Border crossings:
writing, confinement and the voice

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Table of contents

Table of contents.......... iii
Abstract.......... iv
Copyright notices and statement of original authorship.......... v
Acknowledgements.......... vi
Introduction.......... 1
Literature review.......... 14
Methodology.......... 34

Chapter One: *First Love* - desire, confinement and the 'voice' in writing.......... 40

1.1 Confinement and discourse: Michel Foucault.......... 48
First Love extract: *The centaur*.......... 53
1.2 19th century literature and confinement.......... 59
First Love extract: *Wax and fog*.......... 67
1.3 The plural voice in the text: Marguerite Duras and Roland Barthes.......... 71
First Love extract: *Contract with witches*.......... 83
1.4 Writing the 'voice' through *différance*: Jacques Derrida.......... 90
First Love extract: *Swallow window* 98
1.5 The dissonant writing of Hélène Cixous 107

Chapter Two: The 'border,' dissonance and the 'voice' in cinema and *Bordertown*.... 131

Part One: Cinema, dissonance and the 'voice' 136
2.1 The dissonance of image and voice in cinema.......... 136
2.2 The dialectic of image–voice in the films of Chris Marker.......... 150
2.3 Jean-Luc Godard: Brechtian cinema and the 'voice' of dissonance 163

Part Two: *Bordertown*: writing, the 'voice' and the 'border'.......... 182

Conclusion.......... 226
Bibliography.......... 241
Filmography.......... 252

Appendix One: *Ice, time, desire* essay and *First Love, a novella*, manuscripts
Appendix Two: Visual folio
Appendix Three: Temporal diagram

Abstract

This research project examines how the ‘voice’ functions as a significant device in my studio research. It argues that particular conceptions of the ‘voice’ and certain approaches to writing have the capacity to contend with the notion of the ‘border’. This research scrutinises how the ‘voice’ functions alongside other strategies of dissonance to make a ‘border crossing’ within aesthetic forms. It examines a wide range of approaches within literary and cinematic practice to support this assertion, and these approaches illustrate how artistic forms can traverse aesthetic borders. The study of cinematic and literary strategies of dissonance provides the framework for an analysis of the complex relationship between symbolic border crossings in aesthetic form and social and political realities. The exegesis draws on this field of enquiry in order to specifically investigate the role of writing and the ‘voice’ in my art practice, in correspondence with disciplines of cinema and literature. The studio research is centred on two artworks, *First Love* and *Bordertown,* and these projects employ writing in order to deal explicitly with the notion of the ‘border’ and the experience of confinement. By critically examining the ‘voice’ through my studio practice and across cinematic and literary disciplines, this research offers new approaches to writing as a contemporary art practice.

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Introduction

I came to the 'voice' through writing. But the problem of how I should bring both the voice and writing into my art practice attended this instalment. This is the problem that motivated the enquiry. The work presented in this exegesis and the examination exhibition is centred on the question: 'How might writing and the 'voice' contend with the 'border' and the experience of confinement?' It investigates this topic in three subsidiary enquiries in order to ask: 1. How might writing be activated in my two studio research projects *First Love* and *Bordertown* to contend with the 'border' and the experience of confinement?; 2. How might strategies of dissonance and the 'voice' within the studio practice enact a 'border crossing'?; 3. How might the 'voice', as a dissonant aspect of cinema and literature, contend with the experience of confinement and enact a 'border crossing' or a dissolution of the 'border'?

This dissertation will address these questions as part of the wider investigation being conducted in the studio practice and realised during the period of candidature, consisting of two projects: *First Love* and *Bordertown.* The exhibition will present these two projects along with this exegesis as part of the final examination. Both of these projects are multidisciplinary and, importantly to this enquiry, pivot on writing as a major component of the artwork (as will be elucidated in the relevant chapters). The two projects scrutinise the possible forms of writing that

might activate the 'voice' and the various aspects of dissonance that are crucial to the research topic and the notion of the 'border crossing'.

Because of the affinity of this written work to the research problem the writing produced as part these two projects will feature in the dissertation. These will correspond with a series of critical texts that reflect on and examine a number of related theoretical concerns. The dissertation will thus be presented in two chapters that independently address the two studio research projects.[1]

Chapter One centres on *First Love* and reflects on a series of literary concerns and writers that critically inform the project. This chapter presents extracts from four of the stories written for *First Love*. These are 'braided' with five concise theoretical texts that primarily contend with notions of confinement, desire, the 'voice' and strategies of dissonance within 19th and 20th century literary practice. The aim of this structure is to create a dialogue between the diverse forms of writing and the way that strategies of dissonance and multiplicity enact a 'border crossing' in the dynamic and flow of these interchangeable voices and subjectivities. This is distinct from the occasions where I point to the possible dissolutions of borders, seen in certain practices and forms. In both cases, however, a limit is transcended.

[1] Please note that the entire *Bordertown* publication can be accessed online at www.lilyhibberd.com in PDF document format.

Chapter Two is divided into two discreet parts, the first being a study of cinematic form and how it relates to notions of the 'border' through dissonance and the 'voice'. The second part of this chapter, '*Bordertown* – writing, the 'voice' and the border', presents excerpts from the two texts produced for *Bordertown.* These are configured in relation to the stated concerns of this research in order to show how strategies of dissonance and the 'voice' within the studio practice might enact a 'border crossing'; and most significantly to examine how writing and literary notions and conceptions of the 'voice' might contend with the 'border' and the experience of confinement. Similar to the texts in Chapter One, the extracts from *Bordertown* are 'braided', so that the voice of 'the woman' and the voices of the two female protagonists are interwoven with a series of contextual writings. The logic of this presentation is restricted to the *Bordertown* material in this chapter for reasons of intelligibility, this is because the aspects of cinematic theory and practice discussed in Part One are multifaceted in their own right. They also mount a series of intricate assertions regarding 'dissonant' or 'dialectical' cinematic tropes of image, text and voice that need to be presented discretely, even though they underpin the research undertaken in *Bordertown*. It should be noted that many of these notions are common to the discussions surrounding Chapter One and *First Love,* and many of the investigations of literature and cinema are pertinent to both studio research projects too.

At this juncture I would like to briefly clarify the direction that this dissertation will take and how this relates to my field of research within the contemporary visual arts. I realise that the emphasis of this dissertation on writing within cinematic and literary genres potentially situates my research in these academic traditions, and I am aware that the pursuit of writing as part of my studio practice and its inclusion in this exegesis could be categorised as a creative writing PhD. Yet I would like to assert that these exist as frameworks for my enquiry and my studio research as a multidisciplinary artist. The decision to prioritise the discussion of cinematic and literary contexts over and above contemporary art is because of the emphasis that my practice places on cinematic and literary practice. In the process of this research project I examined the relevant contemporary art, however I was unable to address this area due to word restrictions (please note that in the literature review I will outline this aspect of my wider research).

I am conscious that I have brought certain terms to this research topic that require specific clarification, and three require particular definition at this point: the 'border', the 'voice', and 'dissonance'. The demarcation of the meaning of these terms will allow me to specify their precise relevance to the diverse and complex discussions that they articulate. A 'border', for example, can be taken to mean either a physical or metaphysical division or limit, and the 'voice' can be construed figuratively or literally as either a medium of communication

or a psychological construct. I will elaborate on the distinctions pertaining to these two terms and to dissonance below. Before doing so I will quickly touch on how these distinctions are crucial to the argument that strategies of dissonance and the 'voice' might contend with the 'border' across the studio research and in cinematic and literary practice.

The most important distinction to draw at the outset of this discussion is between the representational and the real. To date, discourses on aesthetic form have not escaped this impasse: that the premise of art is that it is a reflection of reality. Recent contemporary practice has sought to traverse the distinction between art and the real world by way of social or political intervention with varying success, as is notable in the work Rirkrit Tiravanija, Francis Alÿs, Santiago Sierra or the Critical Art Ensemble. Because my exegesis frequently deals with this negotiation of politics and aesthetics, it is essential that the two paradigms are not blurred in uncritical conflations of art and life, as is too often the case. When dealing with borders, for instance, a clear distinction must be drawn between borders as they exist in the world and borders in an aesthetic context, such as in literary or cinematic form. Differences exist within these categories too. A border in the sociopolitical realm is configured first of all as an idea, inscribed by governments as law or simply spoken or imagined as real. Sometimes these borders are realised in physical form, say in fencing along a national perimeter,

while at other times they are configured metaphysically, for instance in antagonisms between two culturally incongruent social groups. Further specification of the key three terms, ‘border’, ‘voice’ and ‘dissonance’, is made below in relation to the concerns of the research and the two studio projects. The only other clarification that I wish to make regards the problem of consistently demarcating how these notions function across political and aesthetic realms in relation to this current research.

I am very wary of making claims to political agency for my own creative practice. Because of this concern, I have avoided the application of words like ‘resistance’, ‘rupture’ and ‘agency’ due to the risk that aesthetic representations concerning the ‘border’ and the ‘border crossing’ could be conflated with political action. Nonetheless, certain claims of agency can be made for the cinematic and literary material studied in this dissertation, because sometimes films and books have a direct affect on the world. As a result, at times it can be difficult to disentangle the promise of the art object from its effects. I do not preclude art’s capacity to traverse the divide between artistic form and politics but it is with caution that I argue for the transition of aesthetic object to social object. Also, it is with some anxiety that I note that this research question might exist at the point of an impossibility: that the ‘border’ and the ‘voice’ constitute the same breach in this enquiry for they are both called into being because of the need to inhabit a chasm or dissonance between two or more realms. Such impossibilities provide

fertile grounds for this investigation, however, as this research seeks out ways to negotiate these problems rather than resolve them.

I will now flesh out the different notions of the 'border' and the 'voice' that relate to this enquiry. This will set the scene for my extended investigation into how the 'voice' and strategies of dissonance might enact movements across different forms of the 'border', while questioning how these transactions might constitute a 'border crossing' and whether the 'voice' can contend with the 'border' at all.

As mentioned, a basic distinction can be drawn between socially determined and artistic realisations of the border. In this enquiry I will deal with concerns relevant to both the social and the aesthetic notions of borders. On the social side this will encompass their political, geopolitical and material aspects, as well as their psychological and metaphysical tropes. In the aesthetic incarnation of borders this will involve the scrutiny of cultural and artistic paradigms of the 'border' within cinema and literature, and within the two studio research projects *First Love* and *Bordertown*.

Across this research enquiry, the 'border' is encountered as a political construct in a number of ways: as a limit, a barrier, a frontier, or a space of confinement. These differing conceptions of the 'border' are extrapolated in this exegesis within their relevant contexts: in *First Love*

the limits are social and psychological, as are representations of social and political confinement in the study I make of 19th century literature. The 'border' as a physical and geopolitical entity is delineated by the *Bordertown* project, and the examination of its historical and social scope aims to reveal the 'border' as both a territorial and psychological entity.

In this dissertation 'borders' are addressed in three ways: firstly, from a theoretical or critical perspective; secondly, as historical and fictional narratives; and, thirdly, as formal devices of literary and written form. These means of addressing the border are not always distinct or separable in the research because the stories, forms and reflections are interwoven with each other throughout the material presented. Moreover, part of this dissertation takes on a polyphonic form, which functions as a demonstration of the possibility of crossing genres and hence displacing binaries such as history/fiction, academic/lyric, and literary/cinematic. So, to assist the reader, wherever possible I will attempt to signpost the kind of 'border' that is being contended with.

To indicate the scope of this term I will run through some of the forms that the 'border' might take in this enquiry. These firstly include material barriers in territorial demarcations of walls, fences, or in rivers and marine borders. Then there are the psychological borders of one's own limits, being dual or split, and binaries such as subjective/objective,

personal/collective. Political or social borders are sometimes communal, or they can be comprised of racial, sexual or class differences, and patriarchal or judicial limits, social norms, behavioural codes, social repression and persecution, the demarcations of language, naming, and further dichotomies such as inclusion/exclusion and citizenship/exile. Geopolitical borders maintain sovereignties through border defences, control and protection. A geopolitical border is also sometimes the site of exchange, a contact zone or a cross-border region. The movement of people and goods across a border can result in trade, customs, taxes, tourism, migration zones, legal/illegal immigration, terrorism, and a build up of militarisation. Metaphysical or ideological borders entail fictional, mythical and symbolic limits, and notions of the law, confinement and transgression or even a globalised 'borderless' world.

Finally, in terms of aesthetic form, borders sometimes exist within or between artistic genres. In literary form there are dichotomies of self/other, narrative versus historical paradigms, or the borders of gender, narrative convention, unitary form and realism in contrast to dissonance or intersubjectivity. In cinema the 'border' can be encountered in the limits of filmic convention either in narrative devices or as film form in the open/closed frame, or in limits of illusion and visual or auditory perception. The potential crossing of these tropes over limits, both figurative and real, constitutes one of the key concerns of this exegesis.

The voice is a product of the body and yet the way that it is experienced or encountered is both complex and loaded. This is primarily because the voice is dually constructed: it is both physical and metaphysical. This research is concerned with a wide range of conceptualisations of the voice. The main distinction that can be made is between anthropological or human aspects and aesthetic articulations. As with the 'border', these notions are frequently inseparable (for the voice is the medium of its own expression). But, when practicable, I will highlight the distinct conception that I am dealing with in this research.

I will now run through some of the forms that the ‘voice’ might take in this enquiry. First there is the spoken word as an ‘utterance’ or performed text, which could be encountered as a voice-over, the synched voice, a monologue or dialogue. In literature this term appears as the voice of the narrator, an author, or a historical or poetic voice, as well as in reader-orientated/character-driven voices. In their grammatical construction voices are either active/passive, textual/verbal, and employ direct/indirect address, or the variations of ‘voice’ in pronoun use. In a linguistic context, the voice can be logocentric, patriarchal and phallocentric, gendered (male, female or androgynous), analytical, and primal or pre-linguistic. Psychologically, the ‘voice’ can either be conscious, unconscious or preconscious; objective or subjective and interior. It can also be unitary and singular or plural, split and disjunctive. Moreover, the psychology of the voice can

come across as contested or unreliable, transgressive and resistant, and rational or emotive. In a material sense the voice is sometimes human, machine or animal. It can be bodily too (as in Barthes's 'grain of the voice'), or acoustic and spatialised. In the metaphysical realm there exists one's own voice, or an independent, authoritarian or governing voice. These voices can be internal, or external and projective like the disembodied voice, as well as recollected or imaginary voices, such as the voice of reason or unreason, voices of madness, dreams and hauntings, and finally the voice of the captive or the exile.

In this overview, the relevance of the 'voice' to the 'border' already emerges, and what is significant to highlight here is how the 'voice' might enact a 'border crossing' as it moves across categories of aesthetic genres and human experience. This potential crossing will form the basis of my argument that 'dissonance' plays a pivotal role across the entire scope of this research, which, in terms of the voice, can be aligned with three main categories: anthropologically (the human voice, metaphysics, and psychology); in literary configurations (in narrative or formal constructions); or physically (as sound or material) – and all three dimensions have an impact on daily life and hence on social reality.

'Dissonance' is a term that I have taken up in this enquiry to demarcate a specific territory. The notion of a 'border crossing' as it relates to this

research is investigated through the use of this term. By ‘dissonance’ I mean inconsistency or a lack of agreement, but I also intend to refer to its secondary inference of discordant sounds. I use this word in place of loaded terms like ‘rupture’ and ‘resistance’ (which I discussed earlier), to address questions such as how the 'voice' might be critical to notions of a 'border crossing' in my studio practice and in cinema and literature.

Before presenting the literature review, I wish to suggest how this research might be worthwhile and to briefly indicate the potential contribution to my field of enquiry that I foresee this investigation might make. At this stage, the contribution that I hope to make is situated at the intersection of my studio practice, and the disciplines of literature and cinema, with my examination of the ‘border’, the ‘voice’ and strategies of dissonance. Other possible contributions might arise in the critical evaluation of the dissonant ‘voice’ in cinema and literature, through which I envisage that I will be able to rethink how the ‘voice’ functions in my studio practice.

The broad motivation of this research is to question the social and political meaning of my studio practice and to challenge my presumptions about art and its relationship to politics. In dealing specifically with the question of how writing and the 'voice' might contend with the 'border' and the experience of confinement, I see the potential value of this research as stretching the parameters of thinking

about writing and the voice across disciplines of literature and cinema to broaden the scope of contemporary art practice. I would like to reiterate, however, that I am conscious of the complexities and paradoxes that attend the research problem, and so I can see that the value of this enquiry in what might be the unresolvable or irreducible aspects of the contention that strategies of dissonance and the 'voice' can enact a border crossing.

Literature review

This research is situated within three cultural paradigms: literature, cinema, and contemporary art, drawing on each of their relevant theorisations. It is also underpinned by political theories and philosophies pertinent to notions of the 'voice' and the 'border'. These areas of knowledge have individual relevance to the research question. No one field of expertise has dealt with this question as a whole. Yet specific aspects of the subject have been theorised by particular authors, artists and filmmakers. In this brief review I will provide evidence of my engagement with these practitioners' works in order to discuss the issues that have been raised by each.

Overall, the approach I have taken to the analysis of my topic has allowed me to identify the gaps in the knowledge surrounding these subjects that have offered original directions for the research question. In this review I will also discuss some of the material that has underpinned the research project but that has been excluded from this dissertation due to word restrictions and for the sake of the coherence of this exegesis. For expediency I will conduct this review under the four categories of literature, cinema, contemporary art and wider theorisations.

Wider theoretical material

The earliest theorisation of the 'voice' as a political entity is located in classical Greek philosophy. In the 4th century BC, Plato and Aristotle distinguished notions of the human animal voice (*phone*) from the logic of the spoken word (*logos*) to establish a fundamental divide (or border) in human communications centred on language and the voice.[2] Much philosophical debate has centred on this dilemma since that time, and similar concerns seem to persist even in recent deliberations. For instance, late 20th century philosophers like Giorgio Agamben and Michel de Certeau have recuperated aspects of Aristotelian thought to once more characterise the voice as a political agent. Following the thought of Aristotle, in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1994), Agamben made a corresponding distinction between the same two forms of enunciation, *phone* and *logos*.[3] Another important conceptualistation of the 'voice' in a political context was raised by Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1994), where he proposed a politics of everyday social forms of subterfuge, which he called 'tactics', accessible to the general

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[2] Cf. *The Basic Works of Aristotle,* ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Modern Library, 2001).

[3] Agamben's key contention that *zoe* or 'bare life' is constructed in the 'living being' through its 'exception' and that this exception is initiated in the fact that the subject paradoxically 'has *logos* by taking away its own voice within it [just as] it dwells in the polis by letting its own bare life be excluded, as an exception, within it'. Cf, Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 7.

population.[4] The aspect of Certeau's theory that is relevant to this enquiry centres on the notion of the 'speech act' in the context of everyday forms of resistance, and this concept guided my research in its investigation of the 'voice' in relation to 'border crossings'. I chose, however, to direct my work away from notions of agency or direct political action, even though these possibilities are touched on throughout the exegesis and in the two studio research projects.

Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have separately theorised the notion of confinement and desire, each defining the idea of the 'limit' from a social, cultural and political perspective, and, significantly for this enquiry, in terms of the repressed or governed condition of the contemporary subject.

According to Foucault the political subject often has little prospect of ideological autonomy from the apparatus of the state. Foucault made this clear when he determined that the subjugation of the citizenry takes place through the discursive power of state institutions. In *The History of Sexuality* (1976–84), Foucault examined the relation of the state to sexual practice in the 17th and 18th centuries.[5] This book

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[4] Certeau draws these ideas on speech from John Searle's linguistic philosophy of human agency and speech, in common with Foucault, who went on to develop kindred ideas about discourse as a political practice. Cf. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[5] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1990).

offered my research a critical framework for theorising writing as part of the hegemony of discourse (and hence 'voice') in Western society, providing a critical context for *First Love* and its study of the literature of confinement.

In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis* (*Séminar XI,* 1964), Lacan nominated speech as the only means of access to the truth about desire. His work was underpinned by the linguistic theory of semioticians Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson. Lacan took up semiotics and the structuring of language as part of a binary system in order to develop his theory of the unconscious.[6] Lacan's theorisation of language offered my research the basis for an examination of the ways that the dissonant 'voice' is pivotal to the construction of the human subject, especially in relation to the notion that the speaking subject might be caught between their psyche and language. It also allowed me to comprehend how the slippage of the 'voice' between such constructions could enact a 'border crossing'. Mladen Dolar's *A Voice and Nothing More* (2006) is another text that has contributed to my understanding of the 'voice', particularly within a Lacanian framework. It has provided my enquiry with an in-depth perspective on the ways that the voice can be understood within psychoanalytic paradigms, such as how the voice functions as a

[6] Cf. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis* (*Séminar XI,* 1964), ed. Jacques-Alain Miller; trans Alain Sheridan (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1977).

conduit of the unconscious and hence of human desire.[7]

In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980), Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari advocated a polyvalent and dialectical approach in terms of resistance to constituent power. They offered a new strategy in the form of 'deterritorialisation' that marked a paradigm shift from the hierarchical categorisation of concepts, objects or things, to a perpetual open multiplicity.[8]

'Deterritorialisation' entails the constant and multiple incursion of a given limit, deconstructing it through a reiteration of the mutability, porosity, and overall lack of hegemony that defines discourses and spaces of dominant ideology. This was aimed to produce a dynamic flow of meaning and identity that would dissipate boundaries on both formal and social or political fronts. The 'deterritorialising' propositions of Deleuze and Guattari directed my theorisation of strategies of dissonance and the possibility of a 'border crossing', and this direction caused me to redetermine my understanding of the 'voice'. The first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia, Anti-Oedipus* (1972), also offered extensive new thinking in the critical evaluation of

[7] Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge MA: Short Circuits, MIT Press, 2006).

[8] Cf. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

desire as a space of confinement.[9] *Anti-Oedipus* centres on the disavowal of the dominant Oedipal order of desire in modern capitalist society based on the rebuttal of certain tropes of Freudian psychoanalysis and its negative construction of the human psyche revolving around limit, castration and lack. The assertions made in this book were elementary in the evolution of my thinking on notions of the 'border' and the experience of confinement in human society, even though the scope of the dissertation itself, however, did not allow for the direct discussion of these concepts.

This survey of philosophical and political literature enabled me to comprehend the notion of the 'voice' within a political framework, and to comprehend its paradoxical cultural and psychological construction. This knowledge provided the research with a foundation for theorising the 'voice' as a dissonant element in human communication. On this basis, I was able to pursue the assertions of this research that relate to the notion a 'border crossing' and that could potentially be realised through speaking and in writing.

In the research conducted for *Bordertown,* several texts were significant. *Landscapes of Defence* (2000)*,* is a study of borders and the history of physical constructions in cultural and political contexts. It

[9] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (New York: Viking Press, 1977).

that aided my investigation as I sought to delineate the borders would be relevant to the project.[10] Specific Australian literature dealing with local border politics provided crucial input, including *Our Patch: Enacting Australian Sovereignty Post-2001* (2006), and *From Colonial to State Border: A Federation history of the social construction of the border between New South Wales and Victoria as a frontier, barrier and contact zone* (2001), by Bruce Pennay.[11] This material gave *Bordertown* its historical and social framework but also revealed an opening for an additional interpretation of the 'border' from a philosophical perspective in order to examine how the 'voice' and writing might contend with the 'border'.

Literary works and literary theory

First Love engaged directly with a specific set of literary works, each one dealing with some kind of experience or expression of desire and confinement. As I investigated these notions I was critically, as well as aesthetically, informed by my close engagement with these works. My reading of the texts entailed two levels of analysis: scrutiny of formal and technical approaches, and the consideration of the narrative itself

[10] *Landscapes of Defence*, eds, John R. Gold and George Revill (Edinburgh: Prentice Hall, 2000).

[11] Suvendrini Perera, ed. *Our Patch: Enacting Australian Sovereignty Post-2001* (Perth: Network Books, 2006); and, Bruce Pennay, *From Colonial to State Border: A Federation history of the social construction of the border between New South Wales and Victoria as a frontier, barrier and contact zone* (Albury: Charles Sturt University, 2001).

and its representation of the conditions of confinement. These literary works include: Ivan Turgenev, *First Love* (1860); Samuel Beckett, *First Love* (1970); Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847); Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time* (1913–27); Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (1947); Jean Genet, *Miracle of the Rose* (1946); Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (1929); Helen Garner, *Monkey Grip* (1977); Anne Carson, *The Beauty of the Husband* (2001); Simone de Beauvoir, *Letters to Sartre* (1940); Marguerite Duras, *Malady of Death* (1986); Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* (1977); and Hélène Cixous, *Vivre l'orange* (1979); (please refer to the exegesis bibliography for complete citations for these works). A number of these literary works have been particularly relevant to this enquiry and as a consequence they are scrutinised more critically in the exegetical texts braided Chapter One of this dissertation.

A number of other fields of literary theory contributed to this enquiry and to the analysis of the notion of how writing might be 'dissonant', and how the 'voice' operates in this context. The first field centres on 20th century literary theory in Russia, with the work of semioticians Roman Jakobson and Ferdinand de Saussure, and the formalist Mikhail Bakhtin. The second is the poststructuralist theory of Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida, and the way that their work impacted on the thinking of certain postmodern writers and theorists, especially those who are critical to this research such as Cixous and Barthes. Jakobson

and Saussure are not a focus of this research, but their ideas were critically examined in the development of this enquiry in order to fully appreciate the concepts that Lacan and Derrida garnered from literary formalism and structuralist linguistics.[12]

The relevance of Bakhtin to the background of this study lies in his notion of language as a social phenomenon. Bakhtin was interested in the function of language because of its ability to break with tradition and unsettle dominant culture, over and above the practice of literary criticism of his time with its emphasis on writing as a mirror of society. I drew on other key concepts offered by Bakhtin, set out in four essays in *The Dialogic Imagination* (published after Bahktin's death in 1975) and in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963), such as the distinction between a dialogic and a monologic work of literature, and the significance of polyphony or the proliferation of voices in writing.[13] These theories underpinned much of my ideas regarding dissonant forms and approaches of writing and how the 'voice' operates in this context, even though they have not been directly addressed in this dissertation.

[12] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* ed. and trans. Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1998); and, Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language*, 2nd revised ed. (The Hague: Mouton, 1971).

[13] M. M Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. M. Holquist and C. Emerson, ed. M. Holquist (Austin, Texas: University of Texas, 1981); and M. M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. C. Emerson (Mineapolis, Minn., University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

In *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida ostensibly privileges writing over speech.[14] The significance of this work to my research lies in the notion that writing might escape the dominant unitary function of language, or 'logocentrism'. Through the model of 'deconstruction', presented in *Of Grammatology* and other publications such as *Writing and Difference* (1967), Derrida asserted that writing could be fragmented, disembodied, anonymous and that the 'voice' could be plural, or lost in a chorus of other voices.[15] By engaging with Derrida's work in the more radically deconstructed composition of *Glas* (1974), I was able to critically delineate the role of the voice as a textual entity.[16]

The writing of Barthes was significant in directing the research conducted for *First Love* towards literary form as a means of contending with the notion of the 'border', 'border crossings' and the 'voice'. Several of Barthes's books have been crucial to my study, as he integrated the theoretical proposition of a 'dissonant' voice with its lyrical manifestation. In the 1972 essay 'The Grain of the Voice', Barthes described the 'voice' as a product of the body. He theorised that the expressive and semantic qualities of the voice were inseparable from its materiality, or what he called the 'grain'. This little

[14] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

[15] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass. (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1993), 197.

[16] Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. & Richard Rand (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

piece of material according to Barthes provided the tenuous link in the chain of meaning between language and a voice (or between *phone* and *logos*).[17] Another concept that I derived from Barthes's work was his notion of a 'decentred' method of writing that eschewed the figure of the 'author' so that the reader might actively create meaning. Barthes illustrated this idea in a critique of Honoré de Balzac's *Sarrasine* in *S/Z* (1970).[18] Most foundational to *First Love*, however, is Barthes 'textual' form of writing in *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* (1977), and its dynamic plurality and otherness, compellingly realised as a series fragments, or figures that operate counteract the logocentric model of the unitary author.[19]

The work of poststructuralist feminists of the 1960s, such as Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva, was also imperative to this study. The close reading of the work of Cixous has been central to this research because it has delineated how the 'voice' might be used in literary form to unsettle dominant patriarchal conventions of writing.[20] 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1975) is a crucial text in this regard for it sets apart the voice as the way to mark out feminine difference in a

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[17] Roland Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice', in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977, 181).

[18] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 4–5.

[19] Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1978.

[20] Hélène Cixous *The Third Body*, trans. Keith Cohen (Evanston: Hydra Books/Northwestern University Press, 1999).

practice of writing that Cixous called *écriture feminine*.[21] *Vivre l'orange* chronicles Cixous's encounter with the work of Brazilian novelist Clarice Lispector, and it united a range of concepts that were evolving as part of my research, particularly the notion of 'border crossing' in the practice of writing.[22] It deals with its critical subject matter through the lens of narrative fiction and thus enacts a dissolution of the borders between constructions of language and genres of writing. It employs language boundlessly, traversing formal rules of address, gender designation (more so in French), subjectivities, academic modes of reference, and all in an extraordinarily lyrical style.

I considered contemporaneous other French feminist scholars such as Irigaray and Kristeva in concert with Cixous, which assisted me to contextualise the particular thinking that Cixous offered the research question. Irigaray was important for her clarity of intent (compared to Cixous) in the pursuit of feminine difference as a literary strategy in works such as *Elemental Passions* (1982). Kristeva provided a wider perspective on literary form as a strategy of social and political resistance to dominant and repressive society, most specifically in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1979).[23]

[21] Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1, no. 4, 1976.

[22] Hélène Cixous, *Vivre l'orange* (Paris: Éditions des Femmes, 1979).

[23] Luce Irigaray, *Elemental Passions,* trans. Joanne Collie and Judith Still (London: Athlone Press, 1992); and Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

In my investigation of a literature of confinement in Chapter One I found the writing of Virginia Woolf to be particularly instructive. Her essay, *A Room of One's Own* (1929), argued that patriarchal society – its conventions, its logic, and its language – made it extremely hard for women to find a space in which to think independently, let alone write.[24] To support her case, in *A Room of One's Own* Woolf examined the writing of Emily Brontë and Jane Austen. Woolf's analysis has been useful for my research for it has helped to contextualise the role of women and writing in the 19th century and shed light on the particular construction of the 'voice' in literary form in that period.

Cinema and film theory

A number of texts have been important in establishing the parameters of this enquiry, especially in terms of the question of how, as a dissonant aspect in cinema, the 'voice' might contend with the experience of confinement, the 'border' and its traversal.

The first and most pivotal reference that I examined in this context was Michel Chion's *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (1990).[25] In this book, Chion designated his notion of an 'audio-visual contract' through

[24] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Granada, 1978).
[25] Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

which he theorised that the perception and experience of cinema were founded on the productive contribution that sound makes to the cinematic image. I was able to build my analysis and assertion of a dialectical and dissonant relation between these filmic elements on the basis of Chion's comprehensive work. In another earlier publication, *The Voice in Cinema* (1982), Chion studied the aspects of the voice as a dynamic and autonomous entity within the space of cinematic production. I used this work as a means of distinguishing the voice from the other elements of cinema. I also found Chion's notion of the 'acousmêtre' constructive in encapsulating the operations of the disembodied voice in film.[26] Chion's work has thus made a key contribution to my theorisation of the 'voice', both in terms of its 'dissonance' in film form and as a reference for the 'voice' in my studio research.

The films of Chris Marker and Jean-Luc Godard have been valuable as concrete examples through which I have been able to theorise the notion of the dialectical and dissonant relation of cinematic voices and images. Marker's *La jetée* (1962) has been contributed greatly to the development of a concept of dialectical seeing, particularly in terms of a possible recuperation of history and memory.[27] This film, alongside

[26] Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

[27] *La jetée,* film, 1962, directed by Chris Marker (Paris: Argos-Films, 1962; DVD, Paris: Nouveaux Pictures, 2003).

Letter from Siberia (1957), is also exemplary of the 'photo-roman' approach that Marker realised as a subjective form of documentary filmmaking.[28] Marker's approaches to filmmaking were therefore critical in my scrutiny of image–text–voice operations in cinema.

Several of Godard's films have contributed to the development of a notion of image–voice dialectics in film. *Tout va bien* (1972) and *Nouvelle Vague* (1990) have offered my investigation ways to theorise how viewers might be challenged or confronted by film as an open-ended and unresolvable space of proposition.[29] I have been able to gain a wide ranging and critical view of cinematic practice from these films, through their aesthetic strategies of dissonance and because of the way that the political and social subject matter is presented.

Another important field of enquiry that was explored in the early stages of this research project is the study of women in cinema and feminist filmmaking. This field comprises a significant amount of potentially relevant discussions, but again the focus of this dissertation precluded any extensive discussion of either topic. In the initial phase of my enquiry I did, however, examine the concept of women's representation and the voice in film through Kaja Silverman's *Acoustic*

[28] *Letter from Siberia*, 1957, film, directed by Chris Marker (Paris: Argos-Films, 1957).

[29] *Tout va bien,* 1972, film, directed by Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin (DVD, New York: Criterion Collection, 2005); and, *Nouvelle Vague,* 1990, film, directed by Jean-Luc Godard (Paris: Cine Video Film, 1990; DVD, Cahiers du Cinema, 2007)

Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema (1988), which comprises a unique study of its subject from the dual perspective of feminist and psychoanalytic film theory.[30] I was very influenced by Silverman's contentions, most critically in the last chapter in which she elaborates on how feminist filmmakers of the late 1960s employed the 'voice' as a tool in their program of an ideologically resistant cinema.

Contemporary art

I embarked on this research investigation with the idea that the 'voice' is an explicit component of many contemporary artworks, and after some investigation I determined that a number of significant artists have employed the 'voice' as a dynamic and dissonant medium in certain aspects of their work. This includes Gary Hill's video art, Janet Cardiff's sound installations and Bruce Nauman's performance art. I have found that in general the work of these artists has not been extensively or critically theorised in terms of the 'voice', so at the outset of my investigation I studied each of these artists in detail, whereby I also realised that their practices are remarkable for the production of texts as part of their work. All of these factors have been crucial in the evolution of the research project, particularly in the

[30] Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988). One of Kaja Silverman's preceding books, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (1995), scrutinises the gaze within cinema and the standpoint of the object of cinematic sight within a Lacanian framework. Cf. Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York, Routledge, 1995).

development of *First Love* and *Bordertown* as multidisciplinary artworks that employ the 'voice' within installation art practice. As previously explained, the scope of this exegesis has not allowed for the inclusion of this background research. I will therefore quickly outline the artists that were formative in establishing the direction of my research question (please note that I will refer to supporting publications as secondary references in footnotes to this discussion).

The key artists that have been foundational to this preliminary investigation include Gary Hill, Bruce Nauman, and Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller (other artists were crucial to this preliminary inquiry, such as Tacita Dean, Matthew Buckingham and Vito Acconci, but they cannot be discussed here due to word limitations). I wish to highlight that the notion of the 'voice' that I have scrutinised in this research is a significant constituent of these contemporary artworks and as such this brief evaluation provides evidence of a link between the 'voice' in recent art practice and the 'voice' that I trace in cinema and literature.

The 'voice' as an utterance is central to Nauman's practice. He uses it to challenge modes of presentation and reception to connect the viewer directly to the body and the text, such as in *Lip Sync* (1969).[31] In

[31] Bruce Nauman, *Lip Sync*, 1969, video: black and white, sound, 57 minutes (National Gallery of Australia). Cf. Janet Kraynak, ed., *Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman's Words Writings and Interviews* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); and,

the production of this video installation Nauman filmed a close up of his own mouth but in an overtly perverse act turned the footage upside down. The camera is trained on Nauman's articulation of the two words: 'lip sync', which he endlessly repeats, in a deadpan tone. In an entirely playful way, this work addresses some of the fundamentals of language in linguistic theories like the 'speech act' and other notions of the voice as an active agent of meaning.

A number of Hill's early works offer a rich engagement with text, image and voice and their disjunctive quality.[32] In *Site Recite (a prologue)*, (1989), a camera slowly tracks over an array of strange objects on a table as a man carefully recites a text of four minutes' duration.[33] The tension between the written word and the expression of language pronounces a rift. The anxiety that attends the reading places the viewer in a contingent relation to the image and the voice, a contingency that points to the impasse of looking and listening.

Emma Dexter*, Bruce Nauman: Raw Materials* (London: Tate, 2005); and, Laurence Sillars, ed., *Bruce Nauman: Make Me, Think Me* (Liverpool: Tate Liverpool, 2006); and, Robert C. Morgan, ed., *Bruce Nauman* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

[32] Cf. George Qasha and Charles Stein, *Gary Hill: Hand heard: Liminal Objects* (Paris: Galerie des Archives, 1996); and, Robert C. Morgan, ed., *Gary Hill*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

[33] Gary Hill, *Site Recite (a prologue),* 1989, 4:05 min, colour and sound (Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France).

The practice of Janet Cardiff and Georges Bures Miller is noteworthy for its storytelling mode.[34] *Murder of Crows* (2008) is one of Miller and Cardiff's largest installations.[35] Comprising 40–50 separate sound channels, *Murder of Crows* is able to create quite extraordinary illusions in terms of spatial depth and dynamism. In this and other installation works Miller and Cardiff create unlikely settings and elaborations for their fictions that physically activate the objects in space and psychologically implicate listeners in the fictive realm of the narrator and these have provided important reference material for my study of acoustics and perception in the studio research.

Cardiff is known as a solo artist for a series of recorded audio-guides that participants take on a self-guided tour of a given locale. *The Missing Voice: Case Study B* (1999) is an audio-guide of the streets of East London.[36] As the participant walks along the defined route they listen to Cardiff's voice as she relate a sequence of tales, part fiction and part fact. These accounts are heard amid an array of engaging

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[34] Cf. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, *Janet Cardiff: A Survey of Works Including Collaborations with George Bures Miller* (Long Island City, NY: P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, 2002); and, Ralf Beil and Bartomeu Marí, eds., *The Killing Machine, and Other Stories 1995-2007: Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007).

[35] Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, *Murder of Crows*, 2008, mixed media installation, sound: 30 min (collection of the artists, commissioned by Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary).

[36] Janet Cardiff, *The Missing Voice: Case Study B*, 1999, audio walk (Whitechapel Library to Liverpool Street Station), 50 minutes (collection of the artist, commissioned and produced by Artangel). Cf. Janet Cardiff, *Janet Cardiff: The Missing Voice: Case Study B*, (London: Artangel; New York, D.A.P. 1999).

diegetic sound effects, some of which correlate geographically to the trail. One of the most affective aspects of the audio guide is its spatial quality. Cardiff has captured the sounds, including her own voice using a technique of binaural sound recording, in which sound is captured in the way that the ear would hear it because the two microphones are orchestrated to record and capture the precise acoustic distance between two ears.

From this brief summary of the literature in the field it is evident that my analysis of cinema, literature, contemporary art and attendant theoretical contexts has provided a critical context for the research enquiry. Many aspects of the background investigation have been critical to the development of my thinking on this subject but have been put aside to focus on the very specific examination of precisely how writing and the 'voice' might contend with the 'border' and with the experience of confinement in my own artwork, as well as in cinema and in literature. The research question thus stakes out new terrain based on a combination of pre-existing knowledge and practice across genres of literature, visual art and cinema to propose that strategies of ‘dissonance’ can be used to contend with the border and the experience of confinement as a cultural and social reality. A gap in knowledge is thus situated at the point where my research question coincides with each of these relevant fields.

Research methodology

1. General methods

Because key philosophers and thinkers inspire much of my studio research, I have employed a research design that is both practically and philosophically driven. This was based on a specific decision: that the theoretical component of the research should be entwined with the studio practice as well being critically reflective. These approaches can be broadly categorised as follows: 1. Background research: archival and historical study, wide reading and research of library collections and internet databases, local site visits and documentation, viewing relevant artworks and exhibitions; 2. Writing processes: experimental, expressive, literary, investigative or analytical; and, 3. Concept development: reading specific literature intensively, including relevant commentaries in critical journals on the writers, filmmakers and artists examined, and modelling ideas through a process of testing and reflection. The listed methodologies have been applied across both studio projects and in the theoretical research to establish a rigorous foundation for my investigation.

2. Practical/studio research

I have pursued a number of key methods in the studio research as follows. I have examined and developed the integration of images, text and sound in contrast to the disjunction of these elements in the

development of the two projects, *First Love* and *Bordertown*. The decision to directly and actively engage with the components of the work in this way has been critical to my engagement with the research question, to examine how different forms might produce a form of aesthetic 'dissonance' and also contend the notion of the 'border'. In combining experiments with voice, sound design with visual and written works I have also explored the possibility of working across mediums and genres, in yet another methodology that allowed my studio research to investigate notions of the 'border' and the 'voice'.

I decided early in the research process to focus on writing as a pivotal way to contend with my research question across the studio and dissertation components of the PhD project. I chose, within the studio practice, to examine and work towards two kinds of writing or 'voice' – the 'narrative' voice that exists as multiple 'writers' within *First Love*, and the researcher's 'investigative' voice. A third category emerged in *Bordertown* where the voice slips between fictive and authorial roles. These varied approaches to the author's position in the text were selected as a specific design methodology that allowed me to examine (and test in practice) the 'dissonant' literary structures that comprise one of the foundations of this research.

The scrutiny of the 'voice' underpinned this investigation from the outset. My interest in the voice emerged via the experiments I had

made using sound recordings of monologues in earlier installations such as *Endless Summer* (2007-8). In the context of this enquiry I chose to examine how the 'voice' might acoustically realise a text. Research into installation methods has been a crucial aspect of the studio research, and I chose to apply an experimental process in the structuring of sound and character. This involved experiments with surround-sound design technology and sound constructions in space, devices of rupture and distinction in vocal performance, installation design, exploring theatrical effects, lighting, the use of sculptural and spatial objects, and methods of audience interaction and immersion. The acoustic design for surround-sound environments has entailed the testing of new ways in which viewers interact with the work, with the possibilities of spatialised or disembodied voices, for example. Alongside the physical construction of these projects as installation works, I decided to conduct an additional investigation into architectural and art installation histories. This was because I wanted to formulate and refine the construction of the objects and installation components of the artwork with reference to specific cultural and historical tropes of design.

I applied methods of analyses and reflection across the entire research project to review the function of the writing. I also decided to test the various kinds of relationships that can be created between the viewer and the text by investigating and comparing how the 'voice' functions within cinema, literature and in related contemporary artworks.

3. Theoretical research

As mentioned, the pursuit of knowledge that concerns this enquiry has emanated out of my studio practice. My theoretical research has thus been developed in specific relation to the two studio projects. By making a survey of the field of artworks, cinema, theory and literature I also established the parameters of the topic of enquiry, as elaborated in the literature review.

For *Bordertown* I decided on a research design that combined local historical investigations with critical theorisation of the political underpinnings of these histories. These contexts formed the basis of the project's construction as a narrative work, where the relationship of history to fiction could be explored. I decided that this local research required the specificity of primary data, so I conducted a first-hand methodology of site visits, archival research, which I centred on the dual township of Albury-Wodonga. I also engaged in several discussions with inhabitants of Albury, including a young student, a local refugee worker and the historian Bruce Pennay.

In *First Love* I chose to engage directly with works of literature (discussed in the literature review) to inform the writing of *First Love, a novella*. This methodology was used to investigate and experiment with literary and narrative constructs in the written work, and to examine the research question while I scrutinised select works of literature that

featured the ‘voice’ and disjunctive narrations, especially in a parable or fictional mode. The creative writing developed as part of the studio research has demanded a critical enquiry of specific lineages of literary theory and the work of French theorists and writers Hélène Cixous, Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, in order to understand the precise operations of ‘dissonance’, the ‘voice’ and the ‘border’ in this project. The exegesis further reveals my engagement with these writers and theories, although much more discussion could have been included given a greater word allowance (which the literature review indicates).

As a foundation for my investigation into the ‘voice’ and the ‘border’ within my multidisciplinary studio practice, I decided to closely scrutinise a number of relevant films, literary works and artworks that feature the ‘voice’, in order to examine the distinctive kind of relationship between image, sound and text that exists in each practitioner’s approach. I took up this methodology because I wanted to fully grasp how the ‘voice’ might function in this context. Further research on some of the artists that formed part of this investigation was conducted in Europe while I was undertaking a residency at the Cité International des Arts in early 2009: I viewed a survey exhibition of Janet Cardiff and George Bures-Miller, *The House of Books has no Windows*, at Modern Art Oxford U.K.; and a number of Gary Hill’s works were sighted including *Site Recite (a prologue),* 1989, in the Pompidou collection,

Paris.[37] At this time, I made an additional intensive study of the work of relevant French writers and filmmakers to coincide with the development of the stories for *First Love, a novella.* While in Paris I endeavoured and was successful in meeting with Cixous for a brief discussion of her work in relation to the research topic, and this conversation was insightful and inspiring.

4. Dissertation methodology

The decisions made in terms of the structure of this exegesis were designed to demonstrate the ways that the 'voice' is activated in my own writing and research. They were also designed to reflect on the theoretical background of the studio research. For Chapter One and the second half of Chapter Two, I chose to 'braid' the different kinds of writing in order to enact a topology or crossing of voices that pertains to the impetus of this dissertation. I chose to present the first part of Chapter Two in a conventional essay format to focus on three specific studies of cinema and the voice. This decision was made because a braided design methodology was not going to aid the presentation of the argument in that section or add to the criticality of the ideas being offered (whereas in *Bordertown* and *First Love* the braided form served to represent the research concerns in a dynamic way).

[37] Hill, *Site Recite (a prologue).*

Chapter One

First Love: Desire, confinement, and the 'voice' in writing

Introduction

This chapter features extracts from a collection of thirteen short stories called *First Love, a novella.* These stories comprise the scripts for the videos that are being presented at the examination exhibition. The purpose of this approach is to focus on the aspects of the studio enquiry that relate the 'border' and the 'voice'. The extracts that follow are braided with a number of concise texts that examine specific philosophical and theoretical topics relevant to the research question, to the project *First Love*, and to the individual stories as well.

In this chapter I will principally address the research question in order to examine how writing might take on a form of dissonance to contend with the limits of desire and confinement. The other concern of this chapter is to investigate the 'voice' as a dissonant agent of aesthetic form in literature, and to contend with the notion of the 'border'. I will also consider how certain writers have turned to a kind of dissonant 'voice' in writing (in literary and character formation) as a way to bypass the matrix of patriarchal language and escape its confinements. These writers include: Charlotte Brontë, who wrote as a woman contesting the status of women in her time; Jacques Derrida whose theory of

deconstruction privileged a dissonance of form; Roland Barthes and the dissonant play of self/other; and Hélène Cixous with lyrical form and slippage of gender construction and subjectivity. In this chapter I will investigate how these writers deal with the 'border' and a potential notion of 'border crossing', which is a concept that I have concurrently pursued in the writing created for *First Love*.

In the précis to follow I will describe the formal aspects of *First Love* in more detail, but first I wish to briefly explain how the underlying themes of the stories and their presentation as video and text within the greater project are relevant to the present enquiry.

The *First Love* videos elucidate the literary strategies that are explored in the novella. Moreover, as live readings, the texts are activated by the medium of the speaking 'voice'. It is also worth mentioning that, in their investigation of dissonant form, the videos make a link between the two bodies of work. In the second part of Chapter Two I will explicate how cinematic dissonance is pivotal to *Bordertown*, whereas the role of dissonance in the *First Love* videos will become more apparent in the précis to follow.

Before describing the installation, I wish to provide a little more detail on the conceptual motivations of this project. The stories composed for *First Love*, *a novella,* have each been written through the 'voice' (or in

the tonality and cultural cast) of another specific author's work. In conceiving these stories I had two contrasting aims: I wanted to try to create a method of writing that expressed a sense of freedom; and, conversely, I hoped to enter into the space of confinement of each of the original works as I was writing. For this dual purpose I chose thirteen literary works that are, for me, emblematic of the relations between desire and confinement. These are: Ivan Turgenev's *First Love*, Samuel Beckett's *First Love*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Marcel Proust's *The Remembrance of Things Past,* Simone Weil's *Gravity and Grace,* Jean Genet's *Miracle of the Rose*, Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, Helen Garner's *Monkey Grip*, Anne Carson's *The Beauty of the Husband*, Simone de Beauvoir's *Letters to Sartre*, Marguerite Duras's *Malady of Death*, Roland Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* and Hélène Cixous's *Vivre l'orange*.[38]

It is significant to my investigation that each of these works represents a specific experience of confinement, and that the respective writers have taken up distinctive ways to transcend borders in their writing, related to both psychological or cultural borders and to aesthetic codes. While writers like Brontë, Genet, Barthes and Cixous configured language and content in divergent ways, each author has defined their writing in some regard against the dominant literary and social conventions of the

[38] Please note that publication dates for these titles are included in the literature review, and full citations in the bibliography.

time. They expressed this in three ways: in the literary construction of the text, by the tone of voice employed, and within the story. In this chapter I intend to examine how such writing exists within spaces of confinement, and to look at the ways in which it has historically figured as a crucial means of transcending the limits of desire. It should be noted here that the intention of the author should not be equated with the outcome of the writing: it may hope for and propose liberation without actually enacting it.

Several extended extracts from four of the *First Love* stories will be included this chapter: *The centaur, Wax and fog, Contract with witches* and *Swallow window*. These particular stories have been selected on the basis that they represent a distinct aspect of the underpinning concerns of this research and its questions. The stories have been braided with five contextual studies, comprising: 1. Confinement and discourse: Michel Foucault; 2. 19th century literature and confinement; 3. The plural voice in the text: Marguerite Duras and Roland Barthes; 4. Writing the 'voice' through *différance*: Jacques Derrida; and 5. The dissonant writing of Hélène Cixous**.**

This 'braiding' is designed to create reflexivity between the fictional works and the theoretical writing. It aims to highlight the different voices that exist across these genres and forms, but also how the work (and voices) of other writers slip in and out of my work, which is an

underlying premise of this chapter. Another aim is to demonstrate how the writing I have produced for *First Love* might suggest an experience of confinement, and an attendant desire for liberation or a potential border crossing. This format, moreover, has the capacity to reveal how plurality might function as a productive textual strategy within the exegesis. Due to the limited word allowance the extracts included in this chapter represent only part of the extended written work in the novella and their narratives are therefore unavoidably fragmented. The full transcripts of nine of the *First Love* stories are attached as Appendix One, and visual documentation is attached as Appendix Two. As a guide for the reader each of the contextual passages are numbered and the novella extracts are demarcated by indentation and a serif font. Now, before we come to the body of this chapter, I will provide an outline of the entire project that comprises *First Love*.

Précis of the project *First Love*

First Love is an amalgamation of philosophy, politics and fiction, conceived with the intention that these three elements might endorse and espouse each other. It is made up of four interlocking but separable components: writing, painting, video and sculptural installation. As mentioned above, of these components, only six *First Love* videos and one other accompanying video, *The preface,* will be presented at the final examination exhibition. As I describe the videos, I will incorporate a few comments on the various strategies of dissonance employed.

The *First Love* videos constitute a transduction of six stories from the novella into voice-over recordings. The 'activation' of these texts as acoustic works is designed to allow the writing to be engaged with more immediately and to create a dissonance between the story that is read aloud and the absent novella. The texts were filmed live in the sound studio, with a camera set up outside the booth to record the performer through the glass as they read aloud (no sound was taken in-camera so the footage had to be synched up later). Visually, the footage plays a more complex game with the text. While the performers or collaborators (most are not actors) read directly from the script, the screen fades to black. Subtitles follow the reader's delivery of the text, which adds another dissonant dimension the original story because it is reinscribed once more as a vocal work (it is noteworthy that this blackening device has a similar disembodying function to the wall in *Bordertown*; it both cases the blackout covers over the subject or speaker without eradicating them from the diegetic space). At numerous intervals in the recording session the performer is interrupted. At each of these points of intercession the blackout is lifted to reveal the reader sitting in the sound booth. Because the interruption is unannounced, and because the intervening voice is inaudible, the reader's face is silently yet expressively intent on the person beyond the glass and their muted voice (just to reiterate, the other voice is silent because the sound was only being taken inside the studio). This opens up an acoustic schism for the performer is clearly having a conversation,

but we are placed in a dissonant relation to the missing voice because we can only guess at what has been said, plus the studio window provides a subtle reflection of the external interlocutor. A dialogue proceeds from here in which the reader's fictional characterisation is suddenly lifted to reveal another aspect of their persona. This creates an alternate dramatic construct and an experience of dissonance in the slippage between the actor's performative and real self. These devices have a specific lineage in Brechtian practice, for the glass and the 'blackness' point to the trope of the 'fourth wall' and the interaction between formal and performative elements utilises aspects of Brecht's 'alienation effect'.[39] At this stage, I simply wish to point to the importance of Brecht's work in terms of dissonant approaches to representation and form that have been crucial to the making of these videos; and the import of Brecht's work on dissonant strategies in cinema is elucidated in Chapter Two on pages 165-166, where I briefly discuss my reading of Brechtian theory.

The writing produced for *First Love* has been conceived as a two-part novella. Volume One was published in a limited edition in June this year and includes the essay *Ice, time, desire* (attached as Appendix One), and a number of illustrations from the GRANTPIRRIE exhibition (see

[39] The 'fourth wall' is a term commonly used in theatre to describe the imaginary divide between the performer and audience, which could be placed literally at the front of the stage. This wall can be ruptured by any kind of direct engagement or interaction. If uninterrupted, the conventions of theatrical representation and its fictions are usually maintained. See Chapter Two page 166 for a description of the 'alienation effect'.

Appendix Two for visual documentation). The stories in Volume Two are as yet unpublished but, as mentioned, a selection will appear in Appendix One and in the form of the six videos at the examination exhibition.

In *First Love*, *a novella,* the construct of thirteen different fictional authors has been a device by which I have examined how a writer might contend with love and desire as a personal crisis. And, as previously outlined, I explored this notion through the literary and personal 'voice' of the author of each of the thirteen literary works. To reiterate, in composing my own stories I aimed to create the same space of confinement embodied by the original works, and I hoped that this process would create a form of writing that proposed a liberation within its pages by crossing psychological, social and literary borders.

Desire as the cause or the consequence of social, psychological or political confinement can take many forms, yet in this research I aim to look at how desire is a condition conducive to writing as a 'border crossing', even when the captive is physically ill, criminal or insane. Psychological or spiritual confinement is the most prevalent form of segregation that desiring subjects experience as the result of subtly belying social convention or the dominant culture of repressive patriarchal societies. Expressed in the work of the writers featured in *First Love*, such as Turgenev, Brontë and Genet, I will examine my

assertion that such work is able to make a 'border crossing'. In this context I will also explicate how their work might be described as attaining a form of freedom *through* the act of writing. I will base this on analysis of the challenge to confinement that is mounted in novels such as Brontë's *Jane Eyre,* Turgenev's *First Love* and Genet's *Miracle of the Rose,* which I will show is taken up internally by way of an excess of allusion, intense interiority and experimental formal approaches rather than any notion of direct action.

A wide array of subject matter runs through *First Love* and these are woven through the stories, yet the overarching premise of this artwork is the unhinging of time and desire in contemporary life, and the way that writing and the 'voice' might represent liberation from desire as a space of confinement.

1.1 Michel Foucault and confinement within a discourse of sexuality

Michel Foucault first confronted the culture of confinement in his major work on institutional care and the state, *Madness and Civilization*, *A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1961).[40] The majority of Foucault's work thereafter was focused on the operations of the state in regards to power and control of the population, particularly via imperceptible means. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*

[40] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, *A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason,* trans. R. Howard (London: Tavistock, 1965).

(1975), the uses of surveillance formed one of Foucault's pivotal concepts in the theorisation of prisons as spaces of imaginary control, a psychological construction that he claimed was best exemplified by the panopticon design.[41]

Although unfinished at the time of his death, Foucault's last book *The History of Sexuality* followed on from the conception of state-control of bodies by socio-psychological means.[42] In the first volume of this three-part publication, *The Will to Knowledge* (1976), Foucault argued that sexuality comprised a science in itself, and that the common notion of the population's freedom of expression in relation to sexual practice in fact spawned a proliferation of discursive practices of sexual repression in Western societies from the 18th century onwards.[43] He also asserted that Western societies had formed a whole new identity based on this discourse, in which church and state subscribed its citizens as subjects within a discursive regime. This meant that concerns of economics and religious ideology, such as moral and social integrity, birth control, the maintenance of the 'family', and the surveillance of sexual transgression would all be regulated from within, by the population itself.

[41] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1979).

[42] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 3.

[43] Foucault, 'The Will to Knowledge' in *The History of Sexuality*, 1990.

According to Foucault, these practices only fully emerged in 18th century Europe. In contrast, the 17th century employed open violence to exorcize acts of sexual transgression from the citizenry because it had not yet developed an organised discourse of subjugation. The Victorian age, on the other hand, sought to conceal sexual expression and such public shaming was thought to exacerbate aberrant behaviour rather than order it. In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault argued that in the 18th and 19th centuries state control of the masses was transformed into a repression from within. He elaborated that repression was inculcated by the discourse surrounding sexual life and that the home became a space of indoctrination as the 'conjugal family took custody' of the discourse of sexuality.[44] Through Foucault's designation of 'discourse' as the locus of this regulation it can be argued that this familial form of the 'voice' (in the governing voice of the mother and father for instance) became the chief regulating agent. Foucault additionally asserted that this was being enforced by a strict code of silence as 'verbal decency santized one's speech'.[45] Foucault ultimately aligned the coming of this age of repression with the naissance of capitalism, binding the human subject and its sexuality, along with its ability to desire freely, to the new age of mass production.

[44] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 3.

[45] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 3.

Evidently, Foucault's thesis remains pertinent for the culture that surrounds of sex and free sexual expression is present in Western society today as yet another incarnation of a 'discourse' of sexuality. A contradictory attitude prevails in contemporary life that can also be attributed to a past repression of human behaviour because, while people in Western societies are relatively free to pursue a lifestyle of their choosing, apprehension and social censure still attends the radical or alternative sexual practice (especially when it is configured as a libertarian act. Meanwhile in his preface to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972), Foucault contended that the nuclear family 'constitutes the first cell of the fascist society'.[46] He added that the core impetus of *Anti-Oedipus* was to identify and extricate 'the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us'.[47]

Yet the relationship of power to sex is not always repressive, and Foucault clarified elsewhere that we must not view all power in terms of negativity; that power can be a productive and generative force in society. The embrace of regulation by the subject of a governing authority is by no means straightforward either, for as Foucault also

[46] Michel Foucault, Preface to Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (New York: Viking Press, 1977), xvi.

[47] Foucault, Preface to *Anti-Oedipus*, xiv.

outlined, ‘If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression’.[48] The discourse of sexuality is therefore produced paradoxically in the mutual denunciation and acceptance of repression, because discourse is implicit to sexuality (like every institution), for it organises and structures its subjects.

As I evaluate the role of the writer’s ‘voice’ in a writing of confinement, Foucault’s analyses of power and the hegemony of language offers critical insight into the construction of discursive power. This is centred on Foucault’s assertion that the subject is always in reciprocal discursive relation to this power, because of which Foucault deems them responsible for and hence inextricable from subjugation. The ‘voice’ is central to the configuration of discourse because it manufactures meaning within a society’s linguistic, historical and metaphysical contexts. This contention puts the notion of a dissonant ‘voice’ at the centre of political and social relations because the ‘voice’ is also able to shift or subvert the construction of meaning within discourse. It additionally pertains to writing because discourses of power flow through to the social realm via cultural products such as literature.

[48] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 6.

First Love: The centaur

This is the first story in the *First Love* series. This story was written as a close observation of Ivan Turgenev's novella *First Love* of 1860*. The centaur* also deals with an experience of confinement, expressed by the intensely interior voice of the boy. The story's premise is the experience of 'first love' as an awakening. It points to the possibility that this love coincides with a perception of a divorce from 'the father'. The boy in the story is confined by the impossibility of his desire because he recognises that his father's passionate love is also a betrayal. And the 'centaur' is the figure of the boy's identification with the conflicting animal forces of desire. It offers an image of himself as split – half horse, half man – and moreover held captive by the bodies of others.

The centaur

These are scraps from a short romantic novel written by a boy who has lost or discarded many of the chapters after being accused of autobiography.

Chapter One

My first love was intolerable. Others will recount a story of passion or romance as their amorous initiation. Mine was no such thing. In a way, the love was non-existent. The encounter was unremarkable. In its early stages, I failed to understand why my experience was so painful. Then I came to know love

as a betrayal. I don't have very clear memories of the time, and the scenes I describe in this story are often lacking him. He arrives later, or has just departed; rather like the perpetual exodus of love. Only it is futile to recount mere absences. I therefore will simply relate the severance of the first figure from love as it occurred: by the hand of the father.

My whole life up to my thirteenth year had been a reverie of creatures and nature. I adored birds, then cats, then trees, and last of all horses. The equestrian world became an obsession. I plastered my walls with portraits of great steeds as if they were rock stars. At one point I remember taking down a postcard of Errol Flynn and replacing it with a sultry horsehead. My mother was delighted for she thought that such tastes were more suitably demure. But the beasts in the prints weren't passive. They pulsed with great masculine force. As it grew in intensity, this equestrian devotion presaged a sexual awakening.

– break in excerpt –

I closed the book and looked around the clearing for the source of the charming scent. The night was rapidly moving in over the low trees. I felt the sudden urge to leave. The verse, it seems, had wound my heart into a knot of passion. Desire

gripped my limbs so that I was immobilised. But then wonder rapidly overtook my fear of this foreign sensation. Longing welled up within me like a decadent fountain. Only dusk helped to break my seizure. I collected myself and walked back to the house in the dark through the brush. Along the narrow path, I passed a tranquil pond, which revealed the flower whose scent I had been enthralled by: a blossoming Daphne. My paralysis, it seemed, was the same as Ovid's goddess in *Metamorphoses* who was transformed into a laurel, as 'a heavy numbness seized her limbs, thin bark closed over her breast, her hair turned into leaves, her arms into branches, her feet so swift a moment ago stuck fast in slow-growing roots, her face was lost in the canopy. Only her shining beauty was left'. As I inhaled the majestic air, I saw a figure walking under the trees on the other side of the pond. At first I could only see an outline, but then I recognised Patrick's handsome form. I looked across the water, and I was transfixed.

Patrick raised a hand to pluck a leaf from one of the melaleuca that lined the path. His pose reminded me of a painting I had once seen in a museum in Paris. I think the work was by Tintoretto. I remember that it portrayed the exquisite form of a woman, naked to

the waist, with both of her arms in the air in the moment of transformation from body to plant. The shadowy figure of Patrick became the plant-woman, even though the figure of a man as a form of love had not yet been created in my mind. Clearly I was too young. But it only took one glance for the latent bulb of desire to sprout from the earth. Once the shoots had pronounced themselves, there was no concealing them. I had become one with the striving that the philosopher Spinoza describes as 'the need to persevere in being'. I was the plant of passion and its days in the light surpassed the pull towards the ground as the sprouts stretched up towards the sun. I had one destiny from thereon and no other choice but to pursue it exactly as chromosomes map out the shape of the body from birth. It would be done as nature preordained.

– break in excerpt –

Chapter Nine

I was hankering to be out riding with Patrick again. That morning, however, my father had decided that we were going to the races. He told me, 'You'll see the way that real men ride.' I had never been to a racecourse before. And even though the meeting was in a small seaside town I was surprised to find that the stands were very crowded. Being much

shorter than the men who clustered and bustled, I was trampled on frequently. I could not see the railings, let alone the race, and it all seemed so ridiculous. I looked up at my father; his expression was gritty. He had a small blue ticket in his hand, which he raised in the air as the race commenced. I started to feel stolid and morose, more alienated from him than ever. Taken up in the waves of the rolling crowd I thought about Patrick and how I would see him later that afternoon. A man cursed at the fiasco of his stake and then spat on my head, which turned my stomach. At that moment I felt very acutely more distance than I'd ever felt possible from my image of love.

– break in excerpt –

The sticky, sickly smell of the rotting plants was with me as I roused. It was still dark. I could not sleep. I heard voices so I walked down the passage to the spare bedroom. The light was on and door wide open. I saw my father sitting upright, astride someone much smaller than him, although I don't know who it was. I saw him sliding back and forth on the chest of the slim person. The figure squeezed their ribcage up against my father and arched their back to rise with each thrust. Neither of them saw or heard me, which was odd for I emitted an audible

gasp. I turned and made my way back down the hall as quickly and noiselessly as possible. I took to my bed and pulled the sheets up around my head in agony hoping that the image would fade. But there was no eradicating what I had seen. The question of an affair was far beyond any idea that I could fathom. The form of the two bodies, however, could not have been clearer. Still, I chose to relegate the chance encounter to a bizarre and hallucinatory dream sequence. Only the nightmare that I had been wandering in had not yet ended, as the garden in my dream became a landscape of wild temptations. At least bitterness was avoided, for even the simplest delights in that garden were too rich and sweet for my underdeveloped senses to digest at such a juvenile age.

– break in excerpt –

The lovers separated, standing a metre apart from each other I recognised the other beautiful face as the one that I had stared at and longed to touch so ardently, even though I had long forgotten about that holiday on the island. Moreover, I had obliterated the details of that first love in its dual incarnation as both an attractive young man and father. From the embrace another unexpected scene unfolded. I saw my father bend down to take up a

stick. He raised it in the air but just as he brought it down over Patrick's arm I covered my eyes. When I looked again I saw Patrick stiffening his shoulders and lifting his hand up to my father's lips.

– break in excerpt –

I was overcome with fury and the desire for a reprisal, because I had seen it in its truest form: love as a betrayal. This was not for any loss of innocence, or the realisation that my father had taken someone I loved. It was because my father had been seduced by a cloud-image, and had broken away from me to transform himself into the form of the centaur, forever divided, half horse–half man. It may sound as if I am bitter, but I have merely recounted these events as fables for fledgling lovers, and for anyone who loves another intently as I have.

– End of excerpt –

1.2 Literature and confinement in the 19th century

Having just provided extracts from the story *The centaur,* I will now offer more background on the experience of confinement in the period of literature that I was concerned with when writing this piece. This will reflect on the way that forms of address (as in direct or indirect address), 'voice' and character function in 19th century literature as a

means of explicating social and personal oppression. I will also look at the sense of impossible and repressed desire as a feature of the writing of that period, which is so palpable in *The centaur*.

I previously described how desire leads to an experience of confinement, especially under patriarchy, but I wish to highlight once more how it leads to writing and to strategies of literary dissonance and potential 'border crossings'. This notion is expressed in the literature of writers such as Ivan Turgenev or Charlotte Brontë, and it is most explicit in the era preceding the freedom of thought and sexual expression that arrived in the 20th century. The representation of confinement is thus remarkable in 19th century literature for it is expressed through the subject matter of their stories and apparent in the lives of the writers themselves.

Turgenev is best known for *Fathers and Sons*, written in 1860, two years prior to the novella *First Love.* I chose to scrutinise the latter while writing *The centaur* because Turgenev's *First Love* is one of many 19th century European novels that have dealt with the notion of captivity. Writers of the 19th century produced a surprising number of works that can be defined as a literature of confinement and these are typified by the placement of the stories' protagonists in circumstances that severely curb their liberty. In Russia itself, two of Turgenev's contemporaries wrote novels that explicitly deal with captivity of either

a social or governmental kind, namely *Crime and Punishment* (1866) by Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1875). The prevalence of this literary genre during the 19th century is apparent in other such renowned works as *Madame Bovary* (1857) by Gustav Flaubert, *Mansfield Park* (1814) by Jane Austen, as well as Charles Dicken's *Little Dorritt* (1857), Wilkie Collins's *Woman in White* (1860) and *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë, to mention just a few. These works share a common interest in a particular narrative construction where the characters resist the repressive society of their age. In Turgenev's *First Love* the young boy, Vladimir Petrovich, perceives and contends with this social and personal limit and struggles but fails to transcend it; freedom is strived for but confounded. The text conveys this struggle through a form of direct address, which is used to speak directly to the reader and is evident in the voices of Petrovich and others such as Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre. This form of address communicates with an audience who exist (in the reader's imagination) beyond the walls of the protagonist's confinement and the writing thus seems to have already made a 'border crossing'.

Women writers of the 19th century such as Charlotte and Emily Brontë, George Eliot and Jane Austen were not by any means engaging in a political struggle with patriarchy. The practice of writing itself presented enough limitations, for in pursuing their craft women writers met with the restrictions of socially acceptable female behaviour at the time,

which some women perceived as more repressive than others. What emerges, however, in the writing of Austen and the Brontës is a sense of their determination to transcend these limits, although this sometimes necessitated the cloaking of identities or the taking on of male pseudonyms (for example, George Eliot). The lengths that these women went to in practising their work is little known in most cases, except for one renowned account of Jane Austen's artful concealment of her literary pursuits where she relied on the sound of a creaking door to conceal her writing activity from the outside world.[49]

The struggle of the woman writer to establish an independent voice was the premise of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929).[50] In the first few pages of this extended essay Woolf related the symbolism of her act of 'trespass' on a college lawn and the resultant encounter with the old beadle.[51] Woolf used this story to illustrate how the keeper's reaction impacted on her state of mind, chasing away her free-flowing

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[49] As described by her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh: 'She was careful that her occupation should not be suspected by servants, or visitors, or any persons beyond her own family party. She wrote upon small sheets of paper, which could be easily put away or covered with a piece of blotting paper. There was, between the front door and the offices, a swing door which creaked when it was opened, but she objected to having this little inconvenience remedied, because it gave her notice when anyone was coming.' J.E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen*, ed., R.W. Chapman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 81–82.

[50] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Granada, 1978).

[51] 'It was thus that I found myself walking with extreme rapidity across a grass plot. Instantly a man's figure rose to intercept me. Not did I at first understand that the gesticulations of a curious-looking object, in a cut-away coat and evening shirt, were aimed at me. His face expressed horror and indignation. Instinct rather than reason came to my help; he was a Beadle; I was a woman. This was the turf; there was the path. Only Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me.' Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 7–8.

thoughts. This formed the basis of the assertion that for women writers it was very hard to find a space in which to think independently, let alone write. In *A Room of One's Own* Woolf supported this contention, making an analysis of women's literature centred on the writing of Emily Brontë and Jane Austen. Woolf claimed that until the 18th century any woman 'born in with a gift of poetry…was an unhappy woman, a woman at strife against herself'.[52] She said that to write as a woman and not conform to patriarchy's strictures was impossible for most women, but that during the 19th century it was Jane Austen and Emily Brontë alone who were able 'to hold fast to the thing as they saw it without shrinking… They wrote as women write, not as men write'.[53]

Woolf evidently saw writing as the 'proving ground' of feminism and, moreover, of social justice. She sought to express her opinion regardless of fictional or critical context. As such, the social boundaries of patriarchy and patriarchal literature seemed only to exist for Woolf as limits to be challenged, whether literary, fictional or societal. In this way, both the form and the content of her work constitute a 'border crossing', for her stories tell of women who stand apart and the plurality of her writing transcends the conservatism of unitary conventions of language and literature.

[52] Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 50.

[53] 'Of all the thousand women who wrote novels then, they alone entirely ignored the perpetual admonitions of the eternal pedagogue… [who prescribes that] "female novelists should only aspire to excellence by courageously acknowledging the limitations of their sex".' Woolf, *A Room of One's Own,* 72.

In *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar asserted that female writers in the 18th and 19th centuries composed subversive novels 'whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning'.[54] They contended that women authors such as these 'managed the difficult task of achieving true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards'.[55] Gilbert and Gubar extended their theorisation to a psychological analysis of women's writing from this period, contending that a notion of madness was posited on the author as a consequence of the conditions of being a woman and a writer in their time. In *The Madwoman in the Attic* Gilbert and Gubar purported that madness was embedded within the literary frame of works such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* as a deep inner rage due to patriarchal repression, and that this caused a schism between the socially acceptable persona and the inner life of the writer. Gilbert and Gubar pointed out that this split could be located in the characterisation of madness within the fictions of women writers, particularly in the figure of the monster. According to Gilbert and Gubar a doubling occurred in this form of writing, where the author artfully addressed their repression under the cloak of a fictional construct, and that this was potentially subversive.

[54] Sandra M. Gilbert, and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman In The Attic: The Woman Writer And The Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 73.

[55] Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, 1979, 73.

The identification of the woman writer with insanity is clearly problematic for it relegates the female author to one of patriarchy's favourite compartments: the free and expressive woman as uncontrollable and thus hysteric. It also aligns women's writing with the notion of the heroic author, which locks the woman and her work into a masculine hegemony (because the book itself is arguably a patriarchal model, symbolic of unitary form), regardless of the 'femaleness' of the text. Categorisations, while easily made, are dangerous for this reason and many women writers have tried to avoid conforming to typology at all.

Charlotte Brontë first published *Jane Eyre* in 1847 under the fictional identity of a male 'editor' Currer Bell (its ostensible author), and subtitled it as 'an autobiography'. Underlying a compelling tale of the struggles of a single, orphaned woman to find love and happiness, *Jane Eyre* represents emerging dissatisfactions within social hierarchies of class and gender during the mid-19th century. Whether autobiographical or not, Brontë's narrative of a woman oppressed by both low(er) social circumstance and because of her sex powerfully portrays the conflicts that arise when attempts are made to resist hegemonies and assert an independent and liberated identity.

The first two chapters of the novel with its famous red-room episode presage the struggle and backlash that the character Jane Eyre would

face as a resistant and potentially emancipated woman in later life. Jane protests from the cold, dark captivity of the red-room: ' 'Unjust – unjust!' said my reason, forced by the agonising stimulus into precocious though transitory power; and resolve, equally wrought up, instigated by some strange expedient to achieve escape from insupportable oppression...'[56] The story of *Jane Eyre* thus unfolds as the valiant effort of a girl to escape her lot, and to the reader it seems that by speaking to us so candidly Jane develops a voice of her own, which ultimately enables her to construct an identity that is superficially acceptable for a woman of her times but that would sacrifice none of her true self.

The evaluation of 19th century literary constructions of the voice provides a rich foundation on which to experiment with forms of address and character construction in language. The expression of repressed desire in this period remained a prominent feature of the novel into the 20th century, even though preoccupations shifted from the maintenance of a central unitary narrator to other narrative constructions. Turgenev's *First Love* and Brontë's *Jane Eyre* nonetheless contend with patriarchy in ways that remain potent examples of confrontations with a repressive society through open discontent.

[56] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (London: Zodiac Press, 1968), 9.

First Love*: *Wax and fog

Wax and fog is the eleventh story from *First Love.* It is written in correspondence with Marguerite Duras's *The Malady of Death* (1986).[57] In scrutinising Duras's novella I was drawn to the force of its language and its use of 'utterance' as a formal approach in the writing. *The Malady of Death* comprises a scene in which a woman speaks to a man, except the man in question seems to be oddly absent. The narrator speaks of a woman, who has also departed. It is in fact herself. The way that this is enacted is explicated in my study of Duras's writing, which follows these excerpts from *Wax and fog*. In the following story I write about the body as a site of exchange or slippage of identity between a woman and her lover. And, like *The Malady of Death,* the woman in this story directs her thoughts to a man, yet she speaks to whoever might be listening. The sense of isolation that arises out of this form of address creates the feeling that the woman is unable to escape that imaginary site. Only we can tell that this woman is strong: her voice conveys it and we sense her disparagement of the lover.

Wax and fog

INSERTION

[57] Marguerite Duras, *The Malady of Death*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Grove Press, 1986). Duras has also worked across cinema, literary fiction and theatre. She made a number of her novels into films, such as *India Song* (1975) and *Agatha et les lectures illimitées* (1981). Duras also wrote the screenplay for *Hiroshima mon amour*, produced and directed by Alain Resnais in 1959.

She is listening to you. You speak to her from inside her ear. It's blocked with wax. It's been like that since you first knew her.

She tells you that she's always had trouble with that ear. It's her left ear.

You have a hearing aid. I'm deaf too, you say.

The plastic thing is the same material as those instructional models at the doctor's.

You point at her belly: There it is. It's inside you, the deafness. You say, I can take it out but I'd rather not.

Sometimes they squeal, the plastic aids.

She says: What was that?

A fuck-up in the frequency, perhaps? You reply.

She wants you to touch her. She tells you that you might as well; that if you aren't her father, you're a stranger.

You tell her that the wax is good. It mutes the other voice.

Then she sees you take out the hearing aid. You say that you don't want to hear yourself chew.

She watches you eating ravenously.

She tells you that she can't swallow that way. It blocks up her ear and the wax seeps out.

– break in excerpt –

COMMITMENT

Your room is dark: brown wallpaper, brown curtains.

The moon splits open the sky. It eats both you and her. You eat it and you say how good it tastes.

There are mounds of t-shirts, towels; packets of cigarettes, CDs strewn over the floor; beer bottles, and the chocolate wrapper. She doesn't care, she says.

Her body surges under you. The sheets twist. Your tongue slides through her. Your thighs pin her against the shelf. She opens her throat and lets your hot breath come into her. It swarms like a dust storm. You cum, saying, oh god.

You roll into one body. Nothing comes back out. You say it's not enough, then you force yourself right into her.

She tells you that the incursion unsettles her. It's the former order being reinstated. She says that this possession and the seizure of her body are unacceptable.

You weep but she tells you: No one is going to take it from her again.

– break in excerpt –

FOG

It's something you want to possess.

If she runs, you chase her.

There you are, a year ago, in a bar.

Afterwards she sprints. Riding beside her, you say that she's extraordinary. It is late at night but it is not completely dark. She says: how beautiful it is to see the halfness of a park before morning.

You reply that it's not dawn at the edge of the world but something incandescent.

Oh yes, I see, she says, the atmosphere is being dispersed by shrifts of mist. They are coagulating into clouds of milk and bloody darkness.

You say: It's disappearing into itself. Thinking: It's like when you fuck her; there is no body. Then you remember how she turns over, the blood and the milk floods in. You say you are shocked.

I don't believe it, she replies. She shuts you out.

– end of excerpt –

1.3 The plural voice in the text: Marguerite Duras and Roland Barthes

The insertion of one voice inside another creates the uncertain sense of identity and dissonance that courses through *Wax and fog*. By its inclusion in this exegesis, I wish to show how this linguistic formulation allows the reader to enter into the interior world of the narrator. This strategy takes theories of dissonance beyond the notion of 'rupture'. It evades a unitary voice without causing a total breakdown of engagement by use of 'direct address', or the kind of speech in which a speaker expresses themselves directly to the listener, in the first-person and present tense. Similar approaches are built into the writing of Duras, and Barthes actively sought this kind of writer–reader interaction too. What follows is a brief analysis of Duras's and Barthes's textual form in order to evaluate how it might be understood to create a critical engagement with the reader that brings them to the writer's social or political content through a dissonant interaction of 'voice' (or direct address), plurality and text.

The complexity of this premise raises a number of questions on the level of what can be assumed about a reader or a viewer. Neither Duras nor Barthes made any grand claims to revolutionary outcomes for their art, but the techniques they employed point to the text as a functional apparatus, one that presumes that social transformation can be accomplished through a radical material form, by intertextuality or in a multiplicity of literary tactics and subject positions. Both Duras and

Barthes took up this methodology as part of the widespread promulgation of avant-garde art's role in standing apart from or resisting the mainstream. Yet, these two authors also sought a pleasurable fulfilment in the text, which paradoxically placed them in the realm of classical narrative fiction.

Plenitude is closely tied to the rich and pervasive presence of the voice in human imagination, and psychologically constructed voices abound in Duras's *The Malady of Death;* and yet we are partially alienated by the strange authorial position of the woman's voice as both narrator and subject (swapping between first and third person). In a small room by the ocean a scene of cold seduction compels a female voice to mentally divorce herself from her body: she speaks to a man, her lover, as if her body were someone else's. In her retelling of the events, the man comes to her and they make love. Afterwards he does not leave. He stays the whole night and the next day, and from a distance she tells him of his malaise, saying, 'You'd like to start from that body and get back to the bodies of others, to your own, to get back to yourself. And yet it's because you must do this that you weep'.[58] And when he shows some desire for her she says to him, about herself, that it is only 'in the strangeness of your solitude, as a stranger herself'.[59] The woman adds that when 'you wept it was just over yourself and not because of the

[58] Duras, *The Malady of Death*, 11–12.

[59] Duras, *The Malady of Death*, 53.

marvellous impossibility of reaching her through the difference that separates you'.[60] Even though the ocean is ostensibly right outside, the woman and her lover seem unable to leave the room; desire holds them captive. In this illustration of confinement, the two lovers draw as close to the edge of oblivion *through* otherness, mainly because the woman shifts identities in the slippery space between her varied ways of being and of seeing herself.

The complexity of this story's psychological setting is created through the dynamic of the literary device of the plural voice (or the introduction of multiple figures within the text that can speak from the same or different perspectives). Duras reveals very little of her characters' personal traits so that the slippage between self and other becomes a space of doubt and perplexity. The structure of the text as a script or monologue also implies that what we are reading is a vocal work, so that we can imagine that the woman is speaking as we read the text. This activation is founded on the dissonant and dialectical operation of the 'utterance'. This voice is both material and metaphysical.

An utterance is always reciprocal because discourse requires someone with whom the speaker can commune. American linguistic scholar Walter J. Ong states, 'Every human word implies not only existence – at least in the imagination – of another to whom the word is uttered… The

[60] Duras, *The Malady of Death*, 54.

human speaker can speak to the other precisely because he himself is not purely self, but is also somehow other.'[61] The voice is the mediator in this context, it is the material support for the utterance and the site of communicative exchange. The voice is thus dialectical because it sends out a message, absorbs the communications of the other, and then shapes its response or reciprocal utterance.

We encounter the intersubjective and dissonant voice as a psychological formation in many realms but particularly in literature and cinema, where the loosening of the speaking voice from the referent of 'I' unites them with the listener's imaginary or internal voice. The loss of distinction between these two subjective positions creates a heightening of perceptual and psychological effects because the voice of the narrator – the 'I' – transcends the limits of both internal and narrative borders. For instance, *The Malady of Death* resists the singular voice because of the in-built reciprocity of the woman's delivery:

> She asks if she's managing to make your body less lonely. You say that you can't really understand that word as applied to you. That you can't distinguish between thinking you're lonely and actually becoming lonely. As with you, you add.
>
> And then once in the middle of the night, she asks: What time of the year is it?
>
> You say: Not winter yet. Autumn still.
>
> And she asks: What was that sound?

[61] Walter J. Ong, 'Voice as Summons for Belief' in *The Barbarian Within and other Fugitive Essays and Studies* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), 52.

> You say: The sea.
>
> She asks: Where?
>
> You say: There beyond that wall.
>
> She goes back to sleep.[62]

For all its textual pleasures and sensuality, Duras's *The Malady of Death* shares a common deconstructive impetus with other writers of her generation such as Barthes and Derrida*,* both in the narrator's deferral of self via polyphony and the unstable use of pronouns. *The Malady of Death* is distinguished, moreover, by the undeniable vocality of the text. This is the result of its conversational structure, or dialogism, which is enhanced by the (other), the interlocutor, being unhinged from the exchange because he is being spoken to as if he is absent; a technique that is apparent in the passage below.

> You say that she mustn't speak, like the women of her ancestors, must yield completely to you and to your will, be entirely submissive like peasant women in the barns after the harvest when they're exhausted and let them come to them while they're asleep.[63]

This extract reveals how *The Malady of Death* pivots on an intersubjective model. Being a later work of Duras's, it marks a shift

[62] Duras, *The Malady of Death,* 7–8.

[63] Duras, *The Malady of Death,* 4–5.

from a more conventional singular voice to intertextual configurations of language and narrative, which bear the hallmarks of the poststructuralist theories of Derrida and Barthes, both of whose work I will discuss in the forthcoming pages. Duras's writing, however, is distinguished from peers such as Barthes, Derrida and Cixous, firstly because it encapsulates a voice that has freed itself from patriarchal subjugation (which the language of Derrida and Barthes struggled to contend with), while avoiding the critical or authoritative political assertions of prominent French feminist writers and theorists such as Kristeva, Irigaray, and Cixous.

The path that Duras took in comparison to her contemporaries offers a significant alternative, being a way to free language from the thicket of dominant discourse. Duras's work is therefore key in addressing the research question that enquires as to how writing and the 'voice' might contend with the 'border' and the experience of confinement. This is due, firstly, to Duras's writing, which reveals how a dissonant literary 'voice' can contend with experiences of social and sexual confinement, and, secondly, by indicating how the 'voice' might transcend literary and social boundaries by slipping in and out of the usually fixed distinctions of gender and subjectivity. In the next few paragraphs I will examine what aspects of these questions relate to Barthes.

Barthes worked in Paris during the same period as Duras and engaged with common dilemmas of textuality and its potential affects. As a philosopher, semiotician and writer of fiction Barthes produced publications that transcended academic categories of both literature and theory. Barthes's early work, such as *Writing Degree Zero* (1953) and *Mythologies* (1957), was remarkable for its focus on the revision of writing as a political practice, particularly through the lens of semiotics. For Barthes, the dismantling of unitary and dominant discourse in writing could be enacted in a process of binary differentiation and by the 'death of the author'. In his 1967 essay of the same name, Barthes argued that the assignment of an author to a text subjugated it to a discourse narrowly defined by what the author stood for. He claimed that a singular authorial position limited the reception and closed down the reading of the work.[64] On the other hand, Barthes contended that writing that displaced the unitary author would allow other, multiple texts and voices of varied cultures and viewpoints to come forth. Barthes based this approach on the notion that banishing the author from site of the text would prompt readers to produce their own meanings in diverse, revisionist, plural and from constantly shifting perspectives. Along these lines Barthes distinguished the production of authored texts as either 'readerly' (*texte lisible*), with fixed content

[64] Roland Barthes, 'Death of the Author' in *Image, Music, Text,* trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977).

designed to be consumed, or 'writerly' (*texte scriptable*) where the reader is the producer of meaning, able to engage with the text's content at will and relinquish the idea of an author altogether.[65]

Barthes saw the 'voice' as a product of the body and its expressive and semantic qualities as inseparable from its materiality, or what Barthes calls the 'grain'. In the 1972 essay *The Grain of the Voice* he stated, moreover, that the 'grain' is imparted in the 'very precise space of the encounter between a language and a voice'.[66] Even though the essay addressed the operatic voice, it highlights the affects and semantics of the material voice. This construal can be disputed, however, because the voice is a paradoxical entity. In his rich and comprehensive study, *A Voice and Nothing More* (2006), Lacanian philosopher Mladen Dolar argued, that the physiology of the voice in fact opposes meaning. In Dolar's view, 'The voice is the instrument, the vehicle, the medium, and the meaning is the goal. This gives rise to a spontaneous opposition where voice appears as materiality opposed to the ideality of meaning'.[67] Yet listeners to opera are attuned to this trope, for the 'grain of the voice' in this genre privileges meaning over and above that of the text, evident in the scant attention paid to whether the words of an opera are articulated clearly or not and on the lack of importance as

[65] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 4–5.

[66] Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice' in *Image, Music, Text*, 181.

[67] Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge MA, MIT Press, 2006), 15.

to the audience's acquaintance with the language that the libretto is written in (apart from the varying aesthetic qualities of alliteration between French, German and Italian). Indeed, in opera, it is hoped that the presence of the text should diminish because of the voice and its materiality.

The ordinary speaking voice subtly incorporates this contradiction, in that the human 'voice' sometimes 'catches' on its own materiality and generates meaning out of pure materiality (*phone*) instead of meaning produced by words (*logos*). This can be illustrated by way of the sounds of the body that sometimes overwhelm the rational act of speech, such as shortness of breath or a build-up of phlegm in the throat. This is when we perceive its vocality or 'voiceness' in spite of semantic intention.

Barthes understood the limits of text and the problem of it ever truly representing the 'voice'. Because of this, and following the impact of deconstruction's challenge to structuralist semiotics, in *S/Z* (1970) Barthes pursued a new 'decentred' method of writing that disavowed the figure of the 'author' again. This new approach aimed to dissolve the limits of language through a contingent (de)construction of self. Barthes explicated his new ideas within the genre of literary criticism, which in *S/Z* centred on the analysis of Honoré de Balzac's *Sarrasine*.[68]

[68] Barthes, *S/Z*, 4–5.

In *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973) Barthes made a partial return to the authorial voice, albeit by formulating a new means of absorbing the reader in otherness through an experience of pure pleasure or *jouissance*.[69] He asserted, in a new textual form that he called 'vocal writing', that he could create 'pulsional incidents, the language lined with flesh, a text where we can hear the grain of the voice, the patina of consonants, the voluptuousness of vowels, not that of meaning, of language'.[70] In *The Pleasure of the Text* Barthes postulated that a reader can be a participant in the creation of the text, and that in opening themselves to the author's ideas the reader can find enjoyment, which at its apotheosis might reach a point of climax where bliss subsumes the reader so that he or she experiences, as we all have at some point, a loss of self in the writing.

This was compellingly realised in *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* (1977), striking for its intensity as a chronicle of the dual agony and bliss of desire. In this literary practice Barthes sought to inculcate *jouissance* in the reader through the material form of writing by way of a temporary personage or stand-in that Barthes called a 'figure'. In the guise, or the negative space, of the figure Barthes introduced multiple identities of a shifting and provisional kind, each as a cut-out of the author. The writing

[69] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text,* trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975).

[70] Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, 66–67.

existed in this context as a series fragments, or figures, thus counteracting the dominant literary model of the unitary author.[71]

Barthes's approach to 'textuality', or the form of the text, reveals the possibilities of literary form as a space of exchange between the writer and the reader. The 'figures' as a central premise of this project were meant to act as unrestricted sites of potential identification. And in the negative space of these structures Barthes installed his unique form of 'vocal writing', which, as the excerpt elaborates below, resonated with its own corporeal force.

> ***To circumscribe***
>
> To reduce his wretchedness, the subject pins his hope on a method of control which permits him to circumscribe the pleasures afforded by the amorous relation: on the one hand, to keep these pleasures, to take full advantage of them, and on the other hand, to place within a parenthesis of the unthinkable those broad depressive zones which separate such pleasures: 'to forget' the loved being outside of the pleasures that being bestows.[72]

[71] Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

[72] Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments,* 50.

Barthes called this bodily and pluralistic textual approach 'writing aloud'. Although cultures of confinement are a powerful means of repression of female desire under patriarchy, this writing shows how its regulation extends to all desiring human subjects. This is because patriarchy performs exclusion upon anyone that steps outside of its regulatory zone. So, without making any explicit declaration to the effect, Barthes contested the 'author' as an essentially patriarchal figure, and by undermining the phallocentric construction of language, thereby marked the death of this figure. Barthes mounted his challenge through the crossfire of restless, non-gendered bodies, and his always 'other', pluralised voices.

Such strategies of otherness and dissonance aimed to extricate the reader from the diegesis in order to make them aware of their involvement in the text, a strategy that Jacques Derrida called *différance,* a concept that I fully elucidate in the passages on Derrida that follow the extracts from *Contract with witches*. Moreover, Barthes's literary incarnation of Derridean deconstruction in texts like *A Lover's Discourse* prefigured the fluid and lyrical work of many other French writers to come, such as Hélène Cixous.

Barthes and Duras explored the play of dissonance, plurality and the excess of language, and issues arise as a consequence of radical interventions, like the loss of semantic orientation for ordinary readers

and the consequent inaccessibility of the text. But this oversimplifies the impact of montage techniques on audiences: fragmentation does not always result in a total disintegration of meaning because the human mind is driven to make sense of chaos.[73] Regardless, Duras's and Barthes's engagement with a notion of the 'voice' in literary form is vital to this research enquiry, for both authors reconfigure writing to locate literary and subjective notions of the 'voice' at the centre of contemporary subjectivity and politics. The discussion I have just made reflects on concerns that will be discernible in the following extracts from the *First Love*'s *Contract with witches*. This story and its parallel commentary expand on some of the textual strategies outlined to address ongoing preoccupations with identity, gender politics, social repression, and the potential of literary form to dispute dominant or repressive ideologies (including those we condone or embrace).

First Love: Contract with witches

Contract with witches is the eighth story in the *First Love* series. This text is a reflection of Helen Garner's *Monkey Grip* (1977) and its powerful evocation of a woman under the spell of a heroin-addicted but compelling man.[74] The story of *Contract with witches* revolves around a woman who is infatuated with a young man too, and she, like Garner's

[73] This is what literary formalists describe as 'the theme of motivation', which argues that even in the most ruptured experimental text readers will look for frames of reference to provide a naturalistic setting that diminishes any awareness of textual form, or what Barthes calls the 'writerly' text.

[74] Helen Garner, *Monkey Grip* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble Publishers, 1977).

character, knows that her lover is entirely unsuitable, and that his allure is intensified by the man's predilection for pleasure. The woman relates her gradual awareness of the futility of her infatuation and this symbolises a form of death. This death mirrors the loss of self in a love affair, and more specifically to the way that women willingly give themselves away within the patriarchal logic of desire.

Contract with witches

This is a short sequence of scenes based on a lover who enchanted me with his wildness; the lover's addictions, and his passion for drugs, sex and parties were a magic spell that I had to break with before being destroyed by him and his pandemonium.

Scene ONE

Richard is stretched out on a mattress in the back of Andy's van. It's the first time I have caught sight of him and I am instantly taken with his languid beauty as well as his flared orange slacks. His eyes are wide and his hair wiry and wild. Reclining among the cushions he looks like he is made of marble, not in a lifeless way but the kind of stone that transcends nature, like Michelangelo's *Pietà* (in which pure lust is embodied as a form of violence), or Bernini's *Ecstasy of St Teresa*. Ritchie notices me standing

beside the van door. He smiles gently, then goes back to staring beatifically at the painted ceiling of the vehicle. The rest of the party is working up some excitement for the evening but Ritchie is clearly having a great time in his own head.

– break in excerpt –

Scene THREE

Ritchie and I are hanging out a lot. We are in the first four weeks of the affair. Ritchie drifts along in his usual laid-back fashion. I notice that there are lots of parties that carry him off for the whole night and then for most of the following day. And they start to occur more frequently. At least twice a week he'll tell me that he is at some huge bash at a club or that he is hanging out at a mate's house and that the merrymaking is cranking up. I am not worried about Ritchie's absorption in his scene because I am studying during the day and then working in a pub kitchen in the evenings. Plus Ritchie never invites me to join him. Perhaps he thinks I am too busy. I start to hope that he will think of me. His life seems so exuberant.

Scene FIVE

I see Ritchie about once a week. His habitual disappearances make arrangements difficult. He

also prefers spontaneity. I am willing to go along with this approach. I try my best anyway. On an afternoon some weeks later Ritchie is an hour late, but I am happy that at least he turns up this time. The amendment to basic social mores is a sign of the effect Ritchie is having on me. I am letting his driftwood attitude direct everything in my world too. I cease to make decisions without having first heard from him, which is totally crazy because I don't know where he is most of the time and so I am stranded. But today he has shown up before I've become too upset. I've thrown on a fitted black dress over some shorts. It's a warm day and Ritchie is in the mood for sex. I can see it straight away. He tells me that he likes the outfit because he can see the shape of my body. For all of his faults, Ritchie is a great lover. I have not been able to compare anyone else to him up until then. It is what some people call a connection. We roll around, laughing and kissing for hours. I can't imagine anything more blissful than this.

– break in excerpt –

Scene EIGHT

The new leaf does not take long to turn back over: I have waited three more days to get a call from him. I decide to turn up at his house instead. I let myself in

and find Ritchie sprawled across the mattress on the floor. He is face down and naked. His clothes are all over the carpet. Empty beer bottles are strewn about with butts in the lids. Where were you? I ask. Oh some crazy party that went on for days, he says. Rolling over and smiling at me, he scrounges for a cigarette. I'm unable to control my trembling. I'm shaking from the gut feeling that I have to end this now. But I cannot start the conversation; instead I kiss him softly and stroke his hair. Ritchie leans up on one arm and runs his agile hands over my throat and neck. The rain starts pouring down outside. It's spring so the sun is bright while the raindrops are massive. Water runs in streams from the gutters and down the sides of the house, making the sound of a thousand waterfalls.

I put my head back as Ritchie's breath and skin softens my resistance. The spell of his body is intoxicating. I am not sure that he knows it has that effect. He drags himself out of bed with a fag hanging from his mouth. Throwing on a white dressing gown, he shuffles gradually to the lounge room. The couch is long and narrow and a bit hard but the covering is a funky orange. Ritchie flops down onto it in the white terry-towelling gown,

spreading his gangly legs out in all directions across the cushions.

– break in excerpt –

Scene NINE

The first few days are blacker than coal. The weather is shit as well. But then I go up to Sydney. I arrive at my friend's place on the edge of the ocean. The sun is warm and the waves are soothing. I have a bad cold and I take too much codeine so for the first night I cannot sleep at all. But the darkness of the last few weeks is gradually forced out by the sparkling surfaces around me. It is good to have this sensation; it's like breaking off from a machine being run by a tyrannical motor. On the flight back home I feel the grim pall of annihilation return. I buy a camera in the city and lug my heavy feet back to my place. I see Ritchie's things in a pile on the floor. I can't bear to look at them so I call him. He picks up the phone. I am shocked. He says that he'll be right over. I wonder if he is thinking we could get back together. But when he arrives nothing in his manner gives me that impression. I make tea. I can't remember anything else of that day. I pull out the new camera and take a series of shots of the empty corners of the room. The codeine wears off and I feel the loneliness crawl all over me.

– break in excerpt –

I keep on dancing, trying my best to be happy, but the trick backfires: the more I repress my sadness the more it starts to hurt. Within an hour I feel so bad that I cannot evade the tears. I am angry with myself: How come Ritchie can do it so well? I tell the others that I have to go home. It's not far and I am wide-awake when I get inside. I see the camera on the bed. Cameras can't photograph themselves, I think. Perhaps it's better that I can still see beyond the built-in mirrors of narcissism.

– end of excerpt –

Although *Contract with witches* follows a more conventional literary style I have included it in this chapter to demonstrate how the literary configuration of the 'voice' in this kind of writing engages the reader in the unfolding of language through its direct engagement with the reader. Instead of opposing classical narrative and privileging a splintering of the text, *Contract with witches* shows how language can perform with openness and fullness to bring the reader *into* the text, and this is an approach that I wish to delineate in contrast to other more oppositional or 'rupturing' forms of writing. It is important to assert that the notion of the dissonant 'voice' that I am evaluating in this dissertation should not be confined to transgressive modes of formal

interruption alone, and that rupturing textuality is not the sole agent of 'real' effect or agency for art. This brings us to a specific analysis of Derrida's work to scrutinse how the 'voice' can be brought into writing as another kind of 'border crossing' or strategy of transversality through the deconstruction of the text, which when examined closely is constructed as a dissonant strategy rather than a cleaving or rupturing device.

1.4 Writing the dissonant 'voice' through *différance*: Jacques Derrida

At this weave in our braid it is necessary to take up a bulkier theoretical strand and examine the impact of Derrida's key propositions on late-1960s continental philosophy and literature. Derrida's ideas took many years to graft with mainstream intellectual thought for his propositions marked a radical shift from structuralism and broke with many literary and philosophical traditions. It was also at least another decade before publications such as *Writing and Difference* and *Of Grammatology* (both 1967), reached English-speaking audiences. His influence within France and across Europe during what is now known as the poststructural period was great, particularly notable with Parisian theorists and writers such as Barthes and Cixous.

It is the analysis of the latter two writers that forms one of the central concerns of this chapter, and so the rationale of the following section is to address how Derrida's concept of *différance* influenced postmodern

thought and the theorisation of literary form of poststructural feminism in the late-1960s and 1970s. Derrida's challenge to speech or the 'phonocentrism' of human communication warrants initial elucidation, for it contests the hegemony of *phonos* as the direct link of a sound with its meaning as a word, or the logic that places it at the centre of human communication. While I have not overtly dealt with Derrida's thought as part of my studio research, understanding *différance* is crucial to addressing how the 'voice' might feature as a strategy of dissonance in cinema and literature. It is important to note that Derrida's theories brought the 'voice' to the fore within a range of strategies of dissonance, and how this paved the way for Barthes and Cixous to develop forms of writing that contended with dominant codes of Western discourse, or, more specifically, language. It is also significant to this enquiry because both Cixous and Barthes have been critical to my studio research, a connection elucidated throughout this chapter.

Derrida's deconstructive project was critical to the conception of postmodern continental philosophy in the 1960s and 1970s. His work mounted a challenge to the repressive order of Western language and ideology. As a philosophy, deconstructionism made the claim that all texts are open to continual interpretation. In practice, deconstructionism offered ways to use the innate reciprocity of language to undermine ostensibly fixed meanings.

In respect to this current enquiry and my interest in locating the dissonant 'voice' in literary or 'textual' practice, I wish to focus on Derrida's contribution to the theorisation of ways to transcend the 'borders' of writing. This lies in his attempt to dislodge 'phonocentrism' (defined above) from its ostensible seat of perceptual power in Western scholarly thought since Plato.

Of Grammatology provided the foundation of Derrida's contention that the human subject has always sought a centre, identifiable in the English language as the first-person pronoun 'I'. Derrida defined this need for a centre as 'logocentrism', or the desire for a locus or origin of all meanings, and this notion coincided with Foucault's account of the role of language or 'discourse' as the historical unconscious of the socialised and repressed social subject.[75]

In *Of Grammatology* Derrida took a stance that superficially privileged writing over speech. He claimed that writing is generally derided in Western culture as critically removed from direct communication and is hence less authentic than speech (which is of course not always true). His suspicion of speech or the voice is expressed as follows: 'Such is at least the experience – or consciousness – of the voice: of hearing (understanding)-oneself-speak. That experience lives and proclaims

[75] Derrida identified *logos* as the foundational presence and pivotal stabilising agent of Western ideology. Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

itself as the exclusion of writing.'[76] Note, however, Derrida's use of the word 'proclaims'. It reveals that he was identifying a misconception and misuse of the voice rather than ruling it out. It is thus possible to read Derrida's critique as a potential reconceptualisation of writing that embodies rather than excludes vocality to treat text as a vocal form.

To elaborate, Derrida's deconstruction of language was founded on a return to writing as a means to disassemble or confound the idealised notion of a unitary origin for any discourse. Distinct from Barthes's vocal model of 'writing aloud', Derrida critiqued speech as 'phonocentric'. Derrida aligned orality with 'logocentricism', or the notion that *logos* or the 'word' is a centre or origin of meaning.[77] He claimed that logocentrism favoured speech because it was presumed to have 'pure' presence, and speech was thus perceived as more authentic because the author could be more easily identified and thus could conform to 'logocentric' values of rationality and unity. Yet writing for Derrida could take flight from this paradigm by moving beyond and across planes of meaning, subverting the dominant unitary impetus of Western language. For Derrida, understanding 'logocentric repression permits an understanding of how an original and individual repression became possible within the horizon of a culture and a historical structure of

[76] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 98.

[77] Logocentrism is based on the Ancient Greek term *logos*, meaning 'word', yet it has been adopted as a philosophical term to refer to an unshakable principle of truth or reason.

belonging'.[78] He therefore proposed that human subjects must become aware of the way they are formed by language.[79] Derrida's contention was that logocentric repression held sway because of a loss of consciousness of the structure of language in everyday speech.[80]

Différance is a neologism that Derrida coined to draw attention to the divisive and dissonant potential of language.[81] This term Derrida's played on the etymology of the French verb *différer*, which has the dual meaning, 'to defer' and 'to differ'. And following Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic doctrine, Derrida deployed *différance* to explicate that words can only be defined where one sign defines itself in terms of its opposite, from which the originating words differ. As asserted by other adherents to semiotics such as Lacan, this incessant deferral of meaning creates an endless chain of signification.[82]

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[78] Jacques Derrida, 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1993), 197.

[79] The importance of structuralism should not be underestimated in Derrida's philosophy. In 'Force and Signification', the first chapter of *Writing and Difference*, Derrida asked readers not to forget the impetus of the structuralist project. He contended that many had dismissed it as a closed system instead of using that system to alter their engagement with cultural and historical materials. Derrida hoped that deconstruction would force this change within language itself. Cf. Derrida, 'Force and Signification', *Writing and Difference*, 197.

[80] Derrida's work should be distinguished here from studies of orality, which rely on a delineation of speech and language. In both semiotics and anthropological contexts *langue* and *parole* are delineated as follows: *parole* is the concrete use of the language, the actual utterances, and *la langue* is the whole system of language that precedes and makes speech possible. Cf. Derrida, 'Writing before the Letter' in *Of Grammatology*.

[81] Cf. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, particularly part two 'That Dangerous Supplement', Ch 2, 143.

[82] Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure was the first to demarcate the phenomenal properties of the phonology. The *phone* is a unit of sound, the element of

The logic of 'difference', on the other hand, was designated as the entity that could create the binary oppositions and hierarchies that result in a meaning being assigned to the sign. *Différance* aimed to open text to its potential heterogeneity and to allow a multiplicity of meanings to flow. It brought crucial attention to the 'voice' because it demonstrated how an immediate and vocal literary form could contravene the laws of logocentricism. The dissonant voice in the text is just one approach, which Barthes for example applied to works like *Lover's Discourse* where the old unitary voice is broken up, fragmented, disembodied, anonymous, plural, or lost in a chorus of other voices.

Derrida thus sought to take the notion of 'writing' and redetermine it as a return to the originary event or 'ground zero' of the form. This was realised in the writing that Derrida expounded in publications like *Glas* (1974).[83] This book is one of Derrida's most explicit demonstrations of deconstruction in practice. Hinging on a work of Jean Genet from the late 1950s called *What Remains of a Rembrandt Torn Into Little Squares All the Same Size and Shot Down the Toilet,* the writing makes a dual analysis of Georg Hegel and Jean Genet. Its format is the first means by

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pronunciation and an isolated definitive component of the system of any language. Its study is known as phonetics. The *phoneme*, however, is a reflexive and differentiating unit that can be pronounced in more than one way depending on its linguistic context. It functions to delineate the meaning of utterances from each other. Ferdinand de Saussure*, Course in General Linguistics,* ed. and trans. Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1998), 116-117.

[83] Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr., and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

which Derrida attempts to confound the linearity of writing: the text runs down each square page in two columns. The font style and size vary between the two columns but also within the text, while, as extended quotations interrupt the body text mid-sentence, at times even in the middle of a word. The two essays make no explicit attempt to refer to each other or the block quotations. Formal innovations aside, *Glas* is pertinent to this study because it creates a dynamic in which the 'voice' is activated inside the text. This is evident in the following excerpt, where the words break off from the logic of the argument, engaging us in an open dialogue with the text or the ongoing 'deferral' of meaning.

> *Guillotine* is also a feminine noun
>
> regularly gives itself its
> first name, Guiana, Colony, here more precisely,
> more silently perhaps, 'Galley' lifted by the
> waters: 'And everything that one associates
> with women: tenderness, slightly nauseating
> whiffs from the open mouth, deep bosom [*sein*]
> that the wave lifts, unexpected corrections,
> everything, in short, that makes a mother a
> mother'.[84]

[84] Derrida*, Glas,* 135. Please note that I have made a valiant attempt to replicate the formatting of *Glas* but this is by no means a precise copy.

The theory and practice of 'deconstruction' in Derrida's work brought a new awareness of the potentially open structure of language to continental philosophy. As a result the written work he and others produced saw the rise of the praxis of 'poetics', and the possibility of its cacophonous melanges of multiple and shifting perspectives. Derrida's work offered a transcendence of language that 'writing' had long hoped for but failed to attain. Except the assertion that deconstruction might effect a radical undoing of logocentrism was potentially overly ambitious, given that language can hardly escape from itself. Along these lines Derrida admitted that 'this condition of possibility [of grammatology] turns into a condition of impossibility', especially because everything that Western society holds to has been constructed around logocentrism.[85] Even so Derrida's commitment to the 'undoing' of logocentrism, and concepts such as *différance* resonated with a generation of continental thinkers. His work offered a means to transcend the historical compartments that segregated voice and text, and to contend that the unitary monoliths of tradition, belief, institution and history are not inexorable or intransigent.

Deconstruction provided an important turning point for writing, one that poststructuralist feminist writers like Cixous championed in *The Third Body* (1970), along with Luce Irigaray in *Elemental Passions* (1981). Cixous and Irigaray were among many others who, in usurping the

[85] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 74.

confinement of logocentrism, saw deconstruction, along with Lacanian psychoanalysis as the *sine qua non* of resistance to patriarchal repression. This turning point also saw strategies of dissonance and the 'voice' come to life in literary form. Cixous's *Vivre l'orange* and Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse*, introduced notions of intertextuality, poetics and slippage between academic and literary genres, along with a play of self/other, intersubjectivity, polyphony and authorial dissonance. Such strategies were seen as an effective means of wearing down the limits and borders of patriarchal language, and such concerns are inherent in the following extracts from *First Love, a novella* and in the final section of this chapter in which I make a closer reading of the work of Cixous.

First Love: Swallow window

The following excerpts are taken from the last in the sequence of thirteen texts that comprise *First Love.* The writing of this narrative was inspired by a television documentary that I saw by chance late one night. I can recollect that the program was set somewhere in China, in a landscape of terraced rice paddies. It followed the daily life of an elderly couple and their connection to the land. In one particular scene the old man described how every springtime they would open the windows of their house to the sky and wait for a pair of swallows to come and nest in the ceiling. The footage showed the couple patiently sitting by the open casement, and when the birds arrived the man knew that it was time to sew the rice crop. This moved me deeply, and it represented a

form of fidelity that I would take up as a motif in *Swallow window* for I saw the swallows as an image of fidelity to love, and the old couple as the image of fidelity to nature and felt that these two evocations offered the hope of liberation from desire as a space of confinement.

This writing is the product of an assimilation of the lyrical and intertextual writing of Cixous. Taking a form that reconstructs the female narrator as heterogeneous, *Swallow window* scrutinises Cixous's *Vivre l'orange* (1979). *Vivre l'orange* is a story told by a woman whose persona keeps slipping between multiple representations of self and other, internal and external voice, subjugated lover and liberated desiring creature.[86] As such, the beauty of the writing in *Vivre l'orange* amounts to an excess of pleasure. Similarly, in *Swallow window* it is hoped that freedom can be ascertained through the abundant generosity of the text.

Swallow window

In a time when I no longer knew which creature was the bird and which was an orange a picture came to me, an open window, and I could look from this window. I could see how it was open to the sky and how broad the sky was to the openness of the world. The world was high up, with each plane of the earth

[86] Hélène Cixous, *Vivre l'orange* (Paris: Éditions des Femmes, 1979).

descending from the sky to the ground in agricultural geometry. Space was upside down and from there I knew how the world could come inside if the sky was open and which bird it was that was flying past in the backwards sky. I could see myself as if I were an orange and the sky full of a bird.

The bird and I had never met before, I did not speak to it; we had nothing to say. But the bird loved me; I knew it because there was no difference between the air and its wings, we had no difference, I had no words, it had never spoken yet we knew each other and the orange was the tree that grew taller for us than the house with open windows where we both could fly. The tree had been a place to shelter, always safe for we were not sure of the sky and the tree was strong so we hid beneath it and never looked at the sky even though after that it was impossible to think of the orange or the beauty of the wings we had that flapped together and took us up and up higher than the window.

But, oh, when we saw the open window, it was the first time we had seen into the house which would make us happy and that opened its windows to the sky, so two birds could be one orange and make a place for us in the ceiling. Every spring the orange

flew up to the ceiling, to the same place that we promised ourselves would be always the same place when we would fly in together, not the same day but always a day that was the same by the calendar of light that you only know when the orange loves itself.

I opened the window to be in the time of light so that the birds with forked wings could pass into the house that was open for the light in the season of rain and when the days have more hours because it has never been dark in those hours before we forgot the longer nights. There I found the swallow. The window was open and we went in together, my swallow-self and I. The rain and the light were the first signs that the orange was ready. They were waiting for us to arrive; they had opened the window, the old man and the woman waited for the swallow-women to tell them the time, for we knew when the orange would be ready. On the day we arrived the lovers with the open window would go out onto the terraces with the rain and the light and plant the seed of the orange. This was the way it had always been but I did not know it until I met the swallow that was myself.

– break in excerpt –

To leave the father-time broke my beak and the sky was too big, I had to stay with my swallow-self, she knew how to stay with herself. The terraces below were dark and it was hard to fly above them, only the lighter days were coming and we could see the window where the man and the woman waited. The swallow-self knew that we had found fidelity, for the tree was dead and we had found ourselves.

The window was open as she promised. We flew in and out and about the great sky. We drank from the orange; the man and the woman were happy, planting for the next time. It was the first season of the swallow-self and it was good. In the father-time I had been the weakest; we weren't so strong. At the end of the first season came the challenge: I had to return to the sky, and I knew that there would be another tree. I asked the swallow-self: 'How can I arrest my habitual weakness and submission to them? How can I be strong?' She sagely noted that: 'I would encounter men as a contradiction.' 'But,' I replied, 'I am like a drinker in a bar, what if I see him again?' The swallow-self suggested: 'We could use the encounter to bolster our resistance.' 'Oh yes,' I nodded, 'yes, I might yet be drunk on men.' We laughed, our broken beaks in the air.

The contradiction was a mirror of the sky; instead of loving everyone we had loved no one. Apart from the swallow-self and those others that had flown through the window, those loved ones who were also in the tree and have flown from its broken boughs. We lived in the age of opposites: broken limbs yet with great air and an open window. So I took to the blueness, going out from the window to look for love. My heart sang, even though the sky was empty. Then I met an earthly creature and I began the challenge again.

The first one was tall; he wore a hat and was 'handsome' (perhaps you can tell me what that means). It was the night of a grand facade and he appeared to the people as I had. The hour became late and it was difficult to avoid his attention, yet with the voice of the swallow-self I apprehended which part of this affection was intent and which part was malaise*.* Like any craze, his touch spread through my body like a fever: we drank, he talked; he took my hand, kissed it. The lights went out on the show without applause; a bad performance. I went home and had a shower and quickly forgot him, but not without making a series of compromises.

The birds didn't appreciate my adventure, chirping and shouting from the sky they announced a divorce. I couldn't see because of the light so I flew and battered my way to a new sky. Not too many days later I understood the problem and the swallow-voice was there to confirm that, yes, they were right: love never comes in this way. I took note, retreated to the ceiling and wondered: how could I ever be a creature with a sharper beak and a better eye for worms and the like. Had I mistaken my swift for a swallow; their resemblance is, you know, close due to convergent evolution?

We sat very quietly by the window and waited a long time, more than a hundred days and heaps of nights. Until it was the last day of the year in the final hour of the night and there he was, a clever, jovial, but naïve bloke who spent the entire night dancing with another reveller, and then decided in the morning that it was me he really liked. He sat there staring while the self slept and he took hold of our hand once or twice, which seemed odd but nice. At least it was entertaining and, as they say, I could have done worse. But the games took their course as the players raised their stakes to the point where the game was no longer fun. Not being a gambler, the swallow took her chances at face value:

accepting an invitation to dine a week later. It was a humid night, we ate raw salmon and tuna, which birds prefer, yet the atmosphere was overly sultry and more so in the arms of a well-worn couch; I needed to walk, to get the air under my wings, maybe to fly off from him, a thought he purloined perhaps, for in an attack of affection he then bit my lip and made it bleed. My swallow-self was perturbed due to this aggression but also because for some strange reason he tasted like fish.

Still, the voice of the old tree persisted: 'Whilst you are in the air you may as well keep flying.' It wasn't such a good sign, though, when I saw the lover arriving at the station on the wrong side: he waved yet didn't wait; simply leaving the station, taking the farthest exit. We circled around like cawing seagulls; I was chasing my swallow-grace. Then in the dark, laid side by side in bed, he wanted to quarter a citrus with me, only I heard him say that the knife was dirty*.* I recalled the window and the ceiling where I had left the orange-love and knew that the second flight was over.

I had returned to the high window only a short while when I was overwhelmed by the dream of an open sky that beckoned to appreciate the picture of

my swallow-self, while my problem remained the same: what other man or beast could ever take me to such heights? 'Yes, you're right, the impossibility is in space, not time,' the orange replied.

– break in excerpt –

Love too was becoming absurd, distending and exceeding the format of its geometry and the window couldn't look at the man and the woman who were still waiting there while the days grew shorter and we grew sadder for the time to close the shutters approached when my swallow-swift would go. The greatness of the orange had given me wisdom for the love of others yet I knew that I had to test these limits, the light of friendship and take friends as orange-lovers*.* A gentle voice made my hard wings drop down, and I listened to him carefully, and came to love the song that echoed in my cave-heart as we went out from the terraces, but not so far, which was good for I needed rest and he understood my cave-heart better than I realised. It was almost equinox; I'd heard the window latch but we stood on either side of the orange, feet on the terrace, staring at each other silently with great admiration while sipping jasmine tea and savouring light green ice-cream, knowing great tenderness while remaining very still. I took the orange from

the ceiling and placed it on the terraced earth,

leaving it there as an offering, the swallow-self

trusting that he would take care of it so that we

could forget the cave-heart and leave the ceiling-

place.

I had been confused and shattered, overrun by the

past; partly from perturbations in the form of the

changing gravitational forces exerted by other

planets, and partly due to being in woman-oblivion

from the start. But I trusted that after this great

window-time that I would remain in the realm of

the orange-life, that I would know fidelity to self-

love and severance from the father-line. Moving

swiftly like the swallows in the spring, the swiftness

went boldly out from the closing window, grasping

the celestial light of sailors to fearlessly navigate our

way through the future, a dark and featureless

ocean-time.

– end of excerpt –

1.5 The dissonant writing of Hélène Cixous

In providing examples of writing from *First Love,* I have thus far aimed to demonstrate my interest in the capacity of literary forms to engage on a deeper level with the reader, both psychologically and through alternate

encounters with form and vocal address. *Swallow window,* for example, is focused on testing the effects of formal devices like repeated phrases and words, and the transcendence of limits of rationalised language through its effacement of linear narrative. I am aware, however, that there is a risk here of over-inflating the potential agency of literary form and that there needs to be a realistic assessment of the extent to which these propositions might actualise their ambitions. It is therefore important therefore to demarcate between the political proposition of the text and the ostensible social impact of the writing: one does not automatically equate to the other. I hope to keep this in mind as I engage with the notion that writing has the ability to contend with forms of confinement and to somehow impact on social ideals and the real world. I therefore intend to draw attention to the ways in which Cixous transcends literary and social paradigms via strategies of textual dissonance.

The possibilities of writing as a political agent emerged in Europe in the late 1960s, as postmodernist theorists recouped the efforts of formalism and structuralism along with the radical thought of earlier political scientists such as Karl Marx and Georg Hegel. In France this was feverishly taken up by the intellectual community of Paris, who were combining radical left-wing politics with various poststructuralist textual strategies, such as Derrida's deconstructive project and the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan, to dismantle the stronghold of

late-capitalist ideology over all forms of culture, and most critically writing.

French feminism re-emerged in Paris out of May 1968 as a new, confident and independent movement. Many politically motivated collectives were formed, most notably in terms of literary concerns with the avant-garde journal *Tel Quel* and the feminist group 'politique et psychanalyse'.[87] The latter founded the publishing house *des femmes,* through which Cixous released most of her books after the mid-1970s (when she relinquished both of her mainstream commercial publishers Grasset and Gallimard). By the early 1970s, three key female theorists stood out: Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, and Julia Kristeva. Each of these women are significant to this research because their work on gender, language and writing situated women within a new ideological framework, one that sought to transcend the confines of patriarchy. They proposed a subversion of the regulations and limits of 'phallogocentrism', rather than escaping them or trying to remain obedient to their regulations.

Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva held that subversion was the only route to freedom because women were not at liberty to shrug off their servility

[87] *Tel Quel* was a Parisian semiotic-Marxist journal of which Julia Kristeva was among the founding editors. Authors and collaborators included Roland Barthes, Maurice Blanchot and Jacques Derrida. The group 'Psychoanalysis and Politics' (Psych et po), was set up in the early 1970s by psychoanalyst Antoinette Fouque as the result of a feminist preoccupation with language, deconstruction, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and feminine specificity.

to patriarchy, for there existed no other paradigm, no other place to go, outside the order of patriarchal signification. As such, Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva's notion of feminism was built on the premise that it had to mount resistance from within the conceptual, linguistic and anthropological reasoning of the present regime. French feminist theorists' adoption of Lacanian psychoanalytic thought was also used for radical literary purposes. Thus, where other feminists rejected psychoanalysis outright on the basis of its privileging of the phallus as an ideal of unitary and dominant order, Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva co-opted aspects of psychoanalysis for their own subversive purposes, in order to alter the ways that language might be used within a patriarchal paradigm. In the following discussion I will briefly outline the ways in which Lacan is relevant to poststructuralist feminists like Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva, and how this might be important to my enquiry.

Lacan's work was pivotal to poststructuralism, and Derrida's and Barthes's work sprang from Lacan's interpretation of semiotics. Lacan took up an analysis of language within a semiotic binary system, as prescribed by Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson, to develop a new theory of the unconscious. His consequent theories pivoted on the notion that an infant's entry into language ordered and subjugated the child's psyche to an Oedipal organisation.[88] A number of Lacanian

[88] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* (*Seminar XI,* 1964), ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Hogarth Press, 1977), 20.

concepts were significant for feminist theorists like Kristeva and Cixous, particularly those that offered a revision of the dominant code of binary language to expose the underlying influence of patriarchy. Lacan's work on the logic of desire in contemporary life was also important for feminist theory in the late 1960s. In establishing three stages of childhood psychosexual development – the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic – Lacan created a model of desire in which the human subject was separated from pure pleasure by fantasy, or the insertion of desire in place of a lack of fulfilment.[89] This creates a pursuit of missing objects along a chain of signification in which desires are never attained and thereby continually deferred, and in Lacan's schema of desire the voice is the residue (and also the symptom) of the chase.[90] These constructions offered poststructuralist feminists an alternative to the patriarchal model that dominated Western ideology; and these were crucial in the contestation of language Kristeva and Cixous mounted within their practice of writing.

This is a far from comprehensive elucidation of the theoretical climate of the literary and academic scene of 1960s France. It indicates, nonetheless, how this environment shaped the ideological stances of

[89] Lacan's stages of development are the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic. Cf. Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Techniqu*e (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[90] Cf. 'The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious' in Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection* trans. Alan Sheridan and Bruce Fink. (London: Tavistock. 1977. New York: W. W. Norton. 2004), 292–325.

writers like Barthes and Cixous. The following examination of French feminist theory concentrates solely on the work of Cixous because her absorption of academic writing into an empowered (female) poetic voice illustrates the central concern of this exegesis, to show how writing and the 'voice' might contend with the notion of 'border' and the experience of confinement.

During the 1970s, Cixous was vital to the establishment of an approach to writing called *écriture féminine* in France. Cixous introduced the term herself in 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1975) to define the kind of writing that is emblematic of feminine difference.[91] As a prolific writer, she published dozens of works that sought to recoup writing from patriarchy purely by its textuality, and Cixous's work constitutes a 'deterritorialisation' of writing (to adopt one of Deleuze's and Guattari's terms), for its unique blend of theoretical and literary form transcends conventional discourses by its lyrical structure.[92] Multiple poetic, academic and fictive genres coalesce in her work, including literary criticism, lyrical and musical alliteration, mythological passages, and biblical or historical tenors.

[91] Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1, no. 4, 1976, 875–893.

[92] See page 18 for elaboration on Deleuze's and Guattari's notion of 'deterritorialisation'.

Cixous is a peripatetic writer: she playfully transcends the boundaries of academic and literary discourse in such a way that her work and the many styles she incorporates are inseparable from each other, and while various meanings can be ascertained, it is impossible to limit the inference of the texts to a single message. For Cixous writing should transcend the woman's loss of power, and to do this it must, as a social, political, sexual and aesthetic construct, transcend borders: 'I ask of writing what I ask of desire: that it have no relation to the logic which puts desire on the side of possession, of acquisition, or even that consumption-production which, when pushed to its limits, links (false) consciousness with death.'[93] By this declaration, Cixous signalled her commitment to writing across borders – both in form and by content – and these words indicate what her writing has to offer this investigation, particularly in terms of strategies of dissonance, in the use of the literary form and the 'voice' to transcend limits and forms of confinement.

Unsurprisingly, Cixous embraced Jacques Derrida's concept of *différance* for it offered a means of transcending the system of binary logic that semiotics had identified as the substance of all meaning in language, propounded by Saussure. Derrida's 'free play of the signifier', in which meaning is transcendent, constituted a linguistic strategy that Cixous could incorporate into her elaborate incursions into 'phallocentric'

[93] Hélène Cixous, 'Prenoms de personne', in *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, ed. Susan Sellers (New York, NY: Routledge, 1994), 27.

discourse, this discourse being the language of patriarchy that maintains the hegemony of the phallus as a unified, autocratic image – the totem of humanist ideology.

Cixous's politico-textual endeavour is evident in an early series of small books (categorised subsequently by others as fiction), including *Dedans* (1969); *Souffles* (1975); *Partie* (1976); and *Vivre l'orange* (1979).[94] The latter is exemplary of her allusive literary style, and is a book in which Cixous deployed another of her pluralist devices, incorporated a secondary storyline that shadows the first-person narrator. The following passage shows how this alternate narrative sketches out the form of an absent but powerful figure:

> A woman's voice came to me from far away, like a voice from a birth town, it brought me insights, naive and knowing, ancient and fresh like the yellow and violet colour of fresias rediscovered, this voice was unknown to me, it reached me on the twelfth of October 1978, this voice was not searching for me, it was writing to no one, to all women, to writing, in a foreign tongue.[95]

[94] Hélène Cixous: *Dedans* (Paris: Grasset, 1969); *Souffles* (Paris: Éditions des Femmes, 1975); *Partie* (Paris: Éditions des Femmes, 1976); *Vivre l'orange* (Paris: Éditions des Femmes, 1979).

[95] Cixous, *Vivre l'orange*, 10.

Cixous has frequently reflected on the work of other writers, yet in ways that are entirely unconventional in terms of literary criticism. The following passage from *Vivre l'orange* describes Cixous's encounter with the work of Brazilian novelist Clarice Lispector and how this discovery revolutionised her life and her writing.

> I wandered ten glacial years in the over-published solitude, without seeing a single human woman's face, the sun had retired, it was mortally cold, the truth had set, I took the last book before death, and behold it was Clarice, the writing. I wasn't sleeping, but my eyes were frozen, my sight did not reach things. The writing came up to me, she addressed to me, in seven tongues, one after the other, she read herself to me, through my absence up to the presence.[96]

In *The Third Body* (1970), Cixous constructed a similar form of plurality, in which a nameless woman relates memories of her deceased father in conjunction with the details of her intimate relationship with a lover.[97] Where *Vivre l'orange* subtly shifts between lyrical narration, historical context, memory and concrete fact, *The Third Body* makes a bricolage of its diverse fragments. The effect is not chaotic because the woman is

[96] Cixous, *Vivre l'orange*, 48.

[97] Hélène Cixous, *The Third Body* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999).

always present, even though she disappears under a richly woven blanket of citations from a wide range of literary and philosophical sources, within personal and autobiographical conversations recited and in a flow of myths and dreams. The woman in *The Third Body* dissolves into the 'other' as she entwines herself with the body and persona of the lover. Cixous's character speculates on the loss of self at this intersection, saying, 'For a long time I closed my eyes when he would leave, and I kept my eyes closed when we made love. I would often lose myself in an ageless non-place where I no longer felt anything.'[98] Yet the woman perceives that at this point of bodily excess (and its 'voice') that a 'third body' is conceived, and so in *The Third Body* Cixous offered a way out of the dominant discourse of patriarchy, because as becomes clear in Cixous's later works, this new androgynous body speaks from a place where gender and sexual difference are imperceptible, within the 'limitless existence' of plurality and *jouissance*.

Cixous's surplus of language carries her difficult and critical concepts into the realm of poetics, yet Cixous seemed determined to stun readers out of complacency by her graphic, sensual and sometimes aggressive literary tone. In what is probably her most directly polemical piece of writing, 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1975), Cixous argued that writing is the locus of female liberation, and women cannot escape patriarchy so easily, because the origins of language in Western culture are bound up

[98] Cixous, *The Third Body*, 1.

with the discourses of male superiority. Cixous plotted out this course, asserting, 'Nearly the entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason, of which it is at once the effect, the support, and one of the privileged alibis. It has been one with the phallocentric tradition'.[99] She added that the exclusion of women from the canon of literary history is explained by this order.

Addressing directly those women who have wanted to write but were overcome by obstacles such as lack of confidence, money or time, Cixous explicated that the difficulty of writing really arises for women writers because 'writing is at once too high, too great for you, it's reserved for the great – that is for 'great men' '[100] Cixous was thus emphatic that the supremacy of patriarchy had not yet diminished: 'phallologocentric sublation is with us, and it's militant, regenerating the old patterns, anchored in the dogma of castration'.[101] She commanded her readers to challenge this dogma with an alternate discourse, with a 'feminine' mode of writing, adopting a voice that is of the writer's own 'body', because in Cixous's terms, the woman's 'flesh speaks true' in a way that logocentrism cannot hope to contrive or control. This is 'because the woman writer doesn't deny her drives the intractable and

[99] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' 879.

[100] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' 876.

[101] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' 885.

impassioned part they have in speaking'.[102] 'The Laugh of the Medusa' is focused on the female body as the site from which women's writing must be generated, and Cixous asserted that this entailed a collective responsibility: 'Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal'.[103]

In *Textual/Sexual Politics*, Toril Moi states that inherent contradictions in Cixous's gendered approach to writing raise 'a series of political problems for the feminist reader of Cixous' because it is as much 'marred by its lack of reference to recognisable social structures as by its biologism'.[104] Moi's comments points out the criticism that Cixous faced on the grounds that, in centring women's writing on the female body, *écriture féminine* was biologically determined and therefore contingent on the old oppositional essentialist binary, and it therefore returned writing to the old patriarchal order. This is an oversimplification of Cixous's political stance, however, for it is evident in 'The Laugh of the Medusa' that Cixous viewed *écriture féminine* as a impasse determined by social hegemony rather than an innate expression of gender difference: 'I write woman: woman must write woman. And man, man.

[102] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' 881.

[103] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' 875.

[104] Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (London: Methuen, 1985), 126.

So only oblique consideration will be found here of man; it's up to him to say where his masculinity and femininity are at: this will concern us once men have opened their eyes and seen themselves clearly.'[105] Herein Cixous articulates the view that such writing – a writing free of gender distinction – is not the sole prerogative of the woman.

Cixous has tended to deny having created a new category of feminist or 'female' writing. In 'The Laugh of the Medusa' she stated that 'It is impossible to 'define' a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorised, enclosed, coded'.[106] As Moi has outlined, Cixous also dismissed the label 'feminism' on the basis that it relegated the women's movement to a bourgeois category and as yet another subjugation of the old hegemonic order.[107] Ultimately, the kind of writing that Cixous produced aimed, through an indomitable plurality and multiplicity of genres, to transcend the 'phallogocentric' strictures of Western textuality, 'phallogocentrism' being a term (coined by Derrida) that merged logocentrism with phallocentrism to delineate the inseparability of Western discourse from the dominant figure of the phallus and the privileging of all that is 'masculine' in the construction of meaning.

[105] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' 877.

[106] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' 883.

[107] Cf. Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics,* 103. Note that Cixous shared these views with other French women's groups, particularly the more outspoken collective, 'politique et psychanalyse'.

In the greater dissolution of patriarchy, Cixous envisaged that sexual difference must be transcended as well, and at this juncture she introduced the notion of 'bisexuality' into writing in a distinctive way. She distinguished, however, what she described as the 'neuter' form of bisexuality (one cancels out differences) from her preferred form, 'vatic bisexuality'. The latter is based on the notion that it enacts 'nonexclusion' by the differences it stirs up Cixous elucidated the concept purporting that it multiplies 'the effects of the inscription of desire, over all parts of my body and the other body'.[108] It can thus be argued that Cixous was not in fact an 'essentialist' because this form of textual 'bisexuality' reveals that she did not exclude either sex from sexual or political agency.

As another strategy, Cixous asserted that a woman's 'speech' would enable her to evade the unified, linear discourse of phallogocentric thought. In speaking, however, women would be able to enter into the traditions of political and theoretical writing without being constrained by its code.[109] She called this kind of speech the 'first voice of love', saying, 'In women's speech, as in their writing, that element which never stops resonating, which once we've been permeated by it,

[108] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' 884.

[109] This is in contrast to Kristeva, who saw that the ability to contest and undermine the patriarchal order was not defined or confined by gender. The individual must take up a subject position regardless of sex. This was because Kristeva had no interest in the oppositional politics of gendered society and stated that masculinity and femininity were a symbolic imposition and not biological difference.

profoundly and imperceptibly touched by it, retains the power of moving us – that element is the song: first music from the first voice of love which is alive in every woman.'[110] Cixous thus established the 'voice' as one of the primary means by which women might assert themselves independently of logocentricism, while acknowledging that this must take place within the dominant discourse of men. She asserted that this is because women are born into and defined by patriarchal discourse and so they must find a language of their own within it. For this reason Cixous argued in 'The Laugh of the Medusa' that the female 'voice' within writing is the principal site of subversion.

Cixous tied the primacy of this 'voice' to the notion that women have more fluid access to the unconscious. In 'The Laugh of the Medusa', Cixous explained that this was the consequence of a less barricaded relation to primal life of the female unconscious. She claimed that such access allowed the woman admission to pre-Oedipal thought and a flow produced by a 'prodigious economy' of the unconscious and its drives. This, for Cixous, would come about by speaking, through which a woman could gain access to the power 'to transform directly and indirectly of all systems of exchange based on masculine thrift'.[111]

[110] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' 881.

[111] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' 882.

This ambitious idea borders on conjecture yet Cixous's proposition was firmly grounded in Lacan's theorisation of the three stages of development. This is because her theorisation of the female pre-linguistic unconscious directly refers to Lacan's pre-Oedipal stage of infancy, or 'the Real'. And Lacan defined this stage as the phase of psychic development in which the baby exists in pure experience, and has no concept of separate from others or being distinct from the external world.[112] Lacan also claimed that this was the only period in a human life during in which a person can know psychic fullness, in which there are no physical or psychological boundaries, and that the child's entry into language signifies and differentiates all things from then on.

Cixous took up this aspect of Lacanian thought to state that women might be able to continue to access the Real, regardless of entry into the Symbolic Order. She argued that this access was maintained via a pre-linguistic (non-patriarchal) female voice, which women could explore through a form of bodily (or pre-conscious) feminine writing. For Cixous this kind of writing was able to evade or escape patriarchal binaries of syntax, naming and hierarchical figurations laid down by phallogocentric language.[113]

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[112] Cf. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, 1979. Also see Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Techniqu*e.

[113] Cixous's theories on female access to the Real are aligned with Kristeva, who thought that women were capable of disrupting the symbolic order of language from within by allowing the 'spasmodic force' of unrequited pre-Oedipal love for the mother figure. But Kristeva also warned that dismantling of the symbolic order, or in Lacanian

In the essay ‘Sorties’ (1975) Cixous revealed her commitment to modernist approaches to writing, stating that James Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake* ‘is the text of texts, the readable-untranslatable. Here an extremity is invented. This non-place which undoes and reconstructs itself is given to behold to the mass of singularities’.[114] In the same essay Cixous described other authors who have crossed this frontier into ‘extremity’, where old aesthetic limits are dismantled and borders of representation dissolved for both the writer and the reader. For Cixous these included Kleist, Hoffman and Poe, who ‘through this shaking of the literary ground’ are among ‘those who crack it open’ to ‘pull off amazing effects, glimpses of ways out… It is by moving onwards, beyond the known, that No one and you, other reader, will hear the textual voice.’[115] This statement conveys Cixous view that radical otherness of a text can be enacted in any text, regardless of the author’s gender, as long as it proffers the ‘voice’ as a multiple and intersubjective form of communication.

Cixous, revealingly, pits poets against novelists, mainly due to the dominance of ‘phallogocentric’ conventions within the latter, and because, as she stated, ‘poetry involves gaining strength through the

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terms the Law of the Father, brought with it the risk of a chaotic dissolution of the constructed self and even madness. Cf. Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*, 11.

[114] Cixous, *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, 30.

[115] Cf. Hélène Cixous, ‘Predit’ (originally part of *Prénoms de personne,* Paris: Seuill, 1974) in *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, 30–33.

unconscious and because the unconscious, that other limitless country, is the place where the repressed manage to survive'.[116] She identifies the work of poets like Stéphane Mallarmé and the prose of James Joyce as being able to 'slip something by at odds with tradition'. This is due to the capacity of these writers to force language out of its oppressive regime by creating a work that is 'untenable in a real social framework' because it centres on a 'superb, equal, hence "impossible" subject'.[117]

Cixous evidently recognised the power of polyphonic and heterogeneous writing to upend linguistic conventions, and she called on woman to 'forge for herself the anti-logos weapon'.[118] In *Reading with Clarice Lispector,* Cixous aligns the transduction of anti-logocentric writing with that of reading foreign languages: 'One of the efforts we make is to be transgrammatical, the way one could say transgressive… From this point of view, it is good to work on foreign texts – Clarice Lispector's, James Joyce's and others' – because they displace our relation to grammar.'[119]

This comment brings us to the last major theme that I wish to address in Cixous's work: the figure of the 'exile'. This concept is at the heart of

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[116] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' 879–880.

[117] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' 879.

[118] Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa,' 880.

[119] Hélène Cixous, *Hélène Cixous, Reading with Clarice Lispector*, ed. and trans. Verena Andermatt Conley (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), 4.

Cixous's political strategy, and, moreover, a large proportion of Cixous's writing encompasses a discourse of exile and otherness from a broader cultural perspective. The exile is pivotal to Cixous's configuration of the radically excised Other, for it is the image of a hostage to power who is arguably empowered nonetheless because she or he is resistant from within.[120]

In her doctoral thesis of 1969, *The Exile of James Joyce,* Cixous explicated the relationship between Joyce's literary espousal of exile and his personal experience of it, because the life of Joyce, as she tells it, is both a story of political and social circumstance and a searing tale of loss and alienation. Cixous scrutinised Joyce's domestic life, explaining how his play *Exiles,* of 1914, reflected of his ten-year relationship with his wife Nora. Cixous explicated that it was Nora who revealed to Joyce that he was totally alone, even in that most intimate affair. In Chapter 18 of the dissertation, 'The Notion of Exile Within', Cixous wrote,

> what mattered to Joyce was the necessity of maintaining, within a conjugal-type existence, a situation of separation which would enable him to feel himself condemned to exile, despite the privileged

[120] This relates to Giorgio Agamben's assertion in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* defining the subject of the state of exception as included by exclusion. Cf. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

> relationship in which he stood. Life with another
> person must be for the artist a planned form of exile
> still.[121]

For Cixous, exile was not 'man's' personal or political tribulation, but was the paradoxical condition of any person living with another and thereby becoming alienated from both themselves and their lover. It is at this point that the notion of 'exile within' becomes a major theme in Cixous's work. In the 1975 essay, *Sorties,* Cixous addressed this concept again stating, 'If woman has functioned 'within' man's discourse… now it is time for her to displace this 'within,' explode it, overturn it, grab it, make it hers'.[122]

During the 1980s Cixous made a noteworthy shift away from *écriture féminine* towards historical and political work, mostly in the form of theatrical writing in an ongoing collaboration with Théâtre du Soleil. This shift demonstrates the complexity of Cixous's relation to writing and the difficulty of asserting any simple categorisation of her writing. Cixous's strategies and works are full of contradictions, and so it is almost impossible to determine how successfully they literally deconstruct patriarchal ideology. I am compelled to question, however, if it is

[121] Hélène Cixous, *The Exile of James Joyce*, trans. Sally A. Purcell (New York: David Lewis, 1972), 511.

[122] Cf. Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clements, *The Newly Born Woman,* trans. Betsy Wing (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 95.

realistic to make any such assessment when Cixous so openly privileges poetry over politics and moreover defies categorisation. Further, I wish to postulate that this ambiguity has allowed Cixous the freedom to slither between textual forms as an expression of both sexual and literary heterogeneity.

Cixous has created writing that realises the voice of the woman as a singular wellspring of individual poetic expression. While the incongruities of sexual difference and essentialism that some of Cixous's assertions raise are problematic, it can be maintained that her openness to contestation indeed deconstructs her own authorial standing. On the other hand, Cixous arguably resituates writing within a liberated linguistic realm of the Imaginary where there is no difference; and in the discourse of bisexuality, where there is no limit, no *logos*, no Law, no border, and no Other.

In this analysis of the work of Cixous I have looked at a wide range of her works to show how her practice relates to the concerns of this chapter. Cixous is not only a source of inspiration but her work demonstrates how writing can transcend limits of language, narrative convention and gendered constructions. In my analysis, I have sought to extrapolate the ways that Cixous crosses borders of literary form, from critical to lyrical, to overcome barriers of patriarchal (or phallogocentric) foundations of writing. This study has been pivotal to the argument

proffered by this chapter that writing and the 'voice' might contend with the 'border'. Cixous's work is also a clear demonstration of how a model of dissonant and polyphonic writing can bring about a 'border crossing' by transcending formal and symbolic divisions. In engaging with Cixous's work on this level I have been able to bring specific new knowledge to my own writing. This has been particularly significant in the writing of *Swallow window* where I took up one of Cixous's own strategies to write about her work, embodying aspects of her writerly form and thought in the process.

Chapter One conclusion

In this first chapter I have examined how writing and the 'voice' might contend with the 'border' and the experience of confinement or limit in the following ways. I initially focused on establishing the historical and political framework of a discourse of confinement and on the conditions of the Victorian age through the work of Foucault. The opening story from *First Love*, *The centaur,* was then braided into the chapter. This allowed for a dialogue between my text and a Foucauldian framework, as well as with the following critical text, with its examination of 19th century literature. This study was used to analyse literature generated under conditions of social and political repression, and how writers like Charlotte Brontë and Jane Austen wrote about and wrestled with confinement and desire in their time.

Excerpts from *Wax and Fog* were included next, followed by a study of

the plural voice in the work of Duras and Barthes. The concept of the female voice being a means to contend with the limits of patriarchy emerged out of these discussions and became further evident in the next story from *First Love, Contract with witches*. Derrida's strategies of deconstruction were afterwards outlined to demonstrate how theories such as *différance* have underpinned a new conception of writing as a dissonant and vocal practice. This led into the final *First Love* story, *Swallow window.* This corresponded with the final section in the chapter, which analysed with Cixous's lyrical form to examine the notion that it offers a model of transversality and slippage between forms of writing, shifting formations of subjectivity and the dissolution of neat segregations of sexual difference.

In the braiding of my own work with these reflections, I have provided an outline of the pivotal ideas that have shaped *First Love.* In my own practice of writing I have drawn great inspiration and knowledge from writers and theorists such as Cixous, Barthes, Duras and Derrida, both in terms of their methodology and for the ways that they have contended with borders in their work. To reiterate, this research has given me cause to rethink the way that dissonance operates within writing and this has offered a way to revise modernist tactics. This revision views dissonance as an alternate means to traverse formal borders within the practice of writing.

To recapitulate, in this chapter I have addressed the first and third subsidiary questions: ‘How might writing be activated in my two studio research projects *First Love* and *Bordertown* to contend with the ‘border’ and the experience of confinement?’ And ‘How might the ‘voice’, as a dissonant aspect of cinema and literature, contend with the experience of confinement and enact a 'border crossing' or a dissolution of the 'border'?’ On this basis I have argued that writing has the potential to contend with ‘borders’. I have shown this to be feasible because of the strategies of dissonance and the ‘voice’ that the work and practice of Duras, Barthes and Cixous offer as some examples of ways to enact a ‘border crossing’. I have also shown how this research has been crucial to *First Love* by demonstrating how I have employed writing across my art practice.

This chapter has explicated how the ‘voice’ is critically situated within my work and within literary practice. And the focused study of a literature of confinement has provided a strong basis on which to produce writing of my own. Throughout this chapter I have scrutinised how writing can cross the borders of convention through formal and aesthetic devices and thus transcend notions of confinement within the realm the narrative. This supports the argument posed by this research that writing and the ‘voice’ might be able to contend with the ‘border’ and experiences of confinement, an argument that is corroborated by *First Love* and its creative and critical examination of these notions.

Chapter Two

The 'border', dissonance and the 'voice' in cinema and *Bordertown*

Introduction

This second chapter is concerned with the second studio research project *Bordertown* and how it relates to the 'border' and the 'voice'. It will also encompass an investigation of strategies of dissonance in cinematic theory and practice. The chapter will be presented in two discreet sections. The first section will cover three topics that explicate my engagement with cinema in relation to the research problem: firstly with an elucidation of the notion of 'dissonance' and the 'voice' in cinema, secondly in a study of Chris Marker's dialectical montage techniques, and lastly with a study of Jean-Luc Godard's adoption of Brechtian practices.

The second part of this chapter presents excerpts from the book produced for *Bordertown* (which will be presented as part of the examination exhibition). The excerpts comprise selections from the two 'interviews' with the *Bordertown* protagonists and passages from the journal of a woman who apparently resided in *Bordertown* for seven weeks. The texts in this part of the chapter have been organised under a

series of discreet themes that mark out the underpinning (and original) concerns of the *Bordertown* project as it was researched and developed, as well as some of the questions posed by this enquiry. These writings are supplemented at certain points by further contextual material that interpolates and reflects on the opinions of the three women, sometimes fleshing these opinions out while at others times distinguishing my exegetical words from the women's narrative voices. The aim of this presentation is to use the narrative form of *Bordertown* to address the ways in which the work contends with notions of the 'border', both from a historical and fictional perspective. It also serves to illustrate how intertextuality can contribute to notions of a border crossing because the differing points of view are not always coherent. In contrast to other parts of this exegesis, moreover, the authorial academic voice is given less weight.

This chapter addresses the three subsidiary research questions as follows:

Question one, 'How might writing be activated in my two studio research projects *First Love* and *Bordertown* to contend with the 'border' and the experience of confinement?' will be addressed through my recontextualisation of the *Bordertown* writing in relation to the project's critical concerns (concerns that are raised throughout the dissertation). It should also be noted that *Bordertown* has its genesis in

literary form, my premise being the notion of a dual narrative, so questions of writing and the 'voice' set out in Chapter One will be relevant here too. Question two, 'How might strategies of dissonance and the 'voice' within the studio practice enact a 'border crossing'?' will be addressed across both parts of this chapter as notions of dissonance and the 'voice' will be examined within the *Bordertown* writing and within the studies of Marker and Godard. I will thus address how these notions are critical to the prospect of a 'border crossing' throughout this chapter.

The artworks presented at the examination exhibition will further articulate the answers to these questions, as the full presentation of *Bordertown* will allow for the dual effect of the work to be grasped. The physical construction of this artwork is, for instance, designed to embody dissonance in the presence of the wall, while the sound design is intended to convey the characters' confinement and their attempts to cross or transcend the border.

The third subsidiary question, 'How might the 'voice', as a dissonant aspect of cinema and literature, contend with the experience of confinement and enact a 'border crossing' or a dissolution of the 'border'?' is predominantly addressed in Part One of this chapter, where I focus on the dissonance of the 'voice' in cinema. In this part I will make a case for an integral dissonant structuring of image, sound and voice in

cinema in order to examine how this dissonance might recuperate some of the strategies of avant-garde art. Where shock and alienation was the goal of rupture, I will examine how dissonance takes on a dialectical form in cinema, particularly in a study of the methods that concerned Godard. And I will point to how these concepts are common concerns in *First Love* and *Bordertown*, for instance in the way that the ‘voice’ has been employed in these projects where I have aimed to create dissonance between such tropes as fiction and reality.

Overall, I have drawn a great deal from cinema within my studio practice and this is evident in the various strategies of dissonance that are applicable across the whole of this research. It is apparent in *Bordertown* with a use of the 'voice' that creates a form of dialectical engagement (its intertextuality, polyphony, and space of voices). Dissonance is also notable across the studio research in the way that history and memory are questioned in both projects. This is produced through the use of devices that contest authorial positions and question the logic of representation, such as the blackout in the *First Love* videos and the wall in *Bordertown.*

The scrutiny of Marker and Godard ’s work in this first part of the chapter will substantiate the form and operations that underpin ‘dissonance’ in cinema. This study will enable me to draw conclusions regarding the lineage of their work in prior notions of a dialectical

engagement with aesthetic form in order to divorce filmic montage from modernist notions of 'rupture' or splitting. I intend to investigate how elements of the work of Marker and Godard might offer a revision of the shock tactics of avant-garde aesthetics, particularly in terms of how one might reconsider montage in view of Marker's method of suturing history and memory. At this point, I should admit that I lean towards the notion that a dissonant form of cinema is usually found in alternative genres of filmmaking. It is necessary, however, to point out the risks of this generalisation because it is too easy to assume that classical cinema is coherent and ideologically dominant, and experimental works are dissonant and politically resistant when these qualities can be true of either genre. Regardless, it stands to reason that classical cinema, such as *Casablanca* (1942) or *The Godfather* (1969), tends toward a discreet relationship between sound and image, where the apparatus of the camera and loudspeaker are obscured so that cinema's particular form of 'reality' can continue to support the seamless flow of narrative. Where 'shock' and the alienation of viewers was the goal of the modernist trope of 'rupture', I wish to delineate 'dissonance' as a dialectical approach, one that places viewers at the centre of questions of representation, and heightens their perception to engage them in the process of generating meaning. In response to this proposition, I intend to examine the ways that the 'voice' might transcend borders in cinema, specifically in relation to the work of Marker and Godard.

This proposition forms one of the primary motivations for this investigation. It was also an important consideration in the development of *Bordertown*, in which I have investigated dialectical ways to traverse borders in fictional, historical and material realms. The first and second parts of this chapter thus critically situate the 'voice' in term of how it might contend with borders – both in terms of the 'voice' in *Bordertown* and the 'voice' in cinema. Having outlined some of key concepts that run throughout this chapter's enquiry, I will now embark on the study of cinema's dissonant voice in relation its to twin: the film image.

Part One

Cinema, dissonance and the 'voice'

2.1 The dissonance of image and voice in cinema

In this section I intend to examine the aspects of cinematic form that relate to the 'voice' and strategies of dissonance and to 'border crossings'. While this study will focus on the work of Chris Marker and Jean-Luc Godard it will indirectly reflect on both studio research projects, *First Love* and *Bordertown*, as the notion of dissonance in film points to corresponding concerns in my art practice.

The relationship between dissonance and the limit or 'border' is dialectical. 'Dissonance' entails that something is divided or has two opposing discordant parts, but dissonance is also the substance of that

differentiation (the discordant sound produced by two clashing sounds for instance). A border is both the imagined limit of two realms and the entity that embodies division. And then, in moments when the elements of a story or a form transcend a limit or notion of confinement, dissonance can represent a 'border crossing'. These complex and sometimes contradictory ways of perceiving dissonance in cinema will be a feature throughout this first part of Chapter Two.

Sound and image come into the world of cinema as separate entities. The notion of the dissonance of the 'voice' in cinema gains credence in this way, for the machinations of cinema revolve around this divorce and its reparation.

The advent of sound to film brought profound changes to the structure and temporality of cinematic visual language.[123] Its new sense of time was the result of synchronisation, or the instant in which sound and image coincide, although it took a number of years to achieve a naturalistic coalescence of the two. Sound generates meaning in its relationship to images, mostly by evocation and association. Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice* (1985) typifies the expansive and imaginative

[123] According to Chion, 'we are indebted to synchronous sound for having made cinema an art of time'. Cf. Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 16.

possibilities of sound.[124] A series of suggestive yet disjunctive acoustics stream through the film: in one of the early scenes inside the isolated house, the cries of swallows contrast with the threatening drone of warplanes overhead. Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966) is another film distinguished for the perceptual capacity of its sound.[125] In the first part of *Blow-up* a hip fashion photographer chances upon a couple in a park and he begins, quite audaciously, to photograph them, thereby becoming witness to a crime. In the unfolding of this extraordinary scene, the viewer is held in a state of suspended tension for up to 10 minutes as the events play out without a word of dialogue. The fullness of the moment is more emphatic because of the lack of speech, and this is emphasised because of the uncanny and ominous sound of the wind in the trees.

Audiences generally perceive the cinematic 'voice' as embedded within the narrative of a film. Viewers demand this, at any rate, because the awareness of the apparatus of cinema is an undesirable disruption in the audience's suspension of disbelief. But the concealment of acoustic technology entails a complicated repression, for sound and image are dichotomous within the physical reality of film production and the viewer's awareness is thus sharply attuned to the placement or

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[124] *The Sacrifice*, film, 1985, directed by Andrei Tarkovsky, (DVD: London: Artificial Eye, 2000).

[125] *Blow-up*, film, 1966, directed by Michaelangelo Antonioni (DVD: Burbank: Warner Home Video, 2004).

displacement of the sound from its source, the image.[126] *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) provides the perfect illustration of this trope when, in the final scene, the wizard comes out from behind a curtain to reveal that he is not an omniscient power, and that we have only believed that he was because of the omnipresence of his disembodied voice.[127]

The dissonant voice and its intervention in the seamless plane of visual representation comprises one of cinema's most profound schisms. Generally speaking, cinema offers images and sound as the illusion of reality but, because they are in fact disparate, the brain anxiously seeks out somewhere or someone to fix them to, and this is exactly how the eye and ear match incoming sights and sounds as they shift through space in the real world. The human voice is rationalised in the same way, so when the voice in cinema starts to loosen itself from the strictures of the visual frame of the film, the viewer is forced into an active search for its elusive source. A voice is therefore usually associated with an on-screen character, and the ear will work to reel in the voice, as if on an extendable or elastic line, to that character. Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979) stretches this elastic as the man's voiceover pulls away from the visual referent, and this is because the voice speaks

[126] The positioning of a sound in relation to its source influences the semantic logic of the *mise-en-scène*. Among film theorists it is generally agreed that sounds situated within the logic of the cinematic narrative are generally termed 'diegetic', whereas sounds falling beyond the film's story space are described as 'non-diegetic'.

[127] *The Wizard of Oz*, film, 1939, directed by Victor Fleming, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (DVD: Burbank: Turner Entertainment Co.: Warner Home Video, 2005).

from spaces that are acoustically incongruous with the shot: a landscape with running water; the voice echoing from within an unfurnished chamber.[128]

A conventional on-screen character, on the other hand, offers a visual referent so that a direct connection can be made from source to listener. In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy's words are delivered in concert with a shot of speaking (except when we hear her plaintive internal words, 'no place like home'). Film viewers are aware of the various conventions that the 'voice' takes on and they are able attend to their operation without too much effort while watching a movie. Film sound can thus skate under perception to take advantage of the imaginary realm that acoustics offers and this is an interior or psychological space that is most potently inhabited by the voice, which we will encounter in the closer examination of Marker's and Godard's work.

The power that the voice attains by acoustic means is primarily due to the internalisation of language, or the inseparability of a fictional 'interior' voice and the voices that people hear inside themselves, and in *Stalker* Tarkovsky made the most of this spatial capacity. Vocal constructions take on another level of intensity in the alternate modes of voiceover, flashback or internal monologue. If we consider the use of

[128] *Stalker*, film, 1979, directed by Andrei Tarkovsky, (DVD, Moscow: RUSCICO; New York: Kino International, 2006).

voiceover in classic film noir such as Orson Welles's *The Lady from Shanghai,* for example, we can appreciate how the voice in these modes travels through time: we are told the story retrospectively by an off-screen narrator so that these are evidently words that have been written down.[129] Thus, in terms of the logic of the spoken 'word' in cinema, the experience of interiority is marked by the listener's attentiveness to the text (imagining a script or a story sitting behind the voice). This is a complex set of relationships but the operation usually takes place smoothly because human perception preconceives and thus determines the human voice as the expected accompaniment and explanatory device for images.

The absent auditory voice that I have so far described is known in cinema as the 'disembodied' voice. It often sits well outside the frame of the narrative, the text that it delivers being extra-diegetic, related to, yet situated outside of the unfolding of the story. Although akin to the use of flashcards or inter-titles in early silent film, extra-diegetic voices in the sound film take on a life of their own, weaving in and out of the fictional and non-fictional space, both intervening in, yet framing the unfolding narrative, speaking from above, below and beyond the screen, so that the spatial aspects of film sound seem to beget this wandering, intangible and sometimes pluralised voice. In *The Voice in Cinema*

[129] *The Lady from Shanghai*, 1948, film, directed by Orson Welles (VHS, United States: Columbia Tristar Home Video, 1994).

(1982), Michel Chion introduced the term 'acousmêtre' to define the disembodied or the 'acousmatic' voice, and he posited it as a significant feature of modern cinematic experience.[130] Chion asserted that the authority vested in the acousmatic voice was archetypal and that it called up a visionary yet faceless being of myth and phantasm.[131]

There is a spatial logic to the formulation of the acousmêtre. In the theatrical auditorium the proscenium arch announces the space from which actors deliver a text, a location is always evident and the protagonists are either on-or offstage. Cinema has no acoustic equivalent, for no actors are physically present. Yet, precisely because of the immanence of cinematic sound, voices are given free licence to inhabit the spaces that the image has vacated. These comprise imaginary realms as well as the empty spaces of projection, with the blank or blackened screen.[132] In *The Voice in Cinema*, Chion pointed out that even in the darkest of visual sequences it is 'the obvious frame, [that] makes it so there's still a film', and he claimed, moreover, that the voice gains its boundlessness in relation to this fixed frame.[133] The case

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[130] Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

[131] This notion of the voice is akin to the voice of God, whose presence exists only because of his or her omnipotence. Much more can be said on the relationship of the acousmatic voice and religious notions of the voice, but it takes us on too great a tangent.

[132] Cf. Chion's reference to the 'acousmatic presence' of the voice in a blackout in Orson Welles's *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942) and Marguerite Duras's *L'Homme atlantique* (1981). Cf. Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 18.

[133] Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 121.

that Chion made is foundational to my argument for a dissonant voice because it implies that the voice can move across the cinematic frame or border, and this illuminates the way in which the 'voice' can actively transcend limits and forms of confinement in cinema.[134] The game that the cinematic voice can play is also one of hide and seek because film sets up a dynamic and often quite complex set of partial relations with missing objects. This is distinct from other technologies, such as radio, which isolates the voice entirely from its visual referent and thus avoids the seduction of images.

It is therefore through indication, implication and the suggestion of a physical and visualised presence that the acousmatic voice gathers force. Disembodiment suspends the listener on a thread that, however subtle, has a psychological tie to an image. Any hint of this visual connection renders the phantasmic body in the viewer's imagination as real. The primacy of this relation is in disequilibrium, in the restlessness of the voice having no metaphoric home. The voice roams the diegetic space holding out an invitation, as Chion has described, to a 'loss of the self, to desire and fascination'.[135] This mobility is what empowers the

[134] It is instructive to consider the presence of voices across a wide array of films, such as Hitchcock's *Spellbound* (1945), Robert *Bresson's Diary of a Country Priest* (1951), Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima mon Amour* (1959), Godard's *Vivre sa vie* (*My Life to Live*, 1962), *India Song* (1975) by Marguerite Duras, *Fallen Angels* (1995) by Wong Kar-wai, and David Lynch's neo-noir films such as *Blue Velvet* (1986), *Lost Highway* (1997) and *Mulholland Drive* (2001). Even a brief catalogue such as this reveals the possibilities of the 'voice', as each of these examples casts its loquacious character in a unique acoustic configuration and stylistic or narrative setting.

[135] Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 24.

dissonant voice, giving it the ability to transcend aesthetic and perceptual boundaries, which, from a structural perspective, comprise cinematic conventions, such as synched vocals, smooth scene transitions and actors that remain ‘in character’. These aspects of film form are often equated with dominant codes of ‘conventional’ cinema, but rather than arguing for the radical potential of the rupture of these forms, I wish to examine how the ‘voice’ is employed in terms of dissonance in films that choose to run counter to narrative convention. Through this evaluation, I intend to identify what productive aspects these approaches offer in addressing the third subsidiary research question: ‘How might the ‘voice’, as a dissonant aspect of cinema and literature, contend with the experience of confinement and enact a 'border crossing' or a dissolution of the 'border'?’

Here we can begin to examine the role of the ‘voice’ in the transcendence of narrative- or character-driven borders or limits. Voices emanating from an exclusionary realm tend to be more unsettling than an ordinary voice-over. The few words uttered by the protagonist in Tarkovsky’s *Stalker,* for instance, ring out as the voice of the ‘other’, from a place somewhere far beyond the known world. The Stalker leads his two companions, the Writer and the Professor, on a journey into the Zone, an enchanted but forbidden place where one’s wishes can be fulfilled. While the disciples engage in a dialogue comprised of doubt and scepticism, the Stalker’s inner voice (or voiceover) wells up from a

place of solitude and bewilderment, and guides him as if it were the muse of his unconscious. At one point on his journey the Stalker lies down on the ground, seeming to listen to a parable spoken by an unseen yet inner personage: the acousmêtre. Even so, we know the voice is part of his psyche.

The acousmêtre, along with many other strange acoustic placements of the voice in *Stalker,* creates an evasion of the body that liberates the filmic text or dialogue from its didacticism. The sense of alienation is strong, brought about as much by the affective imagery (dark, muddy ponds, bombed-out buildings, grey skies, trickling streams) as in the disparity between sounds and images that forces our perception to engage in a profound search for meaning. The figure of the Stalker brings about an added otherness by his polyvalence, and this is because his voice, the acousmêtre, is beyond sight and yet it keeps us highly attuned to alternate realms of experience. Like the Stalker, the 'voice' in this film is able to guide us beyond the realm of the known to a place where we do not even recognise ourselves, which could be just like the Zone that Tarkovsky creates in *Stalker*. Sometimes after wandering too far, however, we realise that we are blind; and sometimes, other unseen forces are perceived in this zone, for haunting attends disembodiment: is it the dead that speak? Are they ghosts, fantasy's monsters, or machines? Or are they voices emanating from deep within us?

Images are arguably privileged over sound within contemporary Western society, and the same hierarchy exists in cinema. The 'voice' is an emblem of dissonance in film because it moves through and across the boundaries of cinematic images. In this way, the voice in cinema has the capacity to secede from the dominant code of representation in film, and sometimes even subvert it. Still, until very recently, the most commonly heard voice in cinema was that of the male authorial 'voiceover', which presented a closed and opinionated purview of his subject. This is common to narrative cinema – apparent in any work of film noir (such as Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941), *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947), or *The Third Man* (1949) – and in the genre of documentary film (historically aligned with the newsreel form), which presents a voice that expresses an authoritative set of opinions (a voice that David Attenborough personifies). That said, there are countless exceptions to these dominant codes, including cinema-verité, the 'mockumentary', the films of Werner Hertzog, Agnés Varda and most pertinently those of Chris Marker.

Strategies of dissonance, such as Tarkovsky's use of the disembodied voice, are pivotal to the argument that I am advancing in this dissertation. The phenomenon of the dissonant 'voice' and its peripatetic qualities warrants further examination, and I will accomplish this through my coming discussion of the films of Marker and Godard. Yet, being trained on the work these two men, this focus risks

overlooking the ways that women filmmakers might have engaged with strategies of dissonance in cinema. To redress this imbalance I wish to draw brief attention to two aspects of the relation of women to film. The first is the female voice in cinema and the second is the work of feminist filmmakers in the 1970s. Due to word restrictions, however, this will be limited to a succinct discussion.

In her seminal essay of 1975, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', Mulvey expanded on the concept of the subjugation of women within cinematic production to argue that film provides visual pleasure through the act of 'scopophilia', a way of looking that is dominated by identification with the on-screen protagonist.[136] The tenets of Mulvey's argument aligned with feminist filmmakers' views at that time, which held that cinema offered women the means by which to subvert patriarchal hierarchy because they can break from the restrictions of visual culture and viewing conventions.

Kaja Silverman's *Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (1988) is a major study of the voice in film from the dual perspective of feminist and psychoanalytic film theory.[137] Most of

[136] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

[137] Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988). One of Silverman's preceding books, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, scrutinises the gaze within cinema in a Lacanian framework. Cf. Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York, Routledge, 1995).

Silverman's book is focused on the 'voice' and the representation of women in cinema, yet in the final chapter Silverman turned to the ways in which women filmmakers have constructed an alternative identity through film, and to a number of female filmmakers that Silverman earmarked who share, in her words, a 'vocal itinerary'.

Four of the filmmakers that Silverman discussed, Bette Gordon, Patricia Gruben, Yvonne Rainer, and Sally Potter, have made particular use of the female voice in their work.[138] Furthermore, the efforts of these women to cast off classical traditions of singularity and centrality entailed the use of discordant devices. Silverman argued that these filmmakers have employed the female voice-off and voiceover to jettison 'synchronisation, symmetry, and simultaneity', so that the intervention of the female voice might defy categorisation.[139] She stated that these voices are sometimes so 'multiplied' or 'mismatched' that it is futile to assign them to a body at all, for they are neither 'inside' nor 'outside' the diegetic frame, nor can they be relegated to the usually tidy container of female representation in cinema.[140] For Silverman this release from patriarchal subjugation is thus performed through the severance of the voice from the body.

[138] Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 165.

[139] Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 165.

[140] Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, 165.

Given these tendencies it is no coincidence that the most prominent cinematic works made by women of the 1970s bear the hallmarks of the strategies of dissonance in the works of Marker and Godard that I shall examine in the following analysis. It is also striking to note that much of feminist cinema features the dissonant voice in modes that actively transcend the limits and forms of confinement, which are experienced as a result of patriarchal repression within the world of cinema and society at large.

While technological advances have perfected the synchronisation of image and sound, it is evident that the 'voice' has not been so easily tamed. Only, because of the need for aural comprehension, the moment someone speaks in a film, all other sound-effects recede. Yet, because the wedding of the mouth to the spoken word has been the consistent preoccupation of mainstream film production, alternative practices have often played with these conventions. Early experiments with sound reached an apotheosis of aural effects in the 1960s with the experimental work of New Wave and Left Bank filmmakers in France, including François Truffaut, and Jean-Luc Godard as part of the former, and Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, and Agnès Varda as members of the latter. These filmmakers are not alone in making a departure from conventional cinematic form. Aesthetic disjunction is a crucial approach for many other prominent filmmakers, including Michelangelo Antonioni, Pier-Paolo Pasolini, Roman Polanski and Federico Fellini.

From here on I will focus on the work Godard and Marker and their use of the dissonant voice, in order to specifically address the third subsidiary research question: 'How might the 'voice', as a dissonant aspect of cinema and literature, contend with the experience of confinement and enact a 'border crossing' or a dissolution of the 'border'?'

2.2 The dialectic of image–voice in the films of Chris Marker

Following the brief study of the filmic conditions that point to dissonance as a prevalent trope of cinema, I will now make a close examination of the work of Marker to further establish the features of this dissonance and its reach in terms of the concerns of this research. Much of what I am about to explore relates to the question of how 'dissonance' might contend with experiences of confinement and what scope it has to enact 'border crossings'.

The 1960s and 1970s saw a flourish of experimental cinematic forms in Europe and America. A number of filmmakers during this period focused on the generative possibilities of juxtapositions of images with the voice, in works such as *Nostalgia* (1971) by Hollis Frampton, *Film About a Woman Who…* (1974) by Yvonne Rainer, and Peter Wollen and Laura Mulvey's *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977).[141] Yet the dissonant qualities of

[141] *Film About a Woman Who…* film, 1974, directed by Yvonne Rainer (DVD: New York,

sound and image that are most striking in these films are present in the work of Marker, much of which well preceded the films mentioned above; and his films are even more remarkable for their rich interpolation of photography with voiceover, as I will show in the forthcoming discussion of *La jetée*.

A great deal has been written about Marker and the material structure of his films. Eminent film scholars such as Raymond Bellour and André Bazin have penned much of this critical material, and it is to an article by the latter that I must give principal attention for its discussion of image–text operations in Marker's work are foundational to the assertions that I will make in the coming pages. In a short text on Marker from 1958, Bazin made a pertinent assertion in relation to Marker's particular manipulation of image and text, saying, 'Marker brings to his films an absolutely new notion of montage that plays with the sense of duration through the relationship of shot to shot. Here the given image doesn't refer to the one that preceded it or the one that will follow, but rather it refers laterally, in some way, to what is said'.[142] What Bazin has signalled is more than an allusion; it is, in the context of this research, a vital observation. Bazin's 'new notion of montage' is a critical turning

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Zeitgeist Films, 2006); *Riddles of the Sphinx*, film, 1977, directed by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen (London: British Film Institute; DVD: New York: Women Make Movies, 2008); and *Hapax Legomena I: Nostalgia*, film, 1971, directed by Hollis Frampton (DVD: 'American Treasures IV', San Francisco, National Film Preservation Foundation, 2009).

[142] André Bazin, 'Bazin on Marker', trans. anon, *Film Comment* 39, 4 (2003); Academic Research Library, 44–45: 44. First published in *France Observateur,* 30 October 1958.

point in my investigation. It offers particular perspective on my claim that a dissonant interaction of sound and image in cinema might sit somewhat apart from some of the more oppositional strategies of avant-garde art. And, as Bazin infers, Marker's use of montage is a prime example of how such a technique can be taken up and employed in alternative ways.

Bazin makes an added crucial observation on Marker's use of montage describing it as a dialectical approach. This assertion has a number of connotations that I will come to shortly. What I would like to propose first of all is that, by and large, discussions of Marker's play of image–text have paid little attention to the operation of the voice in this exchange. I therefore wish to extend the theorisation of Marker's work to the notion of a dialectic of 'image–voice'.[143] This brings me to another assertion that I will pursue in the following analysis of Marker's work in an examination of the dialectics of the 'voice' as a dissonant aspect of aesthetic form in cinema. Accordingly, the coming discussion will shed light on the third subsidiary question, as I relate notions of dialectical thinking to the question of 'How might the 'voice', as a dissonant aspect of cinema and literature, contend with the experience of confinement and enact a 'border crossing' or a dissolution of the 'border'?'

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[143] This takes as its premise dialectics as a tripartite technique of reasoning that processes thought in a series of three stages so that things can be understood as mutable, plural and interconnected, and a Hegelian dialectic determines these stages as: thesis, antithesis, synthesis.

In terms of the dialectical operation of image and voice, *La jetée* (1962) is Marker's most emblematic and yet most conventionally narrative film.[144] Comprising almost entirely still photographs, the voiceover in *La jetée* propels the image sequence. The elements are simple but compelling: a single narrator; black and white still photos; Paris has been totally annihilated; World War III has just obliterated the city. A man is in an underground laboratory in central Paris, the subject of the experiment in time travel, an experiment in recovering and changing the past through the recuperative act of memory. The narrator has been taken as the subject of the scientific project because of his predisposition to mnemonic expeditions. This facility has come about because the man is obsessed with a single memory from his childhood, of being on the 'jetty' at Orly Airport and encountering a woman. In the first part of the experiment the man travels back in time and spends around fifty days with her, walking, sleeping and visiting museums. He is then sent by the researchers into the future to be given the technology that will bring restoration to his present society, which is the real mission.

Throughout the voiceover the English narrator speaks in a slow throaty tone that maintains a strange distance from the images as they unfold. In the scenes where he returns to the laboratory, the subject's voice is

[144] *La jetée,* film, 1962, directed by Chris Marker (Film, Paris: Argos-Films, 1962; DVD, Paris: Nouveaux Pictures, 2003).

overlaid with the soft whisperings of another man, who speaks in German and is probably one of the scientists. These dissonances place the text in a parallel realm of interior thought, and in a disjunctive relationship to what appears to be a linear progression of snapshots and archival images: futuristic shots of Paris, the jetty at Orly, the underground laboratory, images of shattered classical statues. Despite the inference of mobilisation in its sequential logic, *La jetée* does not escape the entombment of still photography. It points to the notion that photos encapsulate death or, more precisely, pinpoint the death of whatever has passed away since the camera captured the image – a conceptualisation of photography that Roland Barthes elucidated in *Camera Lucida* (1980).[145] Indeed, *La jetée* is laden with a sense of fugitive history, as the allusion to death coincides with the physical demolition of the past as each photograph slowly replaces the next. *La jetée* enters into a contract with dissonant temporality that allows the film to invert the conventional narrative structure of the 'story' form, as the tense of the narrative shifts between past and present (as in the excerpt from *La jetée*'s monologue below), folding the past 'dialectically' into the future.

> Around the fiftieth day, they meet in a museum
> filled with timeless animals. Now the aim is

[145] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 1993).

> perfectly adjusted. Thrown at the right moment,
> he may stay there and move without effort.
>
> She too seems tamed. She accepts as a natural
> phenomenon the ways of this visitor who comes
> and goes, who exists, talks, laughs with her,
> stops talking, listens to her, then disappears.[146]

I have chosen to focus on *La jetée* because it is Marker's clearest evocation of a 'historical recuperation', and because it can be read as a narrative exposé of the philosophical reconstruction of history that German cultural critic Walter Benjamin. And Benjamin envisaged this being realised via a form of montage, or a recuperation of history through dialectical imagery. This is an affiliation that is present in the story as well as the formal structure of the film itself, for Marker used a dialectical relation of image-voice to speak through images. *La jetée* was categorised by Marker as a 'photo-roman' and this label encapsulated his awareness of the productive possibilities of the 'image-voice'. This particular incarnation of the photo essay, in which images and text form a bricolage of woven meanings across the page, also typifies Benjamin's work and the premise of a dialectical way of seeing on which I elaborate very shortly. This format is crucial to the conceptual make-up of Marker's films, and so I will come to consider another of Marker's works in this 'photo-roman' genre shortly, but I first I wish to reflect on a few

[146] Excerpt from *La jetée* transcript http://www.markertext.com/la_jetee.htm (accessed 2 October, 2009)

concepts that emerge out of Marker’s interest in adapting a Benjaminian way of (re)constructing history and memory.

If we return to Bazin’s aforementioned comment we can see how the notion of ‘montage’ functions laterally within *La jetée.* This lateral action is what functions in a recuperative fashion as the operation of memory in cinematic experience moves through time dialectically (see the temporal diagram I have drafted to illustrate this action, attached as Appendix Three). Such notions of time and the juxtaposition of moving or still images were the preoccupation of both Benjamin and a host of filmmakers such as Russian avant-gardists Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein.

In an article on Marker, Paul Arthur describes the significance of ‘montage thinking’ to Marker’s work and that this notion harks back to the words of Eisenstein, who Arthur quotes as saying, ‘The strength of montage resides in this, that it includes in the creative process the emotions and mind of the spectator’.[147] Clearly there are critical reasons for such thinking and this is where Marker’s reprisal of Benjaminian thought requires a little elaboration, and this is best encapsulated in Benjamin’s own words: ‘The dialectical penetration and actualisation of the past as it connects with the present is the test of the truth of

[147] Paul Arthur, ‘Kino-eye: The Legacy of Soviet Cinema as Refracted Through Chris Marker's Always-Critical vision.’ *Film Comment* 39, 4 (2003); Academic Research Library, 32–34: 33.

present action.'[148] Here we see how Bazin's reference to 'dialectical images' directly ties Marker's practice to Benjamin's notion of 'dialectical seeing'.

This very subject is the subject of a book by Susan Buck-Morss from 1989, titled *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades project.* In this publication Buck-Morss claimed that Benjamin's 'aim was to destroy the mythic immediacy of the present, not by inserting it into a cultural continuum that affirms the present as its culmination, but by discovering that constellation of historical origins that has the power to explode history's 'continuum'.'[149] This, she argued, was realised in his use of dialectical imagery, where past and present interact with one another, as the method and subject of a critical revision and reprisal of history. In material form, this was enacted through the practice of montage, of which Benjamin's epic yet unfinished project the *Passagen-Werk* (1927–1940) was an embodiment. Buck-Morss stated that in this commanding work, 'Benjamin was committed to a graphic, concrete representation of truth, in which historical images made visible the philosophical ideas. In them, history cut through the core of truth without providing a totalizing frame'.[150] Buck-Morss's assertion is

[148] Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften,* Vol. V, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Gershom Scholem (Frankfurt am Maim: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972), 603, quoted in Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 288.

[149] Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, x (preface).

[150] Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing,* 55-56.

significant to the argument that Benjamin's approaches have a close affinity with Marker's image-voice dialectics.

For both Benjamin and Marker 'dialectical seeing' and its practice can be read as a political endeavour. Certainly for Benjamin, the roots of this concept lie in a Marxist concern with Hegelian dialectics. Marker is more evasive, however, and has been quoted as saying, 'What interests me is history, and politics interests me only to the degree that it represents the mark history makes on the present.'[151] Nonetheless, Marker's preoccupation with history and memory reveals the common ground of the two thinkers in relation to truth and documentary. They also share a mutual fascination with dialectics as a mythical and natural trope of the cosmos. This is summed up in Benjamin's words of caution: 'As flowers turn toward the sun, by dint of a secret heliotropism the past strives to turn to that sun which is rising in the sky of history', and this points to the peril of the society that fails to recognise its historical foundations.[152]

The effect of Marker's assimilation of Benjamin's 'dialectical' approach to montage is compellingly realised in film form. The 'voice' in *La jetée* employs this dialectical mode in order to enact a recuperation of history

[151] Chris Marker interview, 'Marker direct', Samuel Douhaire and Annick Rivoire*, Film Comment* 39, 3 (2003); Academic Research Library, 38–41: 39.

[152] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt; trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana Press, 1973), 246.

and memory. Again, Bazin has offered insightful commentary with regards to Marker's revision of the documentary tradition. Where classic filmic form asserts that the image takes precedence over the voice, Bazin informed us that language or 'verbal intelligence' has comprised Marker's 'primary material', and this relegates the image in his work to 'the third position, in reference to this verbal intelligence'.[153] In an oft quoted sentence, Bazin then pinpointed precisely how the voice is axial to this revolution: 'Better it might be said that the basic element is the beauty of what is said and heard, that intelligence flows from audio element to the visual. The montage has been forged from ear to eye.'[154] By this Bazin refers to the overarching prevalence of the voice in Marker's work: where in other films the voiceover is edited into the film, with Marker it often seems as if the words were spoken first and then read out loud once again as if to tell the story to the images.

Marker's first film, *Letter from Siberia* (1957) is representative of this revision of documentary filmmaking for it typifies Marker's subjective vision and his vocal or 'ear-to-eye' editing method, which later emblematised the 'photo-roman'.[155] Taking the form of a series of short sequences of footage interspersed with animation cells (an unusual combination in itself), and the film unfolds in unexpected ways. Where a

[153] Bazin, 'Bazin on Marker', 44.

[154] Bazin, 'Bazin on Marker', 44.

[155] *Letter from Siberia*, film, 1957, directed by Chris Marker, (Film, Paris: Argos-Films, 1957).

documentary narrator would usually follow the logic of the image sequence, in *Letter from Siberia* Marker juxtaposes the diverse collection of visual fragments with equally rich and varied verbal references. The narrator directly explains little of this, apart from the fact he is reading us his letter from Siberia, as the excerpt from the following voiceover text illustrates.

> I'm writing you this letter from the land of childhood; between the ages of five and ten this is where we were chased by wolves, blinded by Tartars, and carried away on the Trans-Siberian Express with our pistols and our jewelry. The Trans-Siberian is the longest railway in the world, it has carried away Anton Chekhov, Cendrars, and Gatti. I felt obliged to gather them all together here, and Jules Verne too, and Larbaud, like sacred cows under a canopy of wild ducks, to watch romanticism plus electrification go by.[156]

Surpassing a mere travelogue, Marker's voiceover creates contradictions rather than authorial positions. This disjunction subverts the conventional cinematic hierarchy in which the image dominates over the voice (a dynamic that I have already touched on a few pages ago). *Letter from Siberia* implies the shifting ground of history, like a transcript written in white ink, or a text inscribed on Freud's 'mystic

[156] Excerpt from *Letter from Siberia* transcript, http://www.markertext.com/letter_from_siberia.htm (accessed 2 October, 2009).

writing pad'.[157] The dissonance between image and voice mirrors Marker's text and its observations on the vanishing culture of Siberia. This early work of Marker thus offers evidence of 'the dialectic between word and image' that Bazin claimed was present in *Letter from Siberia.*[158]

This dialectical premise is expounded most prominently in one particular scene in *Letter from Siberia* where the footage of a street scene peopled with workers is screened three times over. Each screening also features a slightly different version of the text, and each of these is delivered in a distinctive vocal rendition, shifting from a positivist propagandist of Russian Socialism, to a authoritative proponent of apprehension in an American newsreel style voice, and, finally, in a tone more recognisable as Marker's personal and idiosyncratic own. Discussing this trilogy of voiceovers Bazin notes 'what Marker has just demonstrated is that objectivity is even more false than the two opposed points of view; that, at least in relation to certain realities, impartiality is an illusion. The operation we have observed is thus precisely dialectic, consisting of placing the same image in three different intellectual contexts and following the results.'[159] In light of

[157] Sigmund Freud, 'Note upon the mystic writing pad' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Work of Sigmund Freud,* v.19, ed James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1961), 227–232.

[158] Bazin, 'Bazin on Marker', 44.

[159] 'Bazin, 'Bazin on Marker', 45.

Bazin's incisive commentary and the observations just made of these two films it is possible to argue how the dissonance of the voice in Marker's practice is significant to this research. In her 2006 monograph on Marker, Nora M. Alter claims that Marker's creations prise open cinematic time and synchronicity to question the 'veracity of the visual track', all the while remaining akin to the documentary.[160]

In the unconventional overlay of voices, films such as *La Jetée* and *Letter from Siberia* refuse to validate the film image and thus comprise a challenge to cinematic representation. In the former this comes about predominantly by its dissonance, disjunction and absence; whereas in the latter, shifting authorial or subject positions override the usual assertion of distinctions such as divisive cultural identities and historical frontiers. By shifting from a closed interpretation to open, contingent and uncertain form I wish to contend that such actions comprise a 'border crossing' in operation. Marker's application of the voice as a disjunctive device is yet another remarkable example of dissonant approaches to cinematic practice, and it demonstrates the power invested in the 'voice' and how he uses it as a hinge on which to swing between adherence to and diversion or aversion from the conventional ordering of image over text.

[160] Nora M. Alter, *Chris Marker* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 30.

Such swinging or border crossing is enhanced because of the vocal interiority that we encounter in Marker's *La jetée,* which is exacerbated because of a schism: the slow methodical voice is thrown back on itself by the dissonance of the still images that flash up on the screen. As I described in the first pages of this chapter, the dissonance of the 'voice' depends on the divided form of cinema and its disparate senses and materials of image and sound. It is the 'voice,' moreover, that makes the crossing from one side to the other, in sound space, in the audience's imagination and in the gap between image and text. Filmmakers like Marker tap into this dialectical play of partial objects and find a wealth of perverse machinations in the dissonant or atomised voice. The films of Godard add another dimension to image–voice dialectics, yet in a maximisation of the effects of juxtaposition and contradiction, and in the next section of this chapter I will turn to an examination of Godard's works in relation to this enquiry.

2.3 Jean-Luc Godard: Brechtian cinema and the 'voice' of dissonance

In this third section I will extend my enquiry made into Marker's work. This will take up Marker's engagement with Benjamin's revision of montage and a particular form of Hegelian dialectics to evaluate how Godard has ostensibly dealt with similar concerns. I intend to draw attention to the lineage of dialectical thinking in Bertolt Brecht's theories of performance in order to show how a dialectical philosophy operates in Godard's work. In the latter part of this study I will examine

how his work also counteracts dominant tropes of cinematic form, with a particular emphasis on the 'voice' as a dissonant aspect of Godard's aesthetic, and how this voice contends with different kinds of borders.

Before examining the way in which Godard takes up Brechtian concepts, some clarification of Brecht's theories is required due to the common over-simplification of Brecht's work. The reading I plan to make of Godard's work hinges on a revelatory encounter that I had with a production of Brecht's early play, *In the Jungle of the Cities* (1921–1924), at the Volksbühne theatre, Berlin, in 2007.[161] Although at the time of viewing this play I already held certain preconceptions of Brecht's theories and although the entire performance was delivered in German and Portuguese (neither of which I understand), this production caused me to totally revise my understanding of Brecht. What I encountered in this play made more sense as theatre than anything of the genre I had seen before, it was not ideological theatre, or an awkward imposition of theory onto practice, but a vivid demonstration of the way to construe theatre as an experience of human struggle. Whereas the notion of the rupture had previously provided the template for a modernist splintering of form, *In the Jungle of the Cities* created a theatre of audience engagement and transformation. This was realised by the actors and their very specific approach to performance. I have since

[161] The Volksbühne theatre is located in central Berlin, founded in 1914 by the organisation 'Free People's Theater'.

come to grasp that this was a result of the rigorous adherence of the director Frank Carstof to Brecht's theory of acting. Brecht purported that a performer should gesture or narrate on behalf of the character, to realise the story through a series of actions by which the man or woman in the play experiences transformation. The actor therefore remains an actor and avoids impersonation, mimicry or ‘characterisation’. The story (or narrative of the play) in a Brechtian paradigm pivots, moreover, on a series of episodes that the character must wrestle with – in a dialectical way. In this form the Hegelian process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis is generated as a series of actions rather than a fixed representation. I observed how the production of *In the Jungle of Cities* took advantage of an array of coincidental devices as part of this mode of performance. I also noted how these were strictly secondary to the actors’ work, a playful addendum or exacerbation of the action.

The well known Brechtian trope of the ‘alienation effect’ or technique was just one means by which the actor could ensure that this engagement was sustained. The ‘effect’ was intended to emotionally and intellectually engage the spectator in the political and social subject of the play. In Brecht’s words, the *Verfremdungseffekt* ‘prevents the audience from losing itself passively and completely in the character created by the actor, and which consequently leads the audience to be a

consciously critical observer'.[162] Brecht believed that 'naturalism' held the audience captive to its fiction, and thus created a political vacuum where responsibility for the events and character's struggle could not be shared. His view was that this prevalent form of representation was deceitful, proclaiming, 'It is most important that one of the main features of the ordinary theatre should be excluded from [epic theatre]: the engendering of illusion'.[163] Brecht therefore aimed to dissolve this form of representation (emblematised by the notion of rupturing the 'fourth wall').

The extent to which Godard's films take up Brechtian theory needs to be considered in this light. I would offer that Godard had his own interest in a dialectical methodology and that cinema, of course, demands its own terms of engagement with such an approach (because, for example, an actor's voice is an entirely different material on stage as it is on film). Despite this, Godard applied many Brechtian tenets across the various aspects of his filmmaking, particularly in his relationship of the voice to the cinematic image, to which I will return in the latter part of this discussion.[164]

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[162] Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre; The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 91.

[163] Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre,* 122.

[164] Bellour's ideas in relation to the relationship of Brecht to Godard are centred on an ability to reveal the discourse (metafiction) within the story (fiction), a line of reasoning that draws on the work of Christian Metz in *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and Cinema,* trans. Cella Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982). Also cf. Émile

While a modernist approach to filmmaking (common to the New Wave movement) gave Godard the impetus to experiment with interventions into the form of film, it was not until after 1968 that Godard's films tackled Brecht's work explicitly. This coincided with his turn to left-wing politics after the events of May 1968 in Paris. Prior to this, Godard's films seemingly adopted Brechtian tropes as a way to efface the dominant aesthetics of cinema in conjunction with his interest in making social commentary via his work.

In *La Chinoise* (1967) Godard made every attempt to contravene the Brechtian concept of the 'fourth wall'.[165] The story is set in a small Parisian apartment in which a cluster of young Maoist radicals meets for the weekend. The film drily comments on how ideology can lose its way in the wrong company: what starts out as a gathering of ideologues in a friend's apartment ends up becoming an assassination plot. Over two days the more insistent members of the group take over the flat, pasting up slogans and posters, slowly transforming the space into a tricolour mirage in red and blue paint (an action that is seen again in *Tout va bien*, which I will discuss below). *La Chinoise* is driven by dialogue. It slips from a performative mode to explicit recitals read out directly from

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Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics,* trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971).

[165] *La Chinoise*, film, 1967, directed by Jean-Luc Godard, (DVD, London: Optimum Releasing, 2008).

script to camera. And the film frequently switches from an external fictive perspective to a documentary mode, in which the actors step into the realm of production. Godard enters the diegetic space too, posing on-screen questions to the actors while they remain in character. As such, *La Chinoise* points to the disintegration of the young Maoists' ideological stance in the use of a dissonant interaction of modes of actor/character, which serves to expose the underlying fragmentation and contradiction inherent in humanity, politics and forms of representation.

As mentioned, after May 1968 Godard made a greater commitment to left-wing Marxist ideology, which saw his cinema shift to more obvious social and political concerns. At this point Godard abandoned mainstream productions and became part of a 'collective' called the Dziga-Vertov Group, the members of which sought to transform the form or language of film through what they saw as politically motivated aesthetics. This mainly entailed a methodology that avoided 'bourgeois' conventions, this being the modes of production employed by dominant cinema (such as expensive materials and techniques, big budgets, stars, international distribution and production companies). Two members of this group were influential for Godard at this time: Anne Wiazemsky, whom Godard married in 1968 and who featured in a number of Dziga-Vertov films; and Jean-Pierre Gorin who had been a member of the Union de Jeunesses communistes – Marxistes-léninistes (UJCML) since

the mid-1960s and arguably introduced Godard to the Maoist enclave in post-1968 Paris.

Between 1968 and 1972 Godard and Gorin made nine films as part of the Dziga-Vertov group, although the level of their contribution varied. In the early stages of the collaboration the authorship of films like *Le Vent d'est* (*Wind from the East*) and *British Sounds/See You At Mao* (both 1969) and *Vladimir et Rosa* (1971) was basically attributable to Godard. But films such as *Lotte in Italia* (1969) and *Tout va bien* (1972), on the other hand, were primarily the work of Gorin. All of the films of this period were marked by a distinctive Brechtian style. Surprisingly, however, this was not the result of Godard's prior interest, for Gorin was in fact the greater advocate of a direct application of Brecht's theories and technique. This evident in the body of work that Gorin has produced since, most notably with his 'film essay' *Poto and Cabengo* (1978), a documentary about the two on the identical twins who created of their own coextensive language as a response to parental ignorance and neglect.[166]

Tout va bien is one of the most markedly Brechtian of the Dziga-Vertov films, and yet, with corporate financing and stars such as Jane Fonda, it

[166] *Poto and Cabengo,* film, 1978, directed by Jean-Pierre Gorin, (Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen; VHS, New York: New Yorker Films 1980). Gorin has also discussed his views on cinema in relation to Brecht in an interview included on a DVD of Chris Marker's Sunless. Cf. Chris Marker, *La jetée* and *Sunless*: two films by Chris Marker (Paris: Nouveaux Pictures, 2003).

is at once a return to the mainstream.[167] It is worth noting that Gorin's majority authorship is unquestionable in this instance given that Godard had suffered a serious road accident and was hospitalised for the greater part of its filming. Staged in the middle of a strike at a sausage factory in post-1968 Paris, *Tout va bien* is played out in two parallel realms. A fraught relationship between American reporter, Susan, and her French husband, a flagging film director, forms a discreet narrative but is also reflexive: the demise of their love affair mirrors the breakdown of negotiations between the workers, the unionists and the bosses at the factory.

The dialogue in *Tout va bien* frequently gestures towards Marxist propaganda yet the ludicrous and overblown comments of characters like the striking factory workers turn the film into a critique. This is because their rhetoric is irony-laden, a facile imposition of ideology, and the ideas are presented like slogans. In this way *Tout va bien* points to the breakdown of all order as social, physical and representational structures come apart and the 'voices' serve to atomise rather than substantiate the narrative. Godard and Gorin refused to use to filmmaking to purport any idea as an unquestionable and concrete or final solution. Instead they installed a dialectical mode of presentation in which viewers were challenged or confronted by untenable propositions that they had to wrestle with or resolve for themselves.

[167] *Tout va bien*, film, 1972, directed by Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin (DVD, New York: Criterion Collection, 2005).

Ideally, the ‘engaged’ audience would apply their own knowledge and experience in a dialectical way to the disputed concepts of the film to produce a synthesis of political positions.

Tout va bien takes the Brechtian deconstruction of filmic form to an extreme. Scenes such as the unexplained action of factory worker who slowly painting the manager’s office walls bright blue intervene in the unfolding of the story, which carries on around the worker’s absurd yet industrious activity. And in the literal act of painting over the fictive space of the film set and all its props (including a landscape) *Tout va bien* questions the space of representation. Irrationality escalates in the second half of the film, which is mostly comprised of tableaux, or static camera shots where the action passes in front of the lens. One of these tableaux captures an unexpected and extended scene of looting and wanton destruction in a supermarket, another shows a series of confrontations with police and demonstrators in an industrial wasteland. Filmic conventions fall apart in these scenes just as the social and political order disintegrates. The ‘alienation effect’ is also ubiquitous in *Tout va bien*: the set is a cut away or honeycomb construction; actors rush at the camera; the dialogue dissembles into verbal and narrative chaos; and the directors make commentary over the film and speak to the actors on set midstream in the performance to pose questions about the film itself.

In *Tout va bien* the voice of the actor is both the agent of the text (often in an oratorical mode) and a device that facilitates a tremor in the diegetic equilibrium. This is particularly apparent in the sequence where Susan talks about the struggles of being a reporter. Susan speaks directly to the camera from a recording studio while her own voice is over-dubbed to translate her comments into French. The conjunction of the two versions is synchronised at certain points but, more significantly, at others her French translation starts to run ahead of the original English.

Tout va bien thus confounds the acoustic logic and norms of cinema. In a scene subsequent to a 'direct to camera' interview with the male protagonist, Jacques or 'him', the shot cuts to Jacques's film studio where a banal advertisement is being filmed: two girls are bopping on a dais to facile 60s pop music. In the foreground, a director (probably 'him/lui') stands just to the side of camera and makes gestures and visual directions but without offering any clear iteration. Amid the advertisement's pop music another male voice runs over the track and yet this person is entirely ambiguous too. What he is saying is unintelligible because his voice is muffled and he mumbles. Clearly, Gorin and Godard took the opportunity in *Tout va bien* to point to a dystopia, one mired in the empty promises of Western capitalism (the supermarket looting scene being an apt illustration of futile consumerism), to equate this emptiness with the lip service given to

left-wing ideological movements of the time. *Tout va bien* mounts a challenge to the assumption that any ideological stance – including the form of Marxism that Gorin and Godard adhered to – should be acted out without questioning its merits.

After ending his collaboration with Gorin in 1972, and following the overtly political underpinnings and the independence of the Dziga Vertov period, Godard returned to filmmaking with a new philosophical tone and a shift towards autobiographical content. His later films progressed more and more towards a confounding dynamic between diegetic and non-diegetic, and realms where it is difficult to determine one from the other. Godard shifted his subject matter at this point from the portrayal of lives of others to a form of self-portraiture. This commenced with his occasional appearance on the sideline of shot, evolving into an entirely self-reflexive yet indeterminate sets of representations, especially in terms of the possible status of the factual biographical content in films like *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* of 1979 and *JLG/JLG, autoportrait de décembre* (1994).

Godard's interest in dialectical Brechtian approaches was sustained well after his collaboration with Gorin ended, and this is apparent in *Nouvelle Vague* (1990). This film follows the strange affair of an itinerant man and a wealthy woman, which starts when the man wanders onto her property, although it is never clear if she knew him

beforehand, and the plot is not easily followed because of the interspersion of images that cannot always be tied to the action and due to the way that Godard creates interchangeable identities.[168] In *Nouvelle Vague* Godard thus returns to some of his old Brechtian approaches but in a way that is closer to the realisation of Brecht's theory of performance in which the actors are the carrier of the story. This is because Godard's story, as well the actors, go through both a narrative and metaphysical transformation (literally, by drowning) and throughout the film they struggle to establish a solid identity. *Nouvelle Vague* is thus Brechtian because the actors are used as devices to implicate the viewer in a struggle – and it is dialectical because the character does not provide a representation of the story but opens up the situation of the story to the audience through action. *Nouvelle Vague* is redolent with the transcendence of identity. It encapsulates that trope because of the intimacy and interiorisation of its voices in a realisation that, due to the projective qualities of filmic images and sound, could only be brought about within cinema.

For Godard this approach constituted a form of new realism, in which the film could manufacture a lyrical narrative without falling into the trap of naturalism and illusion. This thinking is apparent in *Nouvelle*

[168] This is an approach that Deleuze refers to as a key trait of Godard's cinema stating that, 'the interaction of two images engenders or traces a frontier which belongs to neither one nor the other'. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2, The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Continuum, 2005), 181.

Vague, which is essentially a 'pastoral' (or a romantic narrative set in the country) and a classically poetic narrative, and yet it transcends this classic form because the actors are taken out of the illusionistic tradition into a subjective realm that contests the unity and neutrality of the story. This does not constitute a 'rupture' in the modernist sense but enacts transformation through a dialectical engagement with content. The film has many other aspects that could be read as rupturing but on closer consideration they are more aligned with a distancing effect than the breaking open of the form of film or the story's structure. For example, another dissonant trope of *Nouvelle Vague* arises in the odd occasions where there is a total absence of imagery and the frame is black while the space is filled by an off-screen sound or voiceover – which reveals the power that the 'voice' possesses in ensuring that a mental picture is always present in the mise-en-scène and how the absence of literal visual referents enhances this effect.[169] This points to my assertion that Godard's work, like Marker, enacts a dialectic of the image-voice.

The strategies of dissonance employed by Godard frequently open up the materials of cinema itself, particularly by splitting apart the illusion

[169] This is a device that is present in a number of other filmmakers' works, such as Marguerite Duras's film *L'Homme atlantique* (1981), which commences with a scene of crepuscular light in a room overlooking the sea with the almost inaudible overlay of a muted female voice. The diegesis is stretched but not snapped, for the void and its blackness are never empty as the perceptual boundaries of the fictional realm and the viewing frame rationalise everything that has passed through its field, and any inference of a semantic vacuum is instantly absorbed within this logic.

of the film and its story. It is instructive to consider how such strategies are applied in practice, for by upturning the hierarchy of film audio Godard's soundtracks contradict the ordered sequence of images within the *mise-en-scène*. As a result, the soundtrack is often discordant in relation to the footage, creating dissonances by acoustic instead of visual means.

In *Nouvelle Vague* sound is given as much if not more credence than the image, with an abundance of acoustic sources that tumble over each other. The effect is cacophonous, especially as one dialogue overrides and effaces another, building to a bedlam of six, seven and even eight independent voices speaking at once. At other points, silence intervenes and swamps the diegesis. Constant shifts between internal and external sound also exacerbate the most natural of sounds; and naturalistic sounds turn up out of context, or slightly out of synch. A squawking seabird is heard just after the camera has moved indoors, the sound of the sea slapping on a boat is heard in very close proximity to the ear, a woman's high pitched throat singing is contrapuntal to a tranquil lake shot, and loud trumpets sound in the middle of a restaurant scene. The murmuring of *Nouvelle Vague's* off-screen voices and their dissonant conjunction takes the ties that logically bind the image to the audio track and stretches both sound and image across film.

Multiplicities of voice are a prominent feature in Godard's acoustic landscape, and they manufacture specific aesthetic and perceptual effects, such as in *Nouvelle Vague.* In a scene about half way through the film, in the rich woman's large and rambling house, the sound of another woman's faltering singing voice subtly unsettles the rapid and driven monologue of another. This interpolates and underscores the relationships between the various guests and inhabitants, which are strained by difference yet conflated by indistinct characterisations, particularly because of the blending of vocal identities.

What emanates from the polyphonic personae of 'him' (Alain Delon's slippery character), and the classy multi-lingual woman, 'her' (played by Domiziana Giordano), is a critique of the attempt to corral the mind and how this can prevent a person from experiencing the liberation of unguarded otherness (and efforts to suppress this openness end up in death or disposal of the 'other'). The couple build a hall of mirrors: they are not divided nor are they united. We hear their voices, but also the voices of many others – even ourselves – so that during the process of identification with the figures (man/woman, him/her) we gradually perceive the form of the individual as utterly contingent. This 'otherness' arguably brings about a dissolution of borders, for in *Nouvelle Vague* there are no boundaries between any of the characters, times or places. The film's structure, moreover, is not overtly articulated at any point but is conveyed by splices of dialogue, inner thoughts,

floods of music, acoustic effects, field recordings, quotations without references, voices, title pages and an array of visual and aural impressions.[170] Along these lines, the play of voices in Godard's characters has been described by film critic Raymond Bellour as 'constantly doubl[ing] the film with a critical layer that isn't commentary, since the voices remain engaged in the fiction. But the fiction is based, as much as or more on plot, on analysis of the condition of fiction, conditions of a possible (hi)story'.[171] Bellour refers here to the role of the voice in Godard's film as a process by which the artificial status of the artwork is exposed within the work itself. This approach once again displays Godard's allegiance to the ideas of Brecht and the 'alienation effect'. Moreover, the actions of Godard's characters seem to be motivated by cause and effect, and in a Brechtian fashion, their responses are apparently the result of their innate being rather than a dramatisation that permits viewers to maintain a fictive distance from the unfolding events.

The imperative to question forms of representation and audience engagement reveals the blueprint that Brecht provided for Godard's

[170] The acoustic component of this concoction is so affective that it is easy to imagine it as a separate work, a film without pictures. As testament, in 1997 ECM Records released the complete soundtrack of *Nouvelle Vague,* including its dialogue, music, sound and silences.

[171] Bellour's term '(hi)story' originates with Émile Benveniste's notion of discourse (*discours*) and story (*histoire*) throughout *Problems in General Linguistics*. Cf. Raymond Bellour, '(Not) Just an Other Filmmaker,' in *Jean-Luc Godard: Son+Image 1974–1991*, eds. Raymond Bellour and Mary Lea Bandy (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 219.

struggles with dilemmas of illusionism in aesthetic production. Godard realised countless filmic versions of Brecht's 'alienation' technique, most obviously in the injunction of text frames in the middle of a scene, with actors dropping out of character to address the viewer directly, and in endless reworkings of asynchronous sound effects. Godard's films also reconstructed experiences of film viewing and listening, as the notion of 'montage' was taken up from a Brechtian standpoint.[172] In this way, we see how Godard's cinematic strategies of dissonance are at once reactive as well as dialectical in the recuperative sense that I have already outlined earlier in this chapter. We can also see how Godard, like Marker, was conscious of the significance of past forms and ideological constructs for he clearly reinvented tropes such as montage and put them to use in new ways.[173]

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[172] As opposed to an Eisensteinian notion of montage, Gilberto Perez has made a distinction in his book on film form, *The Material Ghost* saying 'Brecht wanted the audience to be aware that the actor was acting; Eisenstein wanted the audience to register the cut, the break in our perception that conventional editing would smooth over. Yet, though both men diverged from the mainstream, they went in different directions. In making us aware of the actor's acting, Brecht aimed to cool down the heat of the drama and to keep us, certainly not from feeling, but from being carried away by emotion; whereas Eisenstein, in making us register the cut's cutting, aimed to give us a jolt that intensifies our response, to hit us all the harder with his 'kino-fist'.' Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 152.

[173] Godard's efforts to develop a cinema of dissonance owe a lot to literary theory. Likewise, the influence of French structuralist linguistics and deconstructive approaches is evident in much of Godard's diverse work because his films feature a consistently specific play of language, voice and text, one that is seen in *La Chinoise*. As such, the common ground between the text of the film and the work of fiction is a marker of the influence of polyphonic writing, strategies of dissonance, and multi-vocal interpolations in aesthetic form as they each sought to question unitary forms of representation.

Godard's practice has offered this investigation of dissonant cinematic form a series of diverse perspectives. His work, of course, spans many genres and approaches to filmmaking. I have chosen to reflect on *Tout va bien* and *Nouvelle Vague* because they effectively illustrate some of the key points that I am seeking to highlight in this section of the dissertation. My focus has been to examine the way that Godard uses strategies of dissonance and the 'voice' to contend with the notion of the 'border'. In *Tout va bien* I was able to demonstrate the influence of Brechtian thinking and methodologies on Gorin and Godard's direction of the film. I took a particular interest in this study in considering the lineage of dialectical thinking as a model for audience engagement. Gorin and Godard's approach to cinematic form was also important to a revision of the notion of rupture in relation to their work. My analysis of *Nouvelle Vague* has made a constructive contribution to these assertions: its open-ended and multifarious form has illustrated how dissonant strategies form the basis of a 'border crossing'. The film moves across the boundaries of sense and convention, both in terms of the formal elements of sound and image as well as character and plot. Thus, as an extension of my discussion of Marker and dialectical images, this scrutiny of Godard's work is critical to addressing the third subsidiary research question of 'How might the 'voice', as a dissonant aspect of cinema and literature, contend with the experience of confinement and enact a 'border crossing' or a dissolution of the 'border'?'

In the first part of this chapter I have surveyed some of the cinematic strategies taken up by filmmakers with a common interest in contending with the historical confines of classical or mainstream cinema. While intentions as to the degree of this contestation vary according to the commitment of the individual practitioner, from confrontations of a formal nature to filmmaking with an activist premise, an overarching tendency towards an act of 'dialectical' recuperation of modernist techniques can be identified in the strategies of dissonance in the play of image, text and voice that Marker and Godard introduced to cinema.

The discussion in this chapter has also been analogous to the concerns of the first two subsidiary research questions: 'How might writing be activated in my two studio research projects *First Love* and *Bordertown* to contend with the 'border' and the experience of confinement?' and, 'How might strategies of dissonance and the 'voice' within the studio practice enact a 'border crossing'?' This is because the concerns of the two studio research questions are underpinned by the concepts that I have elaborated on in this study of Godard and Marker, particularly with their various strategies of dissonance. In the introduction to the second part of this chapter I will draw these parallel discussions together to link *Bordertown* with the assertions I have made regarding cinema in the first part of this chapter.

Part Two

Bordertown: writing, the ‘voice’ and the ‘border’

Introduction

In the second part of this chapter I aim to address the studio research undertaken in the project *Bordertown,* which will be presented as a sound installation and publication alongside *First Love* at the examination exhibition.

This part of Chapter Two will answer the research questions by engaging more concisely with the research conducted for this project in relation to the written material produced for *Bordertown.* In this introduction to Part Two I wish to briefly correlate the enquiry undertaken in Part One of this chapter with the key concerns and features of *Bordertown.* Following this I will outline the structure and content of this part of the exegesis, and I will include a précis of *Bordertown* that describes the visual and physical elements as well as the conceptual premise of the project.

The common ground between the studio practice and this exegesis that I wish to now demarcate centres on the notion of ‘dissonance’ and how it might be critical in contending with borders and notions of 'border crossings’. In my discussion of cinema and dissonance in Part One of this

chapter I looked at the ways in which the films of Godard and Marker manifest the 'voice' of the filmic text and the actor as a key strategy of 'dissonance'; and it is this particular dissonant conception of the 'voice' (in writing, narrative, and performatively) that I wish to identify as a crucial and active component of *Bordertown.* The ways that I conceptualise the 'voice' in this chapter are encapsulated in the body of the writing drawn from *Bordertown,* as well as explicated in the précis of the project. Certain aspects of this voice can best be appreciated acoustically, and will thus be made more evident at the examination exhibition.

From here I will delineate the specific strategies of dissonance that operate in *Bordertown*, and how four particular components are built on these strategies. The first component that is built on dissonant strategies is the interaction of text and voice and the dissonances that are created between the vocals in *Bordertown*'s sound installation and the text in the accompanying book (which includes the woman's journal and the scripts for the two monologues/interviews). The second component of *Bordertown* that uses strategies of dissonance is the layered and fragmented construction of its narrative, which contests and atomises the various histories being presented. Thirdly, the installation itself is a manifestation of the border, so that the wall, with its material and spatial presence functions as a model of the divided town as well as a cleft between the two women who are apparently

situated on either side and this model sets up a zone of contact and dissonance between the two women and two places or spaces. Lastly, the multi-channel surround-sound installation spatialises the acoustic effects and voices to create cinematic-scale scenes, and I have used this audio technology in dissonant ways to further atomise the stories – constantly shifting their source in the sound space to move across and through the wall. All of these strategies combine in *Bordertown* to support the unfolding of the story, while emphasising the contested status of the characters, their narrations and the histories for which they are providing an account.

These strategies can be correlated with the following features of Marker and Godard's work, which I explicated in Part One of this chapter. In relation to Marker, I have argued for a revision of montage aesthetics in film and the role of 'dialectical images' in his work, and the significance of this approach in terms of a recuperation of lost elements of history and memory, a concern that is common to *Bordertown* as well. I have discussed the work of Godard in terms of the dissonant 'voice' as a dynamic feature of an image–voice interaction, and how the exchange and displacement of these two elements is fundamental to the dialectical composition of Godard's films. Image–text–sound dynamics are pivotal to *Bordertown* too, apparent in the presentation of the documentary style photographs and narrative texts in the book and the way in which the publication sits, as an object, just beyond the realm of

Bordertown's installation. The installation flips between symbolic and real, as the photos in the book document Bordertown and images of its wall and these displace the representation of the 'wall' in the gallery. The result is that these representations are imagined as dual, both part of a metaphoric landscape and part of a real history – and the voices similarly displace the written text. As we have seen, Godard deals with conflations of identity through the dissonance of voices, characters and sound, and kindred vocal techniques of displacement, timing and layering have been crucial to *Bordertown*'s sound design. The subject matter in *Bordertown* slips between stories, histories and modes to question the characters' veracity and, moreover, contest the notion of a unified representation. These concerns dominate Godard's practice too, and, as we have seen, he has also employed strategies of dissonance in order to create dialectical engagement with the material. *Bordertown* thus shares the critical endeavour of a dissonant approach with cinematic tropes, as the artwork deals with the history of a town that is both constituted and divided by a state border.

The presentation of the body of Part Two, this will take the form of extended extracts from the fictional journal of the woman, braided with the 'interviews' with the two protagonists featured in the *Bordertown* book. Additional contextual writing is woven through these extracts, which are organised within a conceptual framework to refer to specific themes of the research project: defining the border; border protection;

and the internal limits of territories. For clarity, the three texts will each be presented in a different font style, and the extracts from the journal and the two interviews will be indented to distinguish it from the other contextual writing.[174]

While the journal itself will be presented as part of the *Bordertown* project at the examination exhibition, there is a specific reason for the inclusion of extracts from the publication in this section of the exegesis. The primary rationale is that they clearly demonstrate how *Bordertown* addresses the central research question because the writing itself addresses the first subsidiary question, ‘ How might writing be activated in my two studio research projects *First Love* and *Bordertown* to contend with the ‘border’ and the experience of confinement?’ In *Bordertown* the writing directly deals with notions of the ‘voice’, experiences of confinement and the ‘border’, and so the inclusion of this writing in the exegesis functions to address the second subsidiary question, ‘How might strategies of dissonance and the 'voice' within the studio practice enact a 'border crossing'?’ Finally, the third subsidiary question, ‘How might the ‘voice’, as a dissonant aspect of cinema and literature, contend with the experience of confinement and enact a 'border crossing' or a dissolution of the 'border'?’ will be addressed in my analysis of *Bordertown* in response to the material in Part One.

[174] Please note that the *Bordertown* book can be accessed online at www.lilyhibberd.com in PDF document format.

To provide a sense of the conceptual motivation for the project, the forthcoming passages will explicate the historical and narrative aspects of *Bordertown* and the ways in which these aspects present notions of the 'voice' (in the imaginary as well as the experiential sense) and contend with the 'border' as a dialectical encounter with the past.

In *Bordertown* I conceive of the 'border' as both a figurative construct in the imagination of the protagonists and as part of the collective Australian consciousness. The 'border' is also presented as a narrative device to demarcate the schism that it might enact within interpersonal relations. This reveals the complex implications of the border on subjectivity: how the 'border' functions to psychologically divide the individual from his/herself as well as the self from the other. *Bordertown* presents these differing configurations of the 'border' with the intention of showing the complex ways that the symbolic and real versions of the 'border' are interrelated in a social and political context. The historical narrative mode has been an important device in this process but I have also been conscious of the problems that attend such authorial approaches and the danger of conflating literary with political or historical realities. For this reason I have employed the aforementioned strategies of dissonance to demonstrate the complex, contested and contradictory layers of *Bordertown's* history while also contesting my fictionalisation of it.

Précis of the project *Bordertown*

Bordertown is a contemporary artwork in the form of a sculptural sound installation. The work is comprised of a surround-sound installation housed within a curved black structure, emulating a wall. A 76-minute soundtrack narrates a partially fictional story of two women living in a divided community called 'Bordertown' that straddles two Australian states. One woman has been dispatched as a migrant labourer to an internment camp on the outskirts of town; the other is an angry and disenfranchised young local from one of the poorest suburbs. Their existence consists of daily confrontations with an impassable barrier; a wall built along the border that divides the community into 'North' and 'South'. Both are witness to escalating antagonisms across the divide, and the social exclusion of women and other minorities in Bordertown. As such, *Bordertown* is a work that deals with the experience of the 'border' and its configuration as a space of confinement as a personal as well as a political demarcation or limit. In *Bordertown* this is embodied in the wall, which is an image of both a geopolitical and psychological partition in the form of the division of two states or two selves.

As a micro-political study, *Bordertown* is sited at a specific yet unnamed Australian location, deploying a narrative mode to allow for a broader reading and critique of contemporary Australian border politics. While fictionalised, the story of the town has particular importance to the political undercurrent of the narrative, for it is the site of colonial border

contestation between New South Wales and Victoria prior to Federation, and enduring rivalry thereafter. Extended passages in the journal and the two interviews describe locations such as the river flats, the highway, the army bases, the camp, as well as the wrangle over the railways, due to differing gauges, at the frontier.

The installation, *Bordertown*, has three key elements: a wall, a book and a multi-channel sound installation. In order to visualise this work I will now briefly describe these three components.

The book is an A3-sized hardcover publication. It is presented as a documentary supplement to the exhibition, some distance from the wall. The book contains two bodies of text: the *Bordertown* journal and the transcripts of the sound recording. It also features eighty black and white photographs, which were taken on trips to the town and on site at several migrant camps and detention centres that I visited as part of the development of this project. None of the images are discussed in the text or captioned at any point, and as a result they remain detached and somewhat dissonant in relation to the writing.

Upon entering the gallery a solid black curved object takes centre-stage. Drawing closer, the object does not appear so impermeable for the surface reveals itself to be made of fine, tightly stretched fabric. The wall thus bears material similitude to a giant loudspeaker, a resemblance that is self-evident as soon as the soundtrack commences.

The audio is made up of multiple tracks, basically separated into two parts: one track for each of the female protagonists in *Bordertown* (the 'Woman' only features once or twice and is heard on both tracks). The way that the sound is installed in the exhibition is relevant to the notion and experience of the border for the two women's voices emanate from inside the wall. The wall itself divides the two women because the two audio tracks project their voices from either side of the wall. The entire soundtrack is scored in a cinematic fashion, with establishing scenes that open up between the spoken narrations. These are also designed as surround-soundscapes that use the shape of the wall to create dynamic spatialisation of the audio and the story.

This description along with the images included in the visual folio provide the context for the story that unfolds in *Bordertown,* certain aspects of which are conveyed in the following articulation of the three texts that have underpinned the written and performed elements of the installation.

The following section of this chapter presents extracts from three of the texts produced for *Bordertown.* These are braided into three overarching themes and a series of corresponding exegetical texts, and the *Bordertown* narrative is woven into this critical framework. The themes – 'defining the border', 'border protection', and 'the internal limits of territories' – comprise the framework around which I

constructed the project. *Bordertown's* narratives are severely curtailed in this setting (in the book they are much more substantial of course); I have thus attempted to maintain the logic of the artwork by following the original narrative structure and by prioritising the voices of the three women over my exegetical voice. In this way, the text and its presentation in this dissertation illustrates the complexities of *Bordertown* and the questions that it raises regarding the representation of history. The interweaving of differing views and histories that this form embodies also directly relates to the contentions of this research – or the notion of how dissonance and the 'voice' contend with the 'border'. This is articulated in the way that the four voices contrast with each other and how they intervene in each other's accounts. The following section of this exegesis thus deals with the 'border' and the possibility of a 'border crossing' in two ways: firstly through the story of *Bordertown* and secondly in the dissonant and fragmented way that this story is told.

***Bordertown*: Writing, the 'voice' and the 'border'**

The following is a compilation of writings, comprised of journal entries from the *Bordertown diaries,* penned by a woman who resides in the community for seven weeks. These are woven among transcripts from the sound recordings of (or 'interviews') with the two women, Stacey and Anna, which will feature as sound recordings in the *Bordertown*

installation. These texts are interspersed with additional contextual writing that reflects on the circumstances and implications of the three braided narrations.

Monday 25 January

It's a searing, hot dry spell. Late summer is always the same in rural Australia. It's dry as dust but the Mazda is cranky as if it's rusted after the rain; only there isn't a drop of it out here. I arrived this morning in a small country town. As I turned at the T-intersection into the main street, the metal ground in the car's joints. I'm here to investigate the role of women as agents of social change in rural communities. I have two interviewees: Stacey Brain, a 22-year-old local, and Anna Pham, a refugee who recently arrived in Bordertown. I'll be here for seven weeks. It's only my first day and I'm already sweating.

Even though I'm from Melbourne, I'm aware that life in country towns is often idealised by city people, so I expect that my work here will be challenging. Why have I chosen this town? The situation is very complex; the reasons are numerous. The town has a specific and decisive history of colonial contestation, border construction, militarisation, Indigenous oppression, migrant encampment, social division and civilian violence. Comparisons can be made between

> Bordertown and the lasting conflicts, injustices and inequalities in Australia. It's instructive for those who hold out hope for transformation. It's a kind of parable of the whole country. Still, Bordertown has been doing it tough. The last two decades have seen a deepening crisis due to drought and economic rationalist policies in country towns. I plan to investigate the historical and contemporary contexts of women and migrants in Australia. This will mean drawing on social and political theory, as well as local history.

Defining the border

One of the key contingencies for any frontier is that of site, particularly where it is located and what land it demarcates. The fixing or defining of a political or territorial border often presents a spatial and conceptual impasse because impossibility is at the crux of its power. While they exist in physical form as walls, borders are notable for their paradoxical function as both barriers and voids. This is because, as means of subjective distinction, borders are imperceptible: invisibility configures the border zone as an exclusionary space or non-place. Because such physical parameters are not always fixed or apparent, the impetus of this first topic, 'defining the border', is to identify the location or form of the border today. The accounts presented by the three women below offer this clarification, amid Australia's shifting relationship to boundaries and territory. This aspect of the *Bordertown* project

corresponds to the concerns of this exegesis in its examination of the ways that the 'border' is constructed within the framework of a contested history, and how the 'voice', or the multiple and dissonant voices of the three women, enter into this dispute to contend with the limits that this version of 'history' has placed on how the past is recollected.

> STACEY: When I was growing up, I just wanted to get out of fuckin' Bordertown … Fuck! Everyone, like, knows me. They'd see me coming in my gear, with the cammo and all that khaki army stuff. I wear it 'coz the whole town is at war … and there's like two towns here. Us and them, kinda thing. It goes up and down as well. In the hills they're all stuck up, snobby and rich. And over the river are the Southies, and they're a real mix of types. But mostly bad, at least that's what I hear. I dunno, I never been over there. The wall keeps 'em in their place … 'coz they're not like us.

In contrast to Stacey's view of the wall as an impassable limit, territorial borders perversely act as a point of contact between divided populations because the people who live on either side of the border are implicated in the daily life of its operations. In contrast to travellers from farther afield who make an easy trans-frontier crossing of the

border as if it were clear-cut or a line on the ground, local populations are drawn into its functional realm. There is a noteworthy difference here between a border and a frontier: the former is contingent on the presence of an excised 'other' and is porous, whereas the latter is a perimeter, a limit beyond which nothing and no one exists.[175] The border is not easily regulated: it is a space of contestations, anomalies and contradictions. If someone is killed on the perimeter of a border, for example, it can be impossible to determine in which territory the event occurred.

As we will see in *Bordertown,* the inhabitants of border territories coexist within the bounds of an abstract yet heavily governed space, because in many instances a 'zone of contact' along the border forms a distinct territory in its own right. Due to the necessity of controlling cross-border movements of people and goods, special rules exist for places like 'The Border'. In some instances these are officially determined, at others they are defined at a local level by naming, ritual activities and folklore. And it is in this particular context that *Bordertown* reveals how the 'voice' contends with the 'border' as the words of Stacey and Anna make the border more impenetrable than the wall. Yet,

[175] During the first 200 years of European presence in the Americas the frontier was the prevalent notion of the divide between the inhabited east and the wild unpopulated west (apart from the Indigenous Americans, who in the colonial mind were non-existent). The image of the border along the perimeter of the Mexican state has become a powerful element in the contemporary imagination of external threat, but in a reciprocal arrangement because so many Mexicans are Americans today. The border is therefore dually constructed.

as the story unfolds, the women's words conversely challenge the border, as dissent shifts to resistance and Stacey and Anna look for ways to make a border crossing.

Tuesday 26 January

In our first conversation Stacey described Bordertown as a divided community, there's the 'North' and there's the 'South'. This is a reiteration of the colonial division that separated north from south at the Murray River crossing. The wall is the frontier now. Stacey is from Lamington, the poorest suburb on the northern side of Bordertown. Most people from the North call the South Struggle Town and the inhabitants Southies. Stacey has a low opinion of anyone south of the wall, which is how most Lamington dwellers also see it. Migrants are also equated with anyone from the 'other side'. The paradigm that those closest in social rank are the greatest threat is true for the underprivileged inhabitants of Bordertown. The anomaly of this state of affairs is not obvious to Stacey; she just thinks the people across the river are a destabilising force that could unhinge the Bordertown way of life. The ruling parties of Bordertown are happy to have the conflict continue, locking the weak into a struggle that ensures the hegemony of authorities is not questioned.

STACEY: The Southies always been over the river. That's like our border. That's what they call this whole area, 'The Border'. With a capital 'B'. It used to be like two different countries. With guards and guns and taxes and that. Nowadays they call them States, but they was always separate. The people here are so sick of it. We wanted to make The Border a whole 'nother state, when that Bracks dude turned up here saying like he's gonna amalgamate the two sides. You should'a seen the howling crowd! Nobody here wants it. We hate the other side 'coz they're real different to us. They've got their own road rules, pokies laws, and there's heaps of fights 'coz one side gives way to the left at the lights and the other gives way to the right. You can ride your bike on the footpath in the North but not in the South. Fruit is cool up here, but ain't allowed over there. If youse buy a car from over there and drive it here you get a fuckin' fat fine, unless you change the plates! One day a bloke drowned in the river and none of the police would get him out because they weren't sure which side he was on. It's all true, I swear.

Border protection

In recent times Australia has developed an obviously 'creeping' or porous border. Maritime restrictions constitute the geographic

characteristic of this phenomenon. Australia's sovereignty hinges on paradoxical constructions of the border: what is seen as internal can only be defined by what is external, or outside. Citizenship is not the only way to define the membership of the state; its terms, however, are yet another important exclusionary device.[176] Following Michel Foucault's notion of reciprocal power, in the study of this arrangement of authority, it becomes clear that the complicity of the subordinate members, as well as those in power, is required. The border, as it emerges in this investigation of Bordertown, is another permutation of this dialectical power structure because Stacey and Anna are part of a bigger political game that uses inhabitants on either side of Bordertown to polarise the communities from within. In this context, it is easy to correlate Foucault's notion of discursive power (which I have already discussed in Chapter One on pages 48–52) with the way that the border is inculcated in the minds and ordinary lives of the people: they are governed by its laws but only because of jurisprudence, because they speak the law into being. This brings us to a critical point of correspondence with the concerns of this research project, because in the symbolic zone of contact, the 'voice' and the 'border' are indivisible and irreducible because they continually configure, reciprocate and thus depend on each other.

[176] Cf. *Our Patch: Enacting Australian Sovereignty Post-2001,* ed. Suvendrini Perera (Perth, Network Books, 2006).

Thursday 28 January

I saw Anna Pham this morning. We met in the garden of the St. Cabrini Catholic Church. Seated on a stone bench, under a wrought old Moreton Bay fig tree, Anna told me that her real name is Ly Thi Pham. She spoke about her arrival in this country, forming her words very slowly, and softly. I listened to her. I thought about the journey she'd made and how Australia's borders are maintained by cultural exclusion, a conflict founded in the violent appropriation of the sacred lands of the Indigenous peoples. To imagine Australia as entirely and homogeneously white, British and masculine is absurd. The reality is different, as we all know. Australia is home to diverse people, cultures and histories. My own family is a patchwork of backgrounds. The first was a convict transported for stealing novels, yet another was an Englishman who pioneered land down near Warrnambool, and then in the aftermath of World War II, a refugee arrived who was the only member of his family to survive the Holocaust. Multiculturalism has had a mixed reception in Australia. Immigrants come here with great visions for the future but for many this country is truly the fatal shore. Some dare to tell their story. Anna is one of those people. She has arrived in the Bordertown camp and is struggling to survive.

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ANNA: With my sister Pamela, I leave my
country. No passport. No name, no
shoes. When we first come to Melbourne
we put into migrant camp in Royal Park.
It not so good … reminding me of other
camps before. But I think it going to
be okay, we start new life in
Bordertown soon.
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Sunday 31 January

After a week of discussions with Stacey I can see that clashes with the Southies have established a combative approach to her relations with 'outsiders'. Seemingly ordinary encounters with the Southies are underscored by this violent and destructive impetus. Peers and parents sanction this attitude, as they too act out scenes of belligerent aggression. Stacey tells of the way 'Southies' infiltrate the North. In one interview, she described a scene in the Lamington pub in which a group of 'Southies' comes in 'looking for a fight'. The violent confrontation that ensued is an indicator of the perceived threat that cross-border 'invaders' pose to the maintenance of an ideally 'homogenous' community, free of external 'contamination'. Like most residents of the North, Stacey thoroughly approves of the wall for this reason, even though this structure is a major intervention, inconveniencing residents on both sides of the border.

STACEY: But when the river dried up we started seein' Southies all the time over here. You can just tell. It's they way they talk, a kinda attitude. You see, I was just walking down Mate Street one day and this Southie bitch blew a kiss at my boyfriend. She fuckin' knew it was gonna make me totally mad, and I went off. I got so angry; I yanked her back by her fucking hair and punched her out. Now they knows what to expect. I can't tell which one it was 'coz they all look down when I'm coming towards 'em now. Hey, and the government knows about 'em anyways. That's why they've built this fuckin' great wall... And I seen more troops coming up the highway. I'm pretty stoked mate.

Tuesday 2 February

I'm trying not to think about it too much but I am having trouble putting my mind to rest. The signs of military supremacy in Bordertown keep racing through my head. For those passing through, Bordertown looks like a peaceful rural centre. But the land around the town is highly militarised. War memorials, avenues of honour and various armaments left over from past battles mark the landscape of Bordertown. Cannon, tanks, planes and even warships rest uneasily in public parks and gardens. The military presence is still strong with bases situated in surrounding countryside on both

> sides of the town. Army bases surround the entire area
> in a nightmarish fortification. To the south are the
> remains of the camp founded at Bonegilla inside
> Latchford Barracks. A few kilometres away are Gaza
> Ridge Barracks, containing the massive Bandiana
> Training Camp. All along the border are surveillance
> cameras, electric and hurricane fencing, and retainer
> walls. And when I turn off the light I think can hear the
> sound of the troops marching in the distance.

Australia's troubled relationship to territory and the attendant absurdity of attempts to secure its perimeter highlights the complexity of geopolitical borders. A useful explication of Australia's contemporary constructions of state, sovereignty and militarisation, can be made in a comparison with the border's antecedents in a colonial framework. Historically, as a subsidiary of the British Empire's incessantly advancing and colonising frontier in the 18th century, Australia, like America, has an anxious relationship with space. Prior to Federation, Australia's fears were acted out in antagonisms between the separately governed states or colonies. After 1901, because of the impossibility of any external physical security cordon and its distance from the protectorate of the 'Empire', Australia's vulnerability to 'invasion' was suddenly exposed, so a psychological defence system became the necessary and best means of border protection. The history of Bordertown in relation to the

confinement of immigrants (both legal and 'illegal') is illustrative of a mentality that pervades Australian attitudes to this day. Within the wider concerns of this exegesis such comparisons offer significant insight into how borders are construed by the active operation of unspoken yet collective fears; and this directly addresses the central research question: 'How might writing and the 'voice' contend with the 'border' and the experience of confinement?' The extracts that follow demonstrate both how the 'writing' of the woman in her journal demarcates the construction of the exclusionary practice of 'border protection', and how the 'voices' of Stacey and Anna come into conflict with this same paradigm.

> ANNA: After 3 weeks we go to Bordertown in the train … In the new camp they put the Nissen huts, all metal and noisy, because it is in the army base again, far away from the south side of town. All over Australia, it the same. The army big here in your country. We have little sections in the huts. Each one 2 beds, 2 single beds … It rain a lot one day. The mud everywhere ankle deep on the ground … not much blankets, and it get so cold. We sleep like that for a month. I have the picture they took of me that day. You can see my eyes, I looking into the face of nowhere. We look like ghosts in the portrait. Still, I believe there is future for us here.

Sunday 31 January

I didn't have any meetings today, so I found a map of Australia and spread it out on the hotel room's worn carpet. I've always seen Australia as a unified shape, with an unassailable coastal perimeter. Now that I know about the fissures running through the land, it's impossible to see a singular, impregnable object, despite Australian government efforts to have the nation fortified in this way. With Federation in 1901, migration across regional borders was no longer under the jurisdiction of the individual states, because defence had shifted to the national coastline and was the principal responsibility of the Commonwealth. It is no coincidence that the Australian Immigration Restriction Act was brought in across all the states in the same year, a law designed to protect Australia's shores from migrants of 'unsuitable' racial origins. Alfred Deakin, Prime Minister incumbent in 1901, stated 'unity of race was an absolute essential to the unity of Australia', and that the strategies being employed were intended to restrict the number of 'aliens' residing within its borders.[177]

The politics of border protection are now more trenchant in the ideological defence of our shore than ever. Because forming a protective shield around its perimeter is literally impossible the focus has been on establishing a racialised frontier so that all unwanted arrivals by sea are deemed a threat to national security.

[177] Henry Reynolds, 'Part of a Continent for Something Less Than a Nation?' in *Our Patch: Enacting Australian Sovereignty Post-2001,* ed. Suvendrini Perera, 67.

I'm going over all of this because the residents of Bordertown believe that the community is suffering from an analogous threat. The proposition of Victoria being partitioned off from New South Wales now sounds like an anomaly, but it offers a critique of contemporary divisive and protectionist policies. The simple comparison to the community of Bordertown makes the absurdity of Australia's fixation with borders and racial distinction plain.

Variances in Bordertown carry on unabated. In the *Border Morning Mail* on the 2nd of March 1944 it stated, 'there have been occasions where frustrating border anomalies have given the impression that, within federated Australia, New South Wales and Victoria were 'like two Balkan states'.'[178]

STACEY: Awww. That's the Bordertown monument. It's a momentous statue that remembers our Anzacs … you know, there's like heaps of army bases down in the South, and stuff like Bundoora … and um, oh I dunno what it's called. And I saw in that paper on the train, y'know the free one? Yeaaaah … I was reading in it about how the Prime Minister's saying in your first year out of school that you do some army

[178] Bruce Pennay, *From Colonial to State Border*: *A Federation History of the Social Construction of the Border Between New South Wales and Victoria as a Frontier, Barrier and Contact Zone* (Albury: Charles Sturt University, 2001), 5.

time. Not compulsory, like military service … I know in some places overseas you have to do the army when you turn 18, and that, everybody has to do it, even girls … maybe that's what the Government means, kinda. Except I don't really like army people.

Friday 5 February

I've noticed that troops draw a lot of water in this town. The thousands of troops and trainees in the surrounding army bases have a big impact on life in Bordertown: barbers offer discounts for defence force members, and on a Friday evening army buses line the main street while the cadets are taken out for a night on the town. Locals must, unhappily, share their pubs and clubs with swarms of young men in uniform, desperate for a good time. Stacey's attitude to the military has been formed by her daily encounters with these troops, who she calls 'AJs' (army jerks).

Stacey and I walked through the botanical gardens. She boasted about the Bordertown Anzac monument up on the hill. She paused in thought for a second then started to recount the astounding story of her fight with an unwitting army cadet who was simply ordering pizza after a night out in Bordertown. The most striking part of this story was how Stacey defended the interests of the women working in the pizza restaurant where the

fight took place. In the interview, she described her reaction being due to the AJ's sexism, that he denigrated the female staff in Sweethearts, Bordertown's inhabitants, and women in general. Stacey lashed out at this young man's abuse, employing the only tactic she had at hand, her wild temper.

After walking up a steep incline, Stacey and I ended up on top of Monument Hill. We stopped under the Anzac tower. I stood there thinking about how such a big deal is made of the Anzacs in Australia. The Anzacs have a strong visual presence in Bordertown too. This is a symbol of national heroism that has even greater significance in a contested space, surrounded by military bases. Although legends don't mean that much to Stacey, she was filled with civic pride at the sight of the monument. In reality, it's a kitsch stucco tower with a tiny light that's turned on at night to represent the eternal flame.

The internal limits of territories

As previously mentioned, hegemonic practice is a crucial means of population control, which has been defined by Foucault as the maintenance of control over the people via internal social stratification and the dominance of one group over another. Giorgio Agamben's theorisation of the 'state of exception' is an elaboration of Foucault's

notion of biopolitics (where bodies are the means by which the state regulates its population), where the usual arrangement of authority requires the complicity of the subordinate members as well as those in power, only in the state of exception the included are defined by the excluded.[179] Such an inversion is mirrored in the formation of the border and the camp in the South. Anna's narrative illustrates the ways that the state determines the lives of the migrants in the most extreme form of control of bodies: detention or confinement; and we will see in these next few passages how the story of Bordertown addresses this research enquiry as it demonstrates how writing might be activated in my two studio research projects *First Love* and *Bordertown* to contend with the 'border' and the experience of confinement.

> ***Monday 8 February***
>
> Anna has been talking about her time in the camp at Bordertown. She wonders why a majority of the interns are women, where the number of men in migrant detention centres usually far outstrips the women. The cause rests with immigration minister Arthur Calwell's 'Beautiful Balts' campaign, which saw post-World War

[179] Agamben owes a debt to Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of 'the Ban'. Nancy explains in *Retreating the Political* that the Ban 'comes from old Germanic terminology which indicates both exclusion from the community and the command and insignia of the sovereign'. As such there is a prognosis that the Ban is the invisible but routine form of exception, that of daily unremarkable practice. Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Retreating the Political*, ed. Simon Sparks (London: Routledge, 1997). Also see Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

II refugees being hand-picked according to their suitability for assimilation into the town's British cultural lineage and heritage. Women were specifically chosen and promoted in flyers and advertisements put out by the Chifley Government as a demonstration of their beauty and refined qualities.[180] Departmentally scripted stories of romance, marriage and integration in the ideal Australian family were run in glossy magazines and newspapers. In reality it was not quite so idyllic. Most women emigrated to Australia on work schemes in which they were bonded for two years' labour placement in government-allotted positions.

ANNA: Here it as if there is war and we are enemy: guards, big fence, gates. Many guns. It very hard for the children and us women. See a lot of fighting in the camp. We think, here it not safe. I don't have knowledge how to forgive for what I have lost. I am blame myself for bring my sister to such a country. I not strong enough. I wish I have more courage to standing up to guards. I think: No point to speak back at the soldier with guns … That day they come with the big black guns in the hut. My sister hiding behind me. We keep our memories for very long time. I am dreaming it going to change for us.

[180] Pennay, Bruce. *Calwell's Beautiful Balts* (a flyer), date unknown.

Monday 8 February

After World War II, thousands of people were shipped to Australia under the Displaced Persons' program. The need to find housing for such large groups pushed government facilities to the limit and the only available accommodation at the time was on army bases. The military context re-established the practice of confining 'alien', undesired people in defended spaces, a strategy that has been a constant feature in this country ever since colonial prison camps were founded under British rule. Accommodating the newcomers within militarised zones also meant they could be monitored and sectioned if necessary. Bases were fitted with rudimentary tin structures called Nissen huts, living quarters that were remembered (not so fondly) for their low, domed form and lack of insulation. Bordertown's site was particularly desolate, even depressing, for its residents. These camps were not suitable environments for long-term habitation or for young families. Yet in the quiet times, resilient and hopeful men and women in the camp found alternative amusements. Anna recollects how there was an electric atmosphere of communality as the radios buzzed incessantly throughout the Nissen huts.

These reciprocal power structures are complex and potentially indiscriminate, yet psychological borders are terribly precise in their identification process. This is because the barrier designates the

outsider as *whoever* is on the other side of the fence. This evokes what Jacques Derrida designates in *Specters of Marx* as a historical 'haunting', or alternatively a cultural past that is perpetually activated by the people who continue to 'live' it, even when they have been banned, excised or outcast.[181] The spectres that inhabit border zones are similarly yet paradoxically embodied by the walls (and objects) that are erected to demarcate them. But instead of an absolute delineation the bricks, concrete and wire swallow up those that they seek to separate. The experience of haunting is further heightened because of the barrier's sublimation of bodies; for walls are both an enclosure and a trap, and the disembodied and segregated voices of the people on either side are the captives of their estranged existence. This aspect of the three *Bordertown* narrations addresses the second subsidiary question 'How might strategies of dissonance and the 'voice' within the studio practice enact a 'border crossing'?' because Stacey's and Anna's stories embody this same division as their dissonant accounts traverse the confines of a singular version of history.

> ANNA: In the first days I come to Bordertown, they tell me to start work. They call it work bond. For two years I stay in camp I must go to do job for Government. Thinking I be sent to clean school or hospital, I very surprised they send me to big private factory for

[181] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, The Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 2006).

the dog food. I clean the factory and I not happy because animal meat everywhere and on the floor. I must to sweep it up. Blood on my clothes and staining under the fingernails. It smelling very much. One day it make me sick. Foreman he angry at me: 'You're not working. Why you stop?'

Monday 8 February

During 1950s, large numbers of men and women who had been promised work on the Snowy Mountains Hydroelectric Scheme and other major state-sponsored projects were accommodated at the camp. Many interns, however, found themselves waiting several years for the jobs to become available and they were not permitted to leave the camp until their work bond expired. While some inhabitants were happy to wait it out, as the prospect was still better than the memories of war, the sense of powerlessness and isolation for others engendered in the camps led to uprisings. I heard about this from Anna when she told of a demonstration in the camp and the slogans written on the signs. Anna, like the others, feels she has been reliving a nightmare, as if there is no escaping the past. When she describes herself as a ghost in a portrait, she speaks of a loss of identity. But Anna is holding onto the hope that she will be given the chance to make the new life that she has dreamt of in Bordertown.

ANNA: Go to migrant camp school. I study. It too hot in the shed. Smelling like piss. They say 'possum's piss'. It very strong. No shade. Dust on paper as we writing. In the class we learn about Australia. They say not many of the original people living here before the government come. They say many ran away. I know it lies. We hear the stories. Learning too, that Bordertown had big river, before this is the border. We laugh because we know it's dry. The river was big before the rain stops, full of water all the time. It dead now, they say. The water was keeping the North and South divide. The people over there in North, they come here first. And they very protective, not wanting us coming into the town, so they build that big wall now instead of river.

Sunday 21 February

In Bordertown, the migrant camp is a good fifteen kilometres out of town, on the south side. Upon release, the interns are housed in specially constructed units located along the border. However, the area is about to be reclaimed as part of the exclusion zone between the North and South. Anyway, local residents endorse this program of segregation. They don't want the 'alien' population to slide unnoticed into urban and rural habitations.

The concealment of Bordertown's camp from the town exemplifies the practice of setting migrants apart from the main population, in this case, a mainly Anglo-Saxon population. The defended space of the camp is symbolic of the way that the segregation of 'alien' residents is bound up with conflict in communities.[182] The paradox of setting 'outsiders' apart in order to 'assimilate' them is a process of defining the constitution of the state through 'normalisation', which in modern states, as Michel Foucault asserts in *Society Must be Defended*, is predicated on racism: 'If the power of normalization wished to exercise the old sovereign right to kill, it must become racist. And if, conversely, a power of sovereignty, or in other words, a power that has the right of life and death, wishes to work with the instruments, mechanisms and technology of normalization, it too must become racist.'[183] Although it is not totally fortified, Anna – like many other migrants – describes the camp with a mixture of fear and hope. Located within an army base, the interns are aware of being under constant surveillance and the gaze of an invisible omniscient authority. Moreover, Australia has at different times had a surprising number of migrant camps situated on former or current defence force lands.

[182] Based on the pamphlet, *The Bonegilla Migrant Experience*, Bruce Pennay (Albury, NSW, date unknown).

[183] Michel Foucault, '*Society Must be Defended*' *Lectures at the College de France*, 1975–76, trans. David Macy (New York: Picador, 2003), 256.

ANNA: We wait such long time. In the camp we start to be very restless. First complaining a lot. One day there is demonstration. The men they go outside with painted wood signs. One say: ‘We get angry. We promise we don’t like your system.’ Another one is: ‘We want work.’ The men also make bigger signs like, ‘Your barbarian system is only worthy of the Stone Age.’ But the army come rushing in from the base with big guns. I never seen our men run like that since at home. Soldiers smash the signs. Lock us up in huts. We very scared. We think we die. My sister she never the same because of this. Now she gone; my last relative. The empty Nissen hut very quiet … Only sound of footsteps in the dirt outside. Every day I want to bring her back.

Tuesday 2 March

I just drove across Gateway Island with Stacey. It’s a very weird environment. The Government call it the exclusion zone. The highway is suspended over the top of a massive floodplain. On the island itself are a series of public buildings and entertainment facilities. These have fallen into disrepair, since neither the people from the North nor the South of Bordertown have been keen to spend time on the island. By developing the space for public use, and calling it a ‘Gateway’, the government has attempted to emphasise the freedom that

appropriate residents from either side would have when they make a border crossing. But as we were driving toward the South, after crossing four bridges, Stacey became confused. Like lots of people in Bordertown, she has no idea where the actual border is. There wasn't a single sign. But, paradoxically, we didn't need to see one. People always know where they belong and will stay clear of places where they are not welcome. When we'd made it onto the banks of the South, Stacey was instantly uneasy. It was not a crossing patrolled by police but we felt that were being watched: it was ominous in an intangible way. In another second we'd turned the car around. On the way back, Stacey cheered up, laughing as we passed Harvey's Fish Farm as she remembered that she went to her first rave party there.

STACEY: Did you know about our island between the two rivers, Gateway Island? It's like no-man's land. Guess what? I been to three or four raves there … and my first ever rave party. And they were at the … mmmm, he, he, this sounds funny … ha, Harvey's Fish Farm. And the whole park was made into a rave … they were awesome. Oh, but we're in the South now. As soon as we cross that bridge, that's uhhh. Oh, hang on. No? This bridge. No. I dunno. Fuck it! Yeah. We call these like the Mexicans, 'coz they're over the border. Heh, heh, the Mexicanos … If you like … But we

should really go back now … it ain't real safe for us here.

Sunday 7 March

I've been thinking about my earlier proposition that violence might be a means of resistance for Stacey. After close examination, I have to say it's a complex and paradoxical situation. While there is often confusion over whether a woman is the perpetrator or the victim of violence, there has also been more recent awareness that some women can use physical force as both a defence and to form a strong identity.

ANNA: I decide I not give them my life. No way! I remember my Grandmother when I am just a little girl … she the strong-will woman. I watch her work very hard to get us the food. I look for the way so I not the prisoner here. Now I get stronger. I know I can defend myself. I going confront them with words in my own language. Not shame anymore.

Wednesday 10 March

On an individual level, a supporting argument exists for displays of aggression in that they can act as a 'safety valve', releasing frustration in an extremely angry person. The same can be said for pent-up

> rivalries on a communal scale. Suppressing the contest between conflicted groups of people can lead to negative concepts becoming deeply ingrained, and consequently more difficult to resolve. The greatest danger is that in contests between minority groups the disempowered can be co-opted by a dominant authority as unsuspecting parties to a program of aggression through the manipulation of latent fears. This is at the crux of the debate over the construction of walls as barriers; accordingly Bordertown's wall is at risk of exacerbating the very conflict it is attempting to suppress. Stacey is caught up in a similar dialectical struggle.

The woman's words can be compared to the Kafka tale, *Great Wall of China* (1917). At the start of *Great Wall of China* the narrator describes how the wall is being built and is perplexed because of its haphazard and fragmented construction. He notes that the wall has no possibility of ever physically functioning as a frontier because it is in pieces, and he surmises that its power must therefore be vested in its fiction. Kafka's story illuminates the symbolic power of walls and how they speak borders into being. This kind of oratory power is aligned with cinematic form too, because the disembodiment of the character's or narrator's voice is exacerbated by the viewer's bodily identification with the blackened iconoclastic screen, or cinematic 'projection'. The symbolism

conferred on walls as partitioning devices has an additional relationship to the use of curtains as they are commonly found in cinematic, theatrical and religious spaces. The curtain announces the schism between the 'real' and the representational format of the viewing experience, as does the proscenium arch, which has its lineage in religious contexts as an archetype of the partition (once a curtain) that separates the congregation from the Holy of Holies in Jewish temples and Christian churches.[184] These configurations of borders are significant archetypes, and in my research for *Bordertown* I engaged in the contextualisation of the local incarnation of the border within the lineage of human civilisation. So the border at a micro-political level attends to geopolitics on a national and global scale, even if the people situated at the perimeter, like Stacey and Anna, are unaware of their place in history.

> STACEY: The wall ain't good no more. I used to think it was 'coz it kept us apart. We were meant to be scared of Southies, and hate 'em. It's crazy that it can be so easy, like it was just pile of rocks, then a few bricks. But one day there was no way for us to cross fuckin' over anymore. But we

[184] The use of curtaining for ritualistic acts of concealment is also notable in the covering for the Old Testament tabernacle, over the Kaaba at Mecca, and in the use of fabric as a shroud to conceal a powerful figure such as a high priest. This latter usage is like the cloak that conceals the priest in the confessional box, whose voice – like God's – is omniscient and disembodied. This is a diagnostic analysis of religion that aligns its hegemony and social control with the form that images of power take in the dispensation of faith, such as in architectural configurations or in forms of discourse.

didn't really notice. Now the wall is all the way through the middle of the town. We're separated by this slab of black fuckin' concrete. It goes on and on, and on, forever! Sure it divides the South from the North, but it cuts the whole town up. I can't understand how Anna or anyone is livin' over there. At least now I know who the real war is against, but.

Saturday 13 March

Back in Bordertown, Stacey has rebelled against authority again. But her argument with the factory supervisor is remarkable because, this time she's recognised that her suffering is shared by another woman.

When regimes attempt to control or quash dissent, it is an indication of the threat it poses to them. Walls are the evidence of escalating fear and defensive behaviour, on the part of nations, states, private companies and ordinary individuals, and these fears do not become any less divisive or political over time. We are living in an age of exclusion, even though, when it comes to peacemaking, history tells us that blockades tend to fail. Unless we gather to resist them, walls will continue to carve up the land, and those on the 'wrong' side will be left to wander along the boundary, hoping to find a way into utopia. But those

who have good reason to traverse the barrier (for love, family, faith or money) will fight to find a way to cross over, by transcending or directly opposing that construct.

ANNA: The wall, it tell us we are not free. It look like impossible barrier. I know over the wall there are the mountains. They called the Great Dividing Range: blue mist, outline, layers. The mountains separate the north from the south and the east from the west. They been holding many things back for thousands of years … sometimes they protect us from danger, like the weather and invaders. I see the storm coming over now. Like the clouds, I can make it over the mountain, swim across the river. Nothing is divided anymore because I know how to make the border crossing. For first time, I look in mirror, seeing myself strong enough.

Saturday 13 March

When we remark upon objective features of antagonism, such as Bordertown's wall, the defiance of ordinary inhabitants can go unnoticed. Yet the people caught in the crossfire always decide if conflict occurs; everyone has some kind of role or determining influence on their environment. As Michel de Certeau suggests, change is the onus of the individual because

she or he can undermine the foundations of power 'in unexpected ways in everyday practices'. For Certeau, the 'democratising of resistance' might be as simple as the way people walk, where they shop, who they speak to and what they say. He claims that ordinary practices possess agency because they seize power from authorities and its system.[185]

Anna and Stacey recognise their enemy. The wall in Bordertown is the image of oppression. Domination by governments, armed forces, men, teachers, family, and police is embodied in this architectural object. They understand the power that elites have invested in the barrier, and that because of it they can be excluded or dismissed at anytime. If cutting a hole in the wall achieves only one thing, it will be to create a symbol for those struggling under the conflict. The action they are taking is, I believe, of a powerful kind, perhaps even the right kind, of aggression. I think that their union may be able to transcend political and social divisions. Stacey and Anna may just be a catalyst for the town's transformation as the border crossing reawakens a desire for the community cohesion that once thrived in Bordertown.

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[185] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 54.

STACEY: I’m walking down to the wall. I sees Anna. She’s cuttin’ a hole. We both know what she’s gonna do. And then me dog, Rexie, he’s back. But it’s just to say goodbye one last time. He’s squeezin’ through the hole Anna made … Now I got me weapon set up like an urban assault rocket launcher. We’re confronting the fear, and I reckon, if we both are resisting it’ll make a mark. Even if we get taken, after we go, the others will see there’s a way to cross over the border.

Chapter Two conclusion

In these braided extracts from the writing created for the *Bordertown* project I have presented the thematic headings – ‘defining the border’, ‘border protection’, and ‘the internal limits of territories’ – in order to offer an alternative reading of *Bordertown* in the critical framework of this enquiry. Even though these texts have been extricated from their fictional setting I have sought to maintain their narrative logic. This format has allowed my contextual or analytical voice to intersperse with the fictionalised voice of *Bordertown’s* historical narrator and the two protagonists to explain how certain aspects of the project are directly tied to this research enquiry. And in the braided form, I have been able create a sense of dissonance between the various modes of

historicising, questioning the status of both. The latter relates to the notion of writing as a contested space of atomised histories and memory, as well relating to the presentation of *Bordertown* as an artwork with the divide between the two women's voices or selves across the wall.

The breadth of topics covered in this section has been an effort to delineate the scope of *Bordertown* as a wider political and historical study. Also, the concerns examined in the first part of this chapter are addressed throughout the second, as cinematic strategies of dissonance and the 'voice' are evident within *Bordertown*. In Marker's films this is illustrated with regards to montage and the notion of 'dialectical images', which is an important conceptual and material arrangement in *Bordertown* in terms of images, text and voice. Godard's cinema is examined within a lineage of theatrical form and the work of Brecht to define the role of dialectical methods of acting and the dissonant 'voice' of differing identity and polyphony. This encompasses the questions of representation that arise in *Bordertown* through a dissonance of both content and form encapsulated by the spatialisation of the 'voice' , and this 'spatialisation' is yet another crucial component of the configuration of sound in Godard's later films. This demonstrates how, in both Part One and Two of this chapter, I have brought together the concepts, methods and experiments that have underpinned this enquiry to address the research question, 'How might writing and the 'voice'

contend with the 'border' and the experience of confinement?’

While walls are by nature insurmountable, *Bordertown* reveals that there are ways that ordinary people can make a ‘border crossing’. The same idea can be applied to the problem of how art might engage a viewer in an aesthetic work, as the dissonance of these three women’s narrations elucidates the ways in which the ‘voice’ can question the space of the story or the *mise-en-scène*, and thereby contest the historical continuum and the order of things.

Exegesis conclusion

Summary of key findings

This research has investigated how writing and the 'voice' might contend with the 'border' and the experience of confinement. In this conclusion I will summarise the major findings made in this research project and how they address the research questions and the other assertions set out in the introduction to this exegesis.

First of all, I intend to recapitulate the research questions, starting with the key question: ‘How might writing and the 'voice' contend with the 'border' and the experience of confinement?’ This enquiry has posed three subsidiary questions, which have asked: 1. How might writing be activated in my two studio research projects *First Love* and *Bordertown* to contend with the ‘border’ and the experience of confinement?; 2. How might strategies of dissonance and the 'voice' within the studio practice enact a 'border crossing'?; 3. How might the ‘voice’, as a dissonant aspect of cinema and literature, contend with the experience of confinement and enact a 'border crossing' or a dissolution of the 'border'?

I now wish to address the formal composition of this exegesis and what it has contributed to the research that I have presented. Each chapter

has been structured slightly differently, but in the overall approach I have employed a braided form. I have used this structure to interweave exegetical writing with extracts from a series of texts produced as part of the two studio research projects, *First Love* and *Bordertown*. The rationale of this dissertation's presentation has centred on the fact that the two projects constitute a critical demonstration of the research problem. Their inclusion has allowed me to show direct evidence of how this writing addressed the enquiry and to facilitate a fluid discussion of their relevance within the body of the exegesis. The first part of Chapter Two is an exception to this approach; its discussion of cinema has been presented separately from *Bordertown* because the material in these two parts comprised a parallel discussion instead of a tightly woven braid.

Three main assertions have been set out by this research, and I will now briefly outline how these have been addressed within this exegesis.

The first main argument that I put forward at the outset of this exegesis contended that two studio research projects, *First Love* and *Bordertown,* would reveal the possible forms of writing that activate the 'voice' in my art work. In this exegesis I have shown how *Bordertown* employs the 'voice' as a literary form within the text-based components of the project evidenced in the construction of the three protagonists around a distinct verbal characterisation. The 'voice' was also shown to be crucial

to *First Love* through its interpolation of the literary 'voice' of thirteen other writers each within yet another narrator's voice in the individual stories.

In the second main assertion I stated that I would examine how strategies of dissonance have been crucial in my studio practice and across the disciplines of cinema and literature. I have addressed this contention in terms of an analysis of formal approaches in cinema and literature to demonstrate, for example, that the films of Marker and Godard alongside the writing of Cixous and Barthes, are evidence of the importance of strategies of dissonance in creating contrastive and dynamic arrangements of formal elements. The exegetical writing on *First Love* and *Bordertown* in this dissertation has explicated the way that dissonant strategies have been used in my studio practice. Also, the two studio projects have demonstrated the use of strategies of dissonance for themselves: bringing dichotomous human relations and geopolitical space into relief in *Bordertown* and generating interchangeable persona and subjectivities in *First Love.*

The third key argument that I put forward in my introduction stated that strategies of dissonance and the 'voice' are pivotal to the proposition of a 'border crossing'. This notion has been supported across the whole enquiry. In my study of cinema I examined the dialectical form of Marker's work and Godard's engagement with Brechtian approaches in

order to show how their films used dissonance and the ‘voice’ to transcend tropes and borders of cinematic representation. My study of literary form has further supported this argument, particularly with writers like Cixous who have exemplified how writing takes up the ‘voice’ as a way to contend with the borders of aesthetic convention within their respective culture. In both cinema and literature the ‘voice’ has been seen to make a ‘border crossing’ from inside the space of the representation to a direct engagement with audiences because of its inherently dissonant composition. *First Love* and *Bordertown* both deal explicitly with the ‘border’ and the notion of a ‘border crossing’: in the latter this is based on the dual and oppositional composition of the border, while in the former the ‘border crossing’ is enacted in the shifting and polyphonic identities presented within *First Love*’s stories.

Overall, this exegesis has contributed to the explication of the research problem by setting up a dialectical relation between many diverse forms of writing to exhibit the way in which multiplicity and strategies of dissonance enact a ‘border crossing’ in the dynamic and flow of different voices and discursive positions.

Summary of contributions

This section outlines a summary of the key contributions to knowledge in my field of research that I believe this research has made in response to the research question. These include:

- Conducting an investigation into the notion of a 'border crossing' within the breaches of literary form to stake out new terrain within my studio practice. This has been conducted at the boundaries of thinking about writing in contemporary art practice and across disciplines of literature and cinema, and I envisage that this will contribute to broadening the scope of the discipline of visual art.
- Bringing new notions of the 'voice' to cinema and literature in order to evaluate and critically rethink how they function. This has the potential to contribute to the conception of new ways of contending with notions of the 'border' and a 'border crossing' in aesthetic and political contexts.
- A new approach to strategies of dissonance and the 'voice' in my studio practice and the possible contribution to the field of contemporary visual art that *Bordertown* and *First Love* offers in this context.
- A contribution to the revision of models of modernist oppositional practice and rupturing aesthetic strategies in the examination of writers and filmmakers Hélène Cixous, Roland Barthes, Chris Marker and Jean-Luc Godard, bringing together the intricacies of their work in order to grasp what concepts and dissonant techniques can be

recuperated or adapted to the notion of ‘dialectical seeing’ in contemporary art practice.

- Articulating the notion of ‘dialectical thinking’ drawn from the analysis of Benjamin, Marker, Brecht and Godard in order to rethink how strategies of dissonance between the elements of my studio research function to enact an aesthetic ‘border crossing’ in the fields of art, literature and cinema.

The summaries above encapsulate the outcomes of this research in the simplest terms. The full extent of the value of this research is embedded in the potential that this body of research represents, and these are briefly outlined in the following notes on the value of these findings.

Research value

This research can be categorised into four areas and these are: *First Love*, literature, cinema, and *Bordertown*. I will now briefly reiterate the findings within these categories in order to discuss their value.

The investigation into writing and confinement that I made in the development of *First Love* has offered a number of new perspectives on my thinking and practice. I came to appreciate alternative forms and structures of literary form both through my own practice of writing and in a parallel engagement in close readings of the thirteen chosen literary works. This shifted my abilities and knowledge in the field from a

general appreciation of literature to a specific capacity to apply literary techniques and concepts to my writing. This was generated from the critical evaluation of 19th century, modern and postmodern literature made as part of this enquiry. I now appreciate how to develop texts in a variety of modes in order to realise (in formal ways) differing experiences of confinement, desire and limit, where I had previously only conceived of writing as a way to represent ideas by description. The exploration of plurality in this project also revealed how the writing and voices of others could exist within a narrative construction. I have yet to fully benefit from all of these new skills and findings as I continue to develop writing in this mode in the future. I believe, however, that the process of writing the stories for *First Love* has allowed my practice to transcend many self-applied limits on writing in order to embrace it as a valid pursuit, especially in its most literary forms, providing me with a new attitude towards writing within the endeavour of contemporary art.

The production of the six videos for *First Love* generated a number of significant results. What started out as a simple way to bring the text into the gallery space (and to activate it) became a rich site of experimentation in which I discovered the possibilities of video production at an intersection with literature. I found that conventions of subtitling, sound recording and editing could be employed in a 'dissonant' way, and that my application of theoretical notions of

dissonance to the site of these productions enabled me to develop the technical aspects of the two projects in specific relation to their underpinning concepts: divided form in the case of *Bordertown,* and the play of dissonance in a writing of confinement with *First Love.* The most important of these has been the engagement that emerged in the space or breach between performance and dialogue, and this, along with the acoustic schism of the sound recording methodology, revealed the possibilities of the reader's slippage 'in and out of character' or between their stage persona and 'themselves'. Most of the discoveries I made in this medium were very elementary articulations of complex ideas, and while I feel that the outcomes are successful for their simplicity I think that there are great possibilities for my practice to extend this thinking to further explore how the 'voice' can contend with notions of the border at this intersection of text, language, theatre and film.

The scrutiny of the form and techniques of literature that attended the development of *First Love* greatly nourished the studio research with examples of literary form and style. In a more critical manner, the philosophical and conceptual underpinnings that I engaged with across such fields of literary theory such as structuralism, semiotics, poststructuralism, formalism and feminism were crucial in building a framework for my theorisation of the dissonant voice and the potential crossing or dissolution of borders within writing. By closely examining the work of Derrida, Barthes and Cixous I discovered a range of

alternative concepts and practices in writing, such as polyphonic writing, intertextuality and *différance.* In the process of analysing these theorists I found that I could equate the above concepts to the notion of 'dissonance' and apply this synthesis of knowledge to the research problem and literally to the development of the creative work in the studio as I composed the stories for *First Love.*

In my engagement with a literature of confinement in this dissertation (building on the works studied for the *First Love* novella) I encountered a rich array of approaches to writing that enabled me to reconceptualise the way I had thought about the role of the writer's 'voice', particularly in terms of the concept of writing that embodies notions of confinement and liberation. Through the lens of Michel Foucault's analyses of power I was also able to conceive how language plays a crucial role in the construction of discursive power and repressive societies. I used this understanding to reflect on works such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Ivan Turgenev's *First Love,* through which I was able to grasp how these writers, and others such as Jean Genet and Jane Austen, mounted a challenge to confinement via an intense psychological interiority and construction of identity through language and literary notions of the 'voice'.

By focusing on particular works of Roland Barthes and Hélène Cixous the possibilities of textual form became apparent, especially as a means to

bring the reader to social or political meanings through a dissonant interaction of 'voice', plurality of identity and a multiplicity of texts. Such strategies were crucial to my apprehension of methods that might wear down the limits and borders of patriarchal language. I became keenly interested in how these methods might additionally allow for a slippage between academic and poetic genres to diffuse unitary models of writing. The literature of Marguerite Duras was also a significant point of reference as I discovered that the linguistic formations she used enabled readers to be drawn into an interiority centred on the voice of the narrator, which was made more distinct for being plural and contested. Cixous and Duras offered an additional source of comprehension in a form of writing that realised the female 'voice' as a means of powerful personal and lyrical expression. The way that these writers used the breach that opened within language was significant to my writing and my enquiry, for I discovered at this juncture exactly how writing could contend with social, political and aesthetic borders.

The investigation of confinement in literature provided a rigorous foundation on which to develop texts for *First Love* that might contend with the border: as part of a narrative formulation, through the voice of the character, and in specific formal and aesthetic devices. From this place of conceptual awareness I was able to envisage the possibilities of literary form as way to make a 'border crossing' even though I also understood that the intention of the writer could not be assumed to

bring about the social reality being proposed. Thus, as I examined this work, I appreciated how it could aspire to a ‘border crossing’ without necessarily enacting it, but also how sometimes the writing was able to enter into and even traverse the breach between these impasses.

The study of the interactions of image, text and voice in cinema brought a wealth of conceptual and formal knowledge to the research project. In wresting with the problem of how the ‘voice’ might transcend the notion of the border within film form I realised that the strategies of dissonance that I had initially identified as part of cinematic formulations of ‘border crossing’ were in fact propelled by a ‘dialectical’ methodology. I was able to theorise this notion through a sustained engagement with the work of Chris Marker and Jean-Luc Godard. Marker’s work has been crucial in developing an understanding of ‘dialectical images’. I came to rethink Marker’s work in this context through a careful examination of the relevance of Walter Benjamin’s methods of (re)constructing history and memory. Godard’s approaches to film form gave me great insight into the meeting point of his strategies of cinematic dissonance with Brechtian thought.

In both of these filmmakers’ work I encountered a use of the voice that directly informed my studio research: in the composition of scripts and stories for *Bordertown* and *First Love,* as well as in the sound design and spatial arrangements of voice, image and text in both projects. My

engagement with Marker’s and Godard’s films revealed how a dialectical approach could facilitate a shifting boundary or a breach between stories, histories and modes to contest conventional narrative and character construction and, moreover, the notion of representation. This allowed me to rethink how representation in my studio research might be questioned by these conceptual and formal means.

The application of the research problem to the development of *Bordertown* prompted me to query many aspects of my studio research. As such, the investigation surrounding *Bordertown* has left me with questions as well as resolutions. The challenges met in the process of exploring this coalescence of historical study and narrative fiction involved wrestling with character construction, narrative structure and formal arrangements of sound and visual or physical materials. The lessons learned from investigating cinematic tropes of dissonance were essential in the articulation of the contested status of the history of the town and its characters. The critical evaluation of literary form and notions of multiplicity and polyvalence also provided crucial direction. I was engaged by this new knowledge to compose the text for the *Bordertown* monologues and the woman’s journal based on the literary trope of a dual narrative. My experiments with sound-effects and voices in space offered my research a set of approaches that have given me a new sense of the scope of sound to contend with contested narratives and atomised histories, particularly in a community both constituted

and divided by a border such as Bordertown. The possibilities of arrangements of formal elements based on a model of dissonance have offered my work a host of possible new configurations, and I envisage that the very precise knowledge I have gained in terms of dialectical thinking will be critical in future work.

Future Research

Of all of these extensive findings, several discoveries have been especially important to steering my thinking in new directions for future research. I began this research project thinking that my study of the 'voice' would bring new knowledge and skills to my studio practice and to my understanding of its theoretical context in philosophical terms and with reference to other contemporary artworks. I did not expect that my intention to explore the 'voice' as a crucial component of this research would bring me back to writing in such a powerful way.

My reservations about the capacity of writing to engage people and transform thinking had, until this point, caused me to confine the practice of writing to a critical or analytical role in my practice. Yet, in the process of this enquiry, I realised that there were other ways to write and that they have the ability to transcend the borders of formal convention. *Bordertown* and *First Love* were the first artworks to enter this breach, and prompted me to take up the 'voice' as a dissonant strategy across all of my work. Being a commanding literary device and a

compelling presence in cinema, the 'voice' in this study quickly became a critical tool in the studio research both in the writing and in the installation works in the form of sound recordings.

At the beginning of this enquiry the notion of the 'voice' seemed rather inscrutable. But the in-depth investigation of writers such as Cixous and filmmakers such as Godard gave rise to a totally new way to think about the 'voice'. In their work I recognised a way forward for writing and the 'voice' as part of an audience-engaged dialectical methodology. While I believe that this revision offers a way to apply modernist tropes like the 'rupture' in contemporary art practice, I remain apprehensive regarding the hyperbole of political language in the field of art. This research project has therefore left me with the irreducible question of how I can determine the point at which art forms might traverse the divide from aesthetic to social object. What is, in my view, possible for the cultural paradigms of art, film and literature is centred on a paradox, for this problem constitutes a border yet it is in encountering the limit and crossing the border that critical consciousness is raised. In other words, the limit has to be recognised before it can be challenged or transcended. While these closing remarks may seem speculative, they constitute a major shift in thinking for my studio practice, one that I intend to apply to future work.

The focus of this current research project has demanded that I leave aside several new lines of enquiry. The most significant of these is a project called *Benevolent Asylum.* This new work will be based on an examination of the history of confinement and exile in early Australian politics, and in terms of content it stems from the concerns of history and collective memory raised by *Bordertown* and with the politics of social and political repression in *First Love.* In developing *Benevolent Asylum* I intend, as a result of this research, to continue to look at what can be recuperated from formal and conceptual strategies of dissonance and dialectical thinking to examine how dominant ideologies might be critically questioned through the medium of art today. Amid the compelling arguments and idealistic propositions, I hope to keep both the dilemmas and the opportunities of this new thinking in mind, as the future work unfolds.

By going back to the ideological roots of aesthetic agency I have been able to envisage a recuperation of models of resistance. This is not to mistake a gesture of resistance for radical action or the exercise of dismantling formal conventions as equal to political intervention, but to realise the kind of art where the border between representation and social reality might occasionally be crossed to engage in a 'thinking' of resistance that sits somewhere in the breach between art and politics.

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