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The 'Waste Land' project: framing practice-based research through literary adaptation

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ABSTRACT

T. S Eliot's seminal poem, 'The Waste Land' (1922) was chosen as an explorative text to acquire an understanding of my interpretation methods for my practice-based PhD, which culminated in a collection of photographic and video installations (2005–2010). Examination of orthodox film adaptation theory established the key debates within this genre – its emphasis upon fidelity criticism, the latitude of translation and the range of methods available to the adaptor. Recognition of the subversive quality of European avant-garde films and its relationship to modernist literature allowed me to implement appropriate stylistic strategies that replicated 'The Waste Land's' cinematic montage. This article considers the way in which my early video experiments were informed by this theoretical and contextual framework, testing out different modes of adaptation in order to reflect upon my process. I argue that undertaking such a methodical approach enabled a better understanding of my role as an editor, re-imagining the source text through extracting fragmentary elements that possess an autobiographical significance. By questioning how literature operated as a resource to represent the self within my practice and acknowledging biographical connections to Eliot, the 'Waste Land' project became an attempt to address the breakdown of my parent's marriage.

Introduction

The objective of my doctoral study was to re-evaluate my arts practice and discover new insights into my translation process through the creation of a new body of work derived from T.S Eliot's 'The Waste Land'.[1] Viewing the poem as an artefact to be visually interpreted, my initial research began with an examination of conventional film adaptation theory, which concentrated on Bluestone (1957), Wagner (1975), Kline (1996), Cartmell and Whelehan (1999) and Hutcheon (2006) to gain an insight into the different mechanisms employed. I will explore how my practice-based research was informed by this theoretical context, and, in particular, how Wagner's three modes of adaptation (1975) structured the creation of my early video experiments. I will outline the problems and reflect upon the insights I encountered whilst making these works, connecting them to the hybrid methods I employed for the final videos.

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Whilst this article considers the motivation and purpose of my literary adaptation, it is important to note that I had originally studied the poem for my A' level English Literature and later, as an undergraduate. However, it was biographical research on Eliot that led to my identification with the shift from his theory of impersonality outlined in his essay, '*Tradition and the Individual Talent*' (1919), to his later admission of the true autobiographical nature of his work,[2] that instigated the recognition of my practice as a form of self-representation, which had been previously shielded by an emphasis upon literary adaptation. This insight accentuated the fact that my visual interpretation of 'The Waste Land' was also 'a submerged biography' (Miller 1977, 37), that shared Eliot's effacement through 'masks, personae and ventriloquy' (Ellman 1987, 3), by utilising the text in order to explore autobiographical experience of parental divorce.[3]

Film adaptation: a question of fidelity, latitude and literacy

It is useful to recount the fundamental questions concerning the translation of literature into film that drove my research at the very beginning. In the light of debates surrounding fidelity criticism, how faithful did I have to be to the original text? How much latitude is there in translation? What different modes of adaptation are available to the adaptor? The limitations of cinema compared to literature, is a much-contested area in film adaptation criticism (Bluestone 1957; Wagner 1975; Cohen 1979; Orr and Nicholson 1992). However, in his 1957 seminal work, *Novels into Film*, George Bluestone analysed six Hollywood films that were made between 1935–1949,[4] concluding that it is,

> Insufficiently recognised that the end products of novel and film represent different aesthetic genera … The film becomes a different thing in the same sense that a historical painting becomes a different thing from the historical event, which it illustrates. (1957, 5)

James Naremore argues that writing on adaptation focuses on two approaches; firstly, the 'Bluestone approach', which is concerned with the comparison of literary versus cinematic form and fidelity to the source. Secondly, he identifies an 'Auteurist approach' which takes the form of a 'metaphor of performance', questioning fidelity but emphasising the differences between the two mediums (2000, 7–8).

These two critical approaches are by no means definitive and other theorists, such as Kline (1996) and Hutcheon (2006), have created further types of classification. Kline detects 'Four Critical Paradigms of Film Adaptation' in her analysis of different forms of film criticism: that of *translation* (in terms of fidelity to the text)*, pluralist* (retaining traces of the novel, whilst becoming independent)*, transformation* (treating the text as source material to create new work) and *materialist* (the impact of cultural and commercial forces on adaptation). In comparison, Hutcheon (2006) distinguishes three critical perspectives, the first two: *formal entity or product* and *process of creation* overlap with Kline's paradigms, but the last definition: the *process of reception* is concerned with the audience's existing knowledge of previous adaptations.

Although these categories outlined by Naremore, Kline and Hutcheon relate to the critique of film adaptations, their theories could be equally applied to the actual translation process itself. By comparison, Geoffrey Wagner in *The Novel and the Cinema* (1975) identified three modes of adaptation: *transposition, commentary* and *analogy* (1975, 221).

> The first of these will be the *transposition*, in which a novel is directly given on the screen, with the minimum of apparent interference. (222–223)

In comparison to his successors, this method is closely aligned with Kline's paradigm of *translation* and relates to the faithful renditions of literary classics, where the film was 'envisaged as a book illustration' (223). Wagner observed that in traditional Hollywood transpositions, there was 'an implicit guarantee that you would see something of Dickens or Thackeray intact' (227). According to Kline, the *translation* critic accepts that adaptations must condense the original, but expect the film to remain faithful to its central themes, characters and genre (1996, 70–71).

The second method of adaptation identified by Wagner is *commentary*, 'where an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect. It could also be called a re-emphasis or re-structure' (1975, 223), whereby the adaptor changes the character's motivations or role, alters the ending, or introduces subtle shifts in time. This mode closely resembles Kline's *pluralist* concept, where changes and omissions are made, yet the film retains the 'novel's mood, tone, and values' (1996, 72). Comparisons can also be made with Linda Hutcheon's *formal entity or product*, which can involve either 'a shift of medium (a poem to a film) or genre, or a change of frame and therefore context: telling the same story from a different point of view' (2006, 7).

However, the third most radical mode coined by Wagner is the '*analogy* [which] must represent a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making *another* work of art' (1975, 227), for example through dramatic shifts in time. The adaptor's intention is prevalent and the completed work cannot be 'a violation of a literary source, since the director has not attempted … to reproduce the original' (227). However, Wagner warned that *analogies* which become so distorted that they are unrecognisable from their source text cannot be considered adaptations. This category is similar to Kline's *transformation* paradigm, where critics 'consider the novel as raw material which the film alters significantly, so that the film becomes an artistic work in its own right' (1996, 72), or Linda Hutcheon's *process of creation*, whereby the 'act of adaptation always involves both (re-) interpretation and then (re-) creation' (2006, 8).

Cinematic language and modernism

Whilst it is true that literature and film share the same communicative aims, they are still different entities and many distinctions have been made between the identification processes involved in viewing a film compared to reading a novel. Wagner defined the film as 'external seeing', whereas the novel is 'internal' (1975, 114). One of the most contested debates in film adaptation criticism that Hutcheon identifies is that interiority is the terrain of the 'telling' mode, whilst exteriority is delivered best by the 'showing' and 'interactive' mode (2006, 23; Bluestone 1957, 47; Wagner 1975, 183; Giddings, Selby, and Wensley 1990, 19; Orr and Nicholson 1992, 2).

Virginia Woolf was one of the earliest critics to comment on the film adaptation process in her 1926 essay, 'The Cinema', where she noted how filmmakers were keen to borrow from literary classics. Woolf recognised that due to cinema's infancy, it was restricted by the literalness of translation, hampered by their 'impoverished representation in the form of indicial signs … A kiss is love. A smashed chair is jealousy. A grin is happiness.

Death is a hearse' (56). She believed that the complexity of verbal language meant that its metaphors could not be sufficiently visualised by the cinema. However, Sharon Ouditt (1999) interprets Woolf's essay as 'not a case for prosecution, but an impressionistic account of the development and potential of the cinema' (Cartmell and Whelehan 1999, 146). This is demonstrated by Woolf's recollection of her experience of viewing the German Expressionist film, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), directed by Robert Wiene, where she remarks how a shadow 'shaped like a tadpole' that menacingly appears behind him could represent a visual metaphor, therefore, disputing the dominant discourses regarding the limitations of the cinematic language: 'For a moment it seemed as if thought could be conveyed by shape more effectively than by words' (1926/1993, 56).

Ouditt acknowledges Woolf's role in the critical understanding of early cinema, recognising that she adopted many cinematic devices within the novel, including the use of flashbacks, dissolves, close-ups or changes in focus, which demonstrates both her critical appreciation of, and experimentation with film language, to create a new literary form. Maggie Humm shares this opinion, emphasising how Woolf 'vividly adopts a more cinematic vocabulary of close-ups – "the very quiver of his lips" – and she understands how the filming of everyday objects, for example, "pebbles on the beach" can function as a visual metonymy of character emotions' (2002, 188). Humm goes further to suggest that Woolf's technique of 'juxtaposing emotions through montage' (189) actually foresaw Sergei Eisenstein's 'overtonal montage' film theory (1929).

Many critics assert that the cinematic quality of experimental modernist literature, by authors like William Faulkner, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, which dispensed with the limitations of realist fiction, coincided with the advent of early film (Bluestone 1957, 13, 61; Cohen 1979, 6, 120, 126; Orr and Nicholson 1992, 4). Keith Cohen detects how modernist literature exploited cinematic techniques, such as discontinuity and fragmented perspectives by referring to Woolf's attempts to expand the present through ' … the rekindling of an image, experience, or feeling buried deep in the vaults of memory' (1979, 126) in *To the Lighthouse* (1927/1992).

Having underpinned my research upon the debates arising from the adaptation of the filmed novel, it was important to realise that I was interpreting a modernist poem through artist video, which was in some respect, stylistically harmonious. My early experiments were informed by a critical understanding of the varying latitude of film poems, such as Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand's *Manhatta* (1921), that illustrated the cityscape in Walt Whitman's poem, 'Mannahatta', from *Leaves of Grass* (1900) and Man Ray's *L'Étoile de Mer* (1928), inspired by Robert Desnos' poem, 'La Place de L'Étoile' (1927). Robert Richardson claims that since Henry James, the novel had become more concerned with its visual qualities. However, he believed that poetry was closer to film, comparing Pound's imagist poem, 'In a Station of the Metro' (1913) written in the style of a Japanese haiku, with a montaged sequence by Eisenstein in order to highlight film's ability, like poetry to 'present a stream of images which make a point or create an effect without logical connection or explanation' (1969, 52).

Earlier, Viktor Shklovsky in his essay, 'Poetry and Prose in Cinema' (1927) had argued that, 'verse is closer to film than is prose', (Shklovsky 2000, 63), emphasising the 'recurrence of images', 'rapid change of frames' and the 'transformation of images into symbols' as 'poetic devices' (2000, 64). Cheryl Potter highlights this similarity:

> Sequences of images in film … function like sequences of words in poetry – they arouse feeling and suggest meaning according to the way they are presented and ordered and according to the rhythm, flow and accumulation of associations. (1990, 22)

In his overview of the European avant-garde, Michael O'Pray observes how 'this symbolist aesthetic, where the image expresses a feeling', began in nineteenth century poetry by Rimbaud, Mallarme and Baudelaire and was then embraced by Pound and Eliot (2003, 11).

From the onset, my investigation was underpinned by determining the modernist context of 'The Waste Land', establishing the extent to which Eliot was influenced by his contemporaries. I drew specific inspiration from avant-garde filmmakers such as Germaine Dulac, Sergei Eisenstein, Fernand Leger and Dziga Vertov, whose work was preoccupied with Shklovsky's notion of de-familiarisation – 'to make forms difficult' (Richter, 778) as outlined in his 1917 essay, 'Art as Technique'. I was intent upon embedding subversive methods, such as montage, superimposition, repetition and the freeze frame within my own work, enforcing Jewel Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley's claim that: 'As Picasso and Braque juxtapose several perspectives on canvas, so Eliot juxtaposes many perspectives of the same idea or object' (1992, 11). My early experiments were also influenced by city films such as Eisenstein's *Strike* (1924) and Ruttman's *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927), but it was Vertov's film, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) in particular, that informed my own walks as a female *flâneur* through London in my *Urban Shadow Walks* (2006) video which combined two different takes together to create a disorientated cubist vision.

The Waste Land: early experimental works (January–September 2005)

'The Waste Land' consists of five individual sections that draw upon a rich tapestry of both historical, and contemporary references, sourced from literature, mythology and popular culture through a vivid montage of imagery, scenes and characters. In the poem's accompanying 'Notes', Eliot acknowledges the importance of Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* about the Grail legend and James Frazer's *Golden Bough* about fertility ceremonies, alongside the writings of Baudelaire, Dante, Marvell, Milton, Shakespeare, and references to, Christianity, Buddhism and Greek mythology. Eliot's employment of these allusions, which is in itself, a form of adaptation, renews our readings of them, creating an interwoven tapestry of sources that comment upon each other, asserting a sense of circularity. Eliot revealed that he used his 'mythical method' (Eliot 1975, 178), as 'a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history' (1975, 177). Jacob Korg observes how:

> These quotations communicate, not by carefully controlled meaning … but by their associations, which are at once more immediate and less exact than the meanings of words … They exemplify, or embody, meaning … In short, they function as objects rather than words. (91)

Korg goes on to suggest that the incorporation of these quotations within the poem operates like bricolage in modernist art (92), supporting Brooker and Bentley's belief that 'in *The Wasteland* there is a continuous instability in which images dissolve, re-form, melt, and overlap' (1992, 31).

My interpretation of 'The Waste Land' began by firstly assessing the poem through the process of re-familiarisation, informed by literary criticism. It seemed logical to start at the beginning with part one, 'The Burial of the Dead' and work through the poem in a chronological fashion, forming an adaptation methodology through experimentation, that could then be applied to the rest of Eliot's text. Although I had established a fundamental understanding of the poem from prior study, I drew upon literary critics who provided more of an art historical reading, such as Korg (1960), Richardson (1969), Schwartz (1985) and Brooker and Bentley (1992) to highlight relevant debates. I was determined not to become intimidated by its critical history, which meant that my creative response to the poem was not restricted and I was able to approach the text in a more open-ended manner, reassured of Linda Hutcheon's belief that:

> What is involved in adapting can be a process of appropriation, of taking possession of another's story, and filtering it, in a sense, through one's own sensibility, interests, and talents. Therefore, adaptors are first interpreters and then creators. (2006, 18)

However, the prevailing question that preoccupied me at this stage was whether it was more appropriate to visualise the overall mood of the text, select individual scenarios, or concentrate on particular imagery. This dilemma resonated with Robert Stam's assertion that the source text contains a 'series of verbal cues that the adapting text can then take up, amplify, ignore, subvert, or transform' (Stam 2000, 68).

After consultation with *The Wasteland: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts, including the Annotations of Ezra Pound* (1971), which reveals the true extent of Pound's editing process, I decided to dissect the text, simulating his technique, by halving the material in the first section from 76 lines down to 38, which could be compared to Hutcheon's definition of a *process of creation* (2006, 8). Even though I felt I was being disobedient to the source material, it was a liberating exercise that brought a critical understanding of both the meaning of the poem as well as connecting to the main points that I felt to be important.

Having carried out this radical editing procedure, I identified the key elements within part one, including references to Spring (l.1–4), Marie's memory of her sledge ride (l.14–17), waste land imagery (l.19–30), the Hyacinth girl sequence (l.37–42), Madame Sosostris' tarot card reading (l.52–56) and the London city commuters (l.60–66). These edited sections were then placed on my studio wall in order to gain familiarity. The resulting video montages combined documentary footage with staged scenes, such as close-ups of snowdrops with commuters walking over London Bridge, but I felt that I needed a more rigorous framework in order to fully assess these provisional works.

Therefore, having acquired a better understanding of the debates surrounding film adaptation theory, I decided to test out my early experiments for the 'Waste Land' project more specifically against Wagner's (1975) three modes in order to investigate whether film adaptation theory could be applied to experimental artists video. I began by creating a *transposition* that literally illustrated part one of Eliot's poem, 'The Burial of the Dead', experimenting with voiceover and subtitles. The resulting three-minute sequence montaged together expected images with each changing scene and backtracked on my initial radical editing process. However, I was disillusioned by this direct form of translation and considered it to be ineffective, since the voiceover or subtitles dominated the work and it became too predictable to view (Figure 1).
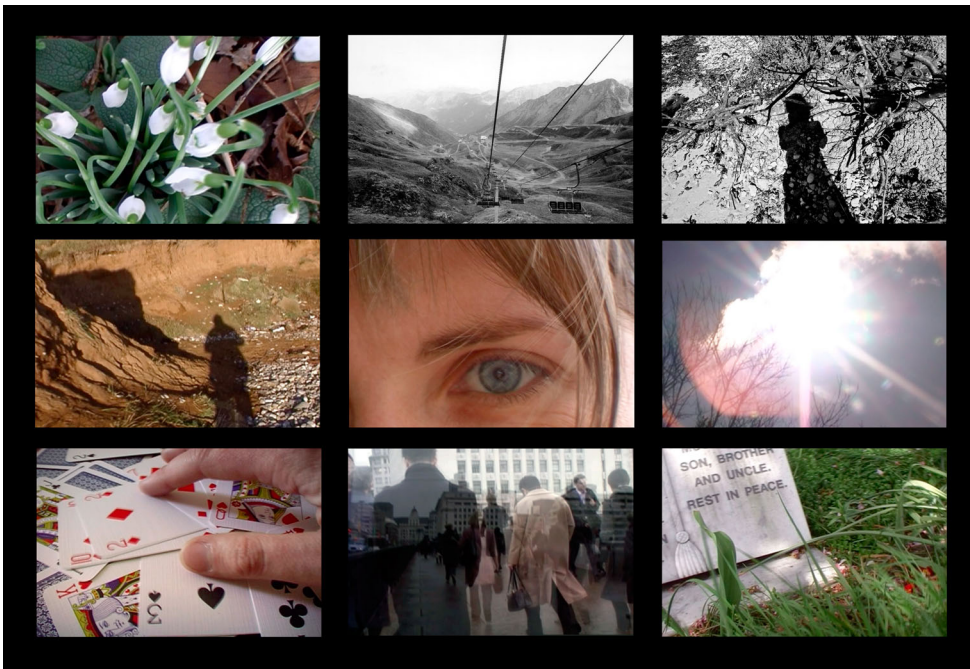
Figure 1. Montage of stills from *transposition* experiments (2005).

Although I was conscious that I was performing a formality by testing out each of Wagner's methods in this systematic way and becoming frustrated in the process, I did appreciate that it was important, since it would facilitate better comprehension of the visual translation process. This led me to think more about the latitude of translation, questioning whether there was any need to both 'show' and 'tell' (Hutcheon 2006, 23), since it would become a literal reading of the text and anchored the meaning too readily. Having completed the *transposition* experiments I realised that this particular adaptation mode would not be appropriate for my own interpretation of Eliot's poem, since its fragmentary nature deemed it stylistically incomparable with conventional film adaptations.

I, therefore, moved onto a series of experiments based on Wagner's second mode of *commentary*, where the source text is 'purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect' (1975, 223). Inspired by this looser latitude of translation, I adopted a metaphorical response by re-editing the material, focusing on specific quotations or imagery that I had considered significant, and was immediately encouraged by the result. The reassessment of the existing video footage marked a return to Pound's radical editing method, but with new, perceptive insights. In my last experiment employing this technique, I isolated each of the scenes within *The Burial of the Dead* by interspersing a few seconds of black screen between each of them. This separation prompted the final decision to create a collection of individual artist videos, rather than producing a single film. Consequently, I decided that I would focus upon key images or episodes that struck a personal resonance to create experiential, fragmentary works that would interact with one another within a gallery installation format.

For the next phase of experiments, derived from Wagner's method of *analogy*, I took a thematic response to the poem, drawing upon references to rural and urban imagery, failed relationships and the role of memory and superstition. These *analogy* sequences focused more specifically on the 'waste-land-scapes' in the poem, capturing footage of city streets, the river Thames and desolate rural landscapes. The application of this freer adaptation method resulted in the production of a series of superimposed videos of journeys through London that visualised Eliot's impressionistic episodes, depicting the poem's 'multi-perspectivism' (Brooker and Bentley 1992, 11) associated with Cubism.

However, I was mindful of creating work that was too distanced from the original source material so that the work became another entity altogether. This problem was resolved for the final works that emerged from these experiments, such as *Urban Shadow Walks* (2006),[5] which drew upon research on the *flâneur* and avant-garde film, yet connected to the poem through specific lines, 'A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, I had not thought death had undone so many' (1.62–63). This video drew inspiration from my *transposition*, *commentary* and *analogy* city experiments to produce a grid of four superimposed walks that documented my experience as a London commuter (Figures 2 and 3).

Indeed, reassessment of my attachment to Eliot's poem allowed for the recognition of the autobiographical significance of my adaptations to emerge. Eliot's poem had originally resonated with me during English Literature 'A' level study, through a biographical connection, whereby parallels between the disintegration of Eliot's first marriage to Vivienne Haigh Wood, with that of my parents' marital breakdown were established. In a letter to his friend Conrad Aiken in 1916, Eliot discloses that since his marriage to Vivienne the year before, he had, 'lived through enough material for a score of long poems' (Brooker 2004, 135). Therefore, it seems undisputed that 'The Waste Land' is not only a response to the First World War, but was also concerned with Eliot's difficult relationship with his wife. This emotional interpretation is demonstrated in *I*

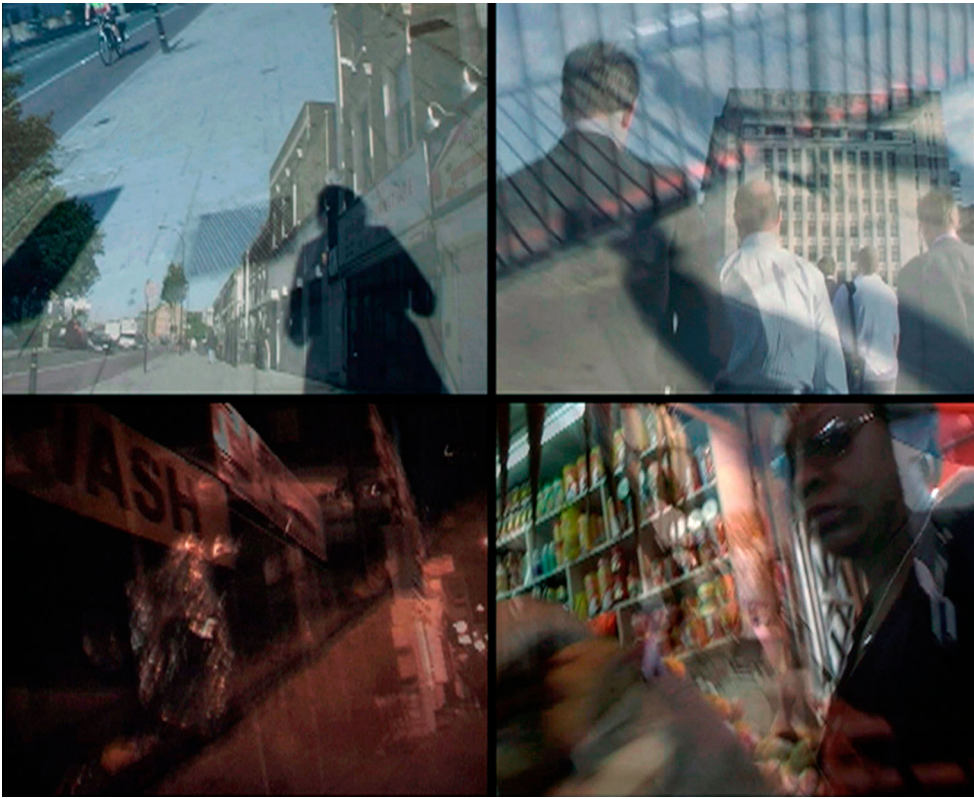**Figure 2.** Still from *commentary* sequence (2005).

Figure 3. Still from *Urban Shadow Walks* (2006).

Knew Nothing (2006),[6] which rapidly cuts between a close-up of my eye crying, with sunlight bursting from behind the clouds in a short, looping, split screen video, with a varying rhythm, including freeze frames to create a sense of disorientation, informed by Fernand Leger's 1924 film, *Ballet Mécanique* and Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera*. This approach was later expanded upon for my embodied performance of *Hushing the Room Enclosed* (2008),[7] that vocalised recalled memories of parental arguments through a multi-layered speech, extracted from part two, *A Game of Chess* (Figures 4 and 5).

Having started my interpretation of Eliot's poem intuitively, informed by Pound's editing techniques before repositioning the process towards a more formulaic method led by Wagner's three modes of adaptation, it was interesting to detect rejection of a literal visual translation and a consequent shift towards a non-literal interpretation of the text. By adopting Wagner's theory as a methodological framework for my experiments, I was able to 'make some sense of' the creative process. Despite being frustrated by their limitations, I felt that the work would not have evolved in the way that it did, had I not chosen this systematic route. It became clear from the analysis of my early *Waste Land* experiments, that only the looser forms of conventional film adaptation theories could be applied to experimental videos derived from literature, and that hybrid categories exist between these suggested modes.
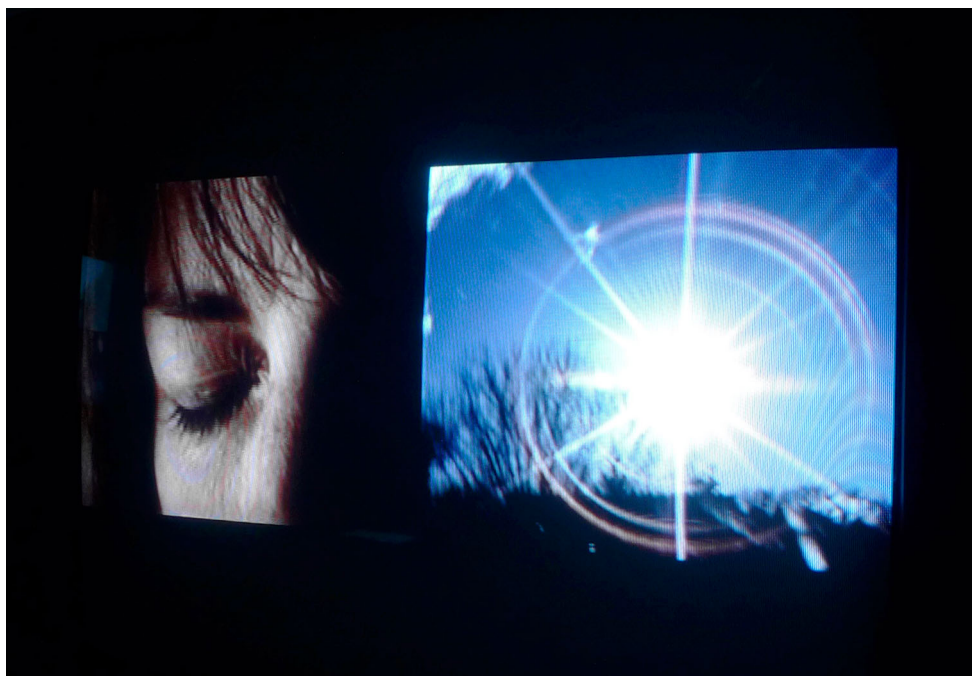
Figure 4. *I Knew Nothing* (2006) installation.

Figure 5. *Hushing the Room Enclosed* (2008) installation.

My final Waste Land interpretive methods

As I approached each part of 'The Waste Land', I constantly reflected upon and refined my interpretive procedures. It became clear that I adopt the role of an editor, interacting with the source text and then re-imagining and transforming it through a process of re-familiarisation and extraction of literary fragments. Therefore, the first stage is to acquire some understanding of its meaning and critical framework to enlighten my identification with specific quotations, imagery or thematic concerns. Crucially at this 'searching stage' I am trying to determine how specific aspects of the text can signify the self and how best to represent these visually. After a final 'break-through' stage of forming autobiographical attachments, isolated quotations or re-scripted phrases are then worked through and supported by relevant contextual influences. I then enter into an 'experimentation' phase, testing out options, refining concepts and re-editing my chosen quotations. Central to this process is the sketchbook, which functions as a reflective document that not only records the creative 'journey' itself, but also acts as a 'place' where theory and practice intersect. This process of combining influences, theory and project development within one location allows the research to evolve in a reflexive fashion and is actively used as a reference point, consistently consulted at different stages and commented upon retrospectively when evaluating the work for dissemination purposes.

Indeed, as a 'practitioner-researcher', I am now acutely aware that doctoral research has encouraged a deeper interrogation and analysis of my practice through the continual process of critical self-reflection and the modification of my research aims, which in turn is fed by my immersion within relevant theoretical discourses. This active cyclical process, which oscillates between theory and practice, has facilitated the unearthing of new understandings. By focusing on thinking through practice, I constantly questioned my prior assumptions in order to reframe my work and articulate my ideas more effectively. I adopt heuristic approaches within my research and I am conscious of 'making sense of the work', through interpretation within a critical discourse in order to make experiential discoveries. Whilst this identifies the research as particular to fine art practices, comparisons can be made to pedagogy, which encourages reflection and critique, particularly David Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984) and Donald Schon's 'reflection-on-action' (1983), which 'does not simply involve doing, but also reflecting, processing, thinking and further understanding' (Fry, Ketteridge, and Marshall 2003, 15).

I found that 'testing out' my research through work-in-progress exhibitions and seminar presentations was fundamental to its development, by situating it within a context, allowing critical dialogue to challenge my ideas and enabling the consequent process of re-evaluation and revision to take place. Participation in the practice-led doctoral exhibition and symposium, 'The Art of Research: Research Narratives' at Chelsea College of Art and Design in October 2008, where I showed *Hushing the Room Enclosed* (2008) led reviewers to detect an experiential narrative that was concerned with emotional aspects of the family and home. Even without prior knowledge of the work's reference to the failed relationship in part two of 'The Waste Land', they recognised the fact that, although the work seemed highly personal, it possessed a universal appeal, which reassured me of earlier concerns about its accessibility.

This reflective research strategy led to an identification of four different approaches to my interpretive method. First, are those works based upon isolated, fragmented lines from

the poem, for example, *The Deep Sea Swell* (2009).[8] Second, a re-scripting exercise, through an amalgamation of several lines, for instance the combination of references to the 'frosty silence' (l.323), 'The shouting and the crying' (l.325), the 'empty chapel' (l.388) and the key in the door which 'confirms a prison' (l.413) in *The Awful Daring of a Moment's Surrender* (2009) video.[9] Third, those works that are inspired by a specific action, character, or image, such as Madame Sosostris in *Fortune-telling/Re-telling* (2007)[10] which developed from my *transposition* and *commentary* experiments. Lastly, I form a identification with a conceptual or thematic concern within the text, for example, *In the Cage* (2007),[11] where I appear as an anonymous figure 'acting out' the non-communication between the poem's speakers through a series of gestures, entrapped between two pillars within a sparse stage-like space. My own interpretations are situated in the space between *commentary* and *analogy* (Wagner 1975) *pluralist* and *transformation* (Kline 1996) or *process of creation* (Hutcheon 2006), but it is also worth noting that each work can embody several of these interpretive methods, since it is a result of autobiographical identification.

Despite formulating and refining these different interpretive methods, I encountered three main challenges during the production of the 'Waste Land' series – firstly, that of literalness, second, that of distancing, and third, that of obscured meaning. These interconnected areas alternated between providing the obvious visual solution, becoming too separated from the original text, or creating work that was too densely interwoven with theoretical, literary, stylistic and contextual references, which corresponded with debates regarding a tendency for some practice-based doctoral research to illustrate theory.[12] It was necessary to rationalise my ideas and focus upon my autobiographical connection with part five of the poem towards the end of my study, which was the continued estrangement from my father. This re-assessment process enabled the metaphorical interpretation of my anonymous figure walking into infinity, separated from my father in *Who is the Third Who Walks Always Beside You?* (2009),[13] along with the performative re-enactment of my mother's bridal walk to the church in *The Awful Daring of a Moment's Surrender* (2009), creating more open-ended narratives (Figures 6 and 7).

I found that this constant fluctuation between theory and practice allowed for pertinent insights to be discovered and re-worked, as I managed to 'write through practice' as well as 'create through theory'. As a result of thinking through writing, I was able to identify and articulate my interpretive methods and processes more explicitly by comparing my work to relevant case study examples of other artworks derived from T. S Eliot, and distinguishing their similarities and differences, which enabled me to firmly situate my practice within an art context.

The most eminent adaptation of 'The Waste Land' is Deborah Warner's 1995 film, whereby the actress Fiona Shaw personifies its multiple identities and fluctuating moods in the form of a dramatic monologue. Each section of Eliot's poem is given distinctive characteristics, signified by a change in the set design's colour palette, lighting and costume and supported by alterations in camera framing and movement. According to film adaptation theory, Warner's interpretation could be categorised as a *transposition* (Wagner 1975), in terms of its fidelity to the text by Shaw's literal poetry reading. However, its emphasis on staged theatricality and emotional responses means that it occupies the looser framework of Hutcheon's *formal entity or product*, or Kline's *pluralist* approach, as it becomes an individualised piece of work.

Figure 6. *Who is the Third Who Walks Always Beside You?* (2009).

Figure 7. *The Awful Daring of a Moment's Surrender* (2009).

John Smith's five-minute film, *The Waste Land* (1999) adopts a more instinctive, care-free approach to the source material, opening to the sound of Eliot's own reading of 'HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME' at the end of part two, 'A Game of Chess' (l.165–172), within the setting of an East End public house. Smith's vocal rendition of 'Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night' (l.171) follows his walk into the men's lavatory, where he recites the beginning of part three, 'The Fire Sermon' (l.173–186), the camera fixating upon the texture of the wall, before panning around and surveying the decrepit interior, reinforcing Eliot's depiction of the squalid Thames riverbank. Drawing upon his ironic sense of humour to create visual puns, Smith's interpretation makes literal connections to the source material, whilst at the same time creating a deliberate re-emphasis, which alternates between *transposition* and *commentary* (Wagner 1975).

Chris Marker's two-channel video installation, *Owls at Noon Prelude: The Hollow Men* (2005), is an adaptation of T. S Eliot's later poem, 'The Hollow Men' (1925) that features an A/B pattern of image and text, synchronised across eight screens. Inspired by Eliot's reflection on the aftermath of World War One, Marker montages 'sightless' silhouetted figures with archive photographs of trench warfare, field hospital group photographs, barbed wire fences and outlines of winter trees, juxtaposed against portraits of beautiful women. Marker's reflection is supported by an autobiographical statement at the beginning, which reveals he was only four years old when the poem was written. Therefore, this interpretation traverses several adaptation modes, since it could be defined as either a *commentary* (Wagner 1975), *process of creation* (Hutcheon 2006), or *transformation* (Kline 1996) that concentrates on producing an emotive, yet politicised response to the source.

Juan Muñoz's installation, *The Wasteland* (1987) features an empty room with a linoleum floor of tessellating black, yellow and grey tiles that form an optical illusion, leading the audience across space towards an isolated ventriloquist dummy perched on the edge of a shelf in the corner. Muñoz's thematic reading of Eliot's text focuses upon the non-communication between the characters and the sense of fragmentation, which is translated into a psychological space. In this respect, Muñoz's interpretation adopts a generalised perspective that could signify an *analogy* (Wagner 1975), *transformation* (Kline 1996) or a *process of creation* (Hutcheon 2006) since it extracts and concentrates upon a particular mood generated from the poem.

The process of discovering and analysing other works derived from Eliot's poetry, which span a range of media, was imperative for the development of my own interpretation in terms of identifying method, style and purpose. Although I was influenced by Deborah Warner's emotional dramatisation of the poem and the stylistic devices employed to distinguish each separate part of the poem, her interpretation faithfully delivered each line from the poem, which is significantly different to my own approach. John Smith's film brought to light the possibility of visualising a short section from the text in a personal, intuitive fashion using a subjective viewpoint, yet his chosen subject matter was in some ways quite literal. Whilst I associated myself both with Chris Marker's process of re-scripting the original text and adopting a thematic approach and his chosen video installation format, I do not share his political impetus. I was intrigued by the way in which Juan Muñoz's installation spatialised the poem so that it achieved a psychological impact upon the audience, but felt that in comparison to my own method, it was quite

reductive in the way in which it became an abstract concept. It has become apparent that whilst my literary interpretations share particular characteristics with these examples, my work is distinctive, in that I adopt multiple methods and employ literature as a device to represent the self and repressed memory.

Conclusion

During my research, I was continually questioning the relationship between the finished visual artefact and the original literary text. I was concerned whether the completed works would become a separate entity, which would mean that there was no need for the poem as a reference point. I also deliberated the extent of the audience's prior experience of 'The Waste Land' and, if their lack of knowledge would prevent them from gaining an appreciation of the work. However, as my research became increasingly preoccupied with notions of autobiography, it became clear that literary texts served an important function as a form of displacement that deflected attention away from the self, yet provided a relevant thematic and psychological framework that enabled the recollection of personal experience. This chosen interpretive method meant that whilst the works are traceable to the source, they are also able to stand alone, appealing to uninformed audiences through their universality.

Indeed, as my research progressed, I was increasingly conscious of the fact that I was working through the poem methodically to discover my praxis of adaptation through my evolving research over the five-year research period. Therefore, I would suggest that the later videos and sound pieces I produced, such as *Hushing the Room Enclosed* (2008), *The Deep Sea Swell* (2009), *The Awful Daring of a Moment's Surrender* (2009) and *Who is the Third who Walks Always beside You?* (2009), in particular, were more successful. What is unique to these works is a process of 'becoming', of an emotional embodiment of the text through a performative re-imagining of repressed memory. As looser, open-ended adaptations, there is a conscious 'letting go', not only of the burden of fidelity to the source text, but also a lack of inhibition of communicating the deeply personal issue of family breakdown.

As a result of my practice-based research, it was realised that I interpret literature emotionally and selectively in order to produce an ambiguous form of self-representation. This method aims to adopt a therapeutic stance, utilising adaptation as autobiography, realised through a re-scripting process, based upon empathy and identification. Consequently, I 'speak' through the text, seeking autobiographical associations with certain images, themes, characters or concepts to re-invent the source material. It was discovered that this fragmentary method of extraction corresponded with the ambiguous visual representation of the self within the work itself.

Therefore, I would suggest that my method acknowledges Wagner's *analogy* (1975, 227), Hutcheon's *process of creation* (2006, 8), or Kline's mode of *transformation* (1996, 72), yet also performs a cathartic role in order to create an alternative format. In this regard, I was able to identify a fine art process of literary adaptation, which uses the source text as a channelling device for self-representation and the recollection and re-staging of memory. This discovery allowed for an understanding of how adaptation can operate as autobiography, beyond its original narrative or purpose, whilst still retaining its relationship to the source material.

Notes

1. The 'Waste Land' (2005–2010) project consists of ten looping artist videos and two photographic series, although this article will highlight the experimental adaptation processes, influences and theories that informed them, rather than critiquing the final works in depth. The work is available at www.sallywaterman.com and full-length versions of the videos are available at: https://vimeo.com/sallywaterman. See also, Sally Waterman (2018). Available as a free PDF download: https://www.transcript-verlag.de/en/978-3-8376-3006-0/global-photographies/
2. Evidenced in 'The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism' (1933) and *On Poetry and Poets* (1957).
3. My doctoral study analysed my different methods of self-representation through performed role-play, acknowledging the fact that I use visual masking strategies in order to situate myself apart from my audience, appearing as an anonymous figure, a disembodied self, or a ghostly trace. The study of women's photographic self-portraiture detected a subversion of objectification, replaced by an involvement with masquerade and self-effacement, together with the creation of shifting rather than fixed identities, informed by female artists such as Francesca Woodman, Ana Mendieta and Sam Taylor-Johnson.
4. These choices were dictated by access to the shooting script and were *The Informer, Wuthering Heights, Pride and Prejudice, The Grapes of Wrath, The Ox-Bow Incident, Madame Bovary.* James Naremore recognises Bluestone's *Novels into Film* (1957) as the first academic analysis of film adaptation in America (Naremore 2000, 6).
5. See https://vimeo.com/113612753
6. See https://vimeo.com/157100743. This video is based on the lines, 'I could not/Speak and my eyes failed, I was neither/Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,/Looking into the heart of light, the silence' (l.38–41).
7. See https://vimeo.com/146700638
8. See https://vimeo.com/24838945
9. See https://vimeo.com/157202874
10. See https://vimeo.com/195088203
11. See https://vimeo.com/70315513
12. Dr Joram ten Brink, (University of Westminster) highlighted this issue in his keynote paper at the AVPhD symposium at the University of Sussex, 4th July 2007, emphasising the role of theory to arise from the practice, rather than practice becoming an illustration of theory.
13. See https://vimeo.com/157198221

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Sally Waterman's video and photographic works explore memory, place and familial relationships through literary adaptation. She received her practice-based PhD Media and Photography: 'Visualising The Waste Land: Discovering a Praxis of Adaptation' from the University of Plymouth, in 2011. Past group exhibitions and film screenings include Wolverhampton Art Gallery; Oriel Davies Gallery, Newtown, Wales; Pitzhanger Manor House and Gallery, London; CCA, Glasgow; Aesthetica Short Film Festival, York; Turner Contemporary, Margate; ViSiONA festival, Huesca, Spain and Moviemento, Berlin, Germany. Her published work includes 'Performing Familial Memory in Against' in Picturing the Family: Media, Narrative, Memory, edited by Silke Arnold-de Simine and Joanne Leal

(Bloombury, 2018) and 'Re-imagining the Family Album through Literary Adaptation' in Global Photographies: Memory-History-Archives, edited by Sissy Helff and Stefanie Michels, (Transcript, 2018). She is a sessional lecturer at UCA, Rochester and Ravensbourne University, London and is the founder of the research group, Family Ties Network. Her website is: www.sallywaterman.com

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