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**AVON AVON**



# AVON AVON

An exegesis presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

at Massey University, Wellington,  
New Zealand.

Kalya Ward

2014



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Figure 1. Ward, K. 2014. *The River*



# Preamble

A River is a trace moving through, always about to intersect, to repeat, to return, to haunt, to confound. It is a confluence of what has been, and what is yet to come. It is at once the precipice and the embrace.

It is history, landscape, and stories.

Stories as told through history books, newspapers, photographs, anecdotes, memories, landscapes, and myths.

Stories of self, societal and individual, weave a similar narrative path. A gulf exists between the familiar landscapes of our past and the similar, unfamiliar, landscapes of the present.

Christchurch has been the scene of a series of devastating earthquakes, felling and emptying vast areas of the city. Perhaps some of the worst affected are the areas in which I grew up.

I started to consider the ramifications, both culturally and personally, of trying to locate a remembered past, or a sense of place, within a physically altered landscape. Is 'home' still 'home' when I can no longer recognise myself in the landscapes of my memories?

In my work the Avon River and its surrounding landscape becomes an allegory for both time and (my) memories, and time and (city) identity.

In name alone the river is an echo of years past. A copy of an ideal no less an amalgam of a reality than memory itself is a representation of a perceived reality.

The word 'Avon' translates to 'River' in both Brythonic (Old Welsh) and Gaelic languages, simply translating Avon River to

'River River'. The duality of this name is a tautology, an overstatement; it is a doubling, a copying, even an emulation of something (or somewhere) that already exists. Somewhere that can be connected to through reimagining our recollections. A story of itself revealed through moments, anecdotes, and re-telling's that rely on momentary specificities, ebbing and flowing beyond the realms of the strictly factual.

The Avon River embodies the *idea* of home as much as the physical space within which it is located.

Throughout the United Kingdom and Britain's dispersed post-colonies, sixteen rivers exist answering to the designation 'River Avon', or 'Avon River'. A product of an English desire to stamp its imperial foot upon colonised landscapes. A deliberate act of mimicry, ominously serving to foreground an absence of 'home' through the (im)positioning of it elsewhere, in various permutations, many times over.

There is some debate as to why the Avon River in Christchurch is named thus. Could it be, as was suggested by local historian Robert C. Lamb in *From the Banks of the Avon: The Story of A River* (1981) that it was dubbed such in response to the nostalgic yearnings of the Deans brothers, in remembrance of an Avon that snaked through their grandfather's Scottish lands? For which they (supposedly) pined from within an unexpectedly inhospitable landscape. Not at all the Arcadian dream the tweaked reports from land surveys and (abridged) personal accounts had assured. In the Deans' supposed naming of the river, they were haunted by the glimpses and tenuous associations of a faraway home, and an equally distant childhood. And yet, that story conjures its own ghost: This particular Avon was also once referred to as *The Shakespeare*, a title which tips its hat to a far away Avon with a more literary (and lofty cultural) appeal. It is this which interests me—the slippage between approximate narratives, wrapped up in fact; but which, like all histories, are easily unraveled through notions of subjectivity.

A river runs through Christchurch. From east to west it exists as a locus of division. Confluence meets where the tracks

switch, either the right or wrong depending on your disposition. Through earthquakes those tracks have buckled, and dispositions have shifted, the ruptures in historic identity laid bare.

I am from the East. Underbelly East. The migratory stretch of the river early destined to become the working end. And, like most urban enterprise, through industry the working homes sprung up along the eastern-side of the tracks. The West-river stood for leisure and the East-river for labour. The racehorse and the draught.

This story began when I returned to Christchurch in 2013, after ten years of absence. Riverside once more, I stood in front of the Christchurch Town Hall, under which the western arm of the Avon River flowed, preparing to film it.

As I set up my camera, a man steering a river punt (dressed in Oxford boater, striped tie, and cricket whites) ferried a load of passengers into my frame. As I listened to him pass, spinning his story, bearing no relationship to Christchurch in its current state, I realised his tale did not resemble Christchurch at all. What it did resemble was the Nineteenth Century proclivities of a forgotten Britain.

A simulacrum can never hope to be what it emulates.

Throughout the process of this work I have been reflecting upon my own opaque recollections and the (equally) vague mythical narratives that form around histories of place. I place particular focus on the tension created between the haunting of ourselves—culturally and personally—and on the ruptures unveiled—both temporal and physical—within a re-collective narrative.

What do these ruptures look/sound/feel like? Moreover, how might I evoke them?

I began with an investigation of site through memory, or really, memory through site, and as such it is very much situated as a response from a self-reflexive position. What started as a self-reflexive response eventually broadened and produced a series of works that engage with, and work to articulate, the

binary and uncanny moments that have revealed themselves along the way.

Over the two years of my Master of Fine Arts Studies, I have split my focus into two separate, but related, sets of methods and concerns. For the purposes of this exegesis, I am going to focus on the latter part of my research, in which I have spent the past year considering and producing the final work for exhibition. The most significant works over both years will be annotated in an appendix, to provide some developmental context.

*AVON AVON* is not a work about earthquakes, although it is true that earthquakes drew me back to Christchurch, but not immediately, and in a rather covert way.

# **The Canterbury Association**

**Incorporated by Royal Charter, 13th November 1849**



## **WELCOMES YOU**

**WORKING CLASS IMMIGRANT**

## **KALYA WARD**

**to the**

## **PORT OF LYTTELTON**

**and the**

## **CANTERBURY SETTLEMENT,**

**you being of the highest Character for  
society, Steadiness and respectability  
as certified by the Clergyman of your parish.**

**H.F Alston**

*Secretary*

*9 Adelphi Terrace, London*

*16th February 1851*

Reproduction by Ferrymead Print, Ferrymead Historic Park, Christchurch, New Zealand

Figure 2. Ward, K. 2014. *Working Class Immigrant*.



# The Beginning

Let me tell you a story.

It began at the moment I sensed irony. The perception of which fell tardily behind the event itself. Until then I hadn't been able to grasp that feeling, just a whisper, an itch—under the skin and annoyingly illusive. It had followed me always, for as long as I had been aware that something irked me.

There is an awkwardness in my relationship to that place—supposedly my own place in the world. If place is the pause in which we become aware of our relationship to space (Tuan 1977, p.6)—the precipice, the beat in-between the noise and the silence, the flux and stasis—then place is also where we find a connection to time. Pauses are infrequent, inconsistent and often inconveniently timed. Pauses also allow room for connection, disconnection, mystification, and for us to catch a breath.

The moment I became aware of the irony was breathtaking. It fell during one of those pauses, caught as I stood and considered the space before me, resembling a site/sight that reminded me of home. Not literally home of course, as it was a large and impressive structure that had housed all of us at one time, throughout childhood to adulthood, a nexus of activity, giving a sense of home in a collective attachment to place through ritual. It reminded me of home because it reminded me of countless other times regarding it.

A punter sailed past, as if out of time.

Not only because his costume resembled the attire of another place and another time (cricket whites, striped waistcoat and straw boater), but also because the event jarred with the

surrounding landscape. Everything about it was awkward. The passengers shuffled self-consciously, as demonstrated through bodily repositioning and furtive glances at my camera, casually (and unintentionally) aimed in their direction. We were collectively aware they had drifted into shot, and that I had not sought them out. I was aware of the irony that their very presence in the landscape and in time presented.

The punter seemed weary and to be operating on automatic, speaking unconsciously—impervious (or was he?) to the tension between what he described and what was present (or, rather, absent). I remember thinking to myself the entire scene was a fitting allegory for historical memory in general.

My experiences of the face of Christchurch as attached to its colonial and mythically genteel history (as taught at school, read in books, and re-lived through histories), always sat a little uneasily with me. The dichotomy between this face and my relationship to it as a place, sat at odds.

There has always been a dark and seedy underbelly and with it a tension reflected in the contrast of lush gardens, Victorian architecture, and quaint inner city streets—which of course now do not exist as before.

In my view that tension was polarised by the city's (or any city's for that matter) inability to maintain such a facade from its very beginning, and as with all mythical places, the proof is in the re-telling and the chasms revealed within the story.

This was reflected throughout my youth in a clear division of class through sensibilities and suburbs, which has often been emphatically denied as existing.

Growing up on the eastern side of the river provided both magical and dangerous encounters, all of which make up some of the story of my past 'insofar as it is affective and magical, [and] only accommodates those facts that suit it' (Nora 1989, p.8). My story is no different to the wider narrative of any place; history is just as slippery as memory.

W. G. Sebald said that the act of wandering through a landscape was crucial to the evocation of memory (Hill 2013, p.383). In *The Rings of Saturn* (2007) the nameless protagonist (who we assume to be Sebald) wanders and 'narrates a deteriorating landscape, surrounded by the forces of nature and the legacies

of the past' (Hill 2013, p.383). Part novel, part memoir, and part travelogue, Sebald walks the narrow line between fiction and 'fact'. His use of a vernacular voice highlights that history is neither.

With Sebald's novels, there is slippage between historic narrative and vernacular voice, creating an illusion of truth whilst highlighting the subjectivity (and fallibility) of experience and memory. All the time feeding us extraneous information so that, almost by osmosis, the story has built itself around the reader, from the bottom up, feeding in tributaries along the way. What starts with a singular stream gathers into a rich and complex narrative, in which one can never be sure where fact lies buried.

To perceive landscape is 'to carry out an act of remembrance' which arises through 'engaging perpetually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past' (Ingold as cited in Hill 2013, p.380).

Reflection upon the nature of memory has long held a place in philosophic discourses. Greek philosophers Aristotle and Plato, both established early positions in relation to the nature of memory. For Plato, recollection and the 'transmission of traditions' were focused on an 'oral and conversational practice' and in a critical engagement with text (Hill 2013, p.381) whereas Aristotle emphasised the 'senses and materiality of the world' and how it is *perceived* and remembered (Hill 2013, p.381).

As Aristotle focuses on time and image within the reception of memory (Aristotle 1984), for my purposes here his approach is the most appropriate. I am exploring a landscape (or in this case, riverscape) in order to re-view the past, through time-based imagery, or objects. Producing visual reconstructions, recreated from the ephemera of actual experiences of the present looking back to the past. Aristotle terms this succinctly: '...memory belongs incidentally to the faculty of thought, and essentially it belongs to the primary faculty of sense-perception' (1984, p.715). It is through this perception that we engage with the past. In the words of Aristotle, 'memory relates to the past' and we would not say that we 'remember what is present when it is present', as 'present is

the object only of perception, and the future, of expectation, but the object of memory is past' (1984, p.714).

Nineteenth Century French philosopher Henri Bergson picks this up further in regard to perception of memory and its relationship to duration and movement in *Matter and Memory* (2007). Bergson 'defined memory as the intersection of mind and matter' (Gibbons 2012, p.6), and that the 'present is both sensation and movement' (Bergson 2007, p.177). According to Bergson the '"present" has one foot in the past' and 'another in the future' (2007, p.177). I am interested in his articulation of the embodiment of memory as moving through space and time, as it relates to the moving image, as well as the physicality of memory. Because if, as Bergson asserts, memory is within us, it cannot be outside of us and, therefore, 'perception is already memory' (2007, p.295). If to perceive is to be within movement, then an engagement with space (soon to be place, according to Tuan (1977) encapsulates both the physical qualities of the materiality of film, and the ephemeral (and unreliable) nature of memory.

Philosopher Gilles Deleuze expands upon Bergson's thesis in his books *Cinema 1* (1986) and *Cinema 2* (1989) in relation to the moving image, considering time within an image 'not as past, present, future but as direct and indirect time' (Coleman 2011, p.135). For Deleuze (1986), the 'movement-image and matter are identical' and he states that according to Bergson 'movement is distinct from space covered. Space covered is past, movement is present, the act of covering' (1986, p.59). Furthermore 'movement is a translation in space' (1986, p.8) and within the moving image 'time splits itself into present and past, present passes and past which is preserved' (1989, p.82). A film sequence unfolds as an indiscernible catalogue of still images in a continuous stream, which have recorded some other past, and in some other place. Yet in the act of engaging with an ostensibly externalised (and as it is film, fabricated) memory of another's experience, we are positioning ourselves within that same moment, from a future tense. It is experienced with all the subjectivities of the personal in present time. But, most importantly, it is viewed with an innate awareness of being both inside and outside of time, and that what is viewed is re-experienced.

There is a sentience of viewing that enables time to function beyond a linear scope. This too reflects that, as the film or sequence of images are also a construction to some degree—edited, or selected, or framed by the artist—there is very little of the 'real' in it.

Memory is a process of construction and as it turns and reappears and reflects, it is likewise subjective and imprecise. As A. S. Byatt reflects, in line with the theories of Neuroscientist Daniella Schiller (2011), every time we take out, or recall a memory we repeat the process of 'putting it together' again 'in the brain', and so, 'there is no "true" or "original" memory to be reconstructed or discovered' (Byatt 2008, p.xix). Every memory is a ghost of itself, and we are haunted just as much by the promise of its return as its disappearance.

A complex temporality, or a multi-versed looping is occurring, embodied in the physical act of movement. If we are within and outside of movement and memory, and in a linear understanding of time in Bergson's terms, particularly with the moving image as memory, we are in a sense as Derrida's 'revenant' (2007), ghost, being both haunted by the spectre of the image, as well as its subject. There is an absence and presence, a past and future occurring simultaneously with the movement through the frames for the viewer. A kind of haunting is takes place, in which the viewer is outside the time elapsing within image.

If we are to speak of ghosts we must turn to the writings of Jacques Derrida, specifically his definition of 'haunting' as outlined in his *Spectres of Marx* (2007). Derrida looks to the figure of the ghost of the dead King in Shakespeare's Hamlet, to provide both an illustration of and metaphor for the concept of haunting. The spirit 'begins by coming back' (2007, p.11), he is a revenant (one that returns after a lengthy absence, one that returns after death), and 'figures as both a dead man who comes back again and a ghost who is expected to return repeats itself, again and again' (2007, p.12). What is important to me here is repetition, and the anticipation of the return. It is about oppositions, or rather between oppositions, and that we might be haunted by something that is always coming back and is

always in-between, in a constant state of flux. In Derrida's words,

The present is what passes, the present comes to pass, it lingers in this transitory passage, in the coming-and-going, *between* what *goes* and what *comes*, in the middle of what leaves and what arrives, at the articulation between what absents itself and what presents itself (2007, p.29).

The paradoxical state of the spectre is neither being nor non-being. It is both present and absent and always about to return. There is a clear relationship between the spatial proclivities of the spectre, Bergson's matter, and Delueze's time-image. Each are concerned with memory and time, and all hold remnants, or ghosts.

*AVON AVON* sits "in-between". Between meaning and implication, between statement and image, between object and image and presence and absence. It transpires also in the transition between space and place, through movement, and within temporal (dis)continuities. It is this same "in-betweenness" that reveals the binaries of Sigmund Freud's *uncanny*, Jacques Derrida's *spectre*, Jean Baudrillard's *simulacra*, and Yi-Fu Tuan's *pause*. Each have a place in the background of my research.





Figure 3. Ward, K. 2014. *The Town of Moorehouse*. Video Still.

# The Place

I grew up in an area that was well suited to my young parents' meagre budget. Having been married at nineteen, my mother pregnant with my older brother, they moved from Nelson to Christchurch, the 'big smoke' of the South Island.

In 1979, it was still possible to buy a house with a quarter acre section on a low income and some savings, and as a child the backyard was the only thing worth bothering about.

It was this house my mother owned for thirty years, and the place that was always thought of as 'home'. Not the city itself but the back garden that had been the scene of fairies and elves, rabbit hutches, fruit trees, marauding Saracens, clod fights, sprinkler runs and endless Star Wars and Indiana Jones' re-enactments. When we gather together, my family and I reminisce about the yard and very rarely the house that sat upon it. This is equally true of the banks of the Avon River flowing through the east a couple of blocks over from our house—an equally important site to mine for memory.

Not unlike history, or "grand narratives"<sup>1</sup>, over the years I have fashioned a vague truth out of subjective recollections and considered them fact. Rationally, I know that they are implausible and unfounded, but why let that get in the way of a good story?

Memory, like "History" is fallible and infinitely re-writable. In the words of historian Pierre Nora 'the quest for memory is the search for one's history' (1989, p.13).

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<sup>1</sup> "Grand narratives" or "metanarratives" are terms coined by French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard in response to dominant, or overarching historical narratives. In *The Postmodern Condition* (1979) Lyotard describes, in what he terms as an extreme simplification, 'postmodernism as incredulity toward metanarratives' (1979, xxiv). Grand and meta narratives can be treated as overarching truths, and absolutes. But, as Lyotard posits, we have become aware, in a postmodern world, that absolutes are insufficient, sweeping, and not applicable to all. Histories, and likewise, absolutes are problematic and reductive.

The European settlement of Christchurch was for the most part achieved through the efforts of the Canterbury Association, established in England in 1848 by Edward Gibbon Wakefield and John Robert Godley (Wilson et al 2005, p.19). The Association established a private company immigration scheme, following the earlier model of the New Zealand Company. Wakefield, a contemporary theorist of colonisation, having earlier participated in the establishment of other settlements around New Zealand, considered Christchurch closest to his ideal in delivering a cross section of (civilised) British society to a new land (Wilson et al 2005, p.19). And as with any story, imprinting this 'new' land with this British 'ideal' was full of ellipsis; left out was the fact that this was not a blank canvas but an existing, vivid landscape, complete with people and culture and histories of its own.

Popular promotion of New Zealand in Britain at the time ignored inconvenient elements, pitting itself around the premise of an Arcadian<sup>2</sup> paradise (Fairburn 1989, p.20) in which one could return to the pastoral lands of yore, and where everyman could be master of *his* own destiny, unfettered by the conventions of class and the chance to return to a simpler time (Morgan 2011, p.3). Immigration was a chance to go beyond (or before) the Industrial Revolution and its proliferating factories, urbanisation, and poverty. In 'a land of milk and honey' (Fairburn 1989, p.24), one would never starve, and the opportunity for advancement seemed limitless.

The Canterbury Association profoundly influenced the development of the city through its ideological beliefs (Wilson et al 2005, p.19). In adopting the designation 'Britain of the South', or the 'better' or "brighter' Britain"(Fairburn 1989, p.24), Christchurch was already being established as a copy, or an ideal copy, a "facsimile" (Morgan 2011, p.103). This facsimile did not resemble Britain as it actually existed, but rather as a

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<sup>2</sup> According to Miles Fairburn, author of *The Ideal Societies and its Enemies: The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society 1850-1900* (1989), New Zealand in particular was advertised in England under 'Arcadian linguistic conventions', as opposed to Utopian. 'Arcadias are 'natural societies' where natural abundance and the innate moderation of their inhabitants have the necessity for social organisation' (Fairburn,1989). In the case of New Zealand, the common (wo)man could enjoy a land of plenty. In an Arcadia 'Natural abundance itself provides what the inhabitants need; resources are so plentiful that collective agencies are not needed for their creation, management, protection, and allocation. At the same time the innate moderation of the inhabitants of arcadia ensures that their wants are simple' (Fairburn, p.26). This was a society that was to have little class distinction, and little resembling the social structure from which they had come.

nostalgic longing for a Britain that was disappearing headfirst into the modern age. The face of modern Britain was marked by cities and industrialisation, as opposed to the pastoral dreams and cottage industry of yesteryear (Morgan 2011, p.103). From the very first instance Christchurch was a copy, becoming over time a representation of 'Olde England' and 'colonial theme park' where the 'place and pastiche of the place co-exist uneasily together' (Strongman 2001, p.10). The Canterbury settlement was an act of nostalgia whose tenets became a founding myth for generations to come.

When the British settlers at last arrived, many were disgruntled.

The swampy, scrubby, landscape was not the land of rolling fields, gentle sun, and plentiful produce they had envisioned. They had been duped. The literature supplied in Britain had been mostly provided by private individuals, organisations and provincial newspapers (Fairburn 1989, p.20)—the prospective settler had been fed on a diet of promotional material, as fanciful and subjective as any work of fiction.

Following its beginnings, nostalgia has played a large part in the shaping of the physical face of Christchurch.

According to historian David Lowenthal, in *Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory* (1975), nostalgia (from the Greek *nostos*, meaning the return home, and *algia*, or, longing) in its original definition, is a form of homesickness.

The term *Heimweh*—meaning return home from sorrow and pain—was coined by Dr Johannes Hoffer in 1668 to explain a sudden malaise befalling Swiss mercenaries in northern Europe. Stricken, they pined and fell ill for the home they had left behind, for what (they perceived) they had lost, maybe never to be found again. Longing for the familiar in unfamiliar landscapes and tongues. A trace of something real, for the banalities of the everyday, and the summary of life better lived. An Ideal.

In *Nostalgia and Its Discontents* (2007), Svetlana Boym reflects that 'nostalgia is a rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress' (2007, p.8). This is not

only true of the founding and establishment of Christchurch in response to modernity, but also of my own engagement with the site, not as a 'longing for place' but actually a 'yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood' (Boym 2007, p.8). Through navigation and excavation I am trying to negate a 'sense of estrangement from oneself' (Lowenthal 1975, p.4). All the while unearthing narratives, and recollections, that reshape and reform my connection to the past, and therefore the present.

Gavin Hipkins' series *The Homely* (2001) was created by the artist from curious, almost incongruous, observations photographed around Australia and New Zealand. Hipkins travelled Antipodean shores in search of observations of 'nationhood and historical folklore' (Strongman 2001, p.6), which are at the center of the 'popular account of New Zealand culture' as irredeemably 'gothic' (2001, p.6).

Through Hipkins' lens we are shown glimpses of ghostly images of 'home', but not a home made up from sensibilities 'imported from the comforts of the motherland' rather a home of here, entrenched in our 'phantoms of national character' (Strongman 2001, p.8). The familiar is made strange through references to Freud's principle of the 'uncanny' and its double meaning of both the familiar and unfamiliar. The concept of the *uncanny*, through Hopkins' lens illustrates 'the uneasy collision between the old and the new, the familiar and the strange' (Strongman, 2001, p.7). Christchurch becomes 'Olde England in the South Pacific, a colonial theme park attracting thousands of international tourists each year, the place and the pastiche of the place co-existing uneasily together' (Strongman 2001, p.10).

In *Playing with Dead things* (2004), his preface to *The Uncanny* (2004), artist Mike Kelley reflects upon Sigmund Freud's notion of *das unheimlich*, the *uncanny*, as an experience of being 'apprehended by a physical sensation' which is 'tied to the act of remembering' (2004, p.26). This sensation may occur in response to 'the bringing to life of that which is hidden and secret', something 'terrifying' and 'long known—at once very familiar, yet concealed and kept out of sight' (2004, p.27). It

is the 'unfamiliar familiar, the conventional made suspect' (2004, p.27).

Kelley explores the uncanny through a succession of life-sized, confronting, and in some cases absurd figurative sculptures. Kelley presents us with the object (or moment) in which we might recognise something similar and yet dissimilar to ourselves, or to our perception of ourselves in the world. It is that moment, that 'prick', that dawning of awkwardness that confronts our 'ambivalence, unexpectedly shifting between pleasure and horror' (Grunenberg 2004, p.58). Importantly, it is the subtle dawning of an uncomfortable recognition.

There are clear gothic undertones in the work of Kelley, within the implications of 'horror', as well as an innate reference to doubling through the qualities of ambivalence. There too is a gothic darkness to my memories of Christchurch, which have most recently been assailed and (willfully) sanitised by the violent destruction of all that personified it. This darkness too resides in its double life as a gentrified 'better Britain', which on the face, through lush gardens and sumptuous Victorian architecture—synonymous with the river west—attempts to conceal its dark underbelly (synonymous with the river east).

From the onset *Avon Avon* has considered notions of place, its perception, and how it is actualised through meaning, both for an individual and for communities. Perceptions of place are intimately bound with time and memory as much as the physical possession of it, as with making sense of the world around us through engaging with our environment.

The first scholar to tackle place through a phenomenological lens, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, posits in his book *Space and Place* (1977), that space is 'transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning' (1977, p.6). To engender meaning in a place we 'endow it with value' (1977, p.6). We claim it, adapt it, cultivate, and name it. What was once space with its limitless freedom of movement becomes place when movement stops, when we pause long enough to have a presence (1977, p.6), to adapt, and to endow it with meaning in relation to the present.

To dwell is to make a home. I borrow the term *desien* (or, approximately, 'dwelling') from Martin Heidegger—a complex concept with various meanings, that here I use in the specific

context of making place 'home'. To be in place is to dwell, and by remaining in one place long enough we form an attachment to it, enabling us to be our authentic selves. An 'authentic existence to Heidegger is one rooted in place' (Cresswell 2004, p.22).

The suburb of Avonside was the second to be established in the new Anglican Settlement of Christchurch. Taking its name from the Holy Trinity Avonside Parish (1855), and constructed on the banks of the Avon. Originally it stretched right across the east, and Avonside Parish encompassed what later split into many suburbs (including Linwood, where I lived, Aranui and New Brighton), making up the Eastern suburbs which were some of the hardest hit in the earthquakes, and which are now rapidly disappearing.

Christchurch photographer, Tim Veling, has been recording the dismantling, or undoing, of the suburb of Avonside through photographic projects<sup>3</sup> before it disappears entirely.

*Vestiges* (2013) is a suite of images that record the traces of Avonside left in situ as dwellings disappear. An array of photographs of empty lots with vestiges of human habitation, are treated with a formal landscape composition. Through a trusty view camera and its attention to detail, there seems an appearance of a neutral eye. But it is through this seeming neutrality that the oddities, traces and idiosyncratic moments are revealed to the viewer. A cluster of footballs, presumably lost over a fence and not returned for whatever reason (an unfriendly neighbour, a snarling dog, sheer laziness) reminds us of its story, its 'placeness' (Tuan 1977). Now only fleeting vestiges of man-made fences can be seen. Amongst the rapid decline of signs of domestic habitation, Veling reminds us of their presence, by highlighting the smallest of details, making the unhomely homely once more, before they too sink back into the swamp. The still, uncanny moments reveal what is familiar and unfamiliar, and the awkwardness of the in-between.

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<sup>3</sup> Veling's has been doing this work in his own practice and within the artistic collective *Place in Time*, a documentary project with contributors including fellow photographers Glenn Busch and Bridgit Anderson. *Place in Time* was established in 2000 as an ongoing project to record the city of Christchurch and its varied communities, through photography, and documentary writing. Since the earthquakes, this has necessarily encompassed a recording of the disappearing parts of Christchurch as it shifts and adapts.

When I returned after ten years of absence, I had planned to re-navigate familiar landscapes in order to re-connect the memories/stories of the person I was once. Unsurprisingly, very little was familiar. Not just because the landscapes had ruptured, buckled and aged, but rather that the distance of time had obscured the memories I had treasured. Overuse or underuse—either is detrimental to memories' survival. It became clear to me, despite my ambivalent relationship with the place, that the stories I had built up over the years were formative, pivotal, and anchoring. Place and memory are 'intertwined' (Cresswell 2004, p.85).



Figure 4. Ward, K. 2014. *Upstream*. Video Still

# The River

## The River

The River was clear this morning  
There the fish  
Flashed from among the weeds, and suddenly stopping  
Fled once again from the light slim keel of my boat.

Over the lithe strong current hung the mist  
In whirling masses, heavy, close to the surface...  
Moving my body back and forth in the skiff  
The slide seemed easier, the long thin trail of the  
stern seemed straighter  
Than ever before  
... The morning was most wonderful.

— Mr. Stuart Perry c.1916-20

The Avon River's name before the British arrived was *Otakaro*. Earlier named by local Māori, *Otakaro* translates to 'the place of a game' (Lamb 1981, p.2), dubbed such for the children who played merrily on its banks whilst food was gathered around them. From the river food was plentiful and varied. An abundance of shellfish and native birds were reaped from the mudflats and marshlands near the estuary at the mouth of the Avon River across the way from the constructed 'historic' township of Ferrymead, and further down scores of eels and freshwater trout could be caught. This same river carried the wares of Canterbury Association passengers from over the perilous Sumner Bar toward their new home.

As with the fate of our *Otakaro*, there are sixteen rivers around the world answering to *Avon River*, or *River Avon*. The name translates literally from the Celtic to *River River*. This tautological overstatement reflects a commonly repeated act of colonial 'mimicry' (Bhabha, 2005), in which 'home' was brought to new lands and applied through linguistic facsimile. Doubly

so in also hegemonically erasing an existing name and supplanting it—'naming is one way space can be given meaning and become place' (Cresswell 2004, p.9), imbuing a newly formed 'home' with a sense of belonging (but for whom?).

In a tipping of its hat to a literary connection, the Christchurch version of the many Avons was at one time referred to as 'The Shakespeare' (Lamb 1981, p.1). Although it is unclear if one name lead to the other, or if for some time the River carried thrice the requisite amount of names, and moved from a doublet to a triplet. Perhaps it was, in fact, simply an accidental act of Avon mimicry that left our Avon with the less prestigious autonym.

Historian Robert C. Lamb, provides us with a compelling trail of vernacularly derived testimonies from letters to the editor, and personal recounts of hearsay (1981, pp.1-2). What is *fact*, it seems, is that evidence exists—by way of a map prepared by a Captain Thomas in anticipation of the impending launch of the Canterbury Association convoy in 1849—showing the title 'Shakespeare' upon the river, and the name 'Stratford' marking where Christchurch is now located (Lamb 1981, p.1). There is only one river of import in the Bard's hometown of Stratford-Upon-Avon.

That is one particular version of the Avon's baptism. The other is a very Scottish play in which two young men, the Deans brothers, who preceded the Association's settlers by some ten years (William in 1840, and John in 1842), petitioned to have it named after an Avon that both intersected and formed the boarders over its entire length on their grandfather's farm in Scotland (Lamb 1981, p.2).

In 1843 William Deans writes to his father:

*"Close behind our house is a fine grove of trees, and in front of the house is a stream a little larger than the Avon, where the Gavel joins the Snabe. Across this stream ... we have made a bridge, and thereby have separated the dwelling from the farm buildings, and likewise the cattle, etc., from the land in crop."*

It seems that the popular account is in favour of the Deans' more nostalgic pastoral yearnings. Personally, I like the idea of punting down the Shakespeare. For me it evokes ghosts.

As a metaphor for memory a river seems the most eloquent. It is implied through language. We can say the *flow* of memory, it has a habit of *rushing* back to us, to dissipate or swim away. Both ebb and flow, retreat and advance, and never stay fixed in time or space.

Memories and rivers both are elusive in their inability to be held or grasped onto, unless somehow frozen in time. A story, a film, or a photograph can capture a moment; but they are as slippery in meaning as water running through fingers. Each defies capture, simultaneously being both truth and illusion. In essence this defiance of a fixed position leans toward the liminal.

In *Memory: An Anthology* (2008), A.S Byatt reflects that 'to remember is to have two selves, one in the memory and one thinking about the memory' (200, p.xxi). Inside the spaces of reflexivity occurring within remembering, there is a separation, a doubling, and temporal dissonance, that helps produce yet another liminal, space producing a chasm ripe for interpolation. Liminality translates literally to 'being-on-a-threshold', a process or state that is 'betwixt-and-between' (Turner 1979, p.465). It is full of 'potentiality and potency' in which 'there may be a play of ideas, a play of words, a play of symbols, a play of metaphors. In it, play's the thing' (Turner 1979, p.466). *Otakaro* too, is the place of the game.

Turner adopted the term liminality following French Ethnographer Arnold van Gennep's rites of passage anthropology. For Turner the focus on liminality is in the 'place of the threshold' (Cate 2010, p.2) the 'betwixt and between of his or her former condition and an as-yet-undetermined state' (Cate 2010, p.2). Although Turner's usage of the term relates mostly to the coming of age rituals which 'mark the tenuous threshold *between* the before and after'(Cate 2010, p.2), it can also apply to rituals, in which through an aspect of pageantry, or make believe, 'we are presented...with a "moment in and out of time" (Turner 2008, p.359). In my work on the river I am interested in it as space between, as both a metaphor and a physical conduit. It is neither here nor there. It is always changing.

Rivers are liminal by virtue of being in constant flux.

The Avon River has always been a dangerous place. Prone to flooding and sudden fits of tempest, its ill temper has caused more than one death. So much so that in his book *From the Banks of the Avon: The Story of a River* (1981), Robert. C. Lamb saw fit to include an appendix outlining the Avon-met deaths of Christchurch citizens between 1850 and 1900 (1981, pp.176-177). What is revealed in those pages is not so much a plethora of deaths at the hands of the stormy whims of the river, but scores caused by a surprising amount of melancholia, unexplained accidents, and freakish events. Within these pages there is more than one drunken misstep, and no small number of suicides—termed in various ways (I am struck at how often one can euphemise a single term), along with several infanticides, and three youths whose vessel had capsized on a routine ferrying of goods. Try as they might to tame the river with fences (which now still stand on the corner of Oxford Terrace and Worcester Street) forged from iron pillars and chains, and stemming the flow and its urges, the river proved to still be, in the dead of night, murderous.

The popular sport of rowing, as well as pleasure boating, has taken place upon the western stretch of the Avon since as early as 1863. It was in October of that year that *The Press* published an editorial emphasising that at the English universities of Oxford and Cambridge boating was the 'principle recreation indulged in, as students there couldn't afford the time for cricket' (Lamb 1981, p.127). Cricket, of course, had been going great guns since those First Four Ships.

Due to popular demand the Antigua Boat Sheds started operation in 1882. It was after the opening of these sheds that rowing parties could, en masse, amble downstream through the botanic gardens at a leisurely pace. Unlike the English cities of Oxford and Cambridge, who were championed as exemplary with regards to nautical leisure activities, punting was not an option in those days. Instead they had the choice of various canoes and boats, of which there were an extensive amount, able to accommodate parties of all sizes and intentions. Punting on the Avon didn't appear upon its waterways—following the same

trajectory as those early canoeists, snaking through the well-kempt Botanical Gardens filled with sturdy British oaks and manicured lawns—until the 1990s.

If you recall, it was on the occasion of one such punt drifting past my camera that caused a moment of uncanny reveal and prompted the course of my final works. I will come to punts once more in my final chapter, when it is time for me to take my own.

Artist Tacita Dean has made several works anchored in water. But here, because of its alignment with a narrative approach, I want to talk about *Disappearance at Sea* (1996). This focuses upon the ill-fated voyage of Donald Crowhurst in his attempt to circumnavigate the globe on a solo non-stop expedition in 1968—which also brings to mind the similarly ill-fated journey of artist Bas Jan Ader<sup>7</sup> attempting a miraculous crossing.

Crowhurst, a family man and owner of a small business, was an amateur at sailing with, at best, the basic skills required to undertake such a lengthy and arduous journey. In short, he was doomed from the beginning, and it was a folly of bravado that went tragically wrong. Still, he sailed off, and mid-way across the Atlantic Ocean it became blatantly obvious to Crowhurst that neither his vessel nor himself would survive plunging any further into an unrelenting void. So, he set about faking his journey.

He took a 16mm film camera on board, and log-books to record his progress, as well as a chronometer—an instrument for measuring the passing of time—with which he formed an 'obsessive relationship' as his only means of 'locating his position' in the vast blue void 'through zealous time-keeping' (Dean 2006, p.127). Crowhurst fabricated his journey through a catalogue of phony coordinates and ambiguous footage. The chronometer, his only means of connecting to any sense of real time, ultimately proved faulty and fatal. Crowhurst, succumbed to 'time-madness' (Dean 2006, p.127), and jumped overboard, chronometer in hand.

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<sup>7</sup> Jas Ader disappeared at sea attempting a record breaking transatlantic crossing in a small one man boat, the work entitled *In search of the Miraculous* (1975), was intended to be part of a triptych of works. Ader's boat was found off the coast of Ireland six months after he first set sail.

In *Disappearance at Sea* 'Dean does not act as a historian' as her material is primarily concerned with an 'allegorical' approach (Royoux 2006, p.99). Not only does she reflect upon the material she has gathered, from both anecdotal and archived sources, but also through the voice of her own journey. This in turn informs the timbre of the final work as much as the information curated. The *gathering* is as much a part of the story as the subject.

Predominately a maker of 16mm anamorphic film works, Dean's approach to narrative, what she terms 'asides' (Royoux 2006, p.99), functions as a 'supplement outside the work' (Jacques Derrida as cited in Royoux 2006, p.86), and thus 'functions as a supplement in relation to the film' (Royoux 2006, p.86), but, in some cases, 'the film is also a supplement to the narrative' (Royoux 2006, p.86). She expressly 'plays with fact and fiction' (Warner 2006, p.13) in order to 'make a new temporal space' for the 'stories' she has 'woven together' (Warner 2006, p.17). This is further reinforced by her visual approach.

Dean films her subjects from a stationary position, and as such 'the objects of the films are underlined by the framing, the frequent use of still shots' and 'optical sound' (Royoux 2006, p.56). By privileging the moving image as still, there is an emphasis on the slippage between motion and stasis, forcing a consideration of what is *actually* occurring in-between. Further aided by the overlaying of sound that has been created in a studio, or of elsewhere, highlighting what is absent from the image as much as present and that both are outside of time, that much of this is fabrication.

Dean's treatment in the use of narrative pairings of static footage, or moving stills, coupled with a soundtrack of elsewhere has helped inform the way in which I approached the investigation of the site in my next chapter.

But for now, let us go to the Town of Moorhouse, where fact and fiction align.



Figure 5. Ward, K. 2014. *The Canterbury Association Welcomes You.*



# The Town of Moorhouse

*Ferrymead continued to thrive,  
As busy as a swarming hive,  
With its wharves, and ferry, and coastal boats  
And a hotel to slake the driest throats.*

*Now its railway, the first in the nation,  
It gained an engine shed and railway station,  
Police came, too, with house, station and gaol  
And these could tell many a tale.  
Customs office and refreshment room,  
All reflected the Ferrymead boom.*

*-Anon c.1860*

There is an historic site just below the Port Hills at the base of the Bridle Path—a steep and unforgiving track over which the inhabitants of The First Four Ships muddled from Lyttleton<sup>8</sup>. Ferrymead was befittingly (re)named<sup>9</sup> in honour of the ferry that would eventually transport the new arrivals across rivers and toward (assured) prosperity.

In 1850 there was already a smattering of buildings at Ferrymead. It was here the travel-weary migrants could pitch a tent, find refreshment, and regroup before hopping on a rudimentary ferry at Ferry Road.

Beyond the ferry sat the estuary, and further on still the swampy mouth of the eastern vein of the Avon River, upon which canoes snaked at a drift toward the fringe of the city.

The fictitious township of *Moorhouse* at Ferrymead Historic Park, is constructed of, and fabricated from, the detritus and refuse of time. Carefully replicated out of 'likenesses' or restored buildings from around the country, that are

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<sup>8</sup> The Charlotte Jane was the first of the Canterbury Association's four ships to arrive from England, berthing at 10am on December 16, 1850. On board were 'Colonists' and 'Emigrants', the Colonists were those intended to buy land and contribute to society awhile the Emigrants were deemed those who would work for them.

<sup>9</sup> Before the English settlers renamed the site it was known as Ohika Paruparu. Ohika means 'fall' and Paruparu means 'muddy place'. The original name refers to when Maori women would gather shell fish in the mud flats there and they would often sink and be covered in mud. Sourced from; Gee & Evans, '*Recycled Township*', 2004, p.10.

similar, but dissimilar in their (mostly) being of elsewhere and of any time. A town-copy of a city constructed from the refuse of many, but in that, not a copy at all, more like an approximate rendering of an approximation. Such a duplicitous site, is a rich environment to not only consider my own fabricated relationship to place, but also that of cities themselves and how they may wish to remember and be represented.

It intrigues me that a city already fashioned from elsewhere, and very proud of its Britain of the South (Fairburn 1989, p.24) associations—as noisily emphasised through Victorian architecture (and some might say social mores)—should build an historic township in order to day-trip in an 'authentic past' (Voase 2010, p.119).

A Heritage site places emphasis on its *affect* upon visitors, and their experience of it, in 'lieu of the belief that the site's physical attributes must be perceived as authentic' (Poria 2010, p.220). In contrast to a Historic site, it does not try to conceal that it is a replica and not the real thing (Poria 2010, p.220), and yet it is accepted as such, because the *impression* of authenticity is implicit.

The constructions standing in for 'real' artefacts foreground a 'hyper-reality'<sup>10</sup>, insomuch as the fabricated landscape relies on 'fantasy and imagination to construct a place that is more real than authentic places' (Selby 2010, p.42). This *Moorhouse* then, parallels strongly the construction of Christchurch as ideal. Both in the shadow of the disillusioned migrants of the 1850s—who went to such efforts to replicate the architecture, and integrate the fauna and flora (Morgan 2011, p.100) of Britain—and as evident in the memory-thwarted narrative of my own attempts at rearticulating the landscapes and memories of my youth.

Both concerns foreground, and reveal, the wilful hand of replication in the construction of allusion. In the words of Ecclesiastes 'the simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth—it is the truth that conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true' (Ecclesiastes as cited in Baudrillard 1994, p.1). In the copying, or simulation of elsewhere the

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<sup>10</sup> 'It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal', (Baudrillard 1994, p.1)

simulacrum exposes (in this case the 'Heritage site'), in its fabrication (as hyper-reality) that the original does not exist, that in fact, it never did. The copy exists as a stand-in for the 'real', and when the object of simulation no longer exists, and only the copy survives, the simulacra thus takes on the mantle of being 'authentic experience' (Voase 2010, p.119).

Ferrymead for me holds an allure, spawned in childhood from a love of cream buns and dressing up in old-timey garb. I was drawn back to visit in a fit of re-collection, a return through (personal) re-vision and re-enactment, making the past feel present again through narrative (Smelik 2009, p.6). To make concrete once more that which had become in-concrete over time.

When I think back to Ferrymead from childhood, I readily recall only two of its aspects—the print shop and the cream buns. A moment later, at the pause, another memory emerges—I once (during a post-Ferrymead visit and in sugar-fuelled rapture) proposed a Victorian-themed eighth birthday party at which I would wear the finest top hat and tails. Sadly, ye olden birthday plans didn't take, but I did receive a *Wonder Woman* costume that I considered a marvellous substitute, and the disappointment was promptly forgot.

My Ferrymead re-collection always reveals itself in this way, and in that order. First, with the objects of desire, followed by my eight-year-old impatience to re-capture the experience. I had made that place (and time) 'meaningful', transforming it from voluminous space by 'endowing it with value' (Tuan 1977, p.6) through treasured (and often forgotten) memories. Space becomes place by giving it meaning in the context of *my* world. Making the site intimate and close, personal and irrefutable, yet still ultimately subjective in the way that only memories can be.

This morning, as I sat to write, I remembered I had at about this same age appeared (for a few seconds) in an episode of a TV series based around Otago barrister, Alf Hanlon<sup>11</sup>. Hanlon's

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<sup>11</sup> The episode was entitled *Hanlon—In Defence of Minnie Dean* (1985) and produced by TVNZ. The series ran for seven episodes and focused on the early career of the Otago Barrister spanning the years between 1895 and 1914. Neither of the leads were played by New Zealanders.

most famous, and first of many high profile cases, was in the defence of Minnie Dean who was hanged for infanticide in 1895, the only New Zealand woman to have ever met this fate.

Being on telly, even if for a few seconds, made me somewhat of a minor celebrity around the quads of Linwood North School. But fame is fickle and a classmate of mine went on to star in a stage production of *Annie* not long after. So, back to obscurity I went.

Today as I found and re-watched those few seconds back, the day returned, right down to the sensation of the wool-itch of a dress and the limping-pinch of the boots.

I remember a chaperone of sorts, I can't recall which gender, who was trying really hard to keep me from feeling homesick. But I wasn't homesick, I was experiencing a familiar past and felt very much at home. I'm not sure I understood there was anything to feel sick for, this past fed the narrative I had been nursed on at school. We were very proud of our First Four Ships.

We shot in Rangiora, not at Ferrymead. Although Ferrymead did feature, and it was then—or rather, as I excitedly watched that episode as it aired (at a neighbour's house, I think, because we only ever had a (hired) TV in the winter)—I began to understand that one place could be substituted for another, that they were somehow interchangeable. We could be anywhere and of any time. We were making history, after all. Canterbury could stand in for Otago and Christchurch could stand surrogate for a (lost) Britain.

When I returned to the print shop this year I met a man called Bud. Wait. Let me go back a step. The story starts before then. When I returned to the print shop I recognised it, at least I thought I did. Mainly because I desperately wanted to. I had already had 'the cream bun disappointment'—there were none—nor was there the bakery splendour I had envisioned, merely glad-wrapped slices and bags of crisps. To be fair there were some cheese scones, one of which I purchased and ate despondently from a paper bag. I was not to have my Proustian moment with my madeleine<sup>12</sup> and I felt unreasonably thwarted.

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<sup>12</sup> In Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913), the protagonist describes a sudden and involuntary childhood memory, prompted by the taste of a madeleine dipped in

I took my scone and wandered around the streets of *Moorhouse*, I had come here on a whim. So I took to that aimless kind of wandering that requires a thoughtful eye. I looked for details mostly among the general. I hoped to recognise it, but it was, of course, vastly different from my recollection. That will be from both earthquakes and the distance of adulthood.

The streets were almost empty, and with an ambient temperature of 2 degrees there wasn't much in the way of loitering in the street, as it was a Sunday and there had been a tremor earlier in the morning, *Moorehouse* was looking more like a ghost town than a bustling heritage attraction. The township seemed somehow more realistic when empty of revellers, and in this stillness is when the ruptures appeared loudest. The slippage between the original and the copy jostled noisily in the middle.

Intrigued I paid curious attention to the moments of awkwardness, the little glimpses of irony—the clumsier they appeared the more revealing they seemed.

If place is a pause in space, of movement, (because places have space between them), then the discovery (or reveal) of place is in the 'stops along the way' (Tuan 1977, p.6).

In the still detail of the street the slippage is exposed.

The reveal is in the pause, the rupture, the moment where suspension confuses itself and exposes the 'uneasy collision between the old and the new' (Strongman 2001, p.7).

As I waited and watched the more fidgety normalcy appeared, and the simulacra in its most vernacular state made its substitution transparent.

The moving image already carries with it implications of haunting, time, memory and narrative, just as the physical and imprecise nature of the copy reflects the taciturn origins of any kind of original. I have been focusing on these specific qualities throughout my project thus far, and they have been touched on earlier in this exegesis. Here I would like to expand upon the thinking behind one.

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lime blossom tea. "No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me." A recurrent theme through this semi-autobiographical work, the text emphasises Proust's belief that 'physical sensations are fundamental to the process of involuntary memory' (Hill 2013, p.381).

In having come into contact with the work of the artists Mark Lewis, Chantal Akerman and Tacita Dean, and their utilisation of the unbroken film take, I have been considering the capacity for narrative to be exposed through the awkwardness of a prolonged gaze. Each of their work to some degree exploits the tension of the locked-off camera shot, often of seemingly banal scenes, causing the 'cameras gaze' to 'estrangle what at first looks banal and familiar' (Campany 2013, p.26). These scenes describe 'the surface of the world but doubt creeps into the equation between appearance and meaning' (Campany 2013, p.26). During the pauses in my *Moorehouse* meanderings, moving stills seemed the best way to illustrate the doubt 'between appearance and meaning'.

Mark Lewis's works have been especially engaging, 'slow and rich in allusion' (Campany 2013, p.28).

Comprising of long single takes that run the duration of a reel of celluloid film (Campany 2013, p.26). His use of a single take, that runs in real (reel) time, speaks to the doubling of time itself, in that it 'requires and produces very particular' (parallel) 'experiences of place' (Campany 2013, p.32) in exploiting connotations of time as implied within the process and its application. Lewis primarily uses as his subject places that he has heard of or happened across' (Campany 2013, p.26). As with aspects of my research work in Christchurch in which I have followed the instinct to explore on a whim, and recorded what is revealed through those unplanned (of people or place) encounters, Lewis's process allows place to reveal itself through the innate qualities of the medium, as well as in the unfolding and unrelenting ordeal of duration.

As Campany observes 'Lewis's films permit us to grasp deep connections between the fate of place, the fate of time and the fate of their representations in the modern era' (2013, p.26).

Let us double back now to the print shop once again.

Having strolled, and peered, mulled over, and filmed, the spaces (and detritus) of *Moorehouse*, I made my way back to the Printery. I had been saving the best for last, well, second-best, and seeing as the first-best—a disappointing lack of cream bun and forced substitution of a scone—was a

fizzer, I was hoping, that at the last, the experience would prove restorative.

I walked through the door and to my delight it was as I had remembered, or rather, it was as I had imagined I would remember it. All manner of ye olden press-printed paraphernalia was on offer, and, to my glee, the very same 'authentic' (reproductions) of type-pressed 'official' documents were available and ready to have my name printed on the blank and incriminating space between the type. Treats such as: "**WANTED** (insert name here), **INFAMOUS HORSE THIEF**, £3000 Reward, **DEAD or ALIVE**". Oh, the memories! For a mere two dollars I could have my name printed on any document testifying to my dastardly deeds, or horse wrangling prowess.

Then I saw it.

"*The Canterbury Association welcomes you, WORKING CLASS MIGRANT .....*". I think I stood and gaped, "that's me", I thought, "THAT'S ME!" Eureka.

I took the document to the counter and introduced myself to Bud. "Oh, that's a new one" he said, "I haven't used any of them yet". I asked if it was 'authentic' and he replied that apparently his boss had copied it from an original document. "Really?" I said, "That's cool, it's just what I've been looking for". There was the briefest of pauses while he turned, smiled at me, and shrugged his shoulders, "Well, that's what he heard."

I beamed maniacally back, and watched him pump the wheel that propelled the document toward the press, the typeset thick with red ink, "That's good enough for me".

**KALYA WARD**—Working Class Migrant.

Well, I thought to myself as I watched my name appear in the blank, that's better than a cream bun. I'm going to make something out of that.



Figure 6. Ward, K. 2014. *Once Upon an Avon*. Video still

## The Works

This is the story of me and the river, or rather, me on the river, in a punt.

It seems I have a pension for visiting Christchurch in the most inclement climates. This particular morning was freezing, and shrouded in a hazy murk that used to be so familiar to me in winter. I almost didn't go to the boatsheds. Living up north has made me a bit soft.

By a stroke of luck I was the lone traveller for my river trip. Just myself and the gentleman who manned the boat—I call him gentleman because I was surprised by his advanced years—at least mid-sixties—which distracted me further as I tried to calculate how many trips he might have already made that morning. I forgot to ask his name, which isn't like me, but by that stage I was also busy adjusting my complementary hot water bottle and woolen blanket (a tartan of blue with yellow and black) before we set off.

Two things occurred that morning that were different to the usual guided punt, one: my driver didn't say a word; two: we went in the opposite direction than I was expecting.

So, no Town Hall float-by, and no city views. But, as seems to be a recurring theme within this project, what was presented offered me a moment for pause, and in doing so, a canny reveal.

I set my camera up at the prow of the punt, with just enough of it in shot to create an anchor for the image. The height was pitched just below my eye line, so the viewer would be able to almost (but not quite) see what I saw. From this position, the prow stayed fixed within the frame for the duration of the trip, creating a foreground that appeared almost fake. There is a tension between the stasis of the punt and the uncanny movement of the vista beyond, creating a sense of being at once inside and outside the image, both in regards to the boat and through the movement of the frame.

Once we had returned to the dock my punter eagerly guided me through his navigation decisions. It seems I had been a much welcome anomaly in the regular routine of downstream and up again and he happily took it upon himself to curate my experience. Not in the way I would have expected—rather than through language (although I was slightly disappointed I did not get to hear his spiel), his decisions were influenced by movement and silence. It is important here to note that in removing routine, which regardless can never truly be fixed and firm as the whims of the river do dictate conditions of passage, we were taking back to the water as a liminal space/place. I was neither on shore or moving of my own volition, I was between two banks, and also between an end and a beginning, inside and outside of usual time, and in-between stories.

The punt recording would eventually become a component of *Once Upon an Avon* (2014), in combination with the soundtrack from another boat-based work, but we will come to that shortly. Duration is important with regards to the punt footage, and I made a deliberate choice to film the journey from beginning to end, with no edits, or additions.

I found myself reflecting upon Chantal Akerman's *News From Home* (1976) when making *Once Upon an Avon*. The final ten minutes of the film is a continuous shot from the bow of the Staten Island Ferry. It begins with an extreme close-up of the departure port and progresses to a diminishing view of the Statue of Liberty and Manhattan. Eventually the port is partially obscured, not only through distance, but also by a shroud of sea mist that hovers before the lens.

I searched for clues in the length of the scene, finding details and imbuing them with importance. I began to see time, or duration, as the main focus of the image, and consider the implications of a diminishing cityscape. I saw (or fabricated) relevance in the smattering of seagulls following in the wake of the ferry, dipping in and out of Akerman's lens. I noticed the passing of time through the ferry's seemingly endless passage, with no view to where it may be heading, only aware of the past where I, or, really, Akerman, had been. Eventually it

was only the details that seemed important as I searched for clues to build my own narrative in lieu any apparent story.

Tacita Dean, as well as using the locked-off camera shot, like Akerman, manipulates sound as a device to further call awareness to the passing of time, and a sense of duration in relation to the image in *Gellért* (1998). The six-minute film is a series of static shots taken over an hour. The subject consists of a small group of women making their way around the thermal baths of Gellért Hotel in Budapest (Gaensheimer 1999, p.75). Images are paired with the ambient sounds of the environment—these noises are not indicative of what is occurring in the moment, but are produced elsewhere and applied later. If one pays close attention to it, the soundtrack is meant to draw us outside of the frame to place it.

The constant reflecting on time, as in Akerman's work, through the long still shot, and through a soundtrack that takes us outside of the linear unfolding of time as with Dean's *Gellért*, brings us back to Bergson's thesis that 'perception takes place not so much in the moment', but in 'its duration' (Gaensheimer 1999, p.75). Duration is important in *Avon Avon* in its relationship to time and movement, both as perception of memory and embodied experience. If we go back to discuss the experiencing of time through someone else's lens, as Akerman observes, the use of time is not to make it look 'natural' but for people to 'feel the time that it takes' (Akerman as cited in Rosen 2007, p.197). What draws us out of that moment through an awareness of ourselves in movement over time, *makes* us self-aware and within memory, and doubly so of our moving through and being outside of it in order to be in it.

The use of a discordant soundtrack is important to the installation of *Avon Avon*. A single audio track is applied to the projection of *Once Upon an Avon* that provides ambient audio for all works. The speakers are installed on the wall above and behind the projector to further enforce a sense of temporal dislocation, yet also one of *connection* that bridges the three works. The audio track has been taken from another work, *Upstream* (2014).

With the assistance of Chris, and two of his rowers, from the Avon Rowing Club, I travelled in a Canadian canoe up the eastern end of the Avon River. This trip was a more thoroughly

planned and controlled follow-up to the earlier punt ride in the west. As such, although visually (which was curious as it was supposed to be the rough side) beautiful, the footage didn't have the spontaneity that most of the other river works do, or that sense of capturing a moment, that illustrates something operating *outside* of what is immediately palpable. The journey was completed in two legs, one through the heart of Avonside, and the other headed through the saltier vein of the river toward the Estuary and the sea. Shot on a still and bright mid-winter day, the footage seemed too overtly nostalgic to be included in *Avon Avon*, but, the audio grabbed me. The day was so still, and the sound so pristine, that the noise of the paddle and the body of the canoe moving through in the water sounded fake. I may not have caught an uncanny moment on film, but I caught an uncanny sound.

The voices of this journey are different to my punt in the west, where the river ambience is provided by a genteel parade of ducks—soft quacks amidst the wind and the clanking of the pole upon the punt-side. Where *News From Home* has seagulls, *Once Upon an Avon* has ducks with the voice of geese and black swans.

As mentioned in the previous chapter the moving stills of banal scenes in *The Town of Moorhouse* (2014) highlight the awkwardness of a prolonged gaze. In exploiting stillness as well as the complicity between stasis and movement, narrative is revealed. Under the scrutiny of the camera's gaze these scenes attempt to elicit 'doubt', which 'creeps into the equation between appearance and meaning' (Campany 2013, p.16). This is amplified also through long periods of stillness, casually disrupted by sudden and incongruous bouts of action. The sequence at times appears dispassionate and a mere description of site, and through the employment of a fixed camera position at (just ever so slightly) low angles, moments (aspects) of juxtaposition become prevalent and unsettling.

Much like with the works by Akerman and Dean, *The Town of Moorehouse* relies on the viewer looking (or listening) for what isn't in frame, or readily revealed, and interpolates narrative onto the scene, which is innately subjective and entirely dependent on their independent decoding.

What is important in both *The Town of Moorehouse* and *Once Upon an Avon*, is precisely the slippage occurring between

presentation and meaning. This ellipses reveals a succession of quiet binaries, stepping in and out of frame—a view which is at one moment still and contemplative and the next noisy with contradiction. As David Company observes there is an innate tension between the still and moving image as binaries, and it is where they begin to 'break down' that 'is most revealing' (2007, p.14).

On a scout to plot my canoe trip up the east end of the Avon toward the Estuary (and Ferrymead), I went to the Antigua Boat Sheds to meet Mike, the owner, who was providing the vessel for the expedition. When I arrived a Canadian canoe was moored to the slip, buffeting, and compellingly frustrated by being tethered to the spot. Its failure to break free of its moorings, again, to me, was a fitting allegory for historic memory. It seemed to speak more of propositions than action, and frustrated potential. Stumbling upon that scene struck me as another of those moments of curious happenstance, where, by pure accident, a contradiction presented itself that underscored the sentiments of my research. And so, I filmed it.

*The Canadian* (2014) is a 15 minute video work in which the boat moves back and forth in a cycle of forward movement, which then almost imperceptively shifts into reverse. It is about possibilities, *frustrated* possibilities, anticipation, and failure. In its trajectory (or lack of) there is also a direct reference to my concerns with temporality, and the relationship between movement and memory.

The physical boat led me to think once more upon mimicry and simulacra, in that this canoe is carrying the name of another British colony, as well as being a modern reconstruction made to *appear* vintage. It felt awkwardly nostalgic, and, a fitting metaphor for being both inside and outside of time.

What struck me the most about *The Canadian* as I watched it back on screen, was with its tight crop and little environmental context, the canoe appeared to be operating on a smaller scale, like a replica, or scale model *pretending* to be a much larger boat, it looked, in short, uncanny.

Each of the works included in the installation of *Avon Avon* attempt to illustrate a very precise, yet tenuous moment of recognition. They all strive to elucidate this moment through a

form of moving still, yet each individual piece explores the nuances of my thesis through slightly different aesthetic treatments of those same aspects.

As a whole a subtle doubling created by visual or aural oddities, is an important theme in all three works. It references, once again the threshold of the in-between, the dubious reliability of history, and the almost imperceptible haunting of the present by the past.

In terms of installation, I treated the works as individual elements of an overarching narrative, and have demonstrated this through their positioning within the room and by the scale of each piece. As the largest and most dominant visual work *Once Upon an Avon* is presented as the overarching narrative, or, central stream. *The Town of Moorehouse* and *The Canadian* function, when read as a part of the whole, act as sub-plots, or tributaries, that feed into the overarching flow of the story. It would be unrealistic of me to assume that a viewer would sit through the full thirty minutes of *Once Upon an Avon*, beginning to end. However, as the works embody similar visual tropes and concerns as self-contained compositions, they are intended to be able to exist as autonomous streams in their own right, with the ability to echo the dominant ethos of my thesis.



Figure 7. Ward, K. 2014. *The Canadian*. Video still



## **Appendix**

I am including this appendix to show development through some of the significant works over both years. These descriptions will be brief, and are only intended as a glimpse into my trajectory for your further information.

The original emphasis in my engagement with Christchurch was a preoccupation with remapping of the site in order to feel some kind of connection to it as *place*. A lot of my early work was embedded in considerations of memory, its imprecise nature, and our ability to fabricate importance, or eradicate, anything deemed unsuitable or unimportant. I became increasingly interested in the stories I had attached to places or events. In coming into contact with Reconsolidation Memory Theory (that every memory is always, and only ever, accessed from the present tense, and therefore, there is no pure memory, because it is always, and invariably, subjectively written from the future-present). I decided to start my mapping looking at the inconsistencies, and slippages, innate to translation and transcription. Focusing on the in-between—what is lost (or added) through re-creating, re-rendering, or re-playing.



Figure 8. Ward, K. 2013. *Map Walk*. Video still

*Google Walk* (2013) was the first of a GSV series. I used an audio recording of my first walk through the central city to re-map, as faithfully as I could (unfaithfully from memory), through screen grabs of GSV. The result was a short and static clip that moved through a forward trajectory and then reversed, which then replayed from the beginning again gaining speed each time, until it sped by in a blink. The overall effect was one of disorientation.



Figure 9. Ward, K. 2013. *Looking Back to Avonside Drive*. Tricolour Gum Bichromate on cold press paper

*Looking Back* (2013). *Looking Back* was an attempt to denote the subjectivity of memory through a hand-rendered process, in which the artist's hand is always apparent through its similarities to a printerly, or painterly, process. I used GSV to recreate four views of photographs I had taken around a stretch of the Avon River. Through these reproductions I tried as faithfully as I could to reproduce, or re-map them, from similar vantage points. This proved difficult as I was denied access GSV and so, they were always 'looking back' to the position I had photographed from.

The final images were shown as a series of four Gum Bichromate prints of the 'everyday' Google Street Views uncannily elevated through the use of process as something precious.



Figure 10. Ward, K. 2013. *The World and Other Traces*. Installation view. Digital file on 52" Monitor

*The World and Other Traces* (2013) was my first experiment with degrading and analogue process, and it was produced for an exhibition at Tropical Lab through LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore. I cut together moving stills that I had collected around the Avon River in Christchurch and mixed it together with similar footage I had compiled in Singapore, which I then filmed off a video monitor into the Standard definition camera. I filmed over and over again on the same tape so that the detail began to disintegrate, the colours shifted, and the tape began to show fissures and tears. I then re-filmed this same footage back onto a DSLR camera, slightly out of focus (thinking of Hipkin's ghostly observations), picking out details and nonspecific elements, and cutting the resultant footage into an 18 minute looping video that was played back on a 52inch monitor in the gallery. The digital file was compressed in such a way that it continued to degrade (at it was played directly from a flash drive into the monitor) over the duration of the exhibition.



Figure 11. Ward, K. 2013. *The safest memories are those you never remember*. New Zealand Film Archive. VHS tape and CRT Monitor. Installation view.



Figure 12. Ward, K. 2013. *The safest memories are those you never remember*. New Zealand Film Archive. VHS tape and CRT Monitor. Installation view.



Figure 13. Ward, K. 2014. *The safest memories are those you never remember (mkII)*. The Engine Room. VHS Tape and CRT Monitor. Installation view.

*The safest memories are those you never remember* (2013) is the second iteration of the processes and concepts of *In The World and Other Traces* and encompasses the more successful elements of the previous work, and draws in the pertinent elements of the site, memory and more specific (reconsolidation) memory theory. This was achieved through filming in a studio off a wall projection onto a broadcast quality Sony VHS camera in order to transfer the image from a digital recording. The final work was dubbed off two 'master' recordings onto 190 minute VHS tapes, already worsening in quality by virtue of being a copy. In transmission of the work from one medium to another the sense of ghosting, or a lessening of precise detail, was exacerbated further in copying.

The work was presented on a 39" CRT monitor, and installed on the floor in a window of the New Zealand Film Archive, on a continuous loop for 24 hours over a week. In that time the recording played 89.25 times. Like the Tropical Lab work, the time of exhibition is also a further part of the work itself. Through the durational process of playback, and the effect of this process upon the material, the work starts to physically represent the concept. There was a second iteration of this work in a group show in 2014 in which the recording played a further 45 times through, on a continuous loop. There were definitely signs of rupture starting to occur on the tape, but, apart from detail being lost in the shadows of the image, and colours shifting and flickering, there has been surprisingly little progress in the disintegration of the tape. Perhaps, memories are safer there, after all.

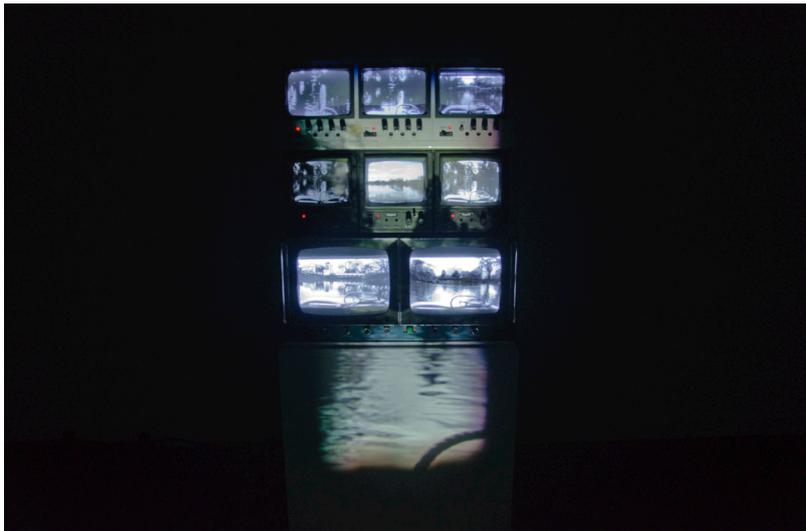


Figure 14. Ward, K. 2014. *avonavon*. Projection, video, and sound. Installation view.

The next installation work I attempted was also the first outing of the title *avonavon* (2014). A stack of three tiers of anachronistic, black and white television monitors doubled as the surface for a projection of a punt ride. Each monitor also had an individual recording of the punt footage running at different stages of the journey.

A literal layering of one story (object) upon another as many streams. The work was well received as immersive, but complicated in its mixing of treatments. It was too reminiscent of surveillance, and also a clumsy reference to Nam June Paik,

and aside from the obvious many streams, the relationship between duration and movement through image, was lost in its mediation. I needed to opt for subtly rather than just physically, and literally, layering.



Figure 15. Ward, K. 2014. *Blind Light*. Video Still

*Blind Light* (2014) moved away from the literal and ran headfirst into the arms of the obscure. Another play on duration, it combined the audio from the punt ride with footage of light appearing in a darkened room in real time over duration of twenty minutes. It was an attempt at capturing the ethereal nature of memory, where the image is indistinct but the sound is clear, leaving the viewer to interpolate the meaning of the two combined. As a large screen projection *Blind Light* successfully engaged, I think, with aspects of the ephemeral nature of memory, and a sense of a narrative (both as revenants) building up over its duration. The disparate audio operated as a clue to location that was a red herring of sorts. What it tried to achieve was a liminality, an in-betweenness, through the absence of any fixed position, demonstrated by the intangible stream of light moving in a state of flux. The audio worked at opposites to the light, a solid and tangible (yet disembodied in the space) sound leading the viewer outside of the moment and beyond confines of space, through memory.

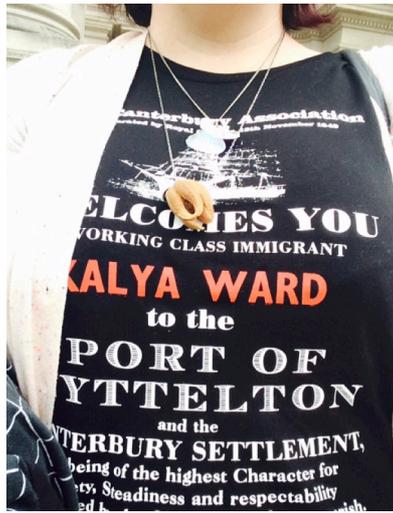


Figure 16. Ward, K. 2014. *The Canterbury Association Welcomes you*. Two colour screen print on cotton T-shirt.

*The Canterbury Association Welcomes You* (2014). When I got the certificate from Bud at the Ferrymead Print Shop, I thought, who needs postcards when you can replicate this? I considered how experiences could be disseminated through ephemera, how a mediated version of an experience (like a story, or anecdote, or memory, or myth) could proliferate out in the world.

I produced (through a screen printer) a series of 32 T-shirts that I passed on, with the story of The Printery (it *could* be an original). I required only two things in return (no money changed hands)—if asked, they would retell that same anecdote to whomever asked, and that they send me a 'selfie' in the t-shirt at a spot they deemed appropriate. I have no idea whether my requests of retelling have been adhered to, but I have received a few selfies.

A T-shirt is, by nature, degradable, as it wears down with each wash and every outing, and that over time the print will disappear and the t-shirt will rot away. I imagine, that likewise, the story will fade away, and become less and less precise. Likewise there is a physical taking the story into the world, through space, and place. The memory is always on the move. Although, not the right fit (if you will excuse the pun) for final exhibition, they are in a sense out there performing in the world on a regular basis, and I intend to pick them up at a later date to map their trajectory and plot out a tale.

*Betwixt and Between* (2014) combines archival footage and a series of moving stills from Ferrymead. In a visual style emulating John Stezaker's film still works, the footage plays in unison and literally layered atop of one another, allowing chance meetings to occur on screen where moments of action in both sets of imagery intersect.

It was quite literally an overlaying of 'experiences' and I left the archival footage uncut so that those moments of intersection would occur purely by chance. The hope was that a story could be constructed by the viewer, at any given time, through



Figure 17. Ward, K. 2014. *Betwixt and Between*. Video still

those chance meetings, or uncanny, moments. Conceptually this work was starting to operate with the central ideas of my thesis, but I felt it was still a little too didactic. What I was aiming for was a sense of the subtle nuances, or the almost imperceptible recognition of awkwardness that was palpable in my meeting of the punter in front of the Town Hall.



Figure 18. Ward, K. 2014. *The Canoe that Isn't*. Basswood and Cedar. Scale model Canadian Canoe. 590.1mm x 76mm

*The Canoe that Isn't* (2014), is a proposition. What is it if it's not a canoe? What does it do if it's not for sailing? Its impotent, merely a likeness, or a place setter, it cannot do anything, but it can be something. Mike Kelley talks about an aspect of the uncanny object in relation to scale. He suggests that a toy, or a replica object in miniature, 'invites the viewer to project onto them' to 'get lost in them' (2004, p.26). *The Canoe that Isn't* invites daydreams specifically because of its small scale, it cannot be used as, in this case, a real boat (except for perhaps mice?), but it can propose the idea of a boat. The viewer supposes, and proposes its use, and hopefully imagines it in action. It is very much a proposition of a boat, and its potential.



Figure 19. Ward, K. 2014. *The Canadian*. Video still.

*The Canoe* (2014) is a re-staging of *The Canadian* (2014) re-filmed in a creek at a park down the road from my house in Wellington, as faithfully replicated as possible, considering it is of another place and another time. The result is not as dark in

mood as the original, and perhaps a little too nostalgic, but there still exists a sense of absence, and a searching for clues within the frame, with regards to scale and purpose.

The intent when I bought the scale model was always to re-film it in this way, as an act of mimicry, or simulation.

I decided not to include this work in the final exhibition, as, like much of my other development work, it is an overstatement. I am trying to avoid what I have been failing at so often, over-emphasizing a subtle feeling, a quiet nuance, that is as much implied, as it is present. My aim for Avon Avon was to have all aspects of doubling, or layering, implied, woven rather than overstated.

# Illustrations

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