
Memory, Time & Place in *The Ballad of Rosalind Ballingall*

Nicole Schafer

SCHNIC028

Supervisor: Associate Professor Lesley Marx

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Masters in Film and Television Production at the Institute for Film and New Media

Faculty of the Humanities

University of Cape Town

2005

COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:

Signed by candidate

Date:

23/12/05

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

Memory, Time & Place in *The Ballad of Rosalind Ballingall*

A written explication of the film by Nicole Schafer

CONTENTS

- **Acknowledgements**
- **Abstract**
- **Introduction** **1**
 - Background to the story
 - 1969
 - My Connection to the story
- **1. Investigating Documentary** **7**
- **2. Cult Icon and ‘Folk Heroine’** **11**
- **3. Time and Place** **14**
- **4. The Forest** **22**
- **In Retrospect** **26**
- **Bibliography** **28**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my father Peter and my uncle Gavin Schafer, and especially my mother, Jacqueline Schafer, for their invaluable support and encouragement in completing my degree. Special thanks to my supervisor Associate Professor Lesley Marx and Roy McGregor for their guidance, as well as my friends and other family members for putting up with me during this time. Extended thanks to the following individuals who participated in the film and contributed to my research without whose input and encouragement this project would not have been possible: Gillian Carter, Neil and Alison Conradie, Tony Manhir, Jaqui Singer, Stacey Stent, Mike Dickman, Giles Hugo, Caroline Seawright, Oliver Stapleton, Gareth Patterson, Dominique du Toit, Sue van Waart, Inspector Ben de Goede, David Danhausen, Lawrence Oliver, John Kapp, Dave Henning, Margerite Nortje, Estelle de Villiers and Wilfred Oraai. Thanks to David Marks from the Hidden Years Archive Project, The Knysna Museum, The National Library, Manuscripts and Archives UCT, The Little Theatre Archives, Trace Images, The Sunday Times, The Argus, The Cape Times, The Knysna Herald and The Department of Forestry for sharing their resources.

This degree would not have been possible without the support of generous and sustained funding from bursars and scholarships through the Postgraduate Funding Office at UCT: The Canadian Foundation Postgraduate Bursary, The Grahamstown Old Mutual Scholarship, The K W Johnstone Bequest Scholarship, The MacIver Scholarship and The Harry Crossley Foundation.

ABSTRACT

The Ballad of Rosalind Ballingall is a recollection of the mystery surrounding the disappearance of the twenty-year-old University of Cape Town drama student into the Knysna forests in 1969. In search of answers to this unsolved case, the film follows Rosalind's footsteps, from the bohemian city streets of Cape Town in the sixties to the Knysna forests, drawing on the collective memory of the Knysna community and students who were at university with Rosalind at the time. In search of Rosalind, the film journeys into the ruins of old South Africa, tracing the emerging consciousness of the hippie era that evolved during that period, partially in response to the oppressive socio-political climate of the country at the time.

My dissertation will look primarily at the way I have attempted to overcome the major obstacles of 'access' and 'time' in documenting this story and this era. In conceptualising my film, I have incorporated elements of the mystery and detective genres, the construction of biography and history as well as themes of memory, recollection and place, instead of focusing on a strictly investigative approach in telling the story about this unsolved case.

Having been denied access to Rosalind's personal life, I have chosen to explore the 'legend' of Rosalind as she has been remembered in the collective memory of the community and individuals from that era and have looked at the 'cult status' Rosalind acquired from extensive media coverage after her disappearance, as an index to the times.

Given the lack of access to Rosalind's personal life, my attempts at constructing her biography have been translated into the construction of a 'cultural geography' of the hippie generation that she espoused and, through placing emphasis on the memory of place, I have explored what can be described as a 'spatial' rather than 'temporal' history of this era.

In the absence of any concrete evidence pertaining to Rosalind's disappearance and the limited access to relatively undocumented aspects of the era, the remains of place come the closest to revealing physical proof of this forgotten past.

The final section of the paper explores both the way I have conceptualised and visually portrayed the significance of the forests in relation to the moods inherent to the mystery and the era combined with the themes of memory and place I've drawn on and the obstacles of time and access that I have had to overcome.

*Time present & time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been & what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus, in your mind.*

*But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose leaves
I do not know.*

“Burnt Norton” Four Quartets
T S Eliot

Introduction

Background to the story

On 11 August 1969 Rosalind Ballingall set off from Cape Town with two friends, to spend a weekend at the popular hippie haunt in Fisanthoek, known as the “The Sugar House”, in the middle of the Knysna forest. What was intended to be a few days’ escape from the city for the trio, soon became an unforgettable tragedy for many and has, thirty-five years later, remained one of South Africa’s unsolved mysteries.

According to police reports, Rosalind left the house the morning after her arrival to go for a walk in the forest. She took nothing with her except a Bible and never returned. Heavy rains made it impossible for trackers to pick up any trace of Rosalind in the forest and reported sightings of the six-foot-tall woman around the country after her disappearance made her story all the more confusing. Apart from her associations with the then highly frowned upon hippie movement in Knysna, what made her story all the more sensational was her involvement with the cult called the ‘Cosmic Butterfly’, which, according to newspaper reports, had, after much speculation on the prophecies in the Book of Revelations, come to the conclusion that the end of the world was near.

Her story was extensively covered in the media as the search became nationwide and has continued to surface over the years. False alarms regarding her whereabouts from clairvoyants to convicted criminals, including reported sightings in different parts of the country led to several re-investigations that were conducted intermittently for as long as ten years after her disappearance.

Rosalind came from a well-established upper-class family in Johannesburg, with her father being an executive of Rand Mines in Johannesburg, who had moved to Cape Town in the same year that she disappeared.

She was in her second year at the University of Cape Town studying a BA in Drama with peers, who are all highly recognised personalities on the South African theatre scene today, including Grethe Fox, Paul Slabolepszy, Jaqui Singer, Aletta Bezuidenhoudt and others.

Rosalind has two sisters and a brother currently living in the UK, who requested not to be included or mentioned in the film and weren't willing to share with me any details of Rosalind's life and the devastating effect her disappearance had on their family. The individuals with whom Rosalind had gone to Knysna that weekend and those living at the house from where she disappeared at the time also chose not to be included in the film and weren't able to shed any new light on the disappearance, other than the facts mentioned in the film.

Although many theories continue to exist around Rosalind's disappearance, the case remains unsolved and any documentation surrounding her disappearance has subsequently been destroyed or simply lost. The mystery of Rosalind's disappearance, however, still lingers in the subconscious of her generation and lives on in the memory of the Knysna forests and the town's older residents, many of whom were extensively involved in the search.

1969



Giles Hugo (Frank Black) 1972

“Bear in mind that CT 69 was not a uniform scene at all – it was emerging. Politics at the time was straight B&W *kragdadigheid* and suppression, however the politics of consciousness (sex, drugs & rock ‘n roll), human awareness and interaction (race, sex, gender, class), psychology (anti-psychiatry, R D Laing, Leary), spirituality (from the born-again through Buddhism, meditation, yoga, to the darker realms - yes some of it was really nasty, but more of that later) and the arts (in terms of commentary and criticism) was slowly exploding in isolated heads and groups, some overlapping. A couple of years later, by ‘73 say, it was much more open and established, but ‘69 was lonely stuff in many respects. Which is why those associations and memories are so vivid. And the pix...” Giles Hugo Email August 2005

1969 can be described as the last year of a tumultuous decade in South Africa’s history that entrenched grand apartheid on an unprecedented scale. As a direct rebellion against the injustices of the apartheid laws of the day and the double standards of mainstream society, a youth counter-culture was emerging in South Africa, which manifested itself in student protests, inspired by the anti-Vietnam War protests and student rebellion in Paris, on campuses throughout the country and in the hippie movement that sought alternative lifestyles to what they referred to as ‘straight society’. On the other hand, the so-called ‘straight society’, whose values were largely based on strict Calvinistic principles, had little sympathy with the hippie movement, which was associated with drugs, immoral sex and loose living, and protesting students, who were classed as being communist-inspired.

Through Rosalind’s story, the film captures the almost bizarre climate of South Africa during this period, frequently referred to as the Silent Sixties (Bickford-Smith, 1999: 154). The government was all powerful. The media had been severely restricted in reporting on political matters. Rigorous censorship laws, guarding the public against communist influences and anything deemed overtly sexual, were in place; the security police were an ominous entity and detentions were the order of the day.

This era was also known as “The Golden Era” for whites, a period of unbelievable prosperity. Despite an international outcry against inhumane apartheid laws, foreign investments poured into the country and the Rand became one of the strongest currencies in the world.

Rosalind came from a wealthy family that had, so to speak, benefited from the ‘evils’ of apartheid. Along with thousands of other young people, she embraced the emerging hippie movement as a part of the rebellion against parental values and establishment that came with the consciousness of these times.

Apart from being a student on one of the most controversial campuses in the country, her disappearance - linked with rumours of drug-induced orgies and rituals associated with the alternative lifestyles of the hippie movement - encapsulated the divide between establishment and the youth culture of the time.

My Connection to the Story

Having familial ties in the Garden Route, I spent most of my summer holidays in this area as a child and although I hadn’t been into the Knysna forests until recently, the space always held a deep fascination for me. My favourite parts of the journey from Cape Town were the forested sections on the N2 that wind down the pass into the Wilderness and The Garden of Eden strip en route to Plettenberg Bay, where I would find myself wondering about this young woman, whom my father had told me had disappeared there many years ago.

I don’t remember his exact version of the story, but I do know that it made a significant impression on my young mind at the time as it shaped some of my earliest associations I had with these forests.

Although I found the fairytale setting of the forests enchanting, the knowledge I had of the disappearance of this young woman made my associations with this forest equally traumatic and unsettling.

At the beginning of 2003 my parents moved from Cape Town to the Wilderness and I found myself spending more time in that part of the world. I was keen to explore this new, yet familiar landscape through its local stories, as a means of enriching my knowledge of and affiliation with the area.

It was during the Christmas period that my uncle, Gavin, a soil scientist, who has lived in the Garden Route area for many years, told me about an experience he had relating to Rosalind in the forests in 1979 that brought these unsettling childhood memories of her and the forests back to me.

Gavin was doing a soil survey in the Fisanthoek forests, approximately 10 years after Rosalind's disappearance. One afternoon while he was waiting for his team to finish digging a pit, he dozed off, and when he woke up, recalls having had a vision of Rosalind Ballingall, whom he knew had disappeared in that vicinity several years earlier. The vision was so strong that he felt that if he dug around in the undergrowth, he would find her remains. But he shrugged it off, and later that afternoon, when he stopped in the village to pick up the local newspaper, was surprised to discover an article that said that Rosalind's case was being re-investigated and that there had been a clairvoyant in the Fisanthoek area, that same week that he had been working in the forests.

That evening when he returned to his cottage in the woods, a wild bush dove had perched itself on the roof of his bakkie and tried to follow him inside. When he shut the bird out, it started pecking at the window until he let it inside. Once inside the bird flew around him trying to sit on his head. Apparently this went on for days and the bird would follow him whenever he went into the forest, until eventually one day, he drove off and the bird disappeared.

He was due to go into the forests to do a soil survey that summer so I went along on my first expedition into the forests and, being inspired by his unusual and puzzling experience, was keen to explore the possibilities of making a film pertaining to Rosalind's story.

I persuaded Gavin to take me to the place where he had his experience, but after so many years, it was nearly impossible to pinpoint the exact spot. What we did find was endless, impenetrable forest all around us and I realised that if I wanted to make a film about the story, this would be my starting point, and it was.

After doing some research about this story, I discovered that Rosalind was a student at UCT at the time, and like myself, spent much time on the Hiddingh Campus where she was doing a BA Drama and where I have spent most of my time during the course of completing my film degree. Besides the intrigue surrounding Rosalind's story, I was curious to know what it was like to be a student at UCT during those turbulent yet exciting times and also felt there could be some value for the university to have a record of this story.

1. Investigating Documentary

Bill Nichols writes: “Traditionally, the word documentary has suggested fullness, and completion, knowledge and fact, explanations of the social world and its motivating mechanisms. More recently, though, documentary has come to suggest incompleteness and uncertainty, recollection and impression, images of personal worlds and their subjective construction” (Nichols qtd. in Bruzzi, 2000: 103)

While a documentary is traditionally associated with the search for truth, my film expresses the impossibility of knowing the complete truth and with the absence of official documentation, the lack of concrete evidence and no suspects or witnesses, my film explores the nature of this mystery in relation to the times, rather than attempting to solve it.

Much like a characteristic feature of what has been defined as the “Anti-detective” genre in post-modern literature, the narrative of my film stresses non-solution, rather than the elucidation of mystery that drives the conventional detective story (Tani, 1984: 41-42). Tani writes in relation to the detective’s pursuit in the anti-detective novel that “discovery is not about finding something really new but, rather, about finding a missing link, something that already existed and we did not know about” (Tani, 1984: 47).

Within the context of South Africa’s new democracy much emphasis is placed on the re-writing of history to include the previously excluded and unwritten histories that have been silenced by the country’s oppressive political past.

History, it can be said, has become a burden in this country in that it reveals our differences and especially young South Africans, like myself, are often reluctant to look back at their past because of this and the difficulties of accepting responsibility for and coming to terms with the cultural baggage that has come with our collective heritage.

In my story, the search for Rosalind mirrors the search for historical continuities in a country where much of the past had been silenced during the apartheid years, and the mystery narrative and the relentless forest landscape become a metaphor to describe the difficulties of accessing this hidden past, about which much still remains unknown today. At the same time the film captures the mood of this generation by highlighting their quest for personal liberation through cutting loose from inherited family values and establishment ideologies. I feel this also mirrors the contemporary experience of South Africans, who are questioning their heritage and exploring their identities as a means of re-establishing a sense of place in this new society.

I've tried to develop the feeling of 'alienation' and 'angst' inherent in the uncertainties surrounding the mystery and the unsettling speculations that came with it, as an expression of that generation's discontent with the socio-political situation and my current experience of feeling burdened and to some extent displaced in relation to my past.

Although I have focused on telling the story about the mystery surrounding Rosalind's disappearance, I wanted to express the themes inherent to what I feel can also be described as a coming-of-age story, capturing the anxieties that come with the loss of innocence and the uncertainties felt from breaking free from family values and the past.

The soul-searching of the sixties generation and their rejection of the norm, mirrors in many ways the questioning that's part of an individual's search for experience, and the tragedy of Rosalind's fate evokes the trauma that can come with this experience.

The journey into the forest can also be read as a rite-of-passage narrative, with the forest landscape representing the bounds of the known world that this generation were questioning. It embodies the instability of reality, uncertainties and paranoia inherent to this 'coming of age' phase in an individual's life and the country at the time.

My choice of the title refers to the popular folk song tradition of the sixties that revived the ballad form, especially the music of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. Much like the traditional ballad that tells the story of a particular person, place or event that has been remembered and retold by a community in the form of an oral poem, my experience of researching and documenting this story draws information from the collective memory of the Knysna community and public domain.

With the limited amount of existing documentation pertaining to both Rosalind's case and this era, I have had to rely on the oral transmission of information from the individuals I have approached during the course of my research and, much like the traditional ballad that is passed by word of mouth, have witnessed how this story has undergone several transformations in its re-telling over the years.

While my film is ultimately another re-telling of this story from my point of view, I wanted to show the process of the story becoming this. Through the juxtaposition of the different views pertaining to the mystery, I intended to show how the perceptions that governed the different interpretations of this story were often more telling about the 'narrators' themselves than the subject. I tried to avoid imposing any information I came across in my research, through the use of expositional voice-over, that would either add to or oppose any of the information I revealed through the interviewees, although I did exert shape over the material through my choice of interviewees for the final version of the film.

The absence of a central unifying voice in the film reflects the difficulty of positing a single unifying point of view upon this unsolved mystery. Although I am present in the film, I chose to act as the 'silent' narrator that shapes the journey motif, and while I discover rather than impose information, wanted to reveal my attempts to make this silence speak, as it pertains to the mystery and the era.

Hartman refers to “a strictly delimited scene of suffering” with reference to the site and nature of the crime that has been committed, as the “central anchoring point” in most mystery narratives (Hartman qtd. in Most, 1983: 210). While the conventional detective or mystery narrative pivots around this inciting incident in the drive towards finding the criminal and understanding the motives behind the act that has been committed, my quest is about trying to define this ‘scene of suffering’ that in Rosalind’s case, remains enshrouded in mystery.

In Wordsworth’s ballad “The Thorn”, Antonioni’s film *Blow Up* or Resnais’ *Last Year at Marienbad* -- where the nature of the crime that has been committed in the story is so illusory -- Hartman says: “The center they scan is an absence; the darkness they illuminate has no heart. There is pathos here but no defined scene of pathos. Instead of a whodunit, we get a whodonut, a story with a hole in it” (Hartman qtd. in Most, 1983: 214).

Although I have not adhered to any formal arrangements as they pertain to the traditional structure of a ballad, I have attempted to create an almost lyrical structure to the film to express the elusive nature of the mystery and through the use of local folk-songs and extensive imagery from this era tried to evoke the moods of absence, silence, estrangement and horror inherent to this story and the times. In addition the timeless quality, archetypal characters and universal themes that are traditionally associated with well-known ballads in Western literature allowed me to conceptualise and express the universal themes of the loss of innocence and coming of age in relation to this era.

2. Cult Icon & Folk Heroine

In a tour I made of Cape Town's "pop clubs" and houses occupied by groups of young people who knew Rosalind before she vanished, I found the youth sub-culture in the city clearly divided into two schools of opinion. Among the younger "swinging set", who populate the clubs, the intensified attention focused on her disappearance has turned her into something of a folk heroine. This group has no shortage of people claiming to have seen her in Cape Town or to know of people who have. One young man, who said he once lived in the same house as Rosalind claimed to have seen and spoken to her in a city street last week. There could, he said, be no mistake that it was her. Another man in his early 20s told me about three weeks ago, while walking in Cape Town with a friend, he pointed Rosalind out to him. They spoke to her and she told them that she intended staying for two weeks with a friend in Camps Bay before moving on to Gordon's Bay and then "moving about a bit".

A. J. Wannenburg, Sunday Times May 3, 1970

The extensive coverage of the peculiar circumstances surrounding Rosalind's disappearance and the repeated sightings and speculations that came with it turned Rosalind, as the above article suggests, into a cult icon of her era. Much as Marilyn Monroe's legend embodied certain desires and fantasies of the fifties, Rosalind came to embody certain of the values and ideals of her generation.

Rosalind's image encapsulated the ideal sixties woman. She was a tall, attractive, red-head who embraced the fashions and interests of the new society of the sixties while the other-worldly, dreamlike quality of her personality and her spiritual nature, coupled with the mystery surrounding her disappearance enhanced her iconic potential. As is the case with popular cult icons, such as Marilyn, her desirable image led to a minor-scale phenomenon of impersonators around the country, as suggested by the above article and individuals like Estelle de Villiers, a Knysna resident quoted in the film, who was introduced to someone who claimed to be Rosalind at a party in Durban.

In *Fan Cultures*, Hills looks at the relationship between cult icons, death and mystery and quotes Rodman who says of Elvis Presley, “in death he is truly a popular medium – a vehicle through which people tell stories about their past and present lives” (Rodman qtd. in Hills, 2002 : 141)

Rosalind’s story has the same effect. Through remembering her and the mystery surrounding her disappearance she becomes a vehicle through which to explore what Hills describes in reference to Marilyn as the articulation of “social meaning and affect” (Hills, 2002 : 140) of her times.

During the course of my research I spoke to several individuals from different disciplines who were students at UCT at the time and it became apparent that disciplinary orientation affected viewpoint. The environmental students believed she was attacked by wild animals and the arts students felt she’d assumed a new identity as a means of rebelling against her family, while students who had taken to the growing interest in the occult at the time spoke of witchcraft and alien abductions.

The theories surrounding Rosalind’s disappearance, including the widely held view that she was murdered or involved in a witchcraft related drug-orgy, reveal the fears about this emerging hippie-culture, in relation to the Calvinistic ideologies that underpinned the values of the still highly conservative South African society of the sixties. On the other hand, the widely held notion amongst her peers that she was still alive reaffirmed the hippie generation’s aspirations towards personal freedom, sought through rebellion against family and mainstream values.

Amongst her friends, however, Rosalind’s disappearance was a devastating tragedy and the endless rumours that surrounded it made it all the more disturbing. Rosalind’s friends described her as a loving and caring young woman who, although admired for her individuality, would never have purposefully abandoned her friends and family, as was speculated on through the media.

Among those who knew Rosalind, she is best remembered for her spiritual nature, as Tony Manhir, a friend and archeology student, describes in his interview. He felt that this spiritual quality was highly valued during the emergence of the soul-searching consciousness of the sixties.

Still today, it is believed amongst many hippie circles that Rosalind is alive, as is the case with the woman who claimed to be Rosalind in a Cape Town night-club in 1999 saying, "Here I am today still dancing with the hippies!" Of course, we can't be totally sure that Rosalind isn't still alive, but we know that, four decades later, her legend is still very much with us.

Having been denied access to Rosalind's personal life, I chose to avoid making overt reference to her family or the individuals involved in her disappearance and chose to use the familiar images of Rosalind that appeared in the news and shaped public perceptions of her, rather than attempting to track down pictures that would be revealing of her personal life. By using these faded black and white images of her from press cuttings and the microfilm projector, in juxtaposition to the mostly full colour archival photographs and films from personal collections, I intended to convey a sense of her image as being a part of the subconscious remembering of the generation that she reflects, rather than presenting her as an independent entity that becomes the sole object of our scrutiny, as has been the case with other versions of this story in the past.

I have used the microfilm-projector motif that shows me searching through microfilm cuttings of Rosalind's disappearance as a narrative thread throughout the course of the film to evoke a sense of the distance felt between my elusive subject and myself. In the beginning of the film, this motif is intended to illustrate me embarking on my investigative journey and my attempts to resurrect the memory of her from these faded news clip archives and by the end of the film, this repeated motif is intended to evoke the sadness of being unable to solve the mystery of her disappearance and to bring closure to her life.

3. Time and Place

“...We have come to know that every individual lives, from one generation to the next, in some society; that he lives out a biography, and that he lives it out within some historical sequence. By the fact of his living he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove.”

(Mills qtd. in Soja, 1989: 13)

Drawing on the current emphasis on the interplay between geography and history in postmodern historiography, I have explored what Soja describes as ‘the spatialisation of thought and experience’ (Soja, 1989: 10) in my approach to documenting the past. With this shift towards the construction of human geographies, ‘place’ and the subjective memories invested in place have become central to current studies of the making of spatial histories.

Since most of Rosalind’s close friends and relatives have moved abroad and with her family members opposed to the idea of the project, I realised that the bulk of my research material would have to be drawn primarily from the memory of place. Place is the central connection between me and my subject and as such the film pivots around these two central places of commonality between us – the city of Cape Town, and the forests in Knysna. Although Rosalind had spent most of her life in Johannesburg and most of the interviewees in the film were not central figures in her life, I have placed my emphasis on these individuals because of their connection to the places I felt to be of relevance to her life at the time of her disappearance and of significance to telling the story of her generation.

In his book, *Gates of Eden, American Culture of the Sixties*, Morris Dickstein says, “Every age has a tendency to cultivate its own principle of decay, to foster the spirit that will eventually overthrow it” (Dickstein, 1997: 53). Rosalind’s character as the idealistic, elusive flower child personifies the utopian ideals inherent to the sixties era and the tragedy of her fate encapsulates the escapist attitudes and destructive elements, such as excessive drug-use, that ultimately cost her her life, and saw the radical mutations of the movement.

While it is felt by several of the individuals I have spoken to during the course of my research that much about the hippie movement in South Africa was all show and little substance, looking back at this era four decades later I wanted to show that this generation, even though they might not have been as effective in implementing social change here as in other parts of the world, had left its mark, most importantly in what I feel to be the birth of a consciousness of transformation that is shared by my generation, and its vision for what the country has come to be today.

“...you have to understand a little of where we were, so to speak, and where that was, was a revolution that had very little to do with politics. We were rather hoping the world would wake up and get its shit together. Rob Harding, [who was the founder and one of two members of the Cosmic Butterfly (singular because it refers to the consciousness and its virtually mindless flitting from one subject to another without the least obvious provocation)], in fact, once remarked that, if South Africa ever really *did* get its shit together, it would naturally turn into a paradise since it was so far the other way then... We were waiting for the pendulum swing, and trying in our strange little ways to encourage it. Our strange little ways included much hope, a little prayer, and a very minor dabble in 'white magic' “ (Mike Dickman, musician and friend of Rosalind’s who was at UCT with her at the time and involved in the search for her, now living in Paris. Email, April, 2004)

I will use the term 'cultural geography' as an alternative to 'biography' to describe my approach in conceptualising the means by which I have documented Rosalind's story, through tracing these significant places and mapping out a cultural space that captures this emerging consciousness and signifies prevalent themes related to the times.

By 1969 close to 150 000 Capetonians had been relocated under the Group Area legislation, as part of the government's goal to ensure white dominance at all costs (Bickford-Smith, 1999: 154). With the massive urban segregation that took place in these years, cheap, low-cost housing became available in the city, including areas such as De Waterkant in Green Point where Cobern Street is situated.



As the government went ahead with destroying entire communities in the city, such as District Six, De Waterkant, which was not as badly affected, became a melting pot of hippies, students and artists. It was also one of the few places in the city at the time where one would encounter the phenomenon of different races mixing and sharing the same space.

Back porch Jarvis Street (Oliver Stapleton)

Since South Africa's emerging counter-culture and hippie movement were never extensively documented in the press, I have had to rely on private collections to find the images I needed to convey a sense of time and place. I managed to get hold of a selection of good pictures of De Waterkant taken by Oliver Stapleton, an award-winning cinematographer in the US and UK today, who was a student at UCT in those years and had lived here during that era, and have used most of his images in the Cobern Street sequence in the film.



De Waterkant, 1971 (Oliver Stapleton)

John Oakley's song "Return to Cobern Street" seemed a most appropriate choice for this sequence where Tony and I revisit the street to find the house where he and Rosalind stayed prior to her disappearance, now changed and knocked down. While the honest simplicity of the song and the images I incorporated of the area and individuals who lived there at the time captures the sentimental value attached to this street and the area by this generation, I also incorporated imposing low-opacity archival images of the bulldozers knocking down District Six, as a reference to the relocations that were taking place during this time, evoking a sense of the ominous and threatening nature of the Nationalist government's ideologies and its apartheid regime that undermined the sense of community these people shared.



(Manuscripts and Archives, UCT)

Much like campuses in Europe and The United States, the University of Cape Town became a protest ground during these years and was nick-named "Moscow-on-the Hill" (Bickford-Smith, 1999: 195) in light of the frequent demonstrations and sit-ins that went on in protest against the apartheid government and its ban on education for black students.

In a still highly conservative South Africa, the natural beauty of the South Cape Coast and the forests of the then still small town of Knysna became a draw card for people wanting to live outside mainstream society. It lent itself to the exploration of a new consciousness that held the freedom of self and the emergence of humankind's spiritual nature as a more meaningful pursuit than an existence confined to materialism and the inhumane politics of the day.

The tiny settlement of Fisanthoek, nestling in the middle of the dense Knysna forests, and the "Sugar House" – so named because of its association with LSD – became a popular meeting point for hippies and individuals who shared in this consciousness and like other communes typical of this area, provided an ideal refuge from mainstream society.

While the film is in some parts a sentimental reflection on these times, it undermines the romantic notions that came to be associated with this movement by revealing, through the tragedy of Rosalind's disappearance, how the promise of freedom and escape that this space encapsulated for some, soon became a place of darkness and fear.

Today, Neil and Alison, who have been living in the "Sugar House" for the past fourteen years (and who were wary of any involvement with my project because of the negative connotations Rosalind's disappearance brought to the place), run a rehabilitation programme for drug addicts and alcoholics and have transformed what was once a space of fear and darkness into a place of healing.

I was fortunate to come across another valuable collection of photographs from Giles Hugo, who is currently living in Tasmania and who was at university with Rosalind. He had documented the era quite extensively and at the time I made contact with him, Giles happened to be archiving and restoring this collection and he sent me batches of pictures via email over a period of about a month.

Among them were pictures taken on the university campus, various ‘digs’ around Cape Town and faces of people, who were part of the scene and whom I had come across in my research. They were a great help as they started to colour this world I had been researching and trying to visualise for some time.

I spent time with both Giles’ and Oliver’s pictures going back to the places where they had been taken so many years ago and in doing so discovered the pleasure of being able to experience these places in the present through the eyes of the past.

Through these images I started exploring how physical places were able to reveal the relationship between the present and the past in that I was able not only to see, but also to feel the visible effects of time and history as they manifested themselves physically on the landscape.



Gargoyle ‘Smoko’ Point - Students Union Cafeteria 1969 – *Ars Nova* Music Event Students Union Building 1969 (Giles Hugo)

Jung writes, in reference to the importance placed on interpreting images and symbols in dreams in his psychology that the “image is the immediate object of knowledge” (Jung qtd. in Hockley 2001: 1). When looking at history, images of the past can similarly be described as the images of the collective memory of a nation’s subconscious, so I’ve explored ways of using these images as an alternative to re-staging parts of the story or making use of voice-over in my recollection, of what I felt to be a more accessible, authentic and emotive account of history.

The use of the image over voice also allowed me greater leeway to express the themes of silence, memory and the prevalent drug-induced themes pertaining to this era. Through the colours and textures of the photographs, I was able to evoke a sense of the corrosion of time and the fragility of memory that work as antagonistic forces in my search for Rosalind, that I could not express through voice over narration.



“Party - Unknown time, place, people, event - like they said if you could remember it all you weren't there. Fortunately I still have the pix.” (Giles Hugo)

Giles also sent me his 8mm 'happening' movie shot in 1973 at Rhodes on the occasion of cutting his hair and beard for the first time in five years, which was staged as a public event to raise bail money for his 'marahoochy' bust. He also put me in touch with a friend of his, Caroline Seawright, who studied at Michaelis at the time and had made what became something of a cult film at the time, "Journey". Her film, shot much like a cinematic poem, is a journey into this young artist's mind and makes use of rich symbolic and religious imagery that illustrate the emerging spiritual consciousness and mystical subjects her generation was exploring. I've interspersed both these films along with photographs through various montage sequences in the documentary to convey the prevalent themes inherent to these times, and create what can be described as a continuous subconscious layer of the memory of this generation that runs almost like a stream of consciousness throughout the course of the film.

Tracking down local music from this era was also an important part of the way I envisioned evoking a sense of the times. I came across the Third Ear Music “Hidden Years Archive Project”, headed up by David Marks who moved in the same circles as Rosalind at the time. His archive holds the music and words of local artists spanning the past thirty-five years that were either censored or never released during the apartheid years. From this collection I chose music from the late sixties and early seventies period by folksinger Mike Dickman, who was also a good friend of Rosalind’s and at university with her at the time. While not all the songs I have chosen deal directly with the political situation at the time and are more personal reflections of the artist, the music encapsulates the distinctive sixties folk sound and alludes to the pressing concerns of these times.

The emphasis on the significance of place is not uncommon in the commemoration of an individual’s life, be they personal, public or historical figures. Matt Hill in his book *Fan Cultures* uses the term “Cult Geographies” to describe places that become significant landmarks in commemorating cult icons such as Elvis Presley’s Graceland and locations for cult films, especially in the United States.

‘Cult geographies’, says Hill, ‘do not merely map out a cultural space’, they ‘also sustain cult fans’ fantasies of ‘entering’ into the cult text, as well as allowing the ‘text’ to leak out into spatial and cultural practices via fans’ creative transpositions and genres of self.’ (Hills 2002: 151)

Tracing these places of significance became a means for me to ease the distance between myself and my subject of whom I knew very little at that stage, by inviting a sense of physical contact with her ‘lived’ and my ‘imagined’ past. In the absence of concrete evidence and official documentation pertaining to the mystery, these remains of place become visible traces of the past that are the closest we get to any physical proof of the details regarding her life and disappearance.

4. The Forest

In the history of Western Civilisation, forests represent an outlying realm of opacity which has allowed that civilisation to estrange itself, enchant itself, terrify itself, ironize itself, in short to project into the forest shadows its secrets and innermost anxieties. (Harrison 1992: xi)

The forest into which Rosalind disappears evokes the pervasive nature of mystery and fear that accompanies perceptions about this vast tract of unknown terrain. Besides Rosalind's disappearance, there have been countless others lost in these forests over the years, including an entire helicopter with four people that went down in 1999 of which no trace has ever been found and the recent disappearance of the young Seteline Moos into the Goudveld forest while I was researching this story.

In the time that I've spent with this story and in the forests, I have encountered individuals who have equated this area to the Bermuda triangle or gone as far as referring to these forests as 'the triangle of evil' in light of these disappearances and reported instances of witchcraft or ritual-related killings.

Although I have found that parts of the forests have an unusually unsettling nature and these stories tend to haunt our associations with this space, I have come to the conclusion that the most terrifying quality of the forests, like the nature of mystery itself, is that they challenge our beliefs.

Because so much about these intricately self-sustaining ecosystems is still not known today, the forest remains largely a mysterious place. As environmentalist, Gareth Patterson, says, "mankind knows more about the surface of the moon than he does about these forests" (Patterson: 2004).

The density and impenetrability of vast stretches of this forest makes any kind of extensive research into it a near impossible task. The Knysna elephants are a fine example. Although Knysna's forests are renowned for their wild elephants, they are seldom sighted and have become as much of a mystery as the forests themselves. With the dwindling elephant population over the years and the limited knowledge about these elephants, much debate has taken place in recent years as to whether these elusive forest elephants still exist.

In the three years that Gareth Patterson has spent tracking and monitoring the movements and behaviour of these elephants, he has built extensively upon the existing knowledge about them and has come to some positive conclusions about the numbers of other species that have been deemed nearly extinct. He has also discovered species of wild animals that have never been documented, some of which, such as the black leopard, mankind had no inkling even existed in this part of the world. During his research Gareth has covered several thousands of kilometers on foot in these forests, but in all this time he has caught a glimpse of only one.

From a socio-historical perspective, Dalene Matthee's novels have contributed much to the general knowledge of the history of Knysna and its forests, but even Matthee, who spent many years of her life researching these forests and their people, says in her novel *Circles in a Forest*, "The forest never gives up its secrets. You can live in it every day, sleep in it every night, you can fell its trees, shoot its animals, burn it down, kill it – but the unknown will die with it" (Matthee 2003: 126).

Anyone who has spent a lot of time in the forests like Gareth and Matthee will openly acknowledge the mysterious nature of their world, not as a means of generating fear, but showing respect. Having had the privilege of going into the forests with Gareth a few times I was amazed at, not only the sensitivity he shared with the environment he knew so intimately, but the caution with which he treated it.

In telling this story I have tried to find ways in which I could express the complex nature of the forests and its mystery in relation to the themes I have explored in the film without regenerating the fear that has accompanied perceptions of the forest in this story – as a means of enriching our awareness of the space.

Dalene Matthee says: “The forest is like someone you can hear talking, but whose language you do not understand. You can hear him, you see him, you touch him, you see the signs he makes, but you do not know what he says” (Matthee 2003: 126).

From the onset of shooting this documentary I explored different ways of filming the forests and have developed several motifs to express the themes of silence and memory, the collective identity of the hippie counter-culture, the blurring of the boundaries between reality and imagination and the obstacles of access and time in this story.

Since there were no conclusive suspects in Rosalind’s disappearance and I did not include any of the individuals who were with Rosalind on that day, some of them having been investigated for murder at the time, I explored ways in which to portray the forest as the ‘silent witness’, which, by keeping Rosalind’s fate secret, can be described as the central antagonist in the story. I looked at ways in which I could capture the stillness of the forest as a means of conveying the ominous nature of the silence as it pertains to the mystery of Rosalind and the lack of information as it pertains to her and the silent past.

Drawing on what Pogue says -- “the forest is all nuance, it blurs distinctions, evoking the lost kinship between animate and inanimate, darkness and light, finite and infinite, body and soul, sight and sound” (1992:186) -- I explored ways in which to reveal the way the boundaries between reality and imagination have been blurred in this story.

In the opening sequence in the film I constructed a collage of voices recalling the event, and transposed some of the disturbing images from Caroline’s film that deal with death, ritual and sacrifice over blurry close-up images of the forest to evoke a sense of the fears provoked by our associations with the forests in relation to this story.

In one of the opening sequences to the film I introduce the spirit of the times and the hippie era to a remix of Bob Dylan's song "I shall be Released." Here I created a montage sequence of low opacity images from Giles' collection of this era that I transposed over a long shot of driving through the forests in Phisanthoek. Besides evoking the endless nature of the search for Rosalind that takes place here, I intended for this sequence to convey a sense of 'a trip down memory lane', but unlike the Cobern Street sequence that is a sentimental reflection of the times, this sequence is intended to encapsulate the estrangement of this generation from society at the time.

The relationship between the forest landscape, Rosalind, and the spirit of her era that she personified, represents on the one hand the idealistic values and romantic ideas that characterised the hippie movement, but ultimately brought it to its end, and on the other, the repressed spiritual consciousness of the country at the time, that viewed this emerging youth culture as a threat to the Calvinistic values which characterised the conservative cornerstones of society at the time.

While the density and impenetrability of the forest expresses the difficulties of accessing my subject and the hidden histories of South Africa's past, it is quite ironic that the forest should present itself as the only constant in my search for the past. While time has affected place, the forest has remained unchanged in the four decades that have lapsed and as such, it is within the timeless landscape of the forests that it evokes the sensation of being in closest contact with my subject.

I use the forest-road motif again in the credit sequence but transposed images of the forests at low opacity over the long road in this sequence to bring a sense of closure to the film even though the mystery remains unresolved. While the endless forest road evokes the timeless nature of these forests and the sense that the search for Rosalind goes on, I also wanted to evoke the notion that while times have changed and memories have faded, the forests are all we are really left with that's concrete and present, in our search for Rosalind and the past.

In Retrospect

Getting back to Roz: She was an amazing woman. Extremely beautiful in a post-Raphaelite sort of way, very gentle, and very obsessive in her attachments.

If, for example (MD's theory N°2), she had decided in her stoned state to become 'the sacrifice' so that the above changes might happen, she could very well have done just that. She was not at her sanest at that time, believe me.

Basically we were just dreamers... Dreamers who hoped that a better world was dawning now that minds were starting to awaken, and who were prepared, to a greater or lesser extent, to help that dawn into existence.

(Mike Dickman. Email, April, 2004)

It has been a challenge for me to make this film emotionally engaging without co-operation from Rosalind's immediate family, the inclusion of close friends and a first-hand account of what had happened in the Knysna Forests during that fateful weekend of her disappearance. Without these personal details it has been difficult to portray my subject with the sensitivity she deserves.

It took me close on six months of research to track down her existing family members, who according to police records didn't exist. They were reluctant to participate and felt that I should have requested their permission to tell this story before I embarked upon the project. Although I tried to keep communication going, I haven't heard from them since.

Most of Rosalind's close friends from UCT, such as Mike, have moved abroad and although I was hoping Rosalind's sister would have been able to put me in touch with another close friend who might still be living in South Africa, who could have acted as a representative voice for Rosalind and the family, this did not transpire and time and budget constraints prevented me from looking into this any further.

Although I have attempted to develop the lack of access to Rosalind's personal life and my enforced distance from my subject as a theme in the film, it has been frustrating and frequently a daunting task to overcome these obstacles, in addition to having to come to terms with the inconclusive evidence and unsettling speculations of her disappearance.

In spite of these limitations, it has nevertheless been a most fulfilling experience being granted privileged access to a relatively undocumented aspect of this era in South Africa's past and to the Knysna forests; and to have been a part of the special process of reconnecting people to the memories of their own distant past and allowing them to re-live those strange times and the precious years that have shaped who they are today.

Although it is not possible to bring closure to the mystery of Rosalind's disappearance, I believe the relevance of this film lies in remembering and acknowledging her through the impact she made in her circles -- and on the wider South African public -- during that time.

Bibliography

1. Bickford-Smith, Vivian, Elizabeth van Heyningen, Nigel Worden, (eds). 1999. Cape Town in the Twentieth Century. Cape Town: David Philip.
2. Brown, Lesley (ed). 1993. The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles. Vol 1 A-M. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
3. Bruzzi, Stella. 2000 New Documentary. A critical introduction. London and New York: Routledge.
4. Dickstein, Morris. 1977. Gates of Eden. American Culture in the Sixties. England: Harvard University Press.
5. Dickman, Mike. April 2004. Personal anecdotes via email.
6. Elliot, T. S. 1959. Four Quartets. London: Faber and Faber Limited.
7. Grossvogel, David I. 1979. Mystery and its Fictions: From Oedipus to Agatha Christie. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins U.P,
8. Hills, Matt. 2002. Fan Cultures. London and New York: Routledge.
9. Harrison, Robert Pogue. 1992 Forests. The Shadow of Civilisation. United States of America: The University of Chicago Press.
10. Hockley, Luke. 2001 Cinematic Projections. The Analytical psychology of C.G Jung and Film Theory. United Kingdom: University of Luton Press.
11. Hugo, Giles. 2005. Personal anecdotes via email.

12. Matthee, Dalene. 2003. Circles in a Forest. South Africa: Penguin Books.
13. Manhir, Tony. 2004. Filmed Interview. Cape Town
14. Hartman, G.H. "Literature High and Low: The Case of the Mystery Story" in The Poetics of Murder: Detective Fiction and Literary Theory (ed) Glenn W. Most. 1983 New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.
15. Patterson, Gareth. 2004. Filmed interview. Knysna
16. Soja, Edward W. 1989 Postmodern Geographies. The Reassertion of Space in Critical Theory. London and New York: Verso.
17. Tani, Stephano. 1984. The Doomed Detective. The Contribution of the Detective Novel to Postmodern American and Italian Fiction. , Southern Illinois: Carbondale and Edwardsville U.P
18. Wannenburgh, A.J. May 3 1970 "Is she on Rand or buried in a Forest grave"
Sunday Times.