

IN SEARCH OF THE SHORTCUTS:

Walking and narrative in physical, virtual and psychological space

by Simon Anthony Woolham

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MIRIAD – Department of Art and Design

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ABSTRACT

In Search Of The Shortcuts is a practice-led research project carried out from the perspective of an artist. By engaging in a practical and theoretical analysis of how walking and narrative interact in physical, virtual and psychological realms, it asserts that this interaction is vital for defining space. A self-initiated artistic residency is both central to the methodology of the project and enriched by the knowledge gained through the research. *In Search Of The Shortcuts* situates the past in the present, a shared affective experience around the suburban spaces of the artist's childhood in Wythenshawe, which lies on the outer fringes of South Manchester. The artist also addresses the relationship between expanded drawing methods and narrative representation, in order to explore how the influence of Wythenshawe and the socio-political context of the 1980s have impacted on his practice.

The thesis draws upon the artist's own past residency experiences, as well as current definitions of the artistic residency. Alongside this, the research explores relevant arts projects and spatial, poetic and non-linear literature that engages with a past to emphasise a present. This draws on Freud's theories relating to autobiographical and procedural memory, specifically, Freud's texts *Remembering, Repeating and Working Through* (1914) and *Screen Memories* (1899) that analyse an engagement with specific forms of childhood memory and deliberate why we return to fragments of them later in life. Retrieving and activating narrative through the practical methodology of walking is employed through a series of narrative guided walks – both physical and virtual – that are referred to as the *Wythy Walks*.

The virtual, online process, which continually reveals collective and personal narrative, is examined as an artistic/curatorial tool for an exhibition called *Unstable Ground*. The thesis utilises a parallel 'conversational' text whereby one side presents a direct 'live' transcript from the *Wythy Walks* dialogue and the other side supports and highlights this narrative with further social, historical and anecdotal details. The relationships between the recorded walks and the drawn-out narrative and spaces are presented through an online artwork, also called *In Search Of The Shortcuts*, which incorporates a live outline version of *Google Maps*. The website maps out and activates the multi-sensory practice, methodology and theory, designed to be experienced in a way that is relevant to the research.

Through practical analysis, narrative related to a past is generated. Whilst simultaneously interpreting, connecting with and within a present through the process of the *Wythy Walks*, the project supports engagement with shared outside, suburban spaces. The environments walked through become, simultaneously, vistas of history; that are interpreted and spoken through them. The *Wythy Walks* define and emphasise space and time as neither static nor linear. The thesis promotes the definition of spaces as an articulation of a past within a present, through physical and virtual arenas, a valuable collaborative methodology, communicated and presented through the website model.

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Dedicated to Hannah, Ava and Lana, my Granddad, who I miss very much, and my Nan who I equally miss and who passed away in 2013 during the early stages of the doctoral research

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PREFACE

The practice-led thesis is supported and works in conjunction with the website *In Search Of The Shortcuts* which situates the practical methodology, simultaneously developed from the reading and written components. The reader is advised to experience the website prior to, or during the reading of the thesis at: www.insearchoftheshortcuts.com

INTRODUCTION

Walking and narrative in physical, virtual and psychological space

The contemporary and familiar notion of an artistic residency¹ is defined as an opportunity for artists, in the broadest sense, to have time and space away from their usual environment and obligations. The residency is generally acquired either by invitation or an application procedure, through a variety of institutions that fund and accommodate them. The residency usually provides time for both individual and collaborative reflection, research, presentation and production of ideas. Simultaneously, residencies encourage exploration within a specific community or environment, an opportunity to engage both with a new audience and like-minded people. It is also customary that the twenty-first century model stresses the importance of meaningful and multi-layered exchange and immersion into one's own or another culture, often reworking the 'idea of culture against the backdrop of emerging issues' (Grizedale Arts, 2015).

In Search Of The Shortcuts – the name chosen for this project in support of the practice-led research – is related to the familiar notion of the residency, in that it advocates 'meaningful and multi-layered exchange', but develops the concept further by interrogating and specifically taking up residence in the past, in the present. The newly proposed notion of residency is a multi-sensory experience and includes a

¹ In this thesis, the shorter term 'residency' is used which will mean 'artistic residency'.

virtual and psychological discourse, defined primarily in relation to returning to sites of significance.

In this thesis it is proposed that a residency can be taken with us wherever we go – a ‘residency of the mind’; a past in the present; an affective experience. The majority of residencies, and subsequent activity, usually take place either in city or rural cultural centers, or are placed in picturesque and historic towns, serving a community. This project was situated and interrelated within a suburban ‘edge’ in Wythenshawe, on the outer fringes of south Manchester, a community with very little embedded artistic integration and activity. The proposed concept of a residency sought to explore this perception of the aforementioned area by employing a collective encounter, focused on generating shared narrative alongside a deeper understanding and mapping of one’s own culture, encouraging a meaningful dialogue with spaces through walking and defining physical and virtual realms through layers of narrative.

Understanding artistic residency from the perspective of the artist

There is a shortage of literature examining the residency from the perspective of the artist. There are examples of mission statements by a range of residency institutions, most notably in the UK by *Grizedale Arts*² and *Wysing Arts Centre*³. Grizedale Arts in particular, in the late 1990s, radically shifted and focused its attention more towards

² Grizedale Arts is a commissioning and residency centre based in Grizedale Forest, a large area of Forestry Commission land in the south of the English Lake District. Founded in 1977, the organisation was a leading light in developing a role for public art in Britain throughout the 1980s, sustaining its ideology and ways of working throughout the 1990s, before undergoing a shift in its approach after the appointment of Adam Sutherland as director in 1999 (Grizedale Arts, 2015).

³ Initially set up in 1989, Wysing Arts Centre is a test bed which develops new ways to support artists and enables art and ideas to engage a wide range of people in unexpected ways (Wysing Arts Centre, 2015).

direct engagement and critique of 'wider social and cultural concerns' (Griffin, Sutherland, 2009: 200), questioning the 'integrity of the context, particularly in terms of the maintaining and marketing of a constructed landscape' (Griffin, Sutherland, 2009: 200) in a specifically rural, Lake District environment and community. Similarly, Wysing Art Centre, situated in a rural site, instigates residencies, often exploring 'how we live today and what alternative versions of the future might hold' (Wysing Arts Centre, 2015). Artistic residences, such as those supported at Wysing Arts Centre in Bourn, near Cambridge, where I had a studio for five years, are focused on research and an autonomous approach. Wysing claims to offer 'a unique environment for art to be developed and presented' (Wysing Arts Centre, 2015). There are artists who have instigated projects at these residency sites, in particular Emma Smith⁴, whose socially-engaged practice deals with social systems, whether through strategies of historical re-enactment or site-specific ceremonies or rituals.

The contemporary notion of a residency is both collaborative and individualistic, related to the dissemination of an artist's reflective processes and the making of work. Through practice-led research, and more specifically through the composition of new methodologies related to an expanded notion of drawing, this project generated narrative, by engaging with spaces through walking and talking. This practice-led research re-contextualises the concept of a residency, grounded through practical methodology, in particular the *Wythy Walks*: a series of collaborative, narrative guided physical and virtual walks, setting off from the past or present house of the co-walker

⁴ Emma Smith is a contemporary British artist, her practice has been described as multifarious. She creates events or inclusive programmes with local communities, rather than working in the studio or gallery setup.

around Wythenshawe, which laid the foundations for the concept of situating a residency of the past in the present. Through the practice-led research, 'past in the present' is defined in relation to the process of re-tracing and re-telling of narrative. The *Wythy Walks* are generated in the present and within geographically familiar surroundings for the co-walkers, evoking and thus equally residing in the past. The psychological experience was highlighted through the process of engaging with familiar narrative and spaces through the physical and digital realms. Wythenshawe is the community where the physical, virtual and 'residency of the mind' takes place in this project. For my part and the collaborators, the walks are charged with a 'multitude of emotions'. Perspectives are re-aligned by returning to the sites, processed around the act of walking. A collective and connectedly loaded place resurfaces through random walking routes.

Purpose and rationale

The hypothesis of this thesis is developed from a practice-led enquiry which reflected on the past in the present. Through a shared methodological process, walking around spatial realms is engaged in to generate narrative. The main aim of the thesis is to define how walking and narrative, interacting in physically embodied, virtual and psychological space, contribute to the context of a self-initiated residency. Throughout the research 'self-initiated' is defined as meaning outside of, and not strictly attached to, a specific cultural institution.

Exploring this concept along the lineage of residences by generating a 'self-initiated' project, not only explores place (Wythenshawe) through modes of walking, but is also

mainly orientated within a specific past period (the 1980s; my most formative years); thus it is a residency of the past in the present through a collaborative exploration of spaces and narratives. The research pursues and defines how walking relates to and encourages narrative in physical, virtual and psychological space, and identifies how, through the process of the physical *Wythy Walks* and the expansion of this methodology through the online walks, this emphasises a relevant and deeper dialogue with personal/shared spaces around a community.

The research utilises, in particular the *Wythy Walks* methodology of a shared engagement with familiar spaces, Freud's writings on theories relating to autobiographical and procedural memory, specifically Freud's texts *On Transience* (1916) that highlights the relevance of mourning that which has been lost, discussed in *Remembering, Repeating and Working Through* (1914) and *Screen Memories* (1899)⁵ that analyse engagement with specific forms of childhood memory and deliberate why we return to fragments of them later in life.

The research undertaken in this project pursues issues around walking and narrative, and an engagement with spaces. Alongside this, current definitions of residency are explored, simultaneously defining the author's own experiences and notion of residency for this project. From this study the research implements a series of physical and virtual walks around Wythenshawe called the *Wythy Walks* to collate, align and encourage narratives alongside the re-exploration of a community's spaces.

⁵ These texts referenced throughout this thesis are published in the anthology of Freud's papers *The Penguin Freud Reader* from 2006.

Simultaneously, a website was created and developed that shares the practical methodology, theory and other artistic practices from the research.

The concepts of the relationship between walking and narrative are engaged in through five contemporary and relevant projects to situate, compare and critique the *Wythy Walks* methodology. Alongside this, the research includes Freud's texts, and those of other writers and theorists who have employed non-linear narrative as a way of exploring layers of history – most notably W.G. Sebald's *Rings of Saturn* (1998), Walter Benjamin's *A Berlin Childhood 1900* (2006 Edition) George Orwell's *Coming Up For Air* (2001 Edition) and Doreen Massey's various writings on spatial geography, in particular *For Space* (2005) which aims to liberate 'space' from some chains of meaning. This research has a profound influence on the thesis layout and led to the parallel text format.

In 2014 through the role of artist/curator (a position developed from the research), I presented and explored an exhibition titled *Unstable Ground*⁶ at PAPER, an artist-run Gallery in Manchester. The artists were: Annabel Dover, Laura Oldfield Ford, Reece Jones, David Miles, George Shaw, Stephen Walter and Lisa Wilkens. In the build up to the exhibition, the *Wythy Walks* methodology was further developed by instigating and presenting a series of virtual memory walks with the *Unstable Ground* artists, which were processed and presented as part of the curatorial framework and detailed

⁶ The title of the show *Unstable Ground* is a reference to the unpredictable process of the methodological process of the *Wythy Walks* and theoretical references to autobiographical narrative and literature utilised throughout the research.

autobiographical and artistic specifics related to why these artists made their work in a particular way.

The concept of a residency in Wythenshawe, in reference to the 1980s, is the most relevant framework for the various methodologies and concepts in relation to my practice, in which nostalgia plays a vital role in the psychological practical experience. Developed alongside the practical and theoretical research is *In Search Of The Shortcuts*: an interactive website that enlivens the multi-sensory experience of the artworks in a relevant way, developed from the research. By navigating around a live, 'outline' version of *Google Maps*, the *Wythy Walks* films, biro⁷ drawings, layers of non-linear narrative, are mapped out in relation to the specific locations. The website is a live spatial experience, a vehicle in the articulation of time and space in the present moment of engaging through the practice and research.

The connections between autobiographical memory and place set around a specific period, and the interpretation of them, defining space as an expanded notion of drawing, is at the core of the research project. Highlighting layers of narrative by engaging with the physical and virtual spatial realms of a community, the *Wythy Walks* are an ongoing sequence of recorded conversations around Wythenshawe, with old friends, family and acquaintances who grew up there. Encouraged by the rhythms and layers of memory signs during the walks, narratives are generated that mapped and highlighted personal geography.

⁷ The term 'biro' is used throughout this thesis rather than the alternative 'ballpoint pen'. This decision is based on my own particular use of the word 'biro' which I have used in reference to my drawing practice since 2000, as opposed to using the term 'ballpoint pen'.

Wythenshawe acts as both a context and space for exploring and encouraging layers of memory, through which the past can be remembered and re-interpreted in the present. Memory is very much in the moment, through the act of walking and remembering. This interplay between narrative and walking encourages the unfolding of episodes of social drama, the uncovering of past experiences: more often than not associated memories between myself and the co-walker. This also draws attention to the fragilities and unpredictability of memory: the reflection and articulation through the performative interpretation of the past.

Hidden events and experiences are brought to light through the methodology of the *Wythy Walks*, and presented as re-enacted films where the participants shared narrative, normally stored away and hidden from others, are put on public display, and conserved on memory tapes. The methodology section in this thesis presents and details the importance of my practical and theoretical method and depicts my perspective as a reflective practitioner. It outlines the methods used throughout the project, a reflection on my practice in relation to the research enquiry. This is not only useful for me as an artist in helping understand the research more thoroughly and critically in relation to the written component, but also helps to locate and contextualise the research for the reader/viewer.

The evidence presented in this thesis results from the theory and practice of researching the physical, virtual and psychological discourse of a methodology, specifically the platforms and realms of the *Wythy Walks*. The process of taking someone back to a specific location encourages narrative by enhancing and situating

the memories linked to the walk, whilst at the same time defining space. Their memories follow the route that was taken, acting as an aid to drawing-out narrative. There are specifics that are brought up and highlighted through the walks that would not arise with just a conversation. The act of walking brought memory back in order, to relevance, while simultaneously generating new memories.

Overview of background literature

The research explores literature, both theory and practice, that directly engages with the issues around walking, narrative and space, through the practice-led methodologies and research area, focusing on poetic, leftist, non-linear, autobiographical narrative. The literature rearticulates the importance of nostalgia: a vehicle for politically and emotionally mapping time and space, a past in the present, which directly relates to and has influenced the practice-led research.

Throughout this research project, Freud's notions of memory are put into practice: between what is remembered and what was experienced. Between implicit memory and explicit autobiographical memory, Freud believed, are the clues to the secret functioning of the unconscious; and he likened his endeavour to 'a detective engaged in tracing a murder' (Freud, 1916-17: 52). The dialogue between these two modes of memory resonates with both the biro drawings and the walking methodology: between the learned, knowing how to draw and walk, and the letting go of these processes through the recalling of memory. Analysing the relationship between the various drawing methods and characteristics, and the experience and process of

revisiting the place of my childhood and formative years (from the perspective of myself and others), brings about my own reflections around initiating memories, whilst simultaneously creating new ones.

W.G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn* (1998), and Walter Benjamin's *A Berlin Childhood around 1900* (2006 Edition), are significant in relation to applying a non-linear, poetic approach, to drawing out narrative details and layers of history. These references are imperative to the research: both in relation to my concept of a residency and in relation to the practical methodology of the *Wythy Walks*. *The Rings of Saturn* (1998), for example, expands, details and blurs both a physical experience of walking from layers of memory (through a specific personal locale) and a historical experience (walking through the mind). Benjamin's *A Berlin Childhood around 1900* asserts the importance of history as a more tangible material for reflecting on the period that *A Berlin Childhood around 1900* (between 1932 and 1938) was written. I parallel this reference, in particular to the title *In Search Of The Shortcuts*, as it also presents and highlights the sensitivities of spaces referenced to a particular period in history, from a particular point of view: that of a child. The discontinuous yet epigrammatic style emphasises the relationship between layers of time and place.

Another key work is James Agee and Walker Evans' book from 1941 *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (2006 edition), in reference to my shared investigation of drawing out and describing human experience of human details and narratives around a specific place (Wythenshawe). Wythenshawe's spatial politics are examined in reference to Doreen Massey's writings, specifically in relation to *For Space* (2005) and her short

essay on Wythenshawe, in the book *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space* (2002). The *Wythy Walks* strive to re-invigorate social relations through a deeper understanding between people and its spaces. This aligns with Doreen Massey's notion of defining space as the spatiality of social relations.

Practical Case studies

The practice-led research explores and compares five contemporary and relevant projects, to situate and compare the *Wythy Walks* methodology. These projects were: 'How To Talk To Buildings' (2006) by Freee, the art collective of Dave Beech, Andy Hewitt and Mel Jordan; 'Procession' (2009) a co-commissioned project by the artist Jeremy Deller; 'Everyday Adventures in London' (2013), a project by the writer and anthropologist Andrew Irving; three films by Patrick Keiller, 'London' (1994), 'Robinson in Space' (1997), and its sequel 'Robinson in Ruins' (2010); and finally, 'The Memorial Walks' (2007) by the artist Simon Pope.

Virtual walks

The concept of the *Wythy Walks* as an online experience through *Google Earth* materialised from further research from the *Wythy Walks* methodology. Following the same procedure as the physical *Wythy Walks*, the process of engaging with space through walking and talking is explored and tested as a live, virtual experience. Using *Google Earth* with *Skype* as an audio dialogue output and *Debut*, a screen capture application, the whole experience is recorded. Although not together in a real place in a physical sense, real experiences and memories are kindled through the virtual

experience. The tangible four-hour experience of the first online walk, involving narrative being ignited against a virtual backdrop: the opposite in some ways to the physical walks, where the environment that is walked around is more tangible.

Curated virtual experience

Subsequently, as part of the curatorial process and framework for *Unstable Ground*, a series of virtual online walks was embarked on with the artists that were presented. Forming part of the exhibition, the virtual walks were laid bare, presenting both autobiographical and artistic details, through layers of space and time. *Google Earth*, *Skype* and *Debut*, were again utilised, as the walk started off at the house where the individual artists in *Unstable Ground* were born or grew up. A journey of mind and matter is then undertaken, a live curatorial event around layers of time and spaces guided by the narratives that are drawn out and unfolded.

The online experience, which equally acts as an interview strategy, was utilised as a curatorial tool with a group of artists for a curated show called *Unstable Ground*. The interview strategy is an integral part of the presentation of the exhibition, unravelling and laying bare autobiographical and artistic details through direct, personal and in-depth dialogue around why these artists are working in a particular way. These key artists' practices for *Unstable Ground* related strongly to the themes being researched: autobiographical narrative related to drawing-out a sense of place. The artists are Annabel Dover, Laura Oldfield Ford, Reece Jones, David Miles, George Shaw, Stephen Walter, Lisa Wilkens, and myself as both artist and curator. The exhibition, *Unstable*

Ground, considers how drawing methods relate to experiences of autobiographical memory. The artists in *Unstable Ground* respond to this with past work or with new works, made specifically for the exhibition and directly related to the experience of the virtual walks. *Unstable Ground* is a group show that explores the perplexing, the fragile, the experiential, and the direct relationship between the paper surface and the representation and manifestation of narrative. Focusing on the autobiographical memory of each artist, their works create an emotional dialogue between place, drawing methods, and the mediation between visualisation, hand and brain.

The artists presented in *Unstable Ground* offer insights and glimpses into these important, discursive processes. They each have a relationship with the concept of *Unstable Ground* in a variety of ways, from Stephen Walter's and Laura Oldfield Ford's urban mappings, which reveal the hidden and complex political and poetic narratives of human life, to Annabel Dover's and Lisa Wilkens's drawn-out relationships with the memories of personal objects and places. The virtual, online walks unravel and lay bare autobiographical and artistic details through direct, personal and in-depth dialogue around why these artists are working in a particular way. This way of interviewing, presented as edited experiences for the curated show, also enlivens the gallery experience for the viewer and how and why these artists dialogue, with both curator and practice.

Parallel text

The layers of narrative 'paths' are presented through a parallel text layout dispersed throughout chapters one, two and three. This is organised as a series of vignettes that function between a column on the right, presenting the narrative details from the transcribed *Wythy Walks* and a more factual column on the left with further social, historical and anecdotal details, creating a cross-referential dialogue between both tones. Visually, the columns represent the collaborative dialogue of the *Wythy Walks* creating visible random 'paths' of cross-referential, non-linear text. The relationship between the two columns is appropriate to the research in that it references both the practical and theoretical research, performing the non-linear, referential, sometimes jarring relationship between the autobiographical and the factual.

The use of non-linear text is continually present within my practices; utterances, fragments of speech are strewn around and about the drawn out spaces. The dialogue not only re-traces and hints at the narratives being portrayed, but also highlights the fragilities of the depicted details. Through these glimpses of speech the stripped-down, dilapidated environments come to life. The conversational qualities that the text portrays, in this case with the drawn out marks, has been adopted to emphasise the dialogue and time-spanning behaviour of the *Wythy Walks*.

This influence of the *Wythy Walks* presents an open approach to meaning between the layers of text: between what is said and suggested, seen and unseen, between the physical act of walking and what is sensed during the walks. Adopting a parallel text approach highlights the importance of both the autobiographical and the critical

analysis of the project. This conversational approach to writing emphasises the details, cross-examination, friction and importance of both lines of enquiry.

The parallel text layout highlights the random conversation, the exchange of thoughts, opinions and feelings that occur through the *Wythy Walks*. The autobiographical text, the narrative details of the *Wythy Walks*, forms one half of the text and my own personal and factual accounts and background details of Wythenshawe, form the other. Simultaneously the parallel text, dispersed throughout the three main chapters, dialogues with the theoretical and analytical details that are centrally aligned throughout, giving rise to both approaches of the written thesis.

A more poetic and narrative referenced thesis is presented, allowing for chance and serendipitous cross reference, akin to how personal memory functions, and suggestive of my narrative voice within the biro drawings which is of such weight and importance to the research. The American composer, theorist and conceptual artist John Cage says that 'There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot' (Cage, 1961: 15). The space between the two columns of text, both chance and silence, creates a meandering path, a psychological space that Cage would term an empty space that is not. The relationship between the two columns is of equal importance as the content itself; and this is appropriate in that it referenced both the practical research of the *Wythy Walks* and key literature; performing the non-linear, sometimes jarring relationship between the more autobiographical and the analytical columns. The English poet Alice Oswald is also referenced, whose poem *Dart* (2002)

utilises a parallel text approach, weaving between ‘Hughesian deep myth and Larkinesque social realism’ (*The Guardian*, July 2002). Oswald also adopted a research approach by spending three years recording conversations with people and communities who lived and worked on the river Dart in Devon, a methodology akin to my own way of garnering narrative in this project through the *Wythy Walks* process.

Summary of key terms

Self-initiated residency:

The familiar notion of artistic residency, defined primarily as an opportunity for artists to have time and space away from their usual environment and obligations, is acquired either by invitation or an application procedure, through the variety of institutions that fund and accommodate them. Throughout this practice-led research project, a ‘self-initiated residency’ is defined as meaning outside of, and not strictly attached to, a specific cultural institution. Furthermore, the research re-articulates the notion of a self-initiated residency as one that is experienced physically, virtually and psychologically, a ‘residency of the mind’ as much as a physical experience. The thesis identifies the embodiment of the intimate, shared experience of the *Wythy Walks* methodology, where layers of narrative, that define space, coexist; a collaborative self-initiated residency, interpreting a past in the present.

Furthermore, *In Search Of The Shortcuts*, the name chosen for the self-initiated artistic residency, is related to the common notion of artistic residency, in that it provides collaborative reflection related to a particular locale (Wythenshawe) but explores artistic residency further by defining self-initiated residency as a constant process for

the artist, as opposed to a specified period of exploration. The self-initiated residency practice is presented through the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* live website. Another similarity is that it is also customary that the twenty-first century model stresses the importance of meaningful and multi-layered exchange and immersion into one's own or another culture. *Furthermore*, the self-initiated residency for this project is related to the familiar notion of the residency, in that it advocates 'meaningful and multi-layered exchange' but this self-initiated residency is a transportive process through the layers of narrative that are physically and virtually defined through the *Wythy Walks* methodology and the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* website.

Physical, virtual, psychological and pictorial space:

The thesis promotes the definition of spaces as an articulation of a past within a present, through physical and virtual arenas. Through the shared process of walking, the layers of meaning in relation to spaces are revealed. Throughout the thesis, the layers of generated narrative define the spaces that are physically and virtually engaged with, and walked through. Through the re-enacted *Wythy Walks* films, pictorial space is identified through the layers of past narrative and existing incarnation of the space represented. The *Wythy Walks* films, from the physical and virtual walks, emphasise that space is not a static slice through time, that space is constructed and viewed through layers of narrative.

Space and place, in the context of the self-initiated residency, in relation to the virtual space of the website, is articulated through both the live outline version of Google Maps (place) and the located *Wyth Walks* re-enacted films (space) opens up a

metaphorical space for narrative and association. Furthermore, the pictorial space of the generated narrative driven drawings, acts as a space for interconnectivity and reflection of the spaces represented.

Place:

Commonly defined as a particular spatial position, area, or point in space, as in a location, the thesis defines place as non-stasis, as a multitude of identities as opposed to a singular geographical position. Place is the physical or virtual meeting point prior to the physical and virtual process of the *Wythy Walks*, where we start at a specific place (Wythenshawe) but place and space align in the moment that we engage with the physical and virtual surroundings and layers of psychological association. The thesis defines place and space as in constant flux, a process of engagement through the physical and virtual *Wythy Walk* methodology and emphasised further through the *In Search Of The Shortcuts research project* website.

What follows

The thesis layout begins with a methodology section, followed by a literature review, both paramount in outlining the contextual and practical and theoretical premise for the research project. Following the methodologies and the literature review is chapter one, which is titled *Walking and narrative: The Wythy Walks: lateral-mapping of human details*. This chapter looks at the specific relationship between walking and narrative and its historical and contemporary context. In addition the methodology of the *Wythy Walks* and the rationale for exploring space in this way, are contextualised.

In chapter two, *The self-initiated artistic residency concept – In Search Of The Shortcuts – A past in the present*, research from both past concepts and the contemporary notion of a residency are contextualised and outlined alongside my previous experiences of artistic residencies as a practitioner.

Chapter three, *Walking through a virtual realm as a curatorial platform*, details the curated exhibition *Unstable Ground*, the personal role as artist/curator and the importance of the virtual walks that developed as the curatorial framework. The parallel text is then dispersed throughout chapters, one, two and three. Finally a conclusion section summarises the thesis and determines the research findings.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology is centred on an ongoing series of physical and virtual, random, explorative and collaborative walks around Wythenshawe, called the *Wythy Walks*. The walks act as a shared, affective process for opening and engaging with physical, virtual and psychological space; they are a means of encouraging and interpreting narratives associated with the realms that are walked through. Equally, the *Wythy Walks* methodology expands my notion of drawing, a collaborative practice which ‘draws-out’ narrative from, and between, co-walkers. The shared and interpreted spaces and narrative voice is emphasised further through the re-enacted films, which emphasise the dialogue between past and present.

The following chapter outlines the range of methods applied throughout this research. This centres on the practical and theoretical analysis of this practice-led project, defined as an affective, self-initiated artistic residency of the past in the present. The main aim of the research methodology is to identify the importance of how walking engages with narrative in physically-embodied, virtual and psychological spaces. Through the process of the *Wythy Walks*, it aims to recognise how expansion of this methodology through an online virtual experience can both define space and emphasise a relevant and deeper dialogue with the past in the present, through a personal/shared exploration around a community. This methodology was further expanded by curating a group exhibition and employing the online *Wythy Walks* method with the artists as part of a curatorial tool. This usefully defines the

artist/curator role through the exhibition, and helpful in gaining further understanding of this practical methodology, for the artist as a reflective practitioner.

As Donald Schon⁸ states in *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (1983), a 'practitioner's reflection can serve as a corrective to over-learning and through reflection, he can surface and criticise the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialised practice, and can make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness which he may allow himself to experience' (Schon, 1983: 61). Schon asserts here the importance of reflecting on a practice, and the insights that can be gained from more abstract processes. The making and engagement of work and ideas can be very instinctive and habitual, and therefore reflection is a necessary tool for engagement with the wide- ranging practice within this thesis. Reflective practice is 'a dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become more skilful' (Schon, 1983: 31). The dialogue between the extensive practices within this thesis is important in understanding the methodological process put forward. Each method is therefore presented in this following chapter and then expanded upon and contextualised throughout the thesis chapters.

⁸ Donald Alan Schön (1930–1997) developed the theory and practice of reflective professional knowledge. His 1983 book, *The Reflective Practitioner*, encouraged practitioners to reconsider the role of technical expertise as opposed to creativity in progressing professional standards.



Figure 1

Still taken from *Keith and Colin* from the ongoing *Wythy Walks* filmed series (2013)

Dialogue with Spaces

Physical walks

The *Wythy Walks* methodology consists of an ongoing sequence of unobtrusively audio recorded collaborations around Wythenshawe with old friends, family and acquaintances, who grew up there. The walks start out at the house where the person was born, still lived, or spent the majority of their time in Wythenshawe. Guided by the collaborators' own memories, we then walk towards different locations, depending on what is discussed.

The personal and emotionally-instinctive rapport that guide us around Wythenshawe, encouraged by the rhythms of the walk and what is seen on the walks, has similarities to Guy Debord's⁹ notion of the *dérive*: 'The *dérive* entails playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psycho-geographical effects; which completely distinguish it from the classical notions of the journey and the stroll' (Debord, 1981: 50). Guided by memory from what was seen and sensed, the walks are more than a new way of engaging with a 'playful-constructive' (Debord, 1981: 50) route around Wythenshawe; they are a vital relational process. The *Wythy Walks* are a strategy to not only jolt the collaborators out of an everyday situation, but enable a relationship to develop that would otherwise not exist. This is related to the free-flowing process of both walking and talking, the loosening of inhibitions and the opening of memory banks.

⁹ Guy Debord was the main protagonist of the Situationist International. The Situationist International (SI) was an international organisation of social revolutionaries, made up of artists, intellectuals, and political theorists, active from its formation in 1957 to its dissolution in 1972. The intellectual foundations of the Situationist International were derived primarily from anti-authoritarian Marxism and the avant-garde art movements of the early 20th century, particularly Dada and Surrealism. Situationist theory represented an attempt to synthesize this diverse field of theoretical disciplines into a modern and comprehensive critique of mid-20th century advanced capitalism.

In contrast to the *Wythy Walks*, the artist Richard Long's more isolated and individual practice of walking is 'a simple metaphor of life, a figure walking down his road, making his mark. It is an affirmation of my human scale and senses: how far I walk, what stones I pick up, my particular experiences. Nature has more effect on me than I on it' (Long, 1983). Long's outdoor pieces are usually made in solitude, in remote areas. The *Wythy Walks*, however, explore a different topography. It is the shared exploration of a community's spaces and the affects that a place has had on the participants of the *Wythy Walks* that is important, emphasised through the personal narratives and relationship to a place. Revealing a deeper investigation of personal histories around a specific place, the *Wythy Walks* followed narrative lines, a shared experience around my own and other people's narratives. The *Wythy Walks* were a collaborative, engaging and explorative act, following the unpredictable nature of both my own personal narratives as well as those of the co-walkers. Walking and history, place and encounter, are examined. During 2013 the *Wythy Walks* were presented as part of a group exhibition called *Interim* at PAPER, Manchester (see Figure 2), an artist-run gallery in Manchester, alongside fellow practice-led researchers from the art and design research department at Manchester Metropolitan University (MIRIAD), giving an opportunity to examine the research in process.



Figure 2

Installation of *Keith and Colin, Sarah* presented as part of *Interim* at PAPER, Manchester (2013)

Virtual realm

The concept of the *Wythy Walks* as a shared virtual experience through *Google Earth* materialised from a conversation about the walks with a relative living in Australia. The same process was followed as if on a real walk, primarily clicking and moving through the street level mode of *Google Earth*, guided by the narratives we talked about. Using *Skype* as an audio dialogue output, the whole experience was recorded using *Debut*, a screen capture application, as well as an ambient recording with a video camera and sound recorder. Although participants were not together in a real place in a physical sense, real experiences and narratives were rekindled through the virtual experience.

In this tangible four hour experience, narratives are ignited against a virtual backdrop. This is in contrast to the physical walks, where the environment that's walked around is more concrete. The collaborative dimension of the *Wythy Walks* methodology is emphasised further through the use of the virtual realm, which allows a direct focus on the intimate 'windows' opened up between us.



Figure 3

Still taken from *Cris* from the ongoing *Wythy Walks* recorded virtual online series (2014)

Re-enacted – Retraced *Wythy Walks* films

There are reciprocal moments unknown to myself and the participants, but through the *Wythy Walks* process we discover perspectives on things and places. These analogies are further explored through an ongoing series of films, developed from the recorded audio from the physical walks. The retraced narration supported and encouraged the series of measured filmed moments from carefully chosen sites from the individual *Wythy Walks*. The very act of returning to these sites, days, weeks, or months after the walks happened, allows for a reassessment and editing not present within the initial walks. These recorded vignettes are deliberately composed and chosen as a contemplation of the walk. Equally, this process allows for the narrative of the walk to become a new shared narrative. Although the camcorder is static for the filmed footage, the films are not about stasis. The *Wythy Walks* films emphasise that space is not a static slice through time, that space is constructed and viewed through layers of narrative. This aligns with what geographer Doreen Massey describes as a 'slice through time' (Massey, 2005: 19), cutting through 'a myriad of ongoing stories' (Massey, 2005: 19).

The resulting films of the *Wythy Walks* are layers: of the relationship to the collaborator and place; the initial narrative that dictated the walk; the resulting new narratives formed whilst walking; the recording of the walk; the transcribing of these tapes; the re-visiting of the sites to film; re-enactment of the audio; and the resulting film footage.

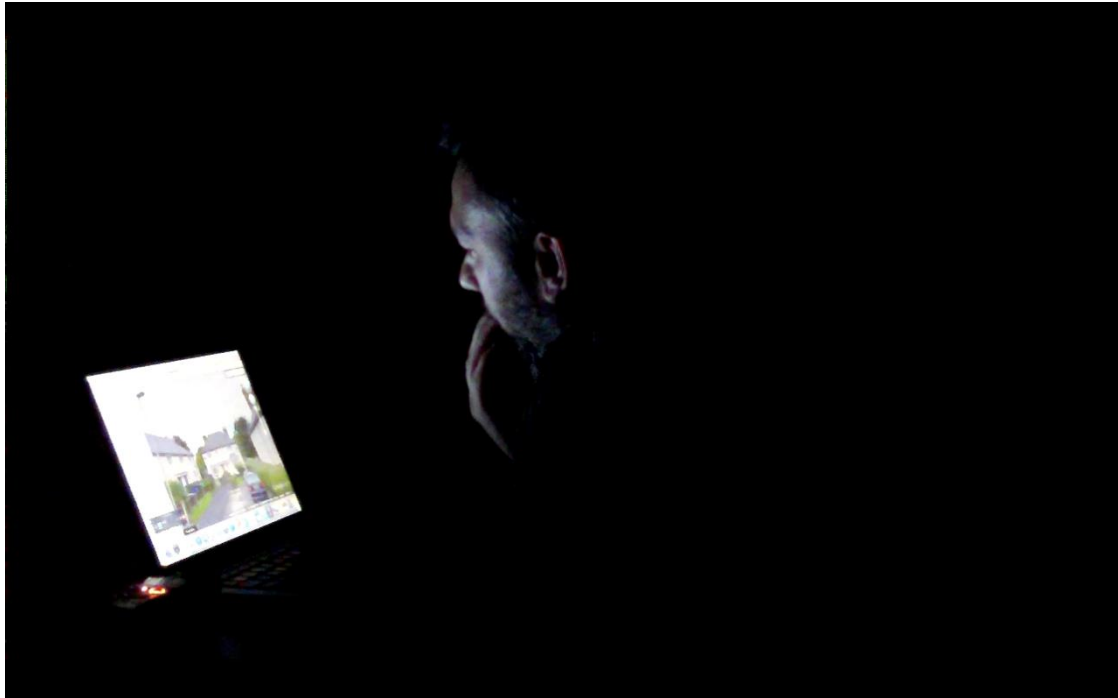


Figure 4

Still taken from the virtual *Wythy Walk* with *Cris* from the ongoing *Wythy Walks* recorded virtual online series (2014)

These sites, including street corners, edges of gardens and rows of new houses, are chosen in relation to moments during the walk where participants pause or stop for some time. These are quite often the places and spaces that do not exist anymore, or have changed beyond recognition. The narration, which is to be overlaid on top of the filmed stills, highlights both the spoken narrative and the present changes of place, a palimpsest of human narrative. The co-walkers memories are reconstituted through my own experience and (re)presented to them in a form that would be unrealised and possibly unrecognised by them without the process having occurred.

The complex and collaborative dimension of the *Wythy Walks* – shaped by the walkers and my own responses to their routes – is vital in informing the often very intuitive process of selecting the filmed sites. Both the physical and psychological process of the *Wythy Walks*, and the retraced and re-narrated films, align to Gilles Deleuze's active and internal reflections on duration. Deleuze states that: 'the temporal qualities of Cinema does not give us an image to which movement is added, it immediately gives us a movement image' (Deleuze, 1986: 2). In other words, the cinematic image is 'mobile', temporal and affective. Although the static moments in the *Wythy Walks* films are specifically chosen spaces related to moments along the walk, both the viewer of the film and the evolving narrative constantly steer, change and manipulate: time is in constant flux.

The ongoing film series of the *Wythy Walks* act as an examination of Wythenshawe in reference to the specific period of the 1980s that is central to my formative years. Through the films Wythenshawe's existing incarnation is presented, and through this

process the layers of meaning, personal narrative, are revealed. The viewer of the films is compelled to move beyond the surface of what is seen and heard. The films present multi-dimensional scenes and sounds and were an examination of social, political and psychological sites of contemplation.



Figure 5

Keith and Colin image still from the *Wythy Walks* series taken from the *Interim* Group Show at PAPER, Manchester (2013)

Ongoing practice

Biro drawings

Biro pen is used for its indelible qualities, demonstrating a commitment to the process of remembering, to the memory being portrayed and to the drawn marks. The fragile and unpredictable relationship between these drawing methods and autobiographical memory, episodes recollected through my own and other people's experiences, are emphasised through the direct correlation between the hand, the drawing material and the paper surface. TRACEY, the online peer-reviewed journal, describes drawing as the 'direct creation and transcription of the mental plane to the material, a mark being made, creative vector' (TRACEY, 2007). This memory needs to be made permanent for a past, an identity or the meaning of the place being portrayed to be fully understood. If these memories are in pencil or paint, there could be a temptation to erase them out or to become too conscious of which colour I use. The biro captures the essence of remembering; it is a portal to the past in the present.

In this research "drawing" is defined as walking, narrative lines; a performative act. Drawing is a way of exploring both a physical space and its narrative re-enactment and meaning, a way of walking through layers of one's mind. The *Wythy Walks* and the biro drawings reference Paul Klee's notion of taking a 'line on a walk' (Klee, 1953: 62), and Richard Long's 1967 work *A line made by walking*. In Long's well-known piece, documenting part of a journey from Bristol to London, a line in a field is made by continually walking backwards and forwards, creating a physical line out of the trodden grass. This again shows both drawing and walking as performative acts.

Similarly, this practice of drawing equates to what the artist Andy Goldsworthy describes as 'exploring line alert to changes of rhythm and feelings of surface and space' (Goldsworthy, 1994: 84). Drawing can be directly 'related to life' (Goldsworthy, 1994: 84). Indeed, the rhythms of drawing and the narrative 'life lines' are closely connected to the *Wythy Walks*, insofar as all these practices are guided by the psychological and physical factors that determined our movement. The relationship between talking and walking (song and line) has previously been described by the travel writer Bruce Chatwin in his research around *Songlines* (1987). In this research Chatwin devoted a period of his life to the Aboriginal community, who bring about the existence of a place and their connection to it by 'singing and walking' through it, creating narrative 'life' lines.

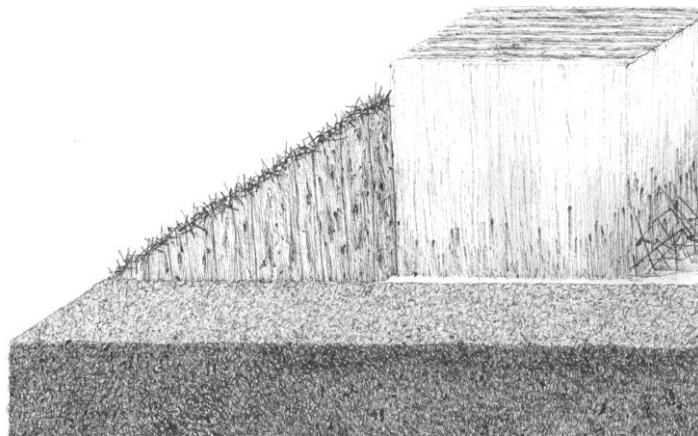


Figure 6

David and Cris biro on paper taken from the ongoing series *Remember Your Garden?* Detailing the biro's contrasting mark making and the different areas of emphasis (2013)

The dialogue between the physical drawing process, and the thinking through of memory associated with a place, is at the core of the drawing practice, as the writer Marc Trieb emphasises: 'To draw, we must look carefully, more fully immersing ourselves in the dimensions and life of place' (Trieb, 2008: 9). The engrossing nature of drawing, and the thinking process that urges and performs the act of making, both bring about the enlightening emergence of the mark on paper. A nostalgic yearning is suggested in the use of a biro pen to draw in the present from memory; it references drawing in the margins of school books when the focus should have been on the classroom.

The biro's doodling and domestic 'at hand' qualities, gives another layer of meaning, allowing the performance of the memory to guide the drawing method. The drawing qualities how hard and how soft, how fast and how slow, how free and how controlled are analysed through the project, alongside an examination of the layers of narrative of place depicted in the drawing. The performative process of 'drawing out' memory is related to the process of remembering through the *Wythy Walks* methodology. From the 'stream of consciousness' of the walks, new drawings are, and will continue to be, made. This highlights the personal spatial details, and ultimately brings about a better understanding of the relationship with human details and a relationship with our immediate surroundings.

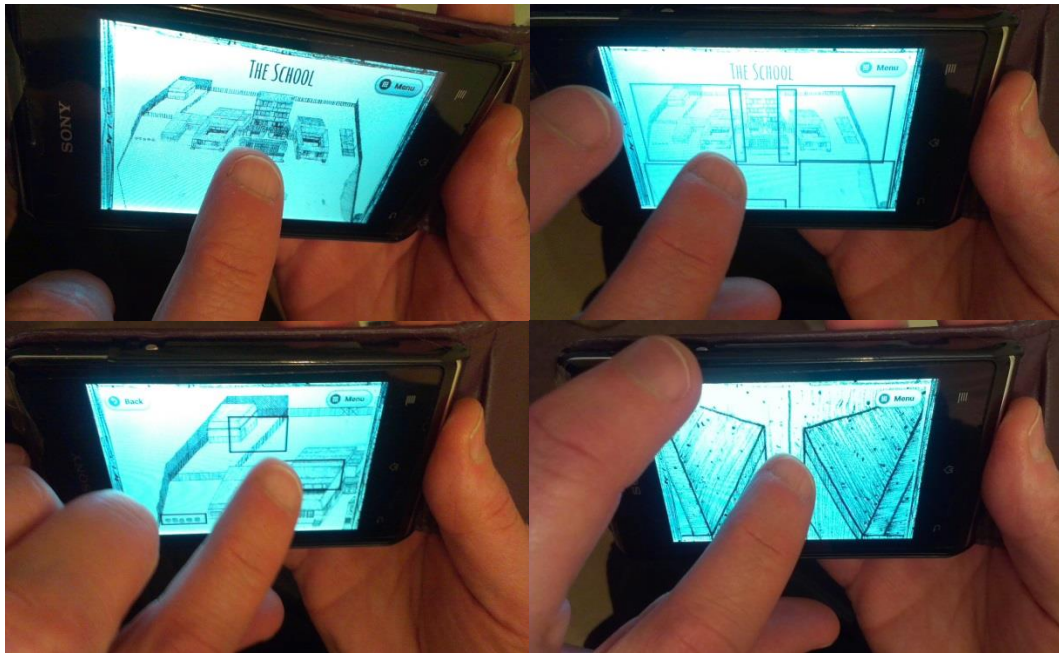


Figure 7

School Downloadable App (2013)

School App

The walks and the biro drawings are primarily a way of detailing and highlighting the importance of drawing and remembering, with the perspectives of human experiences brought to the fore. Details in the drawings through the biro pen, for example, are a representation of returning to the sites of memory. An artwork called *School*, originally developed in 2004, is an interactive piece that grew out of a drawing from memory of my secondary school in Wythenshawe. The recent development of *School* (see Figure 7) into a downloadable App means that the *School* piece can be experienced on an even more intimate level: it can even be taken on a walk to the place where the school once was located. The performative process of drawing is liminal, moving between conscious decision and unconscious compulsion, between autobiographical and procedural memory defined through this project. The cognitive process involved in the biro drawings – the relationship between the types of memory and its portrayal on paper – is mirrored through other expanded processes: the films, the walks and the parallel text.

Spirit of Theatre

Forming part of the research into drawing methods and narrative engagement, *Spirit of Theatre* was a project conducted by Manchester Metropolitan University with the British Theatre Consortium and the Library Theatre Company. As both a researcher and practicing artist, I was invited to collate and explore the memories associated with the Library Theatre Company, which was in a state of flux before being re-housed in 2015.

The concept of a *Cluedo* style website (see Figure 8) was developed as a simple and engaging structure, allowing the drawings to encourage further hidden narratives.

A series of questions in association with the specific areas of the theatre were researched. These questions were activated through the presence of drawing. Central to the functionality and interaction of the *Spirit of Theatre* website was the interplay between the hand-drawn images and text concerning the Library Theatre spaces and memory representation and interpretation. In this website the hidden narratives were highlighted and linked to the questions around the drawn theatre spaces. This was pivotal to its development. The drawings of the spaces were directly linked to the process of remembering them. The significance of the spaces was focused on and the drawings developed through this.

Remember Your Garden?

Remember Your Garden? is another ongoing, online, conversationalist, drawing and narrative project, which poses the question: “Do you remember your childhood garden or an intimate place where you hung out?” *Remember Your Garden?* openly exchanges narratives around childhood gardens and intimate spaces. The live, online archive, acts as a gateway, a ‘memory palace’ for the personal narratives. The anecdotes are interpreted through drawing by myself, and then reflected back to the ‘holder and communicator’ of the narrative. This project shows responses through drawing and highlighted notions of collective memory by creating an intimate, collaborative and communal process using the social network site *Facebook*. The project developed through the research as the drawings/narratives were then situated and accessed

through the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* website, explored further in section aforementioned section. A spatial dialogue is re-examined with this representation of intimate social space.

The collaborators of *Remember Your Garden?* are given a reason to remember and share a narrative from childhood, conjured through words. The project acts as a communication of narrative, a “picture in your head, which paints something entirely different on someone else's head” (Mitchell, pers. comm: 25 Jan 2015). The curator and researcher Liz Mitchell, who took part in the process, described her experience as expanding memory: “There is a line between that episode when it happened and my participating in your project now, with all its’ attendant life context. The memory is still mine, what's been added is something new” (Mitchell, pers. comm: 25 Jan 2015). The shared garden that Mitchell described was no more than a scrubby overgrown backyard with a semi-derelict lean-to, but whilst sharing her narrative the intimate space was remembered with affection: “A bit like letter-writing, you are both there and not there; the distance, perversely, enables more sharing than a face-to-face encounter might” (Mitchell, pers. comm: 25 Jan 2015).

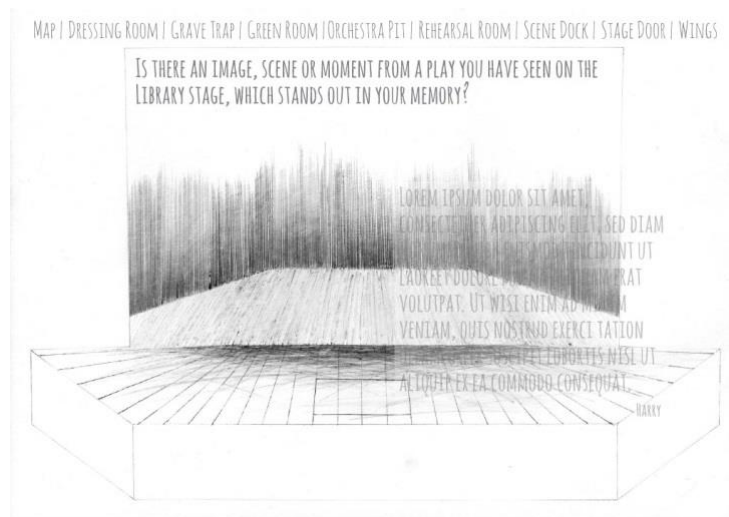


Figure 8

Image taken from the *Spirit of Theatre* website showing *The Stage* drawing and uploaded narratives (2013)

The artist and educator Alison Kershaw was interested in how the project, by being 'live' on *Facebook*, creates a place that we "post future memories of our own, each building an archive day by day that is shared. So to intervene in that with this one off art work seems appropriate" (Kershaw, pers. comm: 26 Jan 2015). Kershaw described having had a similar experience when an old friend posted a photo from the past that she'd forgotten about, in that memories were strongly evoked: "because of the exchange, because of kind of reading my mind, through my narrative you represented something that I have no photo of – just a mental landscape inside my head. Seeing that on paper from someone else's hand was surprising, familiar and strange all at once. I find myself scouring the image for detail and also comparing the differences to that mental image" (Kershaw, pers. comm: 26 Jan 2015). Kershaw described the drawing she received as very precise and delicate, sparse and unemotional but with a childlike care in the marks. "It has a dreamlike effect and an unsettling edge. I like the way it is floating in space – what lies beyond those hedges and walls?" (Kershaw, pers. comm: 26 Jan 2015). *Remember Your Garden?* presents personal, visceral experiences of urban and suburban intimate spaces. The memories of bricks, concrete, weeds and mud, tree stumps and hanging branches are filled with the meanings that surround them.

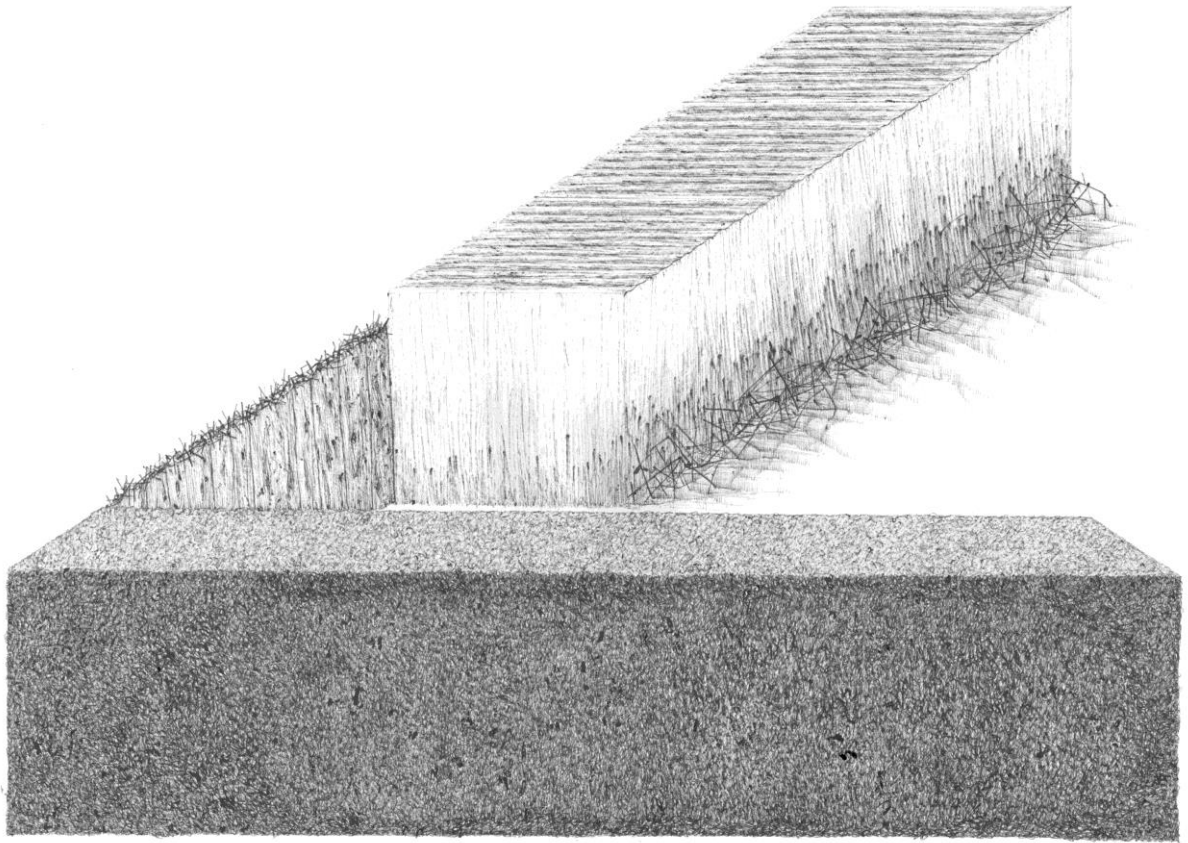


Figure 9

*Cris biro on paper from the ongoing series *Remember Your Garden?* (2013)*

Narration

Narration is an important ever-present element within this body of work. This is shown in recorded stories that support and emphasise on-going works, as in *Performing PAPER* (2013), which formed part of a group show at PAPER, in Manchester. It has also materialised as a singular, ambient, recorded voice emitting from a speaker, as in the piece *The Wanderer* (2013), made at 20-21 Visual Arts Centre in Scunthorpe, which was inspired by the stories of the visitors to and workers at the gallery. This piece was then performed live over a weekend around the gallery spaces that were pertinent to the narrative, which gave a voice to the common but unheard narratives that surround us. Equally, during the *Wythy Walks*, and the presentation of the walks through the ongoing series of films, this same complex relationship is integrated. The narrative between the walker and myself (as their companion and also as a kind of interpreter or translator of their memories), is explored and highlighted.

The artist David Rayson describes his work as wanting to tell 'stories which take place all the time and everywhere. I feel it is the familiar and the everyday that reveals our complex and private relationship with the world around us' (Rayson, 2003: 4). Similarly in this research drawing and storytelling are used because they are inextricably linked with the narrative process and the exploration of the place it depicts. Recounting or remembering a particular incident to oneself or a friend automatically results in a story being told; a narrative where memories are given different emphasis and importance as the story unfolds. The narration also supported and highlighted the qualities and the process of performing the biro drawings. The drawings themselves, even when unaccompanied by audio or text, were inherently narrative-focused.

The narration from the re-enacted physical and recorded virtual *Wythy Walks* around Wythenshawe, encourage simultaneous stories. They open up layers and seams of meaning. The memory tapes act out the complex 'familiar and everyday' (Rayson, 2003: 4) narratives, through other past associations and life episodes. The re-enactment of the walks present an added layer and meaning as the stories become filtered and processed through this re-telling. In Samuel Beckett's 1958 play *Krapp's Last Tape*, for Krapp the tape is a portal into his past. As writer and theorist Steven Connor remarks: the 'Tape brings together the continuous and the discontinuous; more, it disallows the discontinuity between the continuous and the discontinuous. For that reason, it is the medium that most seems to embody the predicament of temporal embodiment' (Connor, 2010: 15). The acted-out narration of the *Wythy Walks* played out both a past and a present; it is a method for performing the layers of history, retracing the traced steps. This process acts as a method for creating other works, including the ongoing series of films and biro drawings. Presentation of the narration is tested on an audience as the *Wythy Talks*, and as pre-recorded works.



Figure 10

Image from *Performing PAPER* video performance at PAPER, Manchester (2013)

***In Search Of The Shortcuts* website**

Forming part of the research outcome of the project is the corresponding development of the website *In Search Of The Shortcuts*. This is an intimately interactive, unplanned and open-ended virtual experience, developing a continuous and experiential cognitive map. The structure of the website is non-hierarchical by incorporating a navigable outline version of *Google Maps*. The website seeks to have a 'live' spatial and poetic relationship, and encouraged the participant to re-enact and explore the practice from the research. The *Wythy Walks* films, biro drawings and layers of personal and collective narrative are mapped out in relation to the specific locations. Both visual and aural spaces are created as you experience the website. Snippets of narrative are heard dependant on what we see on the screen. *In Search Of The Shortcuts* presents connections between the various practical methods utilised. A 'shortcut' is a term used herein to relate a past with a present through the collaborative act of walking, and engaging with physical and virtual realms.

The virtual realm of the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* website appropriately situates and enlivens the re-enacted filmed montages and virtual *Google Map* walks and the narrative-driven biro drawings. The technical development of the website was carried out in collaboration with the web-designer 'Group Of', echoing the collaboration that had taken place on the *Spirit of Theatre* website. *In Search Of The Shortcuts* encapsulated the research project as a whole, and emphasise the non-linear process and concept of the *Wythy Walks* methodology.

The experience of presenting the research practice as a website is seen in *Spirit of Theatre* and also through the recent QR coded downloadable App works *Portrait of a Building* (2013) and *School* (2013) (made specifically for the group exhibition *Soft Estate*). This led to the idea of a website being experienced back in the place itself - for example, encouraging the *Wythy Walks* to be experienced around Wythenshawe, or *School* being seen by the viewer, going to the site where the school was once located.

The methodology of the *Wythy Walks* was at the core and has constantly influenced the concept and design of the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* website. *In Search Of The Shortcuts* acts as a live artwork in itself, as well as presenting all aspects of this research project. It is designed, however, as with the *Spirit of Theatre* website so that the public can navigate a non-linear, non-hierarchical website. They can explore their narratives and experiences through the affective experience and encounter open-ended sites and spaces.

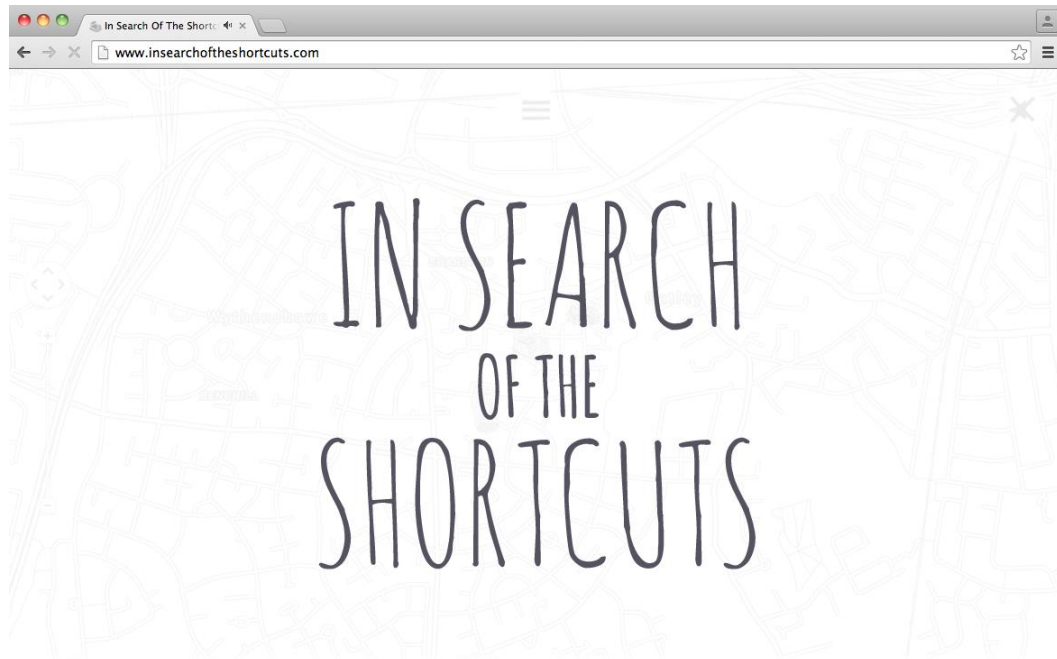


Figure 11

Screen shot of *In Search Of The Shortcuts* title screen website design (2015)

Exhibition

Curated group exhibition

Forming part of this research in 2014, I took on the role as artist/curator and curated the exhibition *Unstable Ground* at PAPER in Manchester, bringing together a number of artists whose practice was related to drawing-out narrative. The title of the show is a reference to the unpredictable process of non-linear, autobiographical narrative and literature utilised throughout the research, and a reference to the virtual and psychological 'exposed ground' that is walked through.

Curating an exhibition to contextualise an artist's practice is a methodology put forward by Graeme Sullivan, in his book *Art Practice as Research – Inquiry in Visual Arts* (2010). He suggests that public exhibitions are a 'visual place for radical debate and change' (Sullivan, 2010: 216), and that they also 'assist with the descriptive, interpretive and explanatory tasks often undertaken that cannot be captured in traditional research languages' (Sullivan, 2010: 216). The role of the artist/curator is an opportunity for creative investigation, allowing development beyond my own immediate artistic practice and consideration of the work of several other artists.

Unstable Ground (examined in further detail in Chapter 3) explores the perplexing, the fragile, the experiential and the direct relationship between the paper surface and the representation and manifestation of narrative. Focusing on the autobiographical memory of each artist, their works created an emotional dialogue between place, drawing methods, and the mediation between vision, hand and brain. The artists

presented in *Unstable Ground* offered insights and glimpses into these important, discursive processes. They each had a relationship with the concept of *Unstable Ground* in a variety of ways. The image that is immediately presented in all these works is the first of many layers. *Unstable Ground* attempted to dig deeper, present and open up a dialogue with seams of artistic, social and political signifiers.



Figure 12

George Shaw's stone lithography prints at *Soft Estate* the Bluecoat, Liverpool (2013)

Virtual Exhibition Walks

Forming part of the curatorial framework for *Unstable Ground* is a series of virtual online walks with the artists, developed from the curatorial process. Initially, the curatorial premise was to align this group of artists with the subjective interest, yet through further interrogation of the research and the curatorial process, the online walks materialised. The online walks are presented as a central part of the exhibition experience, laying bare both the autobiographical and artistic details.

Curating 'Unstable Ground' allows a more meaningful, contextual and direct dialogue with these artists, through expanding on the intimate, virtual, online process of the *Wythy Walks*. The artist Laura Oldfield Ford, one of the eight artists in the curated exhibition, describes her work as 'diaristic; the city can be read as a palimpsest, of layers of erasure and overwriting' (Oldfield Ford, 2011: 1). The layers of meaning of the artists' works are emphasised further through the virtual walks being presented as part of the curated experience. They bring to life and add further complications both to the reasons why these artists make work in a particular way, and to the 'live' gallery experience and reading of the individual works for the viewer.

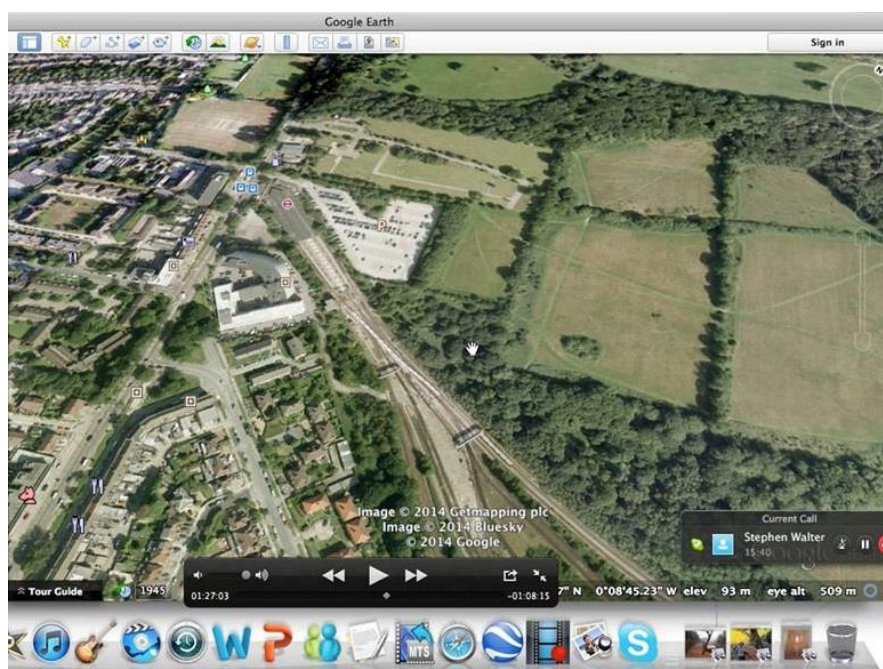


Figure 13

Stills taken from the virtual online walk with Reece Jones and Stephen Walter for the *Unstable Ground* exhibition (2014)

Ongoing exhibitions

The ongoing practical works, and various accompanying exhibitions, are positioned, reflected upon, and written about in relation to the research project. For example, a 2013 exhibition at the Bluecoat in Liverpool, called *Soft Estate*, enabled the development of new work directly related to the research topic of Edgelands¹⁰. Edgelands are commonly described as overlooked spaces and places; areas on the periphery of the usual tourist track. This is a subject closely related to the practice described in this thesis. Wythenshawe is an area on the edge of the city, in-between borders and surrounded by motorways on one side, and the airport on the other. It can be seen as a place described as an Edgeland.

New drawings and a text and sound map were commissioned by the Bluecoat, this was *Portrait of a Building* (2013) (see Figure 14). The piece was developed from personal histories associated with the Bluecoat building from employees of the gallery initiated from a series of walks around the gallery spaces, highlighting the hidden narratives, in-between and overlooked spaces of the building, through the people who work there. The piece was seen as a creative metaphor for the Bluecoat building and its hidden history. This approach to unearthing and interpreting space is akin to the *Wythy Walks*, in that it highlights the hidden human narratives of well-trodden paths. As part of the *Soft Estate* exhibition, a series of downloadable Apps were developed and presented, allowing works to be explored around the gallery spaces from a mobile phone.

¹⁰ Coined by the environmentalist Marion Shoard 'Edgeland' was defined as "the interfacial inter-zone between urban and rural" (Shoard, 2002).

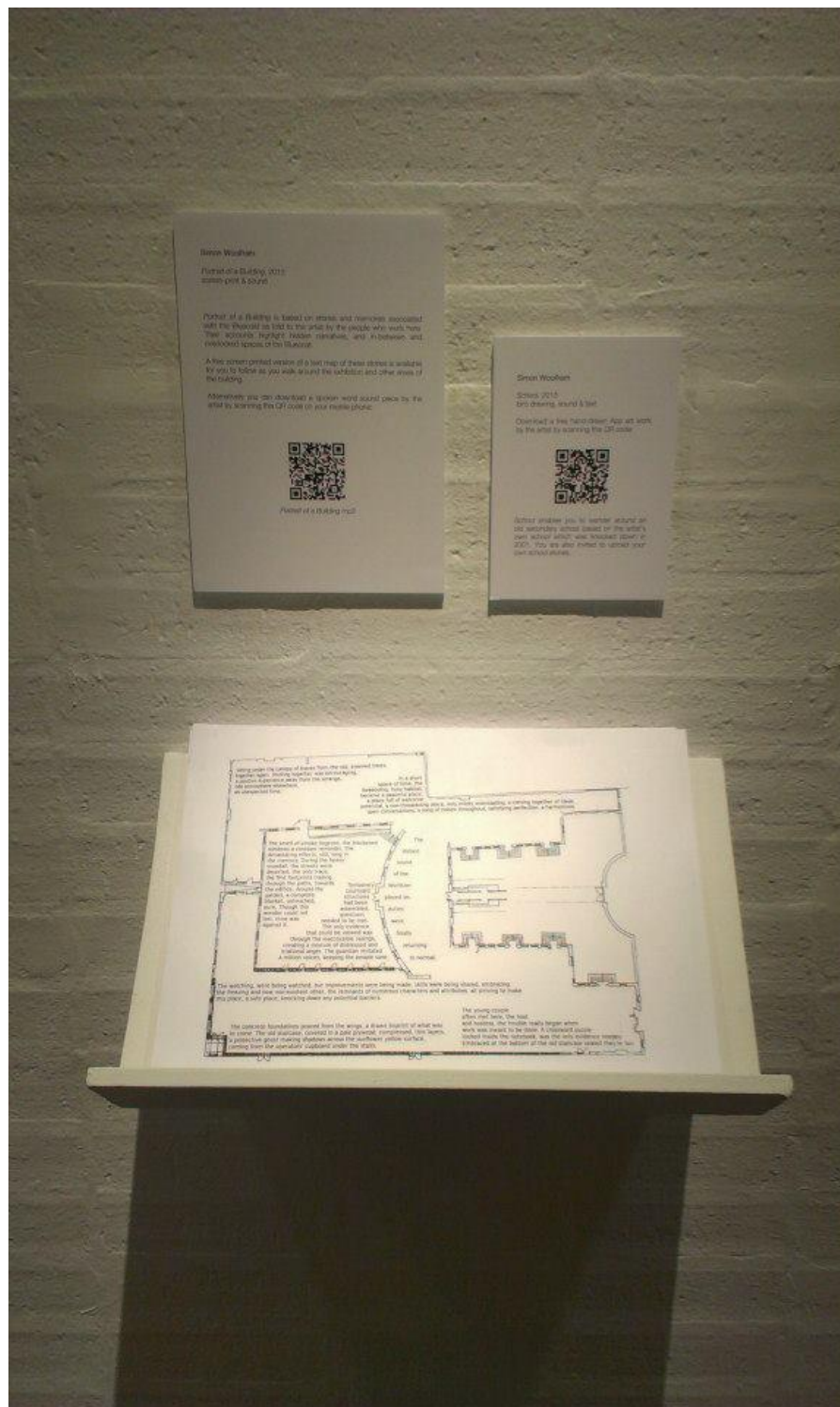


Figure 14

The downloadable Apps *Portrait of a Building* and *School for the Soft Estate* exhibition at the Bluecoat, Liverpool (2013)

Soft Estate featured works by artists that explore the interface between personal history, ecology and place. The exhibition's title derived from the Highways Agency description of the natural habitats of our motorways and trunk roads: verges that offer refuge for wildlife, a modern wilderness in the midst of intense urbanisation. The exhibition featured artists referenced in the book *Edgelands* (2012). In this book by the writers Farley and Symmons Robert, Wythenshawe is mentioned numerous times, together with other artists investigating familiar, yet ignored spaces – neither city nor countryside. For *Soft Estate*, I also presented a series of new drawings specifically referencing the title of the show, showing places where I and others 'hung out' as a child; places off the beaten track, just out of sight.

The Bluecoat gallery in Liverpool acts as a place of refuge, an imaginary wilderness where the historic and contemporary co-exist. It is a place where things grow, change and develop. In this context, a formal conversation was started via email, and later, in person through a series of walks around the gallery spaces, with the Bluecoat employees about their relationship with the building, and which moments were memorable. These unrelated anecdotes were then formed into an interconnected, non-linear text, highlighting the memory bank of the building. This evidenced the unseen, the overlooked and the minuscule details of the hidden narratives of the Bluecoat. These shreds of evidence manifested as a recorded spoken-word piece that could be taken around the spaces within the show, and as a text map for the public to explore the Bluecoat's public and more overlooked corners. This way of experiencing the work was further explored through the research project website *In Search Of The Shortcuts* (see aforementioned section).



Figure 15

Installation of the biro drawings series and book *The bridge was a good place to throw stuff off* for the group exhibition *Soft Estate* the Bluecoat, Liverpool (2013)

The methodologies outline and detail the variety of processes that have been used within this research. The walks have impacted on all aspects of the practice-led research and writing methods. They present a new way of collaboratively engaging with and presenting space through the cross-referencing of the different areas of practice and research. This is related to the concept and format of creating a physical, virtual and psychological self-initiated residency of the past in the present around Wythenshawe, related to a specific period in time. By detailing the reasons for utilising such practical and writing methods, this clearly demonstrates how, through the project, the spatial relationship between walking and narrative is revealed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This key literature review addresses, evaluates and critiques the practice-led research and methodologies: focusing on leftist, non-linear, autobiographical narrative theory and artists' projects. These literary sources and five relevant practical case studies, evolved from the research, are cross-referenced to demonstrate how they have informed the project. They contribute and engage in both historical and spatial theory, and in some cases walking is central to the process. Likewise, the inadequacies of the references are established in relation to this research and address their shortcomings.

The literature and more particularly the five practical projects, map-out the lines of enquiry, engaged with physical and virtual realms and the generating of narrative. Occupying virtual space through dialogue around suburban spaces in this way, however, is under-theorised. This thesis directly contributes to the debates of engaging with a locale, in particular a suburban site through practical and theoretical analysis. There is also an under-represented amount of literature from the perspective of the artist on artistic residency. This viewpoint needs addressing, and is critical not only for understanding the standpoint of the artist, but also revealing a relevant, collaborative engagement with layers of narrative within a community and its spaces, in an era where 'space' is often negated in favour of passing through space (as in a car, or on a train) or virtual space, where it is reduced to a 'backdrop'.

Acting-out history

The affective re-engagement with the spaces during the physical and virtual practical methodology of the *Wythy Walks* and re-encountering and re-enacting memory, have been reflected upon through the various writings of Sigmund Freud: in particular *On Transience* (1916), *Remembering, Repeating and Working Through* (1914) and *Screen Memories* (1899), through which Freud's notions of memory, between what is remembered and what was experienced, are put into practice. Through the research implicit memory and explicit 'autobiographical' memory was analysed and played out in relation to the re-constructed and re-telling of narrative through the new experiences of returning and walking through loaded and once directly familiar spaces.

In Freud's *Remembering, Repeating and Working Through* (1914), the significance and recurrence of 'acting-out' remembered events is recognised. Freud specifies how an unproductive processing of memory 'repeats everything deriving from the repressed element that has already established itself in his manifest personality – his inhibitions and unproductive attitudes, his pathological characteristics' (Freud, 2006: 43). Freud is signifying that pent-up, repressed memory can be applicably freed-up, and that the process of remembering, repeating and working through can 'lead along familiar paths to the reawakening of memories, which surface without any apparent difficulty once the patients resistances have been overcome' (Freud, 2006: 45). The researches methodological process of engaging with spaces leads the walker/co-walkers back to the past by what Freud describes as 'summoning up a chunk of real life' (Freud, 2006: 44).

There are further similarities in Freud's approach: in that through the methodological process of the *Wythy Walks* it is demonstrated how, through the particular rhythms of both walking and talking, the opening of the memory banks and the loosening of 'inhibitions' is played-out through directly engaging with both verbal and psychological narrative and the spatial realms that drive them. The act of walking and talking, in this case, leads us to express ourselves with 'almost total freedom' (Freud, 1914: 45). Simultaneously, the collaborative process of the *Wythy Walks* relates to the conversational technique of IPA, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis¹¹, which similarly approaches a flexible and open-ended inquiry, and also takes into account the emotional and psychological perspective of the facilitator.

The facilitative position is shared in the interactive fieldwork project 'Everyday Adventures in London' (2010), by the writer and anthropologist Andrew Irving, the research identifies parallels of attempting to uncover specific physical and 'psychological' details, 'open ended' narratives associated with familiar spaces and environments. In Irving's project, the significant events and spaces focused on people who had died of a HIV/AIDS related illness. The narratives and spaces became 'lively and open', as opposed to structured and contextual, facilitated by taking volunteer 'buddies' (who visited, befriended and provided emotional and practical support for persons living with HIV/AIDS) to significant streets and buildings in their personal biography. Irving asked volunteers to narrate the thoughts, memories and emotions that emerged into a tape-recorder, whilst a second person took photographs,

¹¹ Developed by Jonathan Smith, Professor of Psychology at Birkbeck, University of London, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is an experiential approach to research in psychology and the social sciences.

encouraging questions and responding with their own thoughts and recollections. According to Irving, this highlights 'emotional reverie, mood and memory, the affinity between ethnography and performance, to bring to life peoples lived experiences, memories and emotions and how these intertwined with different buildings, streets and neighbourhoods' (Irving, 2010: 1). Similarly, through the concept of the *Wythy Walks*, the thesis promotes the interaction of narrative and spaces as a 'lively' and 'open-ended' hypothesis, through a shared and affective act.

However, the research methods differ from the approach and perspective instigated through *Everyday Adventures in London*. The process of engaging 'around' spaces, in contrast to Irving's project, emphasises a collaborative act, through direct and intimately shared experiences. The *Wythy Walks* process is as much about my memory as it is the co-walkers, a symbiotic practice. Through the concept of the *Wythy Walks*, the emphasis is on the shared 'open-ended' dialogue, facilitated through the concrete environments we walk around. The *Wythy Walks* ask no questions: they are emotionally-guided relations and reactions to physical spaces, promoting both 'lived experiences' and imagined ones; they give emphasis to the importance of space by allowing the flow of walking and talking to take place, to take precedence; and they are a resistance to predictability and elitism, following routes around revealed terrain, open-ended lines of enquiry, and history is active by simultaneously walking through narrative and spaces.

Another variant is that of Irving's project being specifically focused on a particular community and physical environment. Through the physical and virtual manifestation

of the *Wythy Walks*, although a specific community is engaged with and highlighted, the emotionally-driven walks are disseminated through a variety of environments and realms. Irving stresses the importance of shared experience through the dissemination of *Everyday Adventures in London* (2010), whereby 'significant events and experiences are put on public display, including those that normally remain hidden and others which are more likely to be shared in collective memory' (Irving, 2010: 2). Irving's project is aligned with the value placed on shared experiences: promoting space as a shared multitude of stories. Set within a community, the *Wythy Walks* are a transporter of time and space, revealing the layers of narrative connected between us, to and within this place.

For space and rhythm

The research engages with notions of community, which open up and give a voice to co-walkers/collaborators within and around spaces. In *For Space* (2005), the spatial geographer Doreen Massey champions a uniting of the social and natural sciences and deals with the politics and social relations of spatial geography. According to Massey, if 'time is the dimension in which things happen one after the other, it's the dimension of succession, then space is the dimension of things being, existing at the same time: of simultaneity. It's the dimension of multiplicity' (Massey, 2005: 2).

Massey makes a case that, fundamentally, a re-conceptualisation of space can go some way to answering 'how we are going to live together' (Massey, 2005: 2) and that we need to 'recognise space as always under construction' (Massey, 2005: 9). During the evolving applied process of the *Wythy Walks*, both time and space interact, are

integral and unfold simultaneously; they are led by space and time (narrative) and access and interpret space as well as presenting and detailing a social relationship to it. Through the process of the *Wythy Walks*, a ‘multiplicity’ of shared personal stories are experienced through engagement with layers of narrative and drawn-out narrative spaces.

Furthermore, Massey is from Wythenshawe, so has an invested interest in this same community, and, coincidentally, grew up on exactly the same road as myself. In further writings of Massey – in particular an essay Massey wrote in 2001 *Living in Wythenshawe* – an incisively autobiographical perspective of the changing spatial politics and social history of the estate, Massey emphasises the importance of space as that of spatial social relations. Massey’s critique of Wythenshawe, which featured in the book of short essays *The Unknown City* (2002), supports a politics of social space in relation to human interaction and engagement; and the fact that the writer was born and brought up in Wythenshawe, and now lives elsewhere, is of added pertinence and interest to my area of study: I absorb narrative in relation to the place where I no longer physically live. In support of Massey’s claim, the *Wythy Walks* strive to re-invigorate social relations through a deeper understanding between people and its spaces. They create a physical and virtual space that brings individuals together to talk and to expound about the space they live, or have lived in, and which still has a profound effect on them. The process of the *Wythy Walks* promotes an articulation around a particular location, and the space is expanded through the communication of the bigger spaces that the walks create. This supports and puts into practice through

the methodology, Massey's notion of the re-alignment of space through the spatiality of social relations.

Time, in opposition to space, can be seen according to Massey as 'a product of (human) experience, in contrast to space as material in opposition to time's incorporeality' (Massey, 2005: 117). More importantly, however, space is more meticulously defined by Massey as 'the product of social relations' (Massey, 2005: 118): as a public we constantly alter space by participating in it. We are 'part of the constant process of the making and breaking of links' (Massey, 2005: 118). Similarly, if we are actively moving through space we are altering it in some way, and the process of the *Wythy Walks* emphasise a change of space by bringing a past into the present, and the knock-on effect: by taking back space, one changes its future. Space, therefore, is a parallel 'product of (human)' (Massey, 2005: 118) time. Space and time are fundamental, and through the *Wythy Walks* they fold into one another, as do both the random chance encounters and the prescribed spaces that are walked through, which also fold inwards and outwards. Through the concept of the *Wythy Walks*, we walk through spaces of social relations whilst simultaneously talking about and through them, in the same way that we walk and talk through timeless anecdotes and the changed spaces that now inhabit them.

The research is intended to be practical and useful: it simultaneously records and grasps the diversity of rhythms in the physical and associated act of collaboratively engaging in space and time. It is multi-layered and has preventative and curative properties of social relations. In a recent interview, Massey emphasised the potential

role of art going beyond a participatory practice: 'participation is OK but it doesn't do that much to change access to powers of initiation and imagination. There is an idea in Latin America that I find much better in this respect and that is 'protagonism'. You don't just invite people in to participate, you give them space and power to initiate. It is about democracy. Instead of only 'participation' you can have protagonistic democracy where people come up with their own ideas and structures. It is much stronger; it has the potential to transform cartographies of power' (Massey, 2012: 63). The *Wythy Walks* are living, moving, collaborative, archives of history; they are a democratising process of open interpretation, an understanding; they are led by the collaborator: it is their voice that is heard.

In the writings of Henri Lefebvre, in particular *Rhythmanalysis* (2004 edition), which provides a multi-sensory method for analysing the rhythms of urban spaces and the effects of those rhythms on the inhabitants of those spaces, the research reflects on rhythmic analysis in reference to the process of the *Wythy Walks*: in particular what Lefebvre termed the 'rhythms of everyday life' related to the social and political, biological and eurythmia (associated) rhythms. Lefebvre promotes the practical 'use' of a more biological rhythm of everyday life, and the idea that 'Thought strengthens itself only if it enters into practice: into use' (Lefebvre, 2004: 69). The research aligns itself with the breaking free from the monotony of 'homogenous and desacralised time' (Lefebvre, 2004: 73): such as that of the watch and mobile. The research advocates the loosening or 'letting go' of inhibitions: adrift to space and time, following the rhythms of walking, talking and engaging in space and each other. The *Wythy Walks* reclaims space politically: not in a manipulative way, but in a way that

opens up (rather than closes) space. Lefebvre believed that 'Rhythmanalytic therapy would be a preventative rather than curative state' (Lefebvre, 2004: 68). The uncontrolled process of the *Wythy Walks*, however, have shown the potential to be both a conscious preventative and curative act, practically aligning and further expanding and exploring Lefebvre's hypothesis through this thesis.

Narrative and walking

Freud's *On Transience* (1916), in essence, presents a poetic and 'fictional' examination of mourning, and how the refusal of mourning prevents a deeper engagement and enjoyment with our surroundings.¹² Freud points out that 'Mourning over the loss of something that we have loved or admired seems so natural to the layman that he regards it as self-evident. But to psychologists, mourning is a great riddle' (Freud, 1916: 84). Freud's point in relation to the compelling and challenging narrative which emphasises the importance of engaging with narrative and walking, a 'transience of nature', and that by encountering remembrance we may be free to uncover still more precious truths.

The concept of the *Wythy Walks* attempts to re-ignite home truths, guided by conversation around often 'intense' associations with a place. They are much more than a walk for walks' sake; they are participatory-led. The walks are unpredictable: a

¹² Freud's short 1915 essay 'On Transience', describes a fictional conversation on a walk in 1913 with a poet and a distant friend. The friend is affected by the surrounding beauty and is deeply saddened by the thought that all beauty is destined to disappear. Around that time Freud was concerned with the conundrum of transience. Freud was preoccupied with the survival of psychoanalysis and his poet friend Rainer Maria Rilke (1875 – 1926), based on the poet in 'On Transience', was concerned with his aging and the decrease in creativity that ensued. For the poet 'transience' of natural beauty made it worthless; for Freud, its transience served to enhance its importance.

multi-dimensional exploration for the co-walkers. Through the act of walking (and talking) new memory is revealed and made, through a fusion of what was once forgotten and the new experiences of walking in the present, often through what has changed in relation to the personal narratives (current spatial incarnation).

The research explores the artistic tradition of art walking in particular Guy Debord and the Situationist International's notion of the *dérive*, a physical and psychological engagement of urban spaces, through the act of walking, 'entails playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psycho-geographical effects; which completely distinguish it from the classical notions of the journey and the stroll' (Debord, 1981: 50). The emphasis here is on the 'awareness' and the effects on oneself in relation to, and through, disrupting a prescribed understanding of the spaces in which we walk. Guided by narrative, the *Wythy Walks* are shared random and unplanned routes around Wythenshawe. They are also a strategy that not only jolts the collaborator out of their everyday situation, but enables us to develop a part of a relationship that otherwise would not exist, related to the free-flowing process of both walking and talking, the loosening of inhibitions and the liberation of narrative.

In relation to the narrative that influences and guides us around, the *Wythy Walks* explore the notion of the *dérive*: a collaborative act of engaging in and with a person's community or ex-community. Similarly, they are aligned more closely with Rebecca Solnit's critique of Debord's *dérive* as 'authoritarian prescriptions for subversion' (Solnit, 2001: 212). The concept of the walking methodology is not one of control, strict instruction or 'subversion'. Instead, they seek to make sense of spatial struggles

through both an intuitive and peripatetic act of walking and talking. They seek to give a voice to anybody, aware of artistic premise or not. We walk out from home with no artistic directive.

Engaging with a community

Back in the late 1930s, the writer James Agee and the photographer Walker Evans' were assigned to write and document the effects of the depression on the most hard-hit communities. Their 1941 book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, however, went some way of changing the perspective and viewpoint of the reporter and recorder of social information. The two assignees quickly established that what was important was not to portray a community, but rather to give a voice and present every minute detail of the lives and rituals surrounding them. Agee and Evans's viewpoint and explorative process of engaging with a community provide a helpful reference for the *Wythy Walks* as a lateral engagement around a specific community. However, the research highlights and recognises the differences to *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, in so far as that the methodology is a shared, generative, symbiotic perspective, between myself and the co-walkers. The *Wythy Walks* emphasis is on allowing a shared human experience around a community and the shared experience allows for further flow of narrative details.

In 2009, the artist Jeremy Deller created *Procession*: a co-commissioned project between the Manchester International Festival and Cornerhouse. Procession was a parade through the city centre of Manchester along Deansgate, part of a traditional

marching route, with diverse groups of people from the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester. *Procession* took place on Sunday 5 July 2009. Deller claimed to be fascinated by parades because they 'hold up a mirror to a town and become a self-portrait of a time and place' (Hickling, 2009). *Procession* included a group of former cotton workers, waving from a mobile mill, and a group celebrating smoking. The project could be seen as a stereotypical view of life in the North today; but primarily it engaged groups in notions of a street festival.

Deller's project, like the *Wythy Walks*, clearly relates to the Lancastrian tradition of the Whit Walks. Similarly, both projects relate more directly to the secular element of the Whit Walks: an example being the brass band celebrations. The Whit Walks interconnected with working life and working communities, offering a collective opportunity to walk together. The collective walk and procession of Deller's project, however, is different to the more intimate model of walking around a community. More obviously, the emphasis of the *Wythy Walks* is also on the influence of the spaces and direct environments. Deller's 'spectacle' could also be projected as reinforcing northern cultural clichés, dark satanic mills, bad health and so on. Of course, *Procession* is an interesting alternative to celebrating the under-represented or marginalised, a one-off art project that inevitably impacted, in some way, on those taking part.

The significant difference between the *Wythy Walks* and *Procession*, alongside the aforementioned, is that the *Wythy Walks* seek to open up and engage with personal and communal space through walking and dialoguing, freeing up an engagement with

space. The *Wythy Walks* seek to rid clichés of a space, a community and the people that live in them. In fact, the process of the *Wythy Walks*, have the potential to go some way towards bridging the gap and negativity (for example, surrounding the ‘hidden away’ elderly community). Rather than taking individuals ‘out for a stroll’, the emphasis would be on the elderly individual to guide both the walking and talking: a positive support structure for engaging in memory, around an individual’s familiar spaces and environments.

Connecting layers of history

W.G. Sebald’s *Rings Of Saturn* (1998) is recognised here as an important book, not only in relation to a more poetic, organic, non-linear approach to drawing out human details, but also with regard to the importance of the dialogue between walking (physically and psychologically) and the layers of collective memory associated with a place, materialised through the research as the *Wythy Walks* methodology. This book is imperative to both my research writing and the practical methodologies. In *Rings of Saturn*, the non-linear narrative, as-well-as the cross-referential use of image and text, is reminiscent of how walking through spaces as a methodology: encouraging narrative around a particular place in relation to retrieving, reflecting and re-enacting events, blurred by the unpredictable and fragile process of memory. This non-linear, layered, interchange approach in relation to a parallel text, is dispersed throughout my written thesis chapters. The parallel text has been adopted to create a dialogue: between the personal voice of the *Wythy Walks*, and what might be perceived as more strictly factual details.

Sebald asserts the importance of writing and engaging with narrative, equated to walking, talking and 'drawing-out' memory: that 'writing is the only way in which I am able to cope with the memories which overwhelm me, so frequently and so unexpectedly. If they remained locked away, they would become heavier and heavier as time went on, so that in the end I would succumb under their mounting weight' (Sebald, 1998: 27). The research parallels this Sebaldian notion of the importance of engaging with layers of history to my research project: that the hidden meanings and the details of human narratives that I wish to access weave together layers of the factual and fictional, collective and autobiographical memory. Sebald's own contrasting journey, in England, began in post-industrial Manchester, and ended in East Anglia. This, to a certain extent, parallels with my own life's journey, having moved from Wythenshawe to London in my mid-20s: the first time that I had moved away from Greater Manchester. This then led me to start making work that reflected and drew on narratives around the place I grew up and had left behind.

Similarly, in *Rings of Saturn* the non-linear use of image and text is reminiscent of how the methodologies of the research utilise drawing and narrative in relation to retrieving, reflecting and re-enacting events, blurred by the unpredictable and fragile process of memory. The *Wythy Walks* demonstrate how Sebald's approach to drawing out layers of memory is utilised, emphasised in *The Rings of Saturn*. This further explored through the collaborative and engaging act of walking through narratives of a place, giving voice to the collaborator through the exchange of dialogue during the walks. In a similar way to *Rings of Saturn*, we navigate our physical and psychological relationship to this place, whilst at the same time gaining a deeper understanding of

Wythenshawe's changes and current incarnation.

During 2007, the artist Simon Pope developed and presented the arts project called 'The Memorial Walks'. For the project, Pope collaborated and embarked on a series of memory walks with seventeen varied but specifically chosen writers. The artist engaged the writers with individual and carefully-chosen paintings of forgotten landscape details (and in some cases the forgotten paintings) of East Anglia. Simon Pope explicitly encouraged each writer to remember the trees or groups of trees that over time disappeared from the physical landscape. The project was influenced by one of the chapters in Sebald's *Rings of Saturn*, which describes and illustrates the disappearance of trees in East Anglia, and, according to Stephen Bode from the commissioning organisation Film and Video Umbrella, who co-commissioned Pope for the project, 'laments the steady disappearance of trees from the East Anglian landscape' (Pope, Bode, 2007: 10). The purpose of the walks with the individual writers, for Pope, was to encourage recall, based on the tree details of the chosen scene, generating a narrative interpretation back in the landscape itself.

There are similarities to the *Wythy Walks* in-so-far as Pope's project engages with walking through recounting physically lost details and to 'keep the past alive' (Pope, Bode, 2007: 18). However, Pope's project is specifically driven by, and is referenced directly to, a landscape painting; and through this process it has a much more linear engagement with a landscape through walking. Furthermore, *The Memorial Walks* collaborate with writers who one would be expected to engage in the particular ways that they did. It is no surprise, for example, that the writers Iain Sinclair and Tom

McCarthy, both synonymous with the artistic and philosophical engagement of walking were chosen.

Finally, Pope purposefully adds complication as the audio recordings of the walks, which influenced the gallery experience, are deliberately kept separate, detached, for the public, from the experience of the paintings themselves. The chosen landscape paintings, particular to the region, were mainly from the gallery archives, already hidden from the public at Norwich's Castle Museum, where the exhibition took place. The paintings and the audio were presented, but antagonistically so. In fact, the paintings were only able to be viewed one at a time, while the others were hidden behind funeral-like curtains. The purpose of Pope's project in relation to the process of walking is not to engage with a local public; it is the interpretation by the writers in the landscape that is foremost. But it seems almost a wasted opportunity, in relation to this project anyway, to not emphasise the 'deep walking' process and shared act of walking with others. The exhibition could have inspired a shared walking experience, but 'The Memorial Walks' is bound to and materialised as a commission.

Residence of the past in the present

In Freud's *Screen Memories* (1899), episodes from childhood are often constructed from 'thoughts and impressions from a later period' (Freud, 2006: 553) and that 'content is connected with these by links of a symbolic or similar nature' (Freud, 2006: 553) often 'illustrating the most important points' (Freud, 2006: 553). Furthermore, Freud claims that 'Our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appeared at the later periods when the memories were aroused'

(Freud, 2006: 322). Freud's claim, is accentuated through arguing that by situating a self-initiated artistic residency of the past, this can only be interpreted, formed and made 'lively' in the present, further proclaiming the hypothesis that through these periods of arousal, Freud declares that the 'childhood memories did not, as people are accustomed to say, emerge; they were formed at that time. A number of motives, with no concern for historical accuracy, had a part in forming them, as well as in the selection of the memories themselves' (Freud, 2006: 322). Freud here asserts the complex relationship between what we remember and what was actually experienced. This relationship is significant in the multisensory and multiplicity of storytelling through the *Wythy Walks* narrative driven walks. Through the active process of the *Wythy Walks* we seek to 'build connecting bridges in all directions' (Freud, 2006: 553).

Although the act of walking is not physically referenced, as in *Rings of Saturn*, the philosopher, writer and critic Walter Benjamin, in his book *A Berlin Childhood around 1900* (2006 English Edition), minutely describes a psychological experience of engaging with physical and spatial details; a walk through the mind around the vanishing Berlin of his childhood, written with childlike, heightened sensibilities. *A Berlin Childhood around 1900* was written sporadically whilst in exile from the Nazis between 1932 and 1939, the year before Benjamin's suicide. The book is a psychological experience, a journey back through particular events and sensations associated with a childhood lived in Berlin; an experience of the mind.

Benjamin asserts the importance of memory as a live and valid process in the present: 'Memory is not an instrument for surveying the past but its theatre. It is the medium of

past experience, just as the earth is the medium in which dead cities lie buried. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging' (Benjamin, 2006: 23). In being both an artist and a researcher, the 'digging' up of the past through a variety of methodologies is employed. With this book a direct relationship to the process of remembering and referencing a particular place and time period from the perspective of childhood and formative years is recognised and acknowledged within this research. *A Berlin Childhood 1900* presents the sensitivities of a period in history through Benjamin's particular point of view, reflecting on himself as a child. This critical book employs a discontinuous, epigrammatic style, emphasising the relationship between the realities, and emotional relationship to a specific place.

Through the concept of the *Wythy Walks* the psychological layers of the self-initiated artistic residency *In Search Of The Shortcuts*, engage with *A Berlin Childhood 1900*. Likewise, the *Wythy Walks* breathe life into memory, a live act of walking through the mind, through the physical and emotional act of walking through heterogeneous spaces. In reference to the research Benjamin's book connects to a specific period of childhood, and memory becomes a deep reflection on the period in question, whilst simultaneously heightening the spaces that are walked around.

Similarly, an engagement with layers of history is emphasised through the project *How To Talk To Buildings* (2006) by the artist collective, Freee. It was initially a commissioned project that took place in 2006 for the Hull-based organisation ARC as part of Architecture Week. The project engaged and encouraged a public to interpret a building 'in terms of personal memories, local knowledge and the routines that

surround them' (Freee, 2006). The purpose of *How To Talk To Buildings* aimed to 'turn the tables on the relationship between architecture and the ordinary citizen: instead of being subject to the secret codes of architectural design, the citizen addresses buildings' (Freee, 2006). A script was developed based on these 'personal memories' of the public; and, according to Freee, the emphasis 'was not for the participants to become experts in architecture but to bring the architecture back into the daily experiences of ordinary people' (Freee, 2006).

The similarities between *How To Talk To Buildings* and the *Wythy Walks* are clear: both processes stimulate narrative, and the language that surfaces is embodied not only in the acts of speaking, but also in the specific places and their 'personal' histories in the spaces where the narrator speaks. Essentially, both projects metaphorically take back space (and buildings) and bring the individual voice back to the centre of it. The re-enacted films of the *Wythy Walks*, are a representation of the reconstructed narratives being voiced and walked through, a montage of the narrative's instability and unpredictability.

Comparable to *How To Talk To Buildings*, the *Wythy Walks* present and encapsulate personal history through the constant flow of narrative, through the re-representation of spatial environment. However, through the collaborative and explorative act of the *Wythy Walks* method, the point of it, in essence, is 'conversational'; a shared experience that encourages both walking and talking. *How To Talk To Buildings* is not focused on the shared act; the scripted conversations are re-staged by the public in front of the space itself. *How To Talk To Buildings* was originally conceived as a one day

series of workshops with a small group of local participants, which ‘attempted to empower each individual participant to develop their own short script that responded to buildings or places’ (Freee, 2006). The project developed as a series of staged films, which placed the narrator in front of the building (or where a building might have been). The filming and re-staging of the narrative is comparable to the *Wythy Walks* re-enacted films. Yet the details in the filmed environments of the *Wythy Walks*, although re-staged in relation to the walk, based on what was said and when it was spoken, are random and non-linear, akin to the unravelling of narrative related to the act of walking.

Another disparity between the re-enacted, narrative-driven filmed stills of *How To Talk To Buildings* and that of the *Wythy Walks* is the narrated voice itself. The voiceover for Freee’s project is by the individual speaker, re-telling and highlighting their hidden histories. Again, I emphasise the shared *Wythy Walks* experience by using my voice to articulate other people’s stories. Utilising my own voice for the re-enactment of the ‘live’ narratives through the *Wythy Walks* films, makes clear that our shared experience, relationship and connection to this place, is expressed during the process of the *Wythy Walks*. This provides a vehicle for both individual and collective memory, through the new experience of the walk and its re-enactment.

The three films by the film-maker and academic Patrick Keiller, *London* (1994), *Robinson in Space*¹³ (1997), and *Robinson in Ruins* (2010), mix spoken narration and

¹³ *Robinson in Space* (1997) is the second in a series of three films proceeding *London* (1994) and the prequel to *Robinson in Ruins* (2010) presented as a montage of narrative-led filmed stills. The films

fixed film footage, and attempt to examine a 'problem' (Keiller, 2011:1) by 'undertaking a journey, or journeys' (Keiller, 2011:1) around England. The films format present non-linear narrative, an open-ended enquiry through an exploration of landscape, focused on the complexities and layers of history, literature and particularly the suggestive readings of the social politics of sites around England. The third film *Robinson in Ruins* (2010), according to Keiller, developed from a set of questions around current debate of dwelling, belonging, and displacement. He claims that these notions should be rethought, emphasising 'to whom the landscape belongs' (Keiller, 2011:3) as opposed to the usual questions around us belonging to a landscape or place.

The co-existence of the non-linear stories, akin to the *Wythy Walks* films, are emphasised through the filmed narrated stills, allowing the focus to be on the 'live' spaces that unfold, and expand with the evolving narrative. In contrast to the *Wythy Walks* films, where the narration from the walks is generated first from the walks, Keiller's filmed footage was created before any narration or script had been written; in Keiller's words 'as if it was to be 'found' (Keiller, 2011: 1). The process of filming first, again, puts the emphasis on the abandonment of the spaces that are portrayed.

In contrast to Keiller's films, the *Wythy Walks* are more personal in nature, they are not, however, idealistic; they are both practical and reflective; they engage with nostalgia, through a psychological state between identifying with a places past, and the personal relationship with it. Nostalgia is unearthed by memory, the narrative is an

address an unspecified 'problem' through a journey across England. The narration of the Robinson films is deliberately third-person perspective, emphasising the dislocation from the filmed sites.

emotional response to the spaces by being guided through familiar territory; and this is paramount. This relationship becomes the model for the link between collective identity and memory, nostalgic transcendence and authenticity as a positive move. Keiller's films similarly engage and focus our attention on both familiar and unfamiliar space and the details within them. They both stop time and present time, and through this they allow you to interpret the present. We, the viewer, are unsure whether Robinson is a real or fictional character, and this seems important to Keiller's narratives. My methods differ from the approach of Keiller: the *Wythy Walks* advocate a multi-perspective, sensory, and shared experience of spaces, that seek to practically engage and change perceptions of suburban culture, by re-emphasising the physical, virtual and psychological realms.

CHAPTER ONE

Walking and Narrative

The *Wythy Walks*: lateral mapping of human details

1.1 Presenting both pavement and the cracks in-between

This chapter emphasises the relationship between theory and practice in relation to the engaging and symbiotic relationship between walking and narrative. Its purpose is to substantiate the research around the notion of a self-initiated artistic residency including a virtual and psychological discourse. The physical and virtual *Wythy Walks*, central to the residency concept, occupy space by forming an ongoing series of discreetly recorded audio walks around Wythenshawe, a 'lateral mapping' of a suburb of South Manchester. I wanted them to be an affective, shared exploration of Wythenshawe, in order to encourage a 'stream of consciousness' and layers of memory tapes. Additionally, I envisaged the walks, moved by the narrative, to be deliberately reflective and roaming, in opposition, for example, to quicker, efficient and decisive (yet less directly engaging) modes of transport around a community.

The walks are with the public, old friends, family and acquaintances; people who grew up there. The *Wythy Walks*, in essence, are a contemplative act around a community and its spaces: a complex relationship not only between the co-walker and myself as their companion, but also as an interpreter or translator of their narrative, as through the re-enacted *Wythy Walks* films. I become the author of our shared and multi-layered stories. I encouraged the process, guided by the narratives, to be random and

intuitive, determined by each co-walker. The 'chance-encounter' was further emphasised through the films, as the visual and oral response and representation of our routes, presenting both pavement and the cracks in-between.

The objective of the *Wythy Walks*, is the activation and encouraging dialogue between walking and narrative, engaging the past with the present. The importance of the *Wythy Walks* is in the details: dramatising the past, through the complex stories woven about, around and within this place. The *Wythy Walks* narrative-driven methodology engages directly with site-specific and time-spanning life storytelling. The walks start out at the house where the person was born, still lives, or spent the majority of their time in Wythenshawe, and, guided by the collaborators' own memories, we then walk towards different locations, depending on what we talk about. We follow an unpredictable, personal and emotionally instinctive rapport to guide us around Wythenshawe, encouraged by the rhythms and what we see on the walks. As the American writer Rebecca Solnit observes, in relation to two people walking side-by-side, 'the delicate act of marching the rhythms of their strides aligns two people emotionally and bodily' (Solnit, 2001: 232). Furthermore, in relation to the 'alignment' that walking can ignite, the *Wythy Walks* have the added 'rhythms' of the shared 'psychological' experiences, related to the well-trodden, heuristic and social spaces that we engage in and walk through. The relationship between the participants is put on display through the process of the *Wythy Walks*; there is nowhere to hide; the process of engaging 'emotionally and bodily' (Solnit, 2001: 232) is at play and the act and encounter is unpredictable.

Henri Lefebvre describes multi-rhythmic experiences as *polyrhythmia*: ‘composed of diverse rhythms’ (Lefebvre, 2004: 67). This includes the bodily, as well as experiential and collective social rhythms. Lefebvre uses *rhythmanalysis*, what he regarded as a ‘new field of knowledge’ (Lefebvre, 2004: 3), as a way of understanding the complexities of time and space, of the historical and the everyday, uniting these elements that are often seen as separate. The process of the *Wythy Walks* is an agency for all the senses, for all involved: a direct multi-rhythmic experience. It is not a walking and talking act for gaining status or clarifying reputation, but a social and sociable action, a free act of will, often emphasising a belonging. The stream of consciousness, the narration of thoughts, memories and emotions that emerge into the hidden Dictaphone, move (rhythmically, spatially and emotionally) between personal reportage, recollected episodes and descriptions of physical and environmental details. Lefebvre accentuates that ‘Rhythm reunites quantitative aspects and elements, which mark time and distinguish moments in it’ (Lefebvre, 2004: 8). Lefebvre’s claim is applied to the methodological process of the *Wythy Walks*, defining space as a production of social practice. Ultimately, a deeper and better understanding of the relationship that we have with this place, and the impact that its spaces has had on us, is revealed through an uninhibited, affective method.

The processes of the *Wythy Walks* define and emphasise the importance of space, not as merely something that is driven or walked through, but as layers of narrative to which we relate and with which we interact. Doreen Massey advocates that space is constantly alive (like time) and is ‘cutting across a myriad of stories going on’ (Massey, 2012: 53). So, instead of space being a one-dimensional material/surface, it is ‘like a

pincushion of a million stories: if you stop at any point in that walk there will be a house with a story' (Massey, 2012: 53). The concept of the *Wythy Walks* is in line with Massey's claim: that space is 'alive', is defined by the narratives that are walked through. This is in opposition to the common perception of space and challenges the notion that space is simply something walked through or looked at. The dialogue and physical (and virtual) act of walking is acted-out between fluctuating and concentrated moments of reverie and intense conversation. The word *reverie* derives from the old English word *revelry* and from the French word *revèr*, to dream. An important analogy is made here for the application of reverie during the walks, a meaningful contemplation of both the spatial and the temporal realms.

Simultaneously, during the *Wythy Walks*, and consequent films, time folds into itself. Gilles Deleuze provides a useful example to develop this idea in terms of reflection and duration in relation to the methodology with particular reference to the *Wythy Walks* films. Deleuze states that the temporal quality of Cinema 'does not give us an image to which movement is added, it immediately gives us a movement image' (Deleuze, 1986: 2). In other words the cinematic image is 'mobile', temporal and affective, psychological. The 'mobile layers' of stories attached to the emotive details of the walks, the hidden, significant events and experiences, are brought to light and are laid bare through the methodology of the *Wythy Walks*, emphasised further through the narrative presence of the films still footage. The focus of the *Wythy Walks* concept is on engaging with a past in the present (both time and space), through the open-ended dialogue between walking and the excavation of memory, of the narrative relations between place and people. Comparably, as John Berger observes: 'No story is like a

wheeled vehicle whose contact with the road is continuous. Stories walk, like animals and men. And their steps are not only between narrated events but between each sentence, sometimes each word. Every step is a stride over something not said' (Berger and Mohr, 1982: 284-5). Both walking and narrative 'move', and through them I seek to emphasise their surrounding complexities. Through the 'layers of stories', the inter-relationship between walking and narrative, the *Wythy Walks* present the recovery of human details surrounding a specific place and its spaces.

The retrieving of memory, linking the present with the past, was imperative to the walks. In the writing of W.G. Sebald, he asserts that: 'Without memory we would not be capable of ordering even the simplest thoughts, the most sensitive heart would lose the ability to show affection, our existence would be a mere never-ending chain of meaningless moments, and there would not be the faintest trace of a past' (Sebald, 1998: 255). In direct correlation to Sebald's statement, the concept of the *Wythy Walks* successfully uncovers and generates 'contoured lines of narrative', bringing to life a past through walking and talking around spaces, a 'meaningful' and often 'sensitive' shared act. The methodological process is a collaborative action, and how this encourages and generates narrative is an important dimension of the methodology. We are discovering a multitude of details - perspectives on places, spaces and temporal qualities that would be unknown to both myself, as the instigator of the walk and the co-walker - without each other. These narratives are reconstituted through my own experience, and (re)presented to the co-walkers in a form that would be unrealised and possibly unrecognised without the *Wythy Walks* process.

According to the writer Andreas Huyssen, our current fascination with memory is related to recovering a 'mode of contemplation outside the universe of simulation', and that 'information overload has led to an overhaul of our inner selves' (Huyssen, 1995: 7). Huyssen's claim is highlighted through the concept of the *Wythy Walks*, through 'contemplation' in contrast to 'simulation' the walks are encouraged by the rhythms and layers of signifiers during the walks, through what we see and what we remember. We seek to emphasise and support the innermost memories that are generated through the act of walking and talking, highlighting personal geography, and ultimately gaining a better understanding of the relationship with our immediate surroundings.

Wythenshawe acts as both a context and space for exploring and encouraging layers of memory through which the past can be remembered and re-interpreted. The time-frame of the period in question is focused on the 1970s and 1980s: the era of my most formative years. The period in question is important as Wythenshawe saw swathes of the deindustrialisation of Manchester's manufacturing sector, which had a huge impact and drastically changed the social landscape. In the writings of Frederick Jameson, in particular *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Jameson advocates spatial history over a broader understanding of space as enveloping modernisation, which he suggests 'triumphs and wipes the old completely out: nature is abolished' (Jameson, 1991: 311). The thesis explores Jameson's acute description, of the effects of not recognising a past. Instead of unreservedly obliterating space, the concept of the *Wythy Walks* advocates space as layers of narrative, and seeks to engage with personal history by interpreting the past in the

present. Through the process of the walks, we accept the complex behaviour around the spaces of Wythenshawe and the unrestricted paths of shared narrative encounters. Applying the methodology supports an active and open spatial analysis of people's narratives by engaging in place.

Through the concept of the *Wythy Walks*, the research's main concern was to demonstrate the importance of chance-like, open-ended, unplanned engagement with spaces. The walks do not have a destination; they are organic, a möbius journey of mind and matter. The point of them is to 'draw out' the details and relationship that myself and the co-walkers have with this place, and equally the impact that this place has had on us. I equate this to Robert Macfarlane's notion of walking: 'the voyage out is always a voyage inwards' (Macfarlane, 2013: 38); and, similarly, the *Wythy Walks* take us both out and in through layers of association. The metaphor of walking through the mind is strengthened by the way in which we are simultaneously walking through our own as well as each of our minds.

Through the *Wythy Walks*, past and present experiences collide. Chance encounters encourage details of incidents, both great and small; memories of which become interconnected through the senses. According to neuropsychologists William Scoville and Brenda Milner, 'the greatest contrast between autobiographical memories is that of procedural memory. Procedural memory – unlike semantic, episodic and autobiographical memory – is an implicit memory type whereas semantic, episodic and autobiographical memories are explicit memory' (Scoville and Milner, 1957: 20). These varied and opposing memory types, which Scoville and Milner describe, are

implemented and provoked through the complex process of the *Wythy Walks*. Ritualistic and routine paths of autobiographical memory, hidden, unspoken and often misunderstood narratives (autobiographical), are released through the act of walking. Therefore, the physical act of walking through the *Wythy Walks*, alongside walking through the mind, is much more closely linked to the autobiographical memory process, guided by particular episodes, deviating from the well-trodden path of the procedural, formalised act of walking around Wythenshawe. Walking in this way encourages memory, and the memory that is being ignited encourages and performs the walking. According to the writer André Aciman, 'It is a good thing to get lost because to get lost you perform something like a Freudian slip, so the truth that you are not even sure that you are going after will be accessed by getting lost' (Aciman, 2012). The truth (both real and imagined) is displayed and accessed through the often vulnerable process of the *Wythy Walks*. The vulnerability of memory is often exposed through the act of opening up the memory banks, encouraged through both walking and talking.

Similarly, in reference to Walter Benjamin's *A Berlin Childhood 1900* (2006), 'getting lost' is a valuable process of engaging with space, and that to 'lose one's way in a city, as one loses one's way in a forest, requires some schooling. Street names must speak to the urban wanderer like the snapping of dry twigs, and little streets in the heart of the city must reflect the times of day, for him, as clearly as a mountain valley' (Benjamin, 2006: 1). This research reflects on the shared, collaborative practice in

relation to Benjamin's notion of the *flâneur*,¹⁴ who to him was in stark contrast to hurried, purposeful activity. I similarly equate the methodology to the art of 'slow walking', as the instrument of modern suburban mapping, as if one is grazing the terrain for pleasure, experience and sustenance. The *Wythy Walks* are a slow, peripatetic process. They are a form of 'lateral', shared, reflection. The physical movements of walking similarly allow for the slow digestion of thoughts and experiences, encouraging a psychological spatial experience. The rhythmic contractions allow for passage through the body, and, by extension, the imagination.

For my part, as the instigator of the walks, and for the co-walkers, nostalgia¹⁵ plays a large role in how we instinctively engage with the physical and emotional experience of the walks familiar spaces. However, this is not a nostalgia that denies the passing of time and of change, we confront the transformation of ourselves in relation to our past by engaging directly within the present. The emotional power, in part, comes from the doubling-up of the two different times, a past within a present. The strategy of the *Wythy Walks* goes some way to making visible these hidden narratives of spaces, their textures and qualities. It achieves this by opening up a stream of consciousness, engaging directly with the realms of spaces that are walked through.

¹⁴ The *flâneur* was a term coined by Benjamin in reference to the poetry of Charles Baudelaire (1821 – 1867) the origins of which were in reference to predominantly male literary characters from 19th century France. Currently the term is associated with urban explorers and has become a common reference in relation to modern urban experience for academics, artists and writers in general.

¹⁵ In alignment with this research's interpretation, nostalgia, according to Linda Hutcheon in her essay *Irony, Nostalgia, and the Postmodern* (1998) depends precisely on the 'irrecoverable nature of the past for its emotional impact and appeal. It is the very past-ness of the past, its inaccessibility that likely accounts for a large part of nostalgia's power' (Hutcheon, 1998). This is 'rarely the past as actually experienced, of course; it is the past as imagined, as idealized through memory and desire. In this sense, however, nostalgia is less about the past than about the present' (Hutcheon, 1998).

Further writings of Doreen Massey clarified this project's perspective: in particular her analysis of the 'open complexity of the spatio-temporality of any place' (Massey, 2002: 465). Massey advocates that the spaces of social relations are 'constructed just as buildings are constructed, they can be adapted as buildings can be adapted, they are not material as buildings are material, but they can be as hard to walk through as a wall' (Massey, 2002: 465). The walls of social relations are sensed, felt and climbed over with the encouraging support and help for each other; a metaphorical 'leg-up' as we engage with the walls that surround us during the walks. In other words our perceived social barriers are softened where we feel we should and should not walk, and in which areas we should and should not be seen. The concept of creating an artistic residency, explored through the '*Wythy Walks*', around a specific place and time, crossing timespans, encouraging non-linear narrative, human details, layers of memory, narratives between the realms of fact of fiction, draws out the relationship between, and highlights the importance of walking and memory associated with this community.

The *Wythy Walks* are a social encounter through the shared experience of space and its impact on autobiographical memory storytelling, around remembered, forgotten and embellished events. Henri Bergson observes: 'The pure present is an ungraspable advance of the past devouring the future, in truth, all sensation is already memory' (Bergson, 1911: 294). Bergson provides a useful methodological assertion, clearly emphasising the relevance and importance of the past in the present: in other words past and present are symbiotic; and therefore both simultaneously influence any future.

Equally, the writings of Jacques Derrida in relation to 'hauntology', in his 1993 book *Specters of Marx*, concern notions of the past and the present flowing into the future, filtered through themes such as childhood and the *Phenomenology*¹⁶ of Landscape. Derrida states that 'To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept, of every concept beginning with the concepts of being and time. That is what we would be calling here a 'hauntology'. Ontology opposes it only in a movement of exorcism. Ontology is a conjuration' (Derrida, 2006: 31). Through the thesis and the concept of the *Wythy Walks*, we filter through our histories; I employ the notion of the past 'bleeding into' the present, through the act of walking (both physically and psychologically), and by placing personal history/narrative at the centre of the process. The stories and physical and virtual spaces that are aroused through the process of walking through them are 'specters' of narrative. What we talk about, more often than not, does not exist physically. The *Wythy Walks* methodology re-positions an active engagement with 'hidden' narratives and space, emphasising ephemeral and affective qualities.

¹⁶ Phenomenology is a philosophical movement founded at the beginning of the 20th century by Edmund Husserl, defined as the philosophical study of the structures of experience and consciousness.

In a large corner of my mind, is a small corner of a large council estate, on the southerly edge of Manchester, Wythenshawe. Our green, in front of our front garden, was our island, with our house at the centre of it. Our corner, from the outside looking in, was like every other corner on the estate; but to us, in this ordinary place, every day, or at least every weekend, was different. There was so much to explore, so much to see, so much to dream about, so much to have nightmares about. The older we got, as our identity associated with this place and space matured, the more we took our green with us, to different areas of what was once the largest council estate in the world. This was then extended to different friend's houses and their islands.

"That's where Lawless split his ball bag open on the fence as we gaze across from Keith's old house, that's now a small private estate, but used to be the abandoned derelict school. Not long after it first became houses Lawless crashed one of his Sierra's that he'd nicked, into one of the houses, apparently as the old couple were just sitting down to eat in front of the telly. We hear this big bang, run out the front door to see what it was. We see Lawless with his face covered in blood, we then see his mum, and she says to us. I thought that was Lee? It is, I say's to her, and she floors him, despite his bleeding face, with the sound of sirens getting louder and louder." (Excerpt from *Keith and Colin*

24th March 2013)

1.2 Walking and engaging with space as a philosophical and artistic medium

Walking, as part of an artists' medium, process and investigation of space, was implemented and advanced as a practical and philosophical tool by the Situationist International¹⁷, predominantly during the 1950s in Paris. Primarily writers, the Situationists', specifically Guy Debord, the group's main protagonist, defined explorations around the city environs. Debord described the *dérive* – a fundamental technique for walking around and examining and sensing the city – as 'a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances' (Debord, 1958: 62). The *dérive* was a practical tool for both letting-go of daily actions by the participator, and also attempted to bring about an awareness of the psychological and geographical push and pull that the walk entailed.

The *dérive* goes beyond chance encounters, beyond spontaneous liberation, exploring and presenting the interplay between new habitual and playful methodologies of walking. Debord cites Marx and his phrase: 'Men can see nothing around them that is not their own image; everything speaks to them of themselves. Their very landscape is alive' (Marx, 1958: 63). This parallel expression, to the primarily urban characteristics of the *dérive*, is also an indication of the potential social, and political impact and influence, the Situationists sought, and not just an artistic one. In fact, Debord believed that the 'most fruitful numerical arrangement consists of several small groups of two or three people who have reached the same level of awareness' (Debord, 1958: 63), striving towards purposeful results. Debord

¹⁷ In this thesis, the shorter term 'Situationists' is used which will mean 'Situationist International'.

described the *dérive* as a 'great game' (Debord, 1958: 63), through an ongoing and evolving invention of mobility, the city is measured in psychological, rather than physical distances.

The Situationists articulated layers of experience of the city through text and re-drawn maps, the diminution of borders through the understanding of them. In contrast, however, and in alignment with the purpose of the *Wythy Walks*, Rebecca Solnit believes that Debord's methods are 'authoritarian prescriptions for subversion' (Solnit, 2001: 212). Solnit's criticism of the Situationists' prescriptive act is how I perceive the methodology of the *Wythy Walks*. They are liberating for both myself and the co-walker/walkers: a term I have used in relation to the 'co-operative' act of walking, talking and thinking.

Walking encourages memory, and memory encourages walking, which can draw out the relationship between, and highlights the importance associated with a place. Equally, the walking and narratives ignited engages us with the spaces that we walk through. The relationship between walking and memory (in other words, walking as a way of engaging with one's mind, according to the American writer Rebecca Solnit) can be traced back to the philosophical writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who confessed that he could only 'meditate when I am walking. When I stop, I cease to think; my mind only works with my legs' (Solnit, 2001: 14). Rousseau himself could have drawn on past Western philosophical traditions, from the Sophists, who pre-date Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The Sophists wandered the landscape, schooled in walking as part of the thinking process, but did not use walking as a philosophical and

analytical tool in itself. Similarly, walking for Rousseau was a contemplative act, a way of walking both outwards and inwards. According to Solnit, 'Philosophers walked, but philosophers who thought about walking are rarer' (Solnit, 2001: 16). The *Wythy Walks*, the shared conceptual and practical methodology for exploring both layers of memory and place, goes some way to presenting how motion affects consciousness. The ways in which motility around a particular place, in this case Wythenshawe in South Manchester, encourages one's experience and shared understanding and dialogue around spaces is considered.

The specific relationship between walking and thinking, however, is not written about or explored further until a hundred years after Rousseau, through the writings of Soren Kierkegaard. Copenhagen was the place that he explored and portrayed so intimately, his subject detailing the minutia of human activity. He described himself as an 'old man of childhood, as a ghost, as a wanderer' (Solnit, 2001: 23). Although a wanderer of the streets of the city, Kierkegaard was, however, notorious for being a reflective and insular man, an observer of life rather than a social participant. Kierkegaard himself wrote that his 'imagination works best when I am sitting alone in a large assemblage' (Solnit, 2001: 24). This suggests that walking for Kierkegaard is a spectator tool, unlike the *Wythy Walks*, which are a device for both an individual as well as a shared interchange around the understanding of a place and the collective memories associated with it.

Rousseau's and Kierkegaard's lasting effects on literature, being more philosophical writers rather than writers of philosophy, were naturally more poetic, and specifically

linked to place, travel and travel writing. Poets like Coleridge and Wordsworth, similarly engaged with a specific place through walking, which had profound consequences on both the subject details and the form of their poetry. Walking in postmodern theory, according to Solnit, is thin on the ground; and 'given that mobility and corporeality have been among its major themes' (Solnit, 2001: 27), it is primarily an absent subject. The specific relationship between walking and memory through a place and experience is discussed further in Solnit's book *Wanderlust*. 'Memory, like the mind and time, is unimaginable without physical dimensions' (Solnit, 2001: 77). In other words, locating a memory within a real location, as, for example, through the physical or virtual act of walking, triggers the psychological association with the memory, and enhances the memory so that it is as concrete as the physical space and architecture walked around.

Seemingly in contrast to this, Michel de Certeau's seminal text, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) specifically the section *Walking in the City* (1984), in relation to walking and engaging with urban space, states that 'To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent, and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place' (Certeau, 1984: 98). Certeau defined walking within the city as a 'space for enunciation' (Certeau, 1984: 98). The *Wythy Walks* present fragments of expression and meaning, in relation to this whole estate, made up of parts, a synecdochical act. The act of walking, returning to a site through the *Wythy Walks*, re-activates a direct relationship to a place: a process of reflecting on a past

by being in the present, bringing memory more into order through the random act of walking.

Solnit equates the ordering of memory to the memory palace: a technique developed and inherited from classical Greece, and one developed before pencil and paper to help memorise through the reimagining of sequenced spaces and places. The relationship between memory and spaces is described further in the writing of the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard. In his 1958 book *Poetics of Space*, Bachelard's emphasis is on the changes to the importance of lived experiences and its impact on architecture, stating that it is 'better to live in a state of impermanence than in one of finality' (Bachelard, 1994: 61). The transience that Bachelard highlights, although related to lived-in spaces, is paralleled to the importance of directly engaging with space through walking. Similarly, the ephemeral qualities and relationship between walking and the workings of the mind for the artist Richard Long, 'expresses space and freedom and the knowledge of it can live in the imagination of anyone, and that is another space too' (Long, 1983). A deeper understanding through direct contact of a terrain through walking is at the heart of Long's practice; but what often materialises is hinted at, and, according to Solnit, 'asks the viewer to do a great deal of work' (Solnit, 20021: 271). The process of the *Wythy Walks* are not a one person act; they evolve through shared, co-operative, multi-sensory and affective experience. They present and express layers of space, and through the process of walking open up seams of narrative, a process leading to a deeper knowledge and understanding around the environments of the large estate.

Remembrance can be associated with mourning, and through the *Wythy Walks* we are often confronted with lamentable moments through the act of remembering and recalling. In Freud's text 'On Transience' (1916), mourning is identified as 'the loss of something that we have loved or admired seems so natural to the layman that he regards it as self-evident. But to psychologists, mourning is a great riddle' (Freud, 2006: 288). I would relate my own role as an artist, in this case, to that of the psychologist: and the artistic act of the *Wythy Walks* is equally driven by a need to understand the complexities and power that the ephemerality of memory/loss presents for us and the *Wythy Walks* put us in the mix. Freud relates the essential process of mourning to the impending Great War, that 'once the mourning is over, it will be found that our high opinion of the riches of civilization has lost nothing from our discovery of their fragility. We shall build up again all that war has destroyed, and perhaps on firmer ground and more lastingly than before' (Freud, 2006: 85). Therefore, as Freud points out, to confront fragility, we understand and ground ourselves back onto its inevitable, unstable ground.

Wythenshawe was conceived as a municipal garden city, a housing framework for interconnectivity. Barry Parker's original 1931 plan and ethos for the municipalisation of Wythenshawe, larger in population than both his Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City projects put together, was described as 'Revolutionary' (Miller, 2012: 14), for developing 'residential neighbourhood units with community facilities, a town centre, industrial zones, open spaces and a peripheral green belt' (Miller, 2012: 14).

"As we walk toward our old primary school, we all look out for the hedged passageway we all walked through, it's still there, and Colin remembers having a sneaky cigarette before he reached school and standing and squashing the hundreds of slugs that came out from the bushes. The kids at that special school across the road were always armed with knives. We saw one of them attack one of our teachers once." (Excerpt from *Keith and Colin* 24th March 2013)

1.3 A shared, encouraging and collaborative act

The *Wythy Walks* are not strictly an ethnographic study; they are however a practical, conceptual, performative and collaborative act, actively interpreting a past, drawing out layers of memory. Memory is very much in the present here, brought into the light of day through the act of walking and remembering. I recognise, in further writings of Walter Benjamin, the importance of understanding the past in relation only to itself in the present. In his short essay from 1940 *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Benjamin uses poetic and scientific analogies to present a critique of historicism, focusing on the differences between historicism and historical materialism; a discussion of what it means when we talk about history. The tensions between historicism and historical materialism are found between their different approaches to the story, of what history offers to us in the present, of the differences between allocating a 'cultural treasure' within a singular event and without hindsight, and of approaching the past through a liberating perspective. For Benjamin, historicism remains concerned with sequential time, whereupon understanding the past becomes allocating history to a specific time, an era. Benjamin argues against the idea of an 'eternal picture' of history, and advocates the idea of history as a self-standing experience. In his own words Benjamin states: 'To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it the way it really was. It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger' (Benjamin, 1999: 247). The interplay between memory and walking encourages the unfolding of episodes of personal social drama, to uncover and animate past experiences, and more often than not associated narrative between myself and the participant.

The walks act as an interview methodology, involving both the mixing and emergence of collective memory and materiality; a tool for exploring layers of memory, storytelling between fact and fiction as well as artworks that are expanded drawings in themselves. The films of the walks, voiced by myself, are a re-telling of the recordings from the original walks. Each film not only re-traces the dialogue of the narratives, but also the actual path and route of the walk, filmed some weeks after the initial walk. The returning and retelling of these events in the first instance, layered further through the *Wythy Walks* films, utilises Freud's 1914 theoretical text 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through'. Similar to the free associative process of the *Wythy Walks* the remembering of hidden, repressed events for Freud, through the cathartic process, helped 'to reproduce the psychic processes of that situation in order to resolve them through conscious activity' (Freud, 2006: 31). The abreacted process during the *Wythy Walks* is fleeting and it comes in waves. The combination of walking, and sometimes meeting the person after a long interval in a place where significant events occurred, is emotionally and psychologically immeasurable. We relive and return to events through the *Wythy Walks*: not as an obvious healing experience, but a mutual, deeper understanding of how this place has shaped us. Freud's theories can be understood and transplanted in the *Wythy Walks*. The methodological processes have the added layer of being a reason to meet up, often for the first time in many years, and consequently have the effect in terms of re-kindling and furthering connections by meeting up again.

Freud asserts that returning to memories helps 'fill the gaps in the patient's memory; in dynamic terms, to overcome the resistances brought about by repression' (Freud,

2006: 31). Both drawing and drawing out memory through the *Wythy Walks* frees up our relationships, associations and understanding of each other and of the place. Freud also believed that the 'forgetting of impressions, scenes, experience comes down in most cases to a process of 'shutting out' such things (Freud, 2006: 31). Not meeting up with old friends and colleagues, or distancing a relationship with a family member for example, is a form of shutting out: not confronting, not understanding and therefore potentially misunderstanding.

I re-trace and return to the walks through the films, focusing on the act of the initial walk with the collaborator; I make connections between and highlight the often isolated events. Freud states that forgetting is often related to 'losing track of connections, misremembering the sequence of events, recalling memories in isolation' (Freud, 2006: 32). Through the concept of the *Wythy Walks* we explore and recall connections through the act of walking and talking. Filming during the initial walk is not appropriate, as it would influence or inhibit the natural behaviour of the collaborator in a way that the discrete Dictaphone recorder does not. Also, coming back to these sites is another layer of memory; and composing moments within the walks is akin to the stark, unpopulated biro drawings, forcing the viewer to concentrate on the details filmed by the static camera, against the backdrop of the ever-evolving spoken words. The writer Vera Dika states that our fascination with the film image is fundamentally related to the 'play of presence and absence', alongside the 'dual system of image and narrative' (Dika, 2003: 5). The complementing duality of presence and absence plays an important role in the representation and presentation of the *Wythy Walks* films in this way. What is talked about during the

walks, more often than not, does not exist physically; whereas the spaces that we walk through together are concrete. Therefore, the hidden narrative layers (absent bodily) and the present (act of walking) are visualised and perfectly sensed through the re-enacted films.

Walking, in the Western world, is synonymous with the Romantic Movement: poets engaged with escaping into the wilderness, escaping both physically and mentally. Wythenshawe is not the Lake District or the Pyrenees. It is a council estate on the southern edges of Manchester. It is not a cultural centre in the strictest sense, or a place on the tourist map. It is in the blind spot of any visit to Manchester, a place described as an 'Edgeland' (Shoard, 2002: 3). Wythenshawe is demeaned and described in the book *Edgelands* (2012), as an ignored, overlooked, suburban wilderness. Yet this is the place that is packed with people, with paths of memory that should be heard, not hidden away, deafened by the sound of motorways and planes.

According to the town planner Mervyn Miller though, Parker's most revolutionary vision, his landscaped parkways, or 'high speed arteries' (Miller, 2012: 15), became a post-war barrier, dividing, rather than unifying Wythenshawe. The tree-lined avenues quickly gave way to quicker routes around, by-passing Wythenshawe to the airport and beyond. Sharston, the area of Wythenshawe where I grew up, and where virtually all my family still live, on the same road, in the same bay windowed two-up-two-down style ex-council house, has physically changed, readjusted to fit more people in. The areas of play, refuge and adventure have all but gone, making way for more houses. Instead of open, gardened spaces, smaller pockets of walled, private estates have emerged, seemingly for more security, keeping the council and ex council houses out of sight, out of mind.

"When we got in that derelict school, it was some of my best days round here. We didn't have to break in remember, it was just open to anybody. One time when we were on top of the roof, we saw that guy Darren snogging his girlfriend, we thought there's fucking Darren and Col thinks fuck it, and throws a brick right into the middle of his back, and he turned and saw us, and shouted 'hey you fucking bastards, he was a big bloke. So anyway, I'd made a bungee jump out of one of the fire hoses, and I bungeed down from five floors, abseiled from the top floor. About ten minutes later I go back, and Darren had caught Colin and Fran, and had got them to do a half-naked dance on the stage. The school was derelict for about two or three years, guys like Lawless set one too many fires off in there." (Excerpt from *Keith and Colin*

24th March 2013)

1.4 In-between moments of letting-go

During the *Wythy Walks*, Freud's notions of memory are put into practice; between what is remembered and what was experienced. Between implicit memory and explicit 'autobiographical' memory, Freud believed, lay the clues to the secret functioning of the unconscious, and he likened his endeavour to 'a detective engaged in tracing a murder' (Freud, 1916-17: 52). The *Wythy Walks* get under the surface and reveal layers of narrative and space through direct associations. The process of walking brings about a dialogue between the two modes of memory that Freud describes, and the 'letting-go' of inhibitions through the process of recalling of memory. Despite the often negative memories that surface during the *Wythy Walks*, they are, in practice, always a nascent process, always a stride forwards whilst simultaneously reflecting backwards. The 'remembering process', for Freud, is a confrontational process of healing we cannot understand without one being confronted with a problem or trauma. Together, through the *Wythy Walks*, we face and dialogue with our past. Freud, again, asserts that we 'can really only achieve insight through their own hurt and their own experience' (Freud, 2006: 35), and through the *Wythy Walks*, we directly confront feelings through a new, mutual experience. The loosening and 'reawakening of memories' (Freud, 2006: 35) is the driving force of the *Wythy Walks* through the act of walking.

The *Wythy Walks* enliven the experiences and memories associated with growing up around the 1980s and living in Wythenshawe from the perspective of the present day; they also have the added layer of encouraging and creating new memories

through the moment of being on the walks. The dialogue and relationship between memory, walking and place, with myself, as the instigator of the walks, not only establishes a context for memory, as with Irving's project, but also encourages a deeper understanding of each participant and their relationship with this place. The *Wythy Walks* recurrently provokes different memories and emotions, a resonance of the past in the present, between reverie and surveillance. The *Wythy Walks* act as collaborative works in themselves, as a method for exploring the poetics of human narratives, between a specific time period and a reflection of the current representation of a place. They are not about the artist as educator, but the artist as an encourager of walking, looking and thinking. I primarily see the walks as a way of detailing and highlighting the importance of drawing and remembering, bringing to the fore the perspectives of human experiences.

There are various points along the *Wythy Walks* routes where the co-walker/walkers let go of their inhibitions; where the dialogue, stream of consciousness, in relation to the live moment of being on the walk, occurs.....a 'letting-go'. In parallel, the 'letting-go' process is related to moments between what the co-walker/walkers expected of the walk and what actually happens on the walk. The 'letting-go' process may also occur when there is extreme change to the space from when the co-walkers last encountered it. However, this is not to say that once the co-walker/walkers let go, that the loosening of inhibitions does not tighten up again. The complexities between mind and matter, the textures of the *Wythy Walks*, are unlimited in this respect. The contemporary art writer Joan Gibbons states that memory 'can alter peoples

understanding of the world, and alter the ways in which they act in or upon that world' (Gibbons, 2007: 3). That multiple layers of narrative occur during the *Wythy Walks* is emphasised by the inter-dialogue of 'understanding' the spaces that are walked around, and the process of walking through the conscious and unconscious dialogue during the walks. In this respect the organic and out of control contrasts with conscious thoughts related to the co-walkers preconceived idea of the walk before it has begun.

The *Wythy Walks* take place with a mixture of people: those who still live in, those who left Wythenshawe during adolescence, and those who returned to the estate, as with my cousin Cris, who returned to Wythenshawe later in his adult life. The individual *Wythy Walks* are varied. Individually, they are personal, a unique experience. The concept of the *Wythy Walks* align to Gibbon's description of memory, that acts as 'both a form of knowledge and an agent of the imagination and bridging the gap between past and present, an important constituent of a person's inner self' (Gibbons, 2007: 4). The gap between 'past and present' (Gibbons, 2007: 4) is explored and put into practice through the virtual and physical realms.

When our granddad moved into Wythenshawe with his parents, it was less about fitting people in. That was more associated with where granddad had just moved from, from one of the crammed slum buildings in Ardwick: Frederick Engels's portrait of Manchester, what Engels described as 'many human beings here live crowded into a small space, the atmosphere that prevails in these working-men's quarters may readily be imagined' (Engels, 2009: 39). No, Wythenshawe was built as breathing space for the mainly working classes, quite literally in my granddad's family's case, whose main reason for moving here was through a recommendation from the doctor, who said that our granddad's brother's life would be cut short unless they moved out from the smog and grime of 1930s inner-city Manchester.

"Remember when we climbed out of the window onto the bay, but then I was too scared to climb, so you were stuck on the bay on your own, do you remember? I was too scared, so you had to come back in, that was the extent of our runaway, it was as far as we got. We then head over to the blossom trees on the green where Sarah first met Andrea. We were both playing there and we needed somebody to climb the tree to get us blossom, so you climbed the tree for us and shook the blossom down. The blossom trees were the perfect goalposts, but we always got chucked off that green." (Excerpt from *Sarah*

4th May 2013)

1.5 Wythenshawe as a terrain

The *Wythy Walks* are unpredictable, non-linear: we straggle an involuntary conversation, and, at times, loose ourselves, in both thought and body. In physical terms, the terrain of Wythenshawe, like anywhere, has an influence on how and where we might walk. For example, barriers like traffic, or a puddle, a fence, or a wall. But does Wythenshawe's designed layout encourage a particular kind of wandering in relation to the *Wythy Walks*?

By the 1960s Wythenshawe's population had grown to around one hundred thousand. In Derek Deakin's historical account of Wythenshawe, in *Wythenshawe: The Story of a Garden City* (1989), the slogan is stated as 'Houses, houses, and yet more houses!' (Deakin, 1989: 113). This was, and still is, the common thinking of visitors and the objective of the planners, both pre-war and post-war. Barry Parker's original designed layout concepts for Wythenshawe in the 1920s, was, in part, an adaptation of the efficiency of Canadian town planner Noulon Cauchon, inspiring a logical sequence of the rapid growth that was seen by most in the North West, as necessary. This was certainly the case from the perspective of Manchester Council, whom, over a period of time, wrestled the area, eventually identified as Wythenshawe, away from Cheshire. Parker's plans for Wythenshawe developed, according to Deakin, by notions of 'social integration' (Deakin, 1989: 45), and a 'self-contained, socially-mixed development' (Deakin, 1989: 45). In reality, however, the wrangling between Manchester, Cheshire and Bucklow councils, who were also involved in the initial disputed territory of Wythenshawe, was echoed by slanderous

clichés, like that of the 1930 slogan 'Cheshire should be kept Cheshire' (Deakin, 1989: 45). This was, and still is, rife. For example, Wythenshawe covers a vast area, and incorporates parts of South Manchester that disassociates itself from being a part of the estate; and vice-versa for some living in the estate.

Parker's design promoted practical efficiency, of time, for how long it takes a paper boy to deliver a round of papers, for example, and space, for 'all who lived and worked there' (Deakin, 1989: 46). In contrast, the Cauchon hexagon design, which had been adopted for the Garden City Movement, and the amount of cul-de-sacs, according to Deakin were 'causing the area to be compared with a maze' (Deakin, 1989: 46). For many that have lived or are living in Wythenshawe, there was, and is, a sense that people 'still get lost' (Deakin, 1989: 46). It is clear that the 'maze-like' layout and metaphor of the estate, encourages wandering, emphasised through the roaming qualities of the *Wythy Walks*. However, the contradictory purpose of a maze is to exit it in the quickest time possible. In contrast to this, the *Wythy Walks* relate to an extended maze without a goal, to 'take pleasure' in the act of being lost in the maze itself. Furthermore, the 'self-contained' (Deakin, 1989: 46) philosophy of Parker's initial design, the self-sufficient proposition for Wythenshawe, was half extinguished with the impending war and the subsequent financial after-effects of the 1940s and 50s. This is exemplified in the fact that Wythenshawe did not get its cultural centre (The Forum), specified by Parker through his mind map of the development, until 1971.

I suggest that this suburban warren is a metaphor for the *Wythy Walks*, for the walker/co-walkers state of mind. Furthermore, I propose that the memory walks change the negative act of getting 'lost' (Deakin, 1989:46) in Wythenshawe, into an active and positive act of taking back space (physically and metaphorically speaking). Straying off in search of the short-cuts, I believe, is a trait of this vast body of geographical space, and through the *Wythy Walks*, a freshness of perception is articulated. The positive engagement of the *Wythy Walks*, with place, references and puts into practice, Walter Benjamin's literary dialogue with the past to reveal the future in *A Berlin Childhood 1900* (2006). Berlin acts as palimpsest and labyrinth, revealing unexpected lyricism in the heart of the familiar. The narrative is guided by Benjamin's affective and detailed memories of growing up in Berlin. Simultaneously, the experiences reveal the present changes to create a fresh connection between the past and the future, spanning time, liberating the past from being engulfed by the future. The unravelling of events by walking through the mind, is heightened through Benjamin's exile whilst writing *A Berlin Childhood 1900*. The *Wythy Walks* loosen inhibitions, and go some way to redeeming a separation that occurs between ourselves and our spaces. We re-connect and negotiate space through the *Wythy Walks*; we do not solve things; they are unfinished and anti-totalitarian, and the directionless suggested by Benjamin's exile is put into practical and positive effect by wandering through space in the *Wythy Walks*. In relation to engaging directly with narrative, Benjamin observes that 'the psychological connection of the event is not forced', and specifies that 'It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks' (Benjamin, 1999: 89).

Another reason why the early design had influence initially was financial. The spatial layout of Wythenshawe stressed the amount of houses to be built, and needed, over the costs of roads. For Parker, it implemented 'large savings in the lengths, and therefore in the costs of roads' (Deakin, 1989: 46). The *Wythy Walks* do not cut corners, there is no financial obligation. They help re-claim a direct relationship to a past by returning to spaces from an intimate perspective. The *Wythy Walks* are guided by a perspective relating to other events in an area of Wythenshawe, a headline from the local newspaper, reporting a gang fight or murder. Whilst wandering through the estate, there is sometimes a sense in which roads have been chosen specifically to go down, and also ones to avoid altogether. After all, the *Wythy Walks* are an encouraging act, not a forced one. The *Wythy Walks* are also a stage for the unsaid and the avoided. For example, Benchill, a large area of the estate, is completely avoided, making Wythenshawe, in a physical and mental sense, drastically shrink in size.

Pre-dating the 1930s Wythenshawe had a lot of the old trees (Willow), what geographer and academic Doreen Massey (who coincidentally lived across the road from us in Wythenshawe when I was a child) contrasts with 'the rawness of new houses, providing a reminder of when this place had been another place' (Massey, 2002: 560). The trees are still standing here, from when this area was small woods (shaw), farmland and small hamlets: the majority of land of which was owned by the Tatton family, who Manchester council dealt with for this piece of land to change hands, from north Cheshire to south Manchester. The trees are markers of memory, especially childhood memory, 'The Lady Tree', 'The Fox', 'Devil's Fork' and 'The Beast' the names of some of our trees.

"I remember that first day as clear as anything, which is very bizarre because it's so very, very, long ago. It must have been one of those life shaping moments, when your brain thinks that this is probably going to be important at some point, so you probably need to remember this. They keep having Haverly Hey reunions, I haven't yet been to one but my sister has, she said that they're fantastic but then she's in contact with a lot of the children she went to primary school with. Her best mate is the same best mate since she was four, so that's quite nice, but also weird in another way, because you think, has she moved on? I don't know." (Excerpt from *Lisa* 9th November 2013)

1.6 In contrast to the Whit Walks

The process of walking and naming of the *Wythy Walks*, occupying a community through walking, is a reference to the Whit Walks: a traditional Lancastrian walking procession which I took part in throughout my childhood in Wythenshawe. The annual event has been traced back more than two centuries, the first believed to be held in 1801, and is said to have arisen out of the Sunday School movement and be related to Whitsuntide. The Whit Walks not only emphasised the importance of community and place by walking collectively through them, but were also seen as a break from the humdrum and the harsh routines of work in the Northern mills. Although greatly diminished, there are areas of Greater Manchester that still hold on to this ceremony of walking, which coincides with traditional brass band contests. As part of the shared gesture of the Whit week celebrations, we were given small amounts of money by extended relatives to buy new shoes and clothes. There are also literary references to the Whit Walks, most notably in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849), which portrays the industrial depression of the early 1800s. Shirley describes the walks as 'a joyous scene and a scene to do good' (Brontë, 1993: 73).

Wythenshawe even chose its own specific day, rather than the traditional Monday or Friday, depending on one's religious association; the Wythenshawe Whit Walks were on a Sunday. There is a sense that the Whit Walks in Wythenshawe were welcomed by the whole community, and according to Canon Jim Burns, it was not only the churches who celebrated the event but 'Sunday and day schools, youth and adult organisations' (Burns, 2013: 129), and these were 'watched by many spectators, and

embraced by the whole community' (Burns, 2013: 129). Burns states, that Wythenshawe 'took up the Whit Walk tradition, brought with its new residents from inner-Manchester' (Burns, 2013: 128). The Whit Walks in Wythenshawe, in other words, took up the mantle and were transported alongside the creation of Wythenshawe during the 1930s. It is believed that the newly-arrived residents 'felt cut off from Manchester with its great Whitsun Festival' (Burns, 2013: 128). In geographical terms Wythenshawe is cut off from the rest of Manchester by the motorways that surround it. Wythenshawe was initially built to be self-contained and have its own social and cultural values.

The Whit Walks and the *Wythy Walks* adopt walking as a way of engaging with both a community, and its spaces. In contrast, however, the *Wythy Walks* do not have religious connotations; they are not a procession or a demonstration in the strictest sense. The *Wythy Walks*, have the freedom to roam around a community, compared to the prescribed routes of the Whit Walks. Indeed, the *Wythy Walks* doctrine is walking and memory itself. Ultimately, the reasons for instigating the *Wythy Walks* is to explore a deeper understanding of a place and a non-linear exploration around its shared associations rather than a celebration of faith. I seek to highlight the memories and connections between people.

There are no specific details as to exactly when the Whit Walks in Wythenshawe (and many other outlying areas of Manchester) ceased; they certainly dwindled, according to Burns, after 1967 with the inauguration of the new Spring Bank Holiday, and again during the 1970s and 1980s with the further decline of religious belief in such

communities. The collective experience of both the *Wythy Walks* and the Whit Walks are connected, in this case, to a particular community. Yet, distinctively, the belief system could not be further apart. Through the *Wythy Walks* the research advocates an opening up of the memory banks through the act of walking both physically and through the mind. According to Canon Jim Burns, another component in relation to the eventual decline in the Whit Walks activity is the 'population movement with re-housing' (Burns, 2013: 185). This contradicts the idea that the new community of Wythenshawe initially transferred its own version of the Whit Walks. The *Wythy Walks* are a way of re-connecting in a relevant way. They have the potential to be passed on, shared and added to. They follow an instinctual rhythm between individuals. The process of the *Wythy Walks* is not to follow past ghosts, but rather to understand and listen to them. Memory never stands still. Walking activities and specifically processions like parades and carnivals, 'still attract crowds of spectators' (Burns, 2013: 186). The *Wythy Walks*, on the other hand, are a contemplative act around a community and its spaces; they are not about viewing a specific spectacle. The focus is on the dialogue between each other and the shared spaces that are walked through.

The practical roaming methodology of the *Wythy Walks* delineate space, an 'opening up' of space by encouraging narrative and presenting personal shared voices and artworks, simultaneously acting as an in depth social and spatial record. The *Wythy Walks*, through the physical and virtual realms, process dialogue by taking someone back to a specific place, enhancing the layers of memory, the 'lateral mapping' of human details. There are specifics that are brought up and highlighted through the

walks which would not arise with, say, a conversation on the phone. The act of walking through this process brings memory back in order, to relevance, simultaneously generating new memories. This is similar to the biro drawings: they act as an aid to re-discovering, reflecting and analysing, a re-articulation of space and narrative around a suburban community. The walks enhance the notion and discourse of an artistic residency, of a past in the present, around a locale.

Despite the fact that the majority of Wythenshawe was built pre-war, it wasn't until during the late 1960s and early 1970s that Wythenshawe had its own centre, its own central identity. Before, however, there were localised shopping parades that were very much embedded in the community. Wythenshawe had risen out of the ashes of post-industrial Manchester, an expansive area of South Manchester, surrounded on one side by the airport, and on the others by motorways, both being fast tracks in and out of there.

"There, either at number sixty four or sixty five, there's a guy there, oh, what's his name, Hilary, Hilary Smith, with a mad shock of blonde hair, and very, very brown eyes, and moles, lots of moles, I don't remember ever speaking to him, but he went to our school, he was in my class. He sticks out because he must have come in halfway through a year or something; there isn't any other reason why he would stick out. I'd never thought about these things till now. I wonder why we always remember their first name and their surnames, my son always calls everyone by their first name and their surname." (Excerpt from *Lisa* 9th November 2013)

CHAPTER TWO

The self-initiated artistic residency concept

2.1 *In Search Of The Shortcuts: A past in the present*

This chapter establishes and further situates the methodological process between walking and narrative, together with how the concept of the *Wythy Walks* and theory is applied, to define the idea of a physical, virtual and psychological, self-initiated artistic residency. The principal hypothesis of the *Wythy Walks* methodology is to situate the past in the present, defining the spatial by inciting narrative through collaborative practice. The shared voice around this community empowers and provides a voice to the co-walker/walkers, both during the walk's experience, and subsequently through the dissemination of the virtual and re-enacted recordings. The name for the research residency is *In Search Of The Shortcuts*. This reflects the methodology of the *Wythy Walks* which are about a shared engagement of spatial realms, defined as narrative layers of the past in the present.

Current artistic residency institutions, focusing on contemporary art practice, Grizedale Arts and Wysing Arts Centre consider themselves as a 'model for a new kind of art institution, one which works beyond the established structures of the art world and aims to rework the idea of culture against the backdrop of emerging issues' (Grizedale Arts, 2015) Grizedale Arts in particular provides a valuable focal point for *In Search Of The Shortcuts* in that it directly engages with relationships and

issues of a communities 'backdrop'. However, this research's notion of a self-initiated residency, although parallel with Grizedale Art's ideologies, differs in that it is not tied to an institution; it is free from any particular establishment, this research residency is situated beyond the 'structures' of the institution, clear of any stringent time restrictions or hierarchy.

The notion of creating an ongoing, imaginative, self-initiated artistic residency in this way, encouraging 'stream of consciousness', collective memory associated with a specific place and time, simultaneously supports, grounds and opens up layers of time and narrative that co-exist in different spaces. *In Search Of The Shortcuts* is a multi-sensory, affective residency, for connecting the fragile, unpredictable layers and lines of human narrative. This includes a psychological discourse and supports the concept that a residency can be taken with us wherever we go, a residency of 'the mind', by engaging with layers of narrative, a past in the present (time and space).

Massey provides a useful perspective on space (and time), for re-imagining space as a practice for understanding our attitudes to each other. That space is a 'product of (human) time' (Massey, 2005: 118). More importantly, in relation to the residency concept, space is more meticulously defined by Massey as the consequences of 'social relations' (Massey, 2005: 118). We, as a public, constantly alter space by participating in it, we are 'part of the constant process of the making and breaking of links' (Massey, 2005: 118). In other words, if we are actively moving through space we are altering it in some way. Massey's claim is applied in and supports the thesis

and methodological concept of the *Wythy Walks*, by re-connecting and generating narratives of a past into the present, simultaneously emphasising social relations through a direct engagement with spatial realms. We take back space and consequently change the perspective and future of it. Space and time is of the essence; and through the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* residency, they fold into one another, as do both the random chance encounters and the prescribed spaces that are walked through; they too fold inwards and outwards. *In Search Of The Shortcuts* advocates spaces of social relations, and through the collaborative, symbiotic practice of walking (and clicking) through spaces, we directly talk about and through them.

The motivation for naming the practical project *In Search Of The Shortcuts* – developed and researched alongside the thesis, and materialised and presented as an interactive and multi-sensory website – is related directly to the process of generating narrative ‘shortcuts’ between the realms of past and present. This is mirrored in the ‘shortcuts’ created by individual and collective movement through un-prescribed territory, defying the functional planners of Wythenshawe’s spaces. Similarly, the ‘shortcut’ is correlated to a chapter in Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts’ book *Edgelands* (2011), in that we ‘unconsciously defy prescriptive space and follow desire paths’ (Farley/Symmons Roberts, 2011: 23), described as ‘lines of footfall worn into the ground, tracks of use’ (Farley/Symmons Roberts, 2011: 23).

The 'desire paths' are measured and put on public display through the live navigable process of exploring the correspondingly named *In Search Of The Shortcuts* website. The person experiencing the website traverses around an embedded outline version of *Google Maps*. The visual (spatial) and spoken experiences of the *Wythy Walks*, through the online virtual recordings and re-enacted films, are emphasised and aligned through the website alongside biro drawings, and layers of non-linear narrative. The 'desire lines' are mapped out in relation to the specific locations in Wythenshawe and beyond. Additional ongoing projects, including *Remember Your Garden?* which I initiated in 2012 prior to the research – a continuing online project that openly exchanges narratives around childhood gardens and intimate spaces – and the curated exhibition *Unstable Ground*, are also located through the website.

Perhaps it was inevitable, that the aftermath of the world-wide-recession of the early 1980s, would impact on a large estate like Wythenshawe. During the period in question, Wythenshawe experienced a collapse of spatial and housing standards which coincided with the deindustrialization of Manchester's manufacturing sector, particularly within Trafford Park, where many Wythenshawe residents worked.

"The woods down there, we had lots of fun in those woods, my second cousins lived down there. At the same time though I always thought it was very, very frightening, very scary, but because I didn't go there often enough apart from when we saw our second cousins, I didn't know where anywhere was and I probably still have a fear of woods now because you would convince yourself that you shouldn't go in there, people telling your stories, of course there is always a pervert in the woods, always an old man, an alcy and bit scary and so it would absolutely terrify me just from what people had told me." (Excerpt from

Lisa 9th November 2013)

2.2 Past concepts of artistic residency

The familiar notion of an artist-in-residence is one of a place for reflection, and takes the artist out of their usual daily confines, attaching them to an art institution, a prison, or an isolated studio in a beautiful part of southern Spain, for example. We confront and challenge the 'daily confines' of a community head-on, and furthermore *In Search Of The Shortcuts* is self-initiated; it is not bound to an institution; it proposes an interchangeable, altruistic philosophy. *In Search Of The Shortcuts* negates institutionalisation: this research's notion of a shared narrative experience equates itself with Marxian 'Labor Theory of Value' (LTV)¹⁸, that the focus is on the shared hours spent together during our 'exchange' of dialogue.

In Search Of The Shortcuts forges a residency without walls. In this particular community, it seeks to solicit a deeper understanding of the relationship to its spaces, 'taking back space' for the co-walkers, stressing the importance of participative practice as a confident 'opening-up' and interchange of narrative. The writer Ian McEwan, in a recent interview, stated that 'Imagination has a specific quality tied to landscape and locale, to community, to neighborhoods' (McEwan, 2012). McEwan's statement confirms the relevance of creativity and the qualities associated with engaging with place, which I encourage further through the residency concept, and the walks. The shared 'imaginative' interchange of the

¹⁸ Labor Theory of Value (LTV) is an economic theory that stresses the importance that the value of goods or service is dependent upon the labor used in its production. According to the American economist David Prychitko 'The theory's basic claim is simple: the value of a commodity can be objectively measured by the average number of labor hours required to produce that commodity' (Prychitko, D 2008).

roaming, drawn-out conversations around Wythenshawe's spaces, are 'given a voice' through the physical and virtual realms.

The common notion of a residency can be equated with the role of the travel writer, which dates as far back as Pausanias' description of Greece in the 2nd century. This is based on first-hand observation and experience, so that others, the masses and less fortunate, could experience a place through the mind of the writer. *In Search Of The Shortcuts*, however, aligns itself more closely with writers engaged in the narrative mode of 'stream of consciousness', following the flow of thoughts and feelings which pass through the mind. An important example in relation to both walking, in metaphorical terms and this approach of writing is Virginia Woolf's 1930 book *Street Haunting*. Through a collage of memory, allowing a stream of consciousness, *Street Haunting* emphasises the importance of the journey, the process in the moment and not the end point. *In Search Of The Shortcuts* is a practical process that presents and asserts the importance of the self in relation to a place with the added layer of shared, live storytelling.

There are other examples of travel writers who immerse themselves into a locality for an extended period, to gain a sense of place: another parallel with the artist-in-residence. A contemporary example of the travel writer, engaged in a places community, is the English poet Alice Oswald, whose poem *Dart* (2002) was conceived through an immersive research approach by spending three years recording conversations with people and communities who lived and worked on the river Dart in Devon. *Dart* was also inspired by Homer's *Odyssey*, the main philosopher of which

was the subject of travel. There are examples of works of fiction which mix factual travel writing, therefore foregrounding an experience of place, alongside creating social and political narrative. Significant examples are W.G. Sebald's *Rings of Saturn* (1998), which blends and intersperses a physical walk with fictional walks of and through the mind; Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), which has its origin in an actual voyage made by Conrad up the River Congo; George Orwell's *Coming Up For Air* (1939), a labyrinthine journey through the places of his childhood, where incidents and characters associated in and around this past local are interweaved and jolted with present-day reflections, with the incoming war just around the corner; and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), based on Kerouac's anecdotal and observational narratives associated with actual road trips across America. The merging of past and present through the anecdotal narratives, as we move across and through Wythenshawe's environments, differs from the aforementioned writers, in that the focus of the storytelling process is 'within' the act of walking in the location and how this place has an influence on the narrative tones that are spoken.

The interplay between the physical and mental terrains is at the core of *In Search Of The Shortcuts*. While set around and within Wythenshawe, the experiences are taken with me wherever I go. I return to this place in an attempt to understand and break down the psychological barriers that are built up, and also, in some cases, physically surround pockets of the Wythenshawe estate that threatens to undermine the social and cultural map. The self-initiated residency heightens what Massey calls 'spaces of social relations' (Massey, 2002: 462), deeply mapped out through the *Wythy Walks* methodological realms. The refreshing, insightful, yet open, non-linear perspective

and influence that the act of walking brings to a residency, and the written methodology, is paramount to *In Search Of The Shortcuts*.

W.G. Sebald proclaims: 'What would we be without memory?' (Sebald, 1998: 255); and through reflecting on this proclamation, he suggests we would 'not be capable of ordering even the simplest thoughts, the most sensitive heart would lose the ability to show affection, our existence would be a mere never-ending chain of meaningless moments, and there would not be the faintest trace of a past' (Sebald, 1998: 255). We actively engage with a suburban environment, Wythenshawe, the place of my birth, from the perspective of, and giving a voice to unheard and unnoticed collaborators who have lived, as well as still live there. *In Search Of The Shortcuts* emphasises the importance of reflecting on our shared experiences, and therefore our understanding of the relationship with this place on a lateral level. The act of walking and conversation through the *Wythy Walks* has demonstrated how this process opens up the dialogue, creating new routes and connections around a place. Defining a concept of a collaborative residency, in this way, acts as a way of mutually re-connecting with a place, encouraging hidden narrative, collective memory associated with a specific place and time. Stimulated and simulated by the residency methodologies, layers of memory are excavated and coexist, drawing out the relationship between, and highlighting the importance of walking and memory associated with this community.

Travel writers and poets, religious and secular pilgrims, searching for divinity or life paths, are examples of other individuals who take themselves to often new and

alternative places with the intention of enhancing knowledge and improving themselves as well as others lives. The sharing of research and knowledge, related to my residency position, is also at the core of Travel Writing. In the mid-15th century, Gilles Le Bouvier, in his *Livre de la description des pays*, described his impulse for travel writing: 'Because many people of diverse nations and countries delight and take pleasure, as I have done in times past, in seeing the world and things therein' (Le Bouvier, 2008: 1). The similarities stop there, however, as Le Bouvier exclaims that the reasons for pursuing these explorations are 'because many wish to know without going there' (Le Bouvier, 2008: 1).

The 1980s and 1990s saw steady further decline with high unemployment, decaying infrastructure, crime (and the fear of crime) and drug abuse problems. In 1982 the UK's unemployment hit 12.5%, northern England exceeded 15%, unemployment in Wythenshawe, was nearer 30%.

“Remember that boiler room? I say to Keith. Yeah the boiler room that we hung out in down in the basement, it was all flooded; we used to say it was Freddy Krueger's boiler room. Do you remember when we got caught in that fire? Someone had set fire to all the polystyrene in the hall, we were all down in that den under the stage and somebody put something on top of the trapdoor, so we couldn't get out, maybe they didn't realise, I reckon they did and ran. Some people just don't think, I think it was Franny who came and rescued us.” (Excerpt from *Keith and Colin* 24th March 2013)

2.3 Foundations of the self-initiated artistic residency

The foundations for the self-initiated *In Search Of The Shortcuts* residency were partially laid in April 2005, when pupils from a school in Sunderland interviewed and selected me as their artist-in-residence. It was a year-long practice-led, educationally explorative and socially-engaged residency, in partnership with Baltic, Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead, and co-funded and organised by the North East regions Creative Partnerships: a now defunct national organisation that was dedicated to the symbiotic relationship between artist and education institutions.¹⁹

This structured residency, which I named *Our Place*²⁰, was primarily focused on developing and researching my practice and collaborative projects in relation to the pupils' (and teachers') activity, curriculum and their relationship to the school environments. From the outset, and throughout the *Our Place* project, I not only focused on giving the children I worked with their own creative opinion and influence, but also encouraged a shared voice and dialogue as an essential part of the process. The curator and academic Derek Horton states, in relation to art education in Britain, that we still see arts role as 'preparing students to work with things and

¹⁹ According to Judy Thomas, Baltic's gallery educator and coordinator at the time, my presence 'provided new and unique visual, tactile and sensory experiences' (Thomas in Horn, 2006). This approach demonstrated and facilitated new insight, with the emphasis on active, corporeal 'experience'. From my perspective, I was open to ideas around broadening the notion of what an artist-in-residence could achieve and what could be gained from the collaborative process within the school locale.

²⁰ One of the main aims of the *Our Place* project was 'a mission to investigate new ways of learning and teaching to support the raising of attainment across the curriculum' (Horn, 2006). The artistic proposal for the *Our Place* residency mirrored Horn's viewpoint, and was focused on bridging ideas between the art/education institutions and the artist, impacting on and working within the context of a school. In other words, I was not breaking down the institutional walls of the school and gallery, but working with it.

materials rather than with people' (Horton, 2008). Furthermore, Horton states that if this emphasis occurs then 'a whole new field of possibilities open up' (Horton, 2008). The projects and materials I applied throughout the twelve-month Sunderland residency project were both physical and intangible, related to the social 'inter-relational' activity of the school spaces. Both the conversational tones and a profound understanding and exploration of materials were central to the *Our Place* residency.

Most importantly to the *Our Place* project and the concept of *In Search Of The Shortcuts*, Horton emphasises, in relation to municipal art, that we should reject the use of public space 'in favour of developing strategies through which to intervene in the private experience of the public' (Horton, 2008). This is central to this research's concept of an artistic residency, and directly parallels the collaborative experience of the *Wythy Walks*: a strategy for directly emphasising, highlighting and engaging with relational 'experiences' and qualities with and within a community. Being resident full-time in a primary school²¹ environment for the first time since my own childhood was highly evocative, heightened by my own narratives associated with the familiar smells, sights and sounds that were brought back into light.

²¹ My presence in the school was very much felt, and the procedure of the children being actively involved in the process of choosing their artist-in-residence was integral to its development and impact. This was exemplified by giving the children the freedom to take ownership of this project right from the start, as the children helped look through all proposals as well as interview, and choose their residency artist. The decision to integrate the children at the school into the process from the beginning had an incredible impact upon the residency, as through this process I became embedded in the school activities and system.

The slippage between the past and present experience of the school, the recalling of memory through the walks (as with the biro drawings), and reflecting on experience of the residency, as both a physical and a psychologically familiar encounter, parallels with Freud's notion of the uncanny; and also revisiting a primary school highlighted his theories explored in and around childhood and concealing memories. The uncanny, in Freud's view, is the familiar becoming alien; this arises only when 'old, discarded beliefs' contrast with our up-to-date sense within a 'realist narrative' (Freud, 2006: 322). The uncanny, in other words, is a jarring of our reality, a familiar place or moment is intercut, causing a jolting of what we normally see or experience. The familiar memory and the jarring of our reality that Freud references is further deepened with the claim that we may not 'have any memories at all from our childhood: memories relating to our childhood may be all that we possess' (Freud, 2006: 322).

Memory of childhood, through the experience of being back at a primary school, was constantly being stirred during my time at Broadway Juniors: not only as a constant reminder, but the experience acted as an excavator of hidden, repressed memory. By being back at the school, this led to an outpouring of practice, from biro drawings to new explorations of memory processes through the experimental narrative film. The notion of the return (as referenced in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), where Freud believed that 'What is forgotten is not extinguished but only 'repressed'; its memory-traces are present in all their freshness' (Freud, 2010: 94)), was being exercised. As an artist who unearths layers of memory of place, I was aware of the fact that, coming back into such a loaded, personal environment had a psychological effect.

Consequently, returning to a formative, educational setting had a deep-rooted impact on the practice, through the recall of memories which were being ignited.

Through setting up and running the artist-in-residence with Baltic and Creative Partnerships, the school also sought to develop pupils' language, literacy and communication skills, as well as developing staff knowledge of the visual arts. Chris Horn, a Year 5 teacher who I worked very closely with over the twelve month project, was responsible for coordinating the residency. He said: 'Someone like Simon breaks the mould. He is very personable with the children but his art challenges them to use language and develop ideas' (Horn, 2006). Overall, the residency was a two-way process, resulting in complete engagement and maximum learning.

The relationship between art, language and the encouragement of narrative was explored further through two projects *Text-Memory-Place* and *I am a Critic* was instigated to place the children within the role of an Art Critic through direct engagement with art.²² I created an open ended 'question kit' for the children and for the school that could be used with any chosen artwork, which, in turn, initiated and developed individual answers from the children. This gave confidence to pupils through talking openly and subjectively about contemporary art. *I am a Critic* lay down the fundamental foundations for the remainder of the project period, which constantly explored and developed their relationship with art and their use of language in reference to it. Through the *I am a Critic* project, the children gained

²² The concept of *Text-Memory-Place* was to present and lay bare the children's uses of literacy. The project explored the perception of the school building by the children, through mapping out their personal, intimate experiences through collecting single words related to specific incidents in relationship to the school environments.

confidence and were helped to feel at ease through the development of their own, unique answers to the questions. Examples of the questions were: How has the work been made? What techniques have been used? Do the materials used tell you anything about the work? Does the title of the work tell you anything about the work? Is the presentation of the work important?

The placing of an artist-in-residence within two institutions – a school dedicated to learning and discovering and a public gallery, which, along with Creative Partnerships, helped support, divulge and stage fundamental elements of the project – was an ideal scenario. This is a perfect model because it supports, encourages and presents ideas, creativity and learning between all involved. More importantly, though, according to the gallerist Danielle Arnaud, who supported another of my residency projects, was ‘an artist whose practice feeds from collaboration, a school whose openness to new experience welcomes the intruder’ (Arnaud, 2007: 3). As Arnaud suggests, the more accessible and engaging, not to say challenging, the artist’s practice is, the further a residency and its ideas can be explored throughout the partnership and beyond.

In November 2006, I embarked on a four-month residency at the Museum of Garden History in Lambeth, London, alongside working with a nearby primary school Walnut Tree Walk. The work and ideas developed from being at the museum influenced the concepts of the workshops with the children, both within the school and within the museum setting. Touching on collective inner city childhood memory, I worked with a class exploring drawings of their favourite places in and around the school and its

surroundings.²³ The playful and performative, insightful and layered qualities of drawing that I pursue, are revealed through the collaborative process of working with the children. I am collaborating through and with my process. Alongside acquiring new skills and the confidence to produce drawings and text, is the insight and self-assurance they gain from presenting their work through working closely with an artist. The memory narratives written by the children, that accompanied their drawings were then transferred and plotted onto a digital version of the drawings, highlighting the fragilities of the drawn spaces. The individual memory designs were then shrunk and printed and placed into snow-globes, and collectively presented at the museum, giving the children a voice through drawn worlds: layers of visual, anecdotal, communicated experience put on public display, re-interpreted and gazed upon by an almost entirely adult visiting public.

The approach, in this instance, was to allow and encourage the children's perspective on what they like about the intimate spaces, and not how adults think they should see it. To quote the Museum of Garden History's director Christopher Woodward in relation to the children's point of view, the 'absence of an aesthetic sense is a kind of innocence' (Woodward in Arnaud, 2007: 11). An adult, for example, might say that the high security fence around the school is ugly, in aesthetic terms; whereas the children, on the other hand, clearly felt intimately attached to the fence and saw it as

²³ I was interested in developing the children's drawing through the relationship that they had with their daily, direct environment through the act and interpretation of pencil rubbings that were gathered from found surfaces and objects: a drawing excavation and exploration of surface and space. By physically exploring and making rubbings, using the architectural features of the buildings' interiors and exteriors, opened up a deeper understanding of the qualities of the drawn marks. The children then reflected and considered the importance of drawing and place, both individually and collectively, whilst cutting and pasting their excavated rubbings, simultaneously recording their memories and impressions of their relationship with the school.

something to climb, on which to make a noise by running a stick along it. The fence here illustrates the fact that the innocent children, who live and experience the fence on a daily basis, see something not as ugly and functional, but actually appreciate its alternative worth. I believe much was gained from this project, certainly in terms of listening to and taking notice of the fresh and honest viewpoint of the children.

The understanding, impact and development of practice and ideas partly developed from the engagement with the children. The experiences with the children in the spaces around the school playground, for example, encouraged and impacted on my own artistic point of view by giving an authentic voice to whoever I collaborated with and encouraged. Throughout the practice, I also attempt to communicate with the viewer by exploring the importance of the narratives, through the 'concise and particular descriptions that infect the listener's own memory' (Le Feuvre in Arnaud, 2007: 16). The stripped down, anecdotal qualities of the language, is itself a measurement of how memory has manipulated and enhanced the details (and lack of details), of what is remembered and forgotten.

The mapping of everyday, collective memory, human details, hidden and shared narrative associated with a particular place, is expanded and detailed through the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* self-initiated residency. The notion of creating a physical, virtual and psychological residency, around a specific community (Wythenshawe), allows me to position and analyse both the theory and practical methodology. The concept of creating a residency in this way, crossing timespans, encouraging non-linear narrative, human details, layers of memory, narratives between the realms of

fact of fiction, draws out the relationship between, and highlights the importance of walking and memory associated with this community. Through the lateral-mapping methodology of the *Wythy Walks*, the foundation for the residency-without-walls was laid. In *A Berlin Childhood around 1900* (2006), Walter Benjamin engages with a past to 'map-out' a fading Berlin he once knew.

Through fragmentary autobiographical text, sequences of recollections are reflected upon, emphasising the current, impending and prevalent threat of social cleansing; likewise *In Search Of The Shortcuts* explored a shared physical and emotional terrain of Wythenshawe. Benjamin also had a particular vantage point: Berlin was the place that was close to his heart yet could only be visited through memory. *In Search Of The Shortcuts* presents and blends both realms of the intangible and concrete. Benjamin's book is a literary version of my self-initiated residency; it connects to a specific period of childhood, and memory becomes a deep reflection on the period in question, whilst simultaneously heightening the spaces that are walked around. 'In Search Of The Shortcuts', however, is potentially a living and breathing incarnation of *A Berlin Childhood 1900*, through the various methodologies employed, in particular the physical and psychological *Wythy Walks* methodology.

In contrast to *Our Place* and *In Search Of The Shortcuts*, the early concept of a residency, which can be traced back to the beginning of the last century, was seen as a new kind of patronage by art-loving benefactors. The emphasis here was on supporting, as opposed to embedding the role of an artist and their practice. According to the art lawyer and advisor, Henry Lydiate, writing for *Art Monthly*,

'Artists are usually required to produce a work or body of works, to be exhibited on an ongoing basis throughout the residency' (Lydiate, 2009: 44). The concept of the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* residency, engaging a past in the present, alongside Horton's claim, contrasts to Lydiate's statement, however: the residency activity itself, in the case of *In Search Of The Shortcuts* which 'intervenes' with people's private narratives, forms a central part of the work. Both process and fabrication, and the propagation of practice, are interconnected. It is clear though that the notion of an artists' residency goes much further back; according to Lydiate, 'residencies were practised long before the development of the art market' (Lydiate, 2009: 45); and, during the artistic Renaissance, artist's 'worked at the patron's specified location and often took up residence there' (Lydiate, 2009: 45). This again differs from my own idea and experience and equates to the common notion of a residency, focusing on the production of works for the patron.

I had never spoken to my mum in so much detail, over so much time, during our mammoth four hour walk. The roving, wandering nature of the Wythy Walks unravelled and revealed our narratives around our relationship with this place; the walks acted as a dialogic, consensual process, the sharing and toing and froing of narrative associated in and around Wythenshawe.

“I was born at number 15, at number 1 was Mrs Jones’ sister, at number 3 was Steve and his wife, at number 5 was the Jones, at number 7 was the chemist, Mr Reynolds, my best friend lived at number 9 and her mum still lives there, Mr and Mrs Massey and their daughters Doreen and Hilary lived at number 11, the Murrays’ lived at 13, then the Coates’ and then the Hassel’s and then other people came after that at 13, then my mum and dad and me and my sister, then the MacLauchlan’s and there was loads of them, then the Hills’ then the Billington’s, then I don’t remember who was after that, at 23 lived another one of my best friends who I see now and again Angela Clarke, when she grew up she moved to Newcastle and now she lives back in Manchester.”

(Excerpt from Patricia 10th September 2014)

2.4 Reflecting on alternative realms

Human beings, historically speaking, have for thousands of years walked into alternative realms, reflecting on unknown territories, either for spiritual, personal or professional reasons. There are clear parallels between pilgrimage, which more often than not includes some kind of walk into the unknown, be it for worldly travel or religious purposes, and the residency. The pilgrim routes, the scars of these journeys and the early, popular, still well-trodden notion of an artist-in-residence are for bettering and understanding oneself, one's practice in the world, and for making a moral progress in life. Although less linked to research and putting things down on paper, as with the travel writer, the pilgrim is connected to a belief: a coming together to a particular and often repeatedly visited sight, such as Mecca or to a shrine.

Solitude and time for reflection are other common traits of many artistic residencies; and the hermit is another example of an individual who might subject themselves to unknown circumstances, usually in seclusion or at least taking a lesser part in society. Solitude is often seen as taking refuge, a negative reason for seeking sanctuary, because one has been betrayed or disappointed. The escaping, disgruntled lonely figure is of course the clichéd, overly-romanticised image of the artist: a misrepresentation which suggests the artist lacks reflection or insightfulness. An example of the importance of reflection, and specifically how we engage with notions of silence, is explored by Sara Maitland. In her seminal book *A Book of Silence* (2009), Maitland explores how notions of silence in relation to the romantic poets, is

often from the perspective of strengthening one's position and perspective on society.

Similarly, in 2009, Manchester Museum had its own 'hermit in residence'. The artist Ansuman Biswas was chosen from a residency open call, to live in the museum's Victorian Gothic tower for forty days and forty nights, alone, except for a computer modem connecting the artist to the virtual world. However, the focus of the residency, for Biswas, was 'developing a dialogue with the public, drawing attention to certain objects, and asking why we care about them – or if we care about them. As Joni Mitchell said, you don't know what you've got till it's gone. I'm not escaping anything in the world in this solitude. The worst bit of the world is yourself, and you never get away from that' (*The Guardian*, 2009). The role of the hermit character for Biswas is one of extreme, shared, self-reflection; and one insight was that, even in solitude, you cannot escape the world; you are forced to confront and embrace it.

William Wordsworth is perhaps the definitive explorer of walking and writing in relation to a locale. However, Wordsworth's deep-mapping affair with his place, leading into the recesses of the country, was generally much more local; his immediate Lake District home was his artistic residency. A sense of place and a relationship with it was then communicated and shared with the outside world, represented through his poetry, which paralleled and often eclipsed the physical place and spaces depicted. The lasting influence of the Romantic poets, and Wordsworth in particular, ultimately presented 'a journey into the unknown that could end up allowing us to discover who we are' (Macfarlane, 2013: 53). Walking

into a place, for Wordsworth, was both physically and philosophically intertwined, 'of texture midway between life and books' (Wordsworth, 1994: 657). The relationship between the factually written and narrated realms, from the random and unplanned traces of a *Wythy Walks*, are detailed and presented through the parallel text, creating spatial narrative paths of text.

Post-Renaissance, and coinciding with the Enlightenment and the Romantic movement during the first half of the nineteenth centuries, the support by patrons through commissions were substantially reduced, and artists in the main became authors of self-generated works for sale. During the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the emergence of artists' residential colonies arose. One example in Europe was Worpswede, near Bremen in Germany, which was established in 1889 as an artists' colony, and currently has approximately one hundred and thirty artists and craftsmen and women living there permanently.

Another example is Dartington in England (1925), which was created as a centre for creativity that lured artists, architects, writers, philosophers and musicians from all over the world. Likewise, in the US, the Woodstock area of New York State, known as the Byrdcliffe Art Colony (1903), is one of the nation's oldest Arts and Crafts colonies. It brought the first artists to Woodstock and established Woodstock's first painting schools, changing the cultural landscape of the town of Woodstock. These residency centres helped signpost the way to the popularity and current understanding of the artistic placement, and helped pave the way for the much more socially- inclusive art residency.

The walk I embarked upon with Lisa, who I had not seen since I was eighteen, described so many coincidences that our six-hour walk could have gone on forever. Lisa described her expectation of the walk though as “long and awkward and silent, as I did not think that I would remember any of the day-to-day things. I was negatively nervous and worried.” (Lisa, pers. comm: 2015)

However, after speaking to Lisa and reflecting on our *Wythy Walk* twelve months later, she described our walk as “A feeling of warmth, of belonging to something, very joyful emotional connections to the ‘where’ of things, a deluge of memories, things that I have not thought about since I left when I was eleven. I felt giddy and exuberant, light, in a way that I rarely am, and full of possibilities as if I were that age again.” (Lisa, pers. comm: 2015)

“It was never like that, used to have a really, really thick hedge, and always felt that you had to go down hundreds and hundreds of steps. My Nan’s room was so pungent; as soon as you opened the front door the stench would hit you. Well, let me just have a think, something happened in there but I can’t remember what it was. I really can’t remember but it seems familiar. I’m sure you didn’t used to be able to drive to the bottom of it. What’s happened? I think it used to be grassed. My memory of it is not gone deep which must mean it wasn’t very important. Poundswick park, oh my word.” (Excerpt from *Lisa* 9th

November 201

2.5 Exploring the contemporary notion of an artist-in-residence

The contemporary conception of an artist-in-residence, which spread rapidly worldwide from and during the 1960s onwards, came out of the development of further residency schemes where artists were engaged to work in and with public institutions that included schools, hospitals, prisons, places of religious worship, universities, galleries and museums. Though this was and still is not always residentially, producing artworks stimulated by or related to the institution was required. To a degree, this propelled and changed the residency ideology: a philosophical shift from artist as observer or mirror of a place, to one becoming more integrated, beneficial to, or even creating a community.

Although there are no specific standard or model approaches to artists' residencies, increasingly there are site-specific requirements: an engagement with place and/or a community is mandatory. This is due in some part to the obligations and conditions set out by the host, which might wish to build on an archive or public collection where the artist leaves an original work of art. This then becomes positive and valuable for all involved, as the artist not only has a hopefully positive and deep experience, but also leaves a legacy that the host institution can present and show. A residency at a specific place or space for a defined period of time, which can range from a couple of days to a week or even a year or two, sometimes only requires attendance, not residence. The nature and extent of accommodation and facilities also vary. But artists are usually required to produce a work or body of works; to be exhibited on an ongoing basis throughout the residency, or as an exposition towards

the end of the project; and to share this with a public and/or a peer group, giving talks about their work, ideas and working methodologies or presenting a performance.

In Search Of The Shortcuts, along with my reciprocal perspective and relationship with other projects, including the *Our Place* residency, equates more closely with Grizedale Arts description: that artists' and 'art should have effect within the local or wider socio-cultural ecology, and an emphasis on the civic responsibility of artist and organisation, using creative processes to improve the conditions of life' (Grizedale Arts, 2015). This was in opposition to the artist working in isolation due to an unfamiliar location, a getaway. Grizedale Arts has a programme that 'actively engages with the complexities of the rural situation' (Grizedale Arts, 2015): in my case a suburban one, on the edges of the city limits.

The blending role of the artist and of the artworks produced has expanded considerably since the last century, and again since the rise of conceptualism in 1970s Western art. From this inception, active and socially engaged practice has become a terminology commonly accepted in artist-in-residence programmes. How this is understood, incorporated and shared by the artist is rooted in their ideas and practice; and this might be one aspect of a practice that is explored by the artist with a chosen public during a residency. *In Search Of The Shortcuts* demonstrates a multi-sensory experience, of a multiplicity of times and spaces. This includes a psychological discourse and that an artistic residency can be taken with us wherever we go - a residency of 'the mind' – a past in the present – an affective experience.

This research's notion of a self-initiated residency is related to the familiar notion of the artistic residency, in that it advocates 'meaningful and multi-layered exchange', but develops the concept further by interrogating and specifically taking up residence in my past, in the present.

Grizedale Arts, set in the southern edges of the Lake District near Conistone Water, and other arts centers like it, are actively supporting and promoting artists who are pursuing the boundaries and unite artist and public. The artist Emma Smith explores a socially engaged practice and also completed a residency at Grizedale Arts during their 2010–2011 residency programme. For Grizedale Arts, she 'took the holiday haven as her starting point and scrutinised the tourism industry and looked at the ownership and control of housing in the village. She also produced a notice board that served as a question-and-answer knowledge exchange point for tourists' (Grizedale Arts, 2015).

Smith's practice offers a contemporary perspective as both research and production based and responds to site-specific issues, exploring the inter-relation between people and place. Situated in the 'every-day' and similar to my own notion of a residency, Smith's work 'investigates historic behaviours in relation to the present, collapsing notions of time in exploring transitory relations to place and practices of being' (Grizedale Arts, 2015). Her time during the residency was a way of 'Excavating embedded knowledge, exploring the psychology of space and considering relational dynamics her work is particularly focussed on social and collective action' (Grizedale Arts, 2015). This asserts and situates the role of the artist, a clear emphasis on direct,

collaborative and active engagement with a public. Clearly, Smith's practice, and Grizedale Arts' ethos go hand-in-hand, both striving towards a direct, open and investigative relationship and dialogue with a public, trading and listening to a community and striving to make a difference within it. Smith confronts social systems while systematically working within them. It is clear that, despite our socially-networked times, there is still a need for direct and amicable measures, working with people and place rather than against it.

Since 2004, Wysing Arts Centre, set in the small rural village of Bourn, South Cambridgeshire, has developed and implemented a series of artist residencies and retreats in order to support artists, quite often in relation to the rural setting. From my own five-year experience of being a studio artist with over twenty other permanent artists at Wysing, I understood how the rural site 'develops new ways to support artists and enables art and ideas to engage a wide range of people in unexpected ways' (Wysing Arts Centre, 2015). The 'unexpected ways' (Wysing Arts Centre, 2015) are partly due to the rural isolation that Wysing embraces, compared to the majority of the residency artists' urban and suburban dwellings, and how this remoteness enables a different kind of concentration and reflection.

The focused time spent with my practice, as well as with other like-minded individuals while at Wysing, contrasted with the urban and suburban terrain of my autobiographical subject matter of Wythenshawe, yet this experience allowed me to see clearer the psychological and emotional dialogue I had with it. This was similar to the reverie and nostalgia I felt after leaving Manchester for the first time to study in

London, in 1999. I was gripped, enticed by the memories. In the rural setting I was as far away from suburban Wythenshawe, South Manchester, as I could possibly be, yet still thinking a lot about the heightened memories associated with it. The excitement and contrast between being in a new place, and the need to get the stream of consciousness down on paper, allowed me to have a deeper and more meaningful viewpoint. From having a perceived distance from the place I grew up, I was able to consider my time at Wysing as very much a residency of the mind.

The programme of residences at Wysing Arts Centre are grouped into environmental themes, of which emerge from 'ongoing artistic enquiry focusing on Wysing's position at the geographic margins of two major cities, Cambridge and London, and its origins as a space for artistic experimentation and innovation' (Wysing Arts Centre, 2015). Wysing has artists visiting from all over the world, and its network, impact, and debate, is far reaching; yet its emphasis is much more of a local one in terms of its direct focus. An example of this explicit and unrestricted emphasis is a recent series of open call retreats Wysing supported. The retreats addressed the question: How do we want to live together? According to Wysing, the title was taken from the 'manifesto for the *May Day Rooms*²⁴ – a meeting place and supportive infrastructure for radical histories and communities' (Wysing Arts Centre, 2015). Wysing encouraged contributions from artists to 'engage in collective thinking and activities, to examine present models of living across different fields. In turn, the

²⁴ The May Day Rooms are defined as a safe house for vulnerable archives and historical material linked to social movements, experimental culture, and marginalised figures, will initiate discussion on current social movements and alternative communities in regards to collaborative ways of living.

retreat will offer an opportunity to speculate on possible futures, whilst situating this discourse within artistic practice' (Wysing Arts Centre, 2015).

In Search Of The Shortcuts is set both within a community, through the *Wythy Walks*, but also, through the process of memory: a lateral, collaborative and collective reflection of it. In similar, direct ways, both Grizedale Arts and Wysing Arts Centre's philosophies are clearly set out to create a place of meeting: a kind of think tank for debate and change, for and within communities. This often happens with the right kind of open minded artists, or groups of artists to spearhead it. Simultaneously, the artists themselves are developing and making new work to present at the public gallery spaces at both Grizedale Arts and Wysing Arts Centre, and potentially evolving those ideas further with their future artistic developments.

How the individual artists' take these ideas further and implement them is varied, and materialises in different ways within their practice, ideas and philosophy. In fact, Wysing states that: 'Rather than providing an answer to this question, we welcome a range of responses and broad interpretations, from the personal to the speculative. These sessions can take one or a number of formats: talks, performances, participatory workshops, screenings, reading groups, making sessions etc' (Wysing Arts Centre, 2015). This openness of interpretation and outcome encourages the exploratory dialogue and therefore a deeper understanding around a subject's arena and ideas. At the core of Wysing's programme is the attempt to address social, environmental and metaphysical change around a variety of subjects. The social, environmental and metaphysical, through personal exchange, is the focus of my non-

linear, open ended, physical and virtual, conversational exploration. Likewise, the excavation, lateral mapping of a place, within and around a particular community, is at the core of this research residency, traversing layers of time.

Through the physical and virtual realms of the *Wythy Walks*, the practical, method-led research engages the past in the present and establishes a self-initiated artist-in-residence, exploring layers of autobiographical memory and the deep-mapping of human narrative and spaces through the re-exploration of a specific site: Wythenshawe, South Manchester around the 1980s. The *Wythy Walks* methodology has emphasised the relationship between walking and memory: the human details and narratives surrounding a specific place and its spaces. Through the unravelling rhythms of deviating, non-linear narrative, *In Search Of The Shortcuts* presents both pavement and the cracks in-between. It shows the interrelation of space and time through the living pulses of walking and talking, a relational, shared perspective of a place. The shared collaborative act of the walks goes beyond that of a participatory role and opens up meaningful and powerful dialogue around a particular place. History becomes a productive process through the process of walking through narrative.

As this chapter outlines, my argument for creating and describing the practical work as a self-initiated residency is a contextual, psychological, historical and practical one. This has been achieved by contextualising my own experiences and concepts of an artist taking up residence, alongside detailing where the notion of an artistic residency came from, paralleling the spiritual and romantic pilgrimage with that of its

early beginnings. Outlining the importance of reflecting on, and situating past and current concepts and notions of a residency, as we understand it today, has helped show and locate the idea of what the self-initiated artist-in-residence for this research entails and its contemporary relevance and impact. The philosophical assertions of other UK-based residency centres, such as Wysing Arts Centre and Grizedale Arts, whose primary focus is a 'philosophy that emphasises the use value of art, and promotes the functions of art and artists in practical and effective roles, as a central tenet of wider culture and society' (Grizedale Arts, 2015), have been related to and reflected upon. The residency concept presents, locates and contextualises the theory and practical work for the reader/viewer; therefore there is relevance to drawing on past residency experience.

The affective 'possibilities' of the walks, of opening up space were described by Lisa as "the most surprising thing, and how many memories came back to me. I really thought that I would be stuck for something to say but something about actually being there made stories fight for prominence in my mind." (Lisa, pers. comm: 2015)

"It's not that one actually; it's definitely that red one. The outside of the house is exactly the same, the porch and door aren't. I remember there being no light in the house at all, never any light. That's number 518. My mum up at four in the morning, setting up the fire and opening up the coal thing for, oh where's the coal thing gone? Looks like none of them have the coal thing now but they definitely had the coal things when I used to come here. Half the kitchen used to be a coal shed and the coal man would come and put it down the shoot." (Excerpt from *Lisa* 9th November 2013)

CHAPTER THREE

Walking through a virtual realm as a curatorial platform

3.1 Curating and dialoguing with the exhibition *Unstable Ground*

This chapter will further examine the role of virtual walking methodology as a curatorial and artistic online process for engaging with the artist, artwork, curator and the public. Previously I cited the exhibition *Unstable Ground* as a valuable and unique curatorial framework for advancing narrative through the virtual sphere. The live and enlivening act of the virtual walks was explored further through examining this process by curating an exhibition in the context of a gallery experience. Forming part of my research in 2014, I curated a show which presented a small group of contemporary artists who I felt drew parallels with the research, and who would relate to the walking and narrative process. To some degree, each *Unstable Ground* artist engages with a past as a way of exploring the present.

The *Wythy Walks* jolts one out of an everyday situation, into the realms of both past and present histories. They are an animate and intimate act, whether physical or virtual, enabling the free-flowing, random and open process of deep walking and talking. They are multi-sensory, affective in both a physical sense and an imaginary one, emphasised through the virtual manifestation of the walks. The writer Andreas Huyssen asserts that 'The more memory we store on data banks, the more the past is sucked into the orbit of the present, ready to be called up on the screen' (Huyssen

1995: 7). The virtual process of the walks elicits Huyseen's assertion, and the research proclaims that the virtual manifestation of the *Wythy Walks* breathes life into the past by simultaneously engaging with, and defining the present. Equally, this new way of experiencing and walking through space, is an innovative concept for dialoguing with artist and artwork.

The writing of Tim Ingold, in relation to the importance of engaging and involving this group of artists' methods with 'surroundings', asserts that 'the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, arise within the current of their involved activity, in the specific relational contexts of their practical engagements with their surroundings' (Ingold, 1995: 76). The practical and psychological course, through the virtual spatial 'environments' of the walks, provided a platform for shared dialogue, engaging with narrative and space through the opening of the 'memory banks'. The psychological and emotional relationship that the artists have with their practice, alongside autobiographical details, set around the 'constellation' of spaces and 'trajectories', were explored, aligned and put on public display through the process and experience of the *Unstable Ground* walks.

An important dimension of the walks is 'live-ness', an 'existent act', and through this methodology nothing in particular is resolved; the walks do not ask specific questions or necessarily give any answers; it is the present act of walking and talking, simultaneously liberating a past, that is important. The physical and virtual walks are a positive method for engaging with narratives and spaces; they open up and interpret territory, whilst at the same time focus on details through deviating

dialogue, layers of memory, during the common act of walking. The layers of personal stories that emerge are genre-less; they are not a thriller, a detective story or a travelogue; the *Unstable Ground* walks encourage life stories that escape labels. They take us out into a spatial realm; they 'take back space' for the collaborators through reconnecting and engaging with collective and personal narrative of a place, encouraged by walking through and about it. The unpredictable routes are physically walked, driven, or experienced virtually through *Google Earth*. It is the stimulating process and act of, 'walking through the mind', that is equally important.

Unstable Ground was at Manchester gallery PAPER, during July and August in 2014, and was presented at the end of my second year. I chose artists who I discovered, after extensive research, had similar concerns in relation to my practice and the thesis, related to evoking and 'drawing-out' narrative. In a newspaper review of the show, the exhibition was described as 'The potential of drawing, to revisit *déjà vu* moments' (Clark, R. *The Guardian Guide*: 14 August 2014). The returning to and re-examination of 'life-moments' are explored and presented through the virtual curatorial process. The exhibiting artists' produced a wide variety of work, the common thread being the emphasis on human details, related to autobiographical narratives; stories associated with, and represented through, specific places and objects. The title of the show *Unstable Ground* grew out of the curatorial development, a reference to the 'instability and unpredictability' of the non-linear narratives, 'grounded' around the personal terrain of the virtual walks method.

The main part of the curatorial framework for *Unstable Ground* materialised as a series of virtual online walks with the artists, developed from both the curatorial and research interrogation. Initially, the curatorial premise was to align this group of artists with the subjective interest; yet through further interrogation of my research and the curatorial process, the online walks emerged. Not all the artists' from the *Unstable Ground* exhibition were able to explore this process of dialogue. Both George Shaw and Laura Oldfield Ford opted out of the process. The online walks were presented as a central part of the exhibition experience (laying bare both the autobiographical and artistic details related to autobiographical narratives and spaces). Curating *Unstable Ground* allowed me to have a more meaningful, contextual and direct dialogue with these artists through the intimate, virtual online process of the *Wythy Walks*. After careful consideration, and primarily for technical reasons, I edited the artists' walk films from the five artists into twenty to thirty minute episodes. From over fifteen hours of recorded footage, in dialogue with the artworks, the edited samples presented a succinct distillation of the walk experience for *Unstable Ground*. The digital, virtual walk episodes were simultaneously mapped out and 'located' to the house where we began our journey on the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* website, as with the *Wythy Walks* films and subsequent biro drawings.

Sarah, who grew up in Wythenshawe, had similar expectations: "I was very nervous about the walk as a lot of my memories of Wythenshawe are quite sad. I was worried we'd have a negative experience and felt that I wouldn't have much of a story to tell." (Sarah, pers. comm: 2015) As our journey played out, according to Sarah, however, our walk evoked "positive childhood memories resurfaced. Remembering friends, places and adventures (some quite embarrassing ones!) that I'd perhaps forgotten about was most refreshing. We loved exploring places as kids; but the whole concept of playing out has changed so fundamentally from then to now, I think the walk made me realise how important it is to continue that love of adventure as a mum. In the end it turned out I've probably got too much to say." (Sarah, pers. comm: 2015)

"We used to hang out a lot on the wall outside the clinic on Hollyhedge road, we even knew the telephone number of the phone box so if one of us was late we'd call that, then one of us would run over to it at say yeah, we're here. I ask Sarah whether she felt Wythenshawe had any negative effects on her. I don't see Wythenshawe in a negative way at all, like when people say oh Wythenshawe (in a negative way) I always say Wythenshawe, it was a top place to grow up and stuff like that. Some things I look back on and I think I can't believe I did that, but then you think well it was fun at the time." (Excerpt from Sarah 4th May 2013)

3.2 The artist/curator role

Curating an exhibition to contextualise an artists' practice is a methodology put forward by Graeme Sullivan in his book *Art Practice as Research – Inquiry in Visual Arts* (2010). Sullivan suggests that public exhibitions are 'not only a site for display and discourse about cultural production, but also as a visual place for radical debate and change' (Sullivan, 2010: 216). He goes on to say that exhibiting can 'assist with the descriptive, interpretive and explanatory tasks often undertaken that cannot be captured in traditional research languages' (Sullivan, 2010: 216). I saw the role of the artist/curator of *Unstable Ground* as an intrinsic part of my research and practice; an opportunity to examine the exhibition process as a critical medium, as opposed to simply presenting artworks, for an in-depth investigation. This allowed me to test my research in relation to the virtual manifestation of walking and narrative, alongside reflecting on the work of several other artists and why they made work in a particular way. The 'interpretive' and 'live' dialogue and qualities of the virtual walks narrative extends on Sullivan's curatorial position, through a relevant artistic process of a deeper and enlightening examination of the artists' concepts in relation to capturing dialogue through engaging with and presenting 'non-traditional' emotive narrative and spaces.

The research reflected upon the artist/curator role and concept of curating an exhibition to explore and reveal further layers of narrative and the relationship to artistic practice, in the proposition put forward by the writer and curator Nicolas Bourriaud, when curating the exhibition *Altermodern* for the Tate Triennial (2009), a

survey of British Contemporary Art. The 'Altermodern' is a term coined by Bourriaud to link a group of artists selected for the Tate Triennial. The pretext of the theory surrounding the exhibition is that Post-Modernism is dead and we are in the age of the Altermodern. Bourriaud's curatorial concept is a 'positive experience of disorientation through an art-form exploring all dimensions of the present, tracing lines in all directions of time and space' (Nicholas Bourriaud, 2009: 11). In this sense, the artist turns 'cultural nomad' to generate creativeness and deriving knowledge from artworks.

In a video interview for *Tate*, Bourriaud outlines his process for curating an exhibition: 'When I do have answers about something I can write a book. When I do have questions I'm curating a show. An art exhibition is the moment where you are really asking any artist participating to provide you feedback on an idea. So it's not about my ideas anymore, it's about the way we can share this theoretical and artistic moment together. What are the artist's answers? That is the main question actually' (Bourriaud, 2009). My curator/artist perspective, emphasised through the process of the virtual manifestation, extends and puts into practice Bourriaud's notion of the curatorial process being equated to asking question. In contrast, however, although a 'positive experience of disorientation', my method and process of the virtual walks differs from the approach of Bourriaud's; the virtual walks with the artists' do not strive to resolve, ask specific questions or give any answers, it is the process of engaging with layers of narrative and the spatial that is important and the generating of further questions for both the public and the artists themselves. This is the motive for curating the *Unstable Ground* show, to generate further questioning/dialogue. By

laying bare more questions the walks have a symbiotic relationship with both the artist and the practice, but they are neither the artist or the practice. They are a recorded live experience, encapsulating the behaviour of the artists' in the virtual realms of walking and talking, the sharing of details, moving between an artistic and personal discourse.

Furthermore, the curator Elena Filipovic, speaking at the *Artist as Curator* Symposium: *When Exhibitions Become Form: A Brief History of the Artist as Curator* in 2013, focuses on the exhibition as a form and how appropriate language, tools and typologies for looking at and talking about how a certain kind of exhibition-making, advanced by artists, can be considered today. Filipovic states that 'If it is easy to see that artist-curated exhibitions can trouble our very understanding of such notions as 'artistic autonomy', 'authorship', 'artwork' and 'artistic oeuvre', what might be less evident is that they also complicate what might count as an 'exhibition'. Many artist-curated exhibitions, perhaps the most striking and influential of the genre, are the result of artists treating the exhibition as an artistic medium in its own right, an articulation of form' (Filipovic, 2013). Curating *Unstable Ground* from the perspective of an artist allowed me to 'articulate' and curate the show, from and around the virtual walking process, with an artistic sensibility. The process engaged a public with raising further questions around 'authorship' by adding further detail and complication to this group of artists' work. The curatorial *Unstable Ground* walks performed both a dissemination and expression of artistic practice, conveying both artistic and curatorial agency.

In curating *Unstable Ground* at a mid-point of my PhD research, I also engaged with the artists and their individual concepts as a way of contextualising my own artistic practice and research, and determining the lasting influence of drawing out memory in relation to my own wider practice to include a curatorial framework, in parallel with the *Wythy Walks* methodology. I curated the show in direct reference to the concept and experience of the virtual walks with the artists and in some cases the artists made new work either directly from or presented older works that were influenced by the walks. Bourriaud suggests that ‘a collective exhibition, when based around a theoretical hypothesis, needs to establish a balance between the artworks and the narrative that acts as a form of subtitling. It needs to develop a space-time continuum where the curator’s voice-off, the statements of the artists, and the dialogues woven between the artefacts can co-exist’ (Bourriaud, 2009: 12). This is also true in the case of the walks: they weave between artist and ‘artefact’ (Bourriaud, 2009: 12); yet the emphasis is not only on the symmetry of the individual works, ‘between the artifacts’ (Bourriaud, 2009: 12), but also on the individual artists’ own voices.

Unstable Ground was on the one hand a formal presentation of works but through the virtual walks, was a discursive experience and allowed me to investigate the practices of a like-minded group of artists, developing a relevant curatorial means through the virtual walks. In order to achieve this, I took on the role of artist/curator and developed a virtual interview strategy that was also being practiced through the *Wythy Walks* methodology. Sullivan is familiar with this dual role as both artist and curator, and points out that ‘the researcher can participate in the show as both artist

and curator, as these kinds of multiple roles are very much in keeping with the diversity of practices pursued by many artist-theorists these days' (Sullivan, 2010: 220). The 'multiple roles' were necessary in curating the *Unstable Ground* show, and from the outset I considered how the artists' drawing methods related to their experiences of autobiographical memory. Through the artistic and curatorial role, intrinsic to my practice and research, the collaborative online virtual walks examined and probed deeper into mapping the narrative realms by encouraging a dialogue around the autobiographical and artistic connections.

Alongside the influence of the physical, designed layout, is the mental plane of the *Wythy Walks*. The walks are guided by particular personal event, although I had only messaged Keith on *Facebook* in relation to organising a *Wythy Walks*, for example, it was both Keith and Colin who turned-up at my mum's house to meet me pre-walk. Initially, I was both anxious and keen to meet Keith, not just because we had not seen each other since we were around seventeen years old, but because of particular past incidents between us. I was eager to begin the walk, in part as a way of releasing the anxiety even before we met at my mum's house. *Keith and Colin* was also my first *Wythy Walk*, so when they appeared together it was a flashback to when they last called at my house over twenty years before.

"We walk past where the old youth club used to be, and both of us remember the time when his dad almost killed a lad by jumping on top of him. He was seeing that girl Tina, who I was also shagging, and so he waited for me outside the youth club, but I'd got off early, my brother was still in there with you and when our Kevin came out he busted his nose, just because he was my brother. Anyway Kevin came home with blood all over his face, so we all jump in the van remember, and go scouting for him around Wythenshawe. Anyway, we eventually find him and we all jumped out, except you, because you weren't into fighting, my dad jumps on him, almost breaks his back, and when he gets up I pull my knife out on him, my dad almost bollocks me there and then, anyway we all got away with it."

(Excerpt from *Keith and Colin* 24th

March 2013)

3.3 The *Unstable Ground* artists practice and virtual walks

The selected artists I worked with were Annabel Dover, Laura Oldfield Ford, Reece Jones, David Miles, George Shaw, Stephen Walter, Lisa Wilkens and myself, as both artist and curator roles. The artists in *Unstable Ground* explore narrative within their practices; and through the context of the virtual walking realm, I wanted to present and uproot, expose, add complication to how and why these artists 'draw-out' memory in their own particular ways. The artists reveal the perplexing, the fragile, the experiential, and the direct relationship between the paper surface, through the process of drawing, and the representation and manifestation of memory. Focusing on autobiographical memory in a variety of ways and degrees, the artists' works have an emotional dialogue with place and objects, and in relation to drawing methods, the mediation between vision and hand.

The artists presented in *Unstable Ground* offer insights and glimpses into these important, discursive processes. They each have a relationship with the concept of *Unstable Ground*, from Stephen Walter and Laura Oldfield Ford's layers of urban mapping, revealing the often hidden, complex, political and poetic narratives of human life, to Annabel Dover and Lisa Wilkens's 'drawn-out' relationship with the memories of personal and significant objects and places and the fabrication of narratives that surround them. This is revealed in the works on many levels. The image that is immediately presented in all these artists' works chosen for the exhibition was but the first of many layers to be explored.

The seams of narrative in the artists' practice were echoed and expanded further through the virtual walks, engaging with the past in the present. *Unstable Ground* presented and explored a dialogue with artistic, personal and emotional, social and political signifiers, with an emphasis on directly engaging with significant spaces through virtual realms. Again, using *Google Earth's* street mode, *Skype* as an audio output and *Debut*, a screen capture application, to record the whole experience, the five artists from *Unstable Ground* followed the same digressing process of the *Wythy Walks*. We started off at the house where the artist was born or grew up.

Lisa Wilkens's practice and virtual walk

The group of artists were from vastly differing places, places I had never been to, and in Lisa Wilkens's case, a completely different country, Bremen in Northern Germany. Currently based at Wysing Arts Centre in Bourn, Cambridgeshire, Wilkens's work is fundamentally grounded in drawing-out a past, and the deeper understanding and exploration of significant and emotionally charged events and images, and their reproduction and development through a drawing process. Similarly, the principal premise of the virtual walks, is the unravelling, explorative, enlightening, excavatory-like process of engaging with narrative and space through the 'spatio-temporality' of the virtual realm. Another relevant and meaningful connection to the concept of the walks is Wilkens's deep interest in the photographic image as cultural object, and the understanding of the representation and transformation of its 'past and present' values. Wilkens perceives her practice as a means for 'analysis, a method to understand and process images' (Wilkens, 2014). The live, engaging process of the

virtual walk, and the resultant exhibition and gallery experience, animated the dialogue with 'past and present' further, creating a 'spatio-narrative' stage for deep conversational exchange.

Choosing images of international affairs, online news and archives, Wilkens's drawings offer a new form of reading located between personal stories and political histories; even the paper used for Wilkens's drawings is sourced from GDR (German Democratic Republic, East Germany) stocks, through her wider family connections. For the *Unstable Ground* show, Wilkens contributed two small ink drawings on paper from this series of works that related the 'personal stories to political histories' (Wilkens, pers. comm: 2014). The narratives from this particular work (and from past work) were uprooted and situated through the process of the virtual walks. The stories became enhanced, detailed, through the significant virtual spaces we walked around.

The walk I embarked on with Wilkens around Bremen was an affective experience, moving between personal and political dialogue. During one section of the walk, Wilkens is detailing her relationship with her father, and her perspective and understanding of his left-wing political wavering, from activist, to being a more isolated figure later on in his life. This 'stream of consciousness' occurs in front of Wilkens's father's old workshop in Bremen, which we are digitally, virtually, standing in front of whilst talking. The walk with Wilkens lasted over four hours; I was, as always, a keen listener, and we are, rightfully, forced to engage and understand the narratives and spaces that unfold in front of our eyes. The virtual spaces, through the

act of moving (at walking pace) and talking, manifest like real spaces, as if we were there living and breathing together, and not a 'simulated' or 'imitated' ramble. Through the series of 'fake' environments, factual and affective episodes unravel. Moreover, we are able to 'transport' to places by either typing in a road name or postcode, or by moving from street-level mode to map mode, and this becomes a feature of the virtual process, which helps to marry-up, and make firmer connections within the memory banks.

This process occurred on at least several occasions during all the walks with the online artists' journeys. Generating narrative relations with space through the virtual walks echoes Doreen Massey's 'dimension of things being, existing at the same time: of simultaneity.' (Massey, 2012: 53). Through the 'dimension of multiplicity' (Massey, 2012: 53), I believe that the research makes a convincing case that participating with virtual space, in this way, a re-conceptualisation of virtual space, can go some way to answering how we might re-connect, and 'how we are going to live together' (Massey, 2012: 53). Although not in the real place in a physical sense, real experiences and memories were ignited during the online virtual experience. The process of the walks is in opposition to notions of the generic interview strategy, where a series of questions are asked. They do not stop people in the street; they are an exploration of people and streets, narrative and space. The walks emphasise and give a compelling, shared voice to the collaborators. The online process as a shared act became an integral part of the presentation of the exhibition experience for the viewer of both the artists' work and the edited virtual films. The unravelling, live, spatial qualities of the walks, was transferred to how I wanted the exhibition to be

physically and psychologically encountered. Likewise, by presenting the deeper autobiographical and artistic details, through the direct, personal and in-depth personal dialogue, this way of interviewing captures how these artists directly engage with both curator and practice in a relevant way for the gallery viewer to see, hear and move in-between.

Annabel Dover's practice and virtual walk

Annabel Dover, an artist and researcher based in Suffolk, UK, works in a variety of media including: painting, photography, video, cyanotype, and drawing; and according to the artist and curator Cathy Lomax her works are ostensibly autobiographical and that she 'engages the viewer in untold tales of wonder' (Lomax, 2012). It was Dover's psychological relationship with her narrative-driven works, between the realms of fact and fiction, which drew me to her practice and why the process of the virtual walks was a perfect platform for delving into this terrain further. Throughout her artistic practice, Dover has focused on the interrelationship between objects and people, and the indiscernible stories that are woven around them. Dover's practice presents itself as a complex mixture of scientific observation and 'tender girlish enthusiasm' (Dover, 2015), which often belies their history. Her work was similarly described by NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) fellow Dr. Martha Fleming as 'anthropology of intimacy' (Fleming, 2015).

I was interested in the works that presented objects that Dover painted, and equally curious as to why they were worked in a particular way in relation to the suggestive, personal narratives. Dover describes her childhood, for example, as 'whilst seemingly on the surface to be of a functioning middle class family, was spent with parents who indulged in drama and abuse, where the truth was impossible to decipher and where the objects that surrounded my sisters and I were often the only witnesses to ludicrous acts of fantasy and violence' (Dover, 2015). This formative drama, for Dover, unfolded further whilst we were staring at, and reflecting on this very childhood home, set on the banks of the river Mersey estuary.

The realms between fact and fiction are unravelled and clearly occur during the process of the virtual online walks; but the experience with Dover was especially resonant. There were many occasions when personal narrative, storytelling-like moments occurred against the backdrop of houses that she had lived in both with her estranged family and alone, away from the estrangement. Transporting directly from house to house, rather than 'walking' around a specific area, was a characteristic of the experience with Dover, mainly due to the fact that the narratives Dover presented were psychological and indirectly related to the specific houses. I believe that this feature is another reason why the walks cannot be compared and for treating them individually.

The objects that Dover presents were 'central to discovering hidden aspects of people's lives and were clues to their unusual behaviour. For example: the newspaper cutting announcing my birth that alerted me to the fact that I had six

sisters and not as I had assumed all of my life, three' (Dover, 2015). The laying bare of personal details through the objects, to Dover, also highlighted 'the traumas, the disjuncture and the breaks in human relationships that made up the atmosphere of my upbringing. The narratives told to me by my family unravelled with the discovery of these indiscreet objects' (Dover, 2015). Dover is interested in the uncovering and laying bare the relationship to objects, related to detailed reportage of people and their lives. The online experience was a perfect addition to engaging directly with Dover's practice, presenting her ideas, and for dialoguing and moving around spaces of significant meaning.

Watching, listening and absorbing Dover's work (and life) has become a fabulous tangle of information, stories (both real and imagined) surrounding images and objects. Her work is part distillation, part a peripatetic ramble through her influences, ranging from archaeological illustration, archaic, scientific techniques, to the theories of Sigmund Freud and anthropological research. For *Unstable Ground* Dover presented two of her older works. A 2012 coloured pencil drawing from the *Psychometry* series, a narrative-driven body of work that invited groups of friends to dialogue with a psychic about a precious, personal object, and a Silverpoint, from a 2010 series of drawings of objects based on the experience of a house that Dover lived in, alone, from the age of thirteen. The three-hour virtual walk that we embarked on was the perfect platform for unravelling the interplay between fact and fiction, performance and instinctual dialogue for my formal but deeply insightful role as curator.

The virtual, unplanned interview strategy is integral to formulating the *Unstable Ground* exhibition. In essence, dialoguing with the artists in this way, and by expanding further the engagement of the gallery visitor with the artists' voiced presence, brings about a relevant and unique experience, an extension, adding further traces and clues to the works on display. The curatorial tool of the walks opens up a 'virtual window' for the viewer, allowing the insight for the third person, furthering the shared experience. I made a curatorial decision to have headphones for the *Unstable Ground* exhibition, as I wanted to expand the intimacy of the virtual memory walks for the gallery visitor. Equally, to avoid a 'bleeding' of the narrative into each other, rather than emphasising the links between this particular group of artists, I wanted to stress the importance of giving a voice to each artist (alongside my own recorded vocal sound). What is important is hearing the individual, yet collectively and distinctly-woven story. My intention is to liberate the gallery experience, not by obvious signposting, but by opening up, and adding to, a direct dialogue between artist and artworks narratives and spaces.

Reece Jones's practice and virtual walk

The London-based artist Reece Jones was born in Roydon, South Norfolk, and for his virtual online walk, again, we started out from his childhood home, with our voices in each other's heads. Jones's drawing practice is processed and built up through layers of charcoal. The Norfolk landscape of his childhood, paralleled with a fascination for the interpretation of the narrative landscapes of film, are of importance to him. He describes film as a 'language we are all critically very fluent in and I think that affords

image makers the opportunity to play around with tropes or to evoke particular atmospheres in the knowledge that narratives – albeit fragmented or abstracted – will be suggested. I like the fact that associations can be made between what I’m making and certain moments in cinema’ (Jones, 2010). Jones affirms that the psychological realms of landscape as something he’s especially interested in, ‘location and the way in which people like Tarkovsky use place as a metaphor for psychological states’ (Jones, 2010).

The ‘psychological states’ of mind that Jones refers to resonates with Freud’s declaration, that the ‘origins of art lie in childhood’ (Freud, 1899), and that the ‘free-spirited, uncomplicated, unself-conscious child, playfully acts out the theatre of life while at the same time the child has the ability to ‘distinguish it quite well from reality’ (Freud, 1899). The virtual walks re-surface and engage with our current definitions of childhood memory, and the ‘playfulness’ of walking through a past is interwoven with the loaded spaces that are walked through, as the drama of the memory re-surfaces. I recognised in the writings of Freud the relevance of ‘walking through the mind’. In particular, Freud believed that later in life we often swap our childhood pleasures that we once fully enjoyed and engaged in, for another pleasure; that as we grow up we stop engaging with play and replace it with fantasy.

The walks engage with both fantasies, ‘rooted in childhood play’ (Freud, 1899), and the playfulness of engaging with narrative and space. The associations that are made between what we talk about and what we see during the walk, guides our rhythms through it. At certain moments we stop and gaze, during other moments we are

slowly moving through a landscape or down a dirt track. Jones defines his subject matter as a 'vague recollection of something' (Jones, 2010) and the walks empathise with the recalling of these states of mind in the form of a profound transitory adventure that stays with us long after the journey's end.

Jones clarifies his engagement with landscape, memory and film by stating that some of his drawings in an upcoming show are 'based loosely on locations from films like *Night of the Hunter* or *Mad Max*' (Jones, 2010), and there are many moments when we return to particular sites that Jones relates particular episodes of his childhood to that of specific films during our five hour online adventure. We occupy one noteworthy landscape, for example, as Jones enthuses upon both the landscape we are both looking into, and the memories of watching the film that is triggered from it. What drew me towards my interest in Jones's practice in the first place was his description of his process of drawing and erasure, and how it has evolved as a way to 'invent spaces and scenarios' (Jones, 2010). Building up the drawings for Jones is 'similar to processing photos (in the old school way, in a dark room), burning areas in and balancing tone or contrast. Many of my more recent works have quite an explicit (albeit unusual or unexplained) light source. It is partly to do with the insertion of iconography or narrative elements to the work, but more formally it's a way of manipulating the logic of the image' (Jones, 2010). The online walks have no logic; they could go anywhere; they perform talking through memory. For *Unstable Ground* Jones made a new series of works, generated from our five hour expedition, typically atmospheric, built up through deeply worked layers of charcoal.

David Miles's practice and virtual walk

The artist David Miles lives and works in Brighton, and grew up in nearby Goring-By-Sea. His work involves storytelling, the interweaving of collective and autobiographical narratives, associated with a sense of personal loss and fear. He is an artist I have exhibited alongside on numerous occasions, mainly in relation to focusing on the influence of the connections between selected local reportage and personal imagery. In relation to the curated *Unstable Ground* exhibition and the preceding virtual walk, I was particularly interested in his works that explored personal terrain, memories related to episodes of social drama. As part of our initial conversation we had in relation to his involvement with *Unstable Ground*, he described this particular body of work to me: "The mobiles relate in two ways: the direct correlation they have to events/memories going round and round in your head, with no particular order, how this is echoed in the physical presence of the piece. Also, how in the mobiles there are only a few elements, necessary to convey the experience, which corresponds to how certain images and actions of past events take precedence over others in one's memory" (Miles, pers. comm: 2014). The relationship between Miles's practice in relation to narrative interpretation, relating to "actions of past events" (Miles, pers. comm: 2014), was of particular interest to me, and why embarking on a virtual walk with Miles could be beneficial to Miles and to the development of the exhibition, exploring and highlighting his concepts further.

In correlation with this, there was a particular poignant episode during our walk around the northern fringes of Brighton, where we 'hung-out' on top of a sandy bank

and listened to 'The Smiths', whilst looking back towards Brighton. This virtual episode mimicked a real life incident with Miles's first girlfriend, relaying and listening to a specific, poignant physical and musical track. This shared, nostalgic moment, had particular resonance, as the song in question had a similar significance in relation to my own life story. The shared, anecdotal qualities, that both myself and Miles's embed in our artistic practice, is brought to the fore during the process of the narrative driven walks. Stories bring us together; they are what bind us; and the virtual and physical manifestation of the walks enhance the multi-sensory connections associated with them.

For the *Unstable Ground* exhibition, Miles was interested in making new work and presenting previously produced works in response to highlighting particular moments from three hour our virtual, online expedition. One of the pieces he chose was a piece from his ongoing series of 'child-like' hand-cut mobiles. The physical act of cutting out the elements of the mobiles, of removing what isn't necessary, is important for Miles. He is interested in how and why certain events are remembered, so embarking on the online experience this position and perspective as an artist. He describes his process of making as an "immediate responses to fears and doubts I had at the time of making them" (Miles, pers. comm: 2014). Miles describes the cut-out mobiles as drawings, which draw-out and emphasise the fragments and fragilities of memory. This is achieved by separating and arranging the narrative elements as the meticulously composed mobile installations. Miles states that re-drawing these remembered personal narratives gives memory "more focus" (Miles, pers. comm: 2014). Through the virtual walks we re-focus our attention to particular

narratives and spaces; memory is put on display, brought into the present act of walking and talking.

Stephen Walter's practice and virtual walk

Another artist I researched, approached and chose for the *Unstable Ground* exhibition, whose practice focuses primarily on drawing-out and 'mapping' layers of narrative lines, experiences, by 'walking through the mind', is Stephen Walter, a visual artist based in North London, close to where he grew up. Walter incorporates localised and personal myths into often large scale, hand-drawn maps. His practice echoes the writing processes of psychogeography, and in particular the London-focused writer and psychogeographer Iain Sinclair. Walter also had formative experiences as a student in Manchester, a place he had not had the chance to visit since. For Walter, the drawn out maps have 'influenced the way I make marks. Every sign and symbol has a back-story and also relates to the other symbols around it' (Walter, pers. comm: 2014). Collectively, Walter describes the maps as being 'informed by a certain politics of space, where each area is denoted according to its particular appropriation of land. This slows down an otherwise expressive mark-making process, pulling it into a graphic form. Every segment takes into consideration the other constituent parts. My own artistic expression has to be filtered through a wider public culture and language, an eco-system' (Walter, 2015). The *Wythy Walks*, and the subsequent walks for *Unstable Ground* are guided by the individual walkers through the personal spatial relations of that individual.

The walks are expressed through the qualities that are uncovered along them. The walks are unmeasurable in that they cannot be compared; but the rhythms along the individual walk, with the co-walkers, where we stop and where we are silent and more contemplative is, in relation to the *Unstable Ground* walks, a mixture of artistic, social and cultural language, 'an eco-system' (Walter, 2015). In Walter's case, he becomes, performs even, both his practice and life simultaneously. It is the relationship or intermediary between the self and the outside world that is important to Walter; it is 'what we relate to within these communal environments that draw us in: mutual understanding. The structures of recognizable signs and symbols in our culture are part of our collective understanding. They also point to a primal drive that seeks to reduce things down to their core elements. This has led me into a further interest in semiotics and into maps, which are in themselves depictions of landscapes formed of many symbols' (Walter, pers. comm: 2014).

The autobiographical element in Walters work is easier to unpick, and is strongest in the maps of real places, as opposed to the more fictionalised ones. Walter immerses himself in the cities he portrays, 'into their rich social tapestries, stories and inherited histories. Within the tangle of words, symbols and drawn elements, I managed to interweave snippets of my own life experiences into the location of these places with a range of other edited references' (Walter, pers. comm: 2014). We walk through a tangle of fact and fiction. The walks acknowledge that memory, for example, is never definitive; they accept memory's complications. The conversation itself, the time spent together, the shared two-hour experience with Walter, is what is most important. The fact that the virtual walks encourage and spark off a conversation

within the details of a place make it different from talking on a phone. The walks are an act of getting closer to each other. Through the online virtual walks we have our windows (our computer screens) into the virtual realms. Walter is interested in ideas relating to individual journeys, pilgrimage routes. For *Unstable Ground*, Walter made a new piece of work, based on our conversations from the virtual walk experience, a 'hand-drawn' map based on our actual route of our virtual walk.

Laura Oldfield Ford's Practice

As part of the whole exhibition process, the dialogue and exchange of ideas, specific to my research inquiry, was opened up; for example, the relationship between the drawing methods, the process of making the work, and the level of influence that autobiographical memory has. Although London-based artist Laura Oldfield Ford and George Shaw, based in Devon, did not partake in the virtual, online walks, it is important that I still outline their practice in relation both the *Unstable Ground* exhibition and the engagement that the two artists have with a past and engage with personal histories to confront a present.

Oldfield Ford's practice explores layers of place and memory through drawing, and is explored and 'grounded' through individual, often private walks, which she describes as 'drifts'. She presents the complexities that surround the urban labyrinths that threaten to engulf the traces of life; drawn, urban spaces that uncovers a 'city in the process of being buried' (Oldfield Ford, 2011: 2). This process reveals the hidden and complex political and poetic narratives of human life and forever shifting

environments. Through her graphic novel influenced zine *Savage Messiah* (2011), combining drawing and narrative representation from public drifts, Ford has recoded the urban fabric of London, bringing its repressed remnants to the fore, utilising both drawing and walking.

In her own words, she is 'drawn to the non-spaces or in-between zones that were designed for free interaction. This never worked out as planned, and these areas, courtyards, walkways and so on, became space for the dispossessed to hang out; they became the unpoliced hidden spaces. After Broadwater farm erupted in 1985, there was a drive nationally to destroy the walkways and eradicate the warrens that were embedded in the clean modernist structures' (Oldfield Ford, 2009). Oldfield Ford goes on to say that her work is not 'nostalgic in a sentimental way but more influenced by Walter Benjamin's thesis on history, about shards of 'Messianic time' hidden in the built environment waiting to be realised' (Oldfield Ford, 2009). Oldfield Ford's practice and the virtual walks for *Unstable Ground* emphasise spatial and architectural features of urban and suburban environments legible, in terms of history.

The recording of the walks present layers of time and space and transform the virtual environments that directly engages with personal history, a past in a present, and I saw correlation with what Walter Benjamin describes as 'a conception of the present as the 'time of the now' which is shot through with chips of Messianic time' (Benjamin, 1999: 255). Through 'layers' of erasure and drawing, Oldfield Ford is, 'trying to show how much has been erased and changed' (Oldfield Ford, 2009) and

that directly relates a sense of 'our history been stolen, that we weren't wanted and that we don't figure in these new schemes' (Oldfield Ford, 2009). The virtual walks directly engage with and navigate a present virtual incarnation, over-transcribed with hidden and often 'erased' histories through the narratives that are evoked during the walks.

Although Oldfield Ford did not participate in a virtual walk for *Unstable Ground*, her practice, and particularly her engagement and reference the writings of Walter Benjamin, are of interest to my thesis and practice-led research. It would have been beneficial to my research to clarify further Oldfield Ford's relationship with the Benjamin text in the context of a virtual walk. Oldfield Ford's makes drawings as 'historical documents' (Oldfield Ford, 2009), in attempting to 'reactivate certain currents. I have made drawings of brutalist estates that have been demolished to make way for cul-de-sacs of faux Georgiana and fly-posted tower blocks over the new builds' (Oldfield Ford, 2009). For *Unstable Ground*, Oldfield-Ford emailed me a series of images from one of her walking 'drifts', which was printed and presented as a frieze across the gallery wall. I presented the piece in a corner space, so as to suggest a physical space beyond the two-dimensionality of the flat wall.

George Shaw's practice

Similarly, hailing from the outer suburbs of Coventry, the artist George Shaw uncovers layers of memory through a painting practice; although Shaw has a direct relationship with the place of his childhood and formative years, rather than, in

Oldfield's case, the emphasis being on her later squat and partying years. Through photographs and Humbrol enamel paint, referencing building model cars and planes as a child, which mirrors my own nostalgic driven 'live act' of drawing, of using the biro pen, Shaw's process, equated to the virtual walking process, engages and situates a past in the present, unearths and presents a contemporary relationship to particular, poignant places and spaces.

For Shaw, his paintings 'become empty vessels, something I do when I'm daydreaming around in my head really. They're almost like the equation that comes out of the series of complex workings-out about where you fit in, and what your relationship is with your family background. You've got an art education and you've got all these things and then what pops out is a drawing of a tree' (Shaw, 2012: 75). It is these 'complex workings-out' (Shaw, 2012: 75), the relationship to the performative process of making, and the varied reasons why autobiographical memory is used as a vehicle to create work, has been revealed through the exhibition virtual interviews. In reference to his outpouring of work, Shaw initially described them as 'a romanticism for times gone by, or of a childhood spent, misspent or unspent' (Shaw, 2012: 73). Yet they become, according to Shaw, 'allegorical for the present' (Shaw, 2012: 73). Shaw focuses on 'things to do with remembrance or forgetting or things to do with National identity.' And that 'Instead of dealing with it by stepping out of my front door where I live, I get a train back and deal with those present images within the allegorical setting of the place that I was brought up' (Shaw, 2012: 73). The 'setting' of the virtual memory walks directly engage the past with the present through the activation and generating of narratives. For *Unstable*

Ground, I presented a series of Shaw's hand-made stone lithography prints, which were produced at Hole Editions in Newcastle during Shaw's Turner Prize nominated exhibition 'The Sly and Unseen Day' at Baltic, Centre for Contemporary Art in 2011.

The walk with Karl began with a long silence, but then there was a moment where his cats were fighting in the front garden which loosened Karl's memory banks. After our two hour walk the contrast between the beginning of our walk and the end of our walk was vast. The walks are meaningful in relation to our shared experience and, in this instance, movement towards an understanding of this place in relation to each other. Towards the end of the walk with Karl, there was a spring in our steps that suggested we had, to a certain extent, let go of our inhibitions.

"What can I say about Wythenshawe?

It's a shithole. It's alright round our part, when you get to the crossroads

though it's a shithole. Over on Brownley road, I still wouldn't walk past there at night. I don't know, you

don't see any scallies on the streets

round this bit though, if you look around, it might not mean a lot to

you." (Excerpt from *Karl* 17th May

2013)

3.4 Tone of speech applied during the *Unstable Ground* walks

The realms of the physical and virtual walks are a theatre of freedom, of open-ended speech and action. The narratives that are accessed lead to shared 'spaces of relations'. Simultaneously, the places confronted during the virtual walks help find, describe, express and locate the stories. The virtual space focuses the narrative: myself and the individual artists directly participating in it through the *Unstable Ground* virtual walks process. I identified in the writing of Michel de Certeau, who describes stories as 'spatial trajectories', as they 'traverse and organise places, they select and link them together' (Certeau, 1984: 115) the generative and spatial encounters of the *Unstable Ground* virtual experiences. Engaging with and walking (or clicking and moving at a walking pace) through virtual space, the *Unstable Ground* walks encourage various tones of deep narrative. The modes of speech during the virtual encounter can move between the everyday and emotional; the vulnerable and flippant, the intellectual and emotional, nostalgic and cynical.

There are several occasions, for example, when the *Unstable Ground* artists' move between these behaviours. These differences are examined by analysing and relating the alterations of language between two of the *Unstable Ground* artists': Annabel Dover and Stephen Walter. I would like to focus on examining how engaging with familiar places has an influence on generating different diction during the process of walking through space for *Unstable Ground*. The personal and artistic registers, which are weaved during the virtual walks, I describe as a form of 'spatial practice'. This is because the virtual (and physical) realms/spaces that are walked through enhance and mould the process of 'speaking the narratives'. Through the everyday

act of walking (and talking), as Certeau states, 'everyday tactics' (Certeau, 1984: 115) come into play. Through the concept of the *Unstable Ground* virtual walks, the everyday, individual 'rituals', the personalities of how these particular artists talk (and therefore move around the spaces), is enacted and affected.

The virtual memory walks demonstrate that there are moments during the process – for example, with Annabel Dover – where being in the 'live' space, in conjunction with the contextual and emotional significance of that space, collide. Reverie takes hold. The space is articulated through her relationship with it. The psychological state of mind takes over. Dover started the walk by stressing how there would not have been scaffolding (which was now surrounding the house) and she described how staring at the house was beneficial, from the start, to her remembering this. At the beginning of the walk Dover went straight into detailing her family circumstances and traumas related to this in an extremely casual manner, as if she had spoken out about these details many times. Dover even asks at one point whether she had told me these tales before. Although episodes of traumatic events are described, there is a lightness and awareness to how Dover self-assuredly describes them. The descriptions are regularly followed by moments of laughter, filling in the more reflective moments related to the ridiculousness of these particular episodes.

There are times when a more serious tone of dialogue surfaces. These specific moments emerge when Dover's narrative turns towards reflecting on the emotional state-of-mind of others, in relation to the anecdotes being discussed and re-surfaced. However, even these moments of reverie and reminiscence are spoken openly and

confidently, in relation to the spaces that we are deeply engaged in. There is a constant narrative in relation to and in connection with the houses and places that the young Dover and her estranged parents (concurrently from Dover and with each other) grew up in and moved to. In Dover's case, the houses that she grew-up in, and where she experienced her formative years, were spent living with family, and then, from the age of thirteen, alone. As the walk progressed, approximately mid-way through, Dover began to pose questions and relate back to my own experiences, in relation to what we had shared together. There was a need to impart, reflect, understand, and to seek both similarities and differences in relation to her own life stories, which is expected of an artist deeply engaged in the realms of personal storytelling, connecting with another artist, to whom storytelling and confidential narrative are key concerns.

Walter's discourse, from the very beginning of our walk, was relatively formal compared to Dover's more emotionally-driven discourse. Walter had even prepared a series of digital interior photographs that he wanted to share with me, during the walk via *Skype*, of his childhood home from which we started. These images, which we of course could not physically see via *Google Earth*, expanded on the narrative descriptions expressed by Walter, and emphasised their importance. As our walk loosened our conversation, the more he regularly expressed moments of surprise as 'snippets', forgotten moments, arose. Simultaneously, however, Walter was often making connections to his autobiographically-driven drawing practice; and through this, the dialect, which Walter often made use of, was clearly in reference to an 'art-speech' terminology.

This use of language, which Walter has been directly engaged in since art school, was applied during the walk, practiced for both professional and personal readings, and then the boundaries between these two forms of talking (a practice-led and personal use of language) began to disappear. Clearly, Walter is deeply aware of his personal history, engaged in and researched extensively through his artistic drawing practice. Through his application of ideas, and throughout the duration of the walks, Walter constantly, and with extreme confidence, draws himself into the forefront of his spatial and psychological maps of space and time. This is emphasised through Walter's practice and materialises as 'recognisable signs and symbols in our culture' (Walter, pers. comm: 2014), forming 'part of our collective understanding. They also point to a primal drive that seeks to reduce things down to their core elements. This has led me into a further interest in semiotics and into maps, which are in themselves depictions of landscapes formed of many symbols' (Walter, pers. comm: 2014).

Walter's practice parallels with the writing of Roland Barthes, in relation to the classification of speech, that 'Language is legislation, speech is its code. We do not see the power which is in speech because we forget that all speech is a classification and that all classifications are oppressive' (Barthes, 2000: 460). The deep understanding and knowledge of semiotics, of signs and symbols, contributed to Walter having a more formal 'closed-down' flow of language; yet this is an extremely enlightening and a pedagogical-like approach to our more prescribed, shared experience. Walter 'lives' his practice, like that of the psychogeographer, in direct comparison to the Situationists' proclamation, which 'sought to break the spectator's

psychological identification with the hero so as to draw him into activity' (Debord, 1981: 43). In relation to Walter's artistic 'activity', he investigates and seeks to 'break' down the prescribed psychological identification with common, everyday spaces, delving deeper, focusing on personal mythologies and the language and details associated with them.

I see similarities of this particular Situationist statement in relation to the virtual (and physical) memory walks: in that they seek to draw and forefront oneself (a public) into the process and activity of walking through personal space. However, I would like to state that the concept of the walks, compared to the *Wythy Walks* around Wythenshawe, was much more easily grasped by the *Unstable Ground* artists and, to a certain extent, made the process familiar, with more knowing collaborators familiar with engaging with new ways of examining concepts. Although the curatorial process was relevant, and was an extremely hard task to organise the artists' time throughout the exhibition process, the 'less knowing' audience of the *Wythy Walks* appeared to benefit from the walks in terms of how surprised they were about the collaborative process of engaging with memory and familiar environments and spaces.

The walks for the *Unstable Ground* exhibition are, in essence, a collaborative and uniting act through a playful and constructive process, a positive act for engaging with space, with artists accustomed to engaging publically with practice and conceptual processes. The curated *Unstable Ground* exhibition was an ideal opportunity to examine the potential of the virtual manifestation of the *Wythy Walks*

in an artistic and cultural context. The *Unstable Ground* walks, although not in the real place in a physical sense, through the virtual realm, emphasise the importance of engaging with a spatiotemporal process through a real 'live' experience, enhancing the narratives which were being ignited. This online virtual experience, as a curatorial tool with this group of artists, acts as an alternative, organic, but in-depth, and informal interview strategy, and becomes an integral part of the practice-led research and impacts on the presentation and activation of the exhibition experience.

The virtual walks demonstrate the insights that can be gained from engaging curator and artists' with a past, relevant to making and presenting work in a present, by unravelling and laying bare autobiographical and artistic details. This is achieved through direct, personal and in-depth dialogue around why these artists work in a particular way. Equally, the virtual walks demonstrate how an informal, un-prescribed way of interviewing, can capture (in a relevant way) how these artists dialogued with both curator and practice. This is expanded further during the exhibition for the viewer/participant of the *Unstable Ground* experience by presenting and creating space to explore, think and move in-between.

My own tentative memories of the Whit Walks are associated with my involvement with the local youth club and my sister's short-lived participation of them through the Brownies. I was too interested in playing football; although I do have a strong memory of being dragged around by relatives, mainly with the fear of having to wear another pair of *Clarkes'* shoes.

"It was when you were at school that he bugged off. He used to take Sarah out in her trolley, he used to say he was taking Sarah for a walk but obviously he wasn't that when he was seeing that woman Collette, but then he got his comeuppance. I went to Nanna Wilson's funeral he was with this woman he was with for years, and he had his son with her, he's the spit of him. Not long after that, we moved to Dunstall road and I got the job at the Happy Man, my priority was you and Sarah, the only way I could work was at nights, at least I had your Nan and Granddad to babysit. I was on the social and I could only work nine hours a week, and that was for you and Sarah. He didn't give me anything, I was entitled to 5p a year, he was supposed to give £12 a week for you and Sarah, and he never did." (Excerpt from *Patricia* 10th September 2014)

I was close to Cris as a teenager, yet I had not seen or spoken to him since the late 1990s. He has been living in Australia for a number of years now and he had seen some evidence of the *Wythy Walks* through my *Facebook* page. Through this he became not only interested in the concept of the walks, but also interested in doing a walk. Maybe next time he and his partner are in England in a couple of years, was my *Facebook* message reply. Due to the obvious geographical constraints, doing a walk was not going to happen. Imagine him and his partner over for a couple of intense weeks, seeing family and friends up and down the country, a bit of time out on a *Wythy Walk*, a pipe dream at best. The concept of the *Wythy Walks* through *Google Earth* then materialised and using the street level mode, we met at his Granddads front door in Wythenshawe.

“I remember those hedges being really, really high. You could crawl underneath them and play all sorts of games under there. Its bizarrely small but I suppose that’s just from what you remember as a little kid. We used to climb over that fence into the girls Catholic school across the way from us and onto the roof. An older friend of mine climbed through a window while we watched guard, he came back with a load of magic markers. It looks abandoned now, it’s clearly not a school anymore. The garage looks old enough to be ours, they’ve not looked after it very well though. I remember that garage being a bit too small, my mum crashed the car into the side of it once. She was reversing out and caught the mudguard on the wall on the way out and just carried on driving.” (Excerpt from *Cris* 18th

January 2014)

CONCLUSION

Research outcomes: contribution to practice and theory

This practice-led research study re-configures a self-initiated artistic residency by generating layers of narrative, whilst simultaneously interpreting a past and connecting with a present. The project supports the importance of the shared articulation of a community's spaces through the unravelling of dialogue. The walks advocate a shared voice through unplanned interactions with spaces, accepting the free-flowing process of talking, allowing narrative to lead the participants. The methodology consequently enables a deeper understanding, expression and measurement of spatial and historical realms, in the physical and virtual 'now'. The nomadic methodological practice, particularly the virtual manifestation of the *Wythy Walks*, is a mode of capturing the act of crossing spaces and timespans without regimentation, ratification or definition of the environments examined. *In Search Of The Shortcuts* advocates an unmediated spatio-temporal 'Relativity'²⁵ of social relations via the realms of the *Wythy Walks*. The environments walked through became vistas of memory: memories are interpreted, but equally, we speak through them.

The main outcome of this practice-led research study is that I have claimed a theory of engaging and interpreting spatial realms through an affective, self-initiated artistic

²⁵ Relativity is a word I have personally coined from the research. It is defined by combining the two words 'Relate', as in narrate and associate, and 'reality'. By bringing the two words together I am saying that history (narrative) and space (reality) is interconnected through the *Wythy Walks* methodology.

residency of the past in the present. The research defines this in terms of art practice, and the project promotes walking and narrative theories to critically assess the symbiotic relationship between spaces and multiple narratives, demonstrating the relevance of creating a residency in this way.

The practice-led research makes a number of contributions to contemporary art and critical theory by developing new tactical models for the deep-mapping of a community within physical, virtual, and psychological realms. This was achieved by aligning walking with the generative process of narrative. Simultaneously, the research demonstrated an affective, liberating and collaborative engagement of a community through the *Wythy Walks* methodology (a valuable and positive process of reflecting both on and within a locale). Furthermore, the concept of the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* residency has advanced the notion from the lineage of artistic residency, by engaging and situating the past in the present and emphasising the experiential qualities of spaces as a physical, virtual and psychological model. It is a collective and existent act of histories: 'scenes of narrative' through layers of space and personal history. *In Search Of The Shortcuts* relates to current definitions of an artistic residency, in that it advocates 'meaningful and multi-layered exchange', yet further develops the concept by situating and exploring the spatial realms.

Freud's usual application of psychoanalytical theories and approach to patients has been applied to the collaborative practice of engaging with spaces and narrative, through the methodological process of the *Wythy Walks*. The research demonstrates how the shared acts of walking and generating narrative have contributed to the

loosening of 'inhibitions' by engaging with the spatial realms that drive them. The research reflects upon and addresses Freud's theories, particularly the notion that pent-up, repressed memory has been applicably 'freed-up', and the process of remembering, repeating and working through has led us 'along familiar paths to the reawakening of memories' (Freud, 1914: 45). Furthermore, the research reveals how the 'recalling of memory' is an important and interpretive tool for shared dialogue, allowing the new memory of the walks to flourish within the present.

Simultaneously, the project research, specifically through the *Wythy Walks* methodology, pursues and demonstrates the writings of W.G. Sebald, particularly *Rings of Saturn* (1996), in which the interplay between the psychological realms of walking and narrative are highlighted and intertwined. The unpredictability and fragility of memory, emphasised by the non-linear narrative (and subject) of *Rings of Saturn*, is reflected upon and supports the research claims in relation to an approach of encouraging and generating narrative through walking. The random routes parallel an overarching impulsive approach to history; understanding the value of the *Wythy Walks* methodology, allowing the unplanned unravelling of narrative in reference to Sebald's writing process. The research applies Sebald's concepts, prevalent in *Rings of Saturn*, to the spontaneous and practical methodological approach and process, allowing the opening of the memory banks to emerge from the spaces we inhabit: retrieving, reflecting and re-enacting events blurred by the unstable process of narrative.

The research reflects upon and recognises the significance of engaging in layers of history in Walter Benjamin's theories, particularly in reference to *A Berlin Childhood around 1900* (2006). Benjamin reconfigures nostalgia, not as a merely sentimental process of engaging with a past, but concerned, rather, with occupying fragments of hidden history in 'real-time' through the constructed spaces (physically and psychologically) awaiting to be understood. By returning to Wythenshawe, the research draws parallels to Benjamin's *A Berlin Childhood around 1900* in reference to generating layers of narrative. Likewise, the *Wythy Walks* methodology activated narrative by the live act of walking through the mind and through the physical and emotional act of walking through heterogeneous spaces. Furthermore, Benjamin's book is reflected upon in reference to the concept of the self-initiated residency: it connects to a specific period of childhood, whereby memory becomes a deep contemplation on the period in question, whilst simultaneously heightening the spaces that are walked around. This further compares and demonstrates that *In Search Of The Shortcuts* is a living and breathing process through physical, virtual and psychological realms.

Through the applied engagement with the social and spatial relations of a community, and the practical analysis of the *Wythy Walks* process, the research also reflects upon and highlights the spatial theory of Doreen Massey, who emphasises and rearticulates the importance of our common assumptions of space. Specifically and practically how the *Wythy Walks* interacted with and were led by both time and space simultaneously unfolding; they accessed and interpreted space as well as presenting and detailing a social relationship with it. The process of the *Wythy Walks*

presents a multiplicity of shared personal stories and experiences through a lively and open engagement with layers of narrative and drawn-out space.

The research practical case studies are cross-referenced to situate and contextualise the thesis to help further the concepts. Furthermore, a number of the practical case studies are also influenced by the significant references in this research; therefore it is important to understand the relationships these projects had with them. As the research developed, the four key literary figures, Freud, Sebald, Benjamin and Massey, emerged as the focus and emphasis developed on engagement with spaces and the generating of narrative around environments starting from the stimulating location of a past or present home.

Through the practical and theoretical methodologies, the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* website supports and stresses the importance of engaging with a personal and collective past and is an affective experience of generating shared narrative in spatial realms. The research website demonstrates new ways of presenting 'live' practice, by aligning the importance of both the physical and virtual experiences. *In Search Of The Shortcuts* presents both the intimate and interactive as a continuous and experiential lateral-mapping of collaborative artistic processes. The research is reflected upon through the multi-sensory design, functionality and structure of the website, which developed as a non-hierarchical platform and incorporates a navigable outline version of *Google Maps*. The website encourages the participant to re-enact and explore the artworks developed from the research, engaging layers of personal and collective narrative, mapped out both visually and audibly, in relation to the specific

locations. The research defines space through the experience of generating narrative, tracing the lateral-mapping of social relations, presenting both pavement and the cracks in-between.

Summary of thesis content, research question and methodology

The thesis content is composed of a number of writing styles: autobiographical, reflective, theoretical, factual and historical. The autobiographical and factual voices converge to have a significant conversation through the parallel text vignettes, dispersed throughout chapters 1, 2 and 3; theoretical and reflective and historical tones are in evidence throughout. This practice-led research project is designed to support an examination of a self-initiated artistic residency of the past in the present, through which walking and narrative interact in physically embodied, virtual and psychological space. Using a combination of research methods, including conducting a series of physical and virtual walks called the *Wythy Walks*, the psychological experience of walking in seemingly familiar spaces, simultaneously surveying relevant literature, and curating the *Unstable Ground* exhibition test and further interrogate the practice-led research. Developing the practical and theoretical framework around the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* website is a vital part of the post-doctoral research.

The initial aim of the practice-led doctoral research was to explore how employing an expanded notion of drawing, one could create a sense of place around a specific location and period drawn from childhood experiences. However, a new set of questions were employed that more specifically ask how walking and narrative

interact in physically embodied, virtual and psychological space, in the context of a self-initiated artistic residency of the past, situated in the present. At the beginning of the research journey the question changed as the initial subject and interrogation felt too broad, and more focus was required on the conceptual and collaborative practical research; the notion of a self-initiated residency, defined as meaning outside of, and not strictly attached to, a specific cultural institution, re-articulating the notion of a self-initiated residency as one that is experienced physically, virtually and psychologically, a 'residency of the mind' as much as a physical experience.

The thesis identifies the embodiment of the intimate, shared experience of the Wythy Walks methodology, where layers of narrative, that define space, coexist; a collaborative self-initiated residency, interpreting a past in the present through the reciprocal relationship between walking and narrative linked directly to the literature and theories referenced. This slight shift in content resulted from the initial practical and theoretical research, and over the last three years has allowed the practice-led research to adapt and embrace changes, yet still remain focused. The study identifies how a relevant and deep, yet complex and sometimes difficult dialogue with personal/shared spaces emphasised both through the practical process of the *Wythy Walks* and utilising the online walks as an artistic/curatorial tool. The practical methodology pursued the collaborative practice of walking and the generation of narrative to engage and interact with a community, alongside the re-contextualising and impact of a self-initiated artistic residency. The research makes a convincing case that participating with physical and virtual realms in this way, generating narrative

through an affective, shared exploration, can go some way to answering how we might re-connect, and be together.

Impact of the study on my practice

The philosophies and practices of engaging narrative with walking through the physical and virtual realms have presented me with an opportunity to reflect upon my expanded practice and explore further methodologies in relation to other practitioners, some of whom I was unaware of prior to the research. The impact of the study in this respect has been significant, leading to a deeper understanding of past work and the interpretation and development of new methods. Through developing the concept of the residency and understanding the implications of my practice and by applying the newly founded and explored methodology, I have understood and developed new work to a much higher and rigorous standard.

Unpacking the theoretical terms and understanding past residency concepts and experiences have applied to my practice as a whole and to the curatorial aspects. The virtual walks in particular, demonstrate the insights that can be gained from engaging curator and artists with a past (spaces and narrative) relevant to making and exhibiting work in the present. This is achieved by unravelling and laying bare the autobiographical and artistic details through direct, personal and in-depth dialogue. Equally, the virtual walks demonstrate how an informal, un-prescribed way of interviewing, capture (in a relevant way) how these artists dialogue with both curator and practice. The exhibition experience for the viewer/participant of *Unstable*

Ground is expanded further by situating the virtual walks in the specific locations where the walks took place. Consequently, the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* website has a profound impact on both the research and my practice, becoming an ongoing 'live' process, and a theoretically relevant presentation of work, as opposed to a 'portfolio' of individual archived works. The website therefore is a social and artistic 'lateral-mapping' and recording of both practice and research.

The research supports the symbiotic dynamics between the multifaceted practices, including the re-enacted films, virtual walks and biro drawings, manifested through the multi-sensory experience of the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* website platform. Consequently the practice is liberated by the research, allowing me a deeper knowledge and understanding of my methods and aims. The research recognises the overarching concept of generating shared narrative of a past in the present, supporting the notion of a self-initiated residency, defined through the *Wythy Walks* methodology. The website generates the practice/research into one entity, whilst simultaneously highlighting the innate meaning of the individual works. Furthermore the research focuses on the exploration of physical, virtual and psychological space, shown through *In Search Of The Shortcuts* website, and opens up avenues, within the realms of 'live' and accessible new media. Utilising the accessibility of programmes, *Google Earth*, *Skype* and *Debut*, means that I can use and activate this model of research within any community and this would be of particular use to those with limited mobility (detailed below).

Future post-doctoral study

Through practical and theoretical research the physical and virtual *Wythy Walks* methodology has developed. Post-doctorate, the intention is to further explore this method of engaging with spaces and narrative, as an intervention for human/social agency. Additionally, further advancement of the virtual curatorial platform, initiated with the *Unstable Ground* exhibition, is anticipated. This has the potential to be expanded and examined with a larger, more public gallery experience. Importantly, many comments have been made, and consequently noted, by various researchers, collaborators and the public, on the research around the relationship between walking and generating narrative and the potential the research has to become a valuable tool for other communities and social platforms. The *Wythy Walks*, for example, have been presented as part of an enquiry into how children in a hospital setting engage with each other and with their locale. Thus, through further research, the *Wythy Walks* are the perfect platform to engage with many communities, both in person, as a supportive and assistive tool, and simultaneously promoted through the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* website model.

The research also has the potential to engage with an elderly community, on many levels. The *Wythy Walks* are, in essence, a positive method for engaging with any community; however for an older generation it can be much more than a regimented short stroll. An individual, or group of individuals, would take the lead, the walks (physical and virtual realms) would be guided by them, as the stories reconnect with each other collectively and individually. This research suggests that autobiographical

memory has a role to play in day-to-day life, particularly with regards to directive information, identity and social aspects. There has been much research around Alzheimer's in relation to engaging patients with memory through walking, although not detailed here as beyond the time frame of this research. The methodology of the *Wythy Walks* embrace the familiarity of spaces through the narratives associated with them. Potentially working with NHS' Alzheimer's patients, or passing on the process of the *Wythy Walks* to their carer's, for example, could further the philosophical and practical implications of the research. I can see how further investigation and practical action, through shared and relevant research could develop this social aspect as a legacy within a much wider community and society than initially anticipated.

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<accessed on 2nd October 2015>

Waldon, S. July 2014) *Unstable Ground*. Review of the exhibition, *The Skinny*
<http://www.theskinny.co.uk/art/news/paper-15-unstable-ground-paper-gallery-manchester>
<accessed on 2nd October 2015>

Woolham, S. (2014) *Unstable Ground*. PAPER gallery page with links to works, virtual walks and installation images
<http://www.paper-gallery.co.uk/335366/3819170/exhibitions/unstable-ground>
<accessed on 2nd October 2015>

Wilkes, R. (2014) *Playing Tricks: Artists delve into their memories for evocative and personal exhibition...Unstable Ground* Review in *We Heart*
<http://www.we-heart.com/2014/09/10/unstable-ground-paper-gallery-manchester/>
<accessed on 2nd October 2015>

Links to *Unstable Ground* and case study artist's websites and specific projects

Jeremy Deller:
<http://www.jeremydeller.org>
Procession in *Projects* section of website
<http://www.jeremydeller.org/Procession/Procession.php>
<accessed on 2nd October 2015>

Annabel Dover:
<http://www.annabeldover.com>
http://www.transitiongallery.co.uk/htmlpages/transition_artists/annabel_dover_imgs.html
<http://www.darkstarlit.blogspot.co.uk>
<accessed on 2nd October 2015>

Laura Oldfield Ford:
<http://lauraoldfieldford.blogspot.co.uk>
<accessed on 2nd October 2015>

Freee:
<http://freee.org.uk>
How To Talk To Buildings in *Works* section of website
<http://freee.org.uk/works/how-to-talk-to-buildings>
<accessed on 2nd October 2015>

Reece Jones:
<http://www.allvisualarts.org/artists/reece-jones.aspx>
<http://www.re-title.com/artists/Reece-Jones.asp>
<accessed on 2nd October 2015>

David Miles:
<http://www.davidmiles.info>
<accessed on 2nd October 2015>

Simon Pope:
<https://sites.google.com/site/ambulantscience>
Link to *The Memorial Walks* Film and Video Umbrella website
<http://www.fvu.co.uk/projects/detail/commissions/the-memorial-walks>
<accessed on 2nd October 2015>

George Shaw:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLlcm2iupWM>

<https://www.balticmill.com/whats-on/exhibitions/detail/george-shaw-the-sly-and-unseen-day>

<http://www.wilkinsongallery.com/artists/8-George-Shaw>

<accessed on 2nd October 2015>

Stephen Walter:

<http://www.stephenwalter.co.uk>

<accessed on 2nd October 2015>

Lisa Wilkens:

<http://www.lisawilkens.com>

<http://lisawilkens.blogspot.co.uk>

<accessed on 2nd October 2015>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Design and details of *In Search Of The Shortcuts* interactive website



Figure 1

In Search Of The Shortcuts title screen website design (2015)

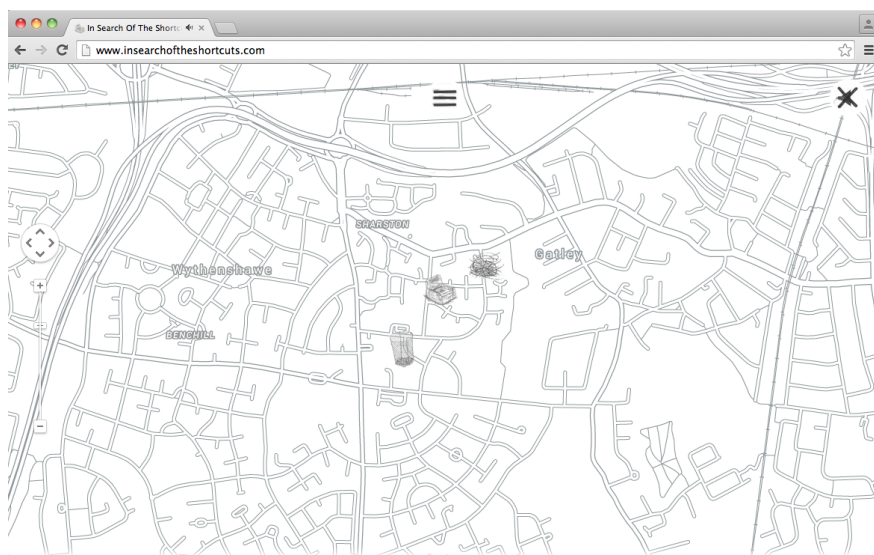


Figure 2

In Search Of The Shortcuts homepage website design (2015)

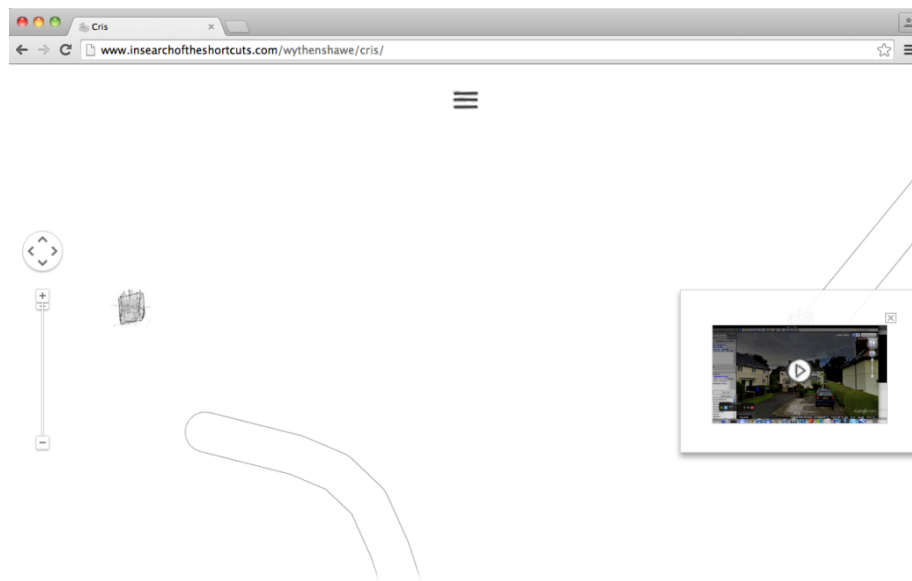


Figure 3

In Search Of The Shortcuts website detailing *Cris* virtual Wythy Walk location (2015)

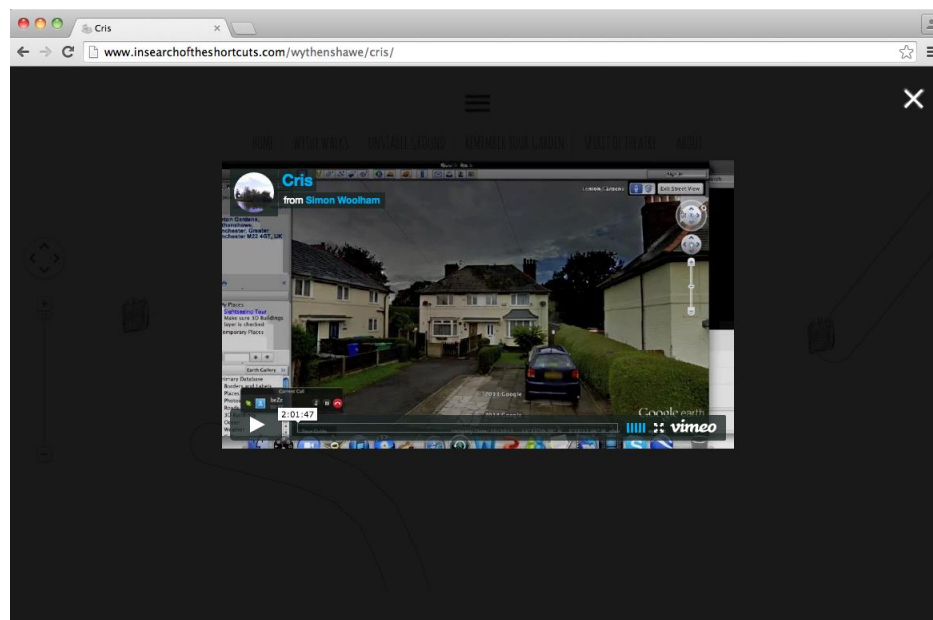


Figure 4

In Search Of The Shortcuts website detailing *Cris* virtual Wythy Walk recorded experience (2015)

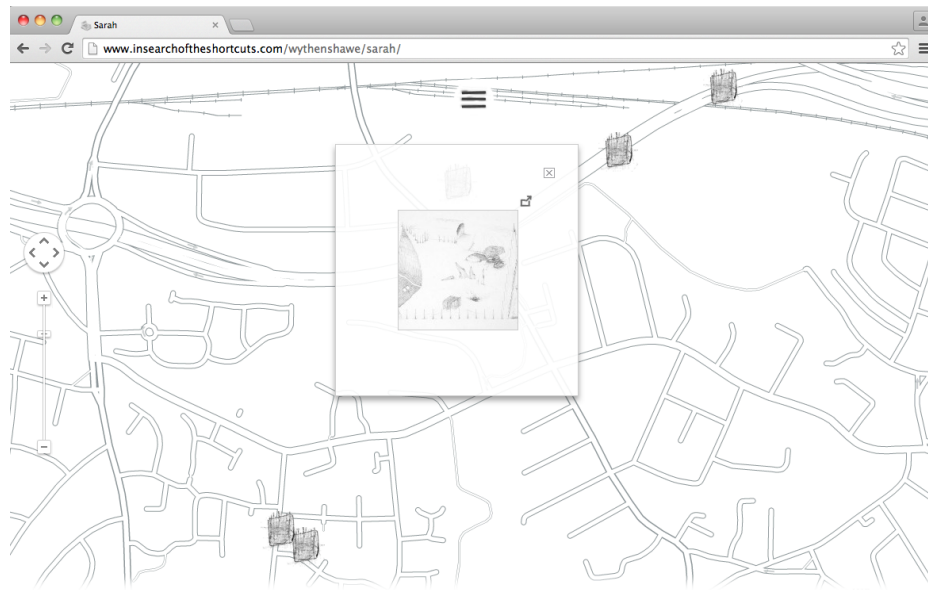


Figure 5

In Search Of The Shortcuts website detailing *The Tip* biro drawing location (2015)



Figure 6

In Search Of The Shortcuts website detailing *The Tip* biro drawing (2015)

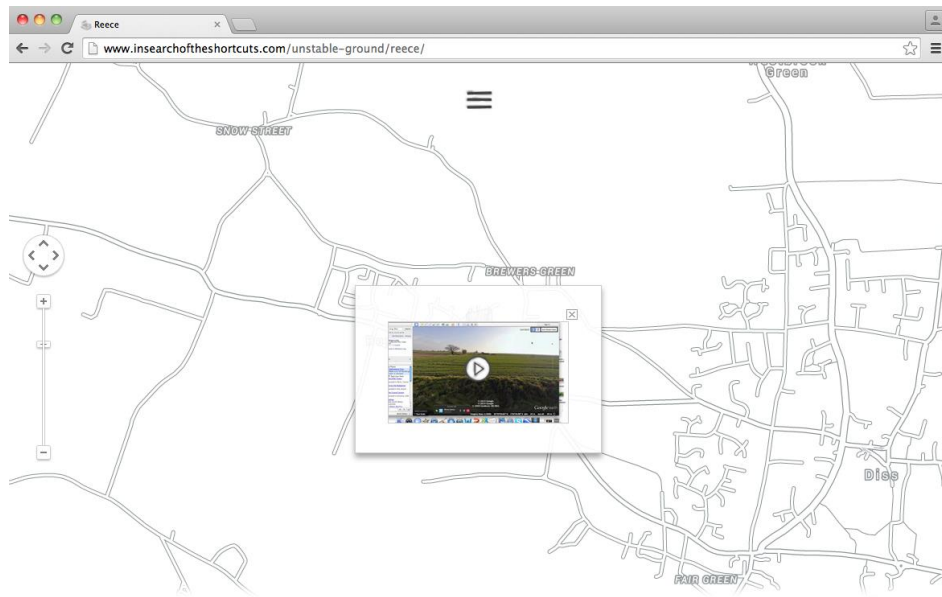


Figure 9

In Search Of The Shortcuts website detailing the *Reece* virtual walk location (2015)

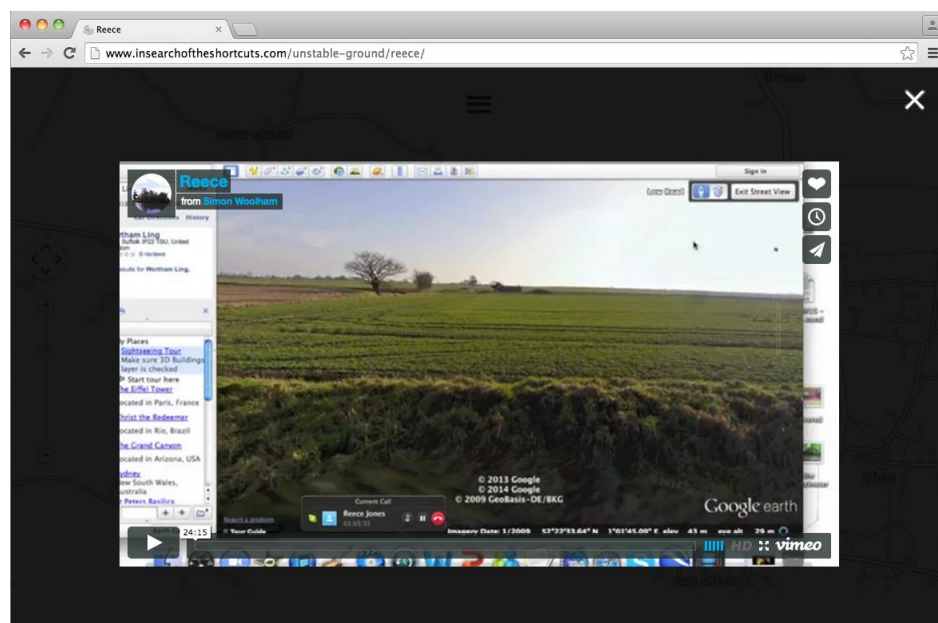


Figure 10

In Search Of The Shortcuts website detailing the *Reece* virtual walk film (2015)

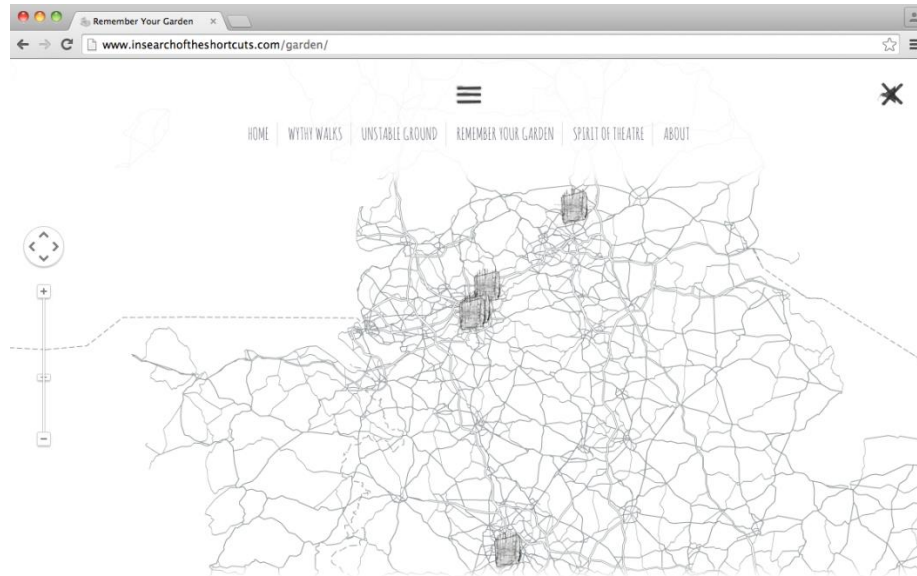


Figure 11

In Search Of The Shortcuts website detailing the locations of the *Remember Your Garden?* project (2015)

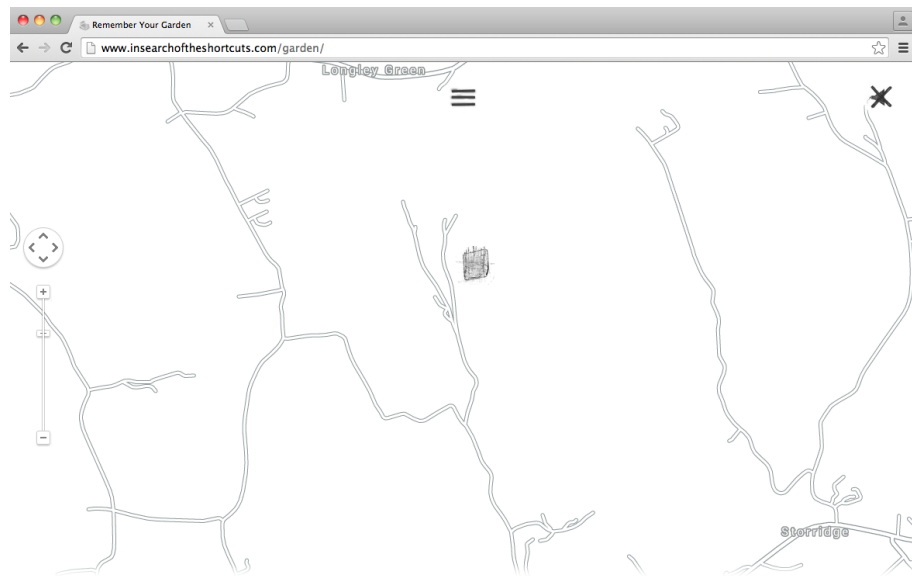


Figure 12

In Search Of The Shortcuts website detailing the location of a *Remember Your Garden?* (2015)



Figure 13

In Search Of The Shortcuts website detailing *David* biro drawing from the *Remember Your Garden?* project (2015)

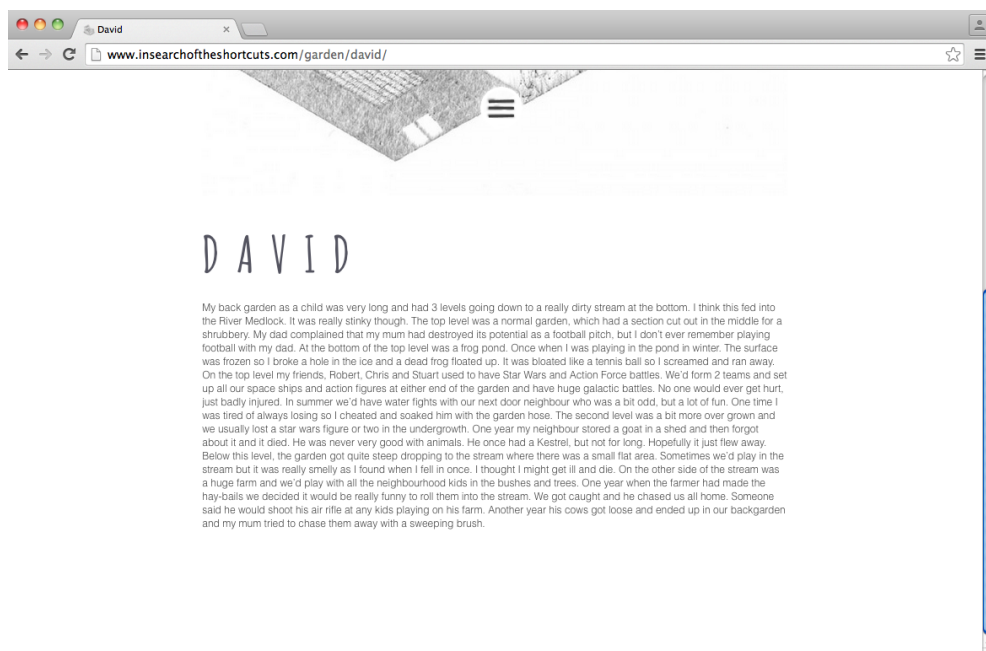


Figure 14

In Search Of The Shortcuts website detailing *David* narrative from the *Remember Your Garden?* project (2015)

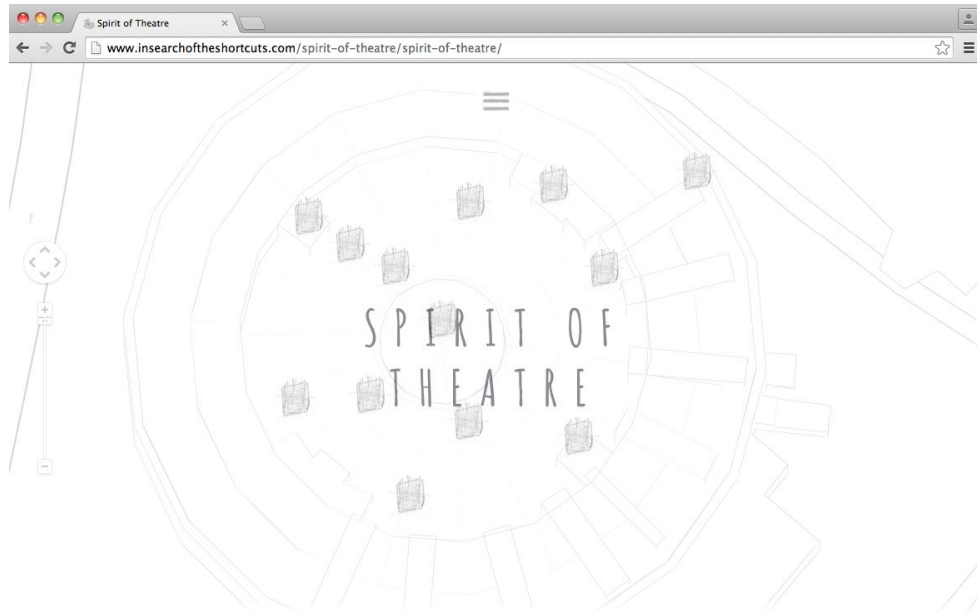


Figure 15

In Search Of The Shortcuts website detailing *Spirit Of Theatre* project location (2015)

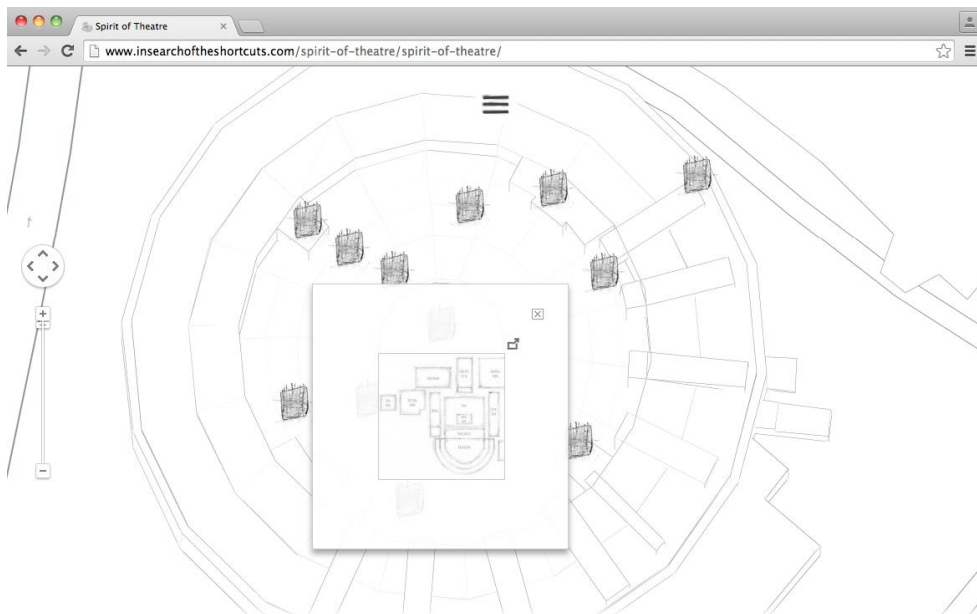


Figure 16

In Search Of The Shortcuts website detailing *Spirit Of Theatre* map biro drawing (2015)

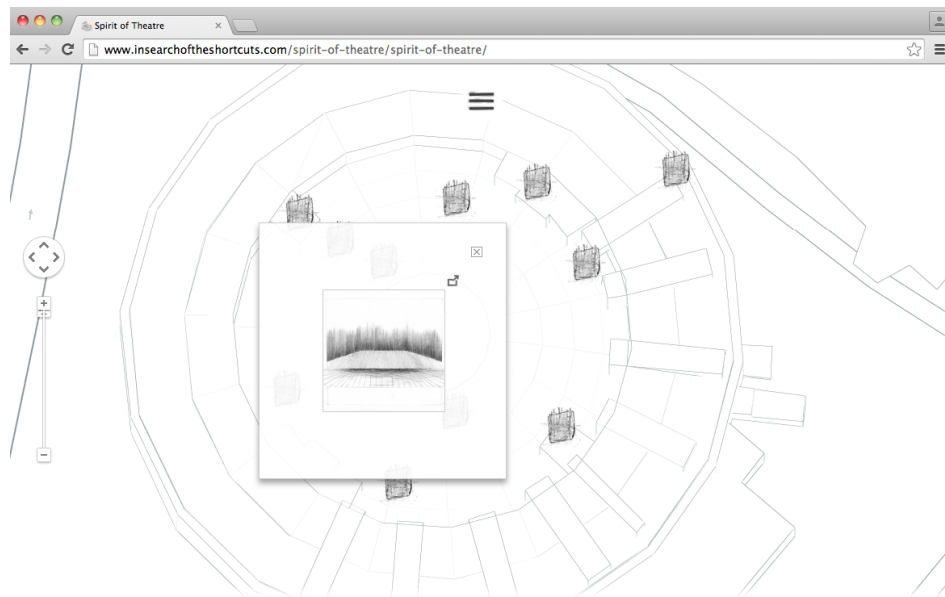


Figure 17

In Search Of The Shortcuts website detailing *Spirit Of Theatre Stage* biro drawing location (2015)

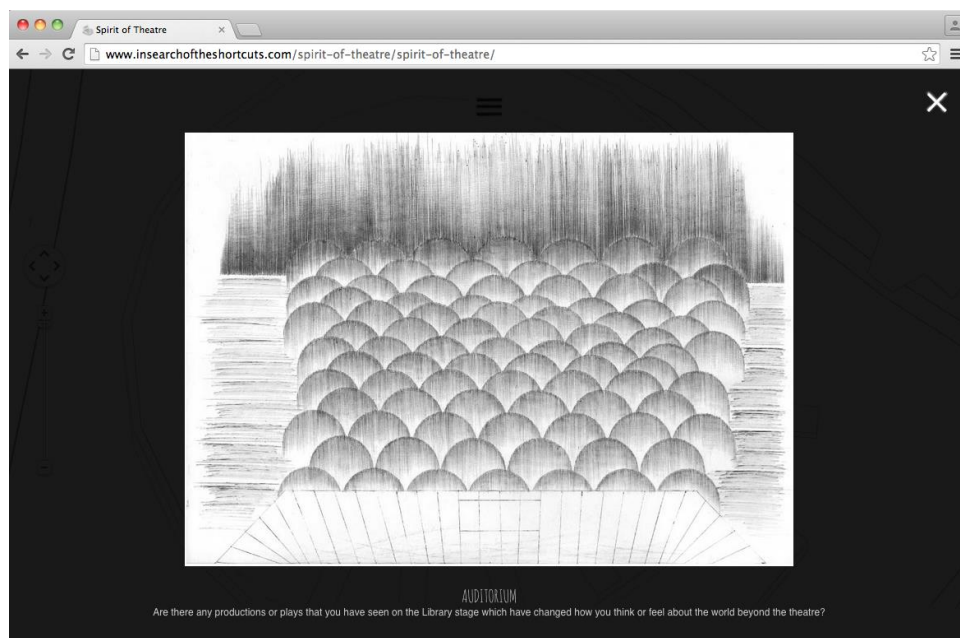


Figure 18

In Search Of the Shortcuts website detailing *Spirit Of Theatre Auditorium* biro drawing (2015)

APPENDIX II: Ongoing Pedagogical Projects

During the research period a series of pedagogical projects were instigated, which explored drawing as part of influencing the *In Search Of The Shortcuts* practice-led research and consequent website. Working with Button Lane Primary School in Wythenshawe, I initiated a series of drawing and narrative projects that highlighted the relationship between drawing and the stories associated with the school spaces. The artist and writer Deanna Petherbridge observes, in relation to drawing through this series of workshops, that ‘Learning to draw, while no longer a privileged activity in either school or specialist art teaching, remains an activity of enormous importance and potency for education as a whole. Learning to observe, to investigate, to analyse, to compare, to critique, to select, to imagine, to play and to invent, constitutes the veritable paradigm of functioning effectively in the world’ (Petherbridge, 2010: 233).

I initiated the same project at Staffordshire University, during an event called Drawing Week, and at Wythenshawe Hall, as part of a cultural education programme in Wythenshawe Park, encouraging the importance of the Hall.²⁶ *Excavating Space/Exploring Drawing* explored the relationship between drawing and place. The project also acted as a reflection of the past and future reflections on the Wythenshawe Hall and park grounds.

²⁶ At Staffordshire University I explored the project further, using rubbings from the school architecture, interiors and surrounding school environments, and from this reflected and considered the importance of drawing and space both individually and collectively whilst cutting and pasting our rubbings creating a documented drawing installation.

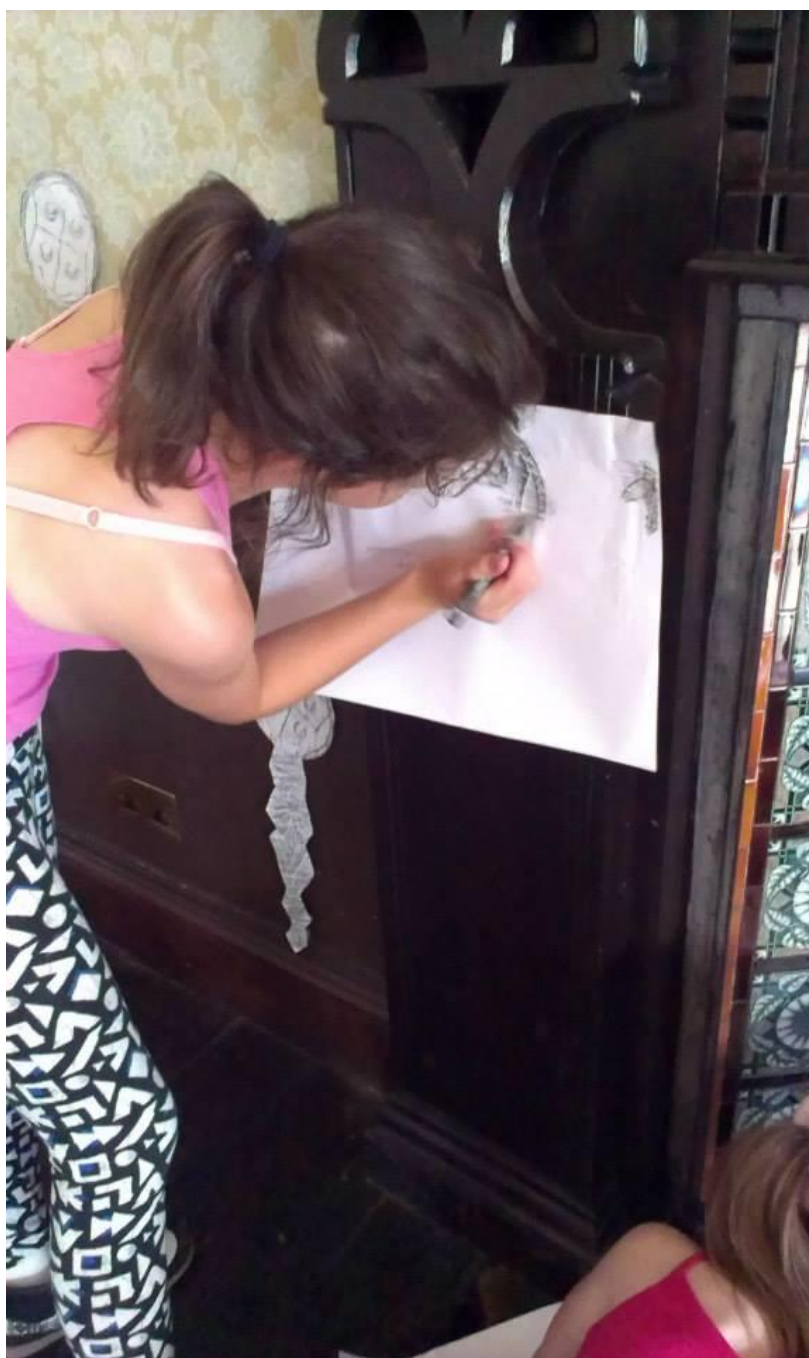


Figure 19

Excavating Place/Exploring Drawing project at Wythenshawe Hall, Wythenshawe Park (2012)

Utilising rubbings and frottage to explore the architecture, interiors and surrounding environments, a collaborative drawn installation was initiated, encouraging the use and opening up of the building. Through this process, the reflection and consideration of the importance of drawing and an engagement with space, both individually and collectively, was encouraged. The anthropologist and writer Michael Taussig, in relation to his book *I Swear I saw This* (2011), emphasises his perspective on drawing, that 'Apart from the perceived closed-off parameters of the art world' (Taussig, 2011: 34), he believes that 'Drawing is devalued in relation to reading and writing in Western culture. Therefore, is it by ridding the artist's ego and creating a more open and investigative role for the artist to help in encouraging the importance of drawing in both a wider and more focused curriculum within education that is needed' (Taussig, 2011: 34).

The process of engaging with the act of rubbing and collage-making in this way is a group collaborative activity, encouraging conversation with each other about the surfaces of their environment. This can lead to the breaking down of individual barriers, alongside questioning any assumptions that they might have around not being able to draw. The process of cutting and pasting the rubbings at Staffordshire University produced an immersive artwork. The students built a whole space utilising and interpreting the rubbings they had collected, creating a multi-dimensional landscape between many minds, creating new imaginary buildings and producing a new shared cityscape.



Figure 20

Excavating Place/Exploring Drawing project at Staffordshire University, Stoke-On-Trent
(2013)

APPENDIX III: Links to individual re-enacted films and virtual walks

Annabel: <https://vimeo.com/106057253>

Cris: <https://vimeo.com/133544451>

David: <https://vimeo.com/106058237>

Keith and Colin: <https://vimeo.com/85468583>

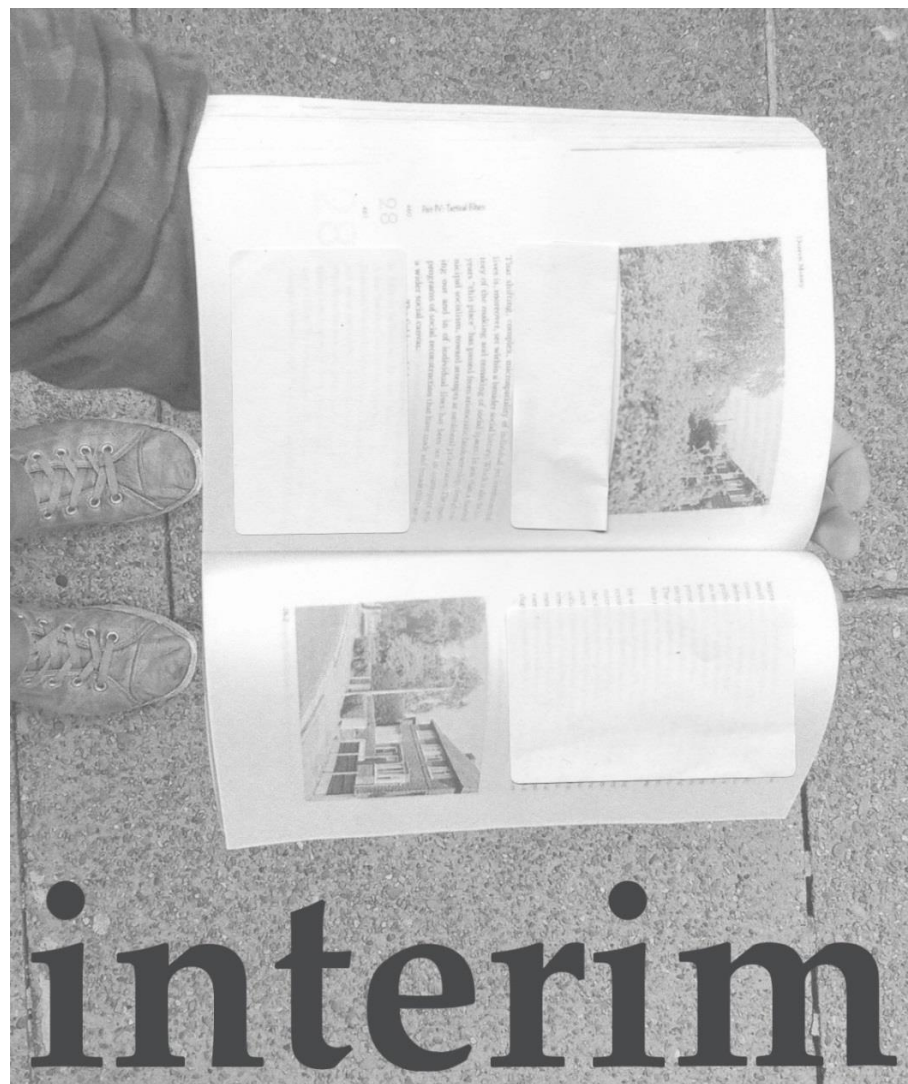
Kevin: <https://vimeo.com/99075059>

Lisa: <https://vimeo.com/106059205>

Reece: <https://vimeo.com/106786149>

Sarah: <https://vimeo.com/85469813>

Stephen: <https://vimeo.com/107564997>



interim PAPER #9

4 October – 17 November 2013

Private View - Thursday 3 October 6 – 9pm
Open Saturdays 11am – 5pm

PAPER



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Figure 21

Poster I designed for *Interim* exhibition at PAPER, Manchester (2013)



Figure 22

Image from *Wythy Talks* performance at PAPER, Manchester (2013)

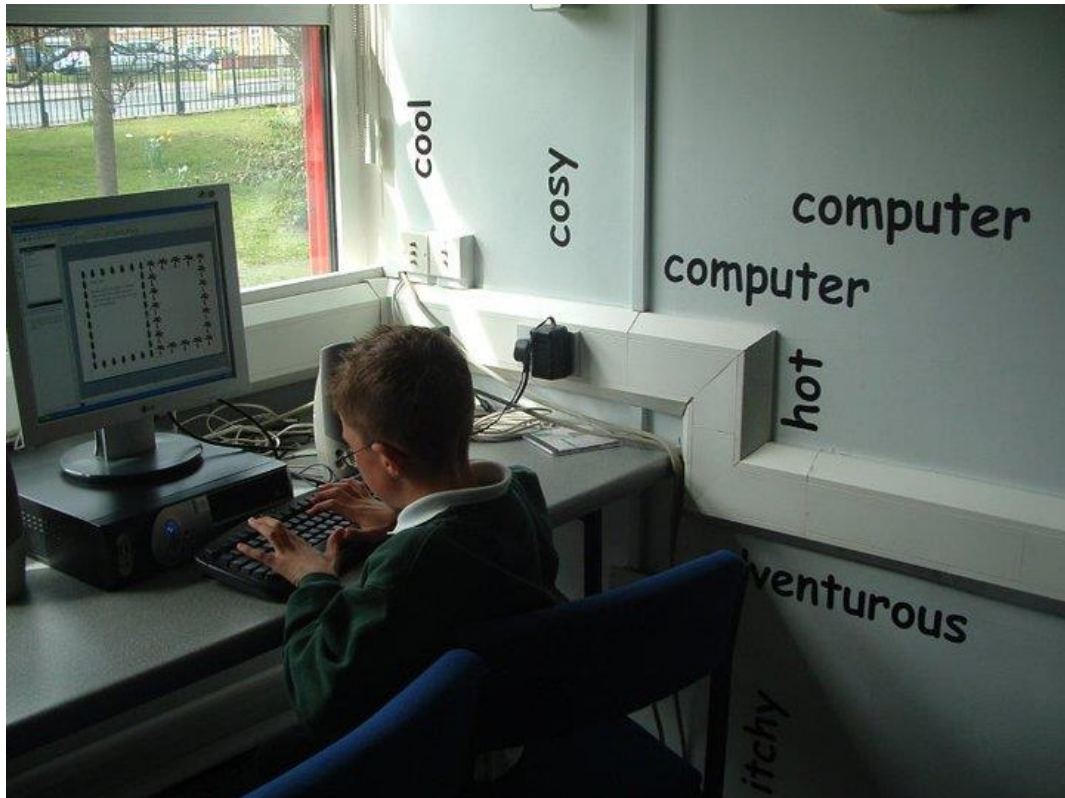


Figure 23

Installation shot from the *Text-Memory-Place* project from the *Our Place* residency,
Broadway junior school, Sunderland (2005)

APPENDIX FIGURES

Figures 1 – 18: *In Search Of The Shortcuts* website design and details (2015)

Figure 19: *Excavating Place/Exploring Drawing* project at Wythenshawe Hall, Wythenshawe Park (2012)

Figure 20: *Excavating Place/Exploring Drawing* project at Staffordshire University, Stoke-On-Trent (2013)

Figure 21: Poster for the *Interim* show at PAPER, Manchester (2013)

Figure 22: Image from *Wythy Talks* performance at PAPER, Manchester (2013)

Figure 23: Installation shot from the *Text-Memory-Place* project from the *Our Place* residency, Broadway junior school, Sunderland (2005)