

A landscape photograph showing a grassy hill in the foreground, with a rocky base visible. The sky is overcast and cloudy. The text "Moving Between the Lines" is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

# Moving Between the Lines

## MOVING BETWEEN THE LINES: an introduction

This unusual and provocative publication is one tangible outcome from an ongoing conversation formalised by members of two disciplines - Geography (at the University of Bristol) and the Visual Arts (at the University of the West of England) and, increasingly, between staff and students at a number of other Higher Education institutions in the south west of England and Wales. This conversation had its origins in an AHRC-funded Landscape and Environment network - Living in a Material World: performativities of emptiness - that enabled staff belonging to the PLaCE Research Centre at UWE to work with their peers in Performance Studies at Aberystwyth and with academics from a range of disciplines at the University of Bristol. This network increasingly became the basis for extending our exchanges to include a larger number of doctoral and graduate students, for example through PLaCE's Visiting Speaker series. In parallel, a doctoral student network has increasingly taken responsibility for extending this conversation, in no small part as the result of Suze Adams' successful bid to the AHRC for financial support for a student led conference focusing on alternative models for dissemination of practice in the field - Moving Between the Lines. This was hosted, with the support of PLaCE, at UWE, Bristol on 01/02 July 2010 as a collaborative venture between the Centre and the Department of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol.

Like all good conversations, this publication invites its readers/viewers to think about how they might participate in the flow of ideas and affect that it performs.

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“The correspondences and clashes between these various essays, images and documents, their multiplicity, challenges any singular understanding ...

“... thinking about time, about newness, about history in the sense of individual lived-experience and about the re-drawing of boundaries and possibilities in the social sphere, in ways that were considerably more dynamic and challenging.”

An alternative model for dissemination of practice in the field: a framing of exploratory research generated by, and originally enacted at, the Moving Between the Lines conference hosted by UWE, Bristol on 01/02 July 2010 - a collaborative venture between The School of Creative Arts, UWE and the Department of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol.

Context

A cross-disciplinary conference heralding the launch of the art and geography research network; a forum for postgraduate students to convene and engage, discuss and debate issues around the convoluted and contested concepts of landscape and place. The conference combined the concrete with the abstract via the incorporation of fieldwork projects/workshop exercises alongside formal presentations, encouraging participants to collaborate in the field and resulting in informal group (re)presentations of place. Against the background of a shared necessity to ‘write up’ practice in the field, the focus of the conference was an exploration and examination of different presentations of research practice and the trialling of alternative strategies for the ‘writing up’ of fieldwork.

Questions

- How might we creatively re-present the performativity of practice in the field?
- How might we explore individual interests and observations through a common performance of place and at the same time retain a criticality of purpose?
- How might we combine description with analysis and the corporeal with the conceptual via productive, expansive yet appropriately rigorous forms of re-presentation?
- What structural frameworks might we explore and/or strategically adopt to reflect the micro-geographies of embodied practice, the actuality of site and situation, and the abstractions of theoretical analysis?
- What difference might the incorporation of additional media (in this instance sound recording) make to evocations of the multi-sensory actualities of a lived experience of place?

Spatial practice and spatial scales: 3 presentations

3 perceptions of distance and proximity: 1 cultural geographer, 1 poet/artist, 1 artist

1 Dr Sarah Cant: Dance, space, embrace

“This talk focuses on creative encounters, unspoken negotiations and subjectivities that emerge through social dance, between couples on the dance floor. I draw upon experiences of dancing Argentine tango, a dance infused with sensuousness, tactility, passion and a rich international cultural history. As a social dance, tango connects individuals through movement, music and free-flowing improvisation, and the tango embrace fosters levels of intimacy and contact in public space. Via dances at different milongas in the UK, and the unfolding associations between two people dancing together, I explore an ethics of difference as bodies connect through dancing Argentine tango.”

2 Sean Borodale: Where is the poem?

“In this presentation I introduce my documentation of landscape and exploration of the *act* of writing. I position a few spotlights along what I consider my path of activity; how an obsession with note-making evolved into two lengthy topographical poems - *Walking to Paradise*, *Notes for an Atlas* - using peripatetic movement as a mechanical means for reading a landscape, as a score or script for playing the poetic temperament (instrument) of the writer. I then consider how these works informed what I have come to call *lyrigraps* - written in a poetic register, on location in real time, and later read in an attempt to re-invoke some shape of the original place or moment.”

3 Neville Gabie: An artist in Antarctica

“Since the age of the first Antarctic explorers, artists were always included in expeditions - in fact Hurley’s photographic images of his journey with Shackleton still shape our perception of the continent. But what is the role of contemporary artists in the age of science? Is it still a legitimate place for artists to want to go and how can the dialogue between art, science and situation be most valuable?

I will discuss these concerns, and others, in relation to previous projects via my experience of a four month residency at Halley Research Station with the British Antarctic Survey team on the Brunt ice shelf in Antarctica.”

<sup>1</sup> Extract from Heathfield, A (Ed), *Small Acts: Performance, the Millennium and the Marking of Time* (Black Dog Publishing 2000), p6/7



## Localised landscapes: 3 fieldwork projects (led by students from UWE/University of Bristol)

### 1 Post-Industrial: Freeform collaboration as a methodology?

This is a group made up of a miscellany of interests, from mapping to memory and myth. However, out of this diversity intriguing correspondences developed; a curious synthesis of physical and psychic landscapes. As the group talked, one theme emerged that we couldn't ignore: the issue of familiarity and unfamiliarity, and what imaginative spaces and places are experienced by some and remain only for others to invent. This will be retained as a working theme as we walk together, experience together, and explore the phenomenology of an unknown (to us) post-industrial environment.

### 2 Sensory walk: Personal experience and common performance

At the conference, the group invites others to join them in following a detailed route - a trail across parkland, urban, residential and industrial space, with a multisensory slant - and to record their individual experiences of the walk, by whatever means, as they go. Back at base, the group will discuss their findings, teasing out common themes on which to base their subsequent conversations, aiming to produce a multi-faceted reflection of a common performance.

### 3 Death: Landscapes of absence and their physical presence

A collaboration of individuals from different academic backgrounds inspired discourse across a vast array of topics but with one dominant referent - death. Several particularly pertinent topics were extracted: death as a threshold; the remains of the dead; death and writing; death and the Shaman; death as a methodology; and death and the non-human. Our formulated method is to converse around these headings and let the dialogue determine its own course. We envisage our fieldwork taking us in the direction of a cemetery whereupon we will see where conversation leads us through this rich and diverse topic.

... the theme of the social space of the dance was carried forward via the fieldwork exercises when various new combinations of common performance were spontaneously choreographed. Images and bodily reverberations flickering through reflections and considerations of 'the social space of dance' as enacted in the landscape ...

... topographical poems, valleys and troughs of literary mapping: words and textual thoughts were carried on further peripatetic journeys and literary body mappings, released back into the elements as the three workshop groups ventured out into the local environs ...

... an artist in residence, a body in the wilderness: abiding images of the Antarctic - a vast expanse of white; unforgivingly beautiful, remaining simultaneously full and empty, always at one remove and yet intensely present. Images that reverberate in our proximity and distance from one another in the field ...

The three presentations guiding us, encouraging us, to step beyond ourselves in order to evoke something of the places we encountered both alone and en masse through the group fieldwork projects. Each of the speakers has generously contributed a text to the publication. By bringing together these contributions with textual, visual and aural responses from participants at the conference, by again giving each individual a voice but simultaneously creating a collective body, we hope to enact another dance via this publication - albeit in a fresh format, one you have to read between the lines and listen to in the spaces between word, image and sound.<sup>2</sup>

Feminist scholar Peggy Phelan observes that 'the pedagogical class, like any performance event, is a collaboration' - with each individual being 'part of the group and each a part from it'. She writes that it is in the 'mutual making' that 'the sociality of performance is manifest'.<sup>3</sup> It is the mutuality that Phelan acknowledges, the 'part and a part' of a group, enacting an inter-change of observer and observed as echoed at the conference, that is of interest in the context of this publication. Phelan cautions against trying to fix this mutuality and advocates, instead, that the mobility of performance be encouraged and maintained in its multiplicity of exchange and possible readings. Such a conceptualisation reflects the intentions underpinning the *Moving between the Lines* conference and was evidenced in the actuality of the workshops. Such an understanding is reflected in any subsequent exchanges, performances and temporary realignments (as, say, might be found between the pages of this publication).

Phelan states:

"The point is to demonstrate how new relations continually emerge by making the sources of power evaporate and re-emerge, elsewhere."<sup>4</sup>

And as she adds, the aim is not to explain or to find unity but to reflect the hybrid intimations embodied in the performativity of the exchanges between participants. The alternative model suggested and reflected in this publication is put forward as just one possibility of an other way of disseminating research - as one among many emergent re-alignments of a multiplicity of encounters and enacted performances, as opportunities for conversation, for further dialogue and investigation, and for possible other collaborations and manifestations of (collective) research practice.

Suze Adams - Editor

<sup>2</sup> See attached CD for recordings from the *Moving Between the Lines* conference.

<sup>3</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked* (Routledge 1993), p173

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p174

Sarah Cant

Dance, space, embrace

“Life always open to what happens. To the fleeting touch of what has not yet found a setting. To the grace of a future that none can control. This will or will not happen”<sup>1</sup>

*As the opening bars of the music played out across the dance floor, I looked over to someone sitting on the other side of the room. Our eyes met, we nodded, stood up, then walked towards each other and embraced. The beginning of the dance; both open to possibilities of connection between the two, of each other's touch, of movement, of the music and the shaping of a dance within an improvised form.*

Creative encounters, unspoken negotiations and subjectivities emerge through social dance, between couples on the dance floor. Via dances at milongas in Britain,<sup>2</sup> and the unfolding associations between two people dancing together, I explore an ethics of difference as bodies connect through dancing Argentine tango. A dance infused with sensuousness and tactility, which has a rich international cultural history and an image of passion.<sup>3</sup> As a social dance, Argentine tango connects individuals through movement, music and free-flowing improvisation. Spaces of improvisation offer the possibility of a dialogue between dancers, but it may be one that is ‘trying

to grab a hold of things that keep changing their form, that are mobile, fluid and unstable and have to do with association, condensation and displacement’.<sup>4</sup> The tango embrace fosters levels of intimacy and contact in public space, intimacy which in so many other social settings lie beyond ‘the everyday’ in British culture and society.

“Listening to the other, sparing them some silent time, is respecting his or her breath, too.”<sup>5</sup>

*We dance, each moment different to the last. I will never know precisely where the tango will move me, each time different to the last. Continuously moving, not arriving, yet always present, always open to what happens. As the dance progresses, in this embrace, wordlessly, we communicate with each other. I listen and they listen; we respect each other within the dance, and through this emerges a fluidity of movement between the two that appears seamless, yet can only occur because we are two, we are different and respect that difference. This is a good dance, musical, connected, fluid, moving freely. There is no conflict of intention, no over-bearing lead where one body imposes their singular view of themselves as one onto the other, forcing movement; there is no apprehension, unease, discomfort or pain. What emerges through this dance is a joyfulness of encounter, of the other.*

Ana Cara writes of ‘esoteric tango’, a way of dancing tango that is not for show or ‘export’,<sup>6</sup> but instead is ‘en la sangre’ (carried in the blood) and ‘sentido en el corazón’ (felt in the heart).<sup>7</sup> Such feeling for tango fuels tango communities in many different places beyond Argentina; feeling for tango lies at the heart of social dancing. But from a different perspective, what emerges, what is felt in the heart by two people as they are dancing can vary immensely from dance to dance with different partners. Through the embrace spatialities and subjectivities emerge within the improvised social dance.

“Let me go where I have not yet arrived”<sup>8</sup>

*After a perfect tanda, I take a short break and sip from a glass of water. Shortly, I am ready to dance again, and accept an invitation from someone with whom I have not danced with before. We dance a tanda.<sup>9</sup> The first dance is a little awkward at times as uncertainty on both sides becomes present, but there are fleeting moments of complete connection that surprise us both, then disconnect us in the moment connection is realised. Consciousness disrupts. The second dance flows, beautifully. As this dance ends, we stand back a little in awe of what has just happened. The final dance of the tanda is a disaster. What once flowed is now a battle, as one side attempts to appropriate. Where there was once a gentle, clear lead there is now a domineering presence of one, imposing (or trying to impose)*

*their strength in the embrace. Communication breaks down. Connection breaks down. In the space of three dances, I have moved from the tentative, to the fluid, to sadly familiar modes of difference.*

A good dance requires dancers to have awareness of their individual presence and that of their partner and to be open to whatever happens next. In so doing, our bodies may reveal our non-verbal pasts (muscle memory for dance, for example), but also social histories and other traditions, sometimes unwittingly. There are times when difference is ‘either-or’, a binary that is not fluid, not reciprocal, when roles within a dance are ‘gendered’, defined by what they are not (the other); although the roles of leading and following in a dance do not neatly map onto male and female dancers in many milonga settings in Britain. So perhaps when a dance does not flow, is not connected, not felt in the heart, it is because of a wonder-less embrace of either/or, one in competition with the other, not two singularities respectful of the others difference. The tango embrace provides a space within which an ethics of difference – a recognition of the differences between two people on their own terms, not based on ‘what the other is not’ – can be explored and potentially realised. The embrace in a good, connected dance (where roles of leading and following merge) may become

<sup>1</sup> Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* (Continuum 1993) p.155.

<sup>2</sup> A milonga is the name for a social dance event, where people come to dance Argentine tango.

<sup>3</sup> For example Christine Denniston, *The Meaning of Tango: The Story of the Argentinian Dance* (Portico 2007); Marta Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (Westview Press 1995); Robert Thompson, *Tango: the art history of love* (Vintage Books 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Mari Krappola, *Burning (of) Ethics of the Passions: contemporary art as process* (University of Art and Design Helsinki 1999) p.40.

<sup>5</sup> Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity Within History* (Routledge 1996) p. 121.

<sup>6</sup> Like the show dancing seen on TV programmes such as Strictly Come Dancing or Dancing with the Stars, or touring tango shows, with highly choreographed displays with exaggerated movement and style, putting on a show for an audience.

<sup>7</sup> Ana Cara, *Entangled Tangos: Passionate Displays, Intimate Dialogues*, *Journal of American Folklore* (2009, Volume 122, Number 486, p.p. 438-465.

<sup>8</sup> Luce Irigaray, *Elemental Passions* (Routledge 1992)

<sup>9</sup> A tanda is a set of three or four dances of similar music (e.g. composer or orchestra), which are usually danced with the same partner. Frequently, in between two tandas a short piece of non-tango music is played (a cortina) when the dancers change partners or rest.



a space ‘in between’, where it is possible to “co-exist, to act together and dialogue”.<sup>10</sup>

“Tales of the self represent ways of combining ethnography and autobiography in explicit and self-conscious ways”.<sup>11</sup>

“Irigaray evokes a sensual encounter with the world, premised on immersion and participation, rather than separation and control”.<sup>12</sup>

As a dancer, an academic, an auto-ethnographer and a writer, I am immersed in my subject and exist as a subject within my research. I seek to explore, through these multiple subject positions, the ways in which sensual encounters in social settings reveal openings, spatialities of the in-between, through which it may be possible to move beyond dichotomies. I write from the position of a ‘member-researcher’,<sup>13</sup> where the language of dancing tango enables me to communicate wordlessly on the dance floor, whilst my writing explores ways of expressing those experiences and developing a dialogue with Luce Irigaray’s philosophies of difference. Through immersion within tango, social encounters and sensuous experience, the sharing of tango embraces moves towards the recognition of singularities, the difference of the other.



Sean Borodale

<sup>10</sup> Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You*, p.125.

<sup>11</sup> Amanda Coffey, *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity* (Sage 1999) p.1.

<sup>11</sup> Tamsin Lorraine, *Irigaray and Deleuze: Experiments in Visceral Philosophy* (Cornell University Press 1999) p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> Brandon Olszewski, *El Cuerpo del Baile: The kinetic and social fundaments of tango, Body & Society* (2008, Volume 14, Issue 2, pp. 63-81.

## Where is the poet?

*Unfolds and props up map-like pages across the lower wall of the room, and over the floor in front of these. The maps are: Lyrigraphic Surveys (black with white text), Walking to Paradise (grey text).*

*Thinks: There's physical enigma to a folded and unfolded page, a temporal quality, and it casts shadows, which elucidate inclines, contour, body; it begins to hold a volume. And the page, under such circumstances becomes a terrain. Yes. The page grows bodily.*

*How should I begin? Ask, Where is the poet? I'm only remotely scared but there's a twisting of my voice box, and both ends are gripped; it's completely clamped into a helix of elemental moment, a sort of bodily seizure of mental time and space. So I'll begin with just a thought for the pages I've unfolded behind me. They are black with white text ... what can I say about them that's useful ... grows blank for a moment*

\*

## Enter voice

I'm going to introduce my work as a writer in the landscape, more specifically my work as a writer across locations. I will position a few lights on what

I consider to be my vein of activity, to show how an obsession with note-making has evolved in particular into two lengthy documentations of place - *Walking to Paradise* and *Notes for an Atlas* - using peripatetic movement as a prompt for reading the walked landscape; as a trigger for playing the poetic temperament (instrument) of the writer. I will try to untangle how and why the presentation of these two works differ - one as map, the other, book - and how a stream of haphazard and random details embodies large, vague forms of the bigger landscape. I will touch on a performance of *Notes for an Atlas*, and how preparations for this provided a new perspective; and how this particular experiment in theatre paralleled my use of dramatic schema as an organising force in the recording of poetic events during the act of experience - stage directions, voices, scenes - developing what I have come to call *lyrigraphs*. I will point out what I see as distinctions between these works - which map poetic outcropping or exposure, a register of engagement across locations (a length of time can be regarded as a location) - and 'poems' (this may prove unhelpful). Lyrigraphs and the earlier walking poems (there, that word) are instructive, in the way of scripts and maps, correlating to

specific actions and regions; they are open technical apparatus for invocation of real-time and real-space. In reality, all poems can contain the mechanical means; however, it is *intention* and *invitation* which puts emphasis on the potential of lyrigraphs to be used *towards* enactments. They are *hospitable* (I'd hope) to both time and space.

A word on precedent and epiphany: Coleridge's notebooks I think rally against the tendency of neatness. Collectively, they offer something of the mind in progress. His notebooks are like the shipyard from which the Mariner's boat set sail - all the experiments of buoyancy, steerage, stress, balance, depth etc. So, this presentation is likely to be a little chaotic, haphazard, as I reach for things here and there in odd corners to explain my whereabouts. Where is the Poet? I'll try to keep up my pursuit of this question, audibly.

What next? I've brought these pages. Points to map-like things behind. And I should say something about the physical page first, since physical pages are lying about. But really I should begin with the earliest work here. Holding one of the maps which make up *Walking to Paradise*. That would be logical.

This is *Walking to Paradise*, written

whilst walking through the Lake District, in the footsteps of Wordsworth and Coleridge. The text is printed on twelve map-sized sheets, in the Ordnance Survey format. The contours of the maps echo the ridged landscape of the Lakes. The text is an unbroken field, four columns per sheet, which continues until the eleventh sheet, where the words run out, leaving blankness across most of the eleventh and all of the twelfth map: space empty so that the eventuality of an end to the piece might remain ... a utopia; a *then*, a nowhere. I was trying to write at the conjunction of phenomena and language. As Rilke suggests: 'are we perhaps here [only] to say: house, bridge, fountain, gate, jug, fruit, tree'. I would hope that the drama within the quietness of reading is an important part of the experience of the work, an experience in which the page speaks for itself, in which reading (when the work is unfolded and arranged into a 12metre strip) becomes a walk. Across the work, pegged out in the details, are bigger land forms, the basin of a valley for instance, or the circumnavigation of part of a lake, crossing of a ridge, passage through a two mile long settlement. These bigger forms are more discernable than in *Notes for an Atlas*. *Notes for an Atlas* was written whilst

walking around central London. As with its predecessor, I began with a simple assertion of limits, generic rules: an address to a reader, no cessation of physical movement, the route topographically continuous.

*Reads from Notes for an Atlas p.72-4*

I'd like to add that most of the world that this describes is transient. So there is only the text, the possibility of orientation, yet not the map, the cohesive image, and even if the map, then not the place; the place in fact within the text, the ingested place which is now and now only the text.

So, *Notes for an Atlas* ... It's a long topographical poem in which the ongoing act of looking or witnessing forms the basis for the metabolic activity (the poetic pulse) of making similes and images; lifting these images (correspondences) into the path of writing. For me, there is something real, physical, to writing on the hoof, like drawing from life, like walking itself, where the scan of the line follows the step of the foot. I aimed to look into each oncoming moment (footfall) and write my way out of it. I was forced by the swift succession of engagements to drop the development of poems. This simple assertion of limits was critical: look, and write; look, and write, so on; working with

just the emergent bits of potential that might have become poems had I stopped to seize them.

When *Notes for an Atlas* was developed for performance, I found myself outside the work, looking in at a homage to the everyman of London's streets; I saw a monstrous implication: a city porous with watching. It summoned up the idea of simultaneous and continuous surveillance of the city by each and every one of its inhabitants.

The two works I've described so far cut across the grain of narratives, just the fleeting nerve-ends of glimpse are noted. I wanted to take this process a link further into catching and working as much as I could in the potent present: to make writing watching. It was at this point that the walking poem stopped and mutated into the lyrigraph. *[Does not add, From lyric and graphic, of course]*

So. What kind of language is appropriate for scrutiny, for taking note, on a poetic basis, how should it work? And, how does the writer keep the precipitating act of creation going; how does the mechanism of writing leap observations into a language of immediacy without losing contact with the primary gasping in of sight and sound and touch.

Like Thoreau, 'a broad margin to ... life'

- space, unconstrained by time; a space that poems require to be said into or across or out of. I gravitate, therefore, towards the contemplative-attentive pause. This pause is useful; it is even powerful. And for this reason, I pause for space in the reading of lyrigraphs as I tried to instil when experience took place in the writing. No decisions of expulsion but an inclusive gathering of pause. I try not to gather what I would have to throw out but still, dangerously I suspect, am fascinated by a 'slight surprise of action' (Bruno Latour), the haphazard quality in quantity. Space, pause for attentiveness, increasingly becomes the vital limiting element, by which I mean facilitator of sense.

So, taking my notebook out on slow excursions until I can see and hear ... Appearances, disorientations, disappearances, other voices, gain presence, loom, and shrink. Sometimes, quite metaphorically, the light levels are too low for any kind of exposure. Some lyrigraphs document what might be described as the standard, the obvious recognisable world-out-there, but others do differently, they find some resemblance, by another key, a kind of counterpoint of image and force, and I liken the whole process to something like a play-in-progress, a workshop in

playing with the other side of ordinary active elements. And the script is live.

And to return to these black pages behind me: *[Turns briefly]* I was still clinging to the idea of the map when I printed them, but really they have stepped off the map, for I could find no precedent for such a collapse of distinction between poem/stage note/time exposure/film script/field log. *[Should I reveal the depths of this difficulty]* What are lyrigraphs then? Here, two statements:

*1) Lyrigraphs are field poems; live documentary written on location, incorporating transcript, notes, and dramatic elements, in which the voice-range includes overheard, peripheral speech and 'various' authorial voices. The lyrigraphs attempt to record the experience of being in or across a specific location over a moment of observation; using the poetic form to embed personal, pared-down experience in factual account, and to investigate how metaphor and simile can strike the 'truth' or 'reality' of a live event as written documentation.*

*2) In reading (more particularly, in reading aloud) they attempt to invoke a specific tone or temperature, in the way a photograph catches and fixes a*

*moment with the presence and enigma of something like an out-of-body memory. The lyrigraph registers the writer's level of engagement with a place, seeking an active voice (or voices) to direct listeners into the topography of the poetic response. In its complete form and range the lyrigraph is not a poem so much as a series of poetic inflections across a period of exposure to the live environment.*

I didn't set out to write poems but to register and document an event, say, in such a way that any poetic arisings, judders, or shivers, might be logged. Therefore, sometimes the poem is scarce, scant, at other times it completely fills out the register of what might ordinarily be described as the world around us. Poetry is not in my view a high ranking language, it just sometimes articulates to the bone.

What do lyrigraphs gravitate towards? I think that they gravitate towards a level just above quietness. By gravitate, I mean to pause towards something of interest, which acts. This implied acting is important to lyrigraphs. I'm going to turn now to some words of Thoreau:

*'We are in danger of forgetting the language which all things and events speak ... which alone is copious and standard'*

So. What kind of instrument can hear, or play, the language of things and events? What is a poem if it is not written song-like? I recognise this question. Some poems stray far from the territory of song; legal or technical language can strike as poetic. And like all poets, all aspirants to the power of poetry, I mean something particular, specific. But written songs are what they are, transcripts of live energy, storage capacities, *[Remembers that Rilke said 'singing is existence']* and keep enough down on the page to allow their readers to re-articulate, exert, invoke their potential effectiveness in the active pattern of their event. What I have endeavoured to put straight ever since by the use of this word lyrigraph is my involvement with poetry through a very specific slant of method. To paraphrase, I would not call lyrigraphs poems, but they do unfold through poetic chambers, rooms, and even stanzas.

And this is how it happens: I carry my notebook out where I go, it's small and light and fairly robust. I carry a pen which can work in the rain. I often have some idea of what I'm looking for; like, there was something interesting and I'll have to go carefully there and listen harder. But there's always - to quote Bruno Latour that 'slight surprise of action'.

The next bit is not an entirely irrelevant excursion. I want briefly to direct you towards Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus. Written shortly before his death, it was first performed after his death and therefore to him, a final text. It is set close to Colonus, which happens to be his birthplace - Sophocles' not Oedipus. I recall the opening scene. Oedipus led on by his daughter, sits on a stone. A villager appears and asks them to leave, the ground is sacred to the Furies - a sanctuary he is not allowed to enter. Oedipus recalls the oracle: a sanctuary sacred to the Furies will be blessed by his death. Sometimes I go back to the edge of the grove, with its dangers, its taboos, its Furies. There isn't time now to elucidate but to say, very swiftly, that Oedipus at Colonus confirms for me the effectiveness of dramatic poetry in adjusting the mind towards invocation of a potent force embedded in the real experience of its writer, real experience as Sophocles must have had on that road to Colonus. Somewhere at some origin real experience, however remote. And it tumbles down through renditions and readings. What in his own terms was Sophocles invoking? Not just his adopted characters, the constellation of their narrative, but his life-force, as a dweller in his own work, acted upon by the

things of that place. We can re-enact, physically.

And, skeletons of time (and space). Technically, lyrigraphs leach up something like the gaps in film scripts, the unwritten space in which the director illuminates his interpretation. I imagine a kind of counterpoint. Reading Tarkovski's script for Mirror, for example, as well as the Theban plays, not to mention the stage directions of Elizabethan theatre ('exit pursued by bear') I can say, I think, that these readings of skeletons - the texts of films and plays - have nagged and polished the lens of my own working perception, which enforces or refracts the incoming world to its resting text, and thereafter, out, replayed, in restless readings. And where is the poet now? I'll turn to two lyrigraphs to finish, since I'm really running out of time; and I was there when I wrote them.

Reads Lyrigraph for a Water Board Man  
Reads Lyrigraph for a Road at Midwinter.  
Exit

Neville Gable





*In December 2008 Neville Gabie joined the British Antarctic Survey as Artist in Residence at Halley Research Station on the Brunt Ice Shelf in Antarctica. The four month residency developed out of previous work – in particular using kites with cameras to film the landscape, more as an experiential immersion into the landscape than for the photographic results. His journey to Antarctica to fly kites, amongst other things, is described here – through selected diary notes sent daily by email to his wife Joan.*

17th Dec 2008 - Dear Joan, starting my journey to Antarctica from South Africa and in Cape Town where I spent so much of my youth seems so perfectly appropriate. Stepping off the plane in Cape Town my whole body ached with longing. The smell of the air, peoples faces, the light, the last flowers of a Jacaranda, a bare patch of dusty ground, the sound of a voice.

27th Dec 2008 - Dear Joan, being so far away and on the edge of anything I have ever experienced, my thoughts keep leaping wildly and it feels that a few words on a page is just not adequate. Today is Christmas on the ship now that the storms are past. Through the porthole the sea and sky have the colour and weight of lead and periodically blizzards of snow engulf us. Words like ‘vast’ or ‘awesome’ or ‘profound’ are completely inadequate to describe the desolation out there. We still have hundreds of miles to travel but what is clear is that we have entered a space [place] where the force of nature and not man is firmly in control.

30th Dec 2008 - Dear Joan, gradually as my eyes adjusted I began to discern the faintest smudge of grey beginning to emerge from an absolutely white background. Over several minutes it grew clearer until I could make out sharp edges and the sloping curve, darker but only fractionally then all around. As we silently got nearer the most enormous iceberg with a crystalline cliff face and soft snow covered top loomed over me. Imagine a drawing of almost no tone, no colour, almost no line but still sharp. A drawing of nothing apparently substantial but which has an awesome presence and physicality. Somehow the less there is, no sun to create shadow and reveal form, no picturesque shapes in the ice; the less information there is the more of what ‘is’ reveals itself.

4th Jan 2009 - Dear Joan, over the last few days it has struck me very clearly that everyone is looking for ‘something’ to photograph - penguins, seals, whales, a spectacular iceberg, parts of the ship, the base, each other, something to focus on, worth seeing. Just how many photographs of penguins have been taken in the last few days hardly bears thinking about except it

raises the question, why? The experience outside is of nothingness, not even a visible horizon. It has made me want to see if I can photograph nothing. I don’t mean not take photographs but to see how little it is possible to reduce an image to. I want to see if I can take a photograph without a specific point of focus; a carefully framed image of landscape and sky which is devoid of colour, horizon and with no particular reference. This so far has been my experience. An unrelenting emptiness that seems to act like a mirror for the only thing in it - myself.

10th Jan 2009 - Dear Joan, imagine a landscape with absolutely no colour other than the muted tones in the sky. No earth or vegetation, no rocks or leaves. A place where anything of colour is artificial and man-made.

15th Jan 2009 - Dear Joan, how do you record silence? This morning when I got up the whole sky was clear and perfectly blue. The temperature outside was minus 10 but with just about enough wind to fly my kite. Once I signed out, got a radio and kite, I walked about two kilometres from the base towards the perimeter. I could not hear a sound - I mean nothing. Because we are inland there are almost no birds - it’s several days since I last saw one and then it was just a lone skewer, which

vanished as quickly as it had come. Of course there are no animals but at that distance there was not even a sound from the base although I could still see it standing proud of the landscape on its stilts. It is difficult for me to describe but I have never experienced a silence so intense. The only sound, the squeaking of my boots on snow and my own breathing. How do you capture that? I cannot think how to photograph and film something so emotive, so personal. What I do know is just how aware of yourself standing in this landscape makes you feel.

27th Jan 2009 - Dear Joan, last night I took out my kite. The sun as usual was still bright and high in the sky, the wind seven knots and blowing directly from the West. It was cold, about minus 7 but perfect for flying. Amazingly, within half an hour the wind swung through 180 degrees and was suddenly coming directly from the East and with equal force. The temperature dropped to minus 17 and a bright mist appeared in moments. Then a very strange thing, Diamond Dust filled the sky. Very thin slithers of ice blowing and floating through the air and reflecting the light like its description, a shower of vanishing diamonds.

9th Feb 2009 - Dear Joan, you probably don’t remember, but an enduring recollection I have is of



the first ever moon landing. With television banned in South Africa by the Nationalist party, our lives were dominated by the radio - Springbok Radio. That day there were gatherings in suburban streets, groups clustered on steps, or in clipped fenced front gardens, radios talking, adults discussing in hushed tones while drinking and smoking. Us children running up and down playing games between parked cars in driveways, aware we were witness to something significant. I seem to remember everyone looking upwards waiting for Apollo to pass overhead. Now that appears fanciful but it's how I picture the afternoon. If you don't recall the day, you will Neil Armstrong's words 'one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind' and the image of the flag being planted in front of the strange four-legged landing capsule. Perhaps the same day in England was quite different; you might even have been at boarding school. In retrospect that event seemed to sum up an age, a particular decade, the value of the expedition being more symbolic than practical during the cold war.

The Halley base is equally strange on its legs, equally a product of science fiction, its location every bit as bereft of life or visual interest as the surface of the moon. Above the front entrance on a tall mast the Union Jack is being pulled about by the wind.

What I am beginning to realise is just how unrealistic is the task of conveying to someone who has not experienced it, the vastness of the space outside. Or the silence on a day without any wind, no living thing in the sky above or in the ice beneath. There are

lines of flags across the landscape, little black or red squares of cloth on bamboo canes part buried, some bent double, all shredded. Flags, which mark out safe routes and dangerous locations, others that are your only guide in the featureless landscape between distant sites. The little lines of bamboo look so pathetic, so completely insignificant stretching out a few miles into the distance over a continent. Their tenuousness a visual reminder of just how ephemeral our grasp of life is.

13th Feb 2009 - Dear Joan, so much of the effort to keep a toe-hold in Antarctica revolves around a shovel. Digging is a daily activity from filling the melt-tank to clearing wind-tails, opening up buried fuel dumps, lifting drum-lines, moving science equipment, burying battery boxes, even digging snow out of vehicles after a blow. Moving things is equally routine. Buildings, fuel, sledges, even the memorials need lifting and moving regularly to stop them from being buried in drifting ice.

This constant wrestling is maintained by the spade-full, even if sometimes its on the front of a bulldozer. One winter, one storm and everything is back to square one. I was always drawn to the ephemeral marks in the landscape, things like the vehicle tracks but everything even the base itself is at best temporary. I want to make some work about that, about digging and moving. Something that gives a sense of scale to the landscape in relation to human endeavour, work which explores the idea of routine and effort, perhaps even futility.



Tim Freeman

**To the Banks of the Avon:**  
**A Document in Response to...**  
**Post-Industrial:**  
**Free form collaboration as a methodology?**

13:45, 1-7-10 ... On leaving the pastoral of Bower Ashton Estate and heading toward the post-industrial banks of the river Avon the walker is confronted, every few hundred meters, by major shifts in land use. Those determined by local enterprises and demanded by wider socio-economic and cultural shifts from industry to leisure and the subsequent micro-environments of transitory non-places [yet to be assigned an official use] created by the move toward a 21st century leisure/ culture based urban environment ...

Cut to: The space beneath a flyover that intersects the skyline of a municipal park. Here shuttered concrete is energised with the individual's need to maintain a psychic and physical connection to their environment via tags and stencils. Read KUNO, Read DMT, Read Tommy. As we enter the city via the river pathway wider cultural changes become evident. Here the derelict bonding warehouse, the single-track rail line [which stops dead], the working riverside tow-path [now cycle path] have become relics of a past inside the present.

As an artist I am drawn to such juxtapositions

and contradictions [both spatial and temporal] that shape our everyday experience of place: The urban and the rural; the fictitious and the real; the synthetic and the natural, all unfolding amidst a sense of nostalgia and the simultaneous projection of a better future. It is the arrangement of these things in time and their poetry that are the landscapes. Landscapes embedded with individual/collective memory and fragmentary experience.

Cut back: And Rain after much Sun stipples  
Newport @ 6:40 am  
WC, security camera, investigation

Moving through an Orange zone  
Comparing journeys  
Reserving my seat  
For Upper-Crust city vision

It's all good  
A council terraced foreground  
A distant wind-farm  
Social housing  
Social communal responsibility  
A national social grid  
Sunrise west-orange sky toward  
Filton, Patchway, Parkway  
7 Tunnel Tarmac  
Wild flower meadow @ 06:54 am  
Pollen yellow beneath pylons

Exit Light

Beneath the Severn the pressure changes  
Limited Service  
Zero bandwidth  
Safety information

Enter light

Beneath MOD slate grey  
The allotments of Patchway

Fly tipping in Parkway  
Prior to the organic self-sustainable inner  
city projects towards Temple Meads

The 359 to Unknown  
Projected idealisation,  
The specific and the speculative  
The surprise of a deer park  
The Oak, The Elm, the British ideal

Bright visions beyond estate walls  
Police horses on blackberry lane

Liverwort and thistle  
Rusted barbed wire against foxgloves

A row of black ants by the cycle path  
over the railway bridge  
Beyond is a 1970's municipal park  
Form and function  
Work and leisure

The allotments again  
The Avon river trail

Portishead 10  
Clevedon 15

An urban prayer  
Kroyz Z beach  
Kuno Rush  
Chronos zebra cave stencil

The willow and the mud flats  
Sink rising  
The DMZ

For Tommy Dreamer (1987- 2009)

Rob Irving



Footsteps, imprints.





Penny Somerville



“The landscape thinks itself in me and I am its consciousness – Paul Cezanne”<sup>1</sup>

Walking, talking, straggling, being surprised, making unexpected connections, undermining the familiar, the entrenched, one and two point perspective, challenging learnt ideas of pastoral/nostalgic/romantic/rural/urban landscape.

Cameras, recorders, notebooks, the paraphernalia of looking, but not seeing, that get in the way of dialogue. The sieve of equipment that catches traces only of experience. The nature of our perception is habitually controlled by these tools. They all intervene to be selective, to frame a possessive personal vision. Faced with the unfamiliar we still try to rationalize, categorize, extract a theme.

So amongst the random sights, random thoughts, we look for a common thread weaving its web around us and between us, an empirical methodology to embrace interactive observation, one sparking the other, different viewpoints shared, different details noticed and highlighted.

We look for the long view, the short view, the close up, the ritual spaces, the sense of history, remnants, ghosts and myths. The contemporary sub-culture gathering in the spaces left behind by spent industrial presences. Present ghosts and past absences. We ask: “what are the tensions in the landscape, who owns it, who contests it, whose history is it and what did we want to find out and why?” Is looking for aesthetic pleasure a distraction; is it but one of the voices, and for whom are we doing that? And the desire, as Kingsolver says, to ‘write all this in your notebook so when nothing is left of us but bones, someone will know where we went.’<sup>2</sup>

Through the poetics of walking the walk together we experience the polyvocal, the polyvisual, the polyaural and the polysensual.

As Abram says, through dialogue we try to encounter the ‘flesh of the world’<sup>3</sup>, uniting ‘subject and object dialectically’, discovering that ‘mysterious tissue ... that underlies and gives rise to both the perceiver and the perceived as interdependent aspects of its spontaneous activity.’<sup>4</sup>

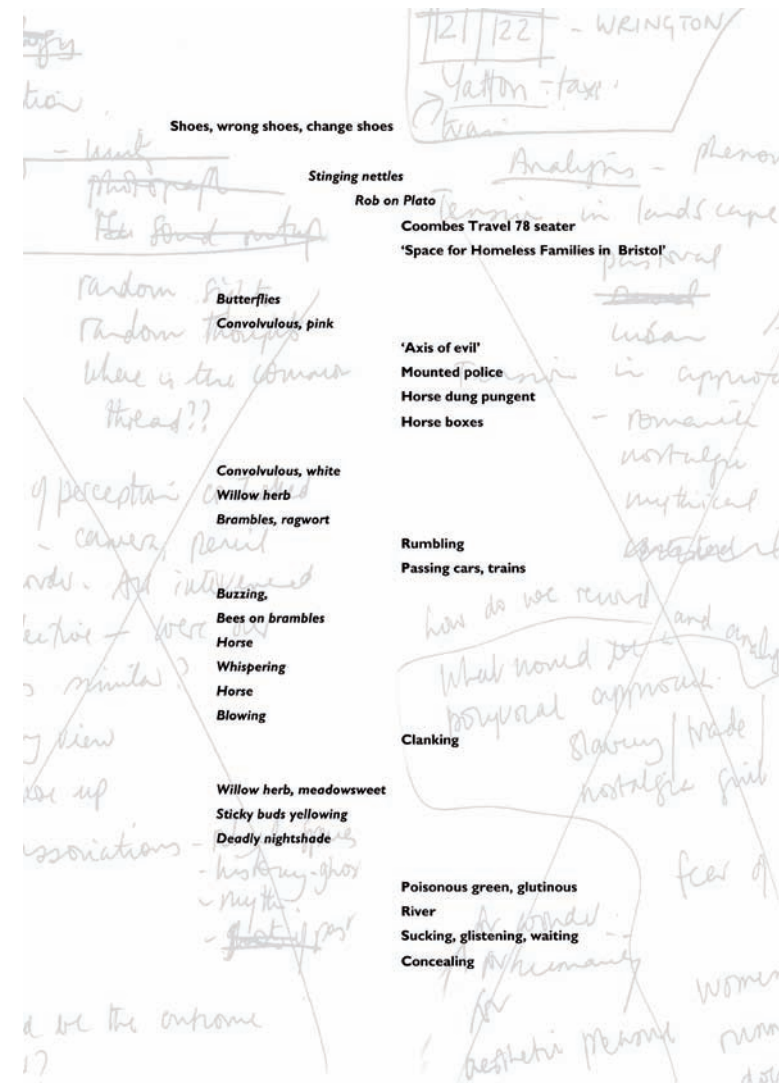
Capturing a collaborative vision is a chorus, an experimental harmony in which the unexpected connections give us another way of looking at ourselves observing the polyphony of the observed.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Merleau Ponty, M. *Sense and Non-sense*, Northwest University Press 1964 “Cezanne’s Doubt” p. 9-24

<sup>2</sup> Kingsolver, Barbara. *Lacuna*, Faber & Faber, London, 2009

<sup>3</sup> Abram, David. *The Spell of the Sensuous*, Vintage, New York, 1996

<sup>4</sup> Ibid p.65,66



Suze Adams

SEARCHING FOR MEANING IN THE SINGULAR PLURAL

A way of thinking that is open, relational and provisional and yet at the same time grounded in specific materialities - a gathering of fragments where each singular aspect (event, object, person) becomes part of a plurality (of events, objects, people, places).

A way of thinking translated as performative process; a process that situates subjectivity in the collective and frames the collective as a series of subjectivities.

A way of thinking that embeds the senses in the body and the body in society; that locates both individual and society in the world as part of a spatio-temporal continuum of (physical and psychological) encounters.

A way of thinking and an active process that together juxtapose without totalising or idealising and, instead, intimate becoming; a becoming reflected in the paradox of a series of snapshot fragments within movement.

The opening of Jean Luc Nancy’s essay Of Being Singular Plural <sup>1</sup> states that:

“It is often said today that we have lost meaning, that we lack it and, as a result, are in need of and waiting for it ...” <sup>2</sup>

Nancy follows this provocative observation by saying that ‘we do not “have” meaning anymore, *because we ourselves are meaning*’ <sup>3</sup> ; not because we are ourselves the ‘content of meaning’ but rather the ‘element in which significations can be produced and circulate’. Understood in such a manner, ‘meaning’ might be found in a passing from individual to society and vice versa - *produced and circulated* in communication; in continuous dialogue with oneself, with others and with the world.

“There is no meaning if meaning is not shared, and not because there would be an ultimate or first signification that all beings have in common, but because *meaning is itself the sharing of Being* ...

Being cannot be anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the *with* and as the *with* of this singularly plural coexistence.” <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jean Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford University Press 2000), pp1-99

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p1

<sup>3</sup> Italics added

<sup>4</sup> Jean Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford University Press 2000), p2

Nancy’s *being-with* is, he states, the ‘affirmation of meaning as the repetition of the instant’; the frozen present of the fragmented or, put another way, the stutter of an accumulation of glimpses - an ‘affirmation abandoned in its movement’. <sup>5</sup> It is, after Nancy, such an expanded affirmation of meaning that I seek in my contribution to this publication; an affirmation of self and place that is singularly plural - in intention and in actuality (via, in this example, as one of many in the performance of a shared walk). Thinking in the singular plural therefore understood as a conceptualisation and an animated process that lends itself to a potential co-incidence and/or collaboration in the making and to the possibility of an extended inter-subjectivity in dissemination, in reception, in repetition and reiteration.

A way of thinking that is conceptually rich and performatively challenging; a stimulus to thought and action, a concept enacted through an unpredictable mix of choreography and improvisation in practice.



The body in place, the place of the body; scales of spatial practice - intersections in place, interactions on the page, crossings of bodies, exchanges of words - non-verbal conversations and textual encounters

micro-geographies and grand choreographic performances

Intersections, interactions, crossings, exchanges ... silence and babble; bodies in place, the place of the body

<sup>5</sup> Jean Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford University Press 2000), p4



balletic moves ...  
 traces of people and place,  
 re-visions of landscapes intersecting across time and place;  
 as we leave/weave  
 threads, as we create unseen knots and  
 leave frayed ends blowing in the wind;  
 as we encounter one another,  
 as we collude and collide with those already in(habiting) place,  
 as we intersect and interact in the material world;  
 echoing topographies, embodying the present,  
 re-writing the future ... circumstantial evidence -  
 time-specific, place-specific

Both inside and outside the situation, on and off the page;  
 simultaneously participating in and observing the scene -  
 noting and notating,  
 connections and disconnections.

in and through the landscape (of practice);  
 alert to changes, feeling my/our way ...  
 movements, steps, stumbles and dances

Thinking in the singular plural has echoes in the fractured, faltering construction of my contribution; in the dialectics of the imagery, in the structure of the writing, in the concepts examined, in this singular plural body of work. A complex amalgam of description with critical theory - evidenced here as a combination of subjective observations framed within conceptual analysis, a diverse range of accounts grounded in time and place by concrete particulars. A presentation of snapshots tracing embodied practice in the singular plural (because, please remember, ‘my’ voice here contains echoes of other voices and other walks).

“It is the originary plurality of origins and the creation of the world in each singularity, creation continued in the discontinuity of its discrete occurrences ... this paradoxical “first-person plural” which makes sense of the world as the spacing and intertwining of so many worlds ...

Everything then passes between us.” <sup>6</sup>

In his analysis of the singular plural, Ian James comments that Nancy’s thinking ‘articulates a refusal of closed systems of signification’ which in turn necessitates, or indeed, demands, ‘an ethics and a praxis of openness vis-à-vis signification’. <sup>7</sup>

“... as an ontology that is at once an ethos and a praxis it allows us to address the real existence of beings or entities in a different register, in a way that attends simultaneously to their specificity and their relationality.” <sup>8</sup>

As *ethos and praxis*, this conceptualisation evidences research in the field and attempts to address ‘the real existence of beings or entities in a different register’ by offering a reconfiguration of the inter-relationship between the personal and the social, between time and place through the concept of *being-with*. Acknowledging Jean Luc Nancy’s *being-with* as a reciprocity of subject and world, of an ‘I’ and a ‘we’, this text reflects a research practice constitutionally always in a state of (the plurality of) *becoming*. Bringing together self/selves in an accumulation of the past in a present already hinting at possible futures, this collection of fragmented snapshots gathered from an accretion of shared moments and encounters in time and place is offered to the reader in (the hope of) a plurality of hermeneutic translations.

“... personal identity could entail a kind of continual transformation in a corporeal dance with others in which we acknowledged and celebrated the interdependent activity of self-making. That is, personal identity could be refigured as a continual shaping and reshaping of self in concert with others, or the continual becoming of a self with a past, present, and future, whose story was inextricably implicated with the stories of others.” <sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Jean Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford University Press 2000), pp4-5

<sup>7</sup> Ian James, *The Fragmentary Demand* (Stanford University Press 2006), p112

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p112

<sup>9</sup> Tamsin Lorraine, *Irigaray and Deleuze: Experiments in Visceral Philosophy* (Cornell University Press 1999), p237



Leila Dawney

## Being-with: Inspired by a collective sensory walk

For the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, being-with is the primary ontological condition:

Being cannot *be* anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the with and as the *with* of this singular-plural existence (Nancy 2000:3)

Being-with – being as singular-plural – questions the possibility of thinking the body or the subject in isolation. Despite its singularity, the being can only be thought through the being-with. Being-with for Nancy implies no sense of similarity, or connection: rather it is an ontological state of *opening out* onto the world, of the production of time and space through this movement that Nancy sees as the spacing of the world. Moreover it is only through the being-with that we are capable of thinking about individuals and groups.

We can never simply be “the we”, understood as a unique subject, or understood as an indistinct “we” that is like a diffuse generality. “We” always expresses a plurality, expresses “our” being divided and entangled: “one” is not “with” in some general sort of way, but each time according to determined modes that are themselves multiple and simultaneous (people, culture, language, lineage, network, group, couple, band, and so on). What is presented in this way, each time, is a stage [scène] on which several [people] can say “I”, each on his own account, each in turn. But the “we is not the adding together or the juxtaposition of these “I”s. A “we”, even one that is not articulated, is the condition for the possibility of each I (Nancy 2000:65)

Nancy, as a philosopher of the continental tradition, engages with phenomenology and ontology, and also with images and texts, through a critique of Heidegger, following on from deconstructionist thinkers such as Derrida. Nancy incorporates the aporias and indeterminacies of poststructuralism into a phenomenology that critiques the very ground of phenomenological thought.

Being-with occurs prior to space and time, prior to the individual. It operates as divisions and entanglements – intertwinings and dispersions. It is what makes space and time possible, and also the possibility of thinking about individuals and societies as hypostatizations of the primary being-with. The being-with, the “*co-*”, the “*mit-*”, is a spacing, an opening out of the world. Being-with can apply to one who is alone. Indeed, to be alone, for Nancy, is to be *alone-with* (Nancy 2005). The being-with is a condition for the being-alone. The walk undertaken that July day can be considered in terms of the being-with, more of an illustration to help us understand what it means than an example of the being-with in practice . The walk encourages a *way of thinking* about the being-with and about the production of collective experience.

All the participants set off on their walk alone, at roughly 2 minute intervals. We aimed to keep within sight of each other, while allowing for the walk to be experienced as an individual journey. The individual/ collective nature of the walk dictated a tacit sense that during the walk we should not speak to each other, despite that for most of the time we were in visual contact. Awareness of other group members, however, was unavoidable, and recognition of this from time to time took the form of a smile, a wave or a nod:

signs of the mutual agreement not to speak. There was awareness of other bodies, not always conscious, and of the way in which this awareness placed limits on the movement of our own bodies. We could not go too fast or too slow, or we would meet up/ coincide with other members of the group. We had to keep up to a certain extent or we would keep everyone waiting in the café. The keeping in sight enabled a less than diligent studying of the map and directions. The walk, as a common performance, became a dance of proximity and distance, respect for and awareness of others’ sense of personal space. At times bodies congregated in certain spaces: the rose garden acted as a lure for affective bodies, its rose bushes offering small privacies. It offered colour and scent (this was a sensory walk, after all), and the banter of some young gardeners, providing verbal records for those of us who respond more strongly to the verbal than the non-verbal. Another area for congregation of sorts was the complex system of underpasses and bridges that seemed to connect two sections of the walk together – an urban intermediary in the experience of parkland that formed the beginning and the end of the walk. The underpasses, while familiar to some, were threatening to others, revelatory of the different micro and macropolitical histories inscribed in bodies that produced their sense of familiarity / unfamiliarity, ease / unease in the lived experience of these places.

Despite these differences in the production of experience from a subjective point of view, the collective field of experience emerged as such because of the sharing of space and time, the sharing of encounters with other bodies and with the materialities of the space, and also through the institutional and interpersonal construction of the walk as a collective practice. This took place retrospectively as well as at the time through the conversations that followed, and the thinking through of the experience together. It also emerged from the institutional contexts that our bodies were all engaged with, a context that encourages certain

types of thinking and engagement, certain approaches and forms of reflexivity and sensibility that hone and produce bodies and make possible such an event to take place.

The collective walk is the being-with converted to an ethics of collaboration: a call and response, an acknowledgement and a knowledge of shared worldings. Bodies moving together and apart, aware of the necessary space between them but reassured by the others’ presences. Connected through the structure of the walk, but able to go off track to take a photo, write or explore a corner of a field. Some bodies were more involved in the choreographing of the walk – standing by a stile, directing people and stopping them from veering off, rounding up or waving us away from turning onto a busy road. Various different practices and modes of engagement were involved in the placemaking that we all participated in. Some bodies were more focused on particular aspects of the experience, for example on memories, or on history, or on things on the ground, since all of these bodies were of course imbricated within institutional rationalities and regimes that focus attention on the concerns of their research interests, which are both produced by and productive of those regimes. All of these practices were involved in the making of the walk as a whole.

We all walked through parkland on a summer’s afternoon. We all breathed the warm, muggy air, travelled on foot, felt the grass underneath us, thought about our research. The field of experience was produced through these materialities, and through the tying of them together in the production of the walk. A walk links places and moreover *produces* places through its performance, in a similar way to how Heidegger describes the bridge as gathering streams and bank and land together (Heidegger 1993). The walk gathered together aspects of place, memory, bodies and thought: a field of experience could emerge from its performance. Bodies moving together-but apart,

playing with proximity and distance: the nature of the collective experience produces the possibility for the collectivity of the experience to be recognised as such. Returning to the university, working through the resonances of memory, different histories create disjuncture, a sense of the absolute otherness of the other. The experience does not have to be *felt as connection to others* to be collective.

This is where Jean-Luc Nancy is important. He posits a prepersonal sense of the collective which occurs before the subject. This then situates the collective as existential – as a condition of existence. In a recent lecture, Nancy discussed how our common condition of thinking is that the individual is first and everything else is second. Instead, he suggests that the “co” comes first. The being-with that is a condition of existence. This primary being-with, however, is not restricted to the human. In Nancy, it is without limits. While an ethics can emerge from this primary being-with, and indeed Nancy suggests that a new politics of community can emerge from this, an ethical sensibility is not implicit in this ontological formulation. Being-with does not necessarily involve a sharing of something, a feeling of being connected. Being-with occurs before the personal, before the individual. The primary being-with enables something different from an ethics: it enables a sense of what Nancy considers as the spacing of the world – the primary spacing from which space, time and individualisations emerge.

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A WALK IN BRISTOL

plastic bag  
skunk  
dog  
disappointing when they don't smell

touch where others have touched and interrupt the rutting trees' conversation  
all in keeping yet  
skeletal ivy fingers the wall

stop  
wait for him to pass  
and pass  
that's a lot of drills in one bucket

pick the lime      look  
key locker  
locked    gutted Mercedes building - beautiful  
picked the lime and carried it to the park

keys  
sycamore keys  
ash keys  
key locker  
locked  
beach huts      Margate never been

*There is no theory of walking, just a consciousness.  
In our digital age, it's also one of the last private spaces.*

On the outskirts of Bristol, we walk at intervals in a place where I have never been. It is described as a 'sensory' walk. We keep each other in sight but otherwise we walk alone accompanied by our private thoughts and the constant hum of traffic.

That was some time ago and as I write now, all that remains to me as evidence of this event is a rough sound recording and two bracts from a linden tree. I must therefore rely on these and my imperfect recollections to capture a sense of it now. Perhaps I should have gathered more substantial evidence: photographs, sketches, notes, objects. Perhaps I could show you a map. Yet even had I been so efficient there is not the space here to show these things.

As I listen now to the soundtrack I can re-trace my audible steps and though my scant commentary makes no mention, I can sense again the close weather, the route, the terrain. I can remember each change of direction and see each part of the journey. The walk leads me through a series of 'rooms' or so it seems. Nature

invades but each section is a human construction: open interiors prey to the elements and bearing the marks of time and the passers by. Through the medium of sound the route is replayed filmically in real time: a story told through images now invisible to all but my mind's eye.

It could be argued that my recollections are not unique, far less invisible since this route still exists. Indeed it was walked almost simultaneously by nine other people who documented their journey more efficiently than I with visual evidence and detailed notes. During group discussions it emerged that my sound recording had picked up faintly the end of an overheard conversation remarked upon by someone walking a little ahead of me. Had I set off a few minutes earlier I too would have heard the same rich banter from the Bristolean workers in the rose garden. This accident of timing seems to emphasise rather than diminish the personal nature of the walk. My recording is unique to the moment at which it took place and hence while some of my observations may overlap with those of others my experiences are also unique.

Without recourse to words or sounds Ed Ruscha captured 'Every Building on the Sunset Strip' (1966). Sylvia

Wolf describes the work as a movie in still images. Ruscha did not walk but, choosing the time of day when the sun was at its highest, he drove the famous route taking each photograph in succession. The result is that as a viewer one feels (as Wolf suggests) like a passenger alongside him as he reveals the narrative. The effect of the bright sunlight is to flatten each image removing any sense of depth, making each building seem like a film lot façade. The use of photographs here emphasises the uniqueness of moment for not only do we see each building as it appears when the camera is clicked, we are also aware that as Ruscha moves to the next building the picture of the previous one is already a representation of a very particular history.

Journeys seem to be good analogies for narratives. They have a starting point and one moves through time (and distance) to an end point, the route providing the structure. In the catalogue to his recent exhibition at Tate Modern Francis Alÿs, for whom walking is an integral part of his practice, suggests it to be "a very immediate method for unfolding stories." It should therefore be quite straightforward to tell the story of my sensory walk in Bristol, but nothing is perhaps as it seems. *A Story of Deception* is the title Alÿs chose for his exhibition coming

from a piece of work made in Patagonia 2003–6. The work consists of 4 minutes and 20 seconds of looped 16mm film. It is a journey along a desert road, one so affected by the heat that what we see is a mirage which continually vanishes as we seem to reach it. Alÿs has a political message, seeing this as an allegory for the failure of capitalism to fulfil what it promises, but on experiencing the work I feel that in a more general sense what it reveals is that as we pass through on our way we construct a story from what we imagine we observe. In other words, though we may bring our senses with us we also bring the conditioning of our experience. Our unique experience can skew our perceptions and hence the stories we tell.

Ruscha gives us a façade, Alÿs a mirage. Each is truthful in that what is presented is what is seen, the deception comes when we bring ourselves and the realisation that what is seen is from one viewpoint only and is therefore open to interpretation. Perhaps my sound recording may be deemed to be more honest in that the microphone is non-judgemental, there are no pictures and the sound is multidirectional, yet if I were to play it to you, unless you had walked with me it would be all but meaningless as a representation of my walk. So one

is left with a reliance on my interpretation of the journey and the things I happened to notice along the way. The texts I have presented here are truthful in that they are presented in the order in which they occurred to me, they are genuine responses to or descriptions of things that I saw or did along the way. Yet they are fragments that come from my viewpoint and like the photographs they are captured moments. Like the film of the mirage they will be coloured from your viewpoint, by your experience and your thoughts.

When I show my fragmented texts to my daughter, she is unimpressed. “It doesn’t have a story,” she says.



John Hammersley



## A fable of a researcher learning to swim on a walk

The conversational terrain of the walk was ‘flooded,’ “don’t stand too close together, don’t have conversation.” Yet as we walked towards the walk, others walked and talked together, perhaps falling into step with the flow and rhythm of walking rather than into line with the researcher’s course.

We passed through a court of children unselfconsciously at play. Play flowing around us, yet not through us.

Recalling Scholasticus, I wondered if it might be possible to learn to swim research without entering the stream of experience or getting your feet wet? But weren’t we already swimming? Starting the walk again, we appeared to be stepping into the same river twice. Others set off, and I jumped into the flow, not awaiting an order. In the moment of then, I wondered if this restart didn’t create its own paradox. Now, I wonder how one tells the difference between swimming and drowning in research? Is it possible to realise how submerged one is?

Walking, I passed the final wall of the court of play. A bell rang and I turned to notice a woman noticing me, telephone in her hand (who was observed and who the observer?).

Downstream, a child asked an alcove, ‘what are you for?’ Interrupting, as men often do, the father spoke *pro parietis*. “They are for sculptures but you are about the right size.” Might the wall have said to the child, “they are for you but sculptures are about the right size?” Conversation with walls might require more pause for thought, as walls may speak more slowly than adults assume. And children may be more attentive to listening to the world as it speaks.

I flowed on down the steps to the pinkish white-water of the rose garden, the scent of the sprays passing the gates. Watching others up to their chests in roses, I sought refuge and steered around. Passing a couple of abandoned ground-keepers’ vehicles under canopy, I broke the boundary. People flowed in different directions, slowing all the time.

Dispersed participants took audit in their own time. I was observed. I appeared both tool of observation and the observed.

In the next field of study, an other played with a gate. Quantifying the solution to a problem? Or maybe playing the gate for the record. The gate reiterated its squeak. I discovered myself playing with the grass, waiting for an interval between auditors.

And onwards, at a loss in the field of study, unwilling to return to the written instrument of instruction I looked to my observers for a prompt. Exit stage right the gesture said. Is supervision, a helpful gesture of steering I wondered.

Field became playing field. I walked through, “Moving between the lines”. Others walked around, until we met again at another path through. We passed through nettle and bramble and out onto a road of expensive houses with cheap souvenirs in the windows.

A skip arrested me. I started looking for things for my house but I found only art. I chose the most appealing brick, my own souvenir from the tour. The brick echoed Richard’s stumbling block or perhaps someone has thrown Carl away. The brick said ‘Marston’. I recalled we were heading towards the big brick building.

The road became round, a hermeneutic circle of traffic. I was burdened by my theory-brick, which had seemed like a good idea at the time. Weaving like a *bricoleur* through the traffic I reached the far bank, littered with field notes and memos from other people in the world. I picked one up randomly sampling. It read, ‘retrofitting.’ How useful to be reminded of theory use. I carried the brick on, trusting that it would find its meaning given time. Perhaps this brick might be my unique contribution to knowledge. I just needed to find the right hole in the wall.

Another turn and a pass under the flow of the road above. Another turn and a pass over a road below. I paused and looked down. The brick sat on the railings looking for the right windscreen. A sign at the side of the road said, ‘No loading at any time.’ So the brick moved on and under-pass again, and so did I.

In sunshine, the brick and I came to another field of green. Dogs played with their owners, playing deaf, and the big red brick building beckoned in the distance. So did the coffee and cake. The field rushed by until something caught my eye, glinting in the grass. It read, ‘If you find me, please call Tracks 0800 977 5725 TK1446886.’ I have yet to decide what this means. But taking it, it came with us. Brick, retrofitting, tracks and I headed onwards to coffee and cake to contemplate what it had all meant.

Looking back on this and my notes, I wonder if I will ever be able to tell the difference between swimming and drowning in research? Perhaps they are the same thing. As Heraclitus said, ‘you can’t step in the same river twice’ and as he was told, ‘neither can you step in the same river once.’



Liz Harding

## A Walk in the Park and Beyond

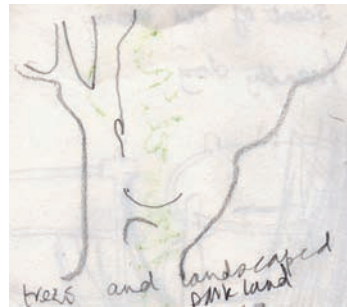
What sense of place is realised through glimpses of an unknown location whilst 'moving between the lines' of an arranged walk on a summer afternoon? What implicit connections with the familiar can be made? How might the experiential knowledge be understood?

For me the initial intuitive response is to focus on noticed physical details and contrasts of scale and form.

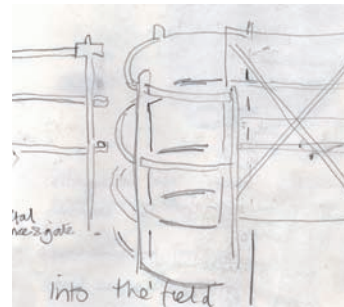
It is a sunny afternoon and a slow procession of figures are wandering, observing, reflecting, moving through a changing landscape. How to react? What to look at? What to remember? What is this place?

Glimpses evoke memories or suggest connections. Down the hill through landscaped parkland, a seagull floats on the wind. There is the heady scent of old roses and a friendly dog. A figure reclining on the grass recalls images of an Arcadian shepherd in an eighteenth century idyll.

Across the field and details become apparent, a dead shrew and a forgotten multi-coloured rubber ball.



The sounds are of breeze in the grass and a digger.



The eye registers curves, of tree trunks and a metal gate.

Arms up through the wood to avoid the nettles. Why are there five coloured drawing pins on the stile?

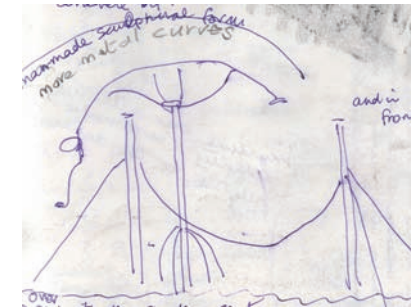
More curves of bindweed in the hedge and the throwing circle on the playing field.

Onto the road and here are cottages, roses, and the rubble of repairs, bright purple lavender and a 1930's semi for sale.

Twenty first century curves of roads, footpaths and underpass and noise of traffic. Too much concrete and asphalt,

which way to go?

Then, 'hooray' for Greville Smyth, another park. Not the broad vistas of the Bower Ashton parkland but a Victorian oasis in the city overlooked by nine floors of red brick warehouse. Sycamore seeds and coke cans and a small tree in a metal cage.



Again there are curves, of the dead tree, a natural sculptural form laying in the grass and the metal climbing frame in the playground.

And finally over the road to the Garden Centre where there are more curves of wood and metal fences and furniture and the means to create a contemporary landscape idyll.

A cerebral connection is made as an awareness of the history of the place becomes apparent demonstrated in different sections of the walk.

Connections with the familiar are easier. Walking the dog and losing the ball, looking at textures and picking up leaves are activities that stimulate the senses and inform art practice.

Connections with materiality are confirmed in the feel of the wind, the variety of surface underfoot and the touch of natural and man-made materials.

Connections with the other participants in the walk are made at the end over a cup of tea. Did you see....? Do you remember....? Why did I not notice that?

What then can I understand about this experience?

It is at once an unfamiliar collaborative physical journey and a familiar personal inner journey of connecting with landscape through observation, process and reflection, which "is so often best imagined through the senses and through the memory of the senses... and now I hear a magpie, and the crows and the swallows. Everything is a bit quieter so I can hear further – cars and the wind in the trees and a plane far off. Something about the combination of sounds tells me that it is early evening and that the sun is out and that it is summer. Place connecting with time."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dean T & Millar J (Eds), *ArtWorks – Place* (Thames & Hudson, 2005), p178

Richard Keating

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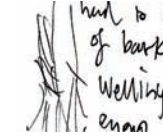


Contemporary theories concerning the appreciation of the aesthetics of nature make a distinction between the role of knowledge and intuition. Writers such as Carlson, Rolston and Eaton make the case for a scientific, cognitive approach while writers such as Berleant, Hepburn and Carroll make the case for a more subjective approach, often including a sensory engagement with place.

On the walk recorded below I was interested in using writing and drawing to explore the relationship between knowledge, including memories, and my own immediate, sensory response to place.

A second aspect of the walk relates to how we as a group of artists and geographers responded to the places we passed, how our collective research would help portray a sense of place. How various media would coexist?

## The Walk



The walk took me through the Ashton Court Estate, parts of which I have had a professional association with as an environmentalist, as well as to parts of the estate and Bristol that I didn't know. At first my sense of place was dominated by my knowledge and past associations, for example the controversial felling of trees. I approached a surviving tree and drew and touched its bark, this sensation seemed immediate. Trying to "get into the moment" I approached and drew some steps, allowing myself to sense the change of level and even mild risk associated with climbing. I quickly noticed visual "tricks" inherent in the designed landscape; I was looking down at a path disappearing enticingly around a corner – I was both enticed and aware that this feeling had been generated by a landscape designer. I'd walked less than 100 yards and looking up realised that I was already dropping behind the group, a line of people at one moment spreading ahead, the next moment gone.



The rose garden: I tried hard to describe in words the scents and colours and felt illiterate. Stopping and sensing was truly overpowering. Scent and warmth from the sun seemed to mix and envelop me. Even the very quick drawing heightened the sensations, writing felt more intellectual and tended to limit my appreciation, encouraging me to think rather than explore. But that could have been due to limited time. Some words written at the time: "... first notice the colours in the rose garden and after a few steps the scents. Eyes closed sniffing individual blooms. Lost in an unknown world. Are rose gardens so formally laid out because they are so disorientating on the senses? A kind of balance between the unknown world of scents and the known world of geometry?" I could have stayed all afternoon learning about scent and colour but I was becoming detached from the group, pulled into a group reality.



A newly planted avenue and disused tennis court: I stepped across the avenue and was immediately transported to a French landscape, a dusty, tree lined avenue. I stopped to draw and write about what was happening in the moment. I paid attention to the sound of crows, noticed them "momentarily merging with the sound of a distant train. Then both sounds stopped, to leave the sound of the wind playing alone in the trees; the crashing of the park rangers loading their trucks and the crescendo of their engines starting encouraged me on my way " As I stepped onto the concrete surface that I later discovered was an old tennis court, the smells and rising heat took me back to childhood days playing on the disused airfield runway with my brother and sister. Such strong memories of childhood and a reminder of what I would be doing tomorrow; going back to empty the family home. Feeling at once saddened by loss and gladdened that my memories could survive.



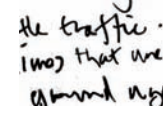
Crossing a ha ha we continue across grazed parkland, an open view where I could pick-out other group members. So English this landscape, behind me the house and garden of Ashton Court, all around distant views of hill sides, church steeples and less traditional, the edge of Bristol. I drew and noted these landscape elements but felt detached, finding it hard not to just see them professionally rather than engage with them sensually. It was an opportunity to try and catch-up with at least a few people who were at varying distances from a large, dead parkland tree. On another day I could have been drawn by its exaggerated tree shapes but in stead I found myself wondering what was on the other side of the hedge that people were passing through. The boundary hedge of the estate.



I hadn't expected a running track, one of those especially marked out for the school sports day. I drew and wrote: "years since I ran around one of these; the wind in my ears feels the same, the pre start excitement... immediately remembering friends and also running very much alone – strained lungs, weak legs - and in this moment a magpie took off. " My initial response had been to be transported back to a sports day at my own school about 40 years before. My writing and drawing were in the present but it had needed the magpie to separate me from the past, to make me aware of the moment I was in. Birds and wildlife seem to do that. Sharing a moment with them. "A flat, demarcated running track, confining me as in my own memory labyrinth until a magpie flashes its wings my way, that well know circular black and white, skyward bound moving image allowed me to break free and to look down from above.



As the walk took me into a residential area I was returned to my associations with landscape planning and wider sustainability issues. A knowledge base of sorts. I drew and wrote about a conserved past, quintessential Mendip building style with TV aerials and exotic plants that had escaped the planners rules. Drawing one particular flower made me write; "where are the humming birds?" Another house had closed circuit tv and closed, double wooden gates with a gently curved top profile. It looked very enticing for the burglars. Surrounded by bramble and bind weed I had a feeling that nature was also keen to break in. A crowd of agitated crows fussed noisily around a kestrel that was protecting its kill, maybe having brought down one of their number? I was leaving the conservation area and entering a less rule bound suburbia.



I entered the urban park via a subway, having caught-up with the walk organiser and surrounded by teenagers emptying out of school. "Dry grass, black and white uniforms, bell less bikes – bags, railings, underpass, echoes, not loud compared to the traffic around us, below and above. Under lime trees that remain as stately as when horses passed this way." We talked about lilac and roses, Buddhism and time passing. To write and draw I had to stand aside, get out of the way. I notice I can draw as I walk better than write and walk. And so to the end. I stopped drawing and writing quite a while before I stopped walking and talking. I wondered how sound recording would have compared, wondered if I would find out. I had completed 12 pages of drawings and notes.

## The Gatherings and the Presentation



1. The Garden Centre Café. Immediately after the walk. I was last to arrive. We sat outside around a couple of tables. We spoke in turn about our walks. Feelings were absorbed. Use of words were questioned. With encouragement I launched into a description of the walk and my responses to it, not referring to or showing my "still wet" ink drawings and writings.

2. Lecture Hall, UWE. The next morning we met to decide upon a way of presenting our collective findings to the wider seminar. We took a while to agree that there was a "collective we" in as much as we had shared the walk in time and space. Someone had made a proposal and we collectively gave it a shape that we could join in with. The shape was to retell our experiences of the walk using appropriate media.



For the presentation we improvised, adding either our recorded sounds or words to each others sounds and words. It was measured as we didn't seem to want to speak over each other. We spoke a bit over longer, recorded sounds. We didn't synchronise particular images with the sounds or words describing the places. We practised as a group before performing to the wider seminar – this felt the more successful of the two– a sensitive feeling of our way together rather than becoming concerned with repeating what we had felt had worked well. Consequently the final presentation was less improvisational and maybe less evocative of our shared research and of finding our way. The collective approach led to a lively representation of a sense of place and carried an additional "weight" in terms of being a valid research technique.

Reflecting on the individual and collective aspects of the walk and the presentation of our research a number of points come to the fore. I had felt rushed at times but "the pay off", was being a part of a group being led on a walk over which I had not had to make decisions, simply been given permission to stop and use all of my senses, to apply my knowledge and understanding, including memories. All of this was heightened by writing and drawing which helped me balance a cognitive with a more subjective approach of engaging with place.



Diana Pilcher

## Now and Then

The walk from Ashton Court toward Ashton Gate is one that I last took almost forty years ago at the age of sixteen. I had been parachuted into the local comprehensive by my father, a man down on his luck. Coming from a south London suburb, I was full of uncertain adolescent bravado; ‘down from the smoke’, a neophyte with attitude.

I cannot remember the route I had taken from behind the sixth form block of my secondary school all those years ago, I only remember being in both places and the hidden secrecy of the parkland surrounding the Court itself. Back then it had appeared neglected. People were largely absent. The parkland adjacent to the Court had offered an escape route for me and my friends, we took pleasure in this grand space where no-one seemed to go. I relished this seclusion whenever I got the chance. The grass and shrubs had appeared overgrown and somehow forgotten. So near to the City but out of place and out of step with the confluence of elevated roads that link Ashton Gate to the area known as Hotwells.

In 2010 I am a different stranger in this space. I cannot conjure up any of those delights that I experienced from this landscape. This place has become impersonal and commercialised. Instead of deer grazing in the distance, I see well manicured rose bushes amongst an unimaginative organization of shrubs and paths. I search for some element of mystique but only one sign lends itself to this sentiment. A dead tree stands centrally in the parkland. I wonder at its isolation and stark contrast to the well tended surrounding vegetation. I fail to recall any sense of wonderment.

Back then. Surrounding the sixth form building was a flint wall, a remnant of a past dwelling that became my cover for the path which led up and beyond. Away from home, family and all that I had previously known. *To her left the city stretched out beyond the flat roof of the College, to her right a range of green hills – she could see both from here, high up on the overgrown garden with its broken paths and cracked render. They both appeared equally impenetrable. She left Bristol a year later to return to London.*

1971. Standing on the flyover drawing the landscape. A skyline of chaos dominated by the heavy drone of trucks and other vehicles. This is not a place that one looks at other than to pass through. My attempts to convey this disjointed, chaotic landscape only highlighted the transient and brittle qualities that Bristol offered.

2010. There is disconnection in all that I see around me. The circuitous route taken from the College, around the Court and back down towards the busy circuitry of roads took me through ever changing spaces. The roads dominate, the pathways work but appear to lead nowhere other than to more roads. And the constant drone of vehicles connects us from one space to another.

*1972. The Circle Line eastbound, north London. The train emerged out of the tunnel into daylight. Looking up from her book she noticed that all she could see was concrete surrounding her and longed for the green distant hills beyond the Court and wondered why she had ever left.*



Ceri Price

## The re writing of the landscapes of research practice through embodied experience

At the conference, Sarah Cant spoke of how we might experience space physically, using all of our senses, and the field walk gave us an opportunity to experiment with this for ourselves. A few days earlier, I had mapped this walk, seeking to provide a series of contrasts, both actual and metaphorical, to challenge and surprise the rest of the group. As we walked, we were to experience the landscape with all of our senses; the touch of the rough wooden stile and the scratching of brambles falling across the path, the scents of the rose garden and the fumes from the traffic, the sights of the sweeping vistas and the narrow, tree overhung, wall enclosed track and the distant sounds of people at play and at work in the parkland, the echoing voices in the tunnels and the constant roar of the traffic around the busy road system. The final sense was to be satisfied at a café along the way, where we could meet up to talk through our perceptions of the landscape we had traversed. I hoped that the route would provide a stimulus for both geographers and artists to find themes which would resonate within our own disciplines and would produce fertile common ground from which we could experiment with creative ways of presenting our findings and our discussions.

We started by climbing up to a vantage point in a ‘middle landscape... a location suspended between countryside and city and thus disengaged from the interests of both’ (Cosgrove 1984: 99). In one direction could be seen the sprawling city, in another the fields and hedgerows of the surrounding farmland. The cultural geography of the area was clear to see from this spot for, as Crump suggests, ‘those with the political and economic power stamp their vision into the landscape’ (Crump 1999 in Rose 2002:459). From here we could look from the mansion, once the home of the local land and mine owner, over the expansive parkland and down to the crowded terraces of the mineworkers; across to the city’s harbour and up to the grand homes built to house the merchants of previous eras. We paused to gaze over the urban plain and, having contemplated this landscape as a cultural product, we began to consider the concept of landscape as a performance, to move from landscape-as-image to landscape-as-dwelling. From this distanced and elevated perspective, we could follow the path of the whole of the walk we were about to perform, where self, landscape and culture would circulate to create our ‘embodied acts of landscaping’ (Lorimer 2005 in Wylie 2007: 166).

We agreed that to focus effectively on the embodied experiencing of the landscape, we should walk alone. As I watched people set off at short intervals, another aspect of Sarah Cant’s paper resonated with me. She had described the non verbal communication that can exist between dancers and I began to see how, in walking alone yet keeping the next person within sight, we were obliged to follow the pace of those ahead and behind, but without interacting. We became both leaders and followers in this extemporised ballet. Just as we had heard descriptions of dancing with different partners, how some pairings flow and how others do not, we wordlessly fell into step with those who moved to the same rhythm in our walking waltz.

At first, the way passed through a large expanse of open parkland, spotted with a few trees. It followed a faint path down the sloping grassland, straightish but not straight, leading to a stile in a line of trees. From the top of the slope and at the back of the group, I watched as each person started out along the path, wandered from it to something that caught the eye and then returned to the way to find the stile. Without a word, these scattered explorers negotiated the space and then fell back into line with my directions and with each other. Looking down the hill, at the small figures as they wandered through their surroundings, some standing, some sitting, some sketching, I saw that as I viewed the scene, those ahead

of me had gone from being *in* the landscape to becoming *of* the landscape, from image to dwelling. They had become insiders, a part of the landscape, and ‘for the insider there is no clear separation of self from scene, subject from object’ (Cosgrove 1984:19). Through their practices, they were producing the landscape on which I was gazing.

Towards the end of the walk, I found myself walking alongside another member of the group. We walked towards a series of tunnels under the busy roads, along paths just wide enough for two. A nearby school had just finished for the day and we heard a crowd of young people coming up behind us. They soon caught up, noisy and happy to be released, full of pent up exuberance. For a few seconds they fell into step behind us on the path, unable to pass and conditioned not to step off onto the grass. I looked over my shoulder and saw that we were heading up a long, loud procession. Then one boy sped by on his bike, cycling up the side of the bank to give us our space. The moment was over. The human dam was breached. The wave of shouting and laughing teenagers broke over us and we were swept on in their wake into the gloom of the tunnels, deafened by the reverberating shrieks. And at the other end of the darkness, they surged forward to continue their dance, taking the noise and the energy with them, while our paths diverged and we were left becalmed.

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Mo Vyse

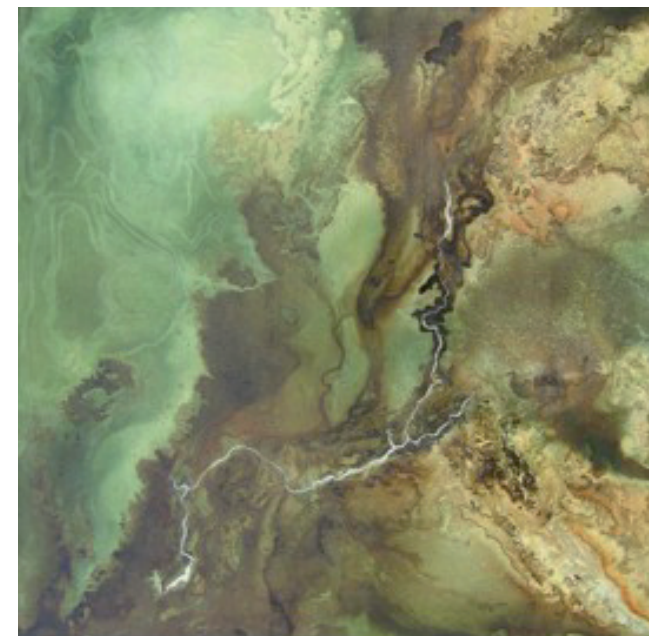
e: [vyse86@hotmail.com](mailto:vyse86@hotmail.com)



### Going for a Walk

Having an opportunity to walk through a previously unknown landscape one is able to experience how place and space fit together to form the personality of an area. Not being tethered by previous memory or emotion (which can sometimes cloud or colour vision) allows us to see how defined areas of estate, parkland, playing field, quiet suburbs, bypass, underpass, park and urban garden-centre fit together to create an environmental patchwork.

Every one of these areas has a narrative but sitting together they create an environmental landscape language, each with its own individual rhythm and pace. Punctuated by strips of green-belt (grass, plants, trees, ponds, gardens, traffic islands, railway banks) which act as commas, exclamation marks and even full-stops, these strips allow a natural breathing space between each place, helping it to unite as one. Green-belts are full of life; they enable us to connect with each other, they also give us opportunity to see how we share this world with many other forms of life.



*Going for a Walk*  
Mixed media on canvas

Davina Kirkpatrick

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### “So where *is* your mother?”

A random question asked without knowledge of her death; I laugh to cover the uncomfortable moment of too much truth with someone fairly unknown and say, ‘Nowhere, she’s dead’

The question stays with me, reverberating - it touches the heart of my grief. The question acts as foil to the visit to Arnos Vale cemetery and prompts another. ‘Where are all those dead people - nowhere, everywhere?’

Paul Ricoeur says in *Memory, History, Forgetting*: “*The work of mourning is the cost of remembering, but the work of remembering is the benefit of the work of mourning.*”

There is also the added dimension that parts of Arnos Vale were left in a state of dereliction and decay for many years. It is *heterotopic* – layered with multiple meanings, exploring the presence of absence. The dead have a presence in the marking of their remains – in the material



representation of memorial stones, lettering and gifts/flowers left at the graveside – but are absent in embodied form.

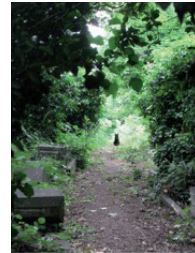
*“The cemetery (is a) space full, or filled with absences... and these absences are not simply absent. Indeed, absence can have some sort of presence.”*



The overgrown – the split, toppled graves resonate with my emotional landscape of death – not tidy, fracturing and fractured, not easily put away. The secret hidden places of ivy enrobed stone and close grown sycamore saplings. I choose the unkempt rather than the tarmac path and am guided by a non-human presence - a small black cat that sits and waits, greets me as I pass.

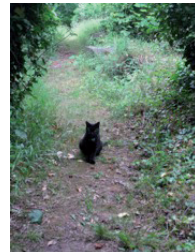
Our group conversation and reflection, afterwards over coffee, dances through – the entranceway as threshold, time affecting respect for place and original intent, the trace prevalent by those cleaning and keeping tidy is very different from the areas claimed by nature. The

place feels full – of language, rhythm, repetition; a place of the living not the dead, yet paradoxically the dead are ever present in the concrete reminders of headstones and words.



Our immediate exposure to this death-scape led on to talk of ceremonies, our individual powerfully resonant experiences of the visceral nature of burial and cremation, the best and worst of funereal experiences, personal recollections and stories that mirror, reflect back and subtly alter my relationship to my own stories.

*“In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent”.*



Ricoeur, P, 2004, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, (University of Chicago Press) p72

Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces* (1967), Heterotopias <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html> (accessed 29.09.10)

Morgan Meyer & Kate Woodthorpe, *The Material Presence of Absence: A Dialogue Between Museums and Cemeteries* <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/13/5/1.html> (accessed 29.09.10)

Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces* (1967), Heterotopias (as above)



Georgie Urry

Experiencing the dead

Before

A graveyard? A cemetery? A graveyard? What should it be called? This centre of the dead.

“I think once we’re in the graveyard, sorry cemetery” I quickly correct myself. ‘Graveyard’ somehow seems callous and disrespectful. But disrespectful to what?

And why here? Why this concentration of the dead? Is this necessary? The dying, death, situates itself within every crevice of *life*, it is integral to *life*, an abundant, excessive life, for which death is a propellant, a fissure, a ‘trip up’ throughout an infinite, teeming plenitude.

Life is a swelling tumult continuously on the verge of explosion. But since the incessant explosion constantly exhausts its resources, it can only proceed under one condition: that beings given life whose explosive force is exhausted shall make room for fresh beings coming into the cycle with renewed vigour. (Bataille, 1986, p. 59)

And here we step forward to witness a gathering of the material remnants of these individual trips.

There’s a nervousness about the situation. A lot of conversation and much unrelated to the task in hand. But, we are also open to each other. There is a boldness about each one of us that is testified by our willingness to take part in the venture to confront the dead, to overcome the anxiety I and, I only assume, my other colleagues are feeling towards our intention to permit the space we enter into to enter into us, to affect us.

And are we permitting it or are we pre-empting it?

-

We arrive. The experience we are expecting is imminent. We cross a busy road and head under the vast arch that distinguishes inside from out. We are inside. I move about nervously, talk unnecessarily, discuss our desired trajectories for longer than is required, procrastinating, stuttering, before heading deeper.

During

I take a path to the left and hope that it carries me. I am concerned not to lose my way and note that if I head ‘up’ then my return to the others will be a simple route ‘down’. I look around, eyes probing, senses alert. I am here to ‘research’.

The gravestones and various memorial structures are not intimidating. They are prolific, multitudinous, and notably disorderly. They tumble, fragment, and impinge in an unregimented, chaotic, lively performance. They are dis-organ-ised, de-stratified, impersonal. Upon death:

The life of the individual gives way to an impersonal and yet singular life that releases a pure event freed from the accidents of internal and external life, that is, from the subjectivity and objectivity of what happens...It is a haecceity no longer of individuation but of singularization: a life of pure immanence, neutral, beyond good and evil, for it was only the subject that incarnated it in the midst of things that made it good or bad. This life of such individuality fades away in favour of the singular life immanent to a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other. A singular essence, a life... (Deleuze, 2001, pp. 28-29)

Remnants of memorials distanced by time, that recklessly, materially, jostle for space, present *life* in its anonymous, messy profusion. The dead are here. *Life* is here.

I continue further and hit a junction. A path crosses that which I have followed. I go to cross but see ahead of me less unruly graves, cleaner,

well kept, maintained with posies of flowers. I hesitate. I cross. I am less easy, less content even. My welcomed awareness of infinite abundance beyond my individual state recedes as I become conscious of those still held present, not quite given over to *life*-itself, by recent memories. I sense a different area, one of mourning. These graves are more than traces of individuals once constituted as subjects. These individuals are permitted a degree of survival by those who carry them within themselves. This Derridean notion that “it is only ‘in us’ that the dead may speak, that it is only by speaking *of* or *as* the dead that we can keep them alive” (Brault & Nass, 2001, p. 9) perpetuates the inclination that these beings are not quite gone, not quite able to be let go of, and serves as a reminder of the very present void left by absence.

I make my way back down.

-

Near the entrance we gather. I am quick to readjust to being in the company of my colleagues but am aware that others are decompressing. I have much I long to ask, running through my steps in my head so that analysis of the experience can be as full as possible.

After

We gather for informal discussions about our individual and yet shared experiences.

We all, inevitably, find common ground on interesting aspects of our walks whilst also noting entirely different points that have moved or touched us in some way. Our behaviour intrigues me. We are noticeably more relaxed around each other. We respectfully allow each other time to disseminate our personal views which tip back and forth between a cathartic exercise and one of learning. I grapple at what my colleagues intend by what they have motioned towards and yet elements continue to escape me. My colleagues are most certainly not incapable of lucidly expressing themselves; however, there is something in their experience

that I am unable to take. I struggle myself to convey my own thoughts. We have come from different directions, backgrounds, histories. This quickly comes to light and we stretch further and further trying to make our voices heard. Our differences become our conversation, our differences in discipline; in expectations of today; of previous experiences of the particular site; of our personal engagements with death itself. I am learning a lot, becoming considerably more aware of the potential affectual nature of landscapes of death outside of my own perceptions. But something is not completing. The conversation continues and does not end naturally.

-

We disperse. I am left unfulfilled, unsatisfied yet unsurprised and strangely relieved for how could such a vibrant landscape be re-presented? “*The world is more excessive than we can theorise....the world does not add up.*” The world does not resolve or come to rest” (Dewsbury, Harrison, Rose, & Wylie, 2002, p. 437). The dead are not still, the dead are *life*-itself, and the procession of *life*-itself evades the stasis of language.

Bataille, G. (1986). *Erotism: death and sensuality* (M. Dalwood, Trans.). San Francisco: City Lights Books.  
Brault, P.-A., & Nass, M. (2001). Editors’ Introduction *Derrida’s The Work of Mourning* (pp. 1-30). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.  
Deleuze, G. (2001). *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life* (A. Boyman, Trans.). New York: Zone Books.  
Dewsbury, J. D., Harrison, P., Rose, M., & Wylie, J. (2002). *Introduction: Enacting geographies*. Geoforum, 33, 437-440.



Victoria Walters

## “There’s Something Death Brings to the Conversation”

We visit Arnos Vale cemetery to walk, have a conversation and ask: what landscape is death? Reaching the gate, the site brings an immediate reminder of death’s visceral reality. The movement of our dialogue will flow outwards towards death at the site, then across to each other. After a brief discussion, we go our separate ways in silence.

Zelda Clarke was 3 month’s old when she died. A black cat leads me to her grave. As I sit with her I rock and sing her nursery rhymes, but that does not suffice, she keeps on crying. I ask her what she wants to hear and the answer comes, “Puff the Magic Dragon.” I do not start up the sound recorder. This is for her and for me, a childless woman.

*Puff, the magic dragon lived by the sea  
And frolicked in the autumn mist in a land called Honah Lee,  
Little Jackie Paper loved that rascal Puff,  
And brought him strings and sealing wax and other fancy stuff.<sup>1</sup>*

She feels distressed to me, stuck. I pick up a twig sitting nearby, which looks like tiny antlers, and perform a small ritual. Closing my eyes, I imagine putting her up on a stag’s back, and walking with them to the boundary. Pausing at the water’s edge, I tell her it is time for me to go back, that I can’t go on with them. After securing and reassuring her I make my way back to a distant vantage point. The stag leaps up and I see her received by loved ones on the other side, grateful that she is no longer caught between two worlds.

I am glad to find the others again. We sit for a while by the gate, gradually returning to language and talking quietly. Not wanting to go back in, yet not quite ready to leave, we hover at the threshold. Who works along the boundary with death? I notice the ravens and rooks all around us. I know that in certain cultures, the raven symbolizes protection, initiation and healing, the death of one thing to initiate the birth of another, and maybe an augur of the future. A trickster, the raven is able to initiate a change in consciousness, delivering messages from the spirits, but is not always to be trusted.

We walk over to a nearby café, feeling the weight and outline of death inside us. I think of animistic traditions, of Mircea Eliade’s work on the role of the shaman, whose knowledge of death is somehow lived. “We have several times observed the initiatory essence of the candidate’s “death” followed by his “resurrection,” in whatever form this takes place – ecstatic dreams, sickness, unusual events, or ritual proper. Indeed, ceremonies implying passage from one age group to another, or admission into some “secret society,” always presuppose a series of rites that can be summarized in the convenient formula: death and resurrection of the candidate.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The song “Puff, the Magic Dragon” was written by Leonard Lipton and Peter Yarrow, and recorded by the group Peter, Paul and Mary in 1963.

<sup>2</sup> Mircea Eliade, “Initiatory Sicknesses and Dreams”, in *Eliade, Shamanism: archaic techniques of ecstasy*, St Ives: Penguin Arkana, 1989, pp. 64 - 5.

The German artist Joseph Beuys argued that by seeing all spheres in terms of art we would see that only art can heal a social system that “totters along the death line”<sup>3</sup>. It occurs to me that now we are not so much tottering as veering. Forces present in shamanism, Beuys argued, might make us aware that the unfettered pursuit of positivist materialism places interior and exterior landscapes at risk of extinction. He taught that this situation could be overcome and that death should be perceived in a broader sense as a trajectory to life, shocking us into full consciousness: “Death keeps me awake”<sup>4</sup>. I surmise that it is not enough, then, to acknowledge the fatal times in which we live, we must find ways to ensure that death shocks us into full consciousness, and then to action.

We talk at length and find it hard to end the conversation, bound together by the intensity of our subject. I am moved by the honesty of our interaction. Beuys said everyone is an artist, is working alongside death something we can all do more consciously? How can we trigger the death archetype in ourselves to summon deep energies and powers of intuition, stimulating us to connect inner and outer landscapes? Are there materials that can bring death near? Can we call in death with “strings and sealing wax”? Can we co-create rituals? Can we move forwards by bringing death into the conversation?



<sup>3</sup> Joseph Beuys (1973), in Caroline Tisdall: *Art into Society, Society into Art*, ICA, London: ICA, 1974, p.48.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Beuys, ““Death Keeps Me Awake”: Interview with Achille Bonito-Oliva” (1986). In *Joseph Beuys in America: energy plan for the Western Man*, 1986, p.155-180.

Michele Whiting

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Role Call

The gates of the cemetery divide our world from theirs, a marker between here and there, then and now, them and us. Moving through the gates it is clear both audibly and visually that a divide has been crossed, like Eurydice and Orpheus we cross knowingly into that ‘other’ space.

We are in the cemetery now - a small group of people standing together. Here to experience, sense and feel this space at it’s given values. We give ourselves half an hour to encounter the cemetery, to feel its presence.

The trees appear tinged by that which they inhabit. The tendrils of their roots reaching down, feeding off the bones of the dead, their branches straining into the sky as if gasping for breath.

Chat ceases. Words become difficult, slower, laden. We split and go on our separate paths of discovery, moving where we want, how we want.

Memories provoke feelings of tenderness. Roland Barthes own empathic realisation, stemmed from his understanding that in the ordinary hours of a day, an image or object can provoke an ‘affect’ that seemingly comes from out of the blue. If we trace the object or image back through the paths of our repressed memories, we may find out why the image/object produced the experience that we encountered.

Unexpectedly, I find myself murmuring the names on the headstones. I push them aside.

This is not quite right, I am here but I am looking for something, something ‘other’ or maybe someone ‘other’, or somewhere(s) in-between. In this space of both question and recognition, I remain drawn to the countless individuals whose deaths make up this place. My feelings are not provoked wholly through ‘things’ or personal associations but through recognition of death’s human condition linking man to man.

In this context, the image or thing that Barthes refers to may be the received image of the tomb; any ‘affects’ or feelings, are therefore prompted by books, film, cartoons and other iconographic images, and of course one’s own familial experiences. Fragments of memory culled from our lives, squished beneath the conscious surface, beneath the skin of what we present to the world.

Barthes traced his feelings that were triggered by an image to a memory of his aunt of whom he was particularly fond. But here in this space and context, any ‘affect’ is experienced essentially and in isolation away from an individual tomb or gravestone, away from the individual representation of death with which it was originally associated, and instead is experienced through comprehending the ‘universal’ tomb.

I write their names on a cemetery guide that I purchased in the cemetery tourist shop. I am going to keep them, inhabit them. Utter them once more. For we are they and they are us.



Mel Shearsmith



*a somatic translation, in other words* (to be spoken aloud)

Breathe,  
Start with a word.  
Which word shall I start with?  
Dance?  
Geography?  
Embrace?

I will start with the word geography; I will embrace it and hold it as a new discovery, very close to my cheek. I will dance with it, me and geography dancing. My weight is off centre and I am balancing on my toes.

Geography; from the Greek ‘geographia’ – meaning, ge for earth and graphia for writing. I will write the earth with my toes as we create a small encounter between our feet and ground, breath and cheeks. Micro moments are held in the space enclosed in our arms, between our shoulders, our ribcages.

A small moment  
the minutiae geography of earth writing.

A short interlude for the real dance, as it happens. It wasn’t pretty or easy. It was awkward but you persevered and we were all rooting for you. It was not modest or intimate or true – you were not home, but it was authentic.

The dance repeats and I am balancing on my toes.  
We are in a silent dark room and the dance is a photograph.

Note to the world - you can close your eyes if you would like?

A figure of eight step  
an embrace  
an intimate rupture  
a performance of tenderness  
we fold in to meet each other  
this lead  
folding in.

Following  
Wide

Fluid  
Colliding  
Revolving  
Repeating  
Repeating  
Repeating.

Are you watching this dance?

Am I engaged in this moment, lost, abandoned? Lost in a rapture of wordless intimacy? Caught in the wonder of the slightest, the smallest of movements - sliding my toes along the floor? Is your attention in my toes? Is your attention in your toes? Are you attending to watching the dance or are you attending to the dance?

Breathe.

The dance repeats and I am balancing on my toes, not looking at the space between our shoulders, our ribcages.

This extended moment, a duration of exposure  
a transcript of the pathways across the floor, the ground, the earth  
the duration of exposure to the dark room is astounding and the room unfolds into a stanza, waterproof pages and a woman with wings of fire drifts across creating song-lines, patterns to dance to.

‘A slight surprise of action’

Breathe.

The dance repeats and I am balancing on my toes, not looking at the space between our shoulders, the peaks and troughs of our ribcages.

I am getting lost. The weather is gathering itself to me.

It pauses  
I breathe  
I move

logging the poetic experience of the world at my feet  
we know our place

(a corner of open crumpled maps lies at our feet and we move around them, very careful not to stand upon them)  
we know our place  
in a figure of eight.

synaesthetic senses transport one to another  
translated and carried across.  
Look at the clank of metal  
see the volume of the field  
followed by the shortest day and the burning image of what she carries on her back  
in a dark room, enter the night.

I can see the sound of the steps you mark out on the floor  
I can hear the rephrasing of the moment, the rupture in the shift  
a persistent crack  
an echo.

I can see  
cars far away  
a wood pigeon  
the trees crackling and creaking  
an ambulance siren  
a bee.

I can see  
‘a slight surprise of action’

Breathe.

This dance repeats and I am balancing on my toes, not looking at the space between our shoulders, the peaks and troughs of our ribcages, an echo.

I can hear  
a pair of gardening gloves  
half an eggshell  
a car bumper  
a bright red flower almost hidden amongst the trees

a bicycle handlebar  
a broken drill bit.

I can hear ‘a slight surprise of action’

I remember the dance, the steps, the figure of eight step  
an embrace  
a dance.

Breathe.

Here is a monument of traces  
marked out with my toes, your toes on the ground  
in the earth marking out, leaning  
leaving it behind  
names dates and acts of love that endure,  
the glories of the dead.

Breathe.

Don’t step off the path or you’ll turn to stone  
spilt and toppled, a split figure of eight fallen over  
fallen foul

(what is that chicken doing crossing the road?)  
it’s not a chicken, it’s a cockerel.  
She gets out of her car and picks it up and moves it out of the way of on-coming traffic  
she places it back on the path.

The dance repeats, balancing on toes, not looking at the space between the peaks and troughs, following the black cat and the space between the shoulder blades, walking into the space of the ribcages, a persistent crack, an echo.

The dance comes to an end  
The figure of eight ceases to revolve  
The imprint of the body is present, written  
Evidenced, a significant trace.

Note to the world - ‘my mortal self lies here’.



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- Suze Adams

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PLaCE

LAND<sub>2</sub>



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A foggy landscape with a grassy hill and a rocky path leading up to a distant building.

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