

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed (candidate)

Date

STATEMENT 1

This work is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged (e.g. by footnotes giving explicit references).

A bibliography is appended.

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Date

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my work, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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Date

[In]tangible Traces....?

A Critical Reflection

Sian Adam

*Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
completion of the MA Practising Performance,
Aberystwyth University, March 2010*

Summary

The performance took the form of a 60-minute audio tour of Aberystwyth, starting at the train station and ending at the large shelter on the promenade. At ten minute intervals, walkers were set up with an Mp3 player, headphones, hand drawn map and guided by the Mp3 soundtrack on a route around the town, between places where they heard the voices of local inhabitants telling their memories. Along the route were some strategically placed live presences who acted as silent guides. At the end the walkers were offered a hot drink and slice of homemade bara brith.

The research explores memory and place and walking through the areas of philosophy (Edward Casey, Husserl), Cultural Studies (Marc Auge), (Rebecca Solnit), psychogeography (Martin Coverley), performance studies (Pearson), and everyday life (Highmore). This document may also be of borderline interest to human geography and the social sciences.

The influences include Rimini Protokoll, Janet Cardiff, Graeme Miller, Mike Pearson, Wrights & Sites, Allan Kaprow, Augusto Boal and the community theatre movement.

The methodology took the form of asking local inhabitants to take me on what I called 'memory walks', where they were to be my guide around the places within the town which held memories for them, and where I would record them telling me their memories. I also recorded everyday sounds from around the town and edited them together using the application Garage Band into a continuous track. All the sounds and voices were recorded by myself using a flash mic, in and around Aberystwyth during the period June-September 2009. The audio track was completed using Logic Pro.

All images in this document are my own.

Included with this document are the DVD made of the walk on the day of assessment and a CD of the audio track.

Appendices are included of documentation from the performance, namely the map given to the walkers, and the credits sheet.

Part One: Arrivals and Departures



“I arrived with all my worldly possessions, which was a rucksack, a few bags and a guitar, and I’ve never left, in a way.”

Midnight, 16th August 2006. A red Rover 25 crammed with so much inside that the two women, and sleeping child (with hamster on his lap) can hardly move, pull up in a village just outside Aberystwyth, exhausted after a six hour journey and days spent packing and cleaning. The two women are myself and my mother, the child my son, and this was my new beginning. I remember being full of anticipation at moving away from a place where negative associations were all around me, and moving to a place where not only the landscape was beautiful but I thought the people were sure to be friendly, and I knew I would be geographically closer to my own family. My mother's side of the family is Welsh and Welsh speaking, and my fondest childhood memories are of the times spent with my Nain and Taid in north Wales. My first language heard, my 'mother tongue' was Welsh, and so for me coming back to Wales was a compulsion, a way to come back 'home'. However, those romanticised notions I had were soon destroyed. As time wore on, the welcome I had hoped to find didn't happen and I found myself on the fringes of several sub-communities – I had chosen to live in a village because I envisaged there would be a greater sense of community than in the town, but I found myself snubbed at the school gates by the cliques of parents, we were harassed by children on the estate we had moved to as being 'different'; as a lone parent I had no one else to talk to other than my children at home, and had little opportunity to socialize outside of my part-time job and part-time university course, and was financially struggling so could not even partake in commodity exchange in the town. I found divisions existing between the Welsh, the English, locals and students, and tourists, which confused me as I

was aligned to most of those groups. Instead of finding myself connecting to place, I found that, since my relocation, I was dis-connected from the place I now lived and *wanted* to belong, and which I became painfully and acutely aware of on my visits back to the town I had moved from; where I had lived mostly since the age of ten, and where waves of nostalgia would overwhelm me and make me question the validity of my decision to move. I desperately wanted to integrate myself into my new communities but circumstances, and, to a degree, personality, inhibited me from doing so.

Part of this isolation I felt was due to something I remember becoming increasingly aware of; I was spending a great deal of time in my car, driving from place to place, repetitively following the same pathways at a speed unnatural to the human body. “*..modern life is moving faster than the speed of thought, or thoughtfulness.*”¹ I had lost time for contemplation. The repetitive routes of home to school, school to university, home to work, work to home, home to town; had resulted in me becoming dis-connected from the beautiful landscape which I had moved to; again my romanticized notions of just being able to step outside the house and experience the landscape were destroyed in the reality of being surrounded by fenced off farmland and not finding the time to go for walk, resulting in a feeling of isolation and being out-of-place. During the MA course, as a group, we had devised, under the direction supervision of Eddie Ladd, a performance based on running. The physical act of running, outdoors, established a re-connection with my body, and drew my attention again to its natural rhythms, pace and limits. Re-grounding, moving at a slower, human pace returned to me a sense of being-

¹ Solnit, R: 2001:10

in-the world (Dasein)². This raised the issue in my mind that most people, in this society, also follow the same regular routes of home to work to the same shops and so on, and thought about the individual unconscious mapping which develops with inhabitation. This helped me decide on my method, which I will discuss further later.

All of this led me to wonder about the performative potential in exploring place memories through community. Although my original motivations were deeply personal I did not want to create a performance about me – I was curious about the area in which I live and the communities of people who inhabit it, and so my research and methodology would focus on them rather than myself in-place.

I looked to the works of Rimini Protokoll, in particular *Call Cutta* and *Cargo Sofia*, and their method of incorporating members of the community or, as they are best described, ‘experts’ who perform as guides. Janet Cardiff’s ‘*The Missing Voice*’ was another influence and Graeme Miller’s ‘*Linked*’ also. Allan Kaprow, since the 1960’s has believed in the ‘blurring of art and life’³ and the returning of art to the community, removing it from the institutions and back to the streets. Wrights and Sites encourage a playful re-examining of place, and a stepping back from the everyday routines. Their perspective influenced my thinking, although I did not really incorporate this influence into the final piece.

The main challenges for me were threefold:

² Casey:2000:215 referring to Husserl

³ Kaprow:2003

1. Addressing the issues/themes giving rise to the project
2. Ethical considerations – finding contributors, creating and maintaining a position of trust and sense of *genus loci*
3. Structural– creating a balance between the framework of walking, the audio and live presences.

I will attempt to address these concerns in the remainder of this reflection.

Part Two: Rationale

Memory and Place

Edward Casey defines places as being defined spaces containing meaning, of special significance to people. Marc Auge describes place in a similar vein, as having a “*private geography*” for its inhabitants, “*invested with meanings, identity and relations.*”⁴ I had no personal history in Aberystwyth and so for me it was not, in Casey’s terms, the *place* I desired it to be. As Graeme Miller said: “*..dwelling, living somewhere, is actually to do with narrative. We write ourselves into the landscape. We own space because we can tell stories about it.*”⁵ As a newcomer, I had no stories to tell. Tuan writes: “*Awareness of the past is an important element in the love of place*”⁶ Without a past in this place, I could not love it in the same way as those who have a past and memories there, and was to a large extent in the role of tourist, and had a sense of frustration because I desired a deeper knowledge of this place as a whole.

“The pre packaged experience of the tourist is said to have replaced authentic forms of travel that involve real contact with different places. The territory to be visited is mapped in advance....tourists often seek access to the ‘back’ areas of the sights they visit...but the back itself is often staged in a way that undermines the opposition”⁷

⁴ Auge:2008:44

⁵ In interview with Carl Lavery, *New Theatre Quarterly*:2004:161

⁶ cited in Pearson: 2008:12

⁷ King, G: 1996:80

It is impossible to ignore the human body also as a place – memory is subjective, and relies on the physical body, since sights, sounds and smells all have a role to play in evoking past events. Casey writes of, the human body as being a place of memory, claiming that “*being-in-place*” gives “*the feeling of being at home...at ease in a place that has become one’s own in some especially significant way*”⁸ and that “*body memory establishes the familiarity that is requisite to the full realization of place memory*”. Therefore it would make sense to ‘collect’ memories in-situ, in the desire that revisiting the places of their memories with my experts would enhance their recall and produce more vivid accounts. In order to explore the potential of openly juxtaposing the past with the present, replaying those memories in-place as opposed to taking them away into a more conventional theatrical framing also seemed the most logical option. “*The power of place exceeds what recollection – as well as other forms of remembering – can effectively encompass.*”⁹

Pearson and Shanks attempted to address the questions raised about landscape, memory and performance through their 1998 CPR conference “Performance, Places and Past”, searching for a de-romanticised reconnection with the landscape through performance and archaeology. Pearson’s performance work, such as *Bubbling Tom* (2000), and *The First Five Miles* (1997) have attempted to address issues of memory and place, arguing for non-materialised approach to local history, inevitably bringing in to play the role of memory and the storyteller. Like Pearson in *The First Five Miles* I felt

⁸ 2002:191

⁹ Casey:2000:214

these stories needed to be told *in* and not *against* the landscape¹⁰, and therefore would be collected and listened to in their places. However instead of becoming the medium through which the stories were to be transmitted, I chose to retain the original voices, not just because of aesthetic considerations of variations in pitch, tone, or ethically wanting to remain as close as possible in my portrayal of the local people, but because I felt that, in order to get a sense of spirit of place, the transition from memory-teller to memory–receiver should be kept as simple and straightforward as possible for maximum impact.

Walking.

*“...[W]alking reshapes the world by mapping it, treading paths into it, encountering it...each act reflects and reinvents the culture in which it takes place.”*¹¹ Walking as both a reflective and performative act was important to the shaping of the performance. Walking and thinking have long gone hand in hand, as Solnit draws to our attention – Rousseau, Kierkegaard, Baudelaire, Sophocles, Aristotle, Wordsworth – all extolled the values and virtues of walking in solitude in order to be able to think.

Walking is a basic everyday action. The romanticist in me was searching for deeper resonances within the town apart from the seen entities of buildings, streets and people, vehicles and so on. In order to do that I would have to connect with people and find out through the performative act of speech what places had resonances for the people. *“when informants tell stories...they are producing memories in specific ways in a particular context, the research*

¹⁰ Centre For Performance Research: POC – 3.01

¹¹ Solnit:2001:276

encounter. In other words, they are doing memory work: staging their memories, performing them.”¹² The Marxist in me wanted to reclaim the streets for acts other than exchanging of commodities. The community theatre practitioner in me wanted to use this as a forum for giving local people a voice. I wanted to stop feeling like an *other*.

Walking as a conscious act would therefore be fundamental to the process and the performance; a means for me in the role of artist to connect with people and in turn, to place. In order to convey that process and sense of place to others, the walkers would need to walk in my/our footsteps and hear the memories as told by those who owned it, in place.

*“Walking is only the beginning of citizenship, but through it the citizen knows his or her city and fellow citizens and truly inhabits the city rather than a small privatized part thereof. Walking the streets is what links up reading the map with reading one’s life, the personal microcosm with the public macrocosm; it makes sense of the maze all around”*¹³

Therefore, in order to become part/a true citizen of the ‘city’ of Aberystwyth, to link myself and my personal map with those of others, I would need to walk the streets, flaneur style (Baudelaire, Benjamin), *“attempting to escape commodification by endlessly roaming the streets in a quest to track down what the Surrealists called ‘le merveilleux’ (the marvelous)”*¹⁴

Solnit also argues that ‘the observer’s state’ is *‘a good state for anybody who needs to reflect or create. In small doses, melancholy, alienation, and*

¹² Kuhn:2002:9

¹³ Solnit:2001:176

¹⁴ Lavery:2009:43

introspection are among life's most refined pleasures."¹⁵ This being the case, my state of feeling alienated from the community was an ideal starting point for this project, as an investigation into the unseen significance of paths and places, the *intangible traces* which gave rise to the name I gave the work.



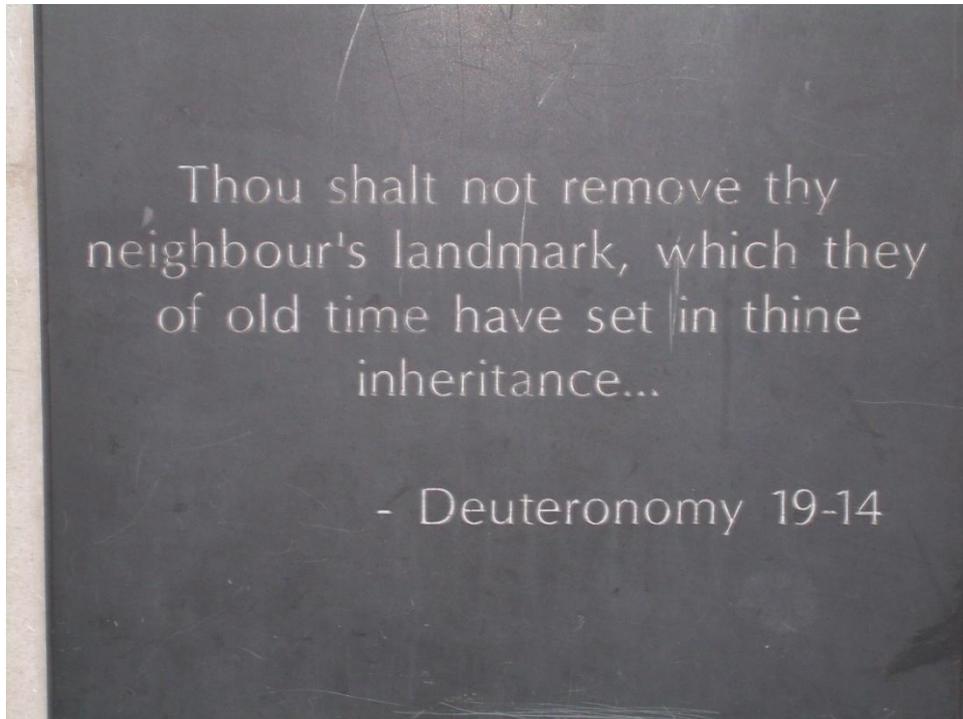
"Half an hour in the bay! Half an hour in the bay!"

With Aberystwyth being a tourist destination, it seemed logical to create a tour of the town, one from and for a local inhabitants, whether their inhabitation was permanent, temporary or transitory. It would be a view from the outside, bringing out and framing the unseen in the everyday, or *"..aspects of life that lie hidden"*.¹⁶

¹⁵ Solnit:2001:186

¹⁶ Highmore:2002:1

Part Two: Process



Clock tower, Aberystwyth

“ ...human beings move between different material contexts; their lives move from one place to another, they move from one building to another, they move along pathways and over floors.... We need to... begin to try and understand that process of inhabitation...and the only way...is through forms of representation and through narrative, and..through performance..”¹⁷

¹⁷ Centre for Performance Research:Barrett:POC – 3.03

In the few months leading up to the beginning, and overlapping a little into the start of my process, protests had been staged organized by specially formed protest group ‘Cadw Calon Aberystwyth/Save Aberystwyth’s Heart’ against the local council’s plans to knock down the site of the old sorting office between Chalybeate Street and Great Darkgate Street, and rebuild into a shopping centre in order to attract larger chain department stores to the town. However the council’s view of the *site* was clearly at odds with the community’s view of the area as *place* (Casey). All this was reflecting the world wide economic recession. Several shops closed down in the town centre during the period before and during my process. I hoped that within the mood of civic pride I would be able to find enough people willing to share stories of Aberystwyth, advertising on the group’s Facebook page, which at that time had over 2,000 members. I had only 3 responses, only one of which actually transpired into a memory walk, and ironically could not be used in the final piece. A friend of mine who works for the County Council and contributed, sent an email to the whole of the Social Services Department, to which there was no response. I also placed an advertisement in the local newspaper, hoping that would produce some volunteers, and received only one call. I considered that the lack of responses might have been due to a reluctance from the fact I was a performance student and people may have been wary about what would happen to their memories, but I have since found out that Mike Pearson also had a poor response to his request for local memories to contributing to *The First Five Miles*.¹⁸ For those who did agree to contribute, I had to find an explanation for what I was doing which avoided

¹⁸ Centre for Performance Research:POC 3.01

giving a confusing and complicated theoretical context, thus leaving an open forum for the experts to bring their knowledge and personality to the process. Taking in to account both the advice of Sophia New¹⁹, and tips gleaned from the Digital Storytelling Conference, in particular Gilly Adams, and Annette Mies of Coney Island²⁰, I decided to record the memories in one take as there is a tendency for people to self-edit. Each meeting had a format: I spoke to people in advance and asked them to think about their special places in and around the town, and asked them to be my guide and take me on a memory walk around those places. The plan was to then map the final route with the ‘landmarks’ being the memory-places. Owing to the time constraints found that I had to overlap the start of the editing process with the continuation of searching for and meeting with experts for their memory walks.

It became apparent during the process that people were less likely to share memories pertaining to personal events in their lives with me, which was understandable given that I was a stranger and recording them telling their stories. I found that this blurred the boundaries between the private personal and the public personal, since every memory I was told was from the subjective viewpoint of the person telling it, and would therefore be imbued with his or her own feelings about that time/place/event, and act as clues to their personal life. I have also found personal histories of places brings them to life in a way that simple facts could not. . . *“time is trivialized when it is*

¹⁹ At the start of our process, we were privileged to have one-to-one tutorials with Sophia New of Plan B theatre company

²⁰ Aberystwyth Arts Centre, 17th June 2009

reduced to calendrical-historical dates.”²¹ For example, I learned that the Caffi Blue Creek...



“... used to be ‘Maeth y Meysydd, ‘Good things from the fields’, a wholefoods shop begun by Alf and myself in 1978....I learned to plaster by plastering these walls...it was full of sacks and bags and buckets...it was a very successful business, as a way of earning our living but also.. publicising the politics of food...and also for networking as regards the peace movement at the time so it was a wonderful project in many ways, I felt. It was a very good 11 years for me and both daughters were involved as infants and children.”

Another theme which emerged through various memory walks was the inclusion of places which were no longer physically, tangibly present. One such place was the old King’s Hall, where a few experts had stories to tell from different viewpoints. Even as I re-walked the route in contemplation of this writing, I overheard a mother telling her children about the ‘lovely old building’ which used to be there which had been replaced by ‘that ugly thing’.

²¹ Casey:2000:214



The site of the old King's Hall

One expert's remembrance of the place was also imbued with political perspective, and illustrative of the divisions I had felt myself. He is a lifelong Aberystwyth resident, now retired, and speaks of the division he feels between the university and the town, symbolised for him in the knocking down of the former Kings Hall, and the rebuilding of the theatre up on the university campus. As a representative of the university I felt the responsibility to let him be heard as a means of bridging the gap:

“It was thriving, the King's hall, and we were so disappointed because we thought it was a thriving enterprise, but the council seemed to think it was losing money, and the building was starting to disintegrate. They said it was unsafe. We all questioned that because it took dynamite in the end to knock it down. But there we are, it's gone, it's another feature of Aberystwyth which has disappeared I'm sad to say, but then again some things happen, whether it its for the best but the theatre up on the college was established, and the new theatre up there and the Great Hall, but they belong to the university, they're not belonging to the town and I feel we've lost something as a community by not being in charge of our own destiny on these things.” (sic.)

I hoped that common themes or concerns would emerge from talking with a cross section of the community, to give some sense of common feeling

or purpose from the interviewees which would guide me through the selection and editing process. It did happen, but not in the obvious way which I had hoped. My original plan to interview people regarding the proposed development would have given an obvious political framework for the context of the work, and likened it in a small way to the circumstances that led to the creation of *Linked*. What did emerge was more subtle. It was my responsibility to weave together a selection of the material gathered through the process to form a cohesive whole, layering the audio, the walking and the live presences to create the performance event. What did emerge through the interviews was a love of and sense of security in place, regardless of whether they were lifetime residents or had moved to Aberystwyth from elsewhere. A sense of ownership also emerged from all the interviewees, as well as different knowledges – to take some examples:

- *A* moved to Aberystwyth in 1975 with her then new, now ex-husband, raised two children in the town and has been very active in the Quaker and peace movements. She showed me many snickets she uses to avoid walking along roads. Despite trying to incorporate one or two in to the final route, it was not possible to do so.
- *B* has lived here all his life, 68 years, now retired, was part of the lifeboat crew, choirs and life of the town.
- *C* often visited Aberystwyth in his youth, and retired here 15 years ago, and has extensive knowledge of local history and has been very active in the theatrical community.

- *Group D* are a mixed group of teenage friends who meet in town regularly, and have their favourite places to congregate. Some were born in Aberystwyth, and others have moved here in childhood. They come from both the Welsh and English speaking schools and simply enjoy each other's company.

These examples demonstrate the cross section of inhabitants, and the blurring of boundaries between groups in actuality, which is in opposition to the perceived divisions of self as belonging to a particular group and *others* as not.

Throughout the process I also had to bear in mind the logistics of the walk itself, including: what the physical capabilities of the audience would be, so it would be best not to incorporate steep hills or many steps; the safety of the walkers with regards to traffic and other obstacles in the streets; the timing of the walking between places; and all of these had to be considered during the selection and editing process. Paramount was the importance for the voices to be clear, contesting with outside distractions and the background track I was creating to play underneath. I had to take into account the standard of equipment the walkers would be using, which were cheap Mp3 players and headphones. The final track being an Mp3 meant that the layers in it would be compressed.

Live Guides/ Presences

In my proposal it was clear I wanted to mix the live presences with the mediated recordings, and the idea of exactly how to provide that mix was left

until later in the process. Originally I wanted the whole encounter to be via mobile phone with live but unseen *experts*, one-to one, but owing to the complicated logistical prospect of finding enough people to be guides, decided to create one walk with a few live presences visible as silent guides, who were also experts who had given memories to the audio track. I decided that these guides would be at strategic locations en route and act as reassurance for the walkers, that they were in the right place, and were expected at that location. I decided they should be silent, so as not to break the ‘sound blanket’, as Sophia New aptly named it. Each guide also had a simple action or task to perform, for example saving a seat, giving a sweet and sitting next to the walkers. However, I wanted the soundtrack to also stand alone so as to be picked up at another time, and so this was another reason for wanting the guides to be silent and subtle presences.

Through spending so much time walking through various routes, timing sections, talking to people and simply being in place I became increasingly aware of the performance inherent in the town itself, snippets of entertainment to be found simply through transcending the everyday, being-in-place for the purpose of viewing the town at work. *“pedestrian performance...objective is to overwhelm us in the present, to provide us with actual experience, to make the world ‘float’ in the here and now.”*²²

A live element missed by the examiners was the happening in the window of Oxfam. I had discovered through a chance encounter that there were two girls of around sixteen years of age who volunteered in Oxfam on a Saturday morning between ten o’clock and midday, which coincided with the time of the

²² Lavery:2009:45

assessment, and that they had become renowned dressing up on themes contrived from whatever they could find available in the stock room, spending time in the shop window posing, and occasionally venturing out into the street and meandering up and down in character. Without realising it, these girls were creating a ‘happening’ and this quirky coincidence was entirely in keeping with my aims to highlight the performative in the everyday life of the town. It was a perfect example of performance inherent in the town, the surreal in the everyday. The girls willingly took part, but this was missed by the majority of the audience walkers owing to a delay and resulting overlap in the exam schedule, and an organisational oversight on my part. I had left this chance happening too much to chance, so the girls could not stay on after midday.

My own presence took a similar form to those of the silent guides. It was my voice guiding and providing companionship to the walkers.²³ The decision to place myself as a live presence at the end, providing tea and cake, and a place to ‘decompress’ was important to me in connecting the beginning and the end, the real and the cocoon of the track, and to bring the tour to a cyclical end. Janet Cardiff, being an international artist, would not have this as a possibility, and I was in the privileged position to be able to be there owing to the small scale of the work.

Sound

I had to make the decision early on in the process how much to play with the sounds of the voices. I wanted to compile a mix of qualities of voices, pitch,

²³ “*Sound..connotates companionship...*” Licht:2007:15

tone, rhythm, and so on, and as this was about personal narratives, I felt that to edit them so much that the stories were lost would be unethical and nonsensical, and so I let the narrative material lead me. Most of the stories were edited in some form, and I created a soundtrack running underneath the voices, using found sounds gathered from around the town. This included recordings made inside the shops, cafes and so on, so that aurally the walkers would be taken inside the establishments, enhancing the *genus loci*. I also added subtle little motifs such as the squeaking sound of my shoes as I walked, to continue my presence when I wasn't speaking, which I emphasized at different times, particularly the end, and a little homage to *The Missing Voice*: "*I'll meet you on the other side*" when crossing from Pier Street towards the pier. The whole piece was intended to be reflective and meditative, providing the walker with a detached and enhanced perspective and I felt that imposing a meta narrative over the track would have been divisive and prescriptive and too much for the walkers to contend with.

I had no significant memories of my own to share, so I did not add any. The result of this was that when the time came for placing myself in to the track, I was on the outside and had little space in which to place myself. My vision was to create the experience of walking through the town's unseen presences, picking up the voices as you pass through places of seeming insignificance, in order to bring another dimension to the everyday movements of the town: highlighting past in the present. After much consideration and discussion with Tim Noble, a local musician and fellow migrant to the town, who tutored me on the technical aspects of the project, I

decided to narrate as an anti-guide, focusing on the banal and mundane, to contrast with the other speakers. I still had to ensure walkers did not get lost and so had to give clear directions. All this was testing how far I could take the piece into the everyday and it was leaning towards the documentary in its form. During the timescale of the process, shops and a hotel were closed down, scaffolding was being erected at various places along the route, and I became aware of the fact I was recording sounds of places that were changing with time, and their potential relevance for local history. I became interested in the potential experience of walking along a street and hearing the drilling in a building as you walk past, which is not happening in the time you are there. I wondered what it would be to walk along the prom and hear the voices of children who are no longer present, playing on the sand. I used all these authentic sounds to evoke time just out of reach, echoes of the recent past.

Part Four: Departures and Arrivals



"I'll meet you in the shelter"

From finding willing participants, selecting the memories to keep in, deciding on the route, getting to grips with the technology and editing, and perhaps the biggest artistic decision of whether, how, and to what extent to place myself as the artist in the work, this was a huge undertaking. Practicalities were the main consumer of time, and didn't leave a great deal of time for deep and meaningful reflection within the process. I had removed myself so far from the centre of the work that when it came to the point where I needed to, I didn't know how to place myself in. I ran out of time to really consider this properly, and this is my biggest regret about the piece. My hopes that a common theme or place would emerge through the interviews fell flat and left me with the decision to edit based on route, governed by timing and the voices themselves – variety of pitch, tone and content, place and so on.

From the beginning, I was aware of my limits in terms of technical capabilities, time scale, and experience. This level of work cannot be compared on a level with more experienced sound artists such as Miller, Cardiff, Speakman, and others, and I have discovered, through this research-as-practice project, and the reflection afterwards, a tension which lies between research, practice, and aesthetics in the field of audio walks. The practicalities of creating an audio walk bound me, on this occasion, largely due to my inexperience. On one hand, my process left little space within it for deep reflection on the overall structure and framing of the piece, my role within it and its aesthetic. On the other, I remained true to my ethical principles regarding the position of trust I held with the contributors throughout the process, adapting the decisions in editing accordingly, and

made discoveries along the way, such as the surprise of the old Draper's shop, itself an installation used in a television series, which I incorporated into the piece, as I felt the discoveries I made during the process were important to share with my walkers.



The Old Draper's Shop

I relied on the structure being the walk itself, with the soundtrack a substantial layer between it and the live guides. Graeme Miller had the poignant advantage for *Linked* in that the people and places were no longer present, and the piece emerged two years after a political struggle of community against government and loss. In my piece, the place was largely unchanged, and so despite the memories being references to the past, the biggest loss was the loss of time as opposed to place. *Linked*, had a strong political basis i.e., people displaced for the building of the M11, strongly resonant of wider contexts of globalisation. I did not have that context within which to create the work, and despite attempts to begin the work in the context of the potential redevelopment in the town centre, did not gain enough material from the community to provide this as a context for my much

smaller scale project. In order to pursue this line of enquiry further, I would have needed more time to gain the trust of and appropriate material from a greater number of inhabitants, as Coney Island do, and then build into a better-contextualized track than the one I managed to produce. Miller had been a part of the lost community he was recreating whereas I was entering the project from the point of view of an outsider. He had a team of researchers to collect the material for him and had the technology to produce the effect he wanted. I had to make decisions based on the known limits of technology, time and experience.

The walking experience in *[In]Tangible Traces* could loosely, be compared to that of the flaneur, since we were walking alone, almost drifting amongst the people doing their Saturday shopping, hearing and seeing things which the other citizens around them are probably unaware of. Both myself, in all my contemplative wanderings and discoveries around the town during the three month period of the project, and the walkers, equipped with their Mp3s, were removed from everyday actions relating to commodity exchange, and busyness, seeing with fresh eyes the richness of the place we inhabit.

Through the journey of the creative process and the ongoing reflections afterwards, I have discovered that Aberystwyth is a town like many others, where identity is shaped not by a long sense of tradition and stability enhanced by nostalgia (Auge's "*indigenous fantasy*"²⁴), but by a long tradition of migration; people passing through as tourists, students and

²⁴ Auge:2008:36

workers, all of whom have a right to claim a link to place, place being the town as a whole and those special places holding memory, which will coincide with others. People inhabit place and form communities. Places contain memory, the same as body as place contains memory.

Without people, there is no place. I am a part of this place.

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Appendices

Feedback

“... There were two sets of performers, those with stories to tell and the participants in the walk. The emphasis was not on how the piece was "performed" but on the discovery of the material. So it was non-theatrical maybe?

As a participant in the walk I found that I was both invisible (just walking in town as you do) and completely exposed. By stopping occasionally, and having that look about you when your attention is not quite there (as you're listening to information), you feel as if you're completely on show. Interesting transitions arose between listening to the MP3 and being in the place to which it was referring. At the castle, I was in the fiction created by the record on MP3 and found myself near a bench on which someone was sat. I felt the "on show" feeling and then thought the person was looking at me for too long, even if I was a bit odd. It was then that I realised that he was a live guide and I had to leave the world of the MP3 and move into a more real one (and was offered a sweet). Then it subsided again, as it was the MP3 that told the rest of the story, on the Celtic Challenge, the rowing race across the Irish Sea.

It was strange how the visual world seemed less vivid than the stories about it. In the real place where something happened you made a second image of what had happened there. All of the sites seemed inactive as a result. That's not a fault! That's what happens...

This points to a big and sobering truth - nothing speaks of what's been there. Only people do and things fade as they stop speaking. It makes you wonder how long memory can last. And then you realise it can last a long time, if there's a motivation (I'm thinking of the Owain Glyndŵr mosaic at the castle).

It was interesting what detail was selected. I didn't know any of the stories on the MPs, probably because I left Aberystwyth in 1986. So somewhere that normally feels familiar felt foreign. Different people would have presented different

experiences

and a different point of view (this is a duuh point, but the great thing is the piece shows you how true it is).

The "decompressing" site at the shelter and the cup of tea at the end were great!"

- Eddie Ladd

"The stories your contributors told were humorous and uplifting and you put them together in a way that maximised their impact, rather than trying to bend them to fit the theoretical constructs so beloved of examiners.....I really enjoyed listening to the contributors and their stories. They were the stars of your show, as you correctly identified from the beginning, and your piece wove them together in an interesting and engaging way."

- Tim Noble