Listening In-between Oral History and Applied Performance

Siobhan O'Neill

Royal Holloway, University of London

Doctor of Philosophy: Department of Drama and Theatre and Department of History

Declaration of Authorship

I Siobhan O'Neill hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is clearly stated.

Signed: Siobhan O'Neill

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Abstract

This thesis explores the intersection between oral history and applied performance as practices of participation. The practice-based PhD critically engages with *Tales from the Marsh* (2016), a community performance project designed by the researcher to explore collaborative processes for participants to form, interpret and challenge their own (hi)stories of a place, the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes. *Tales from the Marsh* was set up by the researcher in partnership with the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and The Mill community centre and was funded through a London Borough of Waltham Forest Arts Development Award. Over a nine-month period, local residents, in one-to-one walking interviews and participatory arts sessions, shared their memories and came together to co-create a performance. This thesis brings together critical thinking on the relationship between authority and authorship in the telling and interpretation of personal and communal narratives. It considers the role of the artist-historian in co-authoring narratives and argues for a renewed attention on practices of listening. The researcher developed practice-based research projects to explore ways to cultivate an expanded form of listening. Investigating an affiliation between embodied sensibilities and oral narratives, this research considered how an embodied sensorial listening to the walked environment and to objects related to the site, might stimulate participants' recollections of corporeal and sensate memories. Drawing on theories of listening as an ontological position and as a practice, particular attention is paid to the encounter between the human and the more-than-human, alongside interrelations amongst participants and with the artist-researcher. The practice-based research interrogates participation in interpretative processes through a generative processual making in different artistic mediums. Drawing on theories of materiality from the fields of history, geography and the arts, the thesis discusses how touching material presence, in recollections and in the making-space, can re-interpret memory stories. The thesis proposes that an embodied listening to recalled lived experience can offer a means for participants to subtlety challenge apparently stable personal and collective narratives.

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This thesis is accompanied by a book and audio CD containing documentation of Siobhan O'Neill's practice-based PhD project *Tales from the Marsh*.

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CHAPTER 1: A Place to Start: Oral History and Applied Performance Knots

This thesis explores the intersection between oral history and applied performance as practices of participation. It investigates my practice-based research project, *Tales from the Marsh,* which enabled local inhabitants to tell lived experience memories of the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes and to co-create a dramatic reinterpretation of their stories of place. I designed the project to explore some of the ways community participants can share, explore and challenge individual and collective historical narratives through the negotiated processes of oral history and performance-making. Stretching alongside a length of the River Lea in northeast London, this open public land encompasses one of the last remaining expanses of river valley marshland in the city. By situating my practice in the Marshes, residents living in the densely populated surrounding neighbourhoods were afforded the opportunity to experience a semi-natural habitat and a range of creative activities. *Tales from the Marsh* was set up by myself, as a local artist, in partnership with the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority and The Mill community centre and was funded through a London Borough of Waltham Forest Arts Development Award. Over a nine-month period, from January 2016, inhabitants, in one-to-one walking interviews and participatory arts group sessions, shared their memories and came together to co-create a promenade performance, negotiating a fragile multifarious collective interpretation of the Marshes.

At the outset of my PhD research, I aimed to investigate the relationship between authority and authorship, for I had questions over who has the authority to tell individual and community narratives. On the one hand, community participants are authorities on their own lived experience, but on the other, the artist or historian have acquired the experience to craft and to challenge a community's narratives. This interconnection between lived and professional authority becomes vexed in participatory practices, for under the aegis of 'having a go' distinctions

between these different authorities start to unravel; hence, participation anticipates authorship. My interest, as an applied performance practitioner, therefore, lay in an investigation of how I might cede authority and foster collaborative means for participants to form, interpret and challenge their own (hi)stories. However, as I began to deepen my theoretical understanding of participation, in my PhD research, I came to perceive how the relinquishment of the need to make an authorial statement leads the artist and historian to listen more deeply. In my practice-based research, therefore, I investigate ways to cultivate a more attentive listening; but more specifically, I attune to embodied forms of listening, because the sensibilities of performance open up an understanding of oral history as founded in the live encounter. By bringing together oral history and experiential walking in the Marshes, I explore how the dialogic listening of the interview can extend towards a sensory attentiveness to the environment in which memories were first formed. Whilst in performance-making, I examine how as an artist I might generate a participatory listening through arts-based experiential methods, to listen to embodied memories of bodily encounters with the environment. Moreover, my research is an exploration of how participatory listening can stretch towards interconnections between participants, human and more-than-human, to open a receptive space where personal and communal narratives of place can be generated and also challenged.

Locating my research at an intersection suggests a crossing of disciplinary trails in what I hope will be a mutually productive contribution to the understanding of participation in both fields. But equally, I must confess, at times during my research, this intersection felt more like a tightly pulled knot. For as I tuned to listening more openly, I did, at times, lose a sense of what I was listening too amid the depth of sound. Was I listening to narrative or embodied action, to local people or to the Marshes, to community or to place? The understanding that listening is "both an ontological position and a material practice", proposed by performance theorist and practitioner Deirdre Heddon, helped me to be-with the knot rather than always trying to tease it apart (Heddon 2017: 21). It is, then, a listening with, to the

resonances between practice and theory, community and place, past and present, story and corporeality that I try to aim for in this thesis.

Trails Leading to this Research: My Background

Prior to starting my PhD, I had worked with the organisation Irish in Britain on the oral history project, *Irish Voices,* which collected the stories of people who had organised, performed in and experienced the London St Patrick's Day Parade, from the 1950s to present day. Irish in Britain is an umbrella organisation for Irish communities across Britain and, in 2013, it received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to capture the history of the Parade, as a celebration of Irish diasporic identity in London. Creating a history of the Parade was seen as a way to reflect the varied experiences of the community, as the funding application outlines, "from a community of suspect in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, to one of modern success and celebration"[1]. I came to *Irish Voices* with a BA in History, a post graduate certificate in dance, an MA in Contemporary Theatre Practice and a performance practice that spanned theatre, dance and multi-art installation. At that time, I had fourteen years' experience of working as a socially engaged practitioner, a term troubled by its implication with governmental inclusion agendas, I then employed it to mark the lack of distinction I made between my own creative practice and my participatory practice. Its usage also signals a transition precipitated by the personally transformative experience of working with theatre practitioner Mark Storor as a collaborative artist on two projects with Box Clever Theatre Company - *Shout, Voices from the Edge* (2000) and *Urban Voice* (2001).

These experiences helped me to develop a collaborative methodology, where participants engage as co-creators, generating images and stories from their personal life experience, which are collectively woven together in site-specific performance. I remember the

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[1] Federation of Irish Societies (subsequently Irish In Britain), funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, 05 Dec 2012. Reference No: YH-11-02208.

sense of risk-taking nurtured by Storor, supporting me to frame absurd and provocative creative encounters to elicit participants' stories and action. Now I also understand how I started to listen differently, with more openness, a listening that stretched beyond the interaction in the drama studio. An example from *Shout* would help to illustrate here. After a workshop, I was driving the two girls who I was co-creating with back to their residential care home. Each artist worked with a small group as a 'family' unit over a nine-month period, but this was early on in the process. The girls wanted to create a performance about why women hate men, but their stories of difficult relationships with men that had brought them to living in care had not emerged as yet. A male driver cut across our car and one of the girls shot out some colourful expletives. The moment resonated instantaneously for me because it touched, as in a reverberation, the reaction I would have had if I was not on my best behaviour driving the young participants home. I felt a connection between us. It was this listening, outside of the creative activity of the workshop, which inspired our performance-making together - in, on top of, rebounding off the car. For the car was a site of power and freedom, typically in the girls experience appropriated by young men, who through their ownership of cars exercised more control of their own lives and of the girls.

I also remember moments of listening to dissonance, times in the co-creative process when we wanted to move in different directions. I recall the tinge of disappointment I felt when, at the last minute, the young women chose to write and paste their stories onto the car they stomped, rolled and leapt from. As an artist, I felt the aesthetics of the conjoined visual and embodied metaphors we had developed would speak to the audience without the mediation of the written narratives. But equally I heard the urgency in the young performers, who had grown in confidence through the journey of our nine-month encounter, and now wanted to communicate their life experiences more explicitly. It is an illustration of the tension of co-authorship in participatory performance-making; when my ambitions to craft artistic form and to enable the participants to express their stories collided. This relationship in participatory practices between the

authority of the artist, as an expert in crafting performance and the authority of participants, as experts on their own life experiences formed a starting point for my PhD research. However, as my practice-based research progressed the entanglement of the embodied and the voiced or written narrative and our impulses to tease these threads apart in articulations of lived experience emerged as something that I wanted to listen to more deeply.

As illustrated above, my participatory performance practice constellated around the exploration of personal stories and their embodiment, but my first experience of using an oral history methodology came with *Deptford Voices* (2006), produced by The Albany Theatre, in partnership with the Royal National Theatre Education. With training and support from oral historian and playwright, Rib Davies, I co-facilitated two projects in which local secondary school pupils co-devised theatre pieces based on the *Rock Against Racism* concerts held at The Albany in the late 1970s. These pieces were part of a larger performative representation of a through the decades' history of The Albany arts and community centre. In the process, the pupils were involved in group oral history interviewing, and the testimony gathered laid the foundation for collective performance-making. There was something in the way Rib Davies conjured up the metaphor of a tree to encourage pupils to listen to interviewees, which pricked my ears. Rather than fixing the interview to set questions we considered themes of exploration, perceived as the main branches of a tree. Then listening to the response made by the narrator to an opening query in the main branch would inform a bifurcating branch question, and so the conversation would continue, in a response - narrative, response - question trail that forked to the smallest twig. In order to respond, to reflect and form a question in the moment, there needs to be an attentive listening. Oral history introduced me to a different kind of listening to people's stories and correlated with my understanding, not fully formed at the time, of the improvisational unfolding of performance-making through a series of creative calls and responses.

Deptford Voices also led me to stretch my ear in the devising process, for I perceived the difference in engagement from participants creatively telling their own stories to a "staged re-iteration of stories" gathered from other narrators (Pollock 2005: 1). It seemed almost a reversal of the listening in the *Shout* project described above, for here the spoken narrative came first, and my attention was drawn to how to facilitate the young people to embody another's memories. I listened to the way particular descriptions of action in the narratives reverberated in the young people's recollections after interviews. Thus, as embodied stimuli, these corporeal memories became a means to translate the spoken word into performative action. I equally felt the storytelling power of these corporeal memories that affectively touched the young people, recollections, for example, of practising running to and unlocking the front door at speed under the guidance of parents, which evoked an embodied sense of the experienced fear of racist attack. However, I did not fully understand at the time how such moments resonated for participants, as reverberation between a dissonant past, evident in their surprise, and as a consonant present, affiliated with contemporary experiences of prejudice.

Utilising oral history testimony unsettled my sense of community-building in participatory performance-making, no longer solely attuned to the congregation of participants in the room and the immediacy of connection or difference negotiated there; it extended out to put the participants and myself in relation with other community members and their various pasts. Here was a listening to broader resonances of community belonging, made manifest through the dialogue with narrators, but also implicating historically based notions of collective identity that, may or may not, have been entangled with participants' experiences in the present. One of the motivations for undertaking my PhD research was to contribute to the development of understanding at the *intersection* between oral history and applied performance as community-building participatory practices. I aimed to investigate the relationship between the temporary congregation of participants in the project and expanded notions of community belonging attached to the historical representation of lived

experiences of place, in my research of the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes.

I want to put my engagement with the school-based projects in *Deptford Voices* into a broader context of my practice at the time. I had become heavily involved in Creative Partnerships, a government-funded initiative aimed to nurture creativity in young people at school and to improve their learning generally. By fostering partnerships between teachers and artists or workers in other creative industries, and paying close attention to the school's development plan, creative activities were developed to enhance pupil learning; improving literacy, for instance, or developing outdoor learning environments, two examples, I was involved with. The aspiration of Creative Partnerships to "enhance curricular attainment in a range of subjects, not only the arts", typically resulted in a cross-curricular emphasis (Parker 2013: 4). In response, my interest in heritage started to percolate in my practice, and I co-designed a number of history-based interventions, drawing together practice and practitioners in education, performance, art, museology and archaeology. As an action research programme, Creative Partnerships was replete with evaluation, some a matter of demonstrating specific impacts, but in other instances, there was valuable and well-grounded support for reflexive practice. I benefitted, therefore, from the time and context to reflect, and I started to develop an understanding of arts processes as learning processes, through which different forms of knowledge may arise and be put into conversation. On the other hand, in some partnerships, I was pricked by an awareness of how the arts were perceived as a means to enliven engagement in learning, but where curriculum content remained rigidly set, I began to question to what extent this afforded a truly child-centred approach.

Deptford Voices was not a Creative Partnership project, but as an oral history project in schools, it had an educational purpose and pupils learnt about the immigrant experiences of the interviewees. This afforded a broader representation of histories in the school curriculum but was

uncritically framed as local history. In creating the oral history performance, we focused on past events, rather than questioning how the past manifested or related to present experience. This is not, however, to say connections were not made between past and present. At the outset, I asked the project producers to extend the budget in order to engage a music producer, so that we could creatively explore the links between the two-tone Ska music that emerged with the Rock Against Racism movement and the hip-hop and rap genres that were familiar to the young people. The request arose through my appreciation of the way making connections can support participation, and also from my feelings of disquiet over the lack of ethnic diversity in the creative team. Moreover, although I danced to two-tone Ska in my youth, I felt that I lacked the authority, or expertise, in these various music genres to engage the young people with them.

I subsequently realise some of the assumptions I was making here. Firstly, I presumed the connection between these different forms of music rather than allowing it to emerge as an area of interest for the young people involved. As can frequently be the case in short-term projects, many decisions on the direction of the work are taken prior to engagement with community participants. But more so, the inclusion of historical knowledge from outside of the participant group seemed to shift attention from listening to informing. Secondly, the inclusion of this music heritage was wrapped up with notions of authority, by turning to someone who knew about the historical links, I assumed this authorial knowledge was significant. In sum, as my initial experience of working with oral history, *Deptford Voices* opened up questions about authority and authorship, which became an interest in my practice and this PhD research. If performance is cast as a form of re-interpretation of lived memory testimony, by those who have listened rather than spoken, what authority do participant performance-makers have to tell those stories? How might I as an artist be able to foster a way of listening to the various participants involved in a project, not simply creating a representation of the narrators' histories but opening a conversation between different past and present experiences?

The issues I outlined here, which developed into the threads of my PhD research, have been reviewed above reflectively with hindsight. However, it was during my work on *Irish Voices* (2013-14) that these questions started to crystallise, and inspired me to undertake my PhD research. There are three strands that I would like to reflect on. The first relates to a reciprocity of skills, which characterised my appointment as the project lead of what was ostensibly an oral history project. On the one hand, I wanted to further develop my knowledge and abilities in oral history, to be immersed in the process of finding narrators and volunteer interviewers, co-developing themes, undertaking interviews, transcribing, archiving and producing historical products. I was also lured by a sense of the *London St. Patrick's Day Parade* as performance. For it encompasses the cultural forms of dance, music and visual display in parade floats, it is a situated performance of collective walking, and it is a performative expression of individual and communal identity.

On the other hand, Irish in Britain appointed me as a creative practitioner, with a sense of how I might bring different participatory practices to project activities and an artistic vision to the development of outcomes; the exhibition, website and a schools' programme already agreed with the Heritage Lottery Fund. The relationship was mutually productive; however, the appointment pricked my sensitivity to a correlation between widening democratic representation in public historical narratives and the use of participatory practices. In particular, where artists, considered adroit at combining engagement, learning and entertainment, are employed in heritage contexts specifically to help redress a representational imbalance. I began to question whether participation inherently bolstered representation in historical narratives and to consider to what extent the artist might simply assume authority from the historian to write collective stories.

The second interest returns to practices of listening, for through *Irish Voices* I developed my skills in oral history interviewing. In one such interview, with Ann Rossiter, a former member of the Irish Women's Abortion

Support Group, I recall how she described the Parade travelling along the streets of central London, at some point in the late1960s, or early 1970s. It is another moment that resonated with me at the time and remains now in my memory perhaps, therefore, a moment of insight. She speaks of traversing through the "wide and open" spaces of Green Park and the transition to Oxford Street, "which is much more containing of a crowd". For Ann, it was not like New York, "where you feel every sound is going to reverberate off the tall buildings", but somehow, she felt "you could hear us so easily". What drew my attention was Ann's sensory sensitivities, how she acoustically related these three places, and the way the relationships between the assembly of people parading and each particular street were sonically inscribed. In the sensorial awarenesses she evoked, I was struck by the notion that her sense of place and of the collectivity were embodied and could only be perceived together. It awakened in me an interest in the way people experience a place, and how a sense of place is created in relation to embodied actions, which are recalled sensorially. This interest informed the exploration of walkers' experiences of the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes in my practice-based research, through which I wanted to develop my understanding of how sensorial and embodied memories relate to and are recalled in place. In *Irish Voices,* it inspired me to walk the words of narrators in the Parade, enlisting parade participants on the day to carry small placards with testimony extracts written upon them.

Thirdly, *Irish Voices* involved me much more directly in histories and representations of community identity. Consonant with many community-based oral history projects, it explored how a specific community, defined around a single aspect of cultural identity, experienced a particular place. Devised and run by an organisation that aims to "lead, champion and connect the Irish in Britain",[2] there was an evident impulse to celebrate the community. The project intended to re-write the collective narrative, using the words of those who had experienced it, to reflect the changes in identity from immigrant community, to one under suspicion, to "now

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[2] https://irishinbritain.org. Accessed 2nd Jun. 2018.

celebrated for its role and contribution within a multicultural London".[3] Once again, with hindsight, I now attend to the layers of confederation promoted in the project, for example, the affirmation of voluntary commitment to organising the Parade or the respect for the way people pulled together in adversity. On the other hand, we did not assume solidarity or homogeneity. In the search for narrators, I specifically sought out people who did not feel their identity was represented by a traditionally religious parade. As you might imagine, Ann Rossiter, who campaigned for a woman's right to have an abortion expressed conflicting allegiances to the Parade and its organising body, the Council of Irish County Associations.

Furthermore, when developing creative interpretations of the oral histories, the participatory arts activities I co-facilitated with poet Cat Brogan and filmmaker Carl Stevenson, fostered a looking outwards to forge connections with participants' own experiences and cultural identities. Working in two secondary schools, we enabled the young people to create an animated film and poetry performances, artwork and text, which were presented at exhibitions and feature on the *Irish Voices* website[4]. However, instead of targeting a traditionally Irish area in London, in which we might have drawn links between generations within the community, we worked with schools in a diversely populated neighbourhood, with the intention to:

> (C)reate a meeting point between the experiences of an ageing, single identity migrant community and the perspectives of young people from other migrant communities within a multi-cultural London.
> (O'Neill and Smith 2014)

Drawing upon my experience on *Deptford Voices*, I retuned the intersection between oral history and the participatory arts practice to encompass the making of re-iterations and the use of narratives as a stimulus for the young people to tell their stories, in relation. In particular, as

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[3] Federation of Irish Societies funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, 05 Dec 2012. Reference No: YH-11-02208.

[4] https://irishinbritain.org/irishvoices.

articulated in a paper Fiona Smith and I presented to the 2014 Oral History Society annual conference, *Community Voices: Oral History on the Ground:*

> We drew parallels between the London Irish story and the young people's own diverse heritage, through which common themes could emerge as a lens to explore the archive: themes such as belonging and cultural celebration, or alienation and suspicion.
>
> (O'Neill and Smith 2014)

Although the themes did elicit a range of individual stories from the young people, I came to realise during the conference how the idea of community expressed in the project was still vexed. There was a bias towards associations of commonality and the celebratory, and the assumptions of shared experience across different immigrant populations focused on connections, without consideration of differences.

The Challenges in Creating Community Narratives

Listening to the keynote address by American oral historian Linda Shopes, 'Community Oral History: where we have been, where we are going' (2014), as I sat in the 2014 conference, I was lured by her own recollections of an oral history practice that spanned almost forty years. As she begins, she echoes the concern voiced by Alistair Thomson at the annual conference seven years earlier, proposing that "the tension between critical community history and community history that produces a parochial and perhaps nostalgic celebration of the community" remains a key issue in the practice (Shopes 2014). In a thought-provoking retrospective reflection of her first employed engagement on the Baltimore Neighbourhood Heritage Project in the late 1970s, she considers changing perceptions of oral history and community, since her early days of activism in historical consciousness raising. Firstly, Shopes notes how the Baltimore project automatically assumed the community it worked with was delineate on geographical lines. Thus, community corresponds with locality. Erstwhile, in reflection she acknowledges the way this definition forestalled

more nuanced representations; the possibility to explore other commonalities, residents' class identity for instance, or to question the lines of racial difference that divided the city (Shopes 2014).

Nevertheless, whether community is defined around locality or identity or interest, it remains problematic, because drawing lines of distinction around a common bond always results in exclusion. The binding of people to an illusionary construction of cohesive homogeneity, as performance theorist and practitioner, Baz Kershaw argues, acts as a powerful means to coerce people into conformity and to occlude diversity (1999: 192). Furthermore, such notions of singular affiliation negate the complexity of selfhood and the fluid multiplicity of human attachments and identities. Thus, Shopes perceives a naivety in the conception at the time "that all members of the community are more or less the same, or that one dimension of identity cancels out significant differences" (2015: 101)[5]. Now she contends, the identities of the narrators were shaped "as much by family, church, work and ethnic/racial group as by where they lived"; conceding how the attention on residence "failed to integrate explicitly these intersecting, cross-cutting identities" (2015: 101). At their worst, then, community-based projects may generate homogenous, stable and insular reflections of a community, which obscure internal divisions and foster a lack of interest in the world beyond the bounds of the neighbourhood or the symbolically constructed community.

In my own practice, I observe, how the constituency of a project has similarly been defined by location; whether narrowly prescribed to a specific institution - a school, prison or venue, such as The Albany and its environs, or more broadly considered, as the Irish in London, the correspondence between community and location is germane. Moreover, *Irish Voices*, like many of the other oral history projects discussed at the conference, attended to the experiences of a community, affiliated around a single aspect of identity, in a specific place. Yet, there was an

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[5] Quotations from Linda Shopes' keynote address, refer to the slightly revised version in her article, 'Community oral history: where have we been, where we are going', published in the Oral History Society journal (Spring 2015).

attunement to the plurality of selfhood, which Shopes speaks of, within the project. Rather than restrict the call for narrators to groups with known associations to the St Patrick's Day Parade, I spoke with members of Irish women's groups, political campaigners, people who identified as LBGT who told different stories; often speaking of the tensions felt between their Irish identity and experiences of its exclusionary religiosity.

In a second and related point, Shopes considers how the idea of community retains an almost mandatory association with the positive, connoting ideas of communion, shared interests and comity. In relation to the Baltimore project, this manifests in the way community volunteers shied away from presenting unfavourable aspects of their history, preferring sentimental accounts of overcoming adversity, rendered ubiquitously as "times were rough, but we survived" (2015: 100). Moreover, interviews lapsed into pleasurable conversations around shared reminiscence, as the community interviewer retreated from asking more challenging questions for fear of disturbing on-going social relationships. As a result, the historical representations of community generated in the project emerged, as Shopes defines, as "populist nostalgia"; celebrating survival rather than questioning the social and political forces that shaped narrators' lives (2015: 100).

Following Shopes, as a heritage engagement generated from within the London Irish community, the volunteer interviewers I facilitated on *Irish Voices* could well be considered community insiders; predominantly second-generation Irish descendants who wanted to understand more about their parents' migration experience. Certainly, feelings of respect, amity and compassion could be heard in many of the oral history conversations. Oral history centres on the inter-subjective relationship, forming a collaborative connection in which affect may be invoked in both narrator and interviewer. I am aware of my own subtle changes in emotional tone in relation to different narrators and topics of conversation. On the other hand, through the funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, volunteers and myself were trained and supported by an experienced oral

historian, who helped to support a level of critical inquiry. An agreed element of the funding agreement, I apprehend more fully now the way such criteria are implicated in governmental agendas, in this case, the Big Society drive of David Cameron's coalition government, aimed to promote civic engagement through volunteerism.

Nonetheless, there were evident layers of nostalgia and communality drawn through the expression of community evoked by many narrators; a harkening back to a sense of belonging experienced when living in close-knit neighbourhoods, for example, or the grassroots camaraderie of producing the Parades together, prior to its renovation as a Greater London Authority backed event. What is missing, Shopes contends, is a sense of the tensions within these local communities, of the struggles between divergent interests, which are often replete with hierarchies of power. In which case, inclusive forms of participation aimed to counter officially sanctioned historical accounts may ultimately produce narratives of community, which equally bolster a homogenous past. Listening, therefore, to narrators from outside the Irish County Associations who felt the traditional Parade was not inclusive of the diversity of Irish people in London, helped to challenge the community's narratives.

Equally, questioning did reveal internal struggles, such as, the conflict between organisers who reaffirmed the Parade's religious character in order to secure its continuation during the Troubles and politically motivated members who saw the cultural event as an opportunity to inform the broader community of campaigns. There was, then, a commitment to listening to alternative personal narratives, but this, in turn, led to the question of how to productively present conflicting knowledges in the public narratives the project produced. I recall my feelings of discomfort at the thought of how discordant views might cause offence to the people who had volunteered with dedication to maintain this communal representation of cultural identity in complex times. In curating the *Irish Voices* website, I aimed to contextualise dissensual social relationships, but the film produced with the young people vibrated with

celebratory tones; plurality was amplified but conflict diminished, mainly through the foregrounding of personal stories and anecdotes.

In contrast to the static, homogenous community, oral historian Alistair Thomson observes, "communities are forged in everyday practices that make relationships and create community bonds and identities" (2008: 98). The emotional efficacy of community, as anthropologist Vered Amit proposes, its capacity to foster "empathy and affinity" ensues from the dynamic interaction between the concept, an imagined community, and the everyday "social relations and practices through which it is realised" (Amit 2002: 18). Writing in *Realizing Community: Concepts, Social Relationships and Sentiments* (2002), she proposes:

> People care because they associate the idea of community with people they know, with whom they have shared experiences, activities, places and / or histories.
> (2002: 18)

This understanding of the way community is actualised through the face to face contact with others, refocuses attention away from expressing community and towards the community-building potential of participatory practices.

As theatre practitioner and scholar, Sue Mayo points out, realising a sense of belonging is not necessarily easy nor spontaneous, "it requires opportunities to come into relationship with others" (2014: 45). Thus, community-based oral history and performance practices offer such possibilities, by bringing people together in temporary groupings, which are nonetheless, defined by the temporal and locational aspects of the project. For Mayo, there is a certain reciprocity between the 'protective wall' of the temporary project and the potentiality to share experiences and to be recognised, to develop relationships with others and to feel a part of something (2014: 45). As she suggests:

> Perhaps in a temporary community, in particular one that everyone knows is temporary, like a project, the group

conspire together to find enough in common between them to allow them to discover their differences without losing the sense of the group.

(2014: 45-6)

In this case, the sharing of life experiences in community projects is significant because different narratives might emerge, and moreover, what is remembered and forgotten from the past continues to shape community-building in the present. As Thomson highlights, when he writes:

Historical consciousness and history-making - the ways in which communities remember their shared experience and historical allegiances - are key features in the creation of communities and community identity.

(2008: 98)

Furthermore, the significance of challenging unified and stable community narratives from past to present is given further prominence, when we listen to Helen Nicholson's proposal "that communities, nationalities or identities that are considered fixed or immutable are likely to maintain cultural hierarchies and deepen social division" (2014: 86). It is to this problem, then, that Shopes and Thomson speak as they mark a distinction between community history that produces parochial celebrations and a critical community history.

To counter, the production of reified and unreflexive representations of community, Shopes encourages projects to explore and make their histories in relation to a contemporary concern or issue, which vibrates with historical resonances. She calls for a "more rigorous and demanding process"; engaging in a "critical dialogue" both in the interview and in the public conversations aroused by oral histories, in which there may be consensus and dissensus, conviviality and discomfort. Furthermore, she argues such processes require leadership, not however in a "hierarchical or authoritarian sense" (2015: 105). Instead, she explains:

(L)eadership understood as a willingness to engage in the long haul with local communities and difficult issues, a

willingness to make choices and take risks, to create form
and meaning out of people's stories.

<div align="right">(2015: 105)</div>

In this way, community-based projects are advised not to abandon the insights of scholarship altogether, because "such an approach vastly underestimates the power of new ideas to challenge deeply entrenched assumptions so often internalise in conventional, popularly grounded categories" (Frisch 1990: xxi). However, whereas Shopes adheres to the potential of community-based oral histories to question popular assumptions and engender social change, she understands the limitations of such aims. In contrast to her ambitions for radical change in the 1970s, she now recognises "the sort of change that is possible is often local, quite modest and not necessarily permanent" (2015: 104).

These debates around the tension between advocacy and scholarship in community-based oral history, are timely when posed by Thomson (2007) and reiterated by Shopes (2014). In particular, Thomson frames his address to British practice in relation to a "renaissance" of community oral history fuelled by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Since, expanding its heritage focus, from buildings to include people in the late 1990s, there has been a substantial rise in financial support for projects that included oral history and reminiscence work. At the time of his address in 2007, Thomson calculated the HLF had awarded over £49 million to such projects (2008: 102). Furthermore, in a brief scan of speakers' abstracts in the 2014 conference programme, I note well over half of the case studies presented received HLF funding. Yet, as Thomson points out, and I alluded to earlier, public funding comes with "implicit and explicit strings", which exert "subtle yet powerful effects on the process and the products of community oral history" (2008: 101). One such effect has been a renewed emphasis on the heterogeneous local community, as funding criteria advance oral history work with communities categorised by a specific aspect of identity or location, as illustrated by *Irish Voices*. Furthermore, Thomson identifies, the institutionalisation of community history and the increased levels of professional expertise required to fund and manage

projects. In my case, I brought transferable skills of managing community-based arts programmes to *Irish Voices*, experience in project management, budget control, marketing and so forth. But equally, as referred to in the previous section, I could call upon expertise in creative and participatory practices to support the re-iteration of oral histories as publicly presented narratives. It is, Thompson argues, the same attributes of inclusivity and participation in oral history practice that support community-building, which have been matched to the social engagement and impact agendas of recent years (2008: 97).

Under the British New Labour government, the championing of a social inclusion agenda resulted in a substantial increase of investment for heritage and arts practices, which explicitly set out to alleviate the routes to, and effects of, social exclusion. At the same time, community was reinvigorated as a central element of policy-making and political rhetoric; regarded as a means to encourage active participation and civic engagement, it equally 'manages' people towards social cohesion. Thus, participatory and community-building practices, including oral history and performance-making, came to be seen as ways to address social problems, such as deviance, crime, drug abuse, unemployment for example. By way of example, the vision for Art of Regeneration at The Albany, which commissioned the *Urban Voice* production with Mark Storor and supported *Deptford Voices*, specifically focused on the use of the arts "as a catalyst for community regeneration" (Ludvigsen and Scott 2005: 2). Thus, working with the local Youth Offending Team to engage the participation of young people at risk of offending on *Urban Voice* matched the objective to "address social exclusion and entrance opportunities for disadvantaged people" (Ludvigsen and Scott 2005: 2). Whilst, the schools' programmes of *Deptford Voices* can be seen in the context of an aim to "enhance...education and skills of local people" (Ludvigsen and Scott 2005: 2). Moreover, as heritage and arts organisations aim to enhance access to peoples identified through "their perceived risk or experience of social exclusion", performance theorist Caiomhe McAvinchey suggests, this sense of "being something highlights only that aspect of themselves" (2014: 6).

Much of my work as an applied performance practitioner has been implicated by this bias - from creating performances with prisoners exploring cues to reoffending to facilitating arts activities with families who have experienced domestic violence to support communication.

This singularity of community identity is further troubled as I turn my attention to the misrecognition of community in authorised heritage discourses as advanced by Emma Waterton and Laurajane Smith in their article *The Recognition and Misrecognition of Community Heritage* (2010). In response to the way people are divided into seemingly homogenous collectives along a single aspect of identity, they propose:

> This artificial idea of community works to reinforce presumed differences between the white middle classes and 'the rest', as well as the full range of heritage experts and 'everybody else' (Smith and Waterton 2009a)
> (2010: 5)

At the core of Waterton and Smith's analysis is an understanding of community as, either nostalgically confined to the past, or, as inscribed upon class, racial or ethnic hierarchies. The inference here suggests that "the social norm of being from a white middle-class background effectively exempts those groups" from community (2010: 7). Yet, if socially engaged projects are framed through the experience of white middle-class heritage professionals and policymakers, then, participation is predicated upon "particular economic means, a Western schooling, access to a specific range of skills, and the freedom not to only get involved, but to choose or change identities" (2010: 5). Hence, under policies of social inclusion, initiatives aimed to extend participation have tended to assimilate excluded communities into an understanding of traditional definitions of heritage, rather than regarding people as authorities capable of adjudicating their own sense of what heritage is and is not (2010: 10). In this way, projects aimed at empowerment can ultimately reinforce status inequality and heritage and arts professionals, however well-meaning, become involved in doing things *for* communities rather than *with* them.

I began my PhD research with an understanding of the concerns around community-building practices outlined above and a realisation that I had more to learn about the sharing of authority with participants in the creation of collective narratives, both in my practice and in my analytical thinking. Furthermore, I had questions about what the integration of oral history and applied performance means for the reinterpretation of a community's stories in a public arena. What does it mean when we acknowledge that personal narratives recalled and shared in a temporary grouping emerge within and inform the wider historical narratives of a community? Moreover, if commonplace representations of community are almost ubiquitously favourable and demanding, as Shopes suggests, of critical scrutiny, then how might non-specialist participants be enabled to challenge such narratives. In this context, I began my research with a critical analysis of the relationship between participation and the redistribution of authority, questioning who exercises the authority to tell a community's narratives. It was out of this analysis, which is discussed in chapter two of this thesis, that I recalibrate my attention in my practice-based research onto an expanded form of listening to narrative and embodied memory, through experiential art-based methods as a means for participants to question apparently stable narratives and identities.

Making Trails: Mobile Ways of Knowing Place

The Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes is a place I have regularly walked in for the past fourteen years; from leisure walks - convivial strolls with friends, brisk energising rambles, perambulations with a pushchair sleepily occupied to explicitly situating myself in an environment in which my embodied awarenesses could drift. The decision to locate my practice-based research in the Marshes, therefore, puts it in relation to my everyday and experiential practices of walking, and hence, to my sensate experience of the changes in the site over time. Yet again, my interest lies not only in the material changes in the environment but more so, in other marsh inhabitants' multifarious encounters with this place. Somewhat

simplistically at the time, I conceived this as trying to see the Marshes through their eyes, to open up my understanding of the familiar and known by listening to the experiences of other marsh users.

Furthermore, situating my practice-based research in the vicinity of my residence engages me with the local. In response to an increased environmental sensitivity and appeals for sustainability, walking artists Deirdre Heddon and Cathy Turner propose, there has been a cultural shift in attention toward the local, with artists consciously locating their practices in their local environs (2012: 232). In contrast, to historical notions of aesthetic walking as "narratives of discovery", which elevate the new and unfamiliar, they draw attention to practices of re-walking known trails, attending to the small scale and the near at hand, to walking as a way to connect with place. And yet, as they note, "the 'local' remains tainted with notions of the parochial" (2012: 231). Under the human need for located belonging, place formed through the doings of everyday habitation can become fixed, rooted and bounded. In its most negative iteration, the local, akin to community, can slip into territorialisation, defensively preserving boundaries with a resultant insularity and exclusion of difference. What artists can offer to the ways we think about place, according to cultural geographer Harriet Hawkins, is "the ability to move away from stasis, representation, and closure, toward considerations of intensities, capacities, and forces" (2015: 34). It is her understanding of how the body is central to knowing and living in place, that brings Hawkins to surmise that artists, in particular, those trained in corporeal practices, are particularly well placed to " study the form and dynamics" of these embodied spatial doings (2015: 34). In which case, walking as an aesthetic praxis, as advanced by Heddon and Turner, offers the possibility to explore how places are made and remade through corporeal activity.

The potential for mobile practices to disrupt the stasis of local place has also been investigated by historian Toby Butler, through his creation and theorisation of 'memoryscape' audio walks. Butler's use of the term 'memoryscape' is borrowed from sound artist Graham Miller, who coined it

to conceptualise his sound trail *LINKED* (2003), as a " landscape interpreted and imagined using the memories of others" (2008: 223). In Butler's audio trails, epitomised by *Drifting* and *Dockers*, he experiments with ways to record and present oral histories in situ, so as to support a listening in which connections between past and present experiences of a specific place, might be heard. As mentioned in the previous section, oral history projects have tended to insert a correlative between community and locality, but as Butler proposes, the idea of place in such projects is often applied uncritically "as a common-sense way to limit the work" (Butler 2007: 9). Thus, as epitomised in some of the case studies offered at the *Community Voices: Oral History on the Ground* conference, geographical location frames the research in relation to a particular neighbourhood - Sailortown, the former dockside in Belfast, or island - the Isle of Jura, or factory - The Rowntree factory in York.

The problem with this approach is that places are not fixed nor preservable because people and materials are mobile, they come, leave and pass through. Hence, populations and places change over time, and "yet the stories tend to come from those that have stayed a long time in one area", which in turn, "can give the impression that communities are far more stable than they actually are" (Butler 2007: 9). For Butler, then, a mobile approach to oral history processes, interviewing in situ and presenting testimony along walked routes, can help accentuate a coeval connection to a place and across different places. By listening to memories within the site recalled, audiences may experience a "sense of closeness or rootedness", which could, Butler contends, foster a sense of belonging (Butler 2008: 235). Conversely, hearing the disjuncture between the past and present, amplified by the overlay of recorded soundscape with real-time environmental sound, may open the listener up to perceptions of dissonance. It is, however, the move to entwine memory and walking in his 'memoryscapes', which particularly engenders "a drifting kind sense of place that is both rooted and shifting, sedentary and mobile" (Butler 2008: 236). Although, I might question the listeners' authority to 'drift', whilst following a curated trail of recorded memories.

In order to think through the idea of local place, I turned to the work of geographer Tim Cresswell, who has written on place and mobility. Following Cresswell, place accrues meaning through the interrelation between location, locale and a sense of place (2009: 169). Location, he suggests, denotes the 'where' of place, a point in space geographically specified through a set of coordinates. Locale refers to the materiality of place, to the buildings, roads, grasslands, and "other visible and tangible aspects of a place" (2009: 169). Locale is, therefore, the physical environment that affords bodily interaction, and yet, in a mutual happening, place is made by people's doings, which arise "according to the meanings (people) might wish a place to evoke" (2009: 170). Moreover, as Creswell writes:

> Sense of place refers to the more nebulous meanings associated with a place: the feelings and emotions a place evokes. The meanings can be individual and based on personal biography or they can be shared. Shared senses of place are based on mediation and representation.
>
> (2009: 169)

In this way, places are scored through with traces of individual and collective narrative. For, just as the physical, in material place and embodied activity, are mutually informing, so to the meaning, of localities and human identities, emerge in relation. In this case, oral history, as a means of accessing people's first-hand experience in a specific place, can tell us much about the changes in the material aspects of the place and in the bodily practices enacted in relation to that environment. Furthermore, oral histories attend to the feelings and meanings inhabitants attach to that place. Through my practice-based research in the Marshes, therefore, I aimed to bring together oral history methods and embodied ways of knowing, in order to listen from different directions to people's experience of a mutually informing place and identity.

The Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes: Location, Locality and Historical Narrative

The Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes lie in northeast London and constitute part of the twenty-six mile long Lee Valley Regional Park. Distinguished by Lee Valley volunteer, Nathaniel Decosta Legall, as a "green lung", this "massive expanse of green" enables "nature to move up and down, in and out of London"[6], from the River Thames at Bow Creek to Ware in Hertfordshire. As with much of the Park, the Marshes run alongside the banks of the River Lea, forming a natural boundary, historically between Middlesex and Essex, and currently between the two densely populated, London boroughs of Hackney and Waltham Forest. Under the stewardship of the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA), Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes serve as open public lands where local residents can experience a rich wetland habitat and various opportunities for recreational activity.

Walthamstow Marsh is one of the last remaining areas of river valley marshland in Greater London. Comprising a nature reserve and designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1986, it hosts an abundant mix of wetland flora with large expanses of reed grass, sedge, meadowsweet, comfrey, meadow grass and two of Britain's rarest plants, creeping marshwort and brookweed[7]. It offers a wildlife habitat for a wide variety of birds - sedge and reed warblers, mistle thrushes, skylarks, and cuckoos, to herons, kestrels and peregrine falcons; numerous types of small mammal - voles, shrews, field mice; along with colonies of butterflies.

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[6] Walking Conversation with Nathaniel Decosta Legall. 22 Mar 2016.
[7] https://visitleevalley.org.uk/en/content/cms/nature/nature-reserve/walthamstow-marshes. Accessed 09 Jun 2018

Figure 1. Walthamstow Marshes from the reservoir. 1967.
Image: Lee Valley Regional Park Authority

Covering around 88 acres, Walthamstow Marsh extends down from the Warwick Reservoir and Coppermill Stream at its northern edge, east of the River Lea to the Leyton Parish boundary. Leyton Marshes stretches south from this point to Temple Mills, although it is divided into separate parcels of lands, which are variously named, including Leyton Marsh, Marsh Lane (Jubilee Park), Porter's Field Meadow. It also encompasses three LVRPA managed recreational facilities, The Lee Valley Riding Centre, The Lee Valley Ice Centre, The WaterWorks Centre and Middlesex Filter beds, housing a large bird hide where resident and migrating water birds can be viewed. The playing fields, presently named Leyton March, lie to the north of the Lea Bridge Road; as the meadow here was used as a site to dump Blitz rubble after the Second World War, the ground is raised above the flood level of the River Lea. Combined, the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes afford to local city dwellers a range of encounters with open and semi-natural spaces; from organised sporting and environmental engagements - conservation work, horse riding, guided

walks, to more individuated experiences - walking, bird watching, picnicking, peace and quiet, jogging, dog walking, messing about, playing, cycling, foraging, raving.

Figure 2: Map of Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes drawn by Jo in the *Tales from the Marsh* project, Older Adults' Group.
Image: Jo Robinson

The metropolitan neighbourhood where the Marshes are located is especially diverse, with a population that encompasses a wide range of ethnic and faith identities. Around half of the population, 49.9 per cent, within the borough of Waltham Forest is from a minority ethnic group (2016), and over a third, 36 per cent, were born abroad (2014)[8]. The largest single minority ethnic group is Pakistani (2011), and comparative to all London boroughs, Waltham Forest has the second largest ratio of residents originating from Central and Eastern Europe, standing at nine per cent (2011)[9]. According to the 2011 census, 48 per cent of people identify as Christian and 22 per cent as Muslims, which compares to a national average of 5 per cent [10]. In the London Borough of Hackney, which abuts the River Lea to the west, 43.6 per cent of residents are from a minority ethnic population, and 38.9 per cent were born overseas (2014)[11]. The largest migrant populations by country, in Hackney, are Turkish - 3.6 per cent, Nigerian - 2.7 per cent and Jamaican - 1.8 per cent (2011)[12]. A little over a third of Hackney's residents are Christian (36.8 per cent), and there are significantly more people of the Jewish and Muslim faiths than the average for London and England[13].

These neighbourhoods of east London have been subject to extensive urban regeneration in recent years, coinciding with and following on from the 2012 London Olympics. Concurrently, there has been a marked increase in property prices; in the year up to April 2016, for example, average house prices in Waltham Forest increased by 25 per cent. Anecdotally, walkers claim a changing class demographic in the local population, which would appear to be supported by improvements in deprivation rankings for both boroughs. Nonetheless, Hackney is currently ranked 11th most deprived borough nationally, and Waltham Forest is

[8] London Borough Profiles, Greater London Authority (2016).
[9] https://walthamforest.gov.uk/content/statistics-about-borough. Accessed. 04 Jan 2017
[10] https://walthamforest.gov.uk/content/statistics-about-borough. Accessed. 04 Jan 2017
[11] London Borough Profiles, Greater London Authority. 13 May 2016.
[12] London Borough Profiles, Greater London Authority. 13 May 2016.
[13] London Borough of Hackney, Facts & Figures (October 2017). Accessed. 25 Jun 2018

ranked 35th, according to the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation[14]. In contrast, however, the diversity of the neighbouring population is not represented in the visitors who come to the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes. According to Lee Valley Regional Park ranger, Eamonn Lawlor, the park is predominantly used by longer-term residents of White British or Irish descent and increasingly by the middle-class demographic and Eastern European migrants moving into the area[15].

It is not only the material attributes of the environment that are significant to residents, however, for the Marshes is a storied site, and aspects of its history capture the imaginations of inhabitants. As commemorated by a blue plaque on one of the arches of the Walthamstow Marsh Railway Viaduct, "the first all-British powered flight" accomplished by early British aviator Alliot Verdon Roe in his Avro No. 1 triplane in July 1909[16], is a matter of local legend. Whilst, popular mythology surrounding the Walthamstow condor tokens[17], minted in the copper mill by the river, was recently aroused at a post Brexit community meeting with constituency MP Stella Creasy, when residents called for "a local 'Walthamstow' currency or discount scheme to encourage money to 'stick in our area' (2016)[18]. Of greater prominence, in the realms of the public imagination is the historical status of the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes as Lammas Lands, signifying an ancient custom where villagers exercised common grazing rights. Stretching back to manorial times, when land was divided into strips to grow hay, Lammas rights ensured that once the occupiers of plots had harvested their crop, the land was thrown open to common pasturage. In the local archives at the Vestry House Museum, the

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[14] Intelligence Briefing, English Indices of Deprivation 2015, Greater London Authority

[15] Conversation with Eamonn Lawlor as part of project planning discussions.

[16] Blue Plaque erected in 1983 by Greater London Council at Walthamstow Marsh Railway Viaduct, Walthamstow Marshes.

[17] Writing in *A History of the County of Essex* (1973), W. R. Powell notes the mill at the bottom of Coppermill Lane issued halfpenny and penny condor tokens, from c. 1809-10 to 1814. During the Napoleonic Wars, tokens were minted locally throughout the country, to alleviate the shortage in small denomination coins required to pay for local goods and wages for industrial workers.

[18] WE17: Tackling the Impact of Brexit on Walthamstow - Outcomes of Meeting (06 July 2016)

1822 map of Walthamstow by John Coe illustrates the Inner and Outer Marsh, partitioned into land strips, predominantly of one acre or less, indicating ownership for haymaking. A couple of cast iron boundary posts still mark the 'presence' of this custom in the landscape of the marsh. The initials embossed in the metal indicate previous ownership to the Bosanquet family, and the Greater Eastern Railway Company[19].

Ultimately, it was the infrastructure built to support the expansion of Victorian London, the driving of the railway northwards across Walthamstow Marshes to Tottenham Hale in 1840, and the developments, from 1852 onwards, of the East London Waterworks, which began the gradual severance of these Lammas rights. Negotiations over the extinguishment of rights were, however, complex and at times tumultuous; as the older adults and I discover during our project visit to the local archives. Commoners quickly organised to protect their interests, and in order to secure access for an aqueduct to run from the newly dug reservoirs, above Walthamstow Marshes, to the waterworks by Leyton Marshes in 1853, the East London Waterworks Company, met with the newly appointed Lammas Lands Committee to arbitrate "a payment of £529.6s.3d" as compensation. A further well-documented dispute occurred in 1892 when the waterworks company enclosed Lammas lands and put down tracks in Leyton Marshes, as part of the Lea Bridge waterworks. This, according to G. A. Blakeley, writing in *Walthamstow Marshes and Lammas Rights* (1951), galvanised "one of the largest assemblages of people ever gathered together in Leyton" (1951: 14), congregating on the traditional Lammas Day, 1 August 1892, to pull down the fences and rip up the railway track. Through this organised opposition, the waterworks company was compelled to compromise, relinquishing any claims to enclose the marshland, and paying a sum of £100 in return for retaining the metal track. It is, Blakeley advances, an indication of the achievement of the Leyton Lammas Lands Defence Committee's campaign that the lands were "devoted to the purpose of an open space or recreation ground" when Leyton Borough Council assumed authority for the Leyton Marshes in 1905

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[19] 'Fire reveals border marker' Waltham Forest Guardian. 13 Mar 2003.

(1951: 14). Not until 1934 were the Lammas rights relinquished in Walthamstow Marshes, when Walthamstow Borough Council paid around £66,000 to plot owners, again to acquire the land as public open space.

For many local people, this heritage as Lammas Lands vividly impacts upon their sense of place. Certainly, the tradition evokes the rural in people's historical imaginings, as walker Norman Minter attests in the way he is often drawn to "wonder what it was like in past bygone times when it was the Lammas fields", and villagers would drive their cattle along the old Marsh Street to graze on the Marshes[20]. Moreover, the relatively recent introduction of more traditional conservation methods by the LVRPA, such as grazing six Belted Galloway cattle to help maintain the grassland and participatory scything workshops to cut the hay in summer, tend to nostalgically accentuate imaginings of a rural idyll. However, a notion of public rights to common land, as bound up in the Lammas custom, has symbolically manifested through local activism in hard-fought struggles to maintain open access. In the late 1970s and early 1980s local residents again took action to preserve the Walthamstow Marshes, this time from the LVRPA who planned to extract gravel from the area, and subsequently turn the quarry into a lake for motorised water sport and playing fields.

Members of the Save the Marshes campaign, founded in 1979 to counter the LVRPA's ambitions, undertook a comprehensive survey of the Marshes' biodiversity, which was published in a report, 'Walthamstow Marshes: Our Countryside Under Threat'[21], in 1981. In the field survey over 300 plant species were identified, along with 17 species of breeding butterflies and a variety of breeding birds. Several years of intensive campaigning ensued, locally and nationally, during which time the Greater London Council turned down the LVRPA application to extract gravel. Despite an LVRPA appeal to the Department of the Environment to reverse this decision, in 1985 the Nature Conservancy Council designated the Walthamstow Marshes a of Site of Special Scientific Interest, as "one of the

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[20] Walking Conversation with Norman Minter. 26 Jan 2016.
[21] Walthamstow Marshes: the 1970s Survey by Save the Marshes Campaign.

last remaining examples of semi-natural wetland in Greater London"[22]. A year later, following a park plan review, the LVRPA agreed to protect the site as a statutory Local Nature Reserve. As a result of this successful civic action, the notion of public custodianship holds prominence in the realms of the imagination of marsh inhabitants and where necessary innervates further action. Members of the Save Lea Marshes group, in particular, participated in legal and direct action in the lead up to the 2012 London Olympics in an attempt to stop the laying of a temporary basketball practice pitch on Leyton Marsh.

Entangled Disciplinarity: A Methodology

Writing in *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts* (2010), Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean propose practice-based research evolves through the "melding of research and creative practice", forming a reciprocal relationship in which "each feeds off the other"; either through a "chain of alternations", or manifesting as hybridisation and fusion (2009: 11). Working at the interstices of two allied disciplines, my PhD research places different research methodologies from oral history and performance into relation, at times consonantly, as Smith and Dean's sense of fusion suggests, but at other times more dissonantly. For as Baz Kershaw points out, in his chapter in the same book, a significant contribution made by performance practice to research lies in its capacity to "*dis-locate* knowledge", to cause a disturbance, which may, in turn, nudge towards new insight (2009: 105). My research attends to these two inter-related understandings. There are two main strands to my research: site located oral history interviews with regular walkers of the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes and a participatory performance practice based on reminiscence. This enabled me to engage with the two bodies of knowledge separately and conjointly. On the one hand, the methodologies of oral history work took the fore in the first strand, whilst in

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[22] 'Call for marsh nature reserve' by John Nash, Waltham Forest Guardian. 26 Oct 1984.

the second, arts-based research methods took centre stage. On the other hand, this is not to diminish the interplay between methodologies; for example, in the way oral history interviews on the move entwined with an aesthetic walking practice or the well-established correlations between reminiscence story-telling and oral history.

In the first line of research, I undertook a series of one-to-one, in-situ walking interviews with nine people who regularly walk in the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes. These walking narrators responded to an open call to guide me on a walk of their choosing and to engage in an oral history conversation around their lived experience of the site. The call was issued through the project's partnerships organisations, the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA) and The Mill community centre, and publicised in local community, heritage and arts venues and media. The participant narrators, ranging in age from early twenties to late seventies, included volunteer conservators with the LVRPA, members of the Save the Lea Marshes campaign group, canal boat inhabitants and local residents. The walking interviews took place over a four-month period, through a seasonal change from January to April. By shifting the oral history conversation away from a typically private and sedentary exchange and situating it in an itinerant place-based encounter, I aimed to interrogate how the sensorial experience of the landscape might affect the narrator's memory recall.

Moreover, conceived as an aestheticised form of walking that cultivates an experiential listening to the material changes in the environment, walking equally emerged as a research practice. By undertaking the research in this way, I hoped to gain an embodied insight into the walking narrators' everyday practices of walking this particular site, which could be layered with the understandings gleaned through the dialogue of the interview. As such, I aimed to consider how the embodied experience of the environment in the present could be brought into conversation with the imaginatively recalled experiences of the past. However, this entanglement of methodologies also resulted in a *disturbance* of the oral history method, for the improvisational and

contingent character of walking unsettled the interview schedule. Where the walking interviews started with a schedule of themes for inquiry, the embodied experience of walking in the Marshes increasingly lured the dialogue into different territories. A characteristic of the walking conversations that was amplified by my decision to *follow* the journey of the walker, both corporeally and discursively. As cultural geographer, Tim Edensor suggests, walking "is suffused with a kaleidoscope of intermingling thoughts, experiences and sensations, so that the character of the walk is constantly shifting" (2008: 136-7). Thus, the dialogue of the interviews shifted with the improvisatory and embodied sensibilities evoked by the walk. This approach led me to reconsider the interviews as walking conversations.

Each conversation was recorded through the use of a binaural, a stereo two-part, microphone placed in my ears, which produced 3-dimensional sound recordings of the dialogue and the surrounding environment. A technology, increasingly employed by artists and oral historians to create immersive sound walks, which provide "a startling realism with headphone listening" (Bradley 2012: 101); its use in my documentation facilitated an analysis of walkers' narratives in the context of a multi-layered soundscape. This proved particularly helpful in locating the spatial relationship between the narrator and myself and our relationship to the Marshes environment, which enhanced my understanding of the encounter between walker and site. Occasionally, I supplemented this documentation by taking photographs on the walks; however, I found this problematic for it felt as though it moved me away from an embodied listening to the narrator and the site and into a more distanced gaze, mediated by the camera. Therefore, I undertook my own walks, often retracing the journeys taken with narrators, in which I took photographs, audio field recordings and gathered artefacts. Two of the narrators, also, supplied me with photographs illustrating moments from their marsh walking histories.

Emerging from and overlapping with the walking oral history conversations, I designed and delivered a practice-based research

project, which engaged three groups of local peoples with reminiscence-based performance-making. Two groups, one comprising older adults, and the other, women and girls under 11 years old, participated at The Mill community centre, which is located on the road leading to Walthamstow Marshes. The third group, young people at Lammas School, the closest secondary school in geographical proximity to Leyton Marshes, participated as part of an after school, spoken word poetry club. The latter sessions were devised and delivered with the school's resident spoken word educator, poets Cat Brogan and Sara Hirsch, respectively. In actuality the various groups engaged in the research project over different timescales, this reflects the flexibility often required when undertaking research in community settings, where there is a commitment to be responsive to the needs of partner organisations and unpredictable changes[23]. As a result, I worked with the older adults group for sixteen sessions, whilst both the young people at Lammas School and the women and girls group engaged in eleven sessions each. The increased number of sessions with the older adults, bolstered by a longer session time, twice the length afforded to the young people in the after-school club, cultivated a more sustained relationship with this group. Accordingly, the analysis of the research with the older adults group forms, the greater part of this thesis. On the other hand, working across the three groups at different times enabled me to build on findings discovered in one group session and develop them to be tested again with another group.

The practice-based project was designed to develop my understanding of how art-based practices can firstly, cultivate an embodied way of listening to past corporeal experiences of place and secondly, involve participants in the interpretations of those lived experience memories. In relation to the first area of research, I designed a series of art-based workshops in which I brought marsh related objects and

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[23] In response to positive feedback on initial sessions with the older adults, and The Mill's aim to provide engagement opportunities for this age group, I was asked to extend the number of sessions offered to this group. Conversely, at Lammas School, the spoken word educator who initially assisted in planning and delivering the project, left the school half way through the process and activities were put on hold until another poet was appointed by the school.

materials into the workshop space, in order to test out how these might trigger memories of the Marshes or similar environments. I questioned whether I might foster an embodied listening to the site for participants, whilst working in more accessible community venues, which nonetheless lack the physical attributes and atmosphere of the Marshes. More specifically, I wanted to investigate how the facilitation of a listening through touch might stimulate the recollection of corporeal and sensate memories. In these workshop sessions, I hoped to develop a better understanding of the role the object plays in memory recall, which aims to extend thinking on the use of artefacts in oral history and museology practices.

Furthermore, with the shift in methodology from the one-to-one interview to group memory work, I questioned if participants explore objects and associated memories with each other, how might this facilitate a way of listening to diverse, potentially dissonant, perceptions of place, and by extension community? This relates to the second area of research, which aimed to investigate how participants could play a more active role in sense-making processes, exploring multiple ways to creatively interpret memory narratives. To question how various modes of creative making might influence participants' interpretations of their lived experience, I designed sessions which journeyed through a processual making and remaking with art materials, movement, writing and reminiscence storytelling. In this approach, I aimed to move beyond the storiness of reminiscence and to test out whether *listening* through embodied making, in various artistic forms, might lend an ear to otherwise unspoken experiences of the past. In addition to these arts-based sessions, participants were involved in walks and sensory mapping activities in the Marshes. Moreover, the older adults group visited the local archives at Vestry House Museum to deepen their historical knowledge of the area, while the young people, women and girls engaged with oral history recordings sourced from the Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop archive.

The arts-based sessions segued into a co-devising process in which I facilitated the three participant groups to create the site-specific performance, *From the Ground Up*. In this area of research, I investigated the creative possibilities of embodied and visual metaphor to interpret participants recalled lived experience into performance. Working with an understanding that metaphor offers an invitation to see or think about one thing in relation to another distinct thing, I aimed to explore if and how the generation of theatrical metaphors might extend sense-making across participants' multiple and diverse narratives. Furthermore, I was interested in testing out to what extent this approach may or may not support the interpretative authority of the participants.

The research project culminated in the presentation of the promenade performance, *From the Ground Up*, on Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th July 2016. Starting from the Coppermill Lane carpark, the audience traversed a trail through the upper meadow and thicket of Walthamstow Marsh, along which they encountered a series of intimate individual and group performances. Strung along the trail, like beads on a string, in-situ performance installations synthesised poetry, embodied images, monologues, dramatic metaphors, dance and recorded oral history testimony. The co-devised work integrated personal memory stories, historical imaginings, fears and thoughts affiliated to this urban common land and broader community and ecological issues. There were fourteen performers aged from six to seventy-six, and seven additional participants carried small flowerpots housing audio speakers to accompany the live action. Due to the status of the area, as a designated site of special scientific interest, audience numbers were limited by the LVRPA to thirty for each event. At times, performers presented individual narratives; at other times, stories and images were layered in group performance. Opportunities for the older adults, women and girls to work together enabled these participants to take roles in each other's memory stories. However, not all participants chose to perform. At the end of the performance trail, audience members coalesced around a tower block

installation to listen to a collage of oral history testimonies articulating the threat of building development to the area.

During the practice-based research project, I recorded observations and evaluations after each session in a research journal. This enabled me to reflect upon the process in a continuous manner, and the analysis of workshops informed the devising of creative research activities for further sessions. I also made audio recordings of reminiscence activities and oral performances (the sharing of creative writing, poetry, story-telling), along with group discussions of the work. These discussions were especially useful in eliciting participants' feedback on their experience of activities and in gathering interpretations of their creative responses to memory work. In particular, the older adults group, with whom I was able to build a more sustained relationship, engaged directly with research questions and provided critical feedback on practices. This documentation was supplemented by photographs of research activities in progress, of the creative work produced in these engagements and of the final performance. Sketches, maps, collages, creative writing and poems developed by participants in sessions were also collated and used in the analysis of research activities. I also experimented with participants documenting their own participatory experience, using mobile phones to take photographs and sound recordings; documentation which broadened out to sketching and note taking when visiting the marsh site. This documentation - photographs, audio recordings, artefacts (found and made) and creative writing - was brought together to form the basis of an exhibition, presented at The Mill, over a two-month period in the autumn. The process of curating the exhibition with the older adults group helped me to think about the research in a different way, making diverse and thematic connections across distinct areas. The process of thinking through ways to visually and conceptually make sense of the work for another audience brought a fresh perspective, which coevally spoke back to the issue in the workshops of trying to transfer the sensate atmosphere of the Marshes into a contrasting environment.

The practice-based research was supplemented and contextualised by desk-based research, evaluation interviews with participants, audience feedback questionnaires and archival research at the Waltham Forest borough archives housed at Vestry House Museum and the Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop. Evaluation interviews were carried out with the older adults group at both the mid and end points of the project. The discussion in these evaluations was instructive not only to myself but concomitantly within the group, mutually opening up an understanding of the different ways participants perceived meaning in the project performance. The women and girls, and the young people engaged in creative feedback activities and written feedback forms. Moreover, post-performance questionnaires were compiled to gather audience feedback on the two performances, and a comments book was left at the exhibition.

Navigating a Path through this Research: Thesis Outline

This PhD comprises three research outcomes; this thesis, a book containing documentation of my practice-based research and the performance, and an audio CD of compiled extracts of the walking conversations. The thesis is composed of five chapters. Chapter two offers a conceptual consideration of the joint concerns of oral history and participatory performance to redistribute authority as inclusive practices of participation. The next three chapters of this thesis each reflect on a different aspect of my practice-based research during the *Tales from the Marsh* project. The documentation in book and audio form should be explored as a whole and referred back to for further context as narratives and artworks are referenced throughout the thesis.

Chapter Two: *Participation, Shared Authority and Dialogue* offers a theoretical discussion of the claims made for participation in the emergent practices of oral history and applied performance to widen representation in both the making and the content of cultural narratives. This raises

questions around the relationship between authorship and authority, and the chapter progresses by placing the idea of a shared authority, proposed by oral historian Michael Frisch, into conversation with recent critical thinking about the redistribution of authority, which has been developed in the fields of community and international development. Drawing upon the work of Claire Blencowe, I consider some of the limitations of extending a shared authority out from the oral history interview and into a wider participatory co-authorship of public historical narratives. Building on from this analysis, a consideration of dialogical art practices similarly problematises claims to consensual forms of authorship. It is, then, from a place of impasse in both disciplines, that I recall attention from making authorial statements and retune to listening, as a basis for my practice-based research.

Chapter Three: *Listening With: Being-In-The-Marshes-Together* discusses an embodied way of listening to narrators and the material environment, through walking and talking with regular walkers in the Marshes. Drawing on my observations in the walking conversations, the chapter explores how a bodily encounter with the environment where embodied memories were initially formed impacts upon the narrator's recollection of and the interpretation of lived experience. The practice-based research is placed in relation to the theories of French philosopher Jean Luc Nancy, on listening as an ontological position. In this way, I aim to explore how the inter-subjective encounter of the oral history interview is expanded through a conjoined listening to the other and the environment in which the interview takes place in.

Chapter Four: *Conversations Between Memory and Materials* attends to my arts-based workshops with three participant groups, which involved the use of objects and materials from the Marshes as stimuli for triggering of reminiscent recall. Questioning how participants in community-based settings can form a sensate encounter with the Marshes, I interrogate how an embodied listening through touching objects might enable participants to get in touch with embodied and sensate memories.

Drawing upon the improvisational approach of making through a "conversation between media", as proposed by artists Miranda Tufnell and Chris Crickmay (2004), I consider the impact of interpreting memories through a processual making and remaking in different modes and the potential for non-verbal forms of knowledge to challenge personal and communal narratives.

Chapter Five: *Interpretation, Metaphor and Authorship* analyses the performance-making process to question how participants listened to, explored and challenged the community's historical narratives. In this context, I first consider how a collective listening to individual memory stories and images in relation, can open up connections and disconnections across lived experience narratives. Secondly, I investigate the use of theatrical metaphor as a means to interpret personal memories, questioning to what extent it might extend beyond the storiness of memories to convey more sensate and affective understandings to an audience. The chapter ends with an analysis of the evaluative discussion undertaken by the older adults group.

Constraints to the Research

In the introduction of her book *Remembering: Oral History Performance* (2005), Della Pollock draws attention to the unique synergy enjoyed between the two fields. As she writes;

> Oral historians and performance scholars / practitioners are increasingly discovering shared and complementary investments in orality, dialogue, life stories, and community-building or what might more generally be called living history.
>
> (2005: 1)

In accord, my research also aims to speak to shared concerns, most specifically, the liveness of the encounter in the oral history conversation

and questions over who might exercise the authority to tell a community's stories.

The synergy Pollock speaks of can also be defined by the term interdisciplinary, referring to research that aims to integrate knowledges from two or more fields, typically separated by traditional disciplinary boundaries. Interdisciplinary research is increasing in significance in UK universities. [24] Moreover, the value of reciprocal relationships between disciplines is well recognised. Pioneer of interdisciplinary education, Julie Thompson Klein, for example, proposes that the objectives of interdisciplinary work include: "to answer complex questions", "to solve problems that are beyond the scope of any one discipline" and "to achieve unity of knowledge, whether on a limited or grand scale" (1990:11). Equally, carrying out PhD research in-between disciplines can pose limitations, particularly on the capacity to develop an in-depth knowledge within a specific field.

When I started my PhD research, my knowledge of oral history practice was limited to community-based projects and lacked a theoretical grounding. Moreover, I quickly realised that conceptual thinking around history and historiography had changed considerably since I undertook my undergraduate studies in the early eighties. Hence, in order to familiarise myself with current thinking and methodology, I attended three courses on the MA in Public History at Royal Holloway, University of London. The Voice of the Publics: Oral History in Public History and the Public Communication modules offered practical and theoretical foundations in the oral history method. Whereas, my engagement with the History Past and Present: Definitions, Concept and Approaches course helped to develop my critical thinking in the philosophy of history. In addition, as my research was concerned with narratives of place, I engaged with Key Ideas in the Contemporary Cultural Geographies

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[24] A report commissioned by HEFCE in 2015 found that interdisciplinary research activity continues to increase in the UK, in line with a global trend. https://hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/Year/2015/interdisc/. Accessed. 15th Aug 2018.

module of the MA in Cultural Geography. These studies greatly supported the broadening of my knowledge into these respective disciplines. Nevertheless, it remains clear that interdisciplinary research prefers breadth and relationality across fields rather than discipline-specific embeddedness. Whilst I aimed to become familiar with the areas relevant to my research, the interdisciplinary nature of my work placed limitations on the scope and hence draws boundaries around the contribution it is able to make to any singular field.

CHAPTER 2: Participation, Shared Authority and Dialogue

> There is something faintly archaic about the current surge of interest in participatory democracy. This archaism isn't the apparent nostalgia amongst some theorists of participation for the slave democracy of Ancient Greece. Rather, it is a nostalgia for democracy itself – a sudden and passionate rediscovery of democratic life that is linked to a shivering premonition of its death.
>
> (Julian Brigstocke 2013)

When put into conversation, oral history and applied performance can be heard to share similar participatory ambitions. Evolving as inclusive practices, both aim to create a space in which to encourage people to tell their own stories, often under the assumption, at times erroneously, that such personal narratives may not otherwise be articulated. For the association eluded to here between participation and claiming voice has conventionally been framed in terms of recognition and empowerment, presenting into the public arena the life experiences of peoples who have historically been marginalised and disenfranchised. On the surface, widening representation emerges to recalibrate dominant historical and cultural narratives. In this pursuit, there has been a considerable blurring of the boundaries between the author and the audience, in the creation of either historical account or theatre performance. "Participation promises authorship", as Anna Harpin and Helen Nicholson suggest in the opening to *Participation and Performance* (2017), and thus with the embrace of inclusive practices comes a burgeoning swell in different forms of authorship. From shaping a personal narrative in the oral history interview or drama-based storytelling, to curating and interpreting histories in

performance- and exhibition- making or forming decisions over the political or social direction of the work; participants, artists and historians have become involved in an active and complex negotiation of authorship.

It is, perhaps, this combined loosening of established hierarchies, the questioning of whose stories might be heard in communal narratives and the reconfiguration of who exercises the authority to tell those stories, which has led to affiliations with democracy in both practices. However, as a practitioner working with community participants across performance-making and oral history, I am aware of the ethical complexities of constructing representative narratives through social praxis. Even the most well-intentioned projects can be troubled by an attempt to extrapolate social and cultural values from one, ostensibly hegemonic, context and apply them to a completely different set of circumstances. Thus, projects and practitioners may inadvertently end up doing things *for* participants rather than *with* them. I started this PhD, therefore, with a need to extend my understanding of the relationship between authority and authorship. To consider the intersection of different modes of authorship in these two practices that are concerned with inclusivity and community-building. If people are authorities on their own life experiences, then, who has the authority to tell these stories, both personal and communal? On the other hand, if experience and training facilitate the theatre-maker and historian with the skills to craft the performance or historical narrative, then, how might this expertise in authorship relate with the authority of lived experience?

This chapter offers a theoretical discussion of the relationships between participation, dialogue and authority, which have emerged across both practices of oral history and applied performance. As I highlighted in the introduction of this thesis, when I started my PhD research I had predominantly been working in the field, developing a community-centred artistic practice, which touched upon oral history interests and methods. Re-entering the academy after a thirteen-year productive gap, I decided to immerse myself in the theoretical discourses around both

disciplines, in order to tease out a conceptual space into which I might place my practice-based research. It was this theoretical investigation, journeying along changing notions of authority and authorship and how participatory dialogic practices have aimed to speak back to this relationship, which ultimately led me to explore an expanded form of creative listening in my practice-based research. This chapter, therefore, reflects this investigative journey, laying out a theoretical groundwork, which I hope the later chapters of this thesis, which discuss my practice-based research, will speak back to.

The first section of this chapter considers the early, radical ambitions for social inclusion and community-building in both practices. Historically, participation in the generation of oral histories and in grassroots performance-making has been associated with democracy, with egalitarian or emancipatory potential. Coalescing around a 'bottom up' approach, the excavation of hidden histories, the life stories of peoples traditionally unrepresented in cultural narratives and socio-political structures, assumed the power of liberation. Emerging through the countercultural movements of the 1960s, the ambition to 'give people a voice' was, therefore, bound to the breakdown of social hierarchies; including the disruption of the conventional interpretative authority invested in the historian and the artist.

In order to think through the implications of this redistribution of authority, I turn to a contemporary analysis of debates on democratic participation, as proposed by social scientists Claire Blencowe and Julian Brigstocke (2013). Consideration of how the 'expert' may be employed to educate the public of their 'true interests', as suggested by Brigstocke, raises questions over the educational, social and political objectives of community-based projects. Moreover, Blencowe's thoughtful analysis of 'real life' experience in relation to authorial knowledge opens to an exploration of the potential for participants to move beyond the telling of lived experience to engage in the meaningful processes of historical and artistic interpretation.

Following this ambition, the chapter proceeds with a close examination of a shared authority, a concept first articulated by oral historian Michael Frisch in the early 1990s to describe the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. In his critique of public history, *A Shared Authority* (1990) Frisch emphasises the necessity to return authority to communities to explore and interpret their own experiences. Since its initial proposal, a shared authority has expanded to encompass collaborations between historians and community participants in the generation of a multiplicity of historical cultural products, from museum exhibits and local publications to audio-based walking tours and theatre performances. Drawing upon a number of public history projects, I aim to evaluate the practical applications of a shared authority. Furthermore, by placing these cases in relation to Blencowe's theory of redistributing authority, I hope to gain further insight into the possibilities and limitations of this approach. A brief excursion is taken from these community history examples, in the form of a reminiscence theatre production by *Fair Old Times,* described by Baz Kershaw in his book *The Radical in Performance* (1991). Reflecting upon the relationship between the everyday practice of reminiscence and performed history, Kershaw suggests the dialogic interaction with the audience may extend to new ways of knowing history.

The inclusive and convivial form of audience interaction Kershaw speaks of here leads me to the next theme of this chapter, which explores the dialogic exchange as a model for creative participation. In his illuminating book about socially engaged art practices, *Conversation Pieces* (2004), Grant Kester discusses performative and process-based approaches in which collaborative encounters and conversations among communities form an integral part of the artwork itself. Parting from the modernist notion of insight residing in the critically distanced visionary artist, he reframes artistic authority to accept dependence and inter-subjective vulnerability. Of particular interest for my research, the centrality of the negotiated discursive exchange in the artwork is put into dialogue with the

oral history encounter, which helps me to think through shared ideas on collective authorship and knowledge production.

Contrastingly, recourse to the critique of communitarian dialogic art, spearheaded by Claire Bishop (2006 and 2012), demonstrates parallel concerns for both disciplines. Following Bishop, I consider how the emphasis placed upon inclusivity and consensual forms of authorship can forestall both the aesthetic quality and the political ambitions of the artwork. Her contestations reverberate with the concern I raised in the previous chapter on the reframing of participatory community-based practices to positive social benefits advanced by governmental 'inclusion' agendas. Following Bishop, participatory encounters are manipulated to meet instrumental values, emerging more as forms of depleted social work, which she evocatively coins as 'artificial hells'. In order to circumnavigate this focus on demonstrable outcomes, Bishop calls for "a more nuanced language" in the discussion of participatory art-making (2012: 18).

Finally, by entwining Bishop's attention to the experiential potency of aesthetics and Kester's call for listening as a creative practice, I am lured to an exploration of listening as the basis for my practice-based researched. Responding to Kester's call I aimed to investigate if and how community participants might be enabled to author their histories through a participatory creative listening process. I was interested in exploring creative possibilities, which might move beyond the authoring of statements, with its tendency to fix a community's narrative, and instead to test out modes of embodied listening. I thought that if participants and myself as researcher could engage in an embodied listening, we might be able to attend to the sensate and aesthetic in relation to the discursive and to open beyond the consensual to listen to diverse perspectives.

Democratic Participation: Communities Speaking for Themselves

In order to understand more about the claims to participatory democracy that have conventionally been voiced in oral history and applied performance practices, I initially tuned into the traditions of community-based oral history- and theatre-making, which arose in the 1960s and 1970s. The drive towards democratisation, the widening of participation that characterised these grassroots movements, operated within a broader anti-hierarchical and egalitarian agenda. It was situated within the post-war countercultural trends, which challenged political, economic and social inequalities and their supporting hegemonic narratives. In this way, both disciplines emerged in relation to a range of overlapping and intersecting socio-cultural movements.

In respect to theatre and performing arts, performance scholar Alison Jeffers (2017) points outs a debt to the progressive education movement. Student performers in higher education were introduced to radical new practices of collaborative theatre making, and coevally performance expanded beyond the theatre into a range of "education, play, therapy, and social settings" (2017: 6). Correspondingly, with regard to community history, oral historian Alistair Thomson (2008) acknowledges the particular influences of community publishing, radical adult education, the women's movement and the growth of reminiscence work with older adults. The latter is an interesting example, for it effectively illustrates the combined shift in attitudes and practices, which characterise movements intent on the augmentation of social change. Thus, perceptions of reminiscence in older people shifted concurrently with entwined oral history and reminiscence-theatre practices; transforming from an unhealthy preoccupation to be eschewed, to a worthwhile engagement of benefit to personal self-awareness and the communication of cultural heritage. Implicit in this transition is the sanction of active participation, which forms a defining attribute across the spectrum of popular movements.

The move towards participatory democracy in cultural practices was equally entangled with anti-establishment agendas, with a manifest commitment to breaking down social hierarchies. More explicit political ambitions arose in the alternative theatre and radical people's history movements, which utilised their practices to galvanise political activism. In addition, by questioning hierarchical structures and labour divisions in commercial theatre and the historical establishment, these movements started to advance anti-hierarchical working methods, which included collaborative practices of authorship. It is in relation, then, to these manifold and concurrent influences, that oral history and theatre, distinctly and at times in combination, start to emerge as and in participatory, community-based practice.

In this section, I will explore the legacy which links participatory democracy to oral history and theatre and the commitment to using these practices to break down social hierarchies and divisions. My investigation starts by considering each practice separately, before broadening to expand upon a productive consonance in their approaches to inclusivity and participation. Constellating around a shared ambition to encourage people to tell their own stories, these correlations are brought together in examples of community documentary theatre with its use of interview techniques and oral testimony.

In his review, *Oral History and Community History in Britain* (2008), Alistair Thomson locates the emergence of community oral history within the counter-cultural movements of the sixties and seventies. Movements he places in relation to "a rich tradition of radical and democratic history-making", notably forwarded at the time by the History Workshop, founded in 1966 at the trade union supported Ruskin College (2008: 96). Politically committed social historians aimed to re-write history 'from below', recalibrating historiography to encompass the histories of peoples who had traditionally been overlooked. In the early years, this primarily meant working-class history, and a contributing factor to this may well have been the way community history projects tended to focus on a specific locality,

with a corresponding attention to class. However, as Thomson points out, during the 1970s and 1980s "the definition and practice of community oral history gradually broadened" and projects came to include "communities defined by shared interest or identity, which weren't necessarily linked to place" (2008: 98). Moreover, the recourse to developing technology to record the voice facilitated the inclusion of a community participant's recalled life history "through their own words" (Thompson 2000: 3). It had the effect of further bolstering radical claims of giving voice to under-represented peoples.

It is from this aspiration to widen representation and participation that oral historian Paul Thompson launched his foundational book *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. First published in 1978, it intercedes in defence of oral sources, which were often undervalued by academic historians as unreliable and lacking legitimacy. But furthermore, as Alistair Thomson notes, it acted as a "clarion call", posing a number of "challenges to the historical establishment" (2008: 96). Reviewing the third edition of Thompson's book (2000), provided me with a useful insight into the democratic and anti-hierarchical sensibilities underpinning this emerging oral history practice. In the first chapter, "History and the Community", Thompson writes:

> Since the nature of most existing records is to reflect the standpoint of authority, it is not surprising that the judgement of history has more often than not vindicated the wisdom of the powers that be. Oral history by contrast makes a much fairer trial possible: witnesses can also be called from the under-classes, the unprivileged, and the defeated. It provides a more realistic and fair reconstruction of the past, a challenge to the established account. In so doing, oral history has radical implications for the social message of history as a whole.
>
> (2000: 6-7)

Oral history, he suggests, offers the possibility to uncover hidden histories, recording the stories of people whose life experience has not traditionally been documented and preserved in the archive: the histories of working-class people, women and migrant populations. But moreover, in his

ambition for a "fairer trial" there is a political purpose to democratise the social message of history, shifting from the "chronicle of kings" to a concern with the "life experience of ordinary people" (2000: 9).

It is the oral history method of working with "informants", which permits the historian to choose who to interview and what topics frame the questions. In this way, more realistic and equitable historical narratives may be produced, not only by broadening the groups of people who are represented but also the historical content itself, exploring subjects that were typically less likely to be considered, familial relations for example (2000: 7-8). Thompson proceeds in this argument by emphasising the "creative and co-operative nature" of oral history, citing how the historian is brought into contact with others, engaged in the sharing of experience "on a human level" (2000: 9). Nevertheless, I listen to how authority clearly remains with the historian, in the selection of both participants and lines of enquiry.

By contrast, Thompson's second challenge appears to more directly posit a participatory democratic history-making. In comparison to archive based research, with the attendant analysis and interpretative skill required of the "professional" historian, oral history affords a more "accessible and easily usable" mode of doing history (2008: 96). It is well suited to project work; moving out of "institutional retreats" and into community settings, it enables school children, elder's groups, students, potentially anyone, to become a historian. Moreover, in this "collaborative historical research", the relationship between historian and participant is reconfigured; intellectually co-operative and less hierarchical, in which "dependence will become mutual" (Thompson 2000: 11).

The third challenge presented by oral history resides in what Thompson considers to be the social purpose of history. It is founded upon an aim to extend the understanding of the past as a foundation for making changes in the present, for the individual and communities, and at a national level. As Thompson suggests:

> History should not merely comfort; it should provide a challenge, and understanding which helps towards change... And for the historian who wishes to work and write as a socialist, the task must be not simply to celebrate the working class as it is, but to raise its consciousness. There is no point in replacing a conservative myth of upper-class wisdom with a lower-class one. A history is required which leads to action, not to confirm, but to change the world.
>
> (2000: 22)

In this sense, the engagement of "the ordinary public" in community oral history aimed to help participants towards broader perspectives. As such, although there was an emphasis on the exchange between information and interpretation, informant and historian, there was also an inclination to educate. Ostensibly framed as an oppositional cultural movement, the aspiration to advance new interpretations of dominant historical narratives, is linked to the agency to produce progressive change in existing social and political relations.

A similar impulse to challenge the dominant social-political order underpins the expansion of the community, alternative and political theatre movements, in the same period. Performance practitioners equally questioned the social purpose of theatre, resulting in moves to extend participatory democracy in performance-making. The writing of influential theatre practitioner and theorist, Baz Kershaw, in *The Politics of Performance Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention* (1992) provided me with useful historical insight into the development of these theatres in Britain, which he positions as a "cultural intervention" (1992: 99). Alternative theatre, he posits, arose in opposition to the strictures of mainstream theatre, both commercial and state funded, to experiment with egalitarian working methods and performance in non-traditional settings. Radical theatre makers adopted collective and collaborative processes of theatre-making, which opened up questions of authorship. Moreover, the presentation of performances in a range of venues simultaneously diversified theatre attendance and blurred conventional audience expectations.

These oppositional and experimental threads also weaved through community theatre, although here, there was a significant commitment to the culture of the locality and the manifestation of a participatory ethic (Kershaw 1992). In community theatre, the desire to extend accessibility, saw the audience and its community gain central significance, becoming "the starting point for making theatre", fundamentally influencing the processes, content and aesthetics of performance (1992: 143). In this way, performances tended to be bespoke, collectively devised for a specific community or group, often involving research into an element of the community's history or a contemporary problem. In some cases, as in the plays by Ann Jellicoe, it involved the mass participation of community members in the performance. Whilst, in other cases, scripts were developed around the first-person testimony of the life histories of local people. A notable and early example is offered by the 'Stoke documentaries' by Peter Cheeseman, who, in 1962, established The Victoria Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent. Based on local history, *Hands up – for You the War Is Ended* (1971) and *Fight for Shelton Bar* (1974) employed the "painstaking, protracted and scrupulous use of historical evidence", which included theatre practitioners recording the oral testimony of community members (Cheeseman cited in Paget 1987: 318). Claimed to be a forerunner in this form of documentary theatre, later coined verbatim theatre by Derek Paget, the 'Stoke documentaries' provided a model of gathering oral histories as a basis for collective playwriting.

In the same vein as oral history, the focus on telling local and personal histories served to authenticate the experience of non-professional participants, whilst reciprocally authenticating the theatre performance through the relevance and accuracy of historical representation. Furthermore, there was an equivocal emphasis on hidden histories; by uncovering local stories that may have been suppressed, their re-discovery implied an act of liberation (Kershaw 1992: 194). More fundamentally, Kershaw suggests, such hidden stories were often "histories of oppression", hence the sympathetic telling of the tale through a community play surmounted to "a criticism of oppression in the present"

(1992: 194). In this way, the exposition of parallels between past and present might serve to both validate community belonging and challenge contemporary socio-political hierarchies.

As such, performance practitioners worked under the presumption that theatre could make a difference to the communities it served. As Kershaw writes:

> (T)he empowerment of the community was central to community theatre ideologies, whether that was conceived in terms of 'giving a voice to the community', or 'strengthening the solidarity of the community', or 'creating a new identity with the community'.
>
> (1992: 145)

Indeed, the momentum to engender a local neighbourhood culture operated within an anti-centrist agenda, offering resistance to the "nationalisation of culture" perpetuated by mainstream theatre and state funding. Moreover, theatre practitioners of radical purpose perceived the potential of performance to engage local people in a collective act of recognition, in which the understanding of hegemonic narratives and social relations was considered a precursor to resistance. In this instance, working with community participants to tell their own stories leaned towards consciousness-raising and ultimately political activism. Thus, despite valid intentions to benefit individuals and communities, in accord with community oral history, grassroots theatre became entangled with an impulse towards education.

What became evident to me in the exploration of both practices was a recurring tension between the ambition to extended participatory democracy in history-making processes and the ambition to inform participant audiences of historical inequities, as stimulus for wider democratic change. I observed that at the centre of this disquiet lay the issue of authorship, raising questions as to who exactly was telling these communal stories and for what purpose? To understand more about the implications of this entanglement of participatory and educational intent, I

turn to the work of human geographer Julian Brigstocke who scrutinises the relationship between democracy and authority. Writing in his article *Democracy and the Reinvention of Authority* (2013), he establishes 'technocratic forms of democracy', where power is vested in the 'masses', who considered 'too ignorant to govern themselves', rely upon a plethora of 'experts' to educate and ultimately define their assertions of self-government (2013). As Brigstoke proposes:

> This meant that the price of increased popular *power* was to be an even tighter submission to *authority:* the capacity of teachers, professors, scientists and economists to define the nature of the world, its problems, and the possible solutions to those problems.
>
> (2013: 9)

This range of 'experts' could well include the professional historians identified by Paul Thompson in his 'age of bureaucracy'; the historical establishment that defines who and what is to be included or ignored in authorised accounts (2000: 5). As I discussed earlier, it was to counter this authority of the professional scholar that oral historians elicited the participation of publics who had not been prioritised in dominant communal narratives. Furthermore, the presentation of life histories in the words of people who had lived through past events assumed a certain realignment of the notions of ignorance and knowledge. Moreover, as I attune my attention to the documentary performances of the time, I hear similar opposition to the authorial voice of the governing classes in the inclusion of first person testimony. This time it is broadcast media and the press that come under scrutiny, as Derek Paget positions verbatim theatre to illuminate in the fight against "the darkness imposed by a hegemony which persistently marginalises anything not manifesting 'official' attitudes" (1987: 334). Thus, personal narratives, crucially "uncovered" by theatre practitioners "blasts open the cosy consensus of the broadcasting media on controversial political issues of the day" (1987: 334).

On the other hand, intentions to challenge the 'submission to authority' in community based oral history and documentary theatre

proved more complicated to achieve in practice. The aim of documentary theatre practitioners to invest authority in those they interviewed is evident in the assertions that communities were supported to speak for themselves. Evidently, the oral testimony was held in reverence, with a stress upon the 'humility' and 'responsibility' of practitioners in representing the 'thoughts and feelings' contributed by 'real people' (1987: 329). Playwright Rony Robinson, who embraced Cheeseman's working methods in the 1970s, attributed this respect to the intimate *interaction* of the interview itself (1987: 329), which echoes Thompson's sentiment in the 'co-operative' exchange (2000: 30).

However, Robinson's understanding that the plays scripted from this recorded testimony were, therefore, 'in a real sense' created by the communities represented within them, is untenable. Despite claims to 'anonymous' authorship and collective scripting processes within the acting company, the craft of shaping and editing hundreds of pages of transcripts demonstrated authorial control. Moreover, interviews were predicated upon a preformed creative vision and actor-interviewers were credited with the ability to sense and 'go for the story'. Thus, suggesting an implicit influence upon interviewees and their narratives. It is, therefore, in respect of these contradictions that theatre scholar Mary Luckhurst characterises verbatim theatre as "stretched on the rack between a pursuit of the 'facts' – a loaded word in its own right – and an engagement with artistic representation" (2008: 203). Correspondingly, in community oral history Linda Shopes echoes this concern, raising questions over the extent to which the historian's interpretation of the interview transforms the narrative voice, to ultimately dominate the final product (2002: 263). In both cases, then, the authority of participants to interpret their testimonies, and thus, to *write* their own histories, is undermined by a depleted authorship.

This is not to weaken the potential of the dialogue between question and response in the interview to generate shared understanding. Nor, the way the interviewer, historian or theatre practitioner, may shift their own perspectives in relation to an interviewee's insight. As oral historian,

Donald Ritchie highlights, the discrepancy between written historical sources and oral interview sources may force the historian to re-think prior assumptions (2011: 12). Hence, in this rendition, the 'expert' historian is recast, as new knowledge gleaned from the participant's recollection of lived experience raises interpretative questions. However, the community based oral history and documentary theatre projects of the 1960s and 1970s frequently furthered objectives to consciousness-raising in the audience; to illuminate 'truths' that changed not only an audience's understanding but ultimately, decision making and action. Citing Cheeseman's, *The Fight for Shelton Bar* (1974), Luckhurst observes, "these verbatim plays told local stories, often with biting agendas that attempted to make interventions into local politics" (2008: 202). In this case, to intercede in the campaign to stop the closure of a North Staffordshire steelworks. The intention to inspire re-thinking is not unworthy, but it is complicated by ambiguity over the distinction between a provocation to thought and an impulse to educate. Following Brigstocke, a fault-line in the motive to educate is prised open:

> (T)he masses must be taught their true interests. Only when they are knowledgeable enough, the theory went, will they be capable of ruling wisely.
>
> (2013: 9)

It, therefore, follows that if interpretative authorship is retained by the oral historian or the theatre practitioner they may unwittingly uphold elitist forms of authority rather than the shared knowledge creation aspired to.

In sum, I started this section by exploring oral history and community-theatre (as an antecedent to applied performance), as emergent participatory practices, which aimed to "give a voice" to people, speaking their life histories as an alternative to the hegemonic historical narrative. These practices of participation, however, not only aimed to redress the marginalisation of different peoples and communities represented in cultural and historical narratives but also to foster more equitable labour divisions, in which these narratives were in some way co-operatively produced. For, the notions of inclusivity at the core of both

practices developed in relation to broader ambitions to question social hierarchies and foster egalitarian social and political change. Evidently, participation in interview-based oral histories or documentary performances enabled narrators to share their memories, anecdotes and life histories, which may, in turn, have both challenged and broadened the knowledge of practitioners and audiences. But without questioning ideas about authority and authorship, claims to empower a community to tell its own stories in a public arena remain troubled. It is, then, with the understanding that participation does not necessarily result in a redistribution of authority that I go on, in the next section, to explore what a shared authority might look like.

Collaborative Dialogue in Oral History: A Shared Authority?

It is in response to the tension between scholarly and participatory authority that American oral historian Michael Frisch interceded in the early 1990s with the influential concept of 'A Shared Authority', proposed in his book of the same title (Frisch 1990). Drawing together reflective essays that traversed two decades of work, Frisch emphasised the most "compelling" characteristic of oral and public history is the capacity to "redefine and redistribute intellectual authority", so that knowledge might be produced and shared more broadly (1990: xx). At the time of writing, Frisch positioned his argument in-between the expansion of scholarly authority into the public history domain and "a kind of guerrilla war" waged against this kind of "expert" authority by socially engaged history-making practices. In response to the polarisation of these positions Frisch attempted to find an alternative path in his proposal of a shared authority (1990: xxi).

At its core, this divarication speaks to the relationship between authorship and interpretative authority, and thus, in order to explore this relationship, he attunes to the oral history method, for he perceives in the interview, authority is already shared. Extending from this idea, he questions:

> What does it mean for understanding how interviews can actually be a source of "H"istory, as distinct from historical data or raw material – history, that is, as a synthetic reconstruction that necessarily involves story, frame, analysis, and interpretation, however implicit?
>
> (1990: xx)

In shifting his attention from the raw data produced in an interview to listen to the way in which the narrator authors the narrative through their storytelling skill, Frisch apprehends the narrator's engagement in an implicit interpretative act. Accordingly, this leads Frisch, to question the relationship between narrator and historian and more significantly who holds responsibility for the histories collaboratively generated through their dialogue. If responsibility is shared, he asks, how might it resonate beyond the interview itself, to touch the production of public historical narratives? How can the authority of the narrator be preserved in the processes of summarising, editing, synthesising and thematising oral accounts, in what might be seen as the "sense-making" that takes place after the interview?

In a recalibration of power dynamics, a shared authority appears to straddle the capacity of non-specialists to engage with historical processes that originate "outside their own immediate experience and knowledge" whilst also affirming the scholarly insight of historians to challenge both hegemonic and popularly conceived assumptions (1990: xxi). Framing a shared authority in terms of the questions it poses, infers a process, which is confirmed in his later observation that "sharing authority was a beginning, not a destination" (Smith 2011: 431). As a call to inquiry, it has been interpreted through various approaches, explored both in the interview process and in an expanded form, to the interpretative authorship of public-facing historical products (Shopes 2003, Smith 2011). A widening of application perhaps prompted by Frisch's invitation for scholars and designers to "respect, understand, invoke, and involve the very real authority" of audiences in the creation of public presentations of history; which might include the documentary theatre performance, seen to be so problematic in the previous section. As Frisch observes:

> Although grounded in culture and experience rather than academic expertise, this authority can become central to an exhibit's capacity to provide a meaningful engagement with history - to what should be not only a distribution of knowledge from those who have it to those who do not, but a more profound sharing of knowledges, an implicit and sometimes explicit dialogue from very different vantages about the shape, meaning, and implications of history.
>
> (1990: xxii)

Within this reciprocal relationship, then, participation extends beyond the democratisation of representation through the embrace of lived experience testimony to a sharing of interpretative authority in a way that is visible in the finished product. Moreover, Frisch suggests, extending the dialogue beyond the interview, publicly placing different experiences, knowledges and perspectives into conversation, may engender a more profound debate about the meaning of history in the present (1990: xxii).

As Frisch was more concerned with posing questions around the politics and praxis of history-making than proposing a 'top-down' methodology for a shared authority, a practical understanding of his theoretical concept can more usefully be gleaned through a review of its subsequent influence. The publication in 2003 of a special forum section of the *Oral History Review (30, no. 1),* titled 'Sharing Authority: Oral History and the Collaborative Process' provided me with a productive starting point for this analysis. Drawing together a collection of essays, in which practitioners reflect upon their own efforts to share authority in a variety of contexts, it yields valuable insight into the co-operative interview and beyond. But furthermore, through their self-reflexive praxis, these practitioners come to reframe a shared authority as the sharing of authority, accentuating the process, a sustained explorative journey of collaboration and the creation of public products.

In her commentary on the essays, Linda Shopes (2003), draws attention to the interview itself, in order to remind us that historical sense-making takes place within the dialogue between narrator and interviewee.

In this respect, Lorraine Sitzia's essay, 'A Shared Authority: An Impossible Goal?' (2003), effectively illustrates the impact of the inter-subjective relationship upon the dialogue. As narratives are recalled through dialogue, so they can be told in new ways, and thus elucidate different insights. The understanding of the way the interviewer's questions may encourage "the interviewee into thinking about an experience in a different way" (Sitzia 2003: 95) evokes Frisch's reciprocity in the sharing of knowledge. On the other hand, if the interviewer over-steers a narrator with a barrage of questions or the narrator skirts questions to comment upon issues, not within the focus of the inquiry, then shared history-making is constrained (Shopes 2003: 104). Furthermore, as Sitzia notes in her self-critical analysis of her long-term collaboration with Korean war veteran and communist Arthur Thickett; a foundation of shared interests and values effectively compromised her capacity to challenge the narrative. As she reflects, did she not merely accept explanations that coalesced with her own beliefs and understandings? (2003: 96)

As Shopes points out, the projects discussed in the essays all focus on an expanded view of shared authority, encompassing participatory approaches that extend collaboration beyond the interview itself. Engagements, which might involve participants in the processes of setting up projects or the selecting, editing and framing of interview material in the creation of historical products, for instance. In her commentary, Shopes identifies four key issues that arise out of these explorations in collaborative practice. Firstly, she highlights the time commitment required to build the trust and "rules of shared decision-making" upon which collaboration can be based (2003: 105). A consideration inscribed with deeper significance when working with peoples who have been marginalised at some time; where there is an implicit need to recalibrate social power relations. Thus, practitioners speak of a kind of unspoken "test", in which they are required to subtly prove their commitment to "being on the narrator's side" (2003: 105). In Wendy Rickard's project with sex workers, for example, her decision to work as a maid in a brothel aims in some way to "share some risk with

narrators"; opening herself to potential legal sanction, she perceives, helps foster trust.

It is the recognition of the way collaborative processes can bring the oral historian into relation with challenging situations and people, that inspires Shopes' second and related point; it is "personally and intellectually demanding" work (2003: 106). As a shared authority is a negotiated process rather than a goal, it calls for practitioners to be open to ambiguity and uncertainty, willing to take risks and to "make decisions based on the logic of the work itself" (2003: 106). The feelings, described by Sitzia, of responsibility towards an emotionally vulnerable collaborator, leads Shopes to remind practitioners to establish ground rules, to recognise their own boundaries and not to shy away from claiming authority when necessary. On the other hand, instances of reluctance to share expanded authority, result in an understanding of the way participants also determine their own level of involvement; picking and choosing throughout the process, "what and how they will share, what authority they will cede to us" (2003: 107).

Thirdly, as collaborative oral history projects are often initiated within broader social goals the issue of objectivity is raised (2003: 107). Drawing upon the work of Wendy Rickard recording oral histories of sex workers, an inherent tension is revealed between speaking to the practitioner's inquiry and enabling participants to speak for themselves. Concerning the editing of oral accounts for publication, Shopes notes:

> (O)n the one hand, it is all too easy, as Rickard notes, to manipulate narrators' words to fit our own analytic categories; on the other, a commitment to rendering narrators' perspectives, to "the voice of experience," can perhaps silence the scholar's imperative to generalize, critique, and theorize.
>
> (2003: 108)

In response to this tension, Shopes reaffirms the basis of a shared authority, suggesting "both parties may need to cede some interpretative authority, neither party needs to relinquish it altogether" (2003: 108); but ultimately the

compromise remains problematic for her. Moreover, this disquiet is amplified, when she turns to instances where practitioners do not share the same intellectual, social or political understandings and beliefs as narrators.

Referencing her address to the 2002 International Oral History Association conference, Shopes uses examples from when Kathleen Blee interviewed former Klanswomen, to illustrate her fourth point:

> Collaboration may well be desirable in certain kinds of oral history practice; it may well not be in others.
>
> (2003: 109)

In her article, 'Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan' (1993), Blee troubles the principle of a shared authority through her critique of the empathic relationship in the interview and the ethical implications of publishing prejudiced and intolerant views in interview material. Firstly, her initial expectation that empathetic rapport would be undermined by the opposing political standpoints of interviewer and narrator is complicated when the Klanswomen assume that Blee, as a white woman from the locality, shares their racist and bigoted views, if not publicly then privately (1993: 604). In response, therefore, she advocates taking a critical approach to the interpretation of oral testimony. But this advice equally relates to her second point on the ethics of research, as she proposes by its very nature oral history research "empowers informants, by suggesting to them, and to their political descendants, the importance of the Klan in American history" (1993: 606). Blee's example is a stark reminder of Frisch's conviction in the role of scholarship to illuminate "new ideas to challenge deeply entrenched assumptions so often internalised in conventional, popularly grounded categories" (Frisch 1990: xxi). Although, Shopes concedes to keep open the possibility that the oral history process can evoke a "spirit of reconciliation", in which "perpetrators of hateful views change their minds and hearts", she remains "sceptical" and similarly asserts the necessity of "critical scrutiny" (2003: 109).

To further understand the intricate balance between discordant views and interpretations, an exploration of less polemical situations equally reveals concerns. Issues over ownership, concerning who makes decisions on what to make public and what to keep private, underscores Sitzia's experience of co-authoring the biography with Arthur Thickett. She perceives how she loses authority through the process, and as a result concludes with a steer towards creating many historical products from one project (2003: 97). It is an idea picked up by Shopes, who advances the potential for different "parties in the collaboration to be able to communicate separately, with separate audiences" (2003: 110). An alternative to multiple products is the presentation of multiple voices within the one historical product, and polyvocal exhibitions have proved a popular form for presenting contested oral narratives. In these exhibitions meaning is created through the interaction between the different voices within the narrative and outside of it, thus connecting speaker and listener. In this case, the interpretative onus is placed upon the audience. As such, the polyvocal approach not only forges possibilities for the representation of multiple voices but also an invite to multiple audiences. Nevertheless, anxiety over a lack of critical scrutiny continues to percolate, and Shopes questions to what extent the presentation of "differing views in a point / counterpoint fashion" can be an effective form of "critical inquiry" (Shopes 2003: 109).

The practice-based insights garnered from the projects reviewed above emphasise the complexity of negotiating a redistribution of 'historical' authority, in both the inter-subjective relationship of the one to one interview and with members of a community engaged in the interpretative authorship of their historical narratives. As Shopes observes, attempts to support the interpretative agency of narrators tends to involve the oral historian in "unorthodox research practices"; from working in diverse settings to providing opportunities for narrators to comment upon a body of interviews and facilitating dialogues between participants (Shopes 2003: 109). Ultimately, there is a necessity for compromise; but while, in some instances, a productive alliance enables an exchange of different

knowledges, in other instances, collaboration can break down as authority is 'lost', in either direction. At its core, the issue centres upon the ability of the historian to usefully engage in a critical inquiry, too, as Frisch suggests, question both hegemonic and popularly grounded assumptions. This disquiet reverberates throughout Shopes' commentary here, and as I discussed in the previous chapter, it remains a key concern, articulated over ten years later in her address to the 2014 Oral History Society conference.

There was much in Frisch's notion of a shared authority that piqued my interest. It speaks to the correlation between authorship and authority, recognising both the way a narrator engages in an interpretative act as they frame memories into a narrative and the challenge of advancing a shared interpretative authority in the authorship of publicly-facing histories. Moreover, the examples of an expanded collaborative practice, which carried a shared authority into the generation of public narratives spoke directly to the potential for a collaborative performance-making to re-present oral histories. There were three distinct aspects of the discussion, which started to shape my thinking as a practitioner. First, I heard the necessity for the critical scrutiny of oral histories, in order to counter the proclivity in participatory projects to publicly project overly positive versions of a community's history. Typically, critical authority is vested in the professional expertise of the historian. Although Sitzia also draws attention to the way an interviewer's questions can invite a narrator to re-think or interpret aspects of their lived experience from another perspective. Thus, I questioned how might this sense of mutual investigation be extended out into community-based projects, in which participants are supported to critically explore and challenge their (hi)stories. Moreover, what role might experiential arts-based methods play in this endeavour?

Second, a shared authority is characterised as a negotiated process rather than a goal. It calls for oral historians to be open to ambiguity and instability, and to engender a supple responsiveness to the work itself. As I performance practitioner, I understand the way applied

performance processes can foster an openness and flexibility, by engaging participants in a broad range of creative, embodied and sensorial encounters. In considering the interstices between oral history and applied performance I started to think about creative possibilities to nurture an openness within this negotiated process. It encouraged me to expand my understanding of the interview as not merely an oral-aural conversation but also to consider its embodied and emplaced qualities. This, in turn, led me to question how the narrator and interviewer might share corporeal and situated knowledge. As my practice-based research attended to local residents' encounters with the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes, I thought modes of embodied investigation might enhance understanding of their corporeal experiences. Furthermore, considering the emphasis in my performance practice on the collaborative telling of stories, I was interested in exploring modes of participatory interpretation, in which negotiation expands beyond the narrator - oral historian bond to a congregation of community participants.

Third, Shopes questions the capacity of a polyvocal approach, which presents oral histories in a "point/counterpoint fashion", to adequately encompass a critical inquiry. Although I recognise, the multi-voice narrative invites audience members to negotiate their own interpretation I was not convinced the constellation of narratives necessarily precludes an authorial sense-making. As a performance practitioner, I attune to the way meaning can be conveyed through the compositional crafting of a dramatic montage. For, sense-making in collage resides in the connections drawn between stories as well as the composite whole. Thus, I thought that if community participants engaged in creating narrative assemblages, this might open up collective reflection on the resonances and dissonances between their diverse lived experience. Finally, brought together, the insights gleaned from oral historians' engagement with an expanded shared authority points to the significance of a self-reflexive practice. However, I questioned, is there no possibility for community participants to also develop levels of reflexivity that would afford them a greater depth of understanding?

Returning to Frisch, I wanted to sharpen my understanding of the way a shared authority might speak not only to questions over who can exercise the authority to tell a community's history but also to define what constitutes heritage itself. At the time Frisch proposes shared authority, he contextualises it in terms of its significance for the present. Establishing, on the one hand, a "resentment" that the social and political changes initiated in the 1960s had forestalled their promise and, on the other hand, a fear "that they have been eroding the binding values and symbols of American culture" (1990: xxii). In my understanding, then, the widening of participation to those previously under-represented has not brought about the changes in the existing structures of political power necessary to effect sustained positive social change. But conversely, the widening of participation has triggered a defensive response to re-assert the traditional values and culture of nationhood, binding peoples together in an illusionary unity. Explicating the complexity of redistributing authority under these conditions, Frisch continues:

> It is one thing to talk about sharing authorship and sharing interpretative authority, as if this were simply a matter of more wisely and sensitively cooperating in our historical dealings across gulfs of expertise and training, much less class and position - as if it were only... "a problem of communication." But, of course, if the issues matter, they must involve more than this, in which case we cannot expect cultural authority to be shared very willingly by those who exercise it, rendering the sharing of other forms of authority increasingly problematic.
>
> (1990: xxii-xxiii)

Here, then, simply joining in the conversation is not enough, for participation alone does not necessarily effect a redistribution of authority. Moreover, there is an implication that the sharing of cultural authority leads to a re-thinking of different types of social and political power.

Another line of critical thinking on the redistribution of authority has been developed by contemporary sociologist Claire Blencowe, and I drew upon her writings in *Problems of Participation. Reflections on Authority,*

Democracy, and the Struggle for Common Life (2013) to help me think about authority more broadly. For Blencowe, democracy lies not only in the widening of political representation but also in the dispersal of authority:

> A democratic society is one where ordinary people have authority; enough authority to make political demands, to hold people to account, to be taken seriously.
>
> (2013: 37)

In alignment with Brigstocke, she considers the way authority is vested in various 'experts'; people become "authorities" because they have gained a superior level of knowledge, training or experience. However, as this authority is based upon uneven access to education, resources and time, she draws attention to its basis as "exclusionary, elitist and so anti-democratic" (2013: 40). In contrast, she emphasises the importance of lived experience, reflecting on the way authority may also be granted to "people who have gone through particularly intense 'real life' experiences of injustice or suffering; or who go beyond their own interests, to work for other people, caring for or creating life and capacities" (2013: 38). Blencowe's ideas have been developed in political science, and her subjects here operate in areas of financial markets and health care. However, considering the value she places on the lived experience of "non-experts", I questioned what might happen if I applied her ideas to the endeavours of oral historians to share authority.

In her chapter, 'Participatory Knowledge Matters for Democracy" Blencowe discusses the possibilities offered by two different ways in which "participation practices can be technologies for redistributing authority" (2013: 41). Firstly, she proposes, participatory processes can extend access to "ordinary" people by involving them in "the kinds of experience that are normally the preserve of experts and those with the means to achieve specialist status" (2013: 41). This could include public engagement in the processes of the historian; the authorship, historical interpretation, and public presentation of histories, for example. Following Blencowe, there is a distinction between participatory practices founded upon people *telling* their "real life experiences" and a more profound sharing of authority, in

which people make decisions that effect change or develop new expertise and confidence (2013: 43). The oral history interview has been reconceptualised as an inter-subjective, dialogic process of history-making, which asserts the 'competency' of the narrator in the telling of a particular history. Della Pollock, who has written on performance and oral history, highlights this capacity as she proposes:

> The act of saying and hearing is seen as collaborative, co-generative, democratising, challenging the usual authority of objectifying modes of knowledge to a more multifaceted indigenous or vernacular conceptualisations of experience, a meeting point of vernacular and 'specialised' knowledges.
>
> (2005: 4)

Evidently, this meeting of authorities in the interview leans towards an experience in which the narrator can operate within the domain of the historian. However, considering the constraints illustrated earlier, it still feels closer to the *telling* of life experience.

In contrast, the growing trend in public history, particularly new museology to build reciprocal relationships with audiences, offers examples of engaging the public in specialist curatorial experiences. Participation in the co-production of exhibitions and (re) interpretations of museum collections generate experiences, which are underwritten by the shared decision-making, financial resources and a public impact that Blencowe considers vital to redistributing authority. *Northern Spirit: 300 Years of Art in the North-East*, a research project led by Rhiannon Mason, Christopher Whitehead and Helen Graham, in partnership with the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle, provides a case in point. Notably, the project enlists community contributors to co-produce audio-visual exhibits for display, aimed to create 'dialogue' with the existing collection, not as an interpretation but situated alongside it, as contemporary public representations of lived experiences of the city (Mason, Whitehead, Graham 2013: 168).

The sharing of decision-making is fundamental, in Blencowe's analysis, to the generation of such experiences, as it extends the potential for "ordinary people to act within the domains of life that are thought of as really important' (2013: 41). However, the realisation of co-authorship between participants, facilitators (education staff, curators, oral historians) and artists in *Northern Spirit* proved challenging. In an evaluation of the project, 'One Voice to Many Voices? Displaying Polyvocality in an Art Gallery' (2013), researchers Mason, Whitehead and Graham initially acknowledge the participants' contribution to the creation of social history, as experts of their own life stories and the historical events experienced within it. But, they later go on to discuss the constraints on sharing authority when participants are called into specialist art history knowledge, which they had not encountered previously (2013: 173).

Furthermore, the co-production of audio-visual exhibits is mediated by the technical skills involved in these "professionalised" production processes. For example, the sound installations require a sustained collaborative approach, where authorship becomes stretched across participants, sound engineer, sound archive and recording studio (2013: 172). Finally, decisions over how to display participant contributions, impacts upon whether a valuable intervention in an important domain is achieved. Although contributor exhibits where not created as interpretations to the gallery collection, but stood in their own right, in practice the exhibition designers assumed the art collection took spatial precedence, as the primary reference point for audiences. Interestingly the value of participants' work in the public domain remained contested. On the one hand, the hierarchy of display did little to change the museum's authority, but on the other hand, observations of audience viewing demonstrated the positive public impact of the audio-visual contributions (2013: 175).

By contrast, in Hutchinson and Collins' research, creating oral narrative sound installations in three Australian museums, the advance of participant agency echoes Blencowe's call for people to act in specialist

domains. This focus on agency, the capacity for individuals to act or create effect, is seen as requisite to their development of equalitarian relationships with contributors and audiences (Hutchison and Collins 2009: 93). In this emphasis, they draw upon James Clifford's suggestion that inequalities inscribed within the museum can be readdressed in exhibition practice by developing approaches based upon 'active' collaboration and shared authority with community contributors. Crucially these are collaborations, in which the participants' agency is evident in both the process and the final work. Consequently, the project takes a multifaceted approach, widening representation in the dominant historical narrative, in terms of content – multiple voiced perspectives; process – decision-making within historical interpretation; and form – the engagement of contributors in the creative design. But even so, I still hear in these ambitions to foster participant agency a presumption that audiences have an interest in readdressing the inequalities of the museum. Moreover, whereas such a presumption might arise from well-meaning intentions to engender cultural democracy, it might equally arise in response to questions of the museum's purpose, especially if considered in relation to the distribution of public funds, falling museum audiences, and the instrumentalisation of socially engaged practices.

This realisation brings me to reflect on Blencowe's second consideration on the relationship between widening participation and the redistribution of authority. Here, she outlines a fundamental dichotomy within practices of participation, in which the aim to challenge hierarchical inequities may ultimately endorse them. Thus, she extends her argument:

> Whilst overcoming the abjection and indignity of exclusion by widening participation in various domains of reality, we can at the same time compound existing hierarchy by cementing given ideas about what is real and what matters. This seems to be an inescapable danger of widening participation.
>
> (2013: 44)

Following Blencowe, then, the widening of participation in new museology, affirms the practices of museum curatorship and historical interpretation as

something the wider public should engage in, as a field of importance. Furthermore, Blencowe suggests, confirming the importance of a particular domain in this way, "can add even more authority to the existing elites within those fields of practice and compound present inequality' (2013: 43). By way of an example, she illustrates how public involvement in biochemical trials confirms the significance of biochemistry which is "not 'democratising' from the point of view of advocates of, say, holistic or behavioural approaches to medicine – who already struggle to have their voices heard relative to the bio-chemical model" (2013: 43). By implication, then, public engagement upholds a particular "mode of understanding" or "way of knowing", in contrast to, and at the expense of, different perspectives.

In the sphere of public history, this distinction might take the form of museum co-curation approaches, which are critiqued through questions of who is the collaboration for, what are the benefits for participants and who drives the encounter? (Modest 2013: 99). Moreover, in the previous chapter, I discussed the way in which heritage institutions and professionals inculcate participants into authorised notions of what heritage is and is not, which consequently fails to recognise the legitimacy of other "competing concepts of heritage" (Waterton and Smith 2010: 12).

But, in order to apply this insight to the relationship between oral history and performance, I returned to the work of Baz Kershaw, and in particular, his concept of 'reminiscence-as-performance'. Writing in the fifth chapter, 'The Death of Nostalgia', of his later book, *The Radical in Performance: between Brecht and Baudrillard* (1999), Kershaw suggests, the everyday practice of reminiscence may translate into performed history. Furthermore, he claims, "the hybrid aesthetics of performed reminiscence", may offer the possibility to "transcend nostalgia, to give access to new ways of 'knowing history" (1999: 177). Firstly, Kershaw advances, a now well established, correlation between performance and reminiscence telling; by listening to the way people 'rehearse' their reminiscences, both in memory, before publicly speaking them and in

repetition, of these public performances. This repeated reminiscence, he refers to as *performed history,* which in line with oral historians he considers "a form of (popular) historiography" (1999: 177).

Kershaw's reconceptualization, here, becomes more interesting when the everyday practice of reminiscence is extended into theatrical performance. This Kershaw discusses in relation to a reminiscence theatre piece he directed for the company *Fair Old Times.* Telling a story from the time of the First World War, which had been recounted by an 85-year old woman, in Devon; the performance is presented in homes for the elderly. As Kershaw recalls, the dramaturgy of the performance combined multiple theatrical forms, which in turn, facilitated a narrative structure peppered with "deliberate pauses", moments to catch the eye rather than the ear of the audience. For Kershaw, this "superficially shapeless" aesthetic fostered a dialogical interaction in which the audience was drawn to fill in the gaps (1999: 181). In correlation with *Northern Spirit,* then, the authority of the elderly residents' rests in their depth of knowledge on the performed historical events, in contrast to the performers. Following Kershaw, this legitimised their "right – to interrupt, to correct, change, discuss, ask us to repeat, whatever was performed' (1999: 181). In this way, a general discussion emerged, flowing in and out of the performative action. Moreover, audience members engaged in not only commenting on specific events or recalling their own life histories but crucially they opened up analytical and interpretative discussions, which touch on the meaning of history itself. As Kershaw, notes, the discussions range across:

> (T)he suppression of free speech, the ways in which information may need to be controlled in the interests of democracy, the rights of authority to determine opinion, the writing and rewriting of history from different points of view.
>
> (1999: 181)

These lines of enquiry sound more akin to the typical questions a 'professional' historian might ask, than those we might conventionally

consider to arise in a conversation between elders in the lounge of a residential home.

In this case, does Kershaw's reminiscence-in-performance sit closer to Blencowe's idea of different modes of knowing, situated outside of the existing elites. Might this not challenge perceptions about "what is important" and who has participated? If so, then, it might change ideas about who has "real life experience" which demands to be respected (2013: 44). A perception, I posit, Kershaw might have held, as evidenced in his observation below:

> In speaking, and listening, to such questions, audience members were, I think, constructing themselves as interrogative subjects, as people with the right to participation in the uses of 'history' for the making of democracy and its meanings in the present.
>
> (1999: 181)

As interrogative subjects, the elders take on the role of the historian and the authority to offer new ways for people, the reminiscer and the audience, to know history in the present. What seems significant to me, here, is how such new ways of knowing history are born from the glitch between the performed historical narrative and the elders' memories. It is in relation, in the space between authored narrative and individual memory that a reflexive autonomy is fostered in the audience.

This connection, emphasised in Kershaw's reminiscence-in-performance, between historical narrative and memory lures me back to the theory around a shared authority. For it echoes one of the main contributions Frisch believes oral history could make to historical knowledge: it draws attention to the relationship between memory and history. At the time of writing, Frisch advanced a shared authority to ameliorate two conflicting approaches within the practice. On the one hand, the "more-history" approach focused on the potential to access previously unknown historical information; the people, events and factual details, which had gone unrecorded in official accounts. On the other

hand, the "anti-history" approach advocated a way of understanding history through "a more direct, emotionally informed sense of "the way it was" (Frisch 1999: 187).

In contrast, Frisch proposes, memory is not a method but the object of oral history. In Chapter 8 of *A Shared Authority,* 'Quality in History Programs', he writes:

> Invert these disadvantages and oral history emerges as a powerful tool for discovering, exploring, and evaluating the nature and process of historical memory – how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them.
>
> (1990: 188)

Thus, oral history opens up a way of thinking about what, how, and why people remember, or in turn, forget the past. For Frisch, it affords the possibility for both historian and "non-expert" narrator to critically engage in individual and collective memory narratives. In this way, it may illuminate how the remembered past exists in and influences the present. If, in the oral history interview there is a mutual listening to how memory becomes history, so then, it might offer a response to Blencowe's call to change perceptions of what 'reality' is (2013: 44). In this case, "memory is living history"; as the basis of historical 'reality' is transformed in relation to the 'everyday' activity of individual reminiscence, so it stands "as an alternative to imposed official history" (Frisch 1990: xxiii).

What emerges, then, in Frisch's argument is the significance of the inter-subjective relationship in the interview as foundation for a shared authority. And it is to the mutuality of the interview relationship that he retunes oral historians' ears too, when, in 2011, he inserts a distinction between "sharing authority" and "a shared authority". In response, to the plethora of public history initiatives, in which heritage institutions have aimed at sharing authority through various public engagement practices, he writes:

> We need to recognize the already shared authority in the documents we generate and in the processes of public history engagement--a dialogic dimension, however implicit, through which 'author-ship' is shared by definition, and hence interpretive 'authority' as well.

> (2011: 127–28)

Hence, in line with a Barthesian reading of the "historical" document, meaning is severed from a single authoritative author, both that of the historian and 'History' itself; loosened by the contingency of the inter-subjective relationship and the intersection between past and present. As such, for Frisch, sharing authority suggests the historian retains authority but exercises a responsibility to share it with the public. Whereas a shared authority, as observed explicitly in the generative dialogue of the oral history interview, recognises the historian and the public share the meaning-making process "by definition" (2011: 127–28).

Dialogue as Creative Practice

Building on from Kershaw's idea of 'performed reminiscence' as a process of shared knowledge creation, an analysis of the current discourse around dialogical art practice reveals interesting parallels to the tensions heard earlier in relation to historians sharing authority. The *dialogue* created in performances of *Fair Old Times*, as Kershaw posits, was defined in terms of a conflation between the aesthetic codes of popular theatre and "the conventions of semi-structured social situations such as, on the one hand, parties, receptions, house-warmings and, on the other hand, debates, arbitration and political meetings" (1999: 180). Inspired by Kershaw, I was interested in practically exploring the possibilities of different modes of dialogue as a form of creative practice. Thus, I started to think about the potential of expanding the oral history conversation into the performance itself. I questioned if and how the co-generation of a performance as a

discursive form might shift the experiences of authorship and authority for artist and non-specialist participant.

In order to think through the potential of this ideas as a basis for my practice-based research, I turned to the concept of dialogical art advanced by Grant Kester. In his books *Conversation Pieces* (2004) and *The One and the Many* (2011), he specifically addresses this idea of commingling artistic praxis and public conversation. Focusing on socially engaged art and performance practice, largely taking place in North America, he evaluates the work of artists and art collectives who develop creative frames for "collaborative encounters and conversations"; encounters in which "participants can share insights, observations, reactions and so on" (2004: 11). It is the grounding of the socio-political imperative of these artworks in the discursive form and the negotiated exchange, which resonated explicitly with my thoughts on the practical interstice between oral history and performance-making as foundation for my practice-based research.

Kester is interested in a specific form of collaborative encounter, in the work of artists who 'open up a space' for the possibility of meaningful dialogue and exchange. In this way, he extends the co-generative frame, proposing that the encounter, or series of performative interactions, is the artwork itself. As he writes:

> (T)hese projects all share a concern with the creative facilitation of dialogue and exchange. While it is common for a work of art to provoke dialogue among viewers, it typically occurs in response to a finished object. In these projects, on the other hand, conversation becomes an integral part of the work itself. It is reframed as an active, generative process that can help us speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities, official discourse, and the perceived inevitability of partisan political conflict.
> (2004: 8)

Not only is process emphasised over product, but the dialogical exchange becomes the artistic medium and an integral part of the final artwork itself.

The principle here, of recalibrating the artist's authorial status is germane to my practice as I equally aim to foster parity with non-artist participants generating projects in which performance-making emerges through our consensual collaboration.

Kester takes as one example, the orchestration of public dialogues by American artist, Suzanne Lacy, which I contend offers a possible model for a publicly witnessed oral history. In *The Roof Is on Fire* (1994), 220 teenagers, seated in cars in a local Oakland rooftop car park "enact a series of improvisational dialogues on the problems faced by young people of color in California"; conversing around issues, such as, "media stereotypes, racial profiling, underfunded public schools, and so on" (2004: 4). Moreover, in the follow-on project *Code 33* (1999), the same parking garage was transformed into:

> (A) performative space in which the police and young people were encouraged to speak and listen outside the tensions that surround their typical interactions on the street and to look beyond their respective assumptions about each other.
>
> (2004: 5)

In this way, the narrators were directly involved in the performance, the young people and police officers recounted their own stories and opinions, outside of the "institutional confines of the gallery or the museum" (2004: 1) or Kershaw's depoliticised, commodified theatre (Kershaw 1999). So, Lacy generated the context for these conversations rather than authoring the content herself, notwithstanding the possible 'rehearsing' of improvised dialogues, and her role as mediator bridging the divide to bring the two groups together.

Furthermore, these performative interventions are considered to animate participants and audiences to question their assumptions of "fixed identities" and "stereotypical images" through a negotiated discourse. Crucially, for Kester, such dialogical art projects unfold over time through a sustained, "cumulative process of exchange", often with an agency to

create change within the 'real' world (2004: 12). In this way, Lacy's work made a concrete intervention, for the first performative interaction, inspired a six-week series of discussions between high school students and police officers, which laid the bedrock for the later public dialogue, *Code 33*, and for a training video to inform the Oakland Police Department community policing programme (2004: 5). In contrast to the 'oppositional politics' evoked by the radical performance- and history- makers of the 1970s and 1980s discussed earlier, the aim here is for shared discourse, intent on breaking down assumptions and generating reconciliation.

Highly critical of the confrontational position taken in avant-garde art, Kester scrutinises the "aesthetic shock" aimed to incite a "kind of epiphany" in the viewer, to see the world with fresh insight (2004: 12). On the one hand, he argues, this stance is predicated upon the idea of the "flawed" viewer, as "subject-to-be transformed", whilst, on the other hand, the artist accrues status as a "superior being, able to penetrate the veils" of political ideology that inscribe our cultural systems (2004: 88). This is not to suggest, however, that artists who engage in inclusive practices do not equally have to attend to their authorial status, for there can be no automatic presumption of parity in collaborative discourse. Stressing the dichotomy of the 'expert' artist calling for democracy from a position of cultural authority, he recognises the challenges of projects:

> ...centred on an exchange between an artist (who is viewed as creatively, intellectually, financially, and institutionally empowered) and a given subject who is defined a priori as in need of empowerment or access to creative / expressive skills.
>
> (2004: 137)

To ameliorate this challenge, in dialogical practice the self-reflexive artist works to overcome her position of authority to achieve a mutual dialogue. Through the reciprocity of the conversational give and take both artist and collaborator may develop new insight. As Kester writes:

> (T)he artist may well recognise relationships or connections that the community members have become inured to, while the collaborators will also challenge the artist's preconceptions about the community itself and about his or her own function as an artist. What emerges is a new set of insights, generated at the intersection of both perspectives and catalysed through the collaborative production of a given project.
>
> (2004: 95)

Nonetheless, there is still an assumption here that participants need to develop new understandings and to transform perceptions of social relations within and outside of their communities.

Returning to Blencowe's analysis of participatory democracy, a synergy arises in the emphasis on shared knowledge creation. Equally, artistic co-authorship and co-production of a publicly received artwork may be conceived as engagement in an experience that really matters, an assessment that is amplified if the artwork involves a concrete intervention in social relations, as in the case of Lacy's work. Similarly, non-art collaborators' involvement in "experimental investigation and (the) reconfiguration of the question or stakes" (2013: 42) is manifest in the dialogic projects that Kester discusses. Locating the political ground of the work in the dialogue itself, this centrality leads Kester to characterise the aesthetic quality of the artwork in the collaborative exchange itself, aptly expressed in his term *dialogic aesthetics* (Kester 2004).

On the other hand, the conjoining of the participatory encounter with the aesthetic quality of the artwork has brought most criticism, amidst growing concern over the instrumentalisation of participatory arts in social inclusion agendas. Taking a polemical theoretical position, art critic Claire Bishop questions the ethical impulse of socially engaged practice, proposing that as the artist relinquishes authorial control, so a weakened artistic quality is predicted. In her influential essay 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents' (2006) she identifies a "social turn" in contemporary art and performance practice, which she aligns to "the recent surge of artistic interest in collectivity, collaboration and the direct

engagement with specific social constituencies" (2006: 178). In these social practices, she argues, the creative rewards of participation are privileged over the aesthetics of the artwork. In turn, the political resonances of the artwork are tuned to reverberate with the realisation of an effective, egalitarian, collaborative process at the expense of the conceptual artistic gesture. As such, Bishop offers a robust critical assessment of dialogical aesthetics, in which she speculates Kester "seems perfectly content to allow that a socially collaborative art project would be deemed a success if it works on the level of social intervention even though it founders on the level of art" (2006: 181). In response, then, Bishop suggests a re-attunement to aesthetic criteria, to an analysis of participatory arts not on the grounds of demonstrable social outcomes, but critically "*as art*" (2006: 180).

In her later book, *Artificial Hells Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012), Bishop's engagement in historicising participatory arts through the twentieth-century, leads her to reposition contemporary developments as a "*return*" to, rather than a turn to, the social (2012: 3). A central theme of her critique focuses on the failure of participatory arts advocates to probe collaborative practices along artistic and aesthetic lines, privileging the ethical efficacy of the process instead. A clear example, of the way ethical imperatives are elevated, is evidenced in the writings of Swedish curator Maria Lind, who prefers the work of the Turkish artists' collective Oda Projesi because:

> (I)t exemplifies a superior model of collaborative practice, one in which individual authorship is suppressed in favour of facilitating the creativity of others. The visual, conceptual and experiential accomplishments of the respective projects are sidelined in favour of a judgement on the artist's relationship with their collaborators.
>
> (2012: 22)

What is clear, in Bishop's analysis, is the way a relationship is drawn between the renunciation of authorship by the artist and the achievement of equal authority by participants, as foundation for a model of co-productive social relations. But equally, in downplaying the sensorial aesthetics of the work

other interesting characteristics of dialogic practice are missed, such as "the achievement of making social dialogue a medium" (2012: 22).

Furthermore, a disproportionate attention on the process, Bishop proposes, comes at the expense of thinking about the broader cultural and political meanings of a project. For, in Bishop's argument, the political efficacy of an artwork is understood to be a part of the aesthetic concept. Conversely, therefore, she suggests:

> The emphasis on process over products - or, perhaps more accurately, on process as product - is justified on the straightforward basis of inverting capitalism's predilection for the contrary. Consensual collaboration is valued over artistic mastery and individualism, regardless of what the project sets out to do or actually achieves.
>
> (2012: 19-20)

The political efficacy of socially inclusive art praxis, then, is justified through consensual dialogue as straightforward opposition to capitalist individualism and consumption, rather than any specific sociological impact. Equally, there is an assumption that the artistic action may stand in for an actual collective political action (Bishop 2006).

Bishop's scepticism over the capacity for socially collaborative practices to act as an implicit gesture of resistance is amplified as she considers the emergence of a parallel rhetoric of participation in governmental social inclusion policies (2012: 16). In this regard, Bishop notes:

> Participation became an important buzzword in the social inclusion discourse, but unlike its function in contemporary art (where it denotes self-realisation and collective action) for New Labour it effectively referred to the elimination of disruptive individuals.
>
> (2012: 13-14)

In similar vein to the implications discussed in the previous chapter the instrumentalisation of the arts as compensation for some perceived social lack results in the tying of projects to demonstrable outcomes. In this way,

artistic projects come to be justified according to the social benefits they achieve, increasing employability or reducing crime for example; "anything but" Bishop posits "artistic experimentation and research as values in and for themselves" (2012: 13). Correspondingly, concrete social goals garner greater import in critical judgements than artistic experiences. Whilst conversely, the same "social achievements are never compared with actual (and innovative) social projects taking place *outside* the realm of art" (2012: 19). Hence, within these constricted parameters of 'success', participatory art and performance projects become depleted forms of social work. Ultimately, the enmeshment of art practice in social agendas of governments leads to a weakened ability to critique those very societal structures; predicated partly on an impoverished authorial intentionality to render conceptual, contradictory or nuanced perspectives.

By contrast, what lies at the core of Bishop's argument is her understanding that "artistic practice has an element of critical negation and an ability to sustain contradiction" (2012: 16). She, therefore, reclaims the political potential of art from the co-generative dialogue and repositions it in the criticality of the artist; responsible not only to non-art collaborators (the 'temporary community') but also to the secondary audience (the 'outside public') (2012: 19). For, in the attention, she places on aesthetics there is a listening to what the viewer "experiences and understands when looking at social practice" (2014: 176). Nonetheless, this is not an explicit rejection of inclusive practice, for Bishop embraces both participation and the critical authorship of the artist. As Kim Charnely, who writes on art history and theory, suggests in his article 'Dissensus and the Politics of Collaborative Practice' (2011):

> Bishop argues for the importance of critical autonomy in artworks that have already taken a step over the threshold between art and the social by defining their aesthetic around some form of collaboration.
>
> (2011: 42)

Of particular interest to my investigation into authority and authorship, Bishop links the reinstitution of critical authority in the artist to the

potentiality of art to contain contradiction. She prefers the participatory art event that is "hard to reduce to...a simple message or social function (be this therapy or counter-propaganda)"; specifically noting how "the visual and dramatic character" of the work is "constitutively contradictory" (2012: 32). As this contradictory space opens, so a multiplicity of meaning is exposed. Effectively, Bishop's analysis of the art event aligns with Kershaw's critique of performance; sharing an understanding that multiple political 'readings' are located within the interplay of profuse "frames of reference" between artwork/text, participant/performer and the audience (Bishop 2012: 33, and Kershaw 1999: 65). Following Bishop, she argues this is reliant upon the subtle decisions taken by the artist over the level of scripting and artistic authorship, combining a "clear conceptual premise" with the fluid unpredictability of participation (2012: 33). A further connection can be drawn here, for I attend to how it chimes with the call in oral history for a shared authority to encompass the critical interpretation of the historian. Both share the concern that the pursuit of an egalitarian consensual dialogue can, if taken to its limits, result in absolving the authority of historian or artist (Bishop 2012, 2006; and Shopes 2003).

On the other hand, the dialogical aesthetics of Grant Kester dissolves such concerns, operating upon the presumption that only through unabated conversation can equality of access be facilitated. In particular, he draws upon Jürgen Habermas' advocacy of "discursive communication", defined as a space "where material and social differentials (of power, resources and authority) are bracketed, and speakers rely solely on the compelling force of superior argument" (2004: 109). However, the realisation of this neutral space created through dialogical practice is problematic. It is highly contingent upon the ethical reflexivity of the artist, who must overcome the power inequities inscribed in the exchange by her privileged status. Here the artist must be reconstituted, "defined in terms of openness, listening... and of a willingness to accept a position of dependence and intersubjective vulnerability relative to the viewer or collaborator" (2004: 110).

In addition, Bishop argues, the position is complicated by the ambiguous status of art conceived as "an independent zone, free from the pressures of accountability, institutional bureaucracy and the rigours of specialisation" (2012: 27). Her analysis here draws on the relationship between aesthetics and politics articulated by French philosopher Jacques Ranciére; in particular, his notion of aisthesis, defined as "an autonomous regime of experience that is not reducible to logic, reason or morality" (2012: 18). But, at the same time, art paradoxically crosses the boundary into the social and the political. Therefore, as Bishop, via Ranciére, suggests art is predicated on a tension between autonomy - "the desire for art to be at one removed from means-ends relationships" and heteronomy - the blurring of art and life (2012: 27). The contradiction is laid bare in politicised art straddling the aim to extend representation through "an egalitarian form of social relations" and its indebtedness to the exclusivity of art, which attracts funding, prestige, participants and audiences (Charnley 2011: 49). In this way, it is reminiscent of Blencowe's inescapable symbiosis between the widening of participation and the re-affirmation of existing notions of what is important and of value (2013: 44). Participation validates arts practice as a form of public agency while lacking redress to political efficacy evident in alternative modes of collective action. Additionally, as the artist frames the collaborative encounter, initiating participants into artistic practices, so non-experts may be inculcated into the very cultural and institutional ideologies that maintain social division.

With this in mind, I return to Kester's proposal of listening as a way to nurture an openness in the artist within the inter-subjective exchange. Instead of starting a project by making an artistic statement, which speaks with the weight of cultural privilege behind it, he suggests the artist takes time to listen. Through a process of what might be described as deep listening - to the situation, the group, and the site; the artist is called to reflect upon the specifics and nuances, prior to devising a response.

> Well before the enunciative act of art making, the manipulation and occupation of space and material, there

must be a period of openness, of non-action, of learning
and listening.

<div align="right">(2004: 107)</div>

Moreover, he extends the proposition of "listening as a creative practice" to the non-artist collaborators in the discursive encounter, creating a listening space which is imbued with "a provisional authority that influences us towards mutual understandings and reconciliation" (2004: 110). Through the act of articulating our opinions to others, in which the response of the other is "anticipated and internalised", we may see ourselves "from the other's point of view", and potentially, are "able to be more critical and self-aware about our own opinions" (2004: 10). Furthermore, as Kester continues:

This self-critical awareness can lead, in turn, to a capacity
to see our views, and our identities, as contingent and
subject to creative transformation.

<div align="right">(2004: 10)</div>

The "provisional authority" mitigates claims to universal consensus, framing connected knowledge as contingent to pragmatic negotiation in the specific collective interaction. However, the assumption still remains that personal and collective identities need to be transformed, suggesting a more permanent change than that which seems pertinent to a temporary creative dialogue. In this case, it may be germane to listen to Helen Nicholson's query as to whether the motivation behind "individual or personal transformation, is something which is done *to* the participants, *with* them or *by* them?" (Nicholson 2014: 15).

In addition, the over-reliance on "empathetic identification (between artists and their collaborators and among the collaborators themselves)" is also vexing (Kester 2004: 150). The complexity of negotiating equity between the 'authorised' artist and non-expert collaborator resounds again, likewise, the 'compassionate' artist aiming to ameliorate the perceived disadvantage of 'socially excluded' collaborators. For Bishop, Kester's emphasis on compassionate identification chimes with broader discourses around participatory art, "in which an ethics of interpersonal

interaction comes to prevail over a politics of social justice" (Bishop 2012: 25). As she writes;

> It represents a familiar summary of the intellectual trends inaugurated by identity politics and consolidated in 1990s theory: respect for the other, recognition of difference, protection of fundamental liberties, and a concern for human rights.
>
> (2012: 25).

Continuing to trouble this trend, she identifies a potential problem in consensual dialogue, in which the "sensitivity to difference" may itself become "a new kind of repressive norm" (2012: 25). So, in a form of self-censorship, the artist shies away from "artistic strategies of disruption, intervention or over-identification" in order to avoid the risk of offending collaborators or audiences (2012: 25). As a result, then, more "idiosyncratic or controversial ideas are subdued and normalised in favour of a consensual behaviour" upon which all collaborators can "rationally agree" (2012: 26). As an alternative, Bishop advocates;

> (U)nease, discomfort or frustration – along with fear, contradiction, exhilaration and absurdity – can be crucial to any work's artistic impact. This is not to say that ethics are unimportant in a work of art, nor irrelevant to politics, only that they do not always have to be announced and performed in such a direct and saintly fashion.
>
> (2012: 26)

The multiplicity of audience response evoked here is according to Bishop amplified in the interpretative openness and affective sensoriality of the aesthetic qualities of the artwork.

Refocusing on the aesthetics, then, I returned to Bishop's reading of Ranciére in order to better understand the way in which the aesthetic provides the ground to think contradiction. As Bishop writes;

> The aesthetic for Ranciére (...) signals an ability to think contraction: the productive contradiction of art's relationship to social change, which is characterised by the

> paradox of belief in art's autonomy *and* in it being inextricably bound to the promise of a better world to come.
>
> <div align="right">(2012: 29)</div>

If the autonomous state of aisthesis fosters an openness of interpretation and response in the spectator, then coevally, the contradictory premise of art opens to dissensus and antagonism. For dissensus challenges the closure of meaning, and thus, can stretch towards new ways of thinking. Furthermore, as Ranciére reformulates notions of the political and of democracy away from the consensual to ground them in dissensus and disagreement, so aesthetics, as the ability to think contradiction, is a priori political. As Bishop posits, "the undecidability of aesthetic experience implies a questioning of how the world is organised", and this, in turn, offers the possibility to change social and political organisation. In which case, she argues:

> (T)he aesthetic doesn't need to be sacrificed at the altar of social change, because it always already contains this ameliorative promise.
>
> <div align="right">(2012: 29)</div>

In conclusion, the opposing theoretical perspectives of Kester and Bishop can both be seen as respective responses to "the productive contradiction of art's relationship to social change" (2012: 29). Kester's consensual collaboration clearly offers the potential to enhance solidarity among collaborators with shared circumstances and to develop more nuanced understandings of a specific community in the public eye. But, his aversion to disruption means that the manifestation of conflicting perspectives is not redressed; and in this case, consensus may congeal into homogeneity. Whereas, Bishop's reinstitution of the aesthetic allows for open-ended representations, the cultivation of dissensus and a recognition of difference and alterity. But, as Charnely proposes, her defence of the "disruptive, or confrontational" in the artwork, could well slip back into "a defence of the unquestionable authority of the artist in collaborative works" (Charnely 2011: 44).

In response to this void, Charnley recalibrates Kester's focus on listening, by posing the question, "what this (listening) might mean to a practice that views dissensus as central to its project" (2011: 51). The idea of listening to dissensus, I propose, can aptly be applied to the multi-vocal approach in public history, which, as discussed earlier, similarly addresses the issue of representing conflicting perspectives. In other words, symmetry arises in the reckoning of dissensus through plurality across both practices. In this approach, then, the authority of the spectator is invoked to negotiate meaning in the polyvocal discourse, independent of the (co)-authors' intentions. But this still begs the question, is there no possibility that the non-specialist participant may not develop the level of expertise to aesthetically craft their cultural narratives with the level of contradiction, disturbance or complexity, Bishop demands?

The Other Side of Communication: Listening

In response to these debates, I became interested in practically exploring participatory practices, which might cultivate a listening to the consensual and the dissensual, allowing for differences to be heard. Thus, taking up Kester's call, listening as a creative practice became the stimulus for my practice-based research, in which I aim to explore different modes of listening in the oral history interview and in collective processes of reminiscence and performance-making. In proposing listening as a creative practice, Kester draws reference from the work of Italian philosopher Gemma Corradi Fiumara, who reframes the receptive act of listening as the "other side" of communication, an integral, but long-suppressed, aspect of dialogue. As Fiumara observes, in the opening of her book *The Other Side of Language, A Philosophy of Listening* (1990), in philosophical thought, 'logos' is predominately aimed at "saying", which is the near equivalent of "defining" and only occasionally is "prepared to glean the messages" by which it might bridge the gaps between different areas of life (1990: 8). It is perhaps, these gaps between thought, embodied perception, and

peoples' differing experiences that I aim to consider through my practice-based research on creative listening.

I was lured by the openness of Fiumara's listening, to the stretching of the ear into the space beyond definition. Might this be a listening to bridge the gap between consensus and dissensus *and* also a listening that expands beyond what is said, and hence, conceptual meaning? In Kester's evocation of an "aesthetics of listening" I perceived the qualities of attentiveness and openness but still more, I was interested in testing out ways to extend participatory listening to the aesthetic, to complexity and the sensorial? For is it not the case that the aesthetic cannot be reduced to "logic, reason or morality"? (Bishop 2012: 18). Thus, influenced by my aesthetic sensibilities as an artist, I aimed to investigate a listening that could stretch beyond the *statements* of participants to the non-verbal; to the experiential and the sensorial, which may be perceived through an embodied listening. In my thinking, here, I do not wish to suggest a closing of the gap between Kester and Bishop; but in considering the tension over simple or complex, concordant or critical statements and the stickiness of who exercises the authority to author these statements, I aimed to open to the other side of communication. For, as Fiumara suggests, without a listening ear there would be no historical narratives to tell.

> No narratives would exist without some disposition to listen. A narrative propensity may be a necessity for regaining a sense of our own history and the continuity of life; in fact our own history may be ultimately construed as being as ancient as life itself... Yet no narratives could be conceivable in the absence of some listening disposition.
> (Fiumara 1992; cited in Todd 2002: 405)

Following Fiumara, listening is participatory, the other side of the conversation, not perhaps the conventional form of *active* involvement but more a receptive participation. How, then, in my practice-based research might I encourage people to listen with me? Alternatively, in what ways might I join in with their practices of listening to place. If I intend to listen to

participant's experiences of the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes, then surely, I would also be listening to the marsh, itself. In which case, how might an embodied listening attend to being-with-others, and encompass others beyond the human, extending to the environment we inhabit? Furthermore, if, when the audience encounters the aesthetic there is an attending to the contradictory, the ambiguous, the nuanced, then, can creative listening activities enable community participants to open to diverse and complex perspectives. Alternately, might such experiential forms of attentiveness foster a listening which may not know what it listens for? Finally, how might this expanded concept of listening open a space for communication, into which we can devise a response.

I started this chapter by looking at how the participatory practices of oral history- and community theatre-making emerged through democratic aims to extend cultural representation to groups of people who had traditionally been marginalised. Participatory processes were seen by politically minded historians and theatre practitioners as a means to uncover hidden histories, but more so, were framed as an opportunity for diverse communities to tell their historical narratives. However, where interview-based oral testimony blurred the conventional distinction between author and audience, I observed, how the skills and vision of crafting a narrative, whether historical record or play script, maintained interpretative authority in the hands of the "expert". Consequently, the offer made through practices of participation to extend cultural democracy remained troubled by a lack of redress by practitioners to their own authority in the (co)-authoring of communal narratives. In this way, I came to understand the way in which authority and authorship are mutually embedded.

By questioning the relationship between authorship and authority, I was drawn to an exploration of the redistributive capacity of 'a shared authority', a concept first proposed in oral history by Michael Frisch. In the first instance, Frisch locates an implicit shared interpretative and sense-making authority in the dialogue of the oral history interview itself (Frisch

2011). Secondly, he questions how the shared authority of this dialogue might be extended outwards into the public arena; "returning to particular communities or generating from within them the authority to explore and interpret their own experience" (Frisch 1990: xxi). Posed as a call to reflective praxis, many public and oral historians took up a shared authority as a mantra and subsequent applications of the theory expanded into a multiplicity of collaborative encounters to co-create historical products (Shopes 2015: 105). Whereas, the examination of the inter-subjective relationship between narrator and interviewer reveals the potential for the co-generation of shared knowledge, drawing out new questions and perspectives. In its expanded form, the collaborative generation of public historical narratives complicates the oral historian's recourse to objectivity and critical analysis. As a result, a compromise centres around the embrace of multiplicity, in the form of multi-vocal exhibits, which places emphasis on the audience to negotiate interpretation between the multiple narratives. Ultimately, however, concerns over the role of the historian to question both hegemonic and popularly grounded views remain troubled.

An alternative angle on this debate can be extrapolated from Claire Blencowe's affirmation of the authority of 'real life' experience as a rebuttal to the anti-democratic foundation of the authority vested in experts. At first, the building of shared knowledge through a narrator telling their lived experiences in the oral history interview can be seen to align with this position. However, Blencowe's emphasis stretches beyond this 'telling' to the generation of life experiences in areas that really matter. More precisely she calls for non-specialists to participate in experiences that are usually the preserve of experts; to operate within domains of life that are deemed important, and for this involvement to be underscored by decision-making authority (2013). In this chapter, this was discussed in relation to co-curatorial experiences in new museology, in which community participants assume interpretative authority in the co-creation of exhibitions. The public profile of the work, created for audiences and positioned in relation to dominant historical narratives, accentuated participant contribution to an

important cultural domain. Nevertheless, the evidence revealed how co-authorship can be undermined by a lack of specialist knowledge and technical skill to craft exhibits and the inability of the museum to surrender entrenched systems of hierarchy aggravate the potential to redistribute authority.

Following Blencowe, the promise of participation to redistribute authority is recast, caught up in a double bind, where the identification of certain practices as important for people to participate in, asserts greater authority in the field itself and therefore in its associated experts. For this reason, Blencowe proposes redefinition, by changing perceptions of what is 'real' and what is important, she suggests, it is possible to reconfigure who has participated. In response, my consideration of Baz Kershaw's notion of 'reminiscence-as-performance', and a more nuanced reading of a shared authority in the oral history interview amplifies the mutuality of conversation. In both situations, participation in the 'real' and the 'important' becomes intertwined with a sense of reciprocal dialogue between the non-specialist and the expert.

The emphasis placed upon dialogue lured me to investigate dialogue-based art and performance practices as models of mutuality, and in particular to think through the potentiality of Grant Kester's notion of dialogic aesthetics. In particular, the accent on encounters located outside of the environs of the institution and the attention to the way in which reciprocal dialogue may question 'fixed identities', leans towards Blencowe's release of participation from elitist confines. The realisation of a negotiated collaboration in which the participants' dialogue becomes the artwork itself, suggests that non-experts engage in experiences that really matter, the creation of cultural representations. A claim that may be amplified when projects are intent on manifesting concrete interventions in social relations. Nonetheless, there is an implication here that individual and community identities need to be transformed in some way. A hypothesis, itself grounded in an under-scrutinised assumption that cultural and historical representation is linked to the manifestation of 'identity' (Waterton

and Smith 2010: 12).

Kester's bid for 'listening as creative practice', placed as an antiphon to the critical *statement* of the avant-garde, is interesting in its correlation with deep listening as applied in oral history. Here, it tempers discursive communication as a space where the strength of argument wins out, to emphasise empathetic identification. Conversely, Claire Bishop argues against the diminished authorial control of the artist, which she contends results in impoverished artistic quality because the critical value of the artwork lies more heavily with the achievement of an ethical collaboration than on the aesthetics (Bishop 2012). As a result, she proposes, artistic experimentation is constrained, along with the corresponding capacity to evince conceptual, contradictory or nuanced depictions, which may crucially critique societal structures. For Bishop, it is the aesthetic that engenders an ability to think contradiction, opening a space for dissensus and forestalling the closure of meaning. It cultivates an openness of interpretation in which a plurality of meaning may arise. But additionally, founded in dissensus the aesthetic is a priori political, and thus, "not taking into account the aesthetic" in socially engaged projects "is tantamount to maintaining, rather than rupturing the status quo that these project claim to challenge" (Eschenburg and Bishop 2014: 175).

My investigation, then, into whether dialogic art practices may plausibly redistribute authority concludes in an impasse. Whereas the revival of the aesthetic embraces an openness towards dissensus, nuance and plurality, it maintains the authority of the 'expert' artist to subtly steer the expression of meaning in the conceptual and experiential qualities of the artwork. On the other hand, the foregrounding of an equitable collaboration grounded in consensual dialogue can foster mutual understandings and promote reconciliation, but the bonding experience augured by collective participation may equally tip over into homogeneity, which can bolster other fixed, hierarchical notions of cultural identity.

By listening to these debates, I began my practice-based research

with the understanding of the issues around participation, dialogue and authority, and a realisation that in order to learn more about an expanded form of creative listening I needed to engage in an embodied way of knowing. Moreover, I had questions as to what it means when we acknowledge the other side of communication, and try to understand listening as a form of participation? Might this shift of emphasis from the authoring of statements to an expanded form of listening, in some way challenge ideas of what is important and who has participated? In this consideration, I explore ways in which the *who* of participation can encompass the other than human, cultivating embodied and sensory ways of listening to experiences of the site, in memory and the present. Furthermore, through investigating different modes of creative listening - embodied listening and a listening through making - I consider the role the aesthetic plays, stretching beyond perceived meaning to the symbolic, sensate and affective.

CHAPTER 3: Listening With: Walking the Oral History Conversation through the Marshes

> The first thing I'd say to any interviewer is… 'Listen.' It's the second thing I'd say too, and the third, and the fourth. 'Listen… listen… listen… listen.' And if you do, people talk.
>
> (Terkel and Parker 2006: 124)

As veteran oral historian and broadcaster, Stud Terkel observes, listening is pivotal to oral history practice. He suggests that the attentive ear of the interviewer opens a space into which the narrator is pulled to fill the expanse with their testimony. Furthermore, this is a responsive listening, for eschewing a pre-formulated questionnaire for a thematic approach, the interviewer engenders another openness, in which questions follow in response to avenues of the narrator's making. It is this co-constitutive act of communication in the interview, which Terkel tunes to the improvisatory impulse of jazz music:

> You can't be too prepared for an interview, because you don't know what the person you're talking to is going to say. But you got to be ready for anything… In a way it's like jazz, you got to improvise. Have a skeletal framework, but be ready to improvise within that.
>
> (2006: 127)

As a performance practitioner, I understand the way the 'yes and…' of improvisation accents an immediate responsivity, which is itself reliant upon the performer's sensitised ability to listen to their fellow improviser. But more so, I apprehend the art of improvisation as a training in perception, for it

calls forth a sharpening of sensorial awareness. If as Terkel suggests, the listening ear draws the narrator into speech, then, I questioned how might a listening body, in which all the senses are pricked, impact upon the knowledge co-generated within the oral history conversation.

Locating an embodied listening as central to my practice-based research, I initially turned to the work of Italian oral historian, Alessandro Portelli, who draws attention to the sensate qualities of oral histories. Posing the question, 'What Makes Oral History Different?', in his seminal article of 1979, he challenges the predilection of historians to turn to the written transcript, and instead, advocates an attentive listening to the sonic qualities of the speaker's voice. For, he argues, the importance of oral histories lies not only in the words spoken but also in the form of their articulation. Thus, the shape and quality of the speech act - the accent, intonation, pitch, volume, vocal rhythm and velocity, all contain "implicit meaning" (1991: 47). Furthermore, shifts in rhythm or faltering in a pause, for example, may accent the emotional content of a person's story.

By urging historians to tune into the speaker's vocal expressivity, Portelli proposes, they may attend to the meaning the speaker has in mind. It is in the *telling* of the narrative that the present modulates the past; so vocal qualities amplify "the speakers' relationships to their history" (1991: 50). In this way, Portelli suggests:

> Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they
> wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what
> they now think they did.
>   (1991: 50)

If this is the case, the historian may learn less about historical events and more about their meaning, tuning into affective attitudes towards events that crucially "speakers may not be able (or willing) to express otherwise" (1991: 48). There is much, then, that can be gleaned through a sensate listening, although Portelli does not prefer orality, but instead, proposes a dual listening to content and its expressive rendering. However, what I also found of interest was in emphasising orality Portelli drew attention to the

doings of oral history, as embodied ways of speaking and listening.

The inter-subjective relationship engendered in the "inter/view" has also been described by Portelli as "literally a mutual sighting", for he proposes, "one party cannot really *see* the other unless the other can see him or her in turn" (1991: 31). His analogy, here, lured my gaze to the corporeal communication in the oral history conversation, which expands listening to encompass the visual register. Where Portelli focused on orality, American choreographer, Jeff Friedman, has stretched attention towards the non-verbal communication within the interview. Reflecting on his oral history research with dancers in his article, ''Muscle Memory': Performing Oral History' (2005), Friedman nudges towards a combined analysis of semantic and somatic content. Into the silences and breaks in narrative rhythm that Portelli speaks of, Friedman inserts embodied signals; "posture shifts, limb gestures, facial expressions and full body movement", which, he proposes, all convey further layers of meaning (2005: 36). For Friedman, tuning into these "multiple channels of communication" can facilitate a more "nuanced analysis and interpretation of oral history narratives" (2005: 46). By colligating these insights taken from Portelli and Friedman, I apprehended more clearly the liveness of the oral history conversation, as an embodied social encounter. From this place of understanding, I designed my practice-based research as a form of embodied listening, which aimed to explore ways to extend the listening ear beyond the aural in the oral history conversation to encompass visual and kinaesthetic sensitivities.

Furthermore, Friedman proposes, with reference to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's notion of bodily dispositions of the habitus, certain embodied actions cannot be represented discursively. Habitus describes the mesh of socially conditioned dispositions, thoughts and practices, which deeply ingrained and embodied, influence the way a person moves through the world. Accordingly, Bourdieu suggests:

> (P)robably the only way to give account of the practical
> coherence of practices and works is to construct models

> which reproduce, in their own terms, the logic from which
> that coherence is generated.
>
> (Cited in Friedman 2005: 35)

If this is the case, it implies the historical exploration of such culturally situated embodied practices, may not necessarily be best suited to the oral interview. In Friedman's application of this notion, he calls for a method of documenting dance performance, that is equally "embodied, contingent and temporal" (2005: 35). This, he argues, does pertain to the "real-time" event of the live interview in which the narrator recalls and constructs her or his memories as a type of embodied performance (2005: 35). Much has been written on the way both interviewee and interviewer co-perform within the oral history conversation, and this is something I will discuss further in Chapter Five of this thesis. But for now, I want to follow this thread as to whether the discursive interview, as "a local embodied social situation" can aptly give account of the bodily doings of inhabiting the Marshes (2006: 473).

In response to this concern, I was interested in Friedman's proposal to extend performance as a form of research enquiry, because it can provide a "powerful interpretative lens" and thus, contribute a "greater understanding of the life worlds" evoked in the interviews with dancers (2005: 37). Whereas, Friedman employed dance-as-research to *interpret* the semantic and somatic information gleaned in the oral history interview, my practice-based research aimed to synthesise the methodologies of the oral history interview and an aesthetic walking practice. For walking, like dance, is "a phenomenon inseparable from its embodied medium" and hence, it emerged in my research as a model of experiential listening that coheres with its own corporeal logic (2005: 35). Moreover, by referring to the interview as a "local" situation, Friedman calls attention to the particularities of location. Typically, the oral history interview takes place in the privacy of a narrator's home, or place of work, to solicit a sense of ease and to minimise environmental disruptions. In contrast, by situating my oral history conversations along a journeying encounter with the Marshes, I aimed to explore how a sensorial experience of the terrain might affect the

narrator's recollections and our mutually informing dialogue.

In this chapter, I discuss my practice-based research project, in which I engaged nine regular inhabitants of the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes on eleven walking conservations, between 26th January and 26th April 2016. The walking narrators all responded to an open call for participants to take me on a walk, issued through the project partner organisations, the Mill community centre and the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA), and publicised locally. Consequently, participants included volunteer conservators with the LVRPA, members of the Save the Lea Marshes campaign group, and other local residents who routinely visited the Marshes. There are all sorts of ways to walk. Accordingly, my walking companions strode out onto the Marshes for a variety of reasons: strolling for health, cyclical meditational journeys, travelling to work, social ambles with friends, the sensitised drift of foragers, midday escapes from the stresses of the day, walking with eyes peeled on the sky for birds, walks of discovery.

By designing my practice-based research as an invitation to participants to guide me on a walk of their own choosing, I aimed to investigate how a shared authority might encompass embodied ways of knowing. Consequently, the starting points and routes were individual and multifarious, but so too were the contexts of the walks. In some cases, I accompanied walkers on their regular constitutionals for leisure or a purposeful engagement in a specific role, bird monitoring or foraging, for instance. In other cases, rambles were more loosely structured. By emplacing my oral history interviews in-situ, I hoped to put different past and present experiences of the Marshes into conversation. I wanted to test out if and how the narrator journeying through the environment where memories were first laid down, might trigger non-verbal embodied memories, which might otherwise not be articulated.

Before starting my practice-based research project, I envisioned the walking conversations in terms of seeing the Marshes through the eyes

of its inhabitants. Accordingly, at the outset of the walks, I observed the significant impact the narrators' visual perceptions of the landscape had upon the stimulation of their memories, thoughts and imaginings, constitutive of our conversation. This is the subject of the first section of this chapter. However, as my walking conversation practice progressed and crucially, as I placed it in relation to the theories of French philosopher Jean Luc Nancy, on listening as a social ontology, I came to realise that my initial conceptualisation may have indeed lured my attention to the visual in the narrators' encounters. This I found surprising, for as a trained dancer and movement practitioner I have at times sensed somatically and improvised corporeally in relation to a landscape. Just as the entwining of oral history and aesthetic walking methodologies disrupted the dialogue of the interview, so it also seemed to dislocate my own embodied sensitivities, to prefer the viewpoint of the narrator. From this place of understanding, I deepened my embodied listening in the walking conversation practice, with an aim to explore if and how my own sensate encounter with walking companion and terrain might impact upon a reciprocal sense-making. In this chapter, then, I proceed from the valuation of the narrator's visual perceptions to discuss Jean Luc Nancy's ontological listening. This progresses to an analysis of my haptic listening; an attentiveness to the sense of touch as a mode of listening to the bodily or non-verbal exchange between the walking narrator and myself. By listening with my body, in coalescence with the oral-aural dialogue, I start to perceive something more of narrators' corporeal and affective connections to place.

Mnemonic Viewpoints: Looking at the Marshes Through the Eyes of Walkers

My first walking conversation took place with Norman Minter on 26th January 2016. I met up with Norman at The Mill, a community venue familiar to him, for he had regularly volunteered on the reception desk there since he retired as an Inland Revenue investigator. Although, Norman recalled he must have gone down to the Marshes when his children were young, the

advent of his retirement, in 2008, ushered in a time of regular marsh visitation, walking or cycling with friends. As we strolled up Coppermill Lane towards the entrance to Walthamstow Marshes, I started to ask Norman questions about where he was born, his family situation, his schooling and so forth; life history events as background to place the interview into context. In accord with oral history practice, I had prepared an interview schedule of themes around which I aimed to circle my inquiry. However, at various points along the route Norman's attention was lured away by connections with the vicinity. Thus, passing the street where he had lived for "twenty-ish years", or the local school his children had attended, shepherded us down other avenues of conversation. [25] With almost immediate effect, then, I realised that visual perceptions of the environment exerted a significant impact upon both recollections and the direction of our conversation. Thus, my themes were increasingly woven into by discursive trails of Norman's own making, generated in relation to the passing environs.

The terraced houses left behind us, Norman's thought turned to historical imaginings, as he spoke:

> (I) wonder what it was like in past bygone times, you know when it was the Lammas fields some people would. This road here, this Copper Mill Lane, well the High Street was originally called Marsh Street, so the local people would take their cattle down Marsh Street to through Coppermill Lane to the Marshes and graze them on what are called the Lammas Lands. So yeah.[26]

Norman continued to afford me a wealth of historical information on the Lammas Lands and the copper mill, which he had learnt from local historians, reading books and attending events. There was, perhaps, an unspoken understanding that in the context of the oral history conversation I was interested in historical information and in response, Norman shared his knowledge. For, following Portelli, the narrator's agency in the oral history conversation can at times be vexed by the subtlety of the inter-subjective

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[25] Walking Conversation with Norman Minter, 26 Jan 2016.
[26] Walking Conversation with Norman Minter, 26 Jan 2016.

relationship, in which the narrator guides the conversation according to their own perceptions of the interviewer's interests.

On the other hand, as I listened back to the audio recording of our conversation, I perceived the way his imaginings were again enlivened by the landscape. It was Norman's visual sighting of "the beauty of all the trees, the changing colour…how those leaves shiver in the wind", which pricked him to wonder; "I think you can open up your imagination a bit".[27] Then, from this place of imagining the bygone times emerged to form pictures in his mind. Listening again to the audio documentation of our waking conversation from this insight, I came to realise I could see the landscape of the Marshes through Norman's audition, for he called attention to the colours, textures, shapes of the passing site. As we ambled, he observed, the green of the bramble bushes even in midwinter, the way the trains crisscross the Marsh, the rising watermark under the railway bridge, the skim of water hardly discernible in the grasses. As Rebecca Solnit, who has written on the history of walking, suggests, time slowed down in the leisurely pace of a walk aids the walker "both to see and to think over the sites, to assimilate the new into the known" (2014: 6). In this way, I apprehend the way Norman knitted together the meandering of his trail, the roving of his eye and the excursive streams of his thought.

In the assimilation of the new and the known, Solnit evokes the temporal, and I note that a risen water level can only be perceived if it has been known differently before. By situating the oral history conversation along an ambulatory journey, I came to observe how features of the terrain triggered Norman's recollections. Later, in our conjoint meandering, for example, the sight of the interesting shape of a pylon towering above us, triggered in Norman a memory of watching workers dismantling a similar pylon on Leyton Marsh, as part of the 2012 London Olympics make-over.[28] Further, as he continued, I heard a wistful trace in his voice at the notion of pylons disappearing from the landscape with the re-routing of power

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[27] Walking Conversation with Norman Minter, 26 Jan 2016.
[28] Walking Conversation with Norman Minter, 26 Jan 2016.

underground, a unique architecture, which he believed is not seen elsewhere in the world.

Figure 3. Pylon sighted by Norman Minter, Walthamstow Marshes. Image: Siobhan O'Neill.

My ear was pulled towards the way Norman's thought wound from a present instance of visual perception, the view of the pylon, to a reminiscence of the past, and reverberations with the future, foreseen as a change in the national landscape. Following Portelli, Norman's narrative told me not only the historical reality of the pylon's removal, in relation to the Olympic developments, but also stretched "beyond facts to meanings" (1991: 2). For Norman, the pylon was a "unique" symbol that characterised the country's horizons, which he feared would be lost. Although, his opinion contrasted with those who supported the National Grid's £500 million plan, announced five months earlier, to reduce "the visual impact of pylons and

power lines" from four protected landscapes, which for environmentalist Chris Baines was considered "highly desirable".[29]

The connection between the narrator's visual encounter with the site and the recollection of previous sightings resonated through all the walking conversations. Whilst strolling with retired actor John Gillett, my second narrator, I listened as he rung the changes he had witnessed in the site over the twenty-five years he had been walking here. Thus, he recollected the putting in of the duck boarding, the signposts, the picnic area, various paths as well as two ponds in Horseshoe Thicket, all variously plotted along our trail and conversation. As we passed a bulrush flecked trench, for instance, he remembered:

> They put in all these gullies, well that's over the last ten years, um so again the water just comes up. And in the winter, it's all white, when it snows, it's like ice and white with the snow. It's beautiful.[30]

Here, in the one sighting there were multiple memories: specific, to the moment of its excavation with diggers, and composite, layered over winters of surveying a niveous scene.

A little further on, the memory of glimpsing "two little weasels" popping their heads up at the same time "like meerkats" is fastened to a precise spot along the gully, opposite the canoe club. At times, these triggers were not so tightly pinned. Hence, while Michael Bowles, a member of the Save the Lea Marshes group, was walking alongside the canal with me, he was induced to recall various pubs along its course and watching:

> ...boats coming up and down, and they looked like they were transporting things like coal and grit and gravel. Now you don't see those so much anymore.[31]

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[29] Chris Baines, chair of the stockholder group of conversation organisations which advised on the National Grid plans. Quoted in 'National Grid to remove electricity pylons from protected landscapes', The Guardian 15th Sep 2015.
[30] Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.
[31] Walking Conversation with Michael Bowles, 04 Mar 2016.

However, at other times, as with John's first and only glimpse of weasels, or Norman reliving the moment when his friend Costas fell off his bike too much hilarity, the affective quality of a "very special" memory bound it to a distinct position.

Memories, I came to realise are located in the site, specifically and more generally, and beholding the place where a remembrance was first laid down prompted visual recollection. It is an observation similarly educed by Canadian oral historian, Steven High, who proposes that the walking conversation emerges as "a three-way one" because the "built or natural environment prompts remembering" (2013: 76). Consequently, he suggests, with reference to the work of geographers James Events and Phil Jones, the sensory stimulation of the surrounding environs "structures the resulting conversation" (2013: 76). In accord then, emplacing my walking conversations *en* route in the Marshes amplified the connection between place and memory. More specifically, walkers' visual perceptions of features in the landscape cued recollections, which correspondingly guided our dialogue.

In order to think through the commingling of visual perception and reminiscence I had observed, I turned to the writings of Australian oral historian, Paula Hamilton, who has discussed the importance of sensory perception in oral histories in more depth. In her article, 'The Proust Effect: Oral History and the Senses' (2010), Hamilton draws attention to a "sensory revolution" in the humanities. First pioneered by anthropologists at the end of the twentieth century, the sensory turn, she suggests, has advanced new ways of thinking about "the nature of experience" (2010: 219). Yet, despite a growing recognition of human experience as founded in sensory perception, Hamilton notes:

> (O)ral historians who are concerned with the memory of those experiences have not yet engaged with the senses in their practice, beyond the obvious preoccupation with sound and listening in the production and communication process.

With reference to the literary work of Marcel Proust, she proposes, the way the "senses can act as a mnemonic device or a trigger to remembering" is well established (2010: 220). In particular, Proust observed the power of "the taste or smell of things" to stimulate a suddenly emerging or "involuntary memory" (Proust cited in 2010: 220). Following Proust, via Hamilton, I perceive how Norman's sight of the pylon triggered an impromptu flashback to his presence at the demolition of another pylon in the same locale. In this way, the senses can instantaneously bring the past into the present, and yet, as Hamilton notes, recall is "only socially meaningful when it is communicated to someone else" (2010: 220). Norman "primarily" visits the marshes to "think", to ponder the shape and form of the trees, for instance, because "they can sometimes stir the imagination."[32] And in this envisioned stirring he might encounter a quickening to reminiscence. But it was in the context of our synergic walking and talking together that his quickened memories were shared and became subject to our mutually informing conversation.

As Hamilton proceeds, she suggests, further impacts of the sensory revolution on historiography beyond value of attending to the senses stretches well beyond their capacity to prick a narrator's recollection. More specifically, there are three areas of her discussion which I found of interest to my practice-based research. First, in the growing body of work on the history of the senses, she notes, scholars have questioned the hegemony of the visual sense in the ways we think about and understand our experiences of the world. Second and relatedly, she draws upon the notion forwarded by leading sensory historian, Mark Smith, that "the senses are historical." Countering any claim to universality, he asserts, the senses are "a product of place, and especially time, so that how people perceived and understood smell, touch, taste and sight, changed historically (Smith cited in Hamilton 2010: 221). Third, with reference to the anthropologist Constance Classen, she proposes, the study of "sensory worlds" in the past

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[32] Walking Conversation with Norman Minter, 26 Jan 2016.

should not only contribute descriptions of "the sounds and smells that existed at a particular time" but should also "uncover the meaning that those smells and sounds had for people" (2010: 220). Taking these perspectives into account then, Hamilton advises oral historians to think about the senses as a way to interpret the meaning of previous interviews as well as to rethink the process for new ones (2010: 220).

With this new insight, I want to return to the valuation of my walking conversations practice, and following Hamilton, I will begin by rethinking "the nature of the visual sense that has been taken for granted in so much of past practice" (2010: 224). Earlier, I noted, the way John Gillet described assorted modifications to the physical environment, in the trenches, ponds, signs and paths we happened upon as we traversed. Rather than focus on descriptions of past sightings, I want to retune to the meaning those sightings had for John, and for other narrators too. Firstly, in a practice intent on exploring notions of a shared authority, my invitation to narrators to guide our route was crucial, for it supported their agency to determine the areas of the Marshes we encountered. Thus, John, whose residence abuts the River Lea towpath on the Hackney side, steered me around his daily circuit; a perambulation his takes either early in the morning, "to clear my head for the day's work" or in the middle of the day "to break it up a bit".[33] To my question, then, whether he travelled the same course each day, he responded in the positive, but added: "it doesn't look the same every day".[34] For John, inhabiting the Marshes on a daily basis means, "you really see the change in the seasons"; "it always feels different...because of the weather, or because of the seasons, or because of the wildlife".[35] For John, then, the changing views makes a significant contribution to his marsh experience. He conjured up his sense of the Marshes as in a constant state of flux, yet also, there was an embedded familiarity, revealed in his capacity to perceive changes over time.

On the other hand, John equally informed me that the changed

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[33] Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.
[34] Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.
[35] Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.

land features he observed were illustrative of the increased site management by the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA); "they just seem to have taken it much more seriously, um particularly with the Olympics".[36] Neighbourhoods abutting the River Lea were subject to rapid redevelopment in the lead up to the Olympics and beyond; evidently, the Marshes were incorporated in this government-sponsored urban renewal. As a result, this tract of land now "feels much more like a nature reserve that people can come and visit", but consequently, had become more populated.[37] As John pointed out:

> (T)here seem to be more people using the Marshes at the weekend, more families, more young people and dare I say, middle class it seems, err because, for a long time not many people really came out here, it was like just a well-kept secret.[38]

Thus, the environmental innovations visually witnessed, also speak to a variation in habitation, in increased numbers of people and in different societal groups, equally optically perceived.

This viewpoint was echoed in many of the walking conversations; all narrators spoke of the rising numbers of strollers, cyclists, dog walkers, and joggers. Conservation trainee with the London Wildlife Trust, Nathaniel DeCosta Legall, the youngest narrator to navigate me through the Marshes, remembered when he used to roam here as a child:

> I could come here, even in the summer and not see anyone. So now I come today and I know I'm going to see at least one hundred people, at least. So yes, for me that's massively changed my impression of the Marshes.[39]

Yet again, the difference between past and present encounters was rendered through the visual register and moreover, could be numerically counted. Furthermore, herbalist, Rasheeqa Ahmad, coevally discerned a

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[36] Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.
[37] Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.
[38] Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.
[39] Walking Conversation with Nathaniel Decosta Legall, 22 Mar 2016.

parallel between the shift in "the demographic of the streets" and an adjustment in the kinds of people who participated in her Marshes herb walks, a couple of years ago.

> It became full of young white couples from streets that were really really mixed and multicoloured. You could see that whole thing happening of young families coming to buy houses. Um and it changed in way of, er the people who come on the herb walks because originally it was just older folk and then it started to be young people because it became, as it became more trendy.[40]

The narrative of change in the marshlands and the surrounding neighbourhoods, then, is one that could be seen - in environmental redevelopments, types of river traffic, and classes of peoples. Interestingly, returning to Hamilton, she proposes, research on gentrification is typically told as "the story of change through external measures such as house renovations and changing types of shops or income levels" (2010: 227). However, she contends, such surveys tend not to reflect "the process from the point of view of the people who experience them" (2010: 227).

Following Hamilton, then, as I tried to see from the narrators' viewpoints, I was drawn towards their common experiences of seeing and not seeing. I observed, for instance, how Rasheeqa, speaking comparatively of another London park, noted: "when you look far away there's still urban sprawl, so I find that really suffocating".[41] Whereas, when John Gillet recalled earlier visits to the reservoirs at the north of Walthamstow Marshes it was in terms almost of an escape from the sprawl:

> You could picnic there you know, I mean there's, they're big lakes, and they have little jetties, and sometimes you used to go over and take a picnic and just sit on one of the jetties, because you're completely cut off, you wouldn't know you're in in the middle of Hackney at all.[42]

Equivalently, Michael remembered secluded picnics when his daughter was young, in the tall grasses of a "wilder" marshland.

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[40] Walking Conversation with Rasheeqa Ahmad, 09 Feb 2016.
[41] Walking Conversation with Rasheeqa Ahmad, 09 Feb 2016.
[42] Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.

When the marsh was very different, a bit more overgrown, we used to sit in the long grass and have picnics and pretend we were in the middle of nowhere. We used to look up in the sky and feel like we were on a big adventure. We used to tell each other stories. And that's part of what being on the marsh is for me. It's a bit like a sort of daily story and quite a magical place like I was talking about earlier.[43]

In an embodied listening, then, by attending to the narrators' visual perceptions I came to sense the significance of not seeing the city; a sensing both sensate and cognate. Not seeing appeared to open the possibility for the imagination, to pretence and being elsewhere; whether that be on a fanciful adventure or historical imaginings, such as Norman's evocation of the Lammas Lands or Rasheeqa's visions of eighteenth-century lovers walking rural landscapes, out of the old books she likes to read.

Equally, I perceived this viewpoint ricochets with a not being seen, which appeared to be troubled for narrators by the escalating number of eyes that now purvey the Marshes. In this case, I suggest, it may not only be that the narrators see more, and different types of people but also that they are seen by them. The Marshes are no longer the secret place John and Nathaniel spoke affectively about. Thus, in contrast, to walking in the countryside, Nathaniel observed, where you might "see a person in maybe an hour, and you say hello", if you were to do the same in the Marshes, "you feel like a bit of a lunatic, every person who passes by every minute".[44]

Focusing on the sense of sight, however, not only opened my awareness to the walkers' symbolic imaginings of place but also, through an embodied listening, I came to realise the role my own visualisations played in the sense-making of the walking conversations. Earlier in this section, I elucidated the way walkers' memories were situated in the Marshes, and therefore, the sight of a specific aspect of the terrain

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43 Walking Conversation with Michael Bowles, 04 Mar 2016.
44 Walking Conversation with Nathaniel Decosta Legall, 22 Mar 2016.

triggered recollection. Another instance of this phenomenon occurred as John Gillett, and I crossed over Whitney Point Bridge, when he spied the new build housing development on the oxbow island, at the edge of Leyton Marshes. The sighting stirred in him a memory of the island's previous inhabitation:

> This all used to be like breakers yards down here. Um you know cars, old cars were brought to be smashed up. And then they got rid of that, so all that small, small-scale companies have gone and they've built up all these big blocks.[45]

Here, the tension between "the real-time present" - the new flats, shaped like the back of a boat, and "a past present" - the remembered breakers yards reverberated with attention (Myers 2010: 59). But also, I noticed how these material modulations oscillated in my own imaginings, for in listening to John's reminiscence, I equally conjured an apparition of vehicular debris, which meshed with the real-time vision of clean lines, wood and glass of the bijou apartments. Thus, my own ocular perceptions of the site comingled with my visual imaginings engendered a sensate understanding of John's verbally recounted event.

Next, as John proceeded to describe the apartments, I noticed a nuanced affiliation made between the visual experience afforded by the balconies - "you've got a fantastic view", and the price the flats commanded - "these are half a million".[46] To my hearing, living with expansive views of the Marshes comes at a price, implying a commodification of open viewpoints in this densely built urban neighbourhood. Consequently, the conversation turned to how or who might be able to afford such a residence. Having previously noted that some of the new flats "are supposed to be so-called affordable housing", John marked out, the difference between the "tiny mortgage we could just about afford" on his residence in a Barratt estate, purchased for £58,000

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45 Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.
46 Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.

back in 1994, and the ability to purchase one of these apartments today.[47]

Figure 4. New build housing development sighted by John Gillet from Whitney Point Bridge, Leyton Marshes.
Image: Siobhan O'Neill

> But I mean you're still going to have a whopping great mortgage for half a million, you know, I mean god knows what it would be... but if people are paying £2,000 a month or something, that's crippling, I mean, you've got to have a pretty damn good job for that... or have an inheritance, you know.[48]

In response, he anticipated the population in the neighbourhood would change, but he affirmed, "there's no big sign of it at the moment". Largely, he suggested, in line with practice in his estate, because the apartments are bought up by "professional landlords, and then they rent them out, for whatever it may be, £1000 a month or whatever".[49] John's reflections, here, speak back to his earlier concern over an expanding count of people, and the shift in social background, as the growth in housing,

[47] Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.
[48] Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.
[49] Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.

gradually transits the area from a light industrial and working-class district. Returning, however, to my own sensate perceptions, as John and I returned upriver to his estate, it elicited me with a further visual dissonance in the perfunctory, red-bricked warren of mixed owned and social housing. But, in this instance, I was also alerted to my kinaesthetic sensitivities as I moved through the maze of passageways. In this way, my understanding of the personal and communal history John narrated was enlivened through my corporeal encounter with the places coiled through in our mutual going-about.

Figure 5. Bakers Hill Barratt Homes estate on the River Lea, where John Gillett's walk finished.
Image: Siobhan O'Neill

Attuning to my kinaesthetic sensitivities, however, struck a chord in the form of a return to my practice as embodied listening. Clearly, attending to the visual senses in my walking conversations offered an insightful addition to the typical preoccupation with the aural in oral histories. In other words, borrowed from performance scholar and walking artist Misha Myers, the walks supported "sharing 'earpoints' and 'viewpoints' with another through intimate or conversational conviviality" (2010: 59). As I stood, looking out over the grasslands with John Sellar, a regular marshes bird watcher, our eyes were directed in the same direction. John was usefully pointing out the distinction between one "looked after"

field and "at the far side" another "that's not touched". In this way, he effectively illustrated the difference between the real-time Marshes and "what the whole of the marsh looked like" in the past.[50] Thus, we stand side-by-side sharing the same viewpoints, past and present, and the same earpoints, speaking and listening memories and current observations.

Whereas the walking and looking out together brought the landscape into view, I began to question whether the embodied signals Friedman proposed as a significant aspect of inter-subjective communication in the interview, might be constrained. If my visual attention was on the landscape, how might this impact upon the emerging inter-relations between the narrator and myself? Moreover, considering the connection made between visual perceptions of the environment and remembering, I wanted to explore if and how other sensory perceptions might impact on both recollection and sense-making in the walked conversation. Returning to Hamilton, by becoming aware of all the senses, we can come to "see the world in a fundamentally different way" (2010: 200). Moreover, she proposes, it can facilitate "a rethinking about the nature of social experience, interpersonal as well as relationships to community, and even ideas about how we live and move through space" (2010: 200-21). Reflecting on Hamilton's ideas, I realised that my focus on visually perceived differences between past and present views did not fully reflect an embodied way of listening, in which I might learn more about both modes of moving through this place or of social relations, whether in our conversational encounter or broader community affiliations. With this in mind, in the next section, I recalibrate my attention towards an expanded embodied listening. In order to do so, however, I will first touch upon listening as discussed by French philosopher Jean Luc Nancy, who forwards it not only as a sensory practice but also an ontology of being-in-common.

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[50] Walking Conversation with John Sellar, 03 Mar 2016.

Listening with Jean Luc Nancy

It was my understanding of the mutuality implied in Frisch's notion of a shared authority, in which 'author-ship' does not begin with the authority of the historian nor with the experience of the narrator but from their togetherness, which first lured my ear to Jean Luc Nancy's theory of being-singular-plural. Grounded in a refusal to conceive relations in the binary of "the Other and the Same" (2000: 53), Nancy proposes a social ontology that predicts co-existence as foundational. Accordingly, his work speaks to both a disquiet over the primacy of the individual and the recourse to communal models unified around some shared essence. In this way, Nancy's theories resonate with the concerns voiced by oral historians. The previously discussed critiques of community oral histories, for example, that generate insular and nostalgic celebrations of community (Shopes 2014). Or conversely, as oral historian Alexander Freund proposes, the upsurge in autobiographical storytelling in public, which tends to "reinforce neoliberal values of competitive individualism" (2015: 96).

In his article 'Under Storytelling's Spell? Oral History in a Neoliberal Age' (2015), Freund suggests, radio broadcasts that ally themselves to oral history, such as *StoryCorps* in America and the *Listening Project* in Britain, promote the production, dissemination, selling and buying, and consumption of confessional stories. However, where "the storytelling industry thrives on sympathy" it does little to "create empathy or understanding" (2015: 97). In this context, Freund contends, it supports liberal values of "self-sufficiency and self-empowerment" whilst also leading to "a depoliticisation of narrative and public discourse" (2015: 97). It is to these parallel concerns, then, the critique of both the atomised individual wrapped up with liberal notions of self-autonomy, and the essentialising tendencies of community, which Nancy aims to address with his social ontology. It is perhaps his refusal to abandon community altogether, which has prompted the opening of his work into the discourses of community-based arts, including Grant Kester's analysis of dialogical art practices. An application, I contend, that can equally be tuned to a more nuanced

understanding of the negotiations between memory, place, and identity aroused in the community heritage project.

Effectively, Nancy re-orientates how we think about community, reimagining the communal bond, not as an existing bond "that only in a second moment becomes social", but rather, being is always in relationship (Devisch 2013: 98). More precisely, community as shared commonality presupposes an ontological sequence in which, an already constituted singular and self-presenting subject exists prior to entering the inter-subjective relationship. In contrast, then, Nancy flips this succession, by understanding that the singular being can never be present to itself. Writing in his book, *Being Singular Plural* (2000), he proposes, "that which exists, whatever this might be, coexists because it exists. The co-implication of existing (l'exister) is the sharing of the world" (2000: 29). Resounding, here, with a Heideggerian apperception of existence as being-in-the-world, the overtone of being-one-with-another in the world, is that our condition is relational. As he posits, "if Being is being-with, then it is, in its being-with, the "with" that constitutes Being; the with is not simply an addition" (2000: 30). Indeed, 'to be alone' oscillates in the space of being-with, for even when (an) other is absent, the experience of that lack is founded upon existence in the world, as co-existence (Devisch 2013: 98). For Nancy, not being-with heralds the abstract, self-conscious and self-present subject of western metaphysics, which sublimates the original alterity of Being. No such abstract interior unity characterises Nancy's singular plurality. As he writes:

> The common, having-in-common or being-in-common,
> excludes interior unity, substance, and presence in and for
> itself. Being with, being together and even being 'united'
> are precisely not a matter of being 'one'.
>
> (2000: 154).

In other words, being is characterised by openness; constituted by a multitude of concrete singularities being is inherently plural (2000: 34).

The overture to the 'concrete', here, as opposed to the 'abstract', recalls the co-existential condition as grounded in the everyday encounters

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in the world (Devisch 2013: 36). Thus, as Nancy proposes, in being thrown into the world together, it is our perceiving senses that act as feedback to our relationality. I must admit, I found it easier to engage with Nancy's social ontology as he tuned to the sensate sense of audition, as explicated in his book *Listening* (2007). In perceiving the sonorous, he suggests, there is a turning inwards, a resonance or *touching* the pinna of the ear, in contrast, to a laying manifest in the distancing of the eye. The visual laying bare, for instance, of walking narrator John Gillett's bird's eye view, gazing over the Marshes from the Springfield Park hilltop. Conversely, I recall how it stood in stark contrast to my later hearing a sensorial thickening at the moment of his embodied encounter with the Marsh itself.

> When you get over the bridge you hit something that feels like a microclimate, so it's not as windy, or it's not as cold, it feels just warmer and more peaceful and you sort of start to feel much more relaxed.[51]

Following Nancy, listening encompasses the same touch of being-with, proximal yet separate, a touching that puts "into play the whole system of the senses" (2007: 3). Furthermore, as Nancy ponders the entanglement of the perceiving senses and perceived sense, he asks "Is listening something of which philosophy is capable?" (2007: 1). The question is predicated upon a distinction Nancy draws between hearing and listening, for he qualifies the question with his assessment of the philosopher as:

> ...someone who always hears (and who hears everything), but who cannot listen, or who, more precisely, neutralises listening within himself, so that he can philosophise?
>
> (2007: 1)

In Entendre (to hear), there is an echo of the philosopher placed at a distance, a place where understanding, "hearing say", is separated from the sensorial experience of "hearing sound" (2007: 6). To hear confers a double meaning - to understand. It initiates a process of signifying meaning,

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[51] Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.

evident in both the signification of language and in the way sounds are perceived as indices for everyday objects or events. Even, in listening to a piece of music, Nancy notes the proclivity of Husserl to convert the music ahead of time into an object, a melody (2007: 20). To intention meaning in advance, reinstates the unitary subject, who, possessing the capacity for attention, wills its direction towards the object, from which it attains meaning (Kane 2012: 443). In this way, meaning is affixed onto the world. Consequently, Nancy moves away from *Entendre* and leans towards *Écouter* (to listen). The root écouter, as Nancy reminds us, is the verb auscultare - 'to lend an ear', which means to listen attentively. To listen, then, is "to stretch the ear", which in contrast to the stasis of signified meaning, evokes a mobility; "it is an intensification and a concern, a curiosity or an anxiety" (2007: 5). In listening, it is not the idea of interpretation that comes first, but rather, it is an impulse, a "straining towards a possible meaning" (2007: 6). To turn this around, listening becomes a mode of thinking.

The distinction Nancy accents, here, between a listening intent on fixing meaning and an extending the ear to protean meaning, vibrating across sensate and perceptual sense is, I contend, significant to the co-generation of knowledge in the mobile oral history conversation. It pulls my attention back to my practice-based research as embodied listening, and in particular, to my walking conversation with Jo Robinson, a retired art teacher and long-standing member of the Save the Marshes group. It is with a new ear, then, attentive to Nancy's apperception, that I want to listen again to the conjoined sense-making in our mobile conversation.

As we sauntered along the path that bisects the inner meadow of Walthamstow Marshes, I asked Jo what she remembered of her first visits to this place, over 45 years ago. In response, she recalled blackberry picking with friends, frequent walks along the river, the trains going across; "it's got such a lot of things" she announced.[52] The "things" expanded into the 'natural' environment, the "beautiful green belt and strange plants by the

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[52] Walking Conversation with Jo Robinson, 19 Apr 2016.

river", and into historical myths, hearing stories of dinosaur inhabitation and Viking boats sailing up the River Lea. In this way, she professed, "the whole landscape just revealed more and more sort of interesting things to you".[53] As I leant my ear, I heard a layered engagement unfold, in Jo's narrative the Marshes became a palimpsest with strata of stories piquing her interest over time.

Interest implies strangeness, a difference from the usual, yet it was not only curiosity that pricked Jo's sensibilities. Equally, closeness and familiarity arose in her encounter, for from the outset the landscape evoked in her the comfort of home. As she articulated:

> I don't know what it was, I just, I just felt, again it's like being at home somewhere, I just felt completely at ease in the place. And I could... I felt like you could erm....[54]

In this instant, I heard Jo trail off, searching momentarily for what precisely aroused her emotional entanglement. Finally, she settled upon:

> It's an industrial landscape basically. The remains I suppose of an industrial landscape. And somehow, I felt, erm, you could feel that. I don't know why I felt that.[55]

Incongruity resounded, here, for her earlier associations with the environment and pre-industrial historical narratives, seemed to petition a commonly expressed translation of the Marshes as a rural setting. Moreover, at this point in our trail, a bucolic scene was evident to the eye, as I observed the long grasses, snarled brambles and rampant nettles. In this tension, then, the industrial claim resonated, felt as ambience, but not as yet, making sense to either Jo nor myself.

Together, therefore, we tried to unravel this entanglement of affect and meaning, to create a pathway to understanding the sensation Jo experienced. I prompted with a question, as to whether there were any

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[53] Walking Conversation with Jo Robinson, 19 Apr 2016.
[54] Walking Conversation with Jo Robinson, 19 Apr 2016.
[55] Walking Conversation with Jo Robinson, 19 Apr 2016.

signs of industry when she first came down here, in the 1970s. Converging, with oral history practice, in which the dialogue is grounded upon a responsiveness, my question arose in return to a close listening to Jo's account. It is in this oscillation, the teasing out of knowledge jointly through narrative and query, that the entreaty to a shared authority arises. "Well, no, not really" came Jo's response, although she moved on to remember the Latham's timber yard, over the other side of the river, which made wood for pencils, and the Victorian-built railway lines that carve across the meadows. However, Jo continued to grapple with her vague impression, affiliating it more with the vastness and openness of the space, along with a spirit of unpredictability. It may have been the association she recalled earlier with the open horizons of her childhood in Blackpool that more accurately beseeched the homely. But, still unable to articulate a tangible interpretation at this stage, Jo was left wondering:

> I think it's more in my head. I don't know where it comes from, all this stuff.[56]

Of course, there is nothing spurious about a sensation simply existing in one's head. For, returning to Portelli, it is often in the discrepancies between fact and memory, the inconsistencies, inventions and myths "creatively generated by memory and imagination", that the symbolic meaning for the narrator begins to emerge (1991: 2). However, as I listened again, this time to the binaural audio recording of our conversation, I was struck with wonder at our straining towards meaning here, evinced in the amorphous interpretations of Jo's industrial conjuring. For I could clearly hear the piercing beeps of trucks manoeuvring in the nearby industrial estate and the rattling of trains rhythmically punctuating our colloquy. Since sound travels through space, from beyond the horizon of the eye, the industrial noise of the urban penetrates and diffuses through the Marshes. It was not purely the imaginary or psychic that vibrated here then. But the question I asked myself was: how did we miss this cacophony of the proximal city?

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[56] Walking Conversation with Jo Robinson, 19 Apr 2016.

Listening is a central tenet of the oral historian's practice, and in order to listen, one must pay attention to the speaker. In the quiet of a narrator's home, with the requisite request for no interruptions, phones turned to silent, and clocks removed, this may be more easily achieved. However, by walking outside in the site where the narrators' experiences had been corporally constituted, we were surrounded by a dense field of sensory information. Was it then, I suggest, the placing of my attention on to Jo's speech that filtered out the *noise* of the remaining sensorial substance. Or perhaps more deftly, it was our joint tuning into sense-making, an attempt to render understanding onto sensibility, which turned my awareness from sensation to perception.

In the next instance, however, the winds changed and caught on a waft, carried across the Marsh boundaries, I snatched the smell of bread. Sweet, pungent and homely, I fleetingly inhaled the Allied Bakeries' factory, located in the same vicinity as those bleeping trucks I failed to hear. My drawing Jo's attention to the scent acted as an olfactory mnemonic; it jolted her into recalling past journeys to work through the adjacent manufacturing estate, as a faster route into the Marshes. The presence of the industrial we had searched for in the past was in actuality tangibly infused with the smells and sounds of the Marshes in the present. Next, as we continued onwards, we arrived at one of the Victorian-built railway arches bowing over the pathway. Now, Jo procured a visual evocation of the industrial remains she solicited, witnessed at the micro-scale in the details of "chopped bricks" mottled with "mortar holes", and "old grubby plasterwork" smudged with "drips and stains", which assembled into "a cartoon of rats".[57] This was the distress cogent of a ruin, as the hand of time had whittled away at the materials of the bridge. Here, I felt Jo settle, through infinitesimal sensory receptors and nerve impulses, I perceived her align sensation and meaning to oscillate together in her sense of place. Nonetheless, the coalescence was fragile, fleeting and remained open, as she mused:

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[57] Walking Conversation with Jo Robinson, 19 Apr 2016.

> I don't know what it is about distress. Distress tells a story, but you don't know what the story is really.[58]

As we stood wrapped up with distress "a massive train" thundered overhead. A deep rumble reverberated through the dome of the railway arch; ricocheting off the walls it vibrated through the dome of my head and the arch of my mouth, down through the dome of my chest and up from the ground through the arch of my foot. I felt the ground, the Victorian-built bridge and our bodies all vibrate simultaneously, touched by the same sound. This is listening to resonance, a resonance that vibrates all the senses; it is an embodied listening, a listening which according to Nancy opens to the resonance of meaning that nestles in the space between being-with.

Returning to Nancy, then, being immersed entirely in listening translates into the resonant body (corps sonore). A resonant chamber enveloped and penetrated with sonority, in which sound and meaning share the same space, both separate and touching, reverberating between and within each other. For sound propagates itself through space, as particle vibrates with particle, it diffuses and resounds in space while still resounding in me; it is constituted by referral. Likewise, meaning takes form in a reference, created in an amalgam of referrals: "from a sign to a thing, from a state of things to a quality, from a subject to another subject or to itself, all simultaneously" (2007: 7). Both constituted by reference and referral, they resound with each other, as a feedback loop of proprioception and perception. Whilst, reverberating within and without the resonant body, sound as meaning, refers back to the self. However, this is not the self-presenting subject, for Nancy is not thinking here in terms of the visual gaze, in which "the subject is referred back to itself as object" (2007: 10). For, attuning to its characteristic mobility, sonorous presence is always "vibrating, from the come and go between the source and the ear, through the open space" (2007: 16); it refers back to itself whilst still sounding

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[58] Walking Conversation with Jo Robinson, 19 Apr 2016.

elsewhere. Thus, it opens to itself and to the world simultaneously; it feels itself listening but always escapes itself for "it resounds elsewhere as it does in itself, in a world and in the other" (2007: 9).

John: There's something calling. It's not that; it's over here. Something over here. I've got to tell you that I've not got very good hearing. I've got ear plug, ear... I have to wear... (signals with his hand)

Siobhan: Okay, yes.

John: But I didn't have it this morning, I forgot to put it on. My hearing's not the best, it's not good for a birder, but I can hear the...

            ...there's   something   in there.
            I don't know what it is. If you've ever heard a...

            ...couple of wrens.
            Hear them?[59]

Whilst rambling with birder John Sellar, I retuned my ear. Our conversation, and correspondingly our footfall, fell jointly into a syncopated rhythm. Whereas I was previously concerned that our shared viewpoint foreclosed my visual perception of his embodied signal, now I linked across the proximal space to attend to the way we walked together. Where the mobile conversations initially seemed to foster less interaction, with little direct eye contact, Lee and Ingold posit walking as "a profoundly social activity" (2016: 1). In walking together, the walkers' "timings, rhythms and inflections" meld, because "the feet respond as much as does the voice to the presence and activity of others" (2016: 1). But more so, the staccato beat of our joint preamble emerged in relation to avian others, for John always had an ear stretched out attentive to the call of birds. In the moment narrated above, he lured my attention to the "di-di-di-di-booooo, di-di-di-di-boooo" of two wrens hidden in the tall grasses, nestled away

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[59] Walking Conversation with John Sellar, 03 Mar 2016.

from sight and the light mizzle we traversed through. Considering John's confession of poor hearing, his ear was pricked by multitudinous warbles, tweets and chatter, and yet adept at tuning in, he singled out each accented bird, amid the urban noise around us.

A regular volunteer with the LVRPA, John undertook weekly bird monitoring walks to tally up the various species he encountered in three "patches" of the Marshes. Birders, John elucidated, have a collection of distinct patches, areas in which they regularly watch for birds, although his routes were coevally prescribed by the park authority. By partaking in three early morning trails with John,[60] I was able to build up a more sustained relationship and conversation. Just as there are many ways to walk, so too, High suggests, there are multiple approaches to a walking interview. This, then, leaned towards a hybrid walking interview and ethnographic participant observation, the "go-along" method, in which "the researcher simply accompanies the informant in their everyday lives" (2013: 76). It was in this trio of walking conversations that I came to understand that through an embodied listening, I not only came to understand something more of narrators' past corporeal experiences through narrative *audition* but also by attending to the ways they *moved* through the environment.

As John accounted, he first learnt to bird in Scotland, before he came down to live in Leyton in 1970. As a boy, he used to live next to Abbotsinch airport, an RAF base near Glasgow, and as he noted:

> (I)t had a huge wetlands out there. And it had thousands, and I mean thousands of what we called peewees, you know lapwings. 'Cause that's the noise they'd make - pee wee pee wee, so we called them peewees.[61]

Throughout all our rambles, John peppered our discussion with imitations of bird calls, often swiftly after he had been alerted to their presence, and

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[60] I undertook three walks with John Sellar: the Leyton Marsh, 03 Mar 2016, Essex Filter beds and bird hide, 04 Mar 2016, and the Middlesex Filter beds, 24 Mar 2016.
[61] Walking Conversation with John Sellar 03 Mar 2016.

thus enabled me to also stretch my ear towards an avian encounter. It prompted me to ask him, on our second walk, how he had learnt all the different types of birds.

> Just through other people's knowledge, I suppose. We used to get five or six kids, when I say, kids, we were about ten, twelve years of age. We used to go to the marshes and things, you know. And people used to point out different birds to you, and you'd remember until the next time you saw it, you know. That's really how most people learn their birding. Through their compatriots, you know.[62]

His narrative effectively illustrated the way knowledge is accrued through inhabitation, built upon the sensate perceptions of our corporeal doings, our being-in-the-world-together. It is anthropologist Tim Ingold, who has called forth the understanding that "it is by moving that we know" (2011: xii). In the process of moving through our environment, he suggests, we encounter not things exactly, but what they afford for the pursuance of our current activity (2011: 11). Therefore, it is through the encounter, the processes of attending and responding, that knowledge is generated. In other words, John acquired his expertise as a birder through a combined "having a go" and being-with others; with bird and fellow boy, who mutually shared their knowledge. Presently, as an authority on birding, John now redistributed this knowledge to me within our walking dialogue. Authority, performance scholar Alison Jeffers, observes is typically based on experience (2017). Hence, a superior level of knowledge, she argues in accord with Nancy, is not innate but rather "generated through relationships to each other" (2017: 216).

Through John's expanding narrative, I continued to attend to the way his knowledge journeyed with him arising in relation to multiple past experiences. Clearly perceived through my sensate experience of our confabulation, and also, as explicitly expressed, John liked to "blather". Not only, he confessed, to "pass the time of day" but also because "you learn so much as well". A police officer with the London Metropolitan Police

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[62] Walking Conversation with John Sellar, 04 Mar 2016.

Force for twenty-eight years, John proposed:

> A lot of good intelligence comes out from stopping an old buddy in the road and talking to them.[63]

Ostensibly, the way of listening attentively he learnt as a boy drawn to the call of birds may have been assimilated and extended in his employ in the police force. It was a corollary he drew himself but in relation to another birding skill.

Audition to the various avian cries was not the only birding expertise John imparted to me on our peregrinations, for as we glimpsed something flash across the hedgerow, he advised:

> Quite often when I'm out in the Marshes doing my walks, you see movement, but you don't know what it is, so you've got to look for it.[64]

This is not, then, the ocular that manifests bird as object, but rather, the perception of motility. The capacity to see movement, to catch something in the glimpse of an eye and to open your attention towards it, is something John put down to his experience of walking the beat. As he articulated:

> Cos, I never walked fast, I was always a slow walker because you see things if you walk slowly. You look around. So, I'm always looking around and seeing movement, and it all comes from training, not training, you just do it naturally I think, you know.[65]

Although John attributed a 'naturalness' to his expertise, I suggest, that rather than an innate ability it resounded as a corporeal activity engaged with over many years.

It was not, however, a general seeing movement he referred to, for later, he related how the motion told him much about each singular bird.

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[63] Walking Conversation with John Sellar, 03 Mar 2016.
[64] Walking Conversation with John Sellar, 03 Mar 2016.
[65] Walking Conversation with John Sellar, 03 Mar 2016.

As he related:

> You sit and study them and the movement. Then next
> time... it's not the next time, but I know that, so that
> movement I know that was a Mistle thrush or any of these
> thrushes, that's how they move, and it's just one of these
> things you know. All birds have different movement, you
> know, I told you about the wren earlier on how it goes bi-bi-
> bi-bi-bee, but it also flies about underneath the bushes all
> the time, it's always flying about bushes.[66]

Accompanying his explanation, he performed movements, carved out
across the sky with his hand, differing undulating curves for thrush and wren.
Again, John spoke in terms of something you just know, but evidently in my
not knowing his knowing was accented. For, his way of knowing the
movement and sonority of birds in singularity instead of generality had
been acquired through years of being-with.

Returning to Nancy, but attuning to performance scholar Deirdre
Heddon's reading (2017), being-in-the-world-together opens to include
being-with the other-than-human (2017: 27). In Nancy's evaluation:

> The ontology of being-with is an ontology of bodies, of
> every body, whether they be inanimate, animate, sentient,
> speaking, thinking, having weight, and so on.
>
> (2000: 84)

Continuing further, the "body" Nancy refers to is materialised:

> ...made of stone, wood, plastic, or flesh", and yet
> materiality does not signal the solidity of unity. Instead,
> existing "outside, next to, against, nearby, with" both (an)
> other body and itself, the body / subject is characterised by
> openness.
>
> (2000: 84)

For, the *with*, here, connotes proximity and distance, a space that equally
summons a linking across; just as the hyphen in being-singular-plural marks

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[66] Walking Conversation with John Sellar, 03 Mar 2016.

both union and division (2000: 37). The leaning towards of being-together is attenuated by the recognition that no two singularities are the same. In equal weight, it is "Being in touch with ourselves" which "makes us "us" *and* in Being exposed to the other "we" touch our limits (2000: 13). In other words, it is through exposure that the self, distinguishes itself from the other, as different (singular), and yet still with others (plural) (Heddon 2017: 28). Furthermore, the "we" Nancy conceives of here encompasses everything in the world, "all existences, those past and those to come, the living and the dead, the animate, rocks, plants, nails, gods - and 'humans'" (2000: 21). However, this is not a generalised world, for, being is thrown into a specific time and place, the here and now. As such, "Being" is always an instance", it exists in each moment and evaporates to pass onto the next instance of Being (2000: 33). In this case, being-with is always "an instance of "with", arising as a contingent "we" that appears and disappears in every singular moment (Devisch 2013: 100).

From this place of understanding, I came to perceive John's listening as characterised by an openness, a being-with the Marshes which remained expansive yet alert to the call or flight of the non-human. A being-with, moreover, that resonated with his past encounters but arose contingently within each moment. But more so, in our shared dialogue, I attended to the proximity of convivial conversation and the distance of different regimes of knowledge. In this linking across it was not simply that I heard his birding expertise shared in oral-aural communication because in walking-together I invoked an embodied listening. So, I tuned into John's bodily dispositions of listening and watching. As a performance practitioner, I also enact embodied ways of attending to sound and movement, which I have developed through experience. An attendance that relates to bodies, feeling others' movement on the inside, in the arousal of kinaesthetic sensation. Thus, in the mutuality of our perambulations I attuned, almost imperceptibly, to how John moved in relation to the Marshes; in our conjoined pauses to listen, beyond words - sonically, visually, more openly to the "more-than-human" (Heddon 2017: 19). This realisation, however, came to me unexpectedly, on a walk alone in the Marshes, as

the sun just started to dip down behind the silhouetted urban skyline.

> An exquisite refrain pulls my ear - a warble, trill, tremulous modulation - singular amongst the plurality of the dusk chorus. Enrapt, I linger a while. The whir - click, click, click - of a bicycle wheel passes behind me. In the flicker of an eye, I catch a faint glimmer of a man snaking through the copse. I am alerted, it is different to walk alone as a woman in the Marshes close to nightfall. But I am lured to bask in the sonorous delight a while longer. A chattering couple moves through my field of sound - distant - proximal - distant. I feel the chill of night arise. Eventually, I stir to step once more. Then suddenly a chant is broadcast, loud and tinny; a human incantation spreads across the Marshes. I readjust my ear trying to make sense of this interloper, in amplification it feels close to ear and yet I understand its source must be at some distance. It calls in a language I am not versed in, Arabic or Hebrew, I surmise from the sound of word, but not the call to pray I am familiar with from the mosque neighbouring my home. I walk on, enjoying both the incongruity, formed in relation to the instant and its presence as a return to this singular-plural place.

As being is always in relation, so in our communal walks I coevally heard John's narrative and listened beyond oral communication, to harmonised my ear with his embodied listening to the marsh. Now I auscultated more attentively. In other words, I lent my ear; for unlike John, I could not name the calls I heard, so instead my listening spread out to the edges of the human and more-than-human to snag on sonic undulations. For the sonorous "spreads across space" (Nancy 2007), moving in and out of presence, it is omnidirectional; where sight can be obscured, sound is borderless. Furthermore, if being open extends the listening ear, it also, in the return, opens to exposure; listening may affect you in surprising ways. And thus, in the instant of ear witnessing accounted above, I heard a metaphor for the walking conversation practice as a whole. Walking and talking with the narrators, I attuned my ear to "hearing say", and stretched beyond articulable meaning, to "hearing sound", in the reverberations of narrators' past and present corporeal encounters. Listening, ergo, became "a multi-directional and multi-directed activity": listening outwards to narrator and site, and inwards to my own interoceptive sensations (Myers

2010: 61). Hence, in terms borrowed from Heddon, the walking conversations emerged as "an 'entangled listening' practice"; a resonant listening to the vibrations generated by the narrators in relation to the Marshes, resounding in me whilst still sounding elsewhere (2017: 19). In this way, I came to re-conceive my practice as listening to the narrators' listening.

Touching Boundaries: The Cultivation of a Haptic Listening

If the sonic is discerned through movement, it equally, resounds as the movement between surfaces, returning back as reverberation from the body, human or non-human, it touches. It is this haptic quality of resonance that attracts Nancy to listening; in resonance, relation as sound encompasses both the contact and delineation of the space between. If movement is a way of knowing, in relation to the world, then, it is articulated through touch.

In order to consider more deeply the possibilities of touch in my practice-based research, I turned to the work of human geographer Mark Patterson, in his book *The Senses of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies* (2007). As the title of his book suggests, Patterson pluralises the haptic sense. In his first chapter 'The Primacy of Touch', he defines, "touch is a modality resulting from the combined information of innumerable receptors and nerve endings concerned with pressure, temperature, pain and movement" (2007: loc 98-99). Conceived as a singular sense but not associated with a single organ, the haptic manifests in multiple modes - in the cutaneous touch of skin, the vestibular perception of balance, and the somatic interoceptive senses of kinaesthesia and proprioception. Thus, touch is vital to embodied existence, it is present within every encounter with objects, and in many of our interactions with the human. It is the capacity of touch to be receptive, expressive and to communicate empathy that brings Patterson to perceive it as "a sense of communication" (2007: loc 99).

In alignment with Nancy, Patterson proposes touch "can bring distant objects and people into proximity" (2007: loc 100). In the feeling of a cutaneous touch, as exemplified by "being caressed by zephyrs of wind"[67] as Jo and I climbed up from the underpass, there is a simultaneous "awareness of the materiality of the object and an awareness of the spatial limits and sensation of our lived body" (2007: loc 123-4). In a return, described by Patterson as "force feedback", kinaesthetic and cutaneous touch articulates how we move through and explore the world. Thus, he argues, touch is linked with verification, to being tangible, to "the co-implication of body, flesh and world" (2007: 119). Touch, then, communicates presence. Returning to Nancy, it is through a mutual touching that being is brought into relation with (an)other being and with (it)self; being can only be present to itself as relation (Nancy 2007).

Furthermore, by evoking the caress, Jo lured my ear to another touch of meaning; intimate and proximal, the feeling of touch can be affective and emotional. As Patterson observes:

> Reaching out to touch and caress an animate object, such as a familiar cat or a warm-cheeked lover, the immediacy of sensation is affirmatory and comforting, involving a mutual co-implication of one's own body and another's presence. On the other hand, touch can cement an empathic or affective bond, opening an entirely new channel of communication. Rather than immediate and embodied, this touch shifts toward the metaphorical, the alternative emotional connotation of 'touching' (e.g. 'I was touched by her speech').
>
> (2007: loc 124-128)

The affective bond rebounds in the space of being-in-common, separate yet proximal, in which emotion and meaning can be communicated and returned. From this place of understanding I want to think through more specifically the connection between the narrators' senses of touch and their affective relationship to the Marshes. In this section, then, I listen again

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[67] Walking Conversation with Jo Robinson, 19 Apr 2016.

to the narratives engendered through the walking conversations but this time I turn to a haptic listening. In this analysis, I will put the narrators' spoken and non-verbal expressions of touch into conversation with my own haptic sensitivities, with an aim to glean a deeper understanding of the affective and symbolic meaning of their narratives of place.

In first audition, there is sparse acknowledgement of the sense of touch tangible in the narrators' testimony. Only one example peels in its attention to physical human contact, when Michael Bowles, a member of the Save the Lea Marshes group, recalls an encounter marked by the absence of touch:

> I remember buying tiles from an Orthodox Jew who... when I clinched the deal I was about to shake his hand and he said no we don't shake the hands of people who are not of our faith. So, it was a very, very interesting, very diverse place then.[68]

The lack of touch resonates; just as sound touches difference in order to rebound, so here, cultural difference vibrated the encounter with interest in Michael's memory. In touch, as Nancy proposes, "(t)here is proximity, but only to the extent that extreme closeness emphasises the distancing it opens up" (2000: 5). Conversely, then, the distance rendered by not shaking hands seemed to metaphorically amplify Michael's sense of the cultural diversity he encountered. By equating this plurality with back *then*, he implied a change, in which this heterogeneity might be presently lost to him. This may be a consequence of some modulation in Michael's inhabitation or it may relate to demographic variations in the area over the intervening period. Alternatively, if listened to in relation to other walkers' narratives of neighbourhood change, from light industrial to residential district, it may also vibrate with a diminished opportunity to touch diverse peoples. In the social capital that is nurtured by the everyday interactions that small local businesses frequently provide. In this way, the lack of touch

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[68] Walking Conversation with Michael Bowles, 04 Mar 2016.

may symbolically taper in contrast to an escalating paucity of face to face convergence.

Apart from the account above, narrators spoke less of the intimate and proximal touch characteristic of human-to-human contact, and more of the haptic sensitivities brought into play through an embodied encounter with the Marshes. With reference to Patterson's observations on the intimacy of proximal touch, Hamilton suggests, as a form of non-verbal communication touch features less in oral histories because narrators "are unlikely to speak about it, except in metaphor" (2010: 224). Yet, if we encounter the materiality of the world through touch, then surely, I thought, pricking the haptic senses by journeying through the environment must equally nudge memory. In her research in Sydney, Australia, Hamilton found only one example of a narrator responding to a haptic mnemonic. As the narrator walked around her local neighbourhood, she often reached out to touch places "that remind her of people she loved now gone or events of importance that happened in her life" (2010: 224).

Figure 6. Amenities at the entrance to Walthamstow Marshes touched by Jo Robinson at the start of her walking conversation. Image: Siobhan O'Neill

In similar vein, I recall the way Jo's hand shifted around the amenities at the entrance of the Walthamstow Marshes; the strong railings, the bicycle rack, "a doggie poo bin", that she then opened to smell the

contents, "pooh!".[69] I now apprehend in this haptic accompaniment to her commentary, how she touched change, grazing over the objects most recently added to "tart" the place up. Objects that became entangled with her memories of a wilder Marshes, to expose a taming, a making more amenable for the public.

Where there is an immediacy in cutaneous contact, touch as a way of listening through referral, opens up the space to temporality, to the oscillation of past and present. On the other hand, in accord with Hamilton, expressions of touch remained bounded in my walking conversations. Because, I suggest, walking is an everyday corporeal habitus, embodied perceptions may be so inveterate they become barely articulable. It was, therefore, by tuning into an entangled listening that I began to feel the narrators' perceptions of touch. By listening conjointly to the walkers' metaphoric articulations in conversation and to my own haptic sensitivities in our joint amblings, I began to hear the significance for the narrators' of touching the Marshes.

Synthesising his own childhood encounters and those heard from older adults whom he currently works with, environmental conservator Nathaniel, described the past topography of the Marshes:

> It used to be very much like dirt tracks and there's no sort of pedestrian paths, no way you could get a bike through here, and you wouldn't come through here with your dog unless you wanted a real task when you got home. So, it was very inaccessible and its only until sort of the noughties when basically the LVRPA made efforts to make it accessible.[70]

His account echoed the narratives of other walkers, who equally recalled the Marshes in terms of wildness; overgrown and inaccessible, with elephantine grasses, thick brambles and fly-tipped rubbish. To my ear, they evoked an almost impassable terrain, which clearly implicated the

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[69] Walking Conversation with Michael Bowles, 04 Mar 2016.
[70] Walking Conversation with Nathaniel Decosta Legall, 22 Mar 2016.

corporeal techniques and embodied sensibilities engaged in traversing it. In contrast, today there were "more amenable access routes in and out of the Marshes" cement and metalled pathways.[71] Brambles are cut back, tall grasses scythed in the summer, the trees are pollarded, and as John Gillett noted, "what they cut down they put into the wood shredder and then they use it to make paths like this... so it's a bit less muddy".[72]

In that instant, his observation, on *this path,* pulled my attention to the surface felt through my feet, a soft sponginess which nevertheless did not deepen to such an extent as to make walking arduous. In actuality, I realised, all the walks were marked by the sensorial encounter with the variously surfaced trails we trod. It is, therefore, important to remember the haptic does not encompass the touch of the hand alone. The shock, I felt, reverberating through bone as my foot hit tarmac, the delicate shift of stones compressed as my weighted body stepped on gravel, the muted bounce of my heel on the constructed wooden boardwalk; all subtly resonated with the temporal change to a more explicitly managed Marshes.

Figure 7. Ground Surfaces in Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes – boardwalk, cement, wood chip.
Images: Siobhan O'Neill.

For the narrators, the wildness they remembered yielded an unmediated bodily encounter, commingling haptic experiences of differently textured surfaces with modulating improvisatory movement kinaesthetically felt. Whilst, as I listened to touch meeting sound in the tones of crunch and thud

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[71] Walking Conversation with Nathaniel Decosta Legall, 22 Mar 2016.
[72] Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.

and smack, I began to hear how it echoed with their past experiences as dissonance, amplified by the remodelled embodied experience of the terrain.

In contrast, the managed walkways channelled our embodied interaction with the physical material of the site, so limiting haptic possibilities. As a relatively level landscape, without the entanglement of undergrowth or the sinking into quagmire, the Marshes' offer of an alternative to Rasheeqa's experience of "endlessly walking flat city streets" was vexed. [73] Geographer, Tim Edensor, whose work has focused on walking, emphasises it as a plural modal practice, which emerges contingently in relation to a specific environment. Writing in 'Walking in Ruins' (2008), he also points to the way a typified urban walk is funnelled by following "preferred, signposted routes along bounded walkways and conveyors which form part of larger systems of circulation" (2008: 125). A metropolitan flow attested to by John Sellar, in his account of the cemented aqueduct path through the Marshes:

> And it's used at this time of day especially, for a drive-through, because everyone's cycling along through these paths to go to work.[74]

Furthermore, "this conveying of bodies", Edensor proposes, "contributes to a broader process "through which the range of activities, styles, forms of comportment and motilities is restricted" (2008: 125).

In contrast, Edensor suggests, ruins, in the case of his article derelict de-industrialised sites, offer the possibility to "walk contingently and improvisationally" (2008: 125). Moreover, he draws attention to the "peculiar affordances and unusual materialities", which may be happened upon, encompassing a multiplicity of sensorial experiences "that coerce the walking body into unfamiliar states" (2008: 123). Although manifestations of industrial ruin are limited in the Marshes, specifically to the

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[73] Walking Conversation with Rasheeqa Ahmad, 09 Feb 2016.
[74] Walking Conversation with John Sellar, 03 Mar 2016.

old East London waterworks site south of the Lea Bridge Road, to my ear, the bodily encounter Edensor conveys here can aptly be applied to narrators' past experiences of the whole marsh. All forms of walking, he posits, are constrained or enabled by multiple factors, including the material qualities of the terrain moved across and also "the particular regulatory regimes that overtly or more subtly coerce normative modes of movement" (2008: 124). In this case, the narrators' embodied being-with a more informal, marginal Marshes of the past, has been gradually siphoned towards a more typified corporeality by the regulatory impulses of the LVRPA to tidy up the area and create a more 'amenable' leisure facility.

Not only is the agency of the narrators hindered in the instance of their bodily doings, but equally, I contend, as custodians of embodied knowledge, which crucially underpins their affective sense of place. For Nathaniel "it's about having that local knowledge", manifest in sensing "when it's ready for walking boots and trainers and not wellies", or which plot "tends to get a bit boggy in the winter".[75] In similar vein, Norman spoke of the thrill of navigating a particular paludal section, pitting his sense, knowing and perceiving, against a deceptive terrain.

> Norman: It all floods here. And I can remember, you know the challenge of can you get through this bit of the Marsh without sinking in a foot of muddy water. You can't, you can't. You know you find some less muddy bits but the more you go over there to the right the wetter it gets. I think you can see the water over there now.
>
> Siobhan: Yes.
>
> Norman: It's quite deceptive isn't it. It looks like it's one bit of water but no that's a true marsh, it's marshy and watery and muddy.[76]

In their narratives, I attend to how Nathaniel and Norman listen to the site. This is a haptic listening, emerging through proximity. There is an

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[75] Walking Conversation with Nathaniel Decosta Legall, 22 Mar 2016.
[76] Walking Conversation with Norman Minter, 26 Jan 2016.

intimacy, almost, in knowing where to lay your foot, a knowing entangled with the remembering of the body. Equally, there is a distancing in the mediation of strangeness, of a ground constantly shifting with water. The area Norman referred to lies to the right of a boardwalk, a long wooden walkway constructed by the LVRPA to bridge the most bemired stretch of the marsh; again, to both ease human mobility and conserve the habitat below. It falls short, however, of the full extent of the meadow, and thus in winter the remaining swathe still presents a challenge. It was with John Sellar, however, that I physically experienced the expertise of crossing. Literally, stepping into his footsteps, I touched the land he touched, and listened, through my somatic interoceptive senses to his moving as a way of knowing.

Although the maintained routeways serve to siphon human motility through the Marshes, for the more adventurous there are still possibilities to meander off track, that is until you encounter a fence. Whereas the transformation of paths is felt, the fence is perceived initially through the visual register. As such, it featured explicitly in narratives, mainly when a visual mnemonic was present, as in Michael's testimony here:

> When I first started coming down here, the Lea Valley conservation area wasn't really as clearly demarcated as it is now. Now they're quite... There are a lot more sort of fences and signs saying how you should and should not use the land. Erm, the *Save the Lea Marshes* project is a witness to try and maintain the Marshes as they are, to try and maintain the ecology and not build on it. Not build carparks. Not set up advertising hoardings. Not build more and more blocks of flats. To keep it open so people can enjoy a relatively wild space. But it is very managed. For instance, I'm looking at a barbed wire fence. Now that wasn't here 27 years ago.[77]

Yet again, I hear in his account, a correlation between bounding the space and bounding bodily activity; embodied experience, which resounds with the affective jouissance availed by a "relatively wild space". Accordingly, some narrators confessed to crossing recently asserted boundaries, "to hop

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[77] Walking Conversation with Michael Bowles, 04 Mar 2016.

over the fence and err trespass basically", in order to access sensorial encounters not offered within the confines set by the "authorities".[78]

In reverberation, moreover, exposing the porosity of boundaries touched metaphor, as heard when Michael tried to unravel the knot he felt between protecting flora and fauna and the consequence that "people feel hemmed in or excluded".[79] No longer perceived just in the distance of the eye, these fences are felt - somatically, affectively, and metaphorically, as he folded them in with strata of political and autobiographical history.

> Unfortunately, there are fences being built in peoples' minds and in reality. And we're very aware at the moment how migration is a big topic in the news. In my family, we part exist because of a forced migration because my mother was a German in, er, Germany just before the Second World War, and she came to this country as a refugee.[80]

For Michael, the fence resonated in metaphor. In the present, it expressed his concern with some people's attitudes to migration. Primarily, I suggest, in light of his reference to news reporting at the time, to the way migrants and refugees were often vilified in the lead up to the European Union membership Referendum. This, then, reverberated with his own family history, for his Jewish mother and grandmother were "adopted" by a Sikh, citizen of the United Kingdom, and offered refuge in her home in Buckinghamshire, seven months before the Second World War was declared. In contrast, then, to the exclusionary attitudes peddled in national newspapers and the rhetoric of politicians, Michael was "very aware" of the "generosity" of a stranger his grandmother met in a German doctor's surgery.[81] As he articulated, she "didn't have to, er, be generous to my family, erm, but she did it out of an act of compassion and kindness".[82]

With these resonances, the 'barbed wire fence' we looked at, an

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[78] Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.
[79] Walking Conversation with Michael Bowles, 04 Mar 2016.
[80] Walking Conversation with Michael Bowles, 04 Mar 2016.
[81] Walking Conversation with Michael Bowles, 04 Mar 2016.
[82] Walking Conversation with Michael Bowles, 04 Mar 2016.

upgrade from the fence you can hop over, became freighted with historic and symbolic meaning, which further underpinned the affective significance of keeping the site open. As he continued:

> And I suppose it's a bit similar to refugees who are trying to get into Europe at the moment. And they're trying to get here because of war, poverty. That's not their fault. I think we should be generous. I think that's why we're here. So, in some ways, my little walks around the, the marsh, are a bit like crossing boundaries between Hackney and Walthamstow. And in some way, that's the sort of world where I like to live in, a world where I can cross boundaries and where I'm not stopped from doing so by forces beyond my control.[83]

Co-aligning a personally felt autonomy enacted in walking, a resistance to its curtailment through the LVRPA's management and the European Union's principle of freedom of movement, his being-with the Marshes rebounds with the closed singular community Nancy rejects. Thus, his sense of freedom in walking is affectively allied in his metaphor with a disavowal of an introverted defensive boundary-making, which is hostile to outsiders.

I heard Michael's testimony as a compelling and affective narrative, which touched me to reverberate with my own sentiments on the current upsurge of national insularity and exclusion of difference. Moreover, I found it an insightful illustration of how individual attachments to local place can be put into relation with global issues. However, as Mackey and Whybrow urge, it is vital for applied performance practitioners concerned with community-belonging to not only attend assiduously with the way places are *imagined* but also *contested* (2007: 3). Despite, potentially congregating as a community of shared interest, brought together by a common engagement in walking the Marshes, not all narrators affiliated the same significance to an unbound motility. In stark contrast, John Sellar admitted his support for leaving the European Union, similarly inscribing his views in relation to the marsh environment, in terms of the impact migratory birds have on indigenous avian populations.[84]

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[83] Walking Conversation with Michael Bowles, 04 Mar 2016.
[84] Walking Conversation with John Sellar, 03 Mar 2016.

As Mackey and Whybrow propose, the way local place - insular, boundaried and exclusionary has been set in opposition to space - fluid, global and by implication liberating, is problematic (2007: 6). Furthermore, as a walking practitioner, Heddon has specifically considered this problem in association with aesthetic walking practices. By observing that walking as a practice is not simply contingent on location but is also historically determined, she draws attention to the continued prevalence of eighteenth and nineteenth discourses, which inculcate walking with notions of autonomy and freedom (2012). An argument explored in further detail in her articles with Cathy Turner (2010, 2012); conventional reiterations of aestheticized walking tend towards "an implicitly masculinist ideology", which "frequently frames and valorizes walking as individualist, heroic, epic and transgressive" (2012: 224). Of particular relevance, to my practice and to Michael's metaphor, they expose the corollary inserted between an unfettered and individualistic walking and a detached release from the relations of everyday life. In contrast, they argue, culturally inscribed relations, though multiple and shifting, "are attached to bodies and travel with them, affecting space" (2012: 227). In this case, the experience of a Syrian refugee of walking across spatial boundaries into Europe is incommensurable to Michael's experience of unbound mobility. Whilst crucially, these singular walking bodies are perceived differently by various collectivities.

By dislodging the notion of the detached walker, Heddon and Tuner, also observe that space is constructed through relation. With this in mind, I want to return to my walking conversations in the Marshes. For through an embodied listening I came to realise that where some walkers might metaphorically diffuse into space in generality, there was also an attendant haptic encounter with this singular place. Thus, there was both an opening out and a proximal linking across, for when they touched this land, they were equally touched by it. Thus, in this mutual being-with the affective pull of the Marshes sounded.

Walking narrator, Abi Woodward was the most vocally ardent of the Save the Lea Marshes' campaigners, who professed a fiercely protective relationship with the marshland when she joined me on a brisk jaunt. She similarly spoke of transgressing fence boundaries, but this time as a political gesture to reassert commons rights of public access. [85] A particular contention resounded for her in the "fencing off bits for the riding stables", for, in contrast to environmental protection, it served the commercial interests of the LVRPA.[86] In recent years, the Lee Valley Riding Centre, she informed, had expanded from a leisure amenity for local people, to accommodate livery horses, for those with the means to pay. Moreover, she decried the behind-the-scenes "deals between the politicos", rendering the Marshes as a "politicised space". [87] As she articulated:

> (T)he Council just waves it through because they need the LVRPA to sign off when they want to build some flats very close to LVRPA land up the road.[88]

Her protest clarioned, once more, an inter-relational rebound between the appropriation of marshland and the "insidious" circumambient urban development.[89]

In response to this land management, the Save the Lea Marshes campaign had propagated a communal, ambulatory touching of commons boundaries, which by crossing recently inserted perimeters, reclaimed authority. As Abi noted:

> That's not their land, it's our land and they've stolen it from us basically. So, every so often Katy Andrews...who died last year... she led... a Beating the Bounds walk every year, and for several years running we walked through that area. We climbed over the fences and we walked through the area

[85] Walking Conversation with Abigail Woodward, 18 Mar 2016.
[86] Walking Conversation with Abigail Woodward, 18 Mar 2016.
[87] Walking Conversation with Abigail Woodward, 18 Mar 2016.
[88] Walking Conversation with Abigail Woodward, 18 Mar 2016.
[89] Walking Conversation with Abigail Woodward, 18 Mar 2016.

because we feel it's really important to just remind people with power that they don't control everything.[90]

As I listened to Abi's testimony it triggered my own remembrance of the Beating the Bounds event. For I had participated in this revived perambulatory custom, in May 2014, in order to discover something more of the history of the Marshes in preparation for my PhD research.

I recalled following a jovial and energetic walk leader, Katy Andrews, as she guided a gathering of around forty to fifty campaigners and interested residents around the historic Parish borders. I remembered the modulation of our congregation, expanding and compressing to the various pathways and the pleasures of traversing a sun-warmed Marshes. At particular points along the trail we coagulated once more; children were overturned to have their heads performatively knocked on the ground, and we listened to remnants of Lammas Land and boundary custom lore. I remembered how the trail branched, opening an opportunity for those more politically minded and physically able to cross fences and travail a more arduous route whilst marking traditional boundaries. Whereas others, more interested, perhaps, in consuming local heritage or a convivial day out advanced on accessible paths to arrive in better time at the local pub. As I co-mingled Abi and my own recollections, I was pricked by a perception that the authority of the campaigners was not solely exercised in a freedom of movement but significantly in local ways of knowing, generated through touch and grounded in cultural tradition.

In order to think this idea through I wanted to learn something more about the Beating the Bounds custom, and I turned to the writings of historian, Stephen Hindle, in his book chapter, 'Beating the Bounds of the Parish: Order, Memory, and Identity in the English Local Community, c. 1500–1700' (2008). An annual custom, stretching back to medieval times as a rite to ensure productive harvests, Beating the Bounds perpetuated the spatial limits of the Parish by passing on knowledge from one generation to the next. For in the time before maps, the precise orientation of the

[90] Walking Conversation with Abigail Woodward, 18 Mar 2016.

perimeter and its boundary markers - mere-stones, border streams and significant trees, was lodged in the memories of the oldest inhabitants. The processional demarcation acted as a mnemonic, embodied through touch, both in the tread of the land along the route and the ritualistic beating of boundary stones.

Additionally, the correlation between touch and memory was extended through the pedagogical function of this ambulatory habitus. As Hindle observes, in order to cement local knowledge into the memories of the young, the attendant children were "bumped, ducked, or beaten" at the relevant places (2008: 219). Furthermore, as these bounds were circumscribed in relation to neighbouring parishes, the symbolic significance of the walk was extended to encompass the identity of the community. So, it marked out "the spatial limits of their rights and duties as inhabitants of a particular parish" (2008: 216). The abatement of this local custom came, Hindle posits, was a result of agrarian reform, when the enclosure of fields and common lands caused obstruction to traditional routes. The demise was, at times, hotly contested by parishioners, who on occasion would attack the fences erected by landowners. As Hindle notes:

> The fact that the beating of the bounds might involve the cracking of skulls and the levelling of hedges epitomises the passions provoked by questions of local identity and its associated rights and obligations.
>
> (2008: 225)

In summary, I suggest, touch was equivocally employed to mark the boundary, in intimacy - the bond to memory, and distance - the bound to constrain, and thus, imprinted an affective affiliation to the land.

Attending to Beating the Bounds as a practice of touch, I am alerted to deep resonances rebounding between traditional custom and its contemporary revival. As a metaphoric touching of boundaries, the meaning I stretch towards unfolds medially as relation in the interval between past and present cultural practices. The mnemonic function of the contemporary congregational walk resounds, acting as *reminder* to

those in power of resident walkers' and campaigners' authority, alongside perpetuating local ways of knowing. Authority, not simply embodied in assailing fences, but through the *touching* of the earth and the *holding* of knowledge. Cultural knowledge, of the way the native black poplar trees intersecting the outer marsh and the hidden Dagenham Brook, now supplanted by the flood relief channel, both inscribe, as Katy informed us, the ancient boundary.[91] Moreover, in the way of a return, I am reminded of John Gillett's reflection on the sound of the leaves rustling in these poplar trees, "so very peaceful, but very energising as well".[92] As a marker, the trees not only stand as a distinctive visual describer but also as a sonically singularly place. Just as the traditional rite served educational purpose, so too the campaigners dispersed knowledge to accompanying neighbours and residents; on local boundaries, common land rights and crucially, through corporeal re-enactment, the Beating the Bounds custom itself. In this walking-touching practice, past and present, there was a social circulation of memory.

Moreover, there was a sociality to the group perambulation, the playful embrace of knocking children's heads on earth and the conviviality of stepping out together in sunshine and subversion, called forth a fleeting communality. Despite the amity aroused in re-enactment, however, the proximal touch of heads to earth analogously exposed difference, in the strangeness of a custom disinherited from its traditional intent. The unfolding co-appearance, therefore, existed as plurality, for in its reclaimed and modulated form, resonance with the past vibrated differently in each walker. As Abi articulated:

> Like all these events everybody who comes to it has got a slightly different reason for being there and a slightly different historical interpretation on it.[93]

As Abi affirmed, the intent for campaigners resonated with "historical

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91 Katy Andrews, *Beating the Bounds*, organised by Save the Lea Marches on Leyton and Walthamstow Marshes, May 2014.
92 Walking Conversation with John Gillett, 05 Feb 2016.
93 Walking Conversation with Abigail Woodward, 18 Mar 2016.

continuity" but did not aim at fixity. Where boundaries were walked in the past to confirm the area of parochial responsibility, now, the paths are walked to cross areas of responsibility; crossing "areas where people don't really want us to go...you know keeping the footpaths open and keeping the areas open".[94] In the crossing of boundaries there is an encounter - an intersection of commons and situated ways of knowing and the responsibilities of the LVRPA. Simultaneously there is an exposure, contesting custodianship, in the implied query - who will act responsibly in the care of the Marshes?

The connection emerging here between touch and responsibility is germane, for in the reciprocity of touch, when the walkers touched the Marshes in perambulation they were touched back, affectively, quickened into feelings of care. There is a responsiveness and a responsibility. Whether in Beating the Bounds, or apropos my walking conversation practice, touch acts as feedback to our relationality; it resounds as a haptic touching of the ground, an embodied touching of cultural memory and the metaphoric touching across boundaries. As such, the multiple ways of touching all reverberated with the walkers' sense of connectedness to the Marshes. Hence, the curbing of rights of passage, through fences, surfaced pathways, or managed marshland, is affectively felt as restraint to being-with. The co-existence of being-singular-plural through which "we are in touch with *ourselves* and in touch with the rest of beings" (Nancy 2000:13).

Finally, returning to my walk with Nathaniel, in the last stretch, he spoke of feeling "honoured" to know the Marshes.[95] There is an emotional intensity to the relationship, but also there is a rebound in the sentiments of protection and care, for here it is the *Marshes* that bestows attachment on *him*. This sense of honour emerged through the experiential encounter, pricked by a sensate touching, layered over time as embodied knowledge, and in Nathaniel's understanding accrued by "osmosis".[96] If the affective relationality with the Marshes is grounded in touch, then it contacts an

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[94] Walking Conversation with Abigail Woodward, 18 Mar 2016.
[95] Walking Conversation with Nathaniel Decosta Legall, 22 Mar 2016.
[96] Walking Conversation with Nathaniel Decosta Legall, 22 Mar 2016.

open boundary, a semi-permeable membrane that propagates a fluid interchange between the two. This is to be listening, intimate and exterior, entering into a tension, in which Nathaniel was looking out for "a relation to self", not to himself, "but to *the relationship to self*" (Nancy 2007: 12).

In conclusion, the practice-based research project I have discussed in this chapter was defined by the relationship it opened up between the walking narrators, my sensate corporality and the environment of the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes. My research was a process of discovery of ways to synthesize a participatory oral history and an aesthetic walking methodology, in order to learn something more about walkers' past and present experiences of this singular place. The concept of embodied listening I introduced in this chapter is useful for thinking about how certain bodily actions, such as walking, cannot be represented discursively, and thus call for an equivalently embodied, situated and contingent way of knowing. As I discovered through the ambulatory conversations, sensorial encounters with the environment where corporeal memories were initially formed, productively triggered remembrance in narrators. I learnt that reminiscence can equally be pricked by a sense of familiarity or of temporal dissonance. Moreover, by sensorially encountering the sites with narrators, my own sensate perceptions extended the understanding of change they described.

However, through the walking conversations I came to realise how easy it is to focus on visual perceptivity, and thus, to not take into account the full range of sensate perceptions. Of further significance, the placing of attention on sense-making in the oral history oral-aural communication, equally foreclosed embodied sensibilities. However, by coming to understand moving as a way of knowing, I recognized that as narrators touched, heard, saw the Marshes, so I listened to their way of knowing. Through developing my practice to listen more deeply and sensately to narrators' embodied ways of listening, seeing, feeling, walking, I came into contact with bodily dispositions, generated in relation in past encounters, which as non-verbal, inveterate habitus might not otherwise have been

articulated. Additionally, I learnt, in being open and responsive there is an exposure, and hence in my embodied listening I was surprised to discover how narrators' ways of knowing were redistributed subtly, without my focused attention. Thus, in a return, my attentiveness opened up a different mode of redistributing authority; it enabled participants to share their knowledge not only through narrative and discussion but also through the expertise of their corporeal doings. Based on my observations this took place over a number of encounters, which would suggest oral historians and artists could adopt an approach, which commingles the walking conversation with a sensory ethnographic method. In response to my observations, I retuned the conception of my practice as a listening to the narrators' listening; as listening-with.

As a situated practice, it was no generalised semi-rural environment we encountered but a singular site, the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes. Just as my attentive ear listened the walkers into speech, so the narrators' attentiveness to their livened senses, quickened the Marshes into speech. The theories of Jean Luc Nancy supported and extended my thinking about listening as a means to conjointly put, sensation and perception, and, the human and more-than-human, in touch with each other. By listening to the sense of touch in walkers' haptic encounters, I came to understand something more of their affective and symbolic relationships with the Marshes. As touch is more intimate and proximal, it appeared less in our discursive conversations, and in response, a haptic listening to a pedestrian touch emerged in my practice as a means to attend to this significant aspect of the walkers' experience.

In conclusion, by attuning to the affiliations between touch, memory and cultural knowledge in the Beating the Bounds custom, I apprehended how the walking conversations equally vibrated as a practice of touch; a knotted encounter of multiple ways of knowing - embodied, situated, affective, symbolic, relational, which called for an entangled listening. Reflecting on the significance of touch in the affective and metaphoric meanings walkers attach to the Marshes, there was a

possibility to take some of this learning into the participatory performance-making practice. Thus, I questioned how I might extend this touching of the Marshes into the workshop space, to facilitate other participants to recall embodied, non-verbal encounters. Finally, as haptic listening, my practice-based research drew attention to the narrators as custodians of embodied and cultural knowledge, which questioned the authority of the LVRPA to define inhabitants' experience and the community's narrative of this place, albeit "in all its moods".[97]

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[97] Walking Conversation with Nathaniel Decosta Legall, 22 Mar 2016.

CHAPTER 4: Conversations between Memory and Materials

The walking conversations described in the previous chapter attended to the one to one relationship concomitant with the oral history interview, and as the research progressed, I moved to the second phase of *Tales from the Marsh*. This part of the research extends embodied listening to the collectivity of the group. Emerging from and overlapping with the walking practice research, three groups of local people came together to exchange experiences of the Marshes, and to develop new understandings of place through creative workshops and performance making.   Two groups - the older adults, and women and girls under 11 years old - engaged with the project at The Mill community centre, which is located on the road leading to Walthamstow Marshes. The third group, young people at Lammas School, the closest secondary school in geographical proximity to Leyton Marshes, participated as part of an after school, spoken word poetry club.

As is frequently the case with community-based projects, whether the purpose is creating performance or generating oral histories, not all sessions occur in the place of interest itself, but in venues within the locality, which are familiar to and accessible to neighbouring residents.   This consideration is amplified in sites, which throw up challenges to physical access, as the Marshes do in the winter months. But equally, it can be an implication of partnership working, upon which a project's viability may be based. The aim, then, is to encourage engagement, however, it made me question how could participants, meeting in a grey carpeted community room or the school's drama studio and classrooms, establish a meaningful and moreover senate encounter with the Marshes, as a foundation for sharing reminiscence and perceptions of bodily involvement in the environment.

The call for participation emphasised an exploration of the Marshes encompassing the sharing of memories, but I was equally aware that

people became involved in the project for a variety of other reasons. As such, the young people engaged through an existing poetry club, thus their predominant interest lay in the exploration of poetics, alongside an emphasis on articulating personal experience. On the other hand, the older adults were more concerned with expanding their knowledge of local history and building relationships through shared reminiscence. Hence, this was not one shared community of interest; an affiliation, which in contrast, could have legitimately been extended to the walking narrators. Instead, workshop participants' encounters with the Marshes were diverse, at times cursory or incidental, but I also hoped this offered the potential to generate new perspectives. Jo, in the elders' group, was a member of the campaigning group Save the Lea Marshes and David and Jean were regular walkers, but the majority of the young people encountered the Marshes through engagement with everyday or specific activities - travelling to school, long distance running - rather than an intentioned engagement. The majority of the women and girls visited the Marshes for family walks, play and foraging, but Malina, who had recently emigrated from Poland had not visited the Marshes prior to the project, although her mother cycled its paths on her daily commute to work. These varying levels of knowledge of the Marshes, made me consider how participants might conjointly generate a sense of place, to be communicated to an audience. Furthermore, how might the listening in the workshops engage with the specifics of locality whilst equally listening to participants' own interests?

In this chapter, I discuss two areas of my practice-based research, concerned with the experiential arts-based activities I facilitated for the three groups. In the first section, I consider the introduction of objects and materials from the Marshes into the workshop space as stimuli to trigger embodied and sensate memories. In light of working within built, indoor workshop spaces, I wanted to investigate if and how an embodied listening through touching Marsh related materials could cue memories of the site or corporeal encounters with other similar environments. Moreover, considering the shift to group memory work, I hoped that if participants

could explore objects and materials with each other, it had the potential to facilitate a way of listening to different experiences and perceptions. I also aimed to consider how the learning from these workshop activities could afford a greater understanding of the role the object plays in reminiscence. In the second section, I discuss a processual making and remaking of artistic forms as a means of generating interpretations to lived experience memories. I hoped to identify ways that participants could play a more active role in the sense-making process, finding ways to creatively analyse their own memories. Thus, I thought that if participants generated responses to their memories in a range of creative forms, it might foster a way of developing new understandings, with the potential to tune into embodied ways of knowing.

The design of my practice-based research in these workshops was influenced by the writings of artists Miranda Tufnell (dance) and Chris Crickmay (installation) on their approach to creating as a 'conversation between media'. Founded on an improvisational frame, they outline a creative process predicated upon a constant shifting between media - "from moving to writing, from writing to making with materials, from making to conversation and story" (2004: ix). To clarify, then, Tufnell and Crickmay employ the term a 'conversation between media' in a dual and interchangeable application; to mean both a conversation between different materials and between different modes of making. In the opening section of their book *A Widening Field: Journeys in Body and Imagination* (2004), Tufnell and Crickmay correlate this generative journeying with the ways we inhabit and perceive the world. The processual making and remaking, they suggest, encourages an opening beyond everyday purposive thinking to an awareness of the sensate, affective and imaginative. Through creating in a variety of mediums a broader spectrum of images unfolds - in story, picture, gesture, for example, but more importantly, they argue, the shifting between different forms of expression facilitates exploration from different points of view (2004: ix-x). It is this notion of the encounter between materials that interested me; the conversational

flow of making something, listening to it, and creating again as a response in another medium.

To be clear, it is not an intentioned listening they propose, in which a singular idea is carried through from one medium to another. Instead, as they explain:

> Creating becomes the conversation when we enter a dialogue with whatever we are doing. In this conversing we are drawn along in the moment by moment flow of sensation, interchange and choice, rather than following a predetermined intention or idea. Conversations grow as we listen and explore – a constantly shifting process of discovery that changes in momentum, rhythm, clarity or chaos as we work.
>
> (2004: 41)

In the loosening of intention, there is an opening to the encounter. Thus, whatever is being made generates the agency to gather what it needs in order to grow, and the 'maker' lets go of what is known, to stretch towards the unknown. It is, they propose, in the process of different mediums touching each other, forming and re-forming *in relation* that "we glimpse the unformed or yet-to-be-formed in ourselves" (2004: 42). It is not, however, merely in the encounter between different modes of making that meaning unfolds, because fundamental to Tufnell and Crickmay's approach is a companion. It is through creating alongside, sharing and reflecting back with another person that we start to get to know our own images. Hence, there is a layering of manifold encounters through which multiple and potentially diverse perspectives may be attended to. As Tufnell and Crickmay write:

> Ideas and perceptions are thus explored from varying points of view and amplified and extended as the work proceeds – the circling and recircling, that lets in the many, often conflicting, facets of our experience.
>
> (2004: 43)

Influenced by the attention Tufnell and Crickmay place on haptic and embodied sensitivities alongside the stories we tell, I devised the

practice-based research workshops to engage participants in exploring their recalled experiences through a range of materials and processes. As an improvisational approach rooted in the immediate sensing of what is within and surrounding the body, memory briefly features within Tufnell and Crickmay's strategies, whereas in my research reminiscence is a central element of workshop design. Constituting the first five or six sessions of the *Tales from the Marsh* performance project for each group, the workshops were exploratory in emphasis; eliciting memories, sharing experiences, generating images. Whereas, workshops after this point focused more intently on devising material for performance, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

In each workshop, an object, affiliated to and symbolic of the Marshes was introduced; primarily found objects, but also maps, images and audio recordings. I wanted to understand something more about how the presence of the object might facilitate participants' reminiscence of this local place. In particular, does the sensory encounter with the object, stretch participants' ears to non-verbal, less easily articulable embodied experiences? Whilst, in designing multimedia workshops that processed through various modes of image making - in materials, movement, word, I wanted to test out if and how participants could expand beyond the narrative of reminiscence and to generate memories and meanings in other expressive forms. Furthermore, if, as Tufnell and Crickmay claim, cycles of forming and reforming opens our awareness to the emergent, yet-to-be-formed within ourselves, then, might this processual generation help participants glean new understandings of their past life experiences? Finally, in creating through a *dialogue* between media and exploring meanings in *dialogue* with (a) companion(s), can workshops foster connections and points of comparison, which might change perceptions of participants' sense of place.

Nest: Mobilising Memory through the Object

As the older adults enter the room, a small bird's nest of interwoven twigs, grasses, moss and feathers lies upon a mirror, in the centre of the room. Its underside and the ceiling are reflected up. Sonorous birdsong fills the air, layered with the occasional rattle of a train, the whizz of bicycle wheels, an eavesdropped conversation passing by; as an audio compilation of field recordings I made in the Marshes at dusk, plays out. The installation aims to evoke the atmosphere of the Marshes within the workshop space, pulling in some of the sensuous elements of the environment. In each workshop, I introduce objects that have lured my attention whilst out walking, in this case, a nest, but in other instances, a bone, broken bicycle lock, lost wellington boot, a muddied dog's ball, to *enact* the Marshes in the room. The emphasis I place on enactment encompasses the enlivening of a sense of place, but also pertains to the bodily actions implicated by the found objects; dog walking, playing, cycling, bird watching. Furthermore, whilst the sensuous qualities of nest and birdsong aim to inspire recollections of embodied experience; it concomitantly, aspires to transition the room from everyday setting to imaginative space. Within my practice-based research, then, the object is available to both reminiscence and poetics, a stimulus for sharing personal experience and for generating creative responses; it engenders an entangled listening.

The nest had a presence. Theatrically through its aesthetic rendering, my deliberate choice to position it centrally, on a mirror and immersed in sound added to the nest's ability to shift expectations in the room from the expected to the unexpected. It pricked curiosity in the elders as they entered; not only summoning the Marshes but equally, in terms borrowed from artist Mark Storor, creating a "disruption" to the appearance of the workshop space (Ledgard 2008: 116). For the elders this may have been a subtle disruption, if compared to the tremulous vivacity inspired by the scaled-up nest I recreated in straw and feathers with the women and girls, who physically inhabited it: playing with the lightness of feathers, tracing their falling pathways in movement, nestling and startling.

Figure 8. Nest holding memory story. Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.
Image: Siobhan O'Neill

Figure 9. Movement with nest and feathers. Girls and Women's Workshop 2, 7th May. 2016.
Image: Siobhan O'Neill

In part, the efficacy of the nest lay in its status as *found* object from the site; it acted as a substitute for the thing itself. The nest stood in for the Marshes, for it was a part of it, and therefore, in The Mill's community room it stood slightly out of place. It was the transference of its presence, resonating from one context to another, which accented its *presence* now in the room. Although the nest affiliated with the Marshes, I was equally aware of how it hinted at a variety of meanings. So, my invitation in the object aimed to open to a breadth of responses, to give everyone an opportunity to reminisce, to speak and to listen, ensuring that "no participant is favoured by the content" (Mayo 2014: 50).

Where some participants were regular visitors to the Marshes, others were less familiar. Thus, for some participants the nest triggered recollected encounters with a literal nest; some in the Marshes - being lifted atop a mother's shoulders to spy a bird in a tree hole and discovering a fox den; others elsewhere - an accidental destruction while gardening, collecting and eating eggs as a child, observing signets hatch over a course of hospital visits. Whilst, other participants responded to the nest as a symbolic object, recalling memories aroused in connection to the common associations of home, comfort and shelter - building a family home, packing belongings into a trunk, nestling in a warm airing cupboard prior to the advent of central heating. Potentially, it was the displacement of the nest in the room, establishing a vibration between two places, which facilitate participants to move away from the specifics of the Marshes, and fill the space with other memories, meanings and places. Whilst, the presence afforded to the nest, enhanced by the sensorial encounter - in sound for the elders and haptic embodiment for the women and girls - helped to transition the object from the everyday to the symbolic. However, in order to understand more about how the sensorial perception and symbolic apprehension of the object, in the room, related to recalled past experience I want to turn to a deep listening to some of the memories, specifically from the older adults' group.

Sitting in a circle, the nest was passed slowly from person to person, each time it rested in a hand it mobilised a reminiscence storytelling. The group listened attentively. Our listening was intentioned, because, at the beginning of the activity, I had asked participants to pen three fragments, which distinctly resonated for them. To collect the singular moments of the plural narratives, which dropped with most vibrancy, like pebbles rippling a pool of water. I came to realise during the workshop process, the use of the term resonate was a particularity to my practice, intuitively employing it in my aim to open up our listening to stretch beyond articulable meaning. In my practice, I aimed to extend our listening beyond the narrative of reminiscence to animate imaginative, symbolic and embodied sensitivities, as concomitant ingredients of drama. However, the question remained as to what precisely participants were listening to in resonance.

> Gosh, it's so amazing holding a bird's nest. I've never seen one before, and it's so delicate, it's very fragile, but it's incredibly robust.[98]

Jo cradled the nest as she reflected on a lifetime of dwelling in temporary accommodation; "sent to boarding school at an early age ", she segued into her move to London. Here she "got evicted, how many times I don't know, squatted, just upheaval for years. And then eventually got housed and felt safe in a house";[99] finally, she settled in Walthamstow. The nest, then, vibrated symbolically in her narrative, reconfigured as home, it allied around the purpose as a shelter for eggs and young birds. Her recollection, however, initiated on a metaphor, in which the nest was transposed analogously by another object.

> So, my earliest recollection of a nest is a trunk, because I was sent to boarding school at an early age, six or seven. And so, all my possessions went in my trunk, and that went to school with me. And I opened it, took everything out, put it away. Then it was the end of term, put it all back in, fastened the trunk up, take it home, quick holiday. Get the trunk out, put it all back, go back to school. So that was my nest wasn't it, that was the only safe thing. It makes me sad

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98 Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.
99 Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.

even thinking of it. It's just like the only thing that was mine
that I could cart about me with all my things in it.[100]

Here, the one object, the trunk, intertwined with the other, the nest, around their shared affiliation with the feelings of security and familiarity, which simultaneously resonated with home. Her reflection on the nest, as a symbolic object, therefore, unfolded in personal meaning, for metaphor invites interpretation, rebounding in the space *between* the object and its associations.

For David, the nest similarly evoked an affiliation with home, triggering the memory of buying a ramshackle house in Walthamstow to move into in the early 1980s.

We came to Walthamstow to build a nest. To have a baby in, in a sense or to bring up a child in. We already had the child at that point, yeah. But the reason we came to Walthamstow in a way was to get away from Tottenham where there was a lot of crime and a lot of nasty stuff going on, you know a lot of drug use, and you name it. And it was good I think, Walthamstow was a much gentler kind of place with much less of that sort of activity going on.[101]

Here the nest resonated with his experience of family life, building a nest-home as a safe environment in which to raise his daughter. However, the reverberations with an environment do not stop here, for the correlative associations between nest and security are extended to encompass the neighbourhood. Entwined in his distinction between London boroughs, there is an understanding that Walthamstow was a suitable place to nestle in for its perceived qualities of safety and geniality.

In listening to the symbolic object, then, we start to discern some affective bonds with the locality. Both Jo and David have settled in the area, and through their inhabitation, the meaning of the place arises commingled with their sense of belonging. This perception was extended in the reflective discussion that followed, in which Jo recalled a historical

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[100] Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.
[101] David Gardiner: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.

manifestation of their shared sense of Walthamstow. She informed the group of the etymological origin of the Anglo-Saxon place name, Wilcumstowe, as "a place of welcome";[102] thus nostalgically cementing the community identity as harmonious and protective. Furthermore, returning to how David contrasted neighbouring boroughs, I was pricked by his depiction of one as congenial to family life in opposition to the other, which he characterised in relation to abhorrent behaviours. Might the symbolic qualities of the nest associated with its role as a safe and comfortable environment, also, extend to its form as a container, protecting eggs from a 'hostile' outside? In this connection, do the symbolic properties of the object, in this case, the marking of a circular boundary denoting an inside and an outside, predicate commonly espoused notions of community as local, insular and consensual?

The writings of anthropologist Tim Ingold provided me with a way of thinking about how the object operated within the workshop, in which participants attributed it with symbolic meaning. In *Materials Against Materiality* Chapter 2 of *Being Alive* (2011), Ingold argues the material properties of an object are largely absent from anthropological and archaeological investigation because the symbolic qualities of the object have taken precedence. At the beginning of the chapter he invites us to pick up a common stone, to wet it and observe as it dries. But more than this, he asks us to hold the stone, to feel it cold and damp, to knock it against another surface, to listen through our haptic and auditory senses to the variations between dry and wet stone.

Where scholars speak of the materiality of the object, Ingold calls us back from this abstract concept to the tangible and sensate, for he questions whether there is something beyond rock which is immaterial (2011: 23). As he writes:

> I can touch the rock... and gain a feel for what rock is like
> as a *material*. But I cannot touch the *materiality* of rock. The

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102 Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.

> surface of materiality, in short, is an illusion. We cannot touch it because it is not there. Like all other creatures, human beings do not exist on the 'other side' of materiality, but swim in an ocean of materials.
>
> (2011: 24)

Not only, then, does Ingold lure our attention to the stone as material but equally to our human bodies as flesh and blood, which come into corporeal contact with materials of other kinds, whether human or more-than-human (2011: 21). Furthermore, by engaging directly with materials, we open our awareness to movement, to the way materials circulate unfolding along trails of growth and development in relation to each other. For materials converge and transform; processual and relational they "mix with one another, solidify and dissolve in the formation of more or less enduring things" (2011: 16). It is to this generative movement that Ingold aligns the agency of the object; not betokened to human thought nor to some spirit that is additional to the material object, but to the aliveness of materials continuously on the move.

Following Ingold, then, I retune my ear to Jo and David's encounter with the nest. At first touch, Jo was 'struck' in amazement by her sensual perceptions of the nest. Listening through her hands to the sonority of the nest it acted upon her piquing an effect. In other words, it issued a call (Bennett 2010: 5). However, its agentic capacity did not resound here with symbolic connotations but with haptic sensations, which sounded in her voiced surprise at the coalescence of the "fragile" and the "robust". She listened to the materials of the nest, to the entwining of twigs, grasses, moss, feathers and down; tensile and delicate in the weave. Moreover, in its current situation, uninhabited and no longer tended, it hovered between coagulation and disintegration. There was a specificity to the haptic encounter with the nest that sparked Jo's recollection. And whilst she spoke in metaphor and symbolic association, to my hearing there were also echoes of making and unmaking of the nest in her embodied memory of packing and unpacking her trunk and, more distantly perhaps, in her own precarious resilience in seeking a home.

In like manner, David was quickened by his senate perceptions of the material nest, heeded through the teasing action of his fingers, to recall the derelict condition of the house he bought.

> And it was in terrible condition; it was as bad as this nest here, it was needing as much repair as that nest.[103]

An intertwined touching of nest and house, in hand and memory, resonated together in their shared condition of dilapidation. Moreover, the touch seemed to harken an affective trigger, and I heard David's reminiscence expand to the personal, shifting from the social context that instigated the house move, to the embodied and emotional implications of the family working together to restore the property.

> We built a two-storey extension onto it literally ourselves, and our daughter even operated the JCB digger for us. We hired this little digger. She was nine, and she was very good on this digger no problem driving the digger. So, she did the foundations, the trenches. And we helped her. And we did the brickwork. We did it all ourselves. So, we did an enormous amount of work.[104]

Where perception of the materiality of the nest may have focused attention upon its qualities, such as its purpose as a shelter, touching materials attended to the generative trails of movement and encounter. So, it was not as a symbol that David related to the nest, here, but to the activity of home building. It unfolded in the movement of digger and child and earth and the coming together of bricks and human labour into a wall. A constellation of objects now entered his reminiscence, and as materials are processual and relational, so these memory objects opened to reflect "the material, sensuous and relational dimensions" of everyday past life (Rasmussen 2012: 115). Thus, it is in relation to the operation of the digger that David's bond with his daughter emerged, expressed in terms of "trust" and "confidence". Furthermore, as the narrative rounded to its conclusion, we learnt David's daughter had "left the nest", she now resided with her

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[103] David Gardiner: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.
[104] David Gardiner: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.

husband in New Zealand and was "about to have a baby of her own".[105] This was a story, then, about his relationship with his daughter. In sum, attending to the object as both symbol and material, here, I suggest the symbolic nest opened up David's idea of home, whilst the haptic put him in touch with embodied and affective experiences of family life.

Influenced by my observation in the walking conversations of how the touch of paths in the past impacted on walkers' encounters with the Marshes in the here and now, I also aimed in my exploration of the object to understand something more about how things recalled in memory may touch the present. If the haptic encounter with the object in the room triggers recollections of touching past objects, then how might the memory of these past objects come, in the manner of a return, back into the room? For the objects, Jo and David recalled in their memories, the digger and the trunk, were not incidental but opened onto embodied, affective and relational experiences of the past.

To develop a deeper understanding of this relationship between object and memory, I turned to the concept of presence developed by philosopher of history, Eelco Runia. For Runia, the objects remembered by participants here, are not simply representations of past experience but emerge as resonant spaces, which puts them in touch with the past. In his article, *Presence* in the journal *History and Theory* (Feb 2006), Runia describes presence in the following way:

> 'Presence', in my view is 'being in touch' - either literally or figuratively - with people, things, events, and feelings that made you into the person you are. It is having a whisper of life breathed into what has become routine and clichéd - it is fully realising things instead of just taking them for granted.
>
> (2006a: 5)

Runia is interested in how the past and present intersect. He argues against the tendency to focus solely on the pursuance of meaning in historical

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[105] David Gardiner: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.

narrative and conversely recognises how the recollection of people, things, events and feelings can put us in *touch* with the past. His use of the word touch is apposite, for once more it evinces the encounter and the return of touching and being touched, as foundation to the communication of presence.

Runia's notion of presence bestows significance on the objects participants recall, for he perceives them as cavities through which they get in touch with their past experiences. As Runia asserts, material objects, in the case he cites photographs, train tickets, receipts, postcards, "function as fistulae or holes through which the past discharges into the present" (2006a: 16). If this is the case, then I propose it is the nest in the hand, or the trunk and digger imagined in memory, which opens a space for participants to be in touch with the worlds of their past. A touching that can be affective, relational and sensate because, as Tim Ingold suggests, in our daily inhabitations we encounter not things but affordances for bodily interaction (2011). Hence object, action and interaction entwine in memory. Therefore, unlike the symbolic connotations perceived by Jo and David, for many participants the nest triggered recollections of everyday corporeal activity - gardening, sleeping in a warm place, walking in the Marshes, sitting upon a parent's shoulders, raiding nests for eggs.

For Runia, such objects do not arise in recollections to aid the work of the narrative, for the way the unrepresented is present in the present is of equal significance as meaning (2006a: 1). As Runia explains further, in his later article of the same year, *Spots of Time* (2006):

> Instead of being contained in the meaningful content (the 'storiness') of stories, presence resides in what a story inadvertently has to be - in, that is, the things a story has to present in order to present a story.
>
> (2006b: 305)

Accordingly, it is as "stowaways" that the objects, actions, interactions Runia refers to occur in our stories, for they go unheeded in our daily lives (2006b: 316). They go unnoticed, however, not because they are hidden

from view, but because they coincide with our culture (2006b: 315). In other words, they are commonplace, existing within cultural practices such as walking, gardening or packing and unpacking clothes, which are inculcated by the social norms of time and place.

The notion of presence helps me to understand how participants can stretch their listening initiated by the object, beyond the narrative and towards the sensuous and embodied aspects of the past worlds evoked. A close attendance to Fitzroy's reminiscence of collecting eggs from birds' nests provides a useful example. As Fitzroy first made contact with the nest he uttered its name, then, waited a while, listening it seems for the memory surface.

> Nest... I suppose um some of the early memories around birds' nests in particular, and the marshes is um um I seem to remember scrumping and trying to find nests to collect err eggs. And I know it was difficult to climb trees um I could climb trees because in Jamaica the coconut trees are very very tall trees and we learned to climb them as children, so when I came here climbing trees was no difficulty. And in fact, I use to have to take off my shoes and socks and climb in bare feet because that was the best way to climb them. So, although I'm a bit ashamed of the memory of of accessing bird's nests to collect... It was like an innocent activity, but you didn't know at the time the impact of that activity.[106]

For Fitzroy touching the material nest did not prompt metaphoric meaning but cued a haptic and corporeal memory of climbing trees to collect eggs from the rousts. The narrative arose, especially at first, with some difficulty and was interspersed with hesitation. An explanation could be the challenge of telling a non-verbal memory, translating the unfolding sensate remembrance into words, but it might very well be the feelings of shame the memory aroused in him. If, as Runia purports, presence emerges in the objects, actions and interactions that typically go unheeded, it implies this encompasses occurrences, which are not easily articulable. Although the

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[106] Fitzroy Johnson: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.

nest triggered his memory and proved the purpose of the corporeal activity Fitzroy described, the trees equally seemed to radiate as presence in his reminiscence. It was a moment in his narrative that resonated for different members of the group, who scribed it on one of their three strips of paper.

Climbing trees with barefoot in Jamaica.

Learning to climb tall coconut trees. [107]

To my ear, as Fitzroy recalled taking off his shoes and socks to climb a tree in bare feet, he got in touch with the past. The object and the action connected in memory, for experienced in the past as affordance, the tree conflates with the haptic and embodied sensations of climbing. These, then, are the stowaways in Fitzroy's narrative, for tree-climbing, and, as we will hear, nest-raiding, were commonplace engagements. Following Runia's proposal that presence resides in common or implicit knowledge, Fitzroy's embodied way of knowing was developed through the encounter with the tree, but crucially, with the tall coconut trees of Jamaica. Moreover, as habitus, this embodied knowledge is adaptive and thus, subsequently transposed as the "best way" to scrump for eggs in the Marshes. In sum, the presence of the tree - nest opened a cavity through which Fitzroy touched the embodied experiences of climbing and scrumping. But, there was a mutual touching, here, for as Fitzroy touched the nest in the past, it touched him back as affect, calling forth feelings of guilt.

So, you know it sits uneasily with me but um I guess you...
and as well it represents an invasion of, um well an invasion
of a living thing's home and et cetera et cetera, so.[108]

Hence, as the remembered nest was pulled into the present, it reverberated with his present-day sensibilities, in which he now understood the implications of disturbing a nest to forage for eggs. As a result, memory

[107] Participants written responses to nest memory: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.
[108] Fitzroy Johnson: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.

nest and present nest vibrated discordantly, oscillating between past innocence and present remorse.

In Runia's fistula, I hear echoes of Jean Luc Nancy's notion of presence, not as a *position* of being-present but emerging into being in "the resonance of a return (renvoi)" (Nancy 2007: 12). However, Runia conceptualises this spacing and linking across in terms of metonymy, which he considers an expedient tool for getting to grips with the problem of continuity and discontinuity (2006a: 6). The *presence* of the past emerges in the present as an impulse to in some way "account for the fact that we are completely unchanged yet completely different from the person we used to be" (2006a: 6). In metonymy, Runia observes, the substitution of a word from one situation to another causes it to fractionally stand out, and therefore, the displaced word brings different contexts, spheres and places into connection as well as juxtaposition (2006a: 16). Asserting metonym is not an exclusively linguistic phenomenon, he similarly visualises the fistula of the object as a passageway through which *presence* rather than *meaning* is transferred from one context to the other. There is, therefore, an entwined understanding of how the displaced object in the workshop room transfers presence from the Marshes and presence from past worlds, which then oscillate together.

Following Runia, I discern it is the surprise of distance in proximity, the nest of the present made manifest by the touch of the hand and the memory nest recalled from a past world, standing together slightly out of place, which drew Fitzroy into reflection. Where, as Runia predicts the presence of the past in the present "can force us to rewrite our stories" (2006b: 314), so Fitzroy proposed an explanation for this dissonance framed in terms of cultural difference.

> And as well it's strange but in the West Indies birds were not treated the same way as birds are treated here. Birds are seen as a source of a meal. You know, and we'd either try

> and trap them in cages or or use a catapult to shoot them out the trees.[109]

The reverberations between past nest and present nest provoked Fitzroy to rethink his actions, in terms of cultural alterity, because one geographical place came into contact with another through his experience of migration. Thus, as he shared his interpretation, there was a concomitant sharing of cultural difference with the group, and I noted this resonated with other participants, who again chose to pen it as a moment that drew their attention.

> Attitude to wildlife different in the Caribbean - birds are food.
>
> In Jamaica collected eggs, birds are food there.
>
> Difference between one culture and another.[110]

In listening to Fitzroy's story, I attend to how it connects with contemporary anecdotes I have heard claiming that recent Eastern European migrants have similarly killed birds on the Marshes to eat. Is there, then, a potential to extend understanding amongst the group on the intersection between different cultural norms in a multi-ethnic metropolis? A possibility, yes, but I am also circumspect, for the distinction discharged to cultural divergence between Jamaica and England is not as concrete as we might suppose. Other walking narrators have disclosed to me comparable guilty tales of childhood nest raiding to sup on eggs, including avid birder John Sellar. In this case, the dissonance we hear in Fitzroy's story may equally chime as temporal change, as a once customary activity is foreclosed; both in relation to Fitzroy's altered practice in the Marshes and to a broader shift in social attitudes around the encounter between humans and the environment.

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[109] Fitzroy Johnson: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.
[110] Participants written responses to nest memory: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.

Just as there is an entwining of twigs and grass to make the nest, so there seems to be is an entanglement of stories and meanings around the invasion of the nest. This entanglement speaks to the epicentre of Runia's argument; presence enables us to rewrite the stories of the past in multiple ways, and it is this capacity he links to being.

> What really makes me me is not my story about myself, but the variety of ways in which my past can force me - and enable me - to rewrite my story about myself. This, I think, is also valid on the level of the nation. What makes a nation a nation is not its story about itself, but the variety of ways in which its past can force it - and enable it - to rewrite its story about itself.
>
> <div align="right">(2006b: 311)</div>

The significance he places on rewriting our stories, both individual and communal, relates to his critique of the role of narrative in the construction of identity, or more specifically, *the imagined community* as conceived by Benedict Anderson (1983). In the imagined community identity arises as a result of the stories the community entertains about itself; and whilst this narrativism may provide a sense of coherence to people's lives, it is troubled by its influence on the here and now, in which people tend to "live" the stories of the past they consider to be most valid (2006b: 310-11). This, then, underpins the turn to presence, not to the meaningful content of our stories but to that which is obliquely communicated; where standing slightly out of place, it can prompt an (other) rewriting.

In the light of this sense of a continuous rewriting and unfolding of stories, I want to offer a further imagined rewrite of Fitzroy's narrative here. For I wonder, if we retune to the presence of the tree, rather than the nest, an additional story might emerge in relation to his experience of cultural difference. So, listening to the embodied, I attend to the sense of assurance in his mode of climbing trees, as the corporeal technique learnt in Jamaica proved the "best way" to encounter trees in the Marshes. Here, the implicit knowledge accrued in his homeland was carried with him as he journeyed to England, it facilitated his encounter with the Marshes but remained under the radar in relation to his narrative of cultural difference. In this

embodiment, then, being-with the Marshes connects, rather than disconnects, being-with Jamaica.

In conclusion, introducing the object as a means to evoke the Marshes in the workshop space, put one place in touch with another, which accrued *presence* in the form of a disruption. For some participants, this relational space resonated with recalled Marshes encounters, but for others, it opened up in vibration with memories of other places and meanings that may affiliate with a symbolic understanding of the object. Moreover, a further understanding of how the object manifests presence operated *within* participants' reminiscence, as the object in memory opened a lacuna through which, the past touched the present. This process, I propose, was emphasised by the haptic encounter with the object in the hand. Whilst my decision to displace the nest, from marsh to room, advanced its capacity to accent the disruptions of separation in proximity, in memory.

Furthermore, because the *presence* of the object denotes rather than connotes, listening to the nest drew participants' attention towards past experiences, which were non-verbal or not easily expressed - the sensuous, embodied and relational aspects of everyday life. Thus, whereas the nest was apprehended by Fitzroy in terms of accessing eggs, or by Jo as a metaphor for home, it is in relation to the presence of tree and trunk that embodied encounters of climbing and packing arose. Hence, when I asked participants to listen for resonances, in the object and in the reminiscences of others, I was asking them to attune to presence, to stretch beyond meanings already configured in their minds. Moreover, in the manner of a return, the presence of the object vibrated with affect and opened the space for rethinking or rewriting personal and communal stories of the past. Hence, it is through the process of recounting and reflecting upon past embodied, sensate experiences, encounters afforded in relation to the surrounding environment, that more abstract notions of place, community belonging and migration started to unfold. In sum, the importance of working with objects lies not just in their symbolic or cognitive

associations but also their presence - both touched tangibly in the here and now, and touched in the past. This enabled the participants to move away from making sense in narrative, or in other words, to retell the stories they may have told before, and to open up the possibility of different ways of knowing - the haptic, sensuous and embodied.

As Jo recounted the last leg of her itinerant life journey, travelling down the Lea Bridge Road out of neighbouring Hackney, she recalled crossing the Marshes with a sudden sense of alterity; "It was like going to a foreign country".[111] Most redolent is her sensuous apprehension of openness, "you could see so much more sky in Walthamstow than the rest of London".[112] As Jo's reminiscence settled, the group penned the moments of her narrative. Synthesising image and the process of remembrance itself, Fitzroy encapsulated Jo's narrative in this metaphoric reflection;

Memories of sky available in Walthamstow.[113]

While listening, another reverberation of the nest took form on the edges of the activity, as David absentmindedly interwove small strips of paper, inscribed with inscriptions of his own remembrance earlier told, into a basket-like nest. Being-in-common, people are always sharing with others in various ways, and so, the inadvertent action that occurred on the periphery of the workshop activity was where a new connection emerged. Hence, the responses David gleaned from the group were folded into an assemblage, a material conveyor of the conversation; encompassing not only the articulations shared between group members but also a conversation between the mediums of word and paper. It is to this 'conversation between media', then, that I now turn.

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[111] Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.
[112] Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.
[113] Participant written responses to nest memory: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.
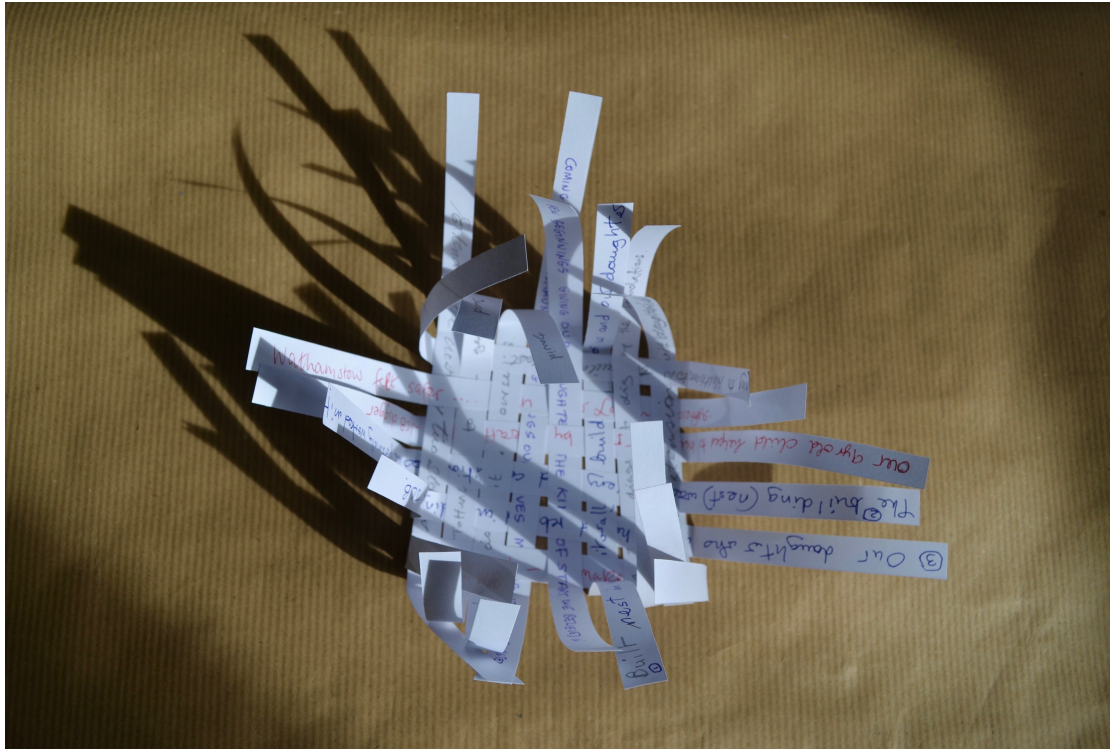
Figure 10. Nest text collage created by David. Older Adults' Workshop 2. March 2016.
Image: Siobhan O'Neill

Listening to Memory in Conversation with Materials

In this section, I turn my attention to an investigation of the interplay between different modes of creative listening. I will specifically focus on a processual making and remaking with materials, movement, writing and reminiscence storytelling. Building on the creative approach proposed by Miranda Tufnell and Chris Crickmay of making through a 'conversation between media' (2004), I was interested in exploring how the encounter between participants' recollections and different generative modes might influence the arousal of their memory stories. I questioned how this creative interaction might firstly, effect what is recalled and secondly, mould their understanding of past experiences. In this practice-based research I aimed to explore ways to move beyond the *storiness* of reminiscence; to attend to how working in various media might not only serve to interpret what is already articulable but to lend an ear to otherwise unspoken experiences

of the past. Arousing, perhaps, memories of the sensuous, embodied and affective aspects of their encounters with past worlds. Furthermore, I questioned whether an iterative generation of memories in different artistic medium might afford new ways of thinking about or rewriting participants lived experience, founded in the relation between reminiscence and form?

The practice of making through a 'conversation between media' was employed as a research method in workshops with all three groups. However, the trails through various artistic means of making shifted from workshop to workshop and group to group. As previously observed in my description of the nest workshop, where the elders passed a real nest around to hold and reminisce, the women and girls moved within a larger nest, playing with the lightness of feathers, and actions of nestling, startling and flying, prior to telling memory stories. Where participants in both groups penned three resonant lines for each tale, the girls and women collaged their words into papier-mâché nests, because I incorporated David's nest making into this subsequent workshop. In this way, I designed sessions in *conversation* with other workshops and groups, each one responding to the other. There were, however, certain leanings towards different artistic processes and mediums. Thus, the Lammas Secondary School pupils, who participated in the project as part of an after-school spoken word poetry club, were predominantly engaged with the poetic form. Moreover, the women, girls and young people all moved more physically in comparison to the elders. Accordingly, in order to discuss my use of different modes of creative listening in this practice-based research, I will focus my analysis, here, on three workshops, one with each group. All shared a common exploration with the medium of mud, thus facilitating a comparative view but also the workshops proved pivotal in developing a connected, and yet disconnected understanding of the Marshes, which went on to be developed in the project.

Using earth as a found *object* did not initially occur to me, possibly because it is a material widely encountered in the Marshes, rather than an object I could pick up and carry away in my pocket. Instead, it was

listening to a memory recounted by Jenika, in the young people's group, which lured my ear back to the ground that I had trodden. In her recollection, she found a shiny two-pound coin stuck in the mud, "but I couldn't pick it up because I didn't know what was in the mud". I heard her falter at the thought of what might be mixed in with the earth; then, she added a detail "I didn't have any wipes"[114], accenting her feeling of distaste. I was pricked by her action of not touching; her anxiety in encountering the unknown and fear of getting dirty subsumed her desire of what she considered a good sum of money. Her anecdote prompted me to recall the strong presence of the mud in the Marshes; the various textures it assumes, malleable, dried rigid or sloppy, the smell of detritus after rain, the way it can be deceptive to the eye. It was in the form of a response, then, that I designed the mud based workshops. Although I often deployed found objects as stimuli, choices were frequently predicated upon heard details in participants' memories; we returned to them as the basis for new explorations.

I introduced the mud in a bowl, where it was contained, for I was already aware of the challenge touching mud may have presented for some people. At first, the mud was dry, and as participants dipped in their fingers, sifting and crumbling the sterilised topsoil, it summoned tactile sensations - "cool", "fine and lumpy". But later, I added water, creating a sodden texture closer to that encountered in the Marshes. In its new textural state the mud elicited descriptions of "dirt", "messy" and "powerful", whilst the touch changed from combing to squeezing. Now the mud could be formed and reformed; compressed into balls that dissipated through the gaps in fingers or piled up into mounds that are pulverised by a clenched fist. In this instance, then, both symbolic object and artistic medium merged in mud, no longer touching a pre-formed object, hands moved through and transformed the material.

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[114] Jenika Meade: Young People's Workshop 2, 3rd Mar. 2016.

Figure 11. Touching mud. Young People's Workshop 6. Apr. 2016. 2nd Jun. 2016.
Image: Siobhan O'Neill

The aim was to touch, look, smell, listen and respond to the earth, but I noticed how in listening participants moved quickly into drawing out associations and memories. A common association with gardening stirred across all the groups, but there was diversity in their experiences too. Jo in the elders' group recalled being forced to garden at school. Two of the mothers spoke of cultivating allotments when their children were younger, but in both cases, these were given up for lack of time, when the children reached school age. Now the memories are too distant for the girls to recall, so the women told them as a story; Helen revealed how Lauren loved to squish the mud through her toes, earning herself the nicknamed, "mudlark". Moreover, in Lammas School, Hamza remembered the planting of the roses, vegetables and lemon trees in his garden back in Lahore, and

Skimante talked of the path leading to her grandmother's vegetable patch in Lithuania. But, there were other associations too, crumbling dry mud was reminiscent of baking, whilst wet it became Christmas cake. For Jo, echoing the inference made by Jenika, the mud manifested as faeces, which as a child she remembered smearing on herself to the reproach of her parents.

Returning to Ingold, who draws our attention to the way materials unfold along trails - flowing, mixing and mutating, I note how the mingling of mud with water transformed the sensuous encounter (2011: 30). This in itself might be considered a shift in medium, for it offers a different mode of haptic listening, which in turn, extends to new resonances with the participants' remembered pasts. The touch of mud no longer simply triggered recollection or association, but rather, in the interplay between hand and material, mud manifestations and memory narratives emerged in relation.

A useful example is presented in Jan's reflection on her experience in the women and girl's session. She talked of how touching and seeing the mud brought up general or composite memories of her playing as a young child with her three older brothers. But, it was in the feeling of the wet mud drying on her hands, combined with the way the bits of detritus stuck to her skin, in this changing sensation, a specific memory arose. She recalled the wintery day when her brothers beguiled her into stripping down to pants and vest, and covered her head to toe in mud and sticks, as a recreation of a bush. As she commented; before the recollections were "just mud and playing with my brothers" but then "I remembered that feeling", of the drying mud on her skin, and this led to "an actual memory".[115] In this case, it was not touching the materiality of mud, in which a memory was cued in the imagination founded upon an immaterial association. But rather, a haptic sensing of material change from wet to dry, where the sensate feeling arose simultaneously with the *presence* of the similar embodied sensation in the past, which opened her awareness to the memory. In other words, it is the corporeal action and the sensate feeling aroused in the

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[115] Janet Rowles: Girls and Women's Workshop 3, May 2016. 14th May 2016.

workshop, which opens to an embodied, non-verbal memory. If I extend this understanding of how past and present touch unfolds in motion, corporeal and material, then, I can attune to the way Lammas pupil Hamza, connected the drawing of the loam together with his fingers with the texture of "badly mashed up rice"[116] in his mouth. Or for Fabio, the action of rolling the damp soil into a ball emerged with a recollection of school "bullies" pelting him with mud balls on the Marshes[117].

This knowing through movement, however, is not limited to corporeal interaction with a singular medium, but also through the journeying from one mode of making to the other. As Tufnell and Crickmay distinguish:

> We have found that shifting between different modes and media in this way stimulates the imagination and gives rise to imagery that could not as easily be found within a single art form. As we continue to explore from different points of view and to different forms of expression, a world of images and meanings begins to open up for us.
>
> (2004: ix-x)

Influenced by the emphasis Tuffnell and Crickmay place on creating in different media as a way to access different points of view, I devised the workshop practice as an unfolding succession of generation and regeneration, in which reminiscence became a mode of making. In the girls and women's group, for example, participants transitioned from the initial mud touching and reminiscence to amalgamating earth and found materials into visual images. These bore a representational tone - a sad bush girl, an allotment garden - but, as the group shifted from image to movement, corporally exploring a large mound of mud opened into the improvisation of play. As the girls poured on buckets of water, the pile spread into a viscous slop, and the encounter became visceral; splatting, stamping, sloshing, mud slipped through fingers and sprayed through the air. Perhaps, some associations with previous *images* could be surmised - Lauren became a mudlark once more, as mud seeped up her trousers.

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[116] Hamza: Young People's Workshop 6, 2nd Jun. 2016.
[117] Fabio Oliveira, Young People's Workshop 6, 2nd Jun. 2016.

However, the sense of response in this conversation between artistic media is not predicated upon the forming of an image in the mind to be realised in mud or movement. As Tuffnel and Crickmay emphasise, "(c)creating, in whatever way is available" aims to move us away from "the abstractions and generalisations of our everyday seeing and language" and towards "the particular qualities and feel of the world around us" (2004: 41). I did, however, attune to an immediate sensate response, in the shift from material to memory, as the women left the children to their messy gambol, and wrote. Now, more immersive, haptic encounters with earth unfurled in greater sensuous detail. Helen, for instance, recalled, crawling under a net on a sodden assault course; "I had to swim through the mud. I closed my eyes & started to swim. The mud went everywhere - in my ears, up my nostrils, yuck".[118]

Figure 12. Mud exploration and play. Girls and Women's Workshop 3. 14th Apr. 2016.
Image: Siobhan O'Neill

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[118] Helen Cooper: Girls and Women's Workshop 3, 14th Jun. 2016.

In Helen's description of her encounter with mud, I am reminded of Tim Ingold's notion that as humans we swim in an ocean of materials, and as we do so, we participate in the transformation of materials. In the 'conversation between media', participants similarly engaged in a continual transformation of materials, whether the sculpting of mud, the gathering of found objects into images or the ink of a pen writing on paper; and in parallel they recalled interactions with materials in past worlds.

I return to Ingold again, therefore, in order to understand something more of this relationship between the body and material in movement. In *Rethinking the Animate, Reanimating Thought* Chapter 5 of *Being Alive*, Ingold asserts the primacy of movement and the relational constitution of being. Drawing a circle to represent an organism, he notes how in this depiction the organism is folded in upon itself, delineated within a boundary which sets it off against the surrounding environment (2011:69). But, fundamental to Ingold's argument is the idea of the environment, perceived not as a physical world that exists in itself, but as a world of materials that continually *unfolds* in relation to the beings that inhabit it (2011:30). So, alternately, he inscribes a line, and in this rendering, the organism comes into being as a trail of growth and improvised movement (2011:69). Following lines of becoming, there is no separation of organism and environment, neither inside and outside nor in a beginning here and an ending there; instead there is "a trail *along* which life is lived" (2011:69). Hence, as trails wind *through* the world, so movement becomes the "fundamental mode by which living beings inhabit the earth" (2011:12). Moreover, whereas trails of inhabitation may easily infer the journeying of the foot along paths, Ingold's summons to wayfaring encompasses all movement, and thus he discusses examples from building a house to the trails of the hand left in the written word or the drawn image.

In my practice-based research, journeying through artistic mediums encouraged a knowing forged in movement. There was a resonant sensing in the generation and regeneration of materials, in each singular form and through the passage from one image to the other. Moreover, memories

were also laid down in trails of movement, in which "action and perceptions are intimately coupled" (Ingold 2011: 152), so they now arose simultaneously as embodied senses were pricked in the movement of the workshop. For, just as Ingold suggests, surfaces of varying degrees of porosity separate one material from another (2011: 22), so I propose, the *presence* of sensate, embodied past action leaked into the present through the generative touch. It was in relation to the various flows of creating that memories came into being. Hence, in similar vein to the women, when the young people returned to work with the soil, from having penned short poetic phrases in response to their first mud touching, further sensate details emerged - the scree slipping down the mountain by the Lithuanian path or the mashed-up rice, already mentioned, for example.

This sense of memories occurring in relation to the unfolding sensate experience was deftly articulated by Jan, as she discussed her recollection of camping with the scouts. It was not only her own haptic encounter with the viscous mud but also the social interaction of the workshop group, which quickened the memory of rolling over "the squidgy mud" in her sleeping bag through the night. For Jan, the girls playing in the mud, the enjoyment and the protestations as they became increasingly messy was equally significant. The "young voices, children's voices and the mud prompted a new memory".[119] It was her sonic perception of the children, combined with her own haptic touch, which stirred the childhood recollection of being with another group of girls and their shared mud encounter. Moreover, she added, the transition to working outside was influential, she was certain the memory of camping would not have arisen "if it had been inside".[120] It was, then, a constellation of interrelating processual activity, which put her in touch with an embodied and social memory from her past. Rather, than the singular touch of an object, which evokes the *presence* of the past, my practice-based research suggests, the generative unfolding of artistic medium within the social encounter of the workshop, helped put participants in touch with the material, corporeal

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[119] Janet Rowles: Girls and Women's Workshop 3, 14th May 2016.
[120] Janet Rowles: Girls and Women's Workshop 3, 14th May 2016.

and social trails in their past worlds. Non-verbal and sensate memories, which may not have been expressed if it were not for the temporary grouping of these particular elements.

In the 'conversation between media', however, we were not only listening for new memories, which may otherwise be difficult to articulate. We were also stretching towards new meaning; because the generation and regeneration of what Tuffnell and Crickmay perceive as images can equally be considered in terms of Runia's rewriting our stories. Hence, as Jan continued to consider the connection between the girls' engagement in messy play and her own memory, she began to rewrite the relationship. Her attention tuned to a sense of freedom, manifest in her past experience of camping and simultaneously entwined with her observation of the girls' unsupervised play. In the space between them, she reflected; "kids don't get the freedom we had".[121] No longer in the realm of unpicking the pricking of memory by mud exploration, she started to open to a broader social understanding of meaning between past and present.

When questioned as to why she thought this might be the case, similarly to Fitzroy, she spoke of cultural rather than temporal difference; specifically, the disconnection she perceived between city inhabitation and her childhood in rural Hampshire. For Jan, children are under threat in the city from "predators of a different nature".[122] Although she was warned as a child to be wary of strangers, she believed that the size of the city amplified the threat, whilst the more transient population meant people are less well known. In particular, it was this sense of knowing that emerged as the way she contextualised her change in attitude.

> This is not my natural habitat being in a city... as a child I
> knew how to survive in the country.[123]

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[121] Janet Rowles: Girls and Women's Workshop 3, 14th May 2016.
[122] Janet Rowles: Girls and Women's Workshop 3, 14th May 2016.
[123] Janet Rowles: Girls and Women's Workshop 3, 14th May 2016.

There was a way of knowing, which she developed in relation to the environment she grew up in, but as it travelled with her to the city, it felt somehow different. She felt it did not quite fit in with this new environment, although she had lived in London for over twenty years. On the other hand, she conceded, as her daughter only knows the city, she might well have developed a similar way of knowing Walthamstow. However, what is significant for my thesis, is the way Jan's rewriting of her story unfolded in relation to one material and mode of making, mud improvisation, encountering another, memory writing. Whilst all forms of making manifested *presence*, her writing in *response* to the mud play placed the associations, memories and sensate perceptions of both in relation. It opened a vibrational space of connections and disconnections, which prompted a reflective rewriting in which new meaning around her own and wider social attitudes to childhood freedom were formed.

In this instance, the rewriting as response emerged in written form, and for many, the word is easier to *read*. But rewriting takes many forms in the 'conversation between media', and so there were times when we needed to share and reflect with our 'companions' upon the images we had generated. Sharing with a partner is a crucial element of this creative approach for Tufnell and Crickmay:

> The presence of a partner who goes with us in our journeys
> of imagination, making alongside of us, watching, looking
> at and sharing in what we create, enables us to get to
> know the life and significance of our images more deeply.
> (2004: 42)

Although I did not stick rigidly to the partnering model proposed here, the notion of sharing personal experiences and conjointly teasing out meaning was critical to the community-building within my practice. In this respect, sharing images and unravelling the entanglement of meanings within them, took place in both pairs and groups. But in order to discuss further, the way in which meaning arose in dialogue, through sharing images and getting to know them together, I want to turn my attention to a close reading of the dialogue between two older adults, Jo and Fitzroy. In their discussion of the

regeneration of their mud memories into found object installations, sense-making notably occurred in their reflections on the congregation of materials and their choices made during the creative process.

With the older adults, touching mud moved into memory visualisation and on to creative writing. I guided the visualisation, prompting them initially to recall a memory fragment buried in the mud, then, to sink into the sensory details and textures, allowing the memory to expand and loosen, filling it out in their imaginations. Once, the sensate visualisation had emerged, Fitzroy and Jo crafted their stories on paper, shifting mode from memory image to written image. I prompted them to inhabit the recollection as they scribed, writing in the present tense; aiming to foster a sense that the memory touched the present in its writing. Next, holding onto the resonance of their story, the feeling it evoked rather than the events, they gathered together material objects, which resonated with this affective sense. Harkening to what lured their attention, they collected together objects and materials, which belonged to the world of their memory and found a place in the room to inhabit. I encouraged them to be playful, to arrange and rearrange, construct and dismantle, allowing the worlds to develop and respond to new associations.

As the memory worlds took form, Jo and Fitzroy considered how to tell their stories in relation to these material manifestations, where and how to place themselves as they finally shared their memory stories with each other. Fitzroy, half squatting, unfurled a recollection of the dried, cracked earth in Jamaica and his grandfather teaching him how to smell the mud to know when the rain was coming. Writing in the present particularly enlivened his narrative; by rendering the conversation between his childhood self and his grandfather in dialogue, it communicated an affective sense of their relationship. Furthermore, his Jamaican accent thickened, to varying degrees for each of them. Whereas, Jo recalled the pleasure of playing with sticky mud in the backyard, when suddenly her mother appeared to scold - "I have mud on my face, I have ruined a dress

and I am called a tomboy".[124] She was sent to bed in the dark in the middle of the day to "wait till your father gets home".[125] Finally, as companions, they reflected together on the work, exchanging the different choices made in the movement from one mode of creating to another, whilst mutually getting to *know* the images.

To my ear, there was much of the sensuous and the embodied in their written responses to the memory. Fitzroy's narrative emanated from the smell of the earth; he attended to the warmth of the sun-dried washing and the timpani of the rain on the tin roof. Whilst, Jo saw the yellow of the laburnum flowers falling against a blue sky. Sensate recollections that may well have been quickened by the sensory focus of the visualisation. However, the conversation centred on the memory world installations they had created; possibly due to their material presence or maybe from an unspoken assumption that the visual, rather than the narrative, needs unpicking. The discussion was significant. Through their reflections, Fitzroy and Jo added further details to their memories, questions were raised, and explanations were posed between 'companion' and 'maker'. But more specifically, it was in attending to the dialogue between the material objects in the memory worlds, the impulses behind choices and the fresh connections they fostered in this present constellation, which opened up to new understanding. As Tufnell and Crickmay suggest, when creating a landscape of material objects;

> As in a conversation, when things meet they are changed
>   they come to life... are diminished... become
> overwhelmed... change size... brighten.
>   (2004: 77)

Potentially, the understanding generated in the movement of materials in relation was amplified in the collaging of objects, and so relationships resonated more clearly.

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[124] Jo Robinson Memory Text: Older Adults' Workshops 4, 12th Apr. 2016.
[125] Jo Robinson Memory Text: Older Adults' Workshops 4, 12th Apr. 2016.

Figure 13. Jo's memory world installation in response to mud. Older Adults' Workshop 4, 12th Apr. 2016.
Image: Siobhan O'Neill

In contrast to Fitzroy's more representational approach, Jo gathered materials intuitively, for she did not realise what she was making when she commenced. Assembling was triggered by a sensory impulse, in response to "something that smelled very nice... a catkin".[126] As "creating is a way of listening", so Jo followed the materials, gathering according to what the 'thing' needed in order to take form. Thus, she started to generate in response to a sensate memory, before it was cognitively perceived. But as the trail of making unfolded, she realised these were nest materials, and

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[126] Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Workshop 4, 12th Apr. 2016.

now she recognised the smell reminded her of the laburnum tree in her backyard. Jo formed the nest first, then, relocated it outside in the earth of the garden; as we attended to it, I commented on how it appeared to be growing amongst the plants. But on reflection, Jo now pondered whether the concrete would have been more fitting, as it bore a closer affiliation to the remembered yard. She discounted the concrete location for she believed it was a walkway; her observation was a reminder to be alert to what we might *read* into the forms. All the same, we were not searching for hidden, unconscious meanings, here, but rather understanding arose through a collective encounter with the created images.

As Jo articulated her understanding of the nest-like structure, it emerged as an affective response to the remembered curtailment and punishment of playful pleasure. "It's me emerging from this nest, growing up from the mess that it felt like I was in".[127] She drew parallels between the qualities of strength and growth she perceived in the structure and those required of her remembered self. "I'm going to grow out of all of this, and escape and get to freedom".[128] The growing out of the nest piece seemed to respond not only to the specific remembered event but also to a more profound feeling of confinement. It did not divulge any more details, as in the case of Fitzroy's memory, but revealed how Jo felt, both, to the specific incident and to her family home life more generally. Yet again, it was the less easily articulable elements of the past, here on-going and ingrained emotional sentiments, which manifested their presence in the making process. Furthermore, once materially *rewritten* these aspects entered the discursive field. And as they sounded, so they resounded, as separations and connections to the experiences of Fitzroy, the companion who also listened. Hence, the conversation expanded to consider 'flying the nest' in more broader terms; where Jo talked of strength and freedom, Fitzroy spoke of confidence and a sense of reaching for something else. There was a coming together over the necessity of leaving home, and a splitting apart over their divergent affective experiences of this displacement.

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[127] Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Workshop 4, 12th Apr. 2016.
[128] Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Workshop 4, 12th Apr. 2016.

Experiences distinctively attuned to the social relationships encompassed in their memories.

Figure 14. Fitzroy's memory world installation in response to mud.
Older Adults' Workshop 4, 12th Apr. 2016.
Image: Siobhan O'Neill

As Fitzroy explored his process of gathering materials to create the world of his memory, there was a representational tone to his selection. He informed Jo that the card box with an image of a printed landscape evoked his rural residence, whilst the nettles equated to an agricultural existence. We learnt that his grandfather was a farmer who grew coffee beans, for the concrete site where Fitzroy located his installation was connected to the hard floor on which he trampled the coffee beans to

pulp. Not an element of his initial memory story, it appeared as though the concrete of the memory and the concrete of the installation came into being together. At first, he chose toilet rolls to stand in for the pans they used to collect water in, but as Fitzroy took his materials out into the garden he found some water bottles, so these became integrated into his memory world. He was drawn out of the workshop room and into the garden by the sunshine; it echoed the cloudless day remembered. Jo enquired whether he would have used similar plastic bottles, which cued Fitzroy to clarify the pans were made of zinc. He talked of the importance of collecting rainwater in Jamaica, and so expanded further this emergent sharing of cultural difference. Chalks were added to represent the school. Again, he teased out their association through another recollection; they did not have "nice books" to write on at his school but used slate and chalk.

In talking about the making process, then, a broader level of detail around Fitzroy's life in Jamaica was remembered and consequently shared. As Fitzroy commented, in relation to this school memory, "so that's another memory that's accessed through that";[129] it is clear this recollection was additional to the initial memory, one that had emerged *in relation* to a mutual coming to know the work. I note how the material objects, mainly, unfolded in non-verbal memories, touching on objects and embodied actions in his past - the floor surface and treading beans, writing with chalks and slate, putting out pans to collect the rain. Everyday objects and embodied experiences, which may easily have been overlooked. In writing the memory, only the pans appeared, whereas, in the process of making with materials, other past objects and actions arose to touch the present. It was through forming and reforming his memory in different artistic forms, shifting from story to haptic presence, we came into contact with a broader sense of the embodied world of his past.

As Fitzroy reflected upon his installation in-situ, another thought occurred to him, and this added a new layer of meaning, which stretched beyond this enhanced sharing of embodied experience.

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[129] Fitzroy Johnson: Older Adults' Workshop 4, 12th Apr. 2016.

> (I)n setting it on the concrete was the… the contrast between, as I've said before, between having all that soil in Jamaica and then having all the concrete in England. Yeah, there's that separation. I'll tell you I really felt close to the soil in Jamaica. And over here it's like it wasn't important, it's not there, because I couldn't see it, it's not a visible part of my life. I missed it, and for a long time I couldn't even do any gardening, I refused to do gardening because it's not the same soil.[130]

The emplacement of the memory world in relation to the concrete opened up a deeper affective understanding of his childhood encounter with Jamaican soil. There was a sense of personal realisation for Fitzroy, here, the reason why concrete manifested his disorientation in London and the agency of Jamaican soil to inhibit his ability to garden here. The soil in the past exerted a presence, not only in this moment of the workshop but more profoundly, as an unspoken presence, which had influenced his ability to literally touch the mud in Walthamstow. This was not some generalised notion of identity belonging founded upon the stories we tell but rather the embodied knowledge of inhabitation in one place travelling with him in the encounter with another place.

In sum, journeying through various artistic mediums fostered a way of knowing forged in movement, which enabled participants to get in touch with memories beyond the stories they usually told. In the workshops, I came to see it was in the space where one medium met another that less articulable memories and perceptions of past experiences emerged. Furthermore, the practice points to the significance of the reflective dialogue with one or more companions, the mutual getting to know the generative images as a way of coming to apprehend new meanings, which unfolded in the rewriting of personal stories. But moreover, through my practice-based research, in the sharing of the embodied memories and perceptions, I came to realise how the knowledge of places participants have been before comes with them to influence their encounters with the Marshes. If Fitzroy's sensate and embodied memory of the mud in Jamaica

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[130] Fitzroy Johnson: Older Adults' Workshop 4, 12th Apr. 2016.

prevailed unwittingly upon his relationship with the soil in his garden, then, so too it shapes his trail through the Marshes. Whereas I brought in the soil in relation to the Marshes, I was surprised by the number of participants for whom the *disturbance* of mud unfurled in memories of habitation elsewhere. Thus, for Fitzroy mud returned him to his grandparent's Jamaican farm, Hamza touched his garden in Lahore, Skimante walked the Lithuania path to her grandmother's vegetable plot, and Jan recalled the "known" environment of the country in Hampshire.

Again, Tim Ingold's writing offers a way of thinking about the way places from the past accrued *presence* in workshops that attended to the Marshes. Just as Ingold perceives the organism as the unfolding of a line rather than the containment of a circle, so he conceives place. He asserts places do not exist as a nested series, like a set of Russian dolls, in which one place contains a number of smaller ones and is itself bound within larger ones. Place is not configured in the manner of a house, he contends, in which the house encompasses various different rooms and is itself a part of a neighbourhood, within a city, and so forth. Instead, since "habitation is lineal", lived along lines of growth, place is perceived in the wandering from one room or place to another, occurring as a temporal procession of sensate perceptions.

Moreover, following lines of becoming lays trails, which extend beyond boundaries instead of enclosing spaces within them; trails that stretch out along a multiplicity of pathways as inhabitants come and go (2011: 146). As he suggests:

> Places, in short, are delineated by movement, not by the outer limits to movement. Indeed, it is for just this reason that I have chosen to refer to people who frequent places as 'inhabitants' rather than 'locals'. For it would be quite wrong to suppose that such people are confined within a particular place, or that their experience is circumscribed by the restricted horizons of a life lived only there (Ingold 2007a: 100-101.
>
> (2011: 149)

Attuning to Ingold's idea of place formed through the movement of inhabitants opens to an understanding of how participants were connected to the places they had inhabited in the past. For the trails, life is lived along do not end when a person leaves one place but continues with them on to the next. Moreover, as movement is knowing, so, on arrival at a place some memory of this wayfaring knowledge remains, and in turn conditions the knowledge of the new place (2011: 152).

It is in this way that the best way to climb trees in the Marshes was traced back by Fitzroy to his knowledge of the tall coconut trees in Jamaica. But equally the integration of previous knowledge was heard in dissociation, in the way the intimate knowing of mud learnt from his grandfather prevented Fitzroy from connecting with the soil of London. Or the way Jan knew how to keep herself safe in the countryside, but was unable to *feel* this security for her daughter in the city, even though she surmised her daughter might well *know* the neighbourhood just as she did her childhood home. Interestingly, it is in connection to the telling of our stories that Ingold attunes more precisely to this relationship between past and present. In the next chapter, *Stories Against Classification*, he proposes as a story *relates* the occurrences of the past, so they are brought to life in the present, but goes on to clarify:

> (T)he meaning of the 'relation' has to be understood quite literally, not as a connection between predetermined entities, but as the retracing of a path through the terrain of lived experience.
>
> (2011: 161)

Whereas in narrative storytelling we may consciously retrace the path, perceiving stories as the relating of occurrences, I suggest, opens to the possibility of retracing action and perception through an encounter with different modes of making. And this, in turn, brings the embodied, sensate experiences of places from the past into the present of the workshop space. It is, I propose, in the getting to know these generative forms, that non-verbal knowledge may rewrite our stories; knowledge that

journeys with us but may go unheard as it integrates with the everyday, the ingrained or the embodied. Hence, in rewriting his story of mud Fitzroy personally came to understand its influence upon the everyday experience of gardening and the complex experience of migration. Moreover, in the congregation of the group, we can perceive something more about how the sense of place in the Marshes, is "a sense of knowing 'along'" (2011: 154); because the trails participants walk are connected to the places they have been before. Thus, Skimante ambled the Marshes regularly with her father for it recalled the open space of Lithuania; Jan and Helen recreated their childhood rural experiences of muddy gambols and foraging for blackberries with their children; Jo was lured by the open skyline for it echoed the vast skies of her home in Blackpool.

CHAPTER 5: Interpretation, Metaphor and Authorship

Theatre scholar and practitioner, Alison Jeffers proposes that participation alone does not assure the necessary redistribution of authority that may advance positive social change. Drawing upon the writings of Claire Blencowe, which I discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, she encourages community theatre practitioners to question the links between authority and authorship. It is critical, Jeffers suggests, if there is to be any possibility for "changing perceptions about what is important – what makes things happen – and thus changing ideas about who has participated in such happening" (Blencowe 2013: 44). Whereas authoring can aptly be applied to the writing of a play, authorship, Jeffers contends, is a far more resonant term, which stretches towards:

> (T)he 'naming, describing and affecting the world around
> us' and claiming 'the right to participate meaningfully in
> the making and defining of culture' (Morgan 1995: 26).
> (2017: 217)

Authorship, then, can involve community participants in processes of sense-making, as they generate and project out their community narratives. A sense-making, moreover, that may potentially challenge received narratives and involve participants in negotiating the limits of those challenges (2017: 227). Following her call, this chapter explores the relationship between authority and authorship in my practice-based research. In the previous chapter, I discussed the way participants came to know their memory stories through a generative creative making and paired reflection on their images. Here, I will extend this attention to the collectivity of the group, and investigate ways participants co-operatively interpreted individual and community histories through the performance-

making process.

In her book chapter, 'Authority, Authorisation and Authorship: Participation in Community Plays in Belfast' (2017), Jeffers examines the development of the community play *Crimea Square,* performed in Belfast in 2013. By pointing out that authority is not innate but is instead generated through relationship, Jeffers draws attention to the mutuality between writer and director Jo Egan and the four community writers, who collaboratively authored the play. She acknowledges an "informal barter" of different regimes of knowledge. Whereas, Egan could not work without the lived experience authority of the community writers, "bringing characters and ideas based on the shape of their lives and histories on which the play was based" (2017: 202). The community writers made recourse to her professional expertise to craft their stories, "offering insights into theatrical form and technique as well as possible challenges to the community's narratives" (2017: 202). Furthermore, she suggests, through the process of researching and writing the play, the writers developed confidence as "authorities on their own history", and this in turn, enabled them "to examine their troubled and contested history in a critical way" (2017: 219). For my research, this is of particular interest, for it resonates with the concern raised by oral historians over the need for a level of criticality in community generated oral history projects, which I discussed in chapter two of this thesis. More specifically, Jeffers notes, the growing capacity to interpret archival material and the writers own lived experience through a dramaturgical process fostered an appreciation of the fragmented and paradoxical aspects of their history. In this way, she proposes, the performance-making created a space in which histories were shared, explored and challenged, in which crucially, there was opportunity to question apparently stable identities (2017: 225). By becoming authorities on their own history and concurrently learning the skills "to craft that history into a dramatic narrative", the writers evidently developed a sense of personal confidence. However, Jeffers also asserts, they played a part in generating a "social confidence". By performing the play publicly, the writers communicated a complex set of narratives "that look out beyond

the usual received histories", to their audience (2017: 221).

Informed by Jeffers' understanding of the way performance-making can support sense-making, and enable community participants to listen to and communicate challenges to a community's history, I pay attention to the ways participants interpret their personal histories through the co-creation of a performance. My approach differs from Jo Egan's, however, in its form. Whilst, Jeffers focuses on the participation of community writers in the co-authoring of a written dramatic narrative, my emphasis lies more with embodied ways of knowing. Thus, the performance-making in my practice-based research investigates a co-devising process, through which I aim to understand the potential of creating embodied images and metaphors as a means for participants to interpret their memory stories. But there are also similarities, particularly for the older adults' group, who were more heavily involved in the dramaturgy of the performance, and participated in archival research, including of recorded oral histories. Nonetheless, as my research attends to listening, rather than authoring statements, I explore the possibilities for creative interpretations to extend participants listening to different perspectives, which may or may not challenge their personal or established community narratives. In addition, as I consider the creation of visual and embodied metaphors a part of my craft as a physical performance-maker, I wanted to understand something more about my role as an artist in the "informal barter of technical know-how for lived experience" (2017: 219).

In this chapter, I discuss two areas of my practice-based research and conclude with a discussion of the older adults' group evaluation of the performance. In the first section, I return to the processual making of the creative workshops but specifically attend to a collective process of getting to know each other's memory images. I aim to understand the potential of a group listening to a number of personal narratives put into relation, and how this might solidify or question community narratives. In the second section, I investigate the practice based project in which the three participant groups created the performance, *From the Ground Up.* A part

of *Tales from the Marsh*, the name was chosen by the participants as the title for the site-specific performance. To a certain extent, there was a distinction made between the initial phase of creative workshops, which focused upon the elicitation of memories, and a secondary phase, which focused upon the development of this material for performance. The discussion in this section, leans towards the latter, although any sense of boundary between the two phases was permeable. Clearly, by attending to memories through a processual making in various expressive forms, material was generated for the performance from the outset. In this second phase, I explore the creative possibilities of metaphor to interpret participants' memory stories into performance. In metaphor, we see or think about one thing in terms of another quite separate thing, and so I wanted to investigate if and how creative metaphors might extend interpretation across the various narratives. I conclude with a discussion of a conversation in which the older adults evaluated the performance-making process.

Marsh Images: Listening to a Glitch between Narratives

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the listening to memories through a processual making and remaking opened up to new understandings of participants' past lived experience. More specifically, a sense of knowing along the trails between generative memory images was unravelled through a mutually informing dialogue between two partners. My practice-based research, then, pointed to an entwined listening; a listening to memories in the encounter with various materialities and an interpretative listening in the interpersonal exchange. However, listening to each other's memory images in the project was not limited to paired companions, joined together for the purpose of a specific activity. Instead, memory stories and creative images were frequently listened to and discussed within larger groups, which multiplied the range of thoughts, questions and insights formed in response.

In this section, I return to the conversation between media, but in

listening again, I attend to the collective encounter. Through a common attention to their memory images in relation, I aimed to explore how participants might perceive connections or disconnections across their lived experience narratives. Moreover, considering the diversity of memories elicited by the Marsh related objects I hoped to gain further insight into how their personal narratives might afford new ways of thinking about historical narratives of the Marshes. However, in this section, I will discuss a specific example that arose in one of the older adults' sessions, for it demonstrated the potential in this mode of collective listening for participants to tune into the instability of their memory stories. As the participants became more confident in the reciprocal getting to know each other's images, they started to apprehend how they might (re)present their lived experience narratives in different ways. In this session, then, they turned a critical attention to their interpretative choices and questioned the impulse to portray the Marshes favourably, despite conflicting experiences.

Once again, participants journeyed through various modes of creating: moving in pairs transited into pictorial renderings of a remembered landscape, which in turn were distilled into list poems, and finally, expanded into memory storytelling. On the surface, there was something more of the ocular in this session, for I devised it in response to Jo's observation of the amplitude of sky in the Marshes and to Fitzroy's metaphoric rendering, "Memories of sky available in Walthamstow".[131] Hence, participants refocused their gaze upwards towards the skies, their eyes trained onto the reflection of the ceiling in a mirror as they moved around the space carefully guided by a partner. There was a great deal of laughter, but also surprise and frustration, because unable to see the floor, in the eye of the mirror bearer they stepped into sections of wall when in actuality they move through doorways. "It was like going into a new world",[132] Jean announced, as she removed the mirror from under her nose. She confessed it took a moment to 'let go' of worrying about what

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[131] Fitzroy Johnson: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.
[132] Jean Duggleby: Older Adults' Workshop 3, 15th Mar. 2016.

she might look like, but this soon opened into a strange enjoyment of the disorientation, relying, she noted, on her other senses and her companion's guiding hands.

Figure 15: Mirror Activity. Older Adults' Workshop 3. 15th Mar. 2016. Image: Siobhan O'Neill.

The activity aimed to engender trust between participants; as theatre practitioner Sue Mayo suggests there can be "no expectation of immediate bonding", thus, introductory activities are specifically designed "to help to build connections" (2014: 42). Here interaction constellates around the material of the mirror, accentuating Jean's embodied sensitivities, which listened attentively to the environment and proximal touch of her guiding partner. In preparation for the painting of marsh memory images, the mirror exercise aimed to awaken the senses, but more so, it acted as an embodied metaphor for sensing the world from different perspectives. Next, closing their eyes or gazing seemingly into nowhere, everyone visualised a distinct location in the Marshes, calling it into memory prior to etching it on paper. A range of materials was available across a large table - sheets of variously coloured paper, pencils, chalks, charcoal, brushes, watercolours, oil pastels, tissue paper and glue. Purposely the

multiplicity of materials nurtured image making in relation to a haptic materiality. But also, I observed how social relations tentatively emerged through the corporeal encounter with these material objects; asking for a crayon of specific colour, for example, or sharing a paint palette. In some making activities participants would become so intently absorbed in forming their memory images they seemed to pay little heed to others in the room. However here, seated together around tables, the exchanges generated by the interplay with the materials opened up into a convivial banter, which accompanied the mapping out, sketching, composing, daubing, shading, in the composition of their picture. "I haven't done this in ages" Fitzroy noted;[133] as he physically remembered how to draw, he reminisced on his childhood art classes. Erstwhile, David observed "I hope I'm not revealing the deepest parts of my personality",[134] dryly acknowledging an unease, perhaps, at the potential for the image to dissemble.

For all the group, apart from Jo, these illustrative images related to memories of more recent marsh visits; encounters that had occurred since retirement. As the reflective group discussion on each singular memory image unfolded, a common theme emerged around various encounters with litter. Perhaps this is not the most profound of issues, particularly if compared to some more intimate memories the participants shared in other sessions. I consider whether this may reflect the shorter time span since events occurred, their on-going involvement in the Marshes, or the possibility that the ocular focus inserts a distance, which the touch of mud and nest forecloses. On the other hand, litter arouses interest because it brings into the groups' awareness different forms of human inhabitation of the Marshes. It proved a divisive issue, for litter conflicts with both the historical imaginings of a 'rural' Marshes and the cultural values of environmental care, which were important to the members of this group.

In particular, a commonality arose between Jean and Fitzroy's

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[133] Fitzroy Johnson: Older Adults' Workshop 3, 15th Mar. 2016.
[134] David Gardiner: Older Adults' Workshop 3, 15th Mar. 2016.

narratives, for both recalled engagement in guided marsh walks. Similar, yet different, Jean spoke of a regular attendance over time, whilst Fitzroy's recounted a snapshot memory of a specific occasion. The affiliation between their memories extended to the disquiet over the rubbish they encountered, which elicited discussion as the group congregated around this concern. Nevertheless, rubbish was not equally present in both their pictorial images and it is this dissonance that lured their attention to consider the impulses behind their representational choices. In turn, the dialogue led the group to apprehend a propensity to drift towards imaginings of how they would like to present the Marshes rather than depicting what they actually encountered.

Figure 16: Picture of Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes by Jean.
Older Adults' Workshop 3. 15th Mar. 2016.
Image: Jean Duggleby

Observing the pictorial images, it is conspicuous, where Jean filled the paper with discarded rubbish - "dog turd and cigarette butts", an Asda plastic bag, "tyre, dead frog", shopping trolley afloat in the river; Fitzroy portrayed an idyllic scene - tall grasses swaying, a line of trees reflected in

the river, and birds rising into a blue sky. As the group reflects on Jean's image David immediately identified it as "the dark side", whilst Fitzroy rendered it in terms of "realism", enlisting a sense of 'truth' to her illustration for it rings consonantly with his own experience. The list poem Jean penned in response matched her troubled image, adding rats and vomit, dangerous cyclists and high rise flats to the tally of offending objects. Although in her memory narrative she related to the group, some elements of her reminiscence did counter the *dark side;* the comity of the walking congregation, for example, and the observation that "the more popular bits are not so much like this".[135] Possibly, I contend, the result of the increased management of more public areas by the LVRPA. It was, however, her encounter with the "back corners" during these guided perambulations, which ultimately marred and foreclosed the experience:

> It was a nice outing, but because of all the muck I just didn't enjoy it the way I would like to, so I stopped going.[136]

Within the group, then, Jean presented an alternative view of the Marshes, as the only person to graphically depict some conceivably more distasteful aspects. Furthermore, there was a clarity in her image, participants immediately gained a sense of it, which they expressed, and this coherence was heard to carry through her various modes of creation.

As the reminiscence sharing moved onto Fitzroy, however, he did not immediately tell a memory narrative but instead began to explain features of his crayoned image. Possibly, a dissonance was already faintly sounding for him, pricking him to start unravelling the representation, although it was not until, and significantly, I propose, through the group dialogue that the discord was directly addressed.

> That's chaos that is, chaos, it's meant to represent chaos. And that's what I think, sort of like, wildlife represents really … And it just reminded me of walking through and noticing people being guided through this and seeing litter and

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[135] Jean Duggleby: Older Adults' Workshop 3, 15th Mar. 2016.
[136] Jean Duggleby: Older Adults' Workshop 3, 15th Mar. 2016.

everything. And there's this orderly group that's being shunted from place to place, while all around there's litter and…it just sprung to mind sort of like the contrast between how we order our lives and the litter that's always near to us if that makes sense. And I saw it on the Marsh and it kind of like um illustrated it more because you wanted it to be a place for nature.[137]

Figure 17: Picture of Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes by Fitzroy. Older Adults' Workshop 3. 15th Mar. 2016.
Image: Fitzroy Johnson.

To my hearing, in this reflection Fitzroy tries to tease out entangled threads, sensing reverberations of incongruity between a chaotic 'wild' and a human ordering, and conversely, an ever-present (human) littering amplified by its conspicuous presence in a "place for nature". Within the 'conversation between media', the pictorial image depicted a picturesque, 'unspoiled' landscape, whilst the chaos and litter manifested in his list poem, in relation to the specific recalled encounter. However, at the time, Fitzroy was speaking to the graphic image, and as the group listened to his endeavour to make sense of it, the glitch troubled the other

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[137] Fitzroy Johnson: Older Adults' Workshop 3, 15th Mar. 2016.

participants. Initially to clarify a sense of misunderstanding, then, David interrupted with a query, and a conversation unfurled around the meaning of this rupture.

> David: You haven't actually shown the litter, have you? It doesn't look chaotic to me, this picture.
>
> Fitzroy: Okay I kind of skilfully avoided the litter.
>
> David: I wondered if I was missing something.
>
> Jo: You mentioned litter, didn't you?
>
> Fitzroy: Yes, I did, but I didn't portray it on the picture.
>
> Jo: Right, do you know why not?
>
> Fitzroy: This once again it's... If you look at it from say the Freudian point of view.
>
> Jo: Gosh, all right.
>
> David: That'll do.
>
> Fitzroy: That's a great example though as it happens, I've subconsciously left the litter out of my picture but I'm talking about it but I don't want it in there like I said before, so I haven't put it in there.
>
> Jo: Yeah.
>
> Fitzroy: See how it works?[138]

Firstly, David's interjection exposed the cavity between pictorial image and memory image, which prompted Fitzroy to perceive his avoidance of the very issue, which concerned him. Next, Jo's inquiry into the reason for this omission probed deeper, drawing Fitzroy to reflect upon a *subconscious* drive to present the Marshes in a positive light. Thus, through the collective listening and reflection on the memory image, Fitzroy came to realise he had created an idealised version of how he would *like* the Marshes to be, rather than the actuality of his sensate encounter. Furthermore, by reflecting on the creative re-generation of his memory, the

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[138] Group Reflection. Older Adults' Workshop 3, 15th Mar. 2016.

group together came to apprehend something more about the way their memories are open to interpretation, and moreover, that this process may not be fully cognisant.

By mutually sharing and getting to know their memory images, participants started to tune into the instability of their memory stories, and thus, to recognise how they might (re)present their lived experience in different ways. In order to glean a deeper understanding of the affiliation between the interpersonal dynamics of the group and the *re-writing* of memory stories, I turned to the writings of British oral historian Lynn Abrams, in her book *Oral History Theory* (2016). In the fourth chapter, 'Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity', Abrams writes;

> Memory stories are not repositories of an objective truth about the past; they are creative narratives shaped in part by the personal relationship that facilitates the telling.
>
> (2016: 58)

By acknowledging their role within the interview process, Abrams posits, it was a simple step for oral historians to start thinking about "the ways in which their own subjectivity impacted on the stories they are told" (2016: 57). Moreover, as being-with always arises in an instance, what the self presents to the world and to itself constantly changes with each moment. Therefore, in the case of the oral history conversation, the narrative can be heard to unfold in relation to the interpersonal encounter of the interview. It is not merely a matter of the specificity of the interview questions, then, but more an awareness of the interaction of subjectivities in the interview. As Abrams suggests:

> The oral history document created in the interview is the result of a three-way dialogue: the respondent with him or herself, between the interviewer and the respondent and between the respondent and cultural discourses of the present and the past. This means that individual memory stories are shaped (not determined) by the intersubjective relationships present in the interview and that what we as researchers hear are narrative constructions of memories of experiences actively created for an audience. The story that is told is thus a partial one, or at least a version of the

past created within a specific context and for a specific purpose.

<div align="right">(2016: 59)</div>

Thus, if a narrator were to be interviewed more than once, each interview may potentially solicit a different memory story. Because memories are fragmentary, disparate and disconnected, narrators tend to compose their memory stories, using "the constructions and language available" (2016: 57), in such a way as to make *sense* to the listener. Furthermore, as narrators are constantly reappraising their life stories, "telling different versions to different audiences", they will have negotiated their way through various cultural discourses. This, in turn, Abrams proposes, will be evident in the interview, "reflected in the ways in which the events of the person's life are selected, described and judged" (2016: 63).

Returning to Fitzroy's memory image, then, the pictorial depiction may have been shaped in relation to cultural discourses around an "unspoiled" nature, and the historical imaginings of the Marshes' rural past. But these communally held narratives, one ubiquitous the other specific to place, were vexed by the ellipses evoked by his verbal articulation of lived experience, which the congregation of the group open up through a mutual questioning. The construction and performance of the two different versions emerged, then, through the specific context of the workshop and the multiplicity of participant interrelations. For, the 'conversation between media' generated a particular way of working, calling forth a self-reflective listening and a collective discussion. Moreover, the questioning of the group drew Fitzroy to try to make sense of these narratives that did not cohere, by framing the disconnect within a Freudian discourse and the idea of the subconscious. His understanding of the semi-conscious alludes to the fluidity of identity contingent upon a being-with, which arises *instantaneously* in relation to each specific time and place.

In the oral history conversation, Abrams proposes, the interviewer and respondent play particular roles by drawing upon their pasts and the specific circumstances of the interview to perform particular identities

(2016: 58). She draws here upon the work of gender theorist Judith Butler, who has argued that "gender is a performative act" (2016: 58). Following Butler, gender is not a biologically determined, fixed identity, but instead, "men and women *perform* their gender through everyday acts of dress, gesture, deportment and speech which are largely unconscious and drawn upon the culture and discourses of the time" (Abrams 2016: 59). Applied more generally to identity, the self is unstable and performative, for identities do not pre-exist their performance but may become temporarily more certain in enactment (2016: 59).

Where, Abrams notes the performance of identities emerging through the interrelations of the oral history interview, theatre practitioner, Sue Mayo attunes to the improvisational in group relations; so, the temporary community constellates around the context of performance-making in a constant state of flux and formation (2014: 56). In this case, the way new insight was gleaned through the interrelations of the group, spoke also to the promise of collaboration; a being-singular-plural in which their individual capacity to tell and interpret personal memories was enhanced through the participants being-with. As social theorist, Rudi Laermans, who as written on collaboration in contemporary dance-making, suggests:

> Through our collaboration, you and I will be pushed in a socially productive way to go beyond our subjective modes of exercising common faculties, thus realising that which were hitherto unexplored, perhaps even inconceivable.
>
> (2012: 97)

Thus, as the group became more familiar in this collaborative approach of collective listening, getting to know each other's memory images together, they develop the confidence to question interpretations and thus prompt the ability to "see how it works".

Furthermore, this insight resonated through the participant assembly to impact upon other interpretations. So, as Jo reviewed her own memory image and narrative, she then apprehended how she painted "through my

little romantic eyes because I have, that's my vision of the Marshes".[139] Once again, the response penned in her poem touched upon her fears, in the lines "Olympics growing, city getting bigger". However, she acknowledged the impulse to erase these aspects from her vision of the Marsh itself.

> Jo: And it's interesting because you chose to show the litter, very much…
>
> David: Jean.
>
> Jo: …because it is obscene. You chose like me to blank out.
>
> Fitzroy: Yeah, yeah.
>
> Jo: So I've got the romance, romantic picture to keep the beauty and that's how I deal with the litter.[140]

Thus, as Jo summed up the contrasting ways the group have each portrayed the Marshes, she revealed an awareness of how her idealised, or, in line with her use of the word romantic, possibly nostalgic, image of the Marshes proved an effective way to deal with the elements she would rather not have encountered. There is then, I contend, a level of unpicking of the collective narratives that are entangled in the performances of participant identities, in what is important to them in their inhabitation of the Marshes.

Through the practice-based workshops, I propose, a place was created in which participants could share, explore and challenge personal and community narratives, and, following Jeffers, where apparently stable identities could be questioned (2017: 225). Moreover, as I gained insight into the potential for the group to exercise critical interpretative authority in the collective getting to know each other's memory images, I came to apprehend the way my practice-based research might be seen to lean more towards group memory work, than the oral history method per se.

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[139] Jo Robinson. Older Adults' Workshop 3, 15th Mar. 2016.
[140] Group Reflection. Older Adults' Workshop 3, 15th Mar. 2016.

Memory work is an umbrella term for an engagement with the past, which deliberately tries to understand how memories are constructed, in order to mutually reveal something about the (re)presentation of selfhood and the influences upon it of cultural socialisation. Collective memory work, as pioneered by feminist sociologists such as Frigga Haug, tunes into the notion that people frequently know much more about themselves and the worlds they inhabit than they might readily imagine (Haug 2000). Based upon this premise personal memory stories are seen to reflect such knowledge, and thus, their analysis may open up insights into the links between personal experiences and broader social and cultural narratives. Group memory work has developed as a defined research methodology encompassing a number of analytical stages, but these were simplified by Judith Kaufman et al. into three general phases when they employed it for their study on the socialisation of girls in relation to nature and science (Kaufman et al. 2003). The first phase involves the collection of memories, typically detailed and written by group members. The second draws the group together to discuss and analyse these memory narratives collectively. Finally, there is a reappraisal of memories in association to a broad range of theories, relevant to the precise area of research (2003: 27).

Clearly my practice-based research did not explicitly involve participants with critical theory, although at the outset I discussed research questions with them and consequently, comments, discussion and questions arose in reference to research themes. Moreover, creative making in a variety of material forms lacked the distinct attention to narrative deconstruction, the scrutiny of how language conveys the narrator-author's message, which is a characteristic of memory work. Nonetheless, there are some productive interstices between the arts-based workshops and collective memory work. The emphasis on theme-based cues,[141] for example, prefers the elicitation of discreet memories instead of autobiographical life-story. This, in turn, amplifies attention to social understandings, by elevating consideration of differences and

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[141] Kaufman et al. use the classical elements (air, earth, fire, and water) as triggers for memory recollection (2003: 2).

commonalities across participant experiences instead of focusing on the biographical, which tends towards cause and effect narratives.

Moreover, the attention to narrative inquiry similarly calls forth a challenge to the storiness of narratives, but conversely, in my practice-based research the listening to embodied sensitivities, here the sense of sight evoked in painting Marsh images, produced the questioning of fixed narratives. Of particular note, however, is the collaborative basis of collective memory work, instead of the one-to-one inter-connectivity of the oral history conversation, there is a broader "shared narrative construction and reconstruction through the inquiry" (2003: 29). Coevally, the group listening and collective critique of memory image-stories in the participatory workshops, I propose, fostered instances of meaningful social reflexivity.

This is significant if we return to the concern raised at the outset of this thesis over the proclivity for community-based oral histories to produce parochial, celebratory and nostalgic interpretations of a community's past. It is an issue that has been discussed in depth by oral historian Linda Shopes, who suggests interviews are undertaken "in a spirit of critical inquiry" in order to ameliorate this tendency (2002: 597). For Shopes, redress centres around the "mutual exploration of a problem" between "informed interviewer" and "knowledgeable participant", in which difficult questions can be asked and controversial topics addressed (2002: 597). By way of contrast, I argue, this spirit of inquiry can also arise in the critique of memory images, through which the participants explored and challenged received narratives. In viewing the Marshes from different perspectives and by developing their own understanding of the way semi-conscious impulses favour celebratory narratives there is an emergent authority within the group to critically interpret their narratives. Moreover, as Laermans notes of the co-creative performance-making process;

> Within artistic collaboration, public acts of interpretation
> and valuation implicitly prepare or explicitly anticipate the
> making of decisions.

(2012: 101)

Thus, the reflexive discussions around the memory stories paved the way for the negotiations and decision making over material, in the creation of the performance.

From Presence to Metaphor

In the practice-based arts activities I developed in which objects and materials triggered lived experience recollection, metaphor was heard to play a role in participants' memory stories and their creative interpretations. In the previous chapter, for example, I drew attention to the way Jo linked the nest back to her childhood trunk and David educed association to building a home in Walthamstow. Moreover, I noted how Fitzroy created a poetic metaphor to convey a sense of Jo's narrative, which resonated with him. The use of metaphor proved important in the way participants made sense of and constructed memory stories; by inferring a conceptual link, metaphor helps us to understand ideas and emotions through some other entity. Furthermore, by focusing on Runia's application of metonymy to objects, in memory and in the room, I considered how presence rather than conceptual meaning was transferred from past to present. Because metonymy refers to the representation of one thing by another that is closely related to it, the object in the past and in the present stood fractionally out of place, and this discontinuity augured the re-writing of participants' memory stories. However, as Runia notes, metonymy and metaphor are proximal concepts. Whereas metonymy convenes a "transfer of presence", metaphor advances the "transfer of meaning" (2006a: 1). In metaphor, one thing is likened to a different thing in a way that differs from its literal meaning, which infers a conceptual leap. Thus, where metonymy denotes, metaphor connotes; it brings about "a level of personal comprehension" and "invites interpretation" (2006b: 313).

Informed by Runia's understanding that metaphor offers a means of interpretation in historical narratives, I paid attention to how it was used in the construction of participants' memory stories. Moreover, the development of metaphors as a means of memory interpretation is a strategy I investigated in my practice-based research. My approach, however, differs in attunement to Runia, who focuses on writing historical accounts, for I attend to the creation of visual and embodied metaphors within a performance-making process. Runia aims to articulate some of the shortcomings of elevating 'meaning' in the turn to narrative history, inaugurated by Hayden White's *Metahistory* of 1973; including its lack of account for the affective power of memory. I wanted to identify the creative possibilities of metaphor to translate personal memories in a way which might open to resonances between different experiences. Furthermore, by perceiving metaphor as not just a matter of language, but as a way to put thoughts, objects and emotions into relation, within visual and embodied forms, I hope to bring practical insight to Runia's understanding that "metonymical presence and metaphorical meaning are locked in an evolutionary dance" (2006a: 22).

In this section, I discuss the use of metaphor as a means to translate participants recalled lived experience into performance, in the practice-based research project, *From the Ground Up*. At the inception of the project, I thought that if the participants could creatively build upon the metaphors in their memory stories, they might be able to extend their listening to further associations and possible insights. Considering the attention in my research on identifying ways that participants could play a more active role in interpreting their lived experience testimony, I wanted to test out if and how the creation of dramatic metaphor might prove a productive interpretative strategy. Instead of devising more literal resemblances of past corporeal experience, I aimed to understand how visual and embodied metaphors could extend beyond the storiness of memories to communicate more sensate and affective understandings to an audience. Moreover, in the shift from individual memory-sharing to the making of a collectively negotiated performance narrative, I questioned

whether metaphor, which connotes by means of a return across associated entities, might help foster connections between participants' diverse lived experience. Equally, could metaphor support an openness, in which interpretative narratives are not necessarily fixed? Finally, following Jeffers, I consider to what extent my decision to develop material for performance through the use of theatrical metaphor enables or disables participants in authoring a collective interpretation of the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes.

Theories of Metaphor

Metaphor has traditionally been treated as a figure of speech, a characteristic of poetic language, in which one word is used to indicate something different from its literal meaning. More recent theories of metaphor, however, have proposed it is not simply a matter of linguistic expression, but more so, metaphor is a matter of thought. This notion was first proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), and I turned to their analysis in *Metaphors We Live By,* to deepen my understanding of the way metaphor might help people to conceive meaning in their lives. For Lakoff and Johnson metaphor is central to the way we conceptualise everyday experience; it helps to structure the way "we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people" (1980: 3). In their understanding, the use of metaphor in language stems as consequence from the metaphorical structuring of thought. As illustrated in the example, "ARGUMENT IS WAR", they propose, not only do we talk about an argument but also, we experience and conceive of it in terms of war. As they explain:

> We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own.
>
> (1980: 3)

By perceiving how the metaphor is implicated in the activity of arguing and frames our understanding of what an argument is, 'Argument is War', they propose, emerges as a metaphorical concept. In this way, they redefine the linguistic trope, broadening metaphor to "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (1980: 5).

Although I question the fundamental basis of metaphor claimed here as 'essential' to our ways of understanding; the distinction inserted between conceptual metaphors and metaphorical expressions is useful. For, as metaphor expands into the terrain of thought, so it vibrates in embodied action, stretches towards the intangible and resonates with the affective. As Lakoff and Johnson write:

> It is as though the ability to comprehend experience through metaphor were like a sense, like seeing or touching or hearing, with metaphors providing the only ways to perceive and experience much of the world. Metaphor is as much a part of our functioning as our sense of touch, and as precious.
>
> (1980: 240)

I harken to the way metaphor becomes a sense of touch, for it recalls the haptic listening proposed by Nancy, in which conceptual and sensate perception arise coevally. For metaphors are not arbitrary, they are shaped through our being-in-the-world-together. Clearly the meaning listened to in metaphor resides relationally in the space between the two entities juxtaposed. On the other hand, in metaphor, this relational movement is conventionally perceived as unidirectional, rather than, in the manner of a return. Hence, aspects of one idea or object are projected onto another, but to reverse the connection requires a different metaphor.

The writings of theatre theorist, Dan Rebellato, in his article *When We Talk of Horses: Or, what do we see when we see a play?* (2010), opened up the boundaries I perceived in this one-way movement. Following Rebellato, metaphor is an invitation; it does not "prescribe in advance what sort of connection must be made"; but rather, it *invites* a person to think of one thing as another (2010: 25). In this way, meaning is

not fixed but left open; metaphor is an invitation to openness. Writing about theatrical representation, Rebellato is referring here to aesthetic experience and therefore allies with this more sensate, embodied reading of metaphor as touch. Returning to Lakoff and Johnson, then, metaphor is not only conceptual; because 'metaphors we live by' anticipates metaphor as a way of being, it encompasses all dimensions of our experience - sensate, embodied, affective and aesthetic experiences (1980: 235). In which case, metaphors can arise in the terrain of language, thought and the symbolic qualities of the visual and embodied. Metaphor is inclusive, as Rebellato accents in relation to theatrical representation:

> (A)actors give performances that becomes metaphors for the characters, the stage becomes a metaphor for indeterminate imaginary worlds or determinate real ones.
>
> (2010: 27)

In sum, any aspect of the theatrical experience, or for that matter lived experience, may contribute to the metaphor.

Whereas, conventional metaphors evolve over time in relation to social and cultural discourses and are inculcated into our everyday actions and language. New, imaginative or creative metaphors can help us garner insight into our lived experiences. As Lakoff and Johnson propose:

> Such metaphors are capable of giving us a new understanding of our experience. Thus, they can give new meaning to our pasts, to our daily activity, and to what we know and believe.
>
> (1980: 139)

In the same way as conventional metaphors, new metaphors provide coherent structure by accenting some things while muting others. New, imaginatively generated metaphors, also accrue multifarious associations, including other metaphors and literal statements. These associations, in turn, may give rise to other affiliations, thus, building a web-like network of connections. This web of associations, Lakoff and Johnson propose, may confederate with our past experience; entirely, partially or not at all. A

match, sensed as a series of reverberations through the threads of the network, connects with memories of past experience, but also, they argue, it can act as feedback and so guide future action (1980: 141). Equally, by emphasising and diminishing different associations, and therefore different dimensions of experience, a new metaphor can question traditionally held ideas, narratives and identities.

Although Lakoff and Johnson make expansive claims for metaphor, they also, offer up useful insights, which I want to take into the analysis of my practice. Firstly, the potential of metaphor as a means of sense-making, aiding people to understand complex or intangible ideas and emotions through association with more accessible entities, may support participants' interpretation of lived experience memory through performance. Secondly, the way metaphor can be expressed in both linguistic and non-linguistic forms, could help tune interpretative attention back to the embodied and sensate. Thirdly, by interpreting memory stories through a web of multiple and simultaneous associations, might participants perceive something more about being-one-with-another, in connection and juxtaposition, across their individual lived experience.

Dogs, Diggers and Cracks: Metaphor in the Interpretation of Memory Stories

In the previous chapter, I described the way I asked participants to attend to one another's memory stories as a listening to resonance, a stretching the ear to those events, phrases and feelings that reverberated for them. This is also how I listened to the personal stories and images that participants shared, an attentive listening to the vibrations which touched me. And within this listening, there was a tuning into metaphor, in word and image, to the poetics of memories, which might prove fertile ground for performance-making. I have previously drawn attention to the way metaphor arises in memory stories; the nest and its various associations were linked by Jo to her trunk and David to his house in the memory narratives

they told. I also noted how some resonances heard by participants were metaphorically expressed without solicitation. But at times, I specifically invited participants to tune into metaphor by devising activities through which they creatively articulated an emotion or an event from lived experience in terms of something else.

In co-delivering the after-school workshops with a spoken word poet-educator, I also developed new strategies for creating linguistic metaphors, which were then adapted for sessions with other groups. In the second school workshop with poet Cat Brogan, for example, we made word banks with the group, by collecting together marsh related objects, actions, emotions and abstract nouns from the young people's recollections. Next, the participants started to build poetic metaphors from these assemblages; initially selecting an emotion or abstract noun that resonated with a remembered event, then congregating other associations from the vocabulary banks around it. Thus, Clement rendered his recollection of cycling in the Marshes:

> Space is cycling in your own zone, room for everyone to move.[142]

To my listening, Clement's selection of the word 'space' to metaphorically communicate his cycling inhabitation coveys something more of his sensate experience. I physically feel it in my body, although I find it hard to articulate, for as John Searle points out, metaphors can be difficult to paraphrase; even when we try to explain a simple metaphor "we feel the paraphrase is somehow inadequate, that something is lost" (cited in Rebellato 2010: 26). Moreover, Clement's embodied sensations seem to speak back to his affective relationship with the Marshes.

Alternatively, Feyrus imparted a very different relationship to place, when she wrote:

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[142] Clement: Young Peoples Workshop 2, 3rd Mar. 2016.

> Stress is being chased by a herd of strangers while the wind
> pushes against you.[143]

She recalls here a time when she felt she was being followed by a couple of people who were unfamiliar to her. By adopting the collectivity of the herd from the cows she had seen in the Marshes, the metaphor infers a sense of unity and strength, which threatened her. Whilst the wind, often present in this open environment, becomes a barrier to a fast escape. Again, this is *my* analysis of her metaphor, but whatever the subtleties of the associations, I propose, it communicates something of the embodied and affective sense of the anxiety she experienced. What lured my attention in this approach, then, was the way the young people's interpretations of their lived experience through metaphor amplified the emotional. I observed, specifically in this group, when telling memories stories of more fearful encounters with the Marshes, a simple storytelling did not accrue the same emotional register as their work with metaphor. Although, I want to contextualise this with the understanding that of the three groups the young people more frequently recalled difficult encounters with the Marshes and also, they were afforded an enhanced opportunity to express reminiscence in linguistic metaphor.

In accord with their interest in poetry, as the project progressed the young people crafted spoken word poetry performances, while concurrently honing their ability to craft poetic metaphors as a means to interpret their lived experience for an audience. Careful attention was given in the workshops to supporting the significant numbers of participants for whom English was a second language. As co-facilitators, Cat, Sarah and I frequently scribed the spoken words. Moreover, vocabulary banks, like the one just described, enabled participants to extend the richness of their language, and, as can be gleaned in the examples above, metaphor helped structure thought. But equally, by observing the young people draft their performance poetry, I became aware of the way imaginative metaphors in linguistic form are contingent upon a certain level of expertise

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[143] Feyrus: Young Peoples Workshop 2, 3rd Mar. 2016.

in the language in which they are formed. It points towards the bartering of "different regimes of knowledge and expertise" that Jeffers speaks of (2017: 210). Here, the young people exchange their lived experience authority for the technical expertise of the poets and myself to craft metaphorical imagery.

Conversely, however, the young people also drew upon writing strategies familiar to them from school. This was exemplified in the mud workshop when we started to collectively compose the memories, ideas and images elicited by touching mud into a group poem. At this point, the young people requested to devise the piece in the manner of an 'I am...' poem, a form they had enjoyed using in the past. As Hamza and Skimante explained to me the nature of an 'I am...' poem, peppered with some previous examples, it became clear it speaks to identity. In reflection, this illustrates how they made a connection between the memory stories of touching "the mud of my homeland" and a form of personification in which the land stands in for themselves. Hence, not only are the young people authorities of their lived experience but also, they share with me a writing strategy they have hitherto acquired expertise in. Furthermore, there is a confidence evident in the way they decided themselves on its usefulness for communicating the interpretation they wished to convey.

Sara and I chose to engage the young people in writing a group poem, as a means to collectively support varying abilities and to draw individual memories into relation in a larger piece for performance. However, the young people chose not only to populate the poem with their own memories but began to pull in historical narratives of the Marshes; knowledge that I had previously shared with them, including excerpts of oral history conversations. There was a sense of ownership, in the way the young people effectively placed their respective "homelands" in to relation with other narratives of the Marshes. As well as being authorities on their own stories they were growing in confidence in their interpretation of other historical narratives through their poetic forms. As you read the poem, in the documentation, you can hear how metaphors and associations layer to

offer multiple angles on the relationship with the Marshes, as sense-making emerges across and between the different stories. For myself, I particularly found Skimante's interpretation of common land bringing "fruits for the workers" insightful because through her explanation my traditional English understanding of common manorial land was brought into relation with her own historical understanding of communal agriculture under a former communist regime.

It was not only metaphor in linguistic form that I investigated as a means of interpretation, but more so, visual and embodied metaphors were explored in the performance-making process. I have previously discussed the use of objects and materials to generate haptic encounters in the workshops, and these were increasingly selected in response to my attentive listening to participants' recollections, attending to the images and objects in their stories. Thus, the various encounters with mud emerged from Jenika's image of the marsh earth surrounding a two-pound coin and her fear of immersing her fingers in the unknown constituents of the ground to retrieve it. Another example from the young people's group constellates around several memories of fearful encounters with dogs. Hamza recalled being chased by two dogs while out running until its owner calls them off, Skimante the sudden growl of a husky, and Jenika remembered a confrontation with a dog, which she somewhat metaphorically described as a bulldog. It was a small dog, but she employed the term bulldog for its associations in order to express the level of anxiety she experienced.

In response, then, I arrived at a later session with an array of dog-related paraphilia as a prompt to image making. Despite, the feelings of trepidation expressed in the memories our interactions with dog balls with paw prints on them, a metal dog bowl, dog biscuits and a bone discovered in the Marshes, were playful. Dog tails merged with another memory of playing fighting with school ties on the Marshes, as we chased and were chased, while simultaneously trying to steal tie-tails. We barked in different emotional registers, some of the young people drawing on the character of their own dogs. In a spirit of reciprocity, I offered something of myself, a

recollection of buying dog biscuits with my pocket money to eat as a child, which solicited revulsion and intrigue in equal measure. Despite, a sense of disbelief, I awarded dog biscuits as prizes, for the most ferocious or pathetic growl, for instance. Tentative embarrassment from one member of the group quickly subsided in the engagement of everyone having a go and the palpable encouragement from her peers. I was, however, sensitive to the risk, for the bizarre can arouse uncomfortable feelings, but on this occasion, the young people together entered the imaginative world to energetically engage with becoming baying dogs.

From this playful improvisation of canine sonority, the young people later decided to develop a barking chorus for the performance. On the one hand, it might appear as though the barking chorus was a resemblance of the dogs. However, I argue it acted more as a metaphor for the young people's feelings of trepidation; the cacophonous sound, distorted by its rendering in multiple human voices, stood in for the affect, *not* for the thing itself. In performance, the baying, growling, barking riot, filled a secluded wooded thicket; heard before seen by the audience, it evoked an emotional atmosphere, resonating with associations of fear, threat, the pack, and the audiences' own canine encounters. The embodied sonic metaphor they created, thus, communicated the emotion of their experiences, into which they spoke their poems. In this way, their performative interpretation placed sense-making for the audience into the space between the affective, sensate sound and the articulated word. In this case, their generation of an embodied, sonic metaphor helped to interpret their affective encounters with the Marshes and through sound, corporeally put the audience in touch with this emotional register.

Nonetheless, through the practice-based research, I came to apprehend that the participants were differently able to engage with metaphor as a means of interpretation. Earlier in this section, I pointed out how the young people's ability to form linguistic metaphors was predicated upon their skills in the English language, although I do not imply here this in any way impacted upon their ability to form conceptual metaphors.

However, in the following example, taken from the older adults' group, I will discuss how the generation of visual and embodied metaphor was equally complex. In a similar vein, then, to the process described above, I brought in objects in response to the images and metaphors heard - a collection of broken eggs, a child's toy digger, plastic bags to gather up dog droppings, piles of feathers, straw and so forth. Selecting the materials that resonated with their memory stories, the older adults started to develop embodied images and metaphors through their interaction with the objects.

Figure 18: Fitzroy devising nest memory installation. Older Adults' Workshop 5, 19th Apr. 2016.
Image: Siobhan O'Neill

Thus, Fitzroy employed the broken eggs to evoke his nest raiding memory, picking up different halves to try and fit the eggs back together again. As he played with this activity, he began to hum the tune of the Humpty Dumpty nursery rhyme, which weaved its way into his developing scenario. The group went on to watch his embodied image and becoming increasingly assured in our reflexive practice they fedback a level of uncertainty as to what Fitzroy was trying to convey in this interpretation. In response, he informed us of how he had worked with a phrase scribed for Jean's nest memory in mind - "unintended consequences – things that once

done can't be undone".[144] The action, therefore, emerged metaphorically as a striving to undo the damage he caused to the birds' eggs in his youth. In the endeavour to repair the broken eggshells, there is a sense that despite his amended feelings, the past cannot be changed. Humpty Dumpty cannot be put back together again. Alerted to his ambition, I suggested, that perhaps the eggshells, which now resided in assembled pairs, were too easily matched, whereas performing a greater difficulty would accentuate the futility of the task. Hence, once more it demonstrates a reciprocity of expertise; where Fitzroy generated the metaphor to convey a broader interpretation of his individual memory story, I brought to it the sensibilities of a theatre-maker to craft the action. In sum, rather than re-enacting his nest story, Fitzroy generated an embodied metaphor, which resonated with his emotions of guilt and coevally expressed something of the (dis)connection between past and present. Furthermore, in performance on the Marshes, when Fitzroy recounted his memory story and mother-daughter pair, Heather and Molly marshalled the egg halves, the metaphor reverberated with further associations around the relationship between the human and more-than-human, which questioned the capacity to reverse environmental damage.

Elsewhere in The Mill's garden, in the same workshop, David laid upon the ground playfully manoeuvring earth into small piles with the "little yellow digger",[145] whilst Jean bagged up the earth into dog waste bags and hung them on surrounding branches. In some way, David's scenario may be perceived as a resemblance of his house renovation nest memory, but as the toy digger stands in for the life-size digger, its toy-ness connotes associations of children, play, family and ultimately his daughter. However, whereas for Fitzroy metaphor came more readily, David found it a challenge to employ it as a means to interpret his memory stories. It was, therefore, with a sense of self-confidence, bolstered by the endorsement expressed by his peers, when in the following workshop, David consciously devised a metaphor for the digger installation.

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[144] Fitzroy Johnson: Older Adults' Workshop 2, 8th Mar. 2016.
[145] David Gardiner: Older Adults' Workshop 5, 19th Apr. 2016.

Figure 19: David devising nest memory installation. Older Adults'
Workshop 5, 19th Apr. 2016.
Image: Siobhan O'Neill

It arose in response to his strong feelings about the local council not telling the 'truth' to the public concerning negotiations for building on open public land, including the edges of the Marshes. A feeling intensified, at the time, by a current proposal to build two 27 storey tower blocks on the only green space in the centre of Walthamstow. Jean and he had informed the group about this regeneration bid in the previous session. His opening proposal was to scribe twenty-seven lies on cards to be given out to the audience, whilst Jean was interested in the idea of creating a tower to block the skyline in the Marshes. The metaphor, however, emerged within a group discussion of ideas to take forward into the performance and in particular what might be dug up by the toy digger in the marsh mud - an unexploded bomb, a Viking ship, an aeroplane, dinosaur bones, a bear missing its head. Historical myths initially arose, reverberating with the warm-up activity I devised in response to his twenty-seven lies idea, in which participants penned Marsh related hearsay, fact, tradition and untruths. By

this point, the older adults were becoming used to my 'responses'; "be careful what you say" David joked, acknowledging the way something said incidentally may return as a catalyst for some new activity. Light-hearted but pointed feedback, it brought me back to my own authority in facilitating the sessions. On the other hand, I had started to transcribe the audio recordings of their memory stories and invited each participant to highlight for themselves the images and phrases they wished to develop.

Returning to the group discussion, however, David proposed an idea to dig up broken pieces of ceramic with writing upon them, which once assembled together would spell the word promises. "Its broken promises" he announced, "a metaphor" for the claims politicians make about the area.[146] I noted in my practice journal the way his "light-bulb moment" emerged "out of the nature of the discussion, bouncing ideas around". An assessment echoed in his own comments concerning the performance-making process in the mid-point evaluation:

> Just kind of bouncing off one another in a group. We were bouncing off one another, co-operating as a group. It's not just my story as one item and your story as another item. We managed to draw it all together I think.[147]

This way of co-generating the performance installations can be seen in how David's metaphorical image continued to develop. David became attracted to the idea of being an archaeologist, for it accumulated connotations of layered ages buried in the marshland and a diminishing certainty of evidence.[148] Hence, he asked if one of the girls from the other group might operate the digger to unearth the ceramic shards, whilst he would dust them off to reveal the letters. The transition proved significant, as I will discuss in more detail shortly, because he retunes to the emotional resonances in his memory story, as the girl stands in for his daughter.

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[146] David Gardiner: Older Adults' Workshop 5, 19th Apr. 2016.
[147] David Gardiner: Older Adults' Group Mid-Point Evaluation, 24th Apr. 2016.
[148] David Gardiner. Older Adults' Workshop 5, 19th Apr. 2016.

Whereas David proposed a broken ceramic tile to carry the written 'promises', Jo wanted to confederate the fragments to animal inhabitation of the Marshes, which might be threatened by political agreement to further housing development. Consensually agreed, Jo and I, sourced china birds, foxes, dogs from charity shops, which were duly smashed. Thus, the performance image was extended to connote an additional trail of associations. Nevertheless, I suggest, Jo's intervention was not solely inspired by listening to the conceptual but also by attending to the sensate, and the aesthetic encounter with the object. Whereas David had brought in a white bathroom tile upon which he had written 'PROMISES' in red marker pen, Jo as a trained artist[149] attuned to her artistic sensibilities. As such the visual and haptic qualities of broken china animals equally contributed to the resonances of the metaphoric image. Furthermore, it brought to my attention the way participants bring with them a multiplicity of knowledge and expertise accrued along their lived trails, which momentarily knot together in the temporary community of a performance-making project.

Metaphor as theatrical representation is inclusive; it communicates "visually and viscerally as well as through the spoken word and the neural pathways of cognition" (Murray 2013: 211). Thus, attention to the materiality of the broken animals, to the visual disfiguration and the texture of sharp chipped edges, evoked a sensate and affective sense of the destruction the embodied image intended to convey. For sense-making in theatrical metaphor emerges across and between the multitudinous dramaturgical elements; in relation to the performers, narratives, images and the site. Furthermore, as the compositional process proceeded over weeks, a new proposal was made to affiliate the action with the audio recording of walking narrator Abi Woodward recalling the protests against the building of a temporary basketball pitch on Leyton Marshes during the 2012 Olympics. Through archival research and listening to oral histories, recordings of the project's walking conversations and others collected by the Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop, the participants were becoming

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[149] Jo Robinson studied art the Blackpool School of Art and was a member of The Poster Workshop in London, 1968-1971.

"authorities on their own history" (Jeffers 2017: 226). An authority demonstrated in the ability here to select the oral history excerpt for its promising linkages to the expanding metaphor network. First considered by Jo for its resonance with her metaphor of "building developments hijacking the sky", through group discussion it was felt to reverberate more productively with David's image. The event of a mother climbing underneath a lorry with her child in an attempt to stop the diggers coming onto the site echoed in coalition with the broken promises metaphor. It amplified an emerging mutual interpretation within the group, to portray the threat to the Marshes and the responsibility of everyday inhabitants in its conservation.

By reflecting upon this process through a conjoined attention to metaphor and collaborative practice in performance-making, I gained insight into the way David's 'broken promises' propagated associations through a processual collective making. Because metaphor does not prescribe connection in advance, but rather offers an invitation to thought, there was an openness for others in the group to map new affiliations. Whereas, the re-enactment of David's memory story might have solidified meaning to his initial intention, metaphor, as Rebellato proposes, "is a much more flexible model of theatrical representation than resemblance" (2010: 25). Thus, in a constant state of becoming, the metaphoric image arising in relation to a cooperative making, accrued multiple ideas, although some did not survive the moment. Moreover, as Laermans points out, there is a contradiction inherent in collaborative performance-making. As he writes;

> (T)he common cause creates a collective focus because it functions, rather paradoxically, as a producer of differences.
>
> (2012: 98)

Thus, as the participants started to generate material for performance, there was a coming together around a collective purpose. As David noted in the mid-point evaluation:

I think what we were attempting to do was to create a way to present our ideas, our thoughts, our memories to a public audience. In other words, it's not just, it wasn't just a little personal exercise. It was something that aimed at an end product.[150]

The shared purpose, creating a performance for an audience, shifted attention from the individual sharing of memory stories to the generation of a potentially over-arching interpretation, which could be collectively agreed. However, antithetically, this singularity of purpose produced a plurality of ideas, images, memories, metaphors and narratives, which required mediation through the collaborative encounter. Thus, as various ideas emerged, were voiced and discussed they provoked a number of implicit and explicit negotiations. The shift from broken tile to smashed animals, for example, was tacit, whereas, the audio selection was closely deliberated and consensually agreed. At times negotiations were harmonious, potentially motivated by the individual desire to collectively ensure the realisation of the performance. But equally, the dynamic engendered by the aim to create a performance "can sometimes be at odds with the needs of relationship building" (Mayo 2014: 43). Thus, cooperation cannot be assumed. It is a point that Laermans coheres with, as he writes:

The common cause actualises a potential of possible choices and solutions, a multiplicity that vastly pluralises the communal activity, up to the point that it may threaten the minimum of social cohesion or solidarity every collaborative undertaking presupposes.

(2012: 98)

Following Laermans, collaboration circles around harmonious cooperation and inharmonious competition, and at times can be troubled by the "destructive effects of individual narcissism" (2012: 98). With interest, I attended to the way, Fitzroy equally understood this possibility in his

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[150] David Gardiner: Older Adults' Group Mid-Point Evaluation, 24th Apr. 2016.

evaluative reflection on the benefits of working in a smaller group. As he proposed,

> I think for myself, I think the smaller group made for success. Because if it was a larger group, it might have been difficult to sustain and contain. And... And also, as well a lot of personalities would come into the room. And a lot of egos would come into the room. Then you've got to deal with all of these. And... Egos are quite a challenging thing.[151]

I draw attention to the analogous thinking here for it adroitly exemplifies the depth of reflection and analysis that increasingly took place within the older adults' group. Although I have spoken previously of participants' authority as experts of their lived experience, I also came to understand how this experience equally arose in the operation of the group, in the negotiations of different perspectives and creative choices. A lived experience authority, which grew emboldened in the familiarity of getting to know each other through the sharing of similar and dissimilar life events and in their increasing confidence in the particularities of this singular performance-making process.

Returning to David's installation piece, however, in the following session the cooperative negotiations, which had transformed the digger image through a web of connections circling around the 'broken promises' metaphor, started to unravel. Somehow the piece no longer made sense to him. In particular, he felt the audio narrative resonated in incongruity with the memory of his daughter operating the little digger. Although the trail of associations had spiralled out from the connection David had conceived between digger, marshland and urban development, the listening to multiple associations had generated a very different effect from his memory story. In response, he now wanted to reassert his original nest story to replace the narrative of protest, and to include photographs of his daughter, A3 laminated copies of which he had brought into the session. In turn, others in the group, though sympathetic to David's desire to tell his nest story, felt the marsh protest narrative connected more cogently with the

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[151] Fitzroy Johnson: Older Adults' Group Mid-Point Evaluation, 24th Apr. 2016.

broken promises metaphor. Moreover, it elevated the political resonances the group as a whole wanted to communicate. The network of connotative linkages, I propose, generated a critical distance, which for some enabled the image to speak to broader narratives, but for David, as it retained the affective qualities of his memory story, it rebounded dissonantly. Attuned to different frequencies, then, a tension arose around whether the performance image was personal or collective, and therefore who might have the authority to 'fix' its interpretation.

In the hubbub, however, I hear another regime of authority from the sense of individual or collective ownership, which vexed decisions as to how to proceed. Following Jeffers who draws attention to the distinction between who has the authority to write a community's stories and who has the levels of expertise to craft a dramatic narrative, I attune to the different capacities within the room to render visual and embodied metaphors. David by his own admission found the creation of a visual metaphor challenging, and on a more attentive listening, I perceive how 'broken promises' resides largely in linguistic form. Moreover, he noted in the final evaluation that in comparison to his previous experiences in amateur dramatics, this particular performance devising 'model' was harder to discern. As he commented,

> I kept feeling that we should know what we wanted to say,
> what we were trying to put across and plan how to do it
> and you know straightforward kind of planning.[152]

Clearly, the entangled web of associations affiliated to the metaphor emerged obliquely, tangentially, in the rebound of the referral, rather than in the direct, straightforward kind of thinking David might prefer. Moreover, I suggest, the invitation of an embodied metaphor calls for a listening to the sensate, to be in touch with the haptic, visual and aural registers. To clarify this, further, I want to listen again to my own embodied sensitivities that were pricked in the experience of this metaphoric image in the performance. Firstly, however, I should point out how the image

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[152] David Gardiner: Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.

became embodied on its journey to performance. Later in the performance-making process, the older adults, women and girls came together in joint workshops and in some instances, became involved in each other's memory world installations. Thus, David enlisted the aid of a girl, Evie, to operate the little toy digger, while one of the women stood in for Jean, collecting sods of earth into dog poo bags to be hung on branches further down the trail.

Figure 20: Digging up the Marshes installation. *From the Ground Up* performance, 9th Jul. 2016.
Image: Tracey Fahy.

I return now to the resonances I attuned to in the performance of the 'broken promises' metaphor. In my audition, I heard reverberations of care in David's embodiment of the archaeologist. I heeded how he delicately touched and dusted off the broken shards. There was an intimacy in the way Evie passed the finds from digger to hand; a familiarity that echoed with the familial working together with his daughter to renovate the family home. To my listening, rather than closing off the interpretation, the tangential connections with the animals and earth of the site, materially made present in the image, stretched this partnership of

care to the Marshes. It was a narrative of conservation that reverberated with the accompanying testimony spoken by the activist. Conjointly, then, these narratives portrayed everyday inhabitants tending to the preservation of the Marshes, which were placed in contrast with the broken promises of the authorities.

In order to gain insight into why the metaphor resonated so differently for myself and the other participants, I returned to Lakoff and Johnson's explication to how metaphors operate within our everyday lives. The metaphors we choose, they propose, and the meanings they convey are a product of our "social reality", and thus, metaphors vary from culture to culture (1980: 146). In this case, individual perceptions of metaphors can differ markedly. As such my analysis above is contestable and, of course, cannot stand in for the sense-making of any of the participants. In turn, David's conception of the collectively generated metaphor was equally singular and subject to change.

In which case, the transition from making sense to making no sense might have reflected the move away, through connotative associations, from the *presence* of the digger, which following Runia, had affectively brought him in touch with his daughter. Or on the other hand, it might have reflected a need to foreclose the precariousness of meaning he encountered in an ever-expanding metaphorical image. To retreat from the entanglement of connections that may or may not be sensed cognitively, sensately, obliquely, and to retune to the sense-making in his initial narrative. Although I may only intuit David's intentions, the event opened up my understanding of how the possibility and the desire to engage with theatrical metaphor as a means of interpretation is experienced differently - between participants and between instances. Moreover, if I consider authority in terms of levels of expertise, then, my attention is drawn to the way participants' differing abilities to listen to and to render visual and embodied metaphors was implicated in their interpretative authority. By way of contrast, however, I might tune into the

insight Jeffers offers, with reference to Blencowe, that to claim authority requires a level of risk. As she observes,

> (I)f participation 'does not incorporate some openness to calamity and creativity, to the world pushing back' (2013(b): 43), then there is nothing at stake and the experience of claiming authority will have proved hollow.
>
> (2017: 226)

If this is the case, then potentially David expressed a different facet of himself in the creation of the metaphor and through being-with-others opened himself to the possibility of multiple associated meanings, but this opening was temporary.

Through the co-creation of the embodied metaphor, the participants had brought different narratives, embodied and spoken, personal and collective, into relation. And for some this challenged the 'official' narrative of the LVRPA and local council as custodians of the Marshes. Accordingly, discussions took place around the promising links between this embodied metaphor and other material in the emergent performance narrative. These were perhaps complicated by the high stakes in regard to the 'message' each wanted to communicate and the tangible time pressure of performance. Hence, Fitzroy suggested the group defer to my authority to arbitrate a final decision, as a theatre-maker but also, in a term borrowed from Laermans, a "collaborative entrepreneur". This role, Laermans defines as the person who initially outlines the possible project, secures funding and "acts during the actual work process as the principal caretaker who flattens out social frictions and continually feeds the team with new propositions" (2012: 100). It is through this intervention, then, that a compromise was ultimately agreed upon, to continue the broken promises installation as collectively generated and to create another installation in which David told his nest story, with the images of his daughter. The compromise was not necessarily comfortable, but I suggest, steering the messiness of inter-relations and the risk of non-agreement also implies a certain sharing of authority.

Stretching Towards the Audience: Final Conversations on

Interpretative Narratives

In this concluding section, I will discuss the evaluation session with the older adults' group, which took place a couple of weeks after the performances of *From the Ground Up,* on 4th August 2016. Through my exploration of their dialogue, I will reflect on how the participants continued to negotiate their differing interpretations of the Marshes in relation to their perceptions of what was communicated to the audience. Comments shared informally by friends and audience members who attended the performances provided thought-provoking feedback, which prompted much debate on the intentions behind the performance and the extent to which these were communicated. Through dialogue, the participants began to tease apart some intertwined trails of thought around their participation, the form of the performance - a collage of narratives, poetry, embodied images and metaphors and how it might have been received. Considering the attention in my practice-based research on the relationship between authorship and authority, their conversations provided useful insight into participants' perceptions of their involvement in authoring the performance.

Although the issues discussed where multifarious, there was a distinct circling around a specific inquiry as to whether the performance should have conveyed a more explicit "message" or whether the collage of multiple and diverse narratives afforded the audience a productive "room for thought".[153] On the one hand, what David wanted "was more message more narrative content", to have decided upon an "intended outcome" and built "it up into a little play"; a model that he "found very hard to detach from".[154] For him, the collage of narratives lacked this sense of clarity. As he explained it:

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[153] Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.
[154] David Gardiner: Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.

It depends on what the point of the exercise is, fair enough you present lots of stories and there will be lots of interpretations, and if that's all you want to do, you've done it. But if there was some particular aim, you know, if you wanted them to pick up some particular attitude to the Marshes they may have done that too. But you'd have to be clear about what the intended outcome was. I think I'm still a bit unclear on that one.[155]

For David, the interpretation between the various narratives was left to the audience. This reverberates, then, with the polyvocal approach often adopted for exhibiting oral histories, curating multiple narratives together rather than authoring a narrative through-line. Moreover, he was left unclear as to whether the group had generated an interpretation of the material, for apparently the lack of a singular crafted narrative was equated by David with an absence of "message".

Whereas others in the group perceived the openness of interpretation more positively, and in part a consequence of the diverse memory stories told, David attuned it to something he felt I had specifically wanted. As he proposed:

I think Siobhan just wanted to suggest things, wanted it very open-ended. She didn't want an agenda created by us that we are trying to get across to an audience.[156]

His comments suggest, then, he did not feel that he had the authority in the process to author a specific message that he wanted to convey to the audience. Although participants told their own memory stories, in storytelling and poetry, and co-generated movement and visual material around these narratives, he perceived a lack of ownership over the arc of the performance. This is perhaps more significant as the older adults engaged in curating the composition of the performance. They made decisions on the arrangement of the various installations and walked the Marshes together to decide the route of the promenade performance and placement of scenarios. However, through the insight gleaned during the

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155 David Gardiner: Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.
156 David Gardiner: Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.

project, I attuned to the possible grounds for his perception. Clearly, I devised workshops and fostered performance-making that considered ways in which interpretation might emerge in non-verbal expression, whereas David professed a preference for the linear narrative of short story writing. Equally, I suggest, his comments at this stage do not reflect upon the complexity of bringing together diverse experiences of the Marshes or the level of negotiation within the group.

On the other hand, Jo and Fitzroy both felt they engaged in communicating underlying meanings in the performance, particularly through the creation of metaphor. Although, as I will discuss later, the need to convey a "message" remained vexed. Furthermore, the sense of openness was welcomed; but whereas Jo amplified it in the making process, Fitzroy tuned into the audience experience. In response to David's comments, Jo suggested he was "working with an older concept of what drama intends to do". In contrast, she proposed:

> (W)e've been working with a new concept of oral history coming alive, and making a drama from what's come from people's real lives, as opposed to writing a play that is scripted with aims and objectives.[157]

Here, Jo tunes into a difference she apprehends in working with memory stories of various peoples lived experience. Moreover, in an attempt to make further sense of this "new concept" for the group, she draws parallels with the spontaneity of "ad hoc comedy and people thinking on their feet".[158] The experience of fluidity in the process was important to her, particularly in the movement from sharing memory stories, when she was not thinking about the audience, to generating material and putting it before the audience. As she noted:

> I mean I think that's what makes the whole thing. It's like using spontaneity, working with spontaneity, as we produced the unknown and we were suddenly in it and

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[157] Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.
[158] Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.

doing it... I like I like this stuff. Because it's more daring, it's more working with the unknown.[159]

In this way, she attends to the improvisatory basis of a devising process, grounded in an iterative cycle of the generation and regeneration of material. It is a point she exemplified in the way a workshop activity, such as the landscape painting "you know just enjoying the painting", was developed into an image for performance, "so I was suddenly doing something I felt confident within".[160] Thus, the openness of the process correlates with her confidence, a confidence, I suggest, bolstered by her ability to author material from elements of her lived experience she feels comfortable with.

In addition, as she continued, she drew a connection between this nurturing of openness with a growing inter-relatedness of the group. As she articulated:

> When we did stuff, we didn't know each other, we've got to remember we did not know each other, where we came from... and in the course of doing those workshops we learnt naturally about each other, we were allowed to you know, to interact .... So, I got so much more out of it than if I'd been told to sit down and together work on a script to tell a story, you know, the way you did it there was a naturalness amongst ourselves.[161]

As Jo reflects, it is the openness of a processual generation in which performance material emerged out of individual memory sharing activities, rather than devising to a specific agenda, which enhanced the sense that she had participated in something personally meaningful. Moreover, this is augmented by the nurturing of mutually supportive relationships, because by "working together", she explained, "there was no sense of like you know competition... vying for attention". Competition, she considered, was a potential fault-line of the play-writing model, thus, echoing the concern Fitzroy voiced in the earlier evaluation, over egos in the room.

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[159] Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.
[160] Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.
[161] Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.

The flexibility to respond to material as it emerged was also valued by Fitzroy, who suggested "if the performance came first it would have been a rider"; it would have constrained the telling and interpretation of their memory stories. However, his interest in supporting an openness of interpretation extended beyond the nurturing of his piece to "come out much more naturally" and stretched towards the experience of the audience. In a similar vein, Fitzroy drew upon references to another art form, in this case, film, to convey his understanding of how the entanglement of interpretation and form might communicate to an audience. Firstly, he proposed, in mainstream American films, "the audience is spoon-fed, every little nuance, every little thing is explained". In contrast, *From the Ground Up* was likened to "arty" films that use split screen techniques to portray multiple narratives simultaneously. As he noted of the performance:

> It worked really well and as I say it left room for for, people to think about what they see, think about the pieces separately and then think about the pieces in relation to each other... the audience can't be spoon-fed... that would detract from what we're trying to achieve.[162]

For Fitzroy, the interpretation resided singularly in each memory installation and in relation across the various pieces, inferred rather than explicitly dispatched, in the connections audience members garnered. A sentiment echoed in a number of audience feedback comments.

> There was enough space for me to interpret what was going on.[163]

> Flitting, butterfly-like, landing on a story and sampling it then fly off before the story is complete. Also, long reflective pauses.[164]

Akin to metaphor, then, sense-making in the performance reverberated in

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[162] Fitzroy Johnson: Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.
[163] Audience Questionnaire. *From the Ground Up*. 9th Jul. 2016.
[164] Audience Questionnaire. *From the Ground Up*. 10th Jul. 2016.

the links across narratives and images. But more specifically, for Fitzroy, it was authored in the group's selection of material and the composition of installations along the promenade trail.

In actuality, the "it" he began his sentence with did not simply refer to the performance as a whole, because he was speaking directly to the use of metaphor. In accord with Jo, he discerned the drama, and the interpretation of the memory narratives resounded in the visual and embodied metaphors they created. Thus, by unravelling the symbolism of his mud installation, he proffered an underlying interpretation, which he considered was communicated across the performance.

> I like the, the universality of say mud, for instance. Mud is everywhere. Mud is everywhere in earth. And the fact that it was more by accident than plan I told a story about my grandfather in Jamaica etcetera on the Marshes, kind of like links in that universal theme of protecting the earth. And that's, and how precious it is. So not only did it, so hopefully, the audience got a sense of the earth being very much if you like to be worshipped and to be taken care of.[165]

In Fitzroy's assessment, he was not merely telling a reminiscence from his childhood about cracked mud, amongst a number of other memory stories. But was contributing to an enveloping narrative, conveying the importance of environmental care and conservation, which he extends worldwide. In his claim of universality, there is a coming together, a connection between the earth in Jamaica and in the Marshes in Walthamstow, which was accentuated in performance by the patch of cracked earth he tried to mend with mud and filling knife, as he recounted his tale.

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[165] Fitzroy Johnson: Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.

Figure21: Cracked Mud installation. *From the Ground Up* performance, 9th Jul. 2016.
Image: Tracey Fahy.

However, there was also a separation of two singular places, in narrative and in site, and within the discussion, this reverberated with a concern raised earlier by Jo over the impact of portraying different places in the Marshes. For, towards the beginning of the conversation, Jo expressed a feeling of disquiet, which had been aroused by a comment of a friend who attended the performance.

> Someone said to me why was it about other countries. You know, it wasn't so much about the Marshes as they thought. I don't know what that means really. I enjoyed other people's experiences like from their origins, you know your experience (to Fitzroy), and that was made relevant to the story.[166]

For Jo, participants' recollections from other places were relevant to the performance narrative. Although she does not articulate how, I suggest Fitzroy's insights on his mud installation resonated with her non-verbal but sensed congruity. Moreover, I contend, in the process of coming together and getting to know each other's memory images she developed an awareness of the way the Marshes evoked recollections and connections to other places, which included her own memories of Blackpool. Nonetheless, on hearing her friend's feedback, she began to wonder whether the significance of this particular place, the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes, had distinctly come across.

In her assessment, "the threats to the Marshes" was the common cause that emerged from within the group, which they had "all worked on... for so long".[167] Furthermore, she apprehended how the theme resonated in many of the metaphors - the mud installation and the digger piece, already discussed, alongside her own installation. In performance, Jo had painted the landscape on the open lid of a trunk-like case, filled with grass and personal objects from home, and accompanied by audio recordings of 'memories of sky'. At the end, she closed the case lid to reveal upon it an estate agent's sign reading, St. Olen Estates, graphically articulating the threat she feared.

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[166] Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.
[167] Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.

Figure 22: Memories of Sky installation. *From the Ground Up* performance, 9th Jul. 2016.
Image: Tracey Fahy.

Figure 23: Memories of Sky installation. *From the Ground Up* performance, 9th Jul. 2016.
Image: Tracey Fahy.

The embodied metaphor Jo created was marked out by some audience members as a memorable piece, including the comment; "The older participant drawing, particularly the sign on her suitcase was very strong".[168] Yet now, she concluded:

> I don't know if it did enough for me at the end to like question the threats to the Marshes, what's going to happen, what can we do about it.[169]

In her observations, I attend to the high stakes involved in communicating the message that the Marshes might be under threat, for it is underpinned by a desire to galvanise people into action. Jo was a member of the Save the Lea Marshes campaign group, and she had been personally involved in the protests to try to prevent the diggers onto Leyton Marshes in 2012. She had participated in the decision to take direct action, created posters and leaflets, took her turn in standing the ground, supplied food for those who camped out on the site, was present when the Olympic Authority sent in the diggers and remembered the protest songs a woman sang as she lay with her child under a lorry to deter progress.[170] Moreover, the friend who raised the question over the "stories from other places", was also a member of the campaign and Jo invoked his authority as she introduced him; "he knows everything that has happened here".[171]

But following Jeffers, I attune to another understanding of "high stakes" in operation here, because in authoring a performance in which people's stories of other countries were made "relevant" the group subtly challenged the narrative of the Marshes as a bounded, insular place, that in some nostalgic way needs to be preserved. Again, this was not necessarily comfortable, especially when confronted by a querying authoritative friend. Yet in this conversation, where the participants adroitly reflected on the performance, in the manner they had become authorities in doing, Jo "was prepared to face up to the complex emotions that she

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168 Audience Questionnaire. *From the Ground Up*. 9th Jul. 2016.
169 Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.
170 Jo Robinson: Walking Conversation, 19th Apr. 2016.
171 Jo Robinson: Older Adults' Group Final Evaluation Discussion, 4th Aug. 2016.

felt in having her fiercely guarded history challenged in such a public way"
(2017: 222). The quote, here, borrowed from Jeffers refers to the effect on
one community writer of authoring a narrative in *Crimea Square* in which a
character was less than loyal to the protest against Home Rule in northern
Ireland prior to partition. Clearly, the context is replete with political
complexity, however, the evocation of loyalty, I suggest, resonates with Jo's
divided affiliations between the campaign narrative entwined with her
personal history and the performance narrative generated through being-
in-relationship in the temporary community. It is not, I argue, that the
narrative to protect the Marshes as left untold, but rather that the group
communicated a complex congregation of narratives to the audience,
which articulated something more of the different communities who inhabit
this place. As a member of the audience reflected,

> It created a sense of history and place in the Marshes but
> also a sense of the diversity of the local community and
> how people from different origins relate to the Marshes.[172]

In this chapter, I discussed the potential of *Tales from the Marsh* in
the redistribution of authority and in generating a space where individual,
and collective histories could be shared, explored and challenged. Re-
tuning to the iterative generative process in the creative workshops, I
observed that where memories and artistic forms emerged conjointly, a
glitch occurred between narrative and material form, which lured
participants' attention to the instability of their historical (re)presentations. In
particular, the social reflexivity developed through a collective getting to
know each other's memory worlds opened up the potential for community
participants to question and examine individual and broader received
narratives. Crucially, the older adults' group realised a proclivity to portray
the Marshes in a positive light, presenting an image that related more to
their affective attachment than the actuality of their lived experience.
Significantly, my research demonstrated how community participants can
develop a spirit of enquiry through an embodied listening, which can help

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[172] Audience Questionnaire. *From the Ground Up*. Jul. 2016.

counter the bias in community-centred projects to produce celebratory and parochial interpretations of a community's past.

The chapter progressed with an analysis of the use of metaphor as a means to interpret memory stories. With a particular emphasis on the embodied and the visual, my research illustrated creative ways in which metaphor can disrupt the storiness of memory, fostering a further suppleness in historical narratives through the unfolding of multiple associations. It proved particularly useful in generating links across community participants' diverse lived experience, bringing different narratives, personal and collective, into relation. Conversely, in the openness generated by metaphor, there is also an exposure, and this proved a considerable challenge for singular participants in singular instances. In my research, then, I learnt that where participants can open up to new perspectives and change personally and collectively held narratives and identities, such shifts may be temporary.

This understanding troubled my notion of the redistribution of authority, for where temporary change can be meaningful it is not necessarily perceived as such. Thus, where I would argue the community participants on *Tales in the Marsh* engaged in a meaningful re-writing of the Marshes story, this was not equally felt by all contributors. Collectively they articulated something of the complexity of the multifarious ways different local peoples relate to the Marshes. But, for some individuals, the lack of a common singular message resonated dissonantly. Finally, however, I came to realise that the co-authoring of this nuanced community narrative was not the only indicator of a redistribution of authority in the project. For in the way the older adults discussed the performance I attuned to an 'expert' critique, replete with an understanding of the intricacies of historical interpretation, the ramifications of different artistic decisions and a responsiveness to how the narrative was received.

CHAPTER 6: Listening Beyond *Tales from the Marsh:* Artists and Oral Historians in Community-Centred Practice

This thesis has investigated the intersection between oral history and applied performance practices and their shared interest in the telling of individual and collective stories. A growing emphasis on the democratisation of public histories has resulted in a turn to participatory practices in heritage contexts, with oral historians, performance practitioners and artists increasingly employed to engage with communities in the production of their own historical narratives. As I have suggested throughout this thesis, issues of authority and authorship remain complex and entangled in both practices, as performance-makers and historians try to balance the lived experience authority of participants with their own professional expertise in crafting and critiquing a narrative. To meet this concern, my research aimed to articulate how a shift in emphasis from authorship to listening as a creative practice might cultivate ways to redistribute authority. In particular, I have advocated an embodied listening practice. Through calling attention to embodied sensitivities, I have encouraged community participants to tune into sensate and corporeal memories of past encounters. Then, by developing modes of sense-making through movement, I have explored ways to enable participants to subtly shift away from the narrative basis of (hi)story-making. This is significant for oral history and reminiscence-based performance because sense-making in narrative form often involves narrators in *retelling* their stories, as individuals and collectively. As my research indicates, a haptic and embodied listening encourages participants to attend to the ways in which lived experience is communicated. This involves listening to the corporeal

and relational dimensions of lived experience and how this can prompt a re-thinking of established or received community narratives.

This chapter will reflect upon my learning throughout the process of the PhD research, and consider how embodied listening can inform the practices of oral historians and applied performance artist who want to engage community participants in the sharing and interpretation of individual and collective narratives. In the first section of this chapter, I will revisit the context and shared concerns of oral history and applied performance as community-building practices, which instigated my research, and reiterate my research questions. The second section offers a definition of embodied listening and outlines six guiding principles, which could influence future practice across both disciplines. In the third section, I will explore the implications of my research in more detail by focusing on the outcomes of the two research projects separately, while simultaneously shifting my address from the oral historian to the applied performance practitioner. Finally, I conclude the chapter by discussing a couple of examples of how participants have taken some of the embodied ways of knowing developed in the research project into their future worlds.

Oral History and Applied Performance: Community-building Practices

When I began this PhD, in 2014, I was aware that the tension between a critical community-based history and a community-based history which produces parochial celebrations was a key issue for oral history practice. Of particular note, the extension of the Heritage Lottery Fund to finance people as well as buildings had resulted in a swell of community-based oral history projects. A welcome renaissance, perhaps, but there was growing concern over the influences public funding exerted on cultural projects, in both heritage and arts sectors. In the case of oral history, HLF funding criteria prioritised oral history work with communities that were categorised by a single aspect of people's identity and one location. This emphasis, along with a focus on volunteerism, was linked to the

reinvigoration of community as a central element of policy-making under the New Labour government policies, from 1997 onwards. These policies aimed to encourage active participation and civic engagement, but equally 'managed' people towards social cohesion. As a result, then, there was a renewed emphasis on the homogenous local community; at their worst, projects generated insular, nostalgic and stable historical narratives that gave meagre account of the tensions within a community.

In similar vein, arts organisations were increasingly supported under governmental social inclusion agendas. This meant that arts projects had also been drawn to divide people into seemingly homogenous social groups. By affording access to people according to their experience of social exclusion, the sense of being something emphasised only that aspect of their identity. Moreover, the instrumental use of the arts and heritage as compensation for a perceived lack of social cohesion resulted in the tying of projects to demonstrable outcomes. In this way, these inclusive practices that aimed to counter dominant historical accounts risked producing narratives of community that represented a homogenous past. Moreover, attempts to widen participation to non-specialists in these areas of cultural production, which had conventionally been the preserve of experts, ultimately left existing power structures unaltered.

Troubled by the reified notions of community advanced in many participatory projects, I started to question the redistribution of authority operating within this work. In my previous experiences of working on oral history-based performance, I had observed the reciprocal exchange between the lived experience authority of community participants and the expertise of historians and performance-makers to craft and critique a narrative. However, the redistribution of authority, as Claire Blencowe asserts, hinges upon the opportunity for non-specialists to participate in experiences that are usually the preserve of experts. In this case, the critical interpretation of a community's history and the crafting of a public performance. I had questions, therefore, around how participants might move beyond the telling of individual life experiences to meaningfully

engage in the re-interpretation of their personal and collective narratives? Was it really not possible for non-specialists to develop the levels of expertise that would allow them to explore and challenge their (hi)stories, in such a way that apparently fixed identities could be questioned? Following Blencowe, the identification of certain practices as important for people to participate in, asserts greater authority in the field itself and therefore in its associated experts. In this case, I thought, might participation in the interpretation and public presentation of a community's narrative simply reaffirm the significance of this field of cultural representation, alongside the historians and performance-makers operating within it? To counter this double bind, Blencowe suggests, that by changing perceptions of what is important it may be possible to reconfigure who has participated.

Influenced by this proposal, I began my practice-based research by approaching listening to oral histories as an embodied practice. I did so, however, with an understanding that listening is part of a conversation and a practice of participation. In this context, I wanted to explore if and how a shift of emphasis in oral history interpretation from the authoring of statements to embodied listening might change perceptions of what is important and who has participated. What does it mean when we acknowledge that embodied lived experience cannot be fully represented discursively and is there a role for experiential creative activities in listening to non-verbal memories? If so, how can participants and practitioners be supported to listen more attentively? In this research, I explored ways sensate memories of embodied, affective and relational dimensions of participants past worlds are evoked through experiential methods of aesthetic walking and arts-based activities as well as questioning whether these non-verbal memories can offer new insight into participants' personal narratives.

I also had questions about if and how the cultivation of embodied ways of listening to the place where memories were initially formed might provide a gateway for the other-than-human to enter the conversation. What does the integration of walking and talking in the environment mean

for the mutual generation of knowledge in the oral history conversation? How can a listening through creative encounters with objects and materials enable participants to attend to non-verbal, embodied experiences of the past and what impact do different artistic mediums have upon their reminiscence? Further, I thought, if the vocal exchange of oral history and reminiscence storytelling fosters a listening directed towards meaning, then, can a listening through movement afford a means for participants to sense the ambiguous, the contradictory and the nuanced. If so, what a happens when these different forms of knowing the past are brought into relation? My final research question aimed to explore if a participatory listening can generate interconnections between participants and, if so, how might these connections either support or challenge established personal and collective histories?

In my practice-based-research, I intended to generate understanding on embodied listening to past and present experiences through two inter-related community-centred research projects. Through an analysis of these projects, I have gained insight into the relationship between community participants' engagement and my own role as an applied performance artist, by specifically attending to the way different regimes of knowledge and expertise were shared. There were two areas of attention in this thesis. The first was to understand how a synthesis of the oral history interview method and an experiential walking practice could extend the oral-aural communication between narrator and artist-interviewer towards a deeper sensory attentiveness, in which non-verbal, embodied and symbolic memories of place could be articulated. The second was to understand the contribution of arts-based experiential methods to the cultivation of a participatory listening, in which community participants could share, explore and challenge personal and communal narratives and identities. Later in this chapter, I will proffer a detailed consideration of the implications of these two areas of research for oral historians and applied performance artists, respectively. At this point, however, I will go on to outline six guiding principles, which could support embodied listening approach across both disciplines.

Principles for Embodied Listening

At the beginning of this thesis I pointed out how my research involved me in an entangled listening; as I proceeded, I came to realise that I did not need to tease apart the various trails I listened too - the corporeal and narrative, the past and present, the community and local place. The interdisciplinary character of my research has moulded the way it contributes to the shared links between oral history and applied performance, as well as, to each singular discipline. In taking my research forward, I wanted to find a way to speak to this interface, and therefore, I suggest, a set of underlying principles as a useful means to guide future practice for both oral historians and applied performance artists. In this section, I will firstly, offer a definition of embodied listening and secondly, outline six guiding principles, which I have found characterise the identity of the creative participatory listening that I have developed through my research. Embodied listening encompasses a broad range of creative corporeal practices, and in my research, I considered the potentiality of a situated experiential walking, a generative art-making with objects and materials, and modes of performance-making in movement, poetry, theatrical metaphor and embodied image. The practice is defined through the relationships is engenders; firstly, in terms of placing narrative and embodied ways of knowing the past into relation, and secondly, as a participatory practice in which different regimes of knowledge, ergo lived experience, are shared and mutually informing.

Embodied listening is both a corporeal practice and a way of knowing the past that recognises we are always in relation.

Principle One: embodied listening addresses the lack of attention to non-verbal memories in the oral-aural communication typical of oral history and reminiscence-based performance. By cultivating sensate ways of listening, as exemplified by experiential walking and arts-based activities,

oral historians and performance-makers can enable participant narrators to access embodied memories, which might not otherwise be articulated. Sensorial encounters with an environment or related object can help trigger remembrance of past corporeal activity and open the possibility for participants to sensately perceive differences between past and present experience. By listening to embodied sensitivities, rather than directing attention towards discursive sense-making, participant narrator, historian and artist can subtly tune into embodied ways of knowing. Embodied listening, then, generates insight into inveterate bodily dispositions that are culturally and temporally emplaced.

Principle Two: the haptic encounter is particularly significant in embodied listening. Through touch, community participants can come into contact with their past worlds and crucially be touched back. By creating opportunities to touch artefacts, materials and surfaces in the present, oral historians and theatre artists can open up a cavity through which past material and embodied encounters can come into the present and touch the narrator with affect. Materials and objects in the remembered past manifest as presence, rather than conceptual sense. By nurturing a careful attentiveness to the presence of an object participants can elicit new insight that stretches beyond meanings already configured in the mind. By vibrating the past in slight dissonance with the here and now, the presence of a remembered object can prompt narrators to rewrite their personal narratives. Thus, listening through touch supports community participants to move away from sense-making in narrative form to enliven other ways of knowing their pasts.

Principle Three: the openness that characterises embodied listening is responsive to the way participants' memories arise contingently in relation to each present moment. It is multi-directional; as participants listen through all the senses in experiential generative processes, they are enabled to tune into memories in multiple forms - embodied, sensory, affective and relational. Equally, embodied listening is multi-directioned; creative and embodied modes of listening foster a loosening of intention as participants'

past experiences emerge coevally along unfolding flows of making and remaking. Itinerant embodied processes accent the fluidity of memory. As recollections emerge differently in each creative form so participants can perceive that their memory stories are open to interpretation. In being open, there is an exposure. Opening to past embodied knowledge can prompt participants to re-think individual and community narratives. Furthermore, oral historians and applied performance artists might also be surprised in the return from an embodied listening encounter. As it tunes into feedback from participants, human and the other-than-human, verbal and non-verbal, so established research practices may be opened up to other regimes of knowledge.

Principle Four: in this invitation to openness community participants, artists and oral historians are encouraged to listen to resonance, or in other words, to attend to spaces in-between. Firstly, embodied listening harkens to the vibrations between what is spoken and bodily ways of knowing, supporting an entwined tuning into tacit knowledge - embodied, situated, and relational. In this in-between feeling thought and touching feeling, narrators can be enabled to stretch beyond the storiness of memory, in which meaning is affixed in simple cause and effect narrative form. Secondly, in generative, creative activities, the placing of things, places, people and memories into relation, invites participants to fill the space with associations and disassociations. By amplifying and muting different associations, ergo different dimensions of lived experience, participants may once again try out new ways of thinking about and (re)presenting traditionally held ideas and narratives.

Principle Five: embodied listening engenders a listening-with rather than a listening to. Whether walking with a narrator or generating memory worlds in a participatory group, there is always a listening alongside. As we walk and make responsively with each other, there is an opportunity for theatre artists and oral historians to listen through their own embodied sensitivities to the ways participants move in relation to the world. Moreover, listening-with opens the possibility to attend to the other-than-human, the

ground in response to a stepping together or the haptic encounter with the object opens up to a multifaceted conversation. Creative listening activities can enable participants to generate, share and reflect on their memory-story-images together. By fostering a collective reflexivity, where participants get to know their memory images through mutual exploration and questioning, a spirit of inquiry may be generated in which broader social narratives are examined.

Principle Six: the redistribution of authority that may be fostered in embodied listening is not tied to the authoring of statements. Firstly, in a bodily being-together the narrator's corporeal dispositions can exert explicit and implicit influence on the way the oral historian or applied performance artist goes about their research. Secondly, through entwining the creation of memory images with a reflective interpersonal exchange, an emergent authority emerges in the temporary community to critically re-interpret their individual and collective narratives. Over time, the growing capacity to examine and question their narratives can embolden participants' confidence as authorities on their own history. More so, participants can develop expertise in this reflexive practice, an embodied and relational way of knowing history, which they may take with them into future projects.

Brought into relation these six principles illustrate how embodied listening draws together strands of oral history and applied performance practice to offer community participants multiple ways to listen to past lived experience. During *Tales from the Marsh*, community participants developed a creative and reflexive co-operation, fostering a spirit of inquiry in which historical narratives were questioned, and artistic potentialities were negotiated. In the embodied listening participants engaged in, however, there was a loosening of the tie between authority and authoring statements, acknowledging something of the complex and subtle ways personal and collective histories exert influence on our lives in the present.

These principles are useful for practitioners of either discipline who want to engage community participants in embodied ways of getting to

know their past worlds. However, I also recognise there were particular leanings towards oral history and applied performance in my two research projects. Thus, the walking conversations engaged with a mobile situated interview technique; while the participatory workshops embraced art- and performance-making processes. To consider the implications of my research more fully, then, I will now consider these two aspects separately whilst concurrently shifting the attention of my address from the walking oral historian to the applied performance artist, via a joint focus on the use of the object. In the following section, therefore, I will discuss the relevance of these principles in relation to the specific practices of the walking conservation and the processual generation of memory-story-images, as a means of participatory sense-making.

Walking the Oral History Conversation

The walking conversations that I developed in my first practice-based research project attempted to challenge the orthodoxy of the oral history interview as a typically private and sedentary exchange by situating it in a mobile encounter with the Walthamstow and Leyton Marshes. Synthesising the oral history method and an experiential walking practice, I advocated an embodied approach to listening to the inter-subjective exchange and the sensate qualities of the surrounding environment. As a means of sharing people's first-hand experience, the oral history conversation can tell us much about changes in a place, in its physical characteristics, its usage and its cultural significance. However, despite a growing recognition of human experience as founded in sensory perception, as oral historian Paula Hamilton notes, there has been little engagement with the senses in oral history practice. In response to the idea that bodily practices cannot be fully represented discursively, my research drew upon oral history and performance practices, to make a case for a conjoined dialogic and embodied listening.

The body is central to inhabiting and knowing place. For oral

historians, then, walking and talking with a narrator in a site offers an equivalently embodied, situated and contingent way of knowing. As my research indicated, inviting narrators to guide a walk of their own choosing enables participants to author the route and the type of bodily engagement, opens up opportunities to share embodied knowledge. In the walking conversation practice, I learnt that sensorial encounters with the environment where corporeal memories were initially formed, effects narrators' recollections and how these are interpreted. Sight is a particularly effective medium in triggering memory. A view of a feature in the landscape frequently prompted the remembrance of a past sighting. Visual cues can help a narrator to locate a recollection specifically to a singular spot and moment. But equally the temporal dissonance pricked by an absence, revealed through the recollection of composite memories layered over time, can engender an appreciation of how a place has changed.

In encountering a site with a narrator, the interviewer's own sensate perceptions can aid them grasp the changes the narrator describes. By walking side by side narrator and oral historian can share the same views of spatial features that arise in the oral conversation. As my research demonstrated, this encourages further questions and reflections, which in turn supports the mutual generation of interpretations. I also observed that my discernment of narrators' past events was bolstered by my own visual imaginings. When, for example, I visualised recalled descriptions and juxtaposed these with my real-time sightings. However, with a note of caution to interviewers, I came to realise how easy it is to focus on visual perceptivity, and therefore, not take into account the full range of the senses.

Embodied listening, I propose, it is not merely a matter of what is seen and heard. The walking conversations practice indicated that other real-time and recalled sensory perceptions become layered; so for example, the felt walking on a wood chipped path rung out in contrast to a past navigation of a muddy, barely formed trail. As I learnt from this

process, bodily encounters with the environment enable narrators to access involuntary, embodied and sensate memories, which might not otherwise be articulated. Once remembrance of past corporeal experience has been sensately pricked, sense-making can take place. In the case above, the narrator's reflections on increased site management and the curtailment of unmediated bodily encounters. As a situated practice, walking conversations facilitate an encounter with a singular environment, and the narrators' attentiveness to their livened senses quickens the site into speech.

The theories of Jean Luc Nancy extended my thinking about listening as a way to conjointly put, sensation and perception, and, the human and other-than-human, in touch with each other. In my analysis of the walking conversation practice, I paid particular attention to the sense of touch in narrators' past and present experiences of the Marshes. In touch, there is a return, and I perceived that when walkers touched the marsh, they were touched back with affect. As touch is more intimate and proximal, it appeared less in our discursive conversations. However, my careful attention to the narrators' haptic sensitivities in a pedestrian touch elucidated something more of their affective and symbolic relationships to this place. In taking the practice forward, I suggest that oral historians not only think about the way sensory encounters with the environment can trigger remembrance. More so, embodied listening can generate insight into the temporality of narrators' sensory experiences. It can elucidate how sensate encounters with the site have changed over time, and the symbolic and affective significance narrators' attach to this.

By spending time with narrators occupied in their corporeal doings and attending to their own kinaesthetic sensitivities, oral historians can start to listen to their companion's inveterate bodily dispositions. Through paying attention to the work of anthropologist Tim Ingold, and I came to understand movement as a way of knowing. Thus, in the walking conversations, I realised that as narrators touched, heard, saw the Marshes, so I sensately listened to their way of knowing. When I accompanied LVRPA

volunteer, John Sellar, on three bird monitoring walks I tuned into the way he listened attentively and looked for movement rather than stasis. This embodied sharing of knowledge deepened my understanding of the recalled experiences he shared; how he learnt birding with his peers as a child and the correlations he made with his work as a police officer. This is significant for an embodied listening practice, because it highlights the way knowledge is accrued through relationship to others, including the other-than-human. If oral historians can develop a capacity to listen more attentively to narrators' embodied ways of listening, seeing, walking, so they might be able to come into contact with participants' bodily dispositions. Corporeal actions, generated in relation in past encounters, which as non-verbal, inveterate habitus might not readily be communicated in the oral-aural conversation. Furthermore, I learnt that in the openness of embodied listening there is equally an exposure. So, I was surprised to discover how John's embodied dispositions subtly influenced the way I listened to and observed the Marshes when walking alone. Embodied listening, then, engenders a different mode of redistributing authority. It enables participants to share knowledge not only through narrative and discussion but also through the expertise of their corporeal doings.

In taking this forward into oral history practice, I am mindful that I brought my own expertise as a trained movement practitioner to this kinaesthetic, embodied listening. I note, also, that my sensate attunement to John's corporeality emerged over a number of walks, in which, crucially, he was engaged in the bodily activity of bird monitoring. It suggests that the embodiment of another's way of moving, however slight, is not instantaneous. If oral historians are to adopt embodied listening in a mobile interviewing practice, I suggest, they extend the walking conversation over a number of encounters, in order to build up their sensate awarenesses of a narrator's bodily activities. I also encourage the embrace of an ethnographic approach, in which the oral historian accompanies the narrator in their 'everyday' purposeful activity. Moreover, there is further scope to explore how embodied sensitivities might be fostered in oral

historians and volunteer interviewers engaged on community-based history projects. In future practice, I would like to extend the sensory mapping activities I developed in my workshop-based research into a preparatory activity for walking conversations. This preparation would aim to nurture a deeper sensory attentiveness in interviewers in advance of a mobile encounter with the narrator.

As is evident from the discussion above, embracing a mobile, embodied listening approach is not without its challenges for oral history. When I started the walking conversations, I quickly learnt that the improvisational and contingent character of walking unsettled the interview schedule; because the changing sensory perceptions of the environment guided the conversation in different directions. Rather than a constraint, however, I submit, this as a productive way for the other-than-human to enter, and more so, to structure the dialogue. On the other hand, the placing of attention on sense-making in the oral-aural communication can foreclose the interviewer's embodied sensitivities. It suggests, oral historians might embrace an oscillation between narrative, discursive and embodied forms, in which meaning emerges in the reverberations between different ways of knowing. Embodied listening, then, is not a listening directed towards a sense-making grounded in the critical authority of the scholar. It tunes into feedback from participants, human and non-human, verbal and non-verbal, so that established research practices may be opened up to other regimes of knowledge.

Understanding the Role of the Object in Reminiscence

The use of objects as a tool to prompt recollection is a well-established practice in reminiscence work with community participants, which has been employed by oral historians, museum practitioners and reminiscence theatre-makers. In my research, the introduction of marsh related objects and materials in arts-based workshops played a similar

mnemonic role, and the process affords productive insight into this practice. When working in community-based venues, the deployment of found objects and materials can help participants get in touch with the site itself. This is helpful, especially, when a site is not readily accessible to specific groups. For some participants, in the workshops I delivered, the associative power of the object prompted recalled experiences of the Marshes. However, for others, it prompted memories of embodied encounters with other past worlds. It implies that where the object can usefully act as a substitute for the place itself, it is vital for workshop facilitators to select objects that remain open to interpretation, so that all participants have an opportunity to reminisce, to speak and to listen. A further distinction in participants' engagement lies in how remembrance can be triggered by a literal 'reading' of the object or by its symbolic associations. So, the bird's nest, for example, not only cued memories of nest raiding and spying a rousting bird, but also those associated with its connotations as a home. In my workshops, this availability of the object was amplified by paying careful attention to its aesthetic presentation. Enhancing its effect as a disruption in the 'everyday' workshop space can further open the object up to potentially contradictory or ambiguous affiliations. Furthermore, by prompting participants to listen for resonances in the object and shared memory stories, workshop facilitators can enhance this sense of stretching beyond articulable meaning.

In this embodied listening practice, significance is equally attached to the material qualities of the object alongside the conceptual meanings it evokes. In the workshops, I observed, that participants' haptic perceptions of the object held in their hands triggered the recollection of specific material and embodied encounters in their past worlds. The felt disrepair of the nest, for example, cued remembrance of the material condition of David's past house, along with the corporeal and relational activity of renovating it. This is significant because opportunities for haptic encounters with historical artefacts has proven problematic in museum engagement practices, particularly when the emphasis remains on material conservation. However, my research indicates that touch plays a crucial

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role in participants' recollection of past sensate and embodied experience. The theories of Tim Ingold supported my understanding that life is lived along trails unfolding through the world, and in journeying, we encounter not things but affordances for bodily interaction. In my practice, I propose, the real-time touching of objects stimulates the remembrance of past tactile sensations, which as bodily encounters helps put participants in touch with the embodied and relational dimensions of past everyday life. In accord with the haptic encounters generated by walking in a site, touching objects can also call forth lived experiences that are typically non-verbal and not easily articulable. For reminiscence work, therefore, I encourage historians and artists to take into account the material-tactile qualities of an object, whether artefact or substitute, for it wields an influence on participants' recollection, and their interpretations thereafter.

In my research, I learnt that objects in the remembered past manifest as presence, rather than as conceptual sense. Therefore, an embodied listening to the object can enable participants to elicit new insight beyond already configured meanings. With reference to the writings of Elco Runia, I discovered that a recalled object can act as a cavity through which presence rather than meaning is transferred from the past into the present. Objects do not arise in a recollection to aid the work of the narrative. Instead, they emerge as 'stowaways' entangled with the embodied and relational dimensions of past experience. These object-action encounters go unnoticed, Runia proposes, not because they are hidden but because they are commonplace, existing within cultural practices that are inculcated by the social norms of a time and place. The way the unrepresented is present in the here and now is, for Runia, of equal importance as meaning. In this case, I contend, the nest employed in my workshops resonated with participants' past nests, trees, trunks, and their embodied, commonplace actions of scrumping, climbing, packing and unpacking clothes. Moreover, my research demonstrated that the cavity opened up by past objects actualises a mutual touching, in which participant narrators may be touched back with affect. When Fitzroy touched the nest in the past, for example, it provoked feelings of guilt.

Because the remembered nest was pulled into the present, it reverberated with his present-day sensibilities, provoked him to perceive and reflect on the environmental and cultural implications of his past nest raiding.

By fostering an embodied listening to objects, touched tangibly in the room and in the past, historians and artists can encourage community participants to listen for the obliquely communicated dimensions of embodied and relational experience. As signalled in the example above, the surprise of distance in proximity generated by the past-present objects standing together slightly out of place, can draw participants to re-think their personal stories. This is of value in reminiscence work because when participants typically recall in narrative form they often recount the stories they have told or rehearsed before. Moreover, in the participatory listening generated in my workshop practice there was a collective attending to resonances in their memories of past embodied and relational experiences. In this social encounter participants began to question broader notions of place, community belonging and migration. By adopting this practice, then, historians and artists can support participants to move away from sense-making solely in narrative form and to open possibilities to question established personal and community stories.

The Processual Making and Remaking of Memory Worlds

Understanding the role of objects in re-writing personal and community narratives also involves an appreciation of how memory worlds can be generated through a wide range of creative mediums. In a reminiscence context, the arts can foster a mobile knowing forged in movement, because they enable engagement with various non-verbal and embodied forms of expression. In my practice, this included creating memory worlds in materials, image, movement and dramatic metaphor. By developing itinerant embodied processes, performance-makers can help extend participants' listening beyond the narrative of reminiscence and draw attention to the way memories surface in multiple forms. Instead of

the singular touch of an object, the generative unfolding in artistic modes of making helps to put participants in touch with material, corporeal and social *trails* in their past worlds.

In my research, I advocated the strategy of 'a conversation between media' as a means for participants to generate recollections and interpretative forms coevally. This does not prefer a sequence in which memories are formed narratively in the first instance only then to be interpreted in creative form. Instead, sensate sense in making and perceptual sense in reminiscence surface in relation. Simultaneously, the presence of past bodily action leaks into the present through the touch and corporeality of making, whether with materials or in embodied forms. Cycles of forming and reforming can encourage a listening to the emergent, yet-to-be-formed; it enables participants to discover as they go along and to propagate multiple images of their memory worlds. Hence, by employing making as 'a conversation between media' performance-makers can animate a journeying through memory images, and so aid participants to explore their past worlds from various perspectives. This accents the fluidity of memory. Because recollections emerge differently in each creative rendering participants, come to perceive that their memory narratives are open to change.

In a processual generation and regeneration of creative memory images, manifold encounters are constellated together, both in individual art-making and in collective performance-making. This is significant as it enables community participants to foster connections and points of comparison within their memory stories and across their diverse lived experience. As my research demonstrated by listening to the spaces between the assemblages of various images, dissonant glitches can be acknowledged, leading participants to question already formed or received narratives. In my workshops, for example, the older adults group came to perceive their propensity to represent the Marshes in overly positive and romanticised ways, portraying how they wanted it to be, rather than, the actuality of their lived encounters. In the ensuing discussion,

then, they came to understand something more about the way their identities, as performed through their marsh inhabitations, were influenced by collective narratives of this local place. Alternatively, listening-in-between the congregation of memory images can forge fresh affiliations, which might equally effect participants' sense of place. In practice, the object as stimulus to remembrance operates as a thematic cue. It prefers the elicitation of discreet memories to biographical life-stories, which typically compound simple cause and effect narratives. By employing an object-based thematic approach, theatre artists can amplify the potential for participants to reflect on commonalities and differences across their lived experiences, and so open up broader social understandings.

As the generation of memory images takes many expressive forms, the practice also requires participants to come together to explore the meanings communicated within their images. Because iterative making processes stretch listening beyond everyday purposive thinking, there is a necessity for participants to 'get to know' these creative depictions. It is not necessarily that the memory images are less proximal or intimate than narratives, but more that the ambiguity and multiplicity of meaning prompts engagement in further sense-making. By creating a reflective space, in which there is a mutual sharing and critique of memory image-stories with (a) companion(s), applied performance artists can foster a spirit of inquiry. Moreover, by placing individual stories into relation within the congregation of the group, broader social and cultural narratives can be investigated. In this way, the practice can support participants to generate instances of meaningful social reflexivity. This has important implications for the community history project, which can be vexed by a lack of criticality exercised by community participants. My research points to the potential for non-specialist participants to wield critical interpretative authority, as demonstrated in their evaluations of memory images, both in the workshop space and public performance.

To reiterate, the listening to individual and collective memory in this practice is underpinned by a knowing through movement. By attending to

embodied sensitivities whilst traversing as a wayfarer through a series of creative encounters, community participants attune to sensate, corporeal and affective dimensions of their past worlds. Once again, Ingold's notion of life lived along unfolding trails, can help applied performance artists to understand how embodied knowledge travels with participants as they journey from place to place. So, on arrival at a place, whether a locality of inhabitation or the temporary community of the project, some memory of this wayfaring knowledge remains and influences a person's knowledge of the new place. In my workshops, I was struck by the way participants' processual encounters with materials quickened memories of habitation elsewhere and how this had become entangled in their relationships with the Marshes. My research indicates that in the engagement with itinerant modes of making there is a retracing of action and sensation, which brings embodied, relational experiences of participants' past places into the present of the workshop. It is, I suggest, in the coming to know these memory images, that participants' non-verbal knowledge re-writes their memory stories. Knowledge that may well have previously gone unheard because it is intertwined with the everyday, the ingrained or the embodied. In this embodied listening practice, then, participants can be enabled to tune into the way their past experience and corporeal knowledge has travelled with them, and crucially exerts a tacit effect upon their present way of being-in-the-world.

Theatrical Metaphor as a Mode of Interpretation

The staged re-iteration of memory narratives has become a recognised outcome in oral history projects, and as outlined in chapter two, an established dramatic form in verbatim theatre. As a communicative event, performance proves a particularly effective medium for placing private memories into a public arena, and so, offers a productive opportunity to put seemingly individual stories into relation with collective narratives. It is not simply the performance itself that manifests as a dialogic space where memories can be publicly shared and discussed. Because

performance-making supports sense-making, so the engagement of community participants in the active (re)-interpretation of their memory stories involves them in processes of exploring and challenging individual and community histories. In my research, I suggested that the interpretative act does not necessarily have to be conceived as the authoring of statements. Instead, I advocated the creation of visual and embodied metaphors as a way for participants to co-operatively bring their memory worlds into being-with-one-another.

By facilitating the generation of visual and embodied metaphors, rather than literal resemblances, performance-makers can enable community participants to articulate something more of the sensate and affective dimensions of their past worlds to an audience. In metaphor, we are invited to think of one entity in terms of another entirely separate entity; it connotes meaning relationally, in the return between associated entities. In listening through theatrical metaphor, participants can be encouraged to cognitively generate meaning in the connections between memories, movements, narratives and materials. In my workshops, I attended to the resonances in participants' memory stories and selected materials and objects in association to their past worlds. In performance-making, participants developed embodied images and metaphors through their interaction with these objects and materials. So, for example, Fitzroy, making in relation with his nest memory, tried to put broken eggshells back together, thus, generating a metaphoric act of repair for his past destruction. As my research indicated, the generation of creative metaphors in non-linguistic form can help tune interpretative attention back to the sensate and the embodied. Because metaphor in theatrical representation communicates across all the dramaturgical elements - viscerally, visually and through the spoken word it can enable participants to communicate the haptic, aural and visual aspects of their lived experience. Moreover, embodied metaphors can help participants to make sense of emotions and complex or intangible ideas by developing associations with more accessible entities, or in performance-making terms, images.

Where the re-enactment of a memory story tends to solidify the narrative, my research demonstrated that interpretation through creative metaphor offers the possibility for participants to generate multifarious, nuanced and ambiguous readings. The creative metaphor acts as an invitation to thought, it does not prescribe the type of association in advance but unfolds through a trail of associations. In Fitzroy's broken eggshells metaphor, the embodied image affiliated with his present-time feelings of guilt and an understanding that things done in the past cannot be undone. More so, when the image was performed in the Marshes, these interpretative affiliations expanded to encompass broader associations with environmental damage and the relationship between the human and the other-than-human. In metaphor, then, one association gives rise to another association, building a web-like network of connections. Furthermore, as I observed in the performance-making process, these unfurling trails of associations can foster a critical distance, in which participants can link the metaphoric image to broader narratives. It is this capacity, I suggest, that makes theatrical metaphor an especially effective way for community participants to co-create interpretations. The openness of creative metaphor to accrue affiliations supports devising processes where ideas are voiced, images and affects played with and meanings are collaboratively negotiated.

In taking this forward, I suggest, that applied performance artists encourage participants to map new ideas and creative forms onto an embodied metaphor in the collective making process. In the workshops, I observed how the 'broken promises' metaphor, for example, generated co-operative interpretation through the propagation of affiliations with smashed china animals and narratives of environmental protest. These affiliations, I propose, emerged into those spaces opened up by the metaphor that resonated with some aspect of participants' own remembered pasts. In this way, interpreting recollections through embodied metaphor encourages participants to not only listen to resonances between different dimensions of their own past worlds, but to

perceive something more about being-one-with-another, in the connections across their diverse lived experiences. Furthermore, by amplifying and muting different associations, ergo different dimensions of lived experience, the unfolding theatrical metaphor can enable participants to try out new ways of thinking about and (re)presenting apparently stable ideas, narratives and identities.

On the other hand, the adoption of theatrical metaphor as a mode of collaborative interpretation is not without its challenges for non-specialist participants. Through my research, I came to understand the varying capacities of participants to manifest their memory stories in embodied metaphors, with attendant implications for their interpretative authority. I observed, for example, that the young people's ability to form poetic metaphors was predicated upon their skills in English as a second language. Moreover, where the collectivity of the group was able to link multifarious associations to the 'broken promises' metaphor, David as the metaphor's instigator, found this entanglement unfurled too far from his initial intention. The understanding forwarded by Lakoff and Johnson on metaphor as a product of our social norms, can help artists attend to the way creative metaphors accrue markedly different meanings across cultures, individuals and instances in time. Accordingly, applied performance artists facilitating collective sense-making might need to balance the potential of theatrical metaphor to render complex, nuanced and interconnected interpretations. Because there is equally a possibility, the metaphor may tip into making no-sense, for one or more participant.

As my research signalled, affiliations linked by participants to the embodied metaphor emerge tangentially, in the rebound of referral; thus, the metaphor resounds in a constant state of becoming. For some participants, perhaps those who prefer a more straightforward kind of thinking, this may feel uncomfortable and can vex intentions to directly communicate a singular message. Moreover, the insight, developed in my research, on how the presence of the past-present object exerts affect, can also alert performance-makers' to the potentially difficult emotions

aroused when associations are layered onto a participant's lived object-action encounter. In addition, I observed that as a complex metaphor generates a singularity that connects multiple experiences, so it also produces a plurality of ideas and images that entreat numerous implicit and explicit negations. In supporting the creation of entangled metaphors, performance artists should be mindful that where a multiplicity of choice can engender communal decision-making; competition can equally threaten social cohesion. In such instances, the artist may be called upon as the caretaker of the participatory community to intercede and broker a compromise; correspondingly suggesting the final authorial authority lies with the artist.

The notion of openness as coevally an invitation and an exposure, however, can help applied performance artists move towards a more nuanced understanding of the redistribution of authority in this embodied listening practice. Where the invitation of an embodied metaphor opens to other(s') affiliations, there is equally an exposure to multiple and new perspectives. For David, the expanded metaphor rang discordantly both in relation to the affective qualities of his memory narrative and to the precariousness of its meaning. It was, then, as a means of foreclosing this exposure that he proposed a return to the sense-making of his initial memory narrative. If artists can listen to Blencowe's idea that an openness to creativity *and* risk anticipates participation in meaningful experiences. Then, they might be encouraged to attend to the small shifts in participants' experience as a subtle redistribution of authority. Through this approach, I came to perceive that in the creation of the embodied metaphor and the being-with-others David was enabled to express a different facet of himself; he meaningfully engaged in re-interpretation beyond the linear narrativity he preferred, but this opening was temporary.

This insight can be amplified to speak to the performance-making process as a whole. In the openness of generating interpretation through embodied metaphor and an iterative making together, the participants authored an intricate collage of image, movement and narrative that

communicated something of the various communities who inhabit the Marshes. Their interpretation challenged received narratives, which typically render the Marshes as a bounded, preservable place, that in some way remains tied to an idealised rural past. However, there was also an exposure. As the evaluation discussion indicated, the nuanced and entangled interpretation disrupted a hitherto tacit aim of some participants to convey a simple cause and effect narrative of the Marshes under threat and in need of protection. Again, it suggests that where embodied ways of interpretation can enable participants to re-write their individual and community stories, such changes to narratives and identities may well be temporary. Nevertheless, this does not detract from the risks involved for participants of even small and temporary shifts. The complex emotions, for example, pricked in Jo as she tried to reconcile her personal history as an ardent defender of the Marshes with her inclusivity towards the stories of people from other countries. In taking this work forward, then, it is important for applied performance artists to pay close attention to small changes, to nurture an expansive listening in themselves, which can register and attend to such nuanced affects. In this way, I propose, artists can better support the constant negotiations around the limits of the challenges participants, individually and collectively feel comfortable to author and communicate into a public arena.

The lure to return to a simple narrative here presents a much more significant constraint to my research when amplified as a broader turn to narrative in the representation of our historical pasts. Following Hayden White's argument for the enmeshment of historical and literary writing, in which meaning is linked to the narrative form, historians have engaged with narrativity more consciously. Although White's thesis spoke against claims for the historian's potential to uncover objective truths about the past; narrative equally can wield a capacity to cement historical representations. Influenced by the ambition to make sense of the past, historians may be drawn to forward simple cause and effect narratives, which dissolve the messy entanglement of lived experience. As discussed in chapter four of this thesis, narrative is particularly problematic because of

the role it plays in the construction of individual and collective identities. Where narrative can provide a sense of coherence to people's lives; the (hi)stories people entertain about themselves influence their ways of being in the present.

In my research, I learnt that by listening to how narrators recall first-hand experience, oral historians have discovered and shared much about the fragmentary and contingent quality of memory. This insight, I suggest, operating alongside endeavours to expand the sharing of authority, have led oral historians to experiment with polyvocal modes of re-presenting oral histories. Concomitantly, theatre artists, informed by postmodern performance practices, have also played with non-linearity in the telling of personal and collective stories. In the performance-making of my research, I similarly encouraged participants to create a collaged effect. This productively open up spaces between lived experience accounts fostering opportunities for both connectivity and ambiguity. But ultimately, I contend, in accord with the evaluative reflections of the older adults, narrativisation then falls to the audience.

More so, I advocated embodied listening and sense-making because it enables participants to get in touch with the material, corporeal and affective dimensions on their past worlds. Lived experience that is not readily communicated in the meaningful content of their stories. As this embodied knowledge emerges in relation to the generative processes of making with materials and theatrical metaphor, there is opportunity for its presence to re-write participants' memory stories. The attention nurtured in embodied listening to all the corporeal senses is significant here for it speaks back to a lack of address to sensory experience in oral history practice. As my research demonstrated, attending to performance sensibilities can encourage oral historians to pay attention to the liveness of the encounter with a narrator. To some extent, it echoes the entreaty made by Portello nearly thirty years ago in which he drew the historian's focus away from the written word of the transcript to listen sensately to the vocal expressivity of the stories told. However, as argued by Paula Hamilton, this opening to the

senate remains largely tuned to the oral-aural register, with sparse attention to the broader range of senses. Even as I attended to Hamilton's writing, I noted how her investigation into methodology segued into the telling of narrators' stories. This I have found to be typical of oral history writing. Moreover, as I wrote this thesis, I also felt a tension between my inclination as a practitioner to elucidate the doings of my practice-based research and a desire to tell the stories I had heard in the process. It illustrates, once more, the lure of narrativity. One of the challenges, then, in taking my research forward relates to a wider difficulty posed to scholarship of how to explicate embodied knowledge in written form.

That being said, in practice, I might return to the promise of performance, expressed at the beginning of this section, as a means to put private memories into a public arena. However, if I attune to the resurgence of verbatim theatre in recent years, I hear a similar amplification of the oral iteration of narrative as the basis for meaning. The appearance of headphone verbatim theatre, in which actors, in performance, listen to and speak along with edited audio interviews, aims to achieve the faithful reproduction of a narrator's speech. In contrast to conventional verbatim pieces, meaning is not simply tied to word and narrative, but more so, is seen to reside in-between the what and the how of the spoken word. In accord with oral history, then, developments in verbatim theatre support an understanding of the way vocal intonation and expressivity contribute towards meaning and help communicate an affective sense to the audience. However, I remain circumspect of claims that link the use of headphones to notions of authenticity in the reproduction of the verbatim subject, when there is scant attention to any other aspect of the sensate in an embodied lived experience.

The contribution my research makes to oral-history based performance is to re-tune attention onto the embodied in our re-presentations of lived experience memory. In workshops, the haptic listening to objects and materials and the iterative creation of memory images as a wayfarer journeying through making and remaking

encourages recollection and interpretation to unfold coevally in multiple forms. In performance, the creation of visual and embodied metaphors supports the communication of embodied and affective dimensions of past experience, which crucially do not appear in the meaningful content of narrators' stories. In an embodied listening practice, participants are encouraged to attend to the emotive resonances of *presence* in the object-action relationship, both in the remembered past encounter and in the present generative making. It fosters opportunities to come into contact with embodied ways of knowing, which as inveterate habitus travel with participants unobserved to emerge in processes of somatic listening and creating. This embodied knowledge, then, can prompt participants to re-write the stories they may have told before, but to be clear, this re-writing, I suggest, does not necessarily manifest in narrative form. In my research, I observed that in some instances the reflexive getting to know memory images enabled participants of cognately re-think a personal or community (hi)story. In other instances, I propose, the re-writing remained within the sensate realm, made manifest in the embodied images and theatrical metaphors devised, which communicated as affective sense to the audience. In this way, the embodied and sensate elements of live performance express something of the dimensions of narrators' past worlds, which they cannot articulate in word.

By drawing these research threads together, I came to understand that narrative and embodied ways of knowing the past are inherently enmeshed and mutually generative. In taking my research forward, therefore, I encourage practitioners who want to engage participants in the representation of their histories to adopt an intertwined approach. Instead of gathering memories stories in the first instance to interpret them in the second, I suggest, an embodied creative listening in which participants can generate memory stories and images in relation. By nurturing an entangled listening through different artistic mediums, participants can be enlivened to attend to different regimes of knowledge, which coming into relation can open up new perspectives.

Furthermore, the mutual getting to know each other's memory worlds is a vital element of the practice, which supports the development of participants' interpretative capacities. As reflective critique is interwoven with generative processes it fosters opportunities for narrators to re-think their personal stories and identities; although instances of re-thinking may be precarious and temporary. Moreover, through practice, participants may generate a culture of social reflexivity, in which broader community narratives can be explored and challenged. In my research, I suggest, the older adults became authorities on listening to and critiquing their individual and community histories. In the evaluation discussion, not only did they have the confidence to question various interpretations but also, they demonstrated the expertise to consider the implications of different modes of artistic expression. In other words, they understood something more about the crafting of a performance and the possibilities of interpreting lived experience in both narrative and embodied form.

Future Resonances

Acknowledging the limitations to potential change in participants' narratives and identities raises the issue of longevity. What might participants take with them into the future once the temporary community of the project disperses? If there is an aim to enable participants to exercise the authority and develop the expertise to explore, craft and challenge their histories, then, is there too an assumption of some lasting effect? Earlier in this chapter, I highlighted how such assumptions are often tied to the funding of community-centred projects, measured in terms of skills acquisition or the generation of social integration. As such, I note in my funding application to the Waltham Forest Arts Development Award I was asked how the art activity would "developed relationships between people from different communities", and how I might "ensure the legacy of the creative work is used effectively". [1] In starting to thinking about legacy, however, I was struck by how my research demonstrated the way our narratives are flexible, open to change and can be re-written. If through

embodied listening we are drawn to re-think our stories, then, might this openness also lead us to re-think the "cause-and-effect narratives that link participation to change in overly simplistic ways" (Jeffers 2017: 210).

Other insights from my research lead me to reframe the notion of legacy in the temporary community project. I return again to the notion of knowledge accrued through our bodily doings in relation to others journeying with us on unfolding trails into each new encounter. In which case, I anticipate, the knowledge participants generated together in the embodied social encounter of this history- and performance- making will be taken into future opportunities. Moreover, everyday embodied knowledge typically travels with us unseen but can arise in a haptic encounter when we are put in touch with the presence of the past. This notion, I suggest, can be stretched towards an understanding that practices engendered in the project, though not formally addressed in the evaluation, may equally emerge in unexpected and yet-to-come ways. As outlined above, the social reflexivity that developed in generative reminiscence and collective critique, emerged as a *practice*, that the older adults employed to generate their feedback on the performance. To be clear, I am not making claims for any fundamental or unconscious transformations in participants through their engagement in the project. I do, however, encourage artists and oral historians to re-think sustainability in terms of the diverse, embodied and contingent ways participants may be put back in touch with learning from this encounter - in unforeseen, future and recurrent temporary ways.

In this final section, I want to turn to some of the small resonances of *Tales from the Marsh,* which emerged in the participants' futures. Although I did not aim to undertake any follow-up discussions in my research, there were subsequent encounters with participants. By undertaking the research within my local neighbourhood, I was afforded unforeseen opportunities to re-connect with some of the participants beyond the enclave of the temporary project. This is exemplified in an occasion a couple of months after the performance when I happened to meet Adela on the street. As

we quickly caught up with each other's worlds, she mentioned another brief encounter, recalling the delight her daughter Malina felt when they happened to bumped into Jo on the bus. Malina and Adela participated in *Tales from the Marsh* within their first year of moving to Walthamstow from Warsaw, Poland. Whereas Malina had made friends at school, it proved more challenging to meet elders, but during the project, she had befriended Jo. Thus, the unexpected sighting of Jo on the bus, exchanging a wave, smile and greetings, had Adela informed me, given them both a small sense of belonging.

Another resonance can be heard in the way David and Jean took their passions for protecting public green spaces, which had been galvanised in the group's collective discussions and performance-making, into active campaigning. I have been kept informed of their campaign against the proposed housing development on green land in central Walthamstow through David's regular email digests and local newspaper coverage. It is not without a glimmer of irony that I perceive I started my research by questioning the radical claims of participatory practices to galvanise political action and yet here David and Jean have engaged unstintingly in two years of public lobbying. Of course, I can only surmise any connection between the public performance of their narrative and this manifestation of public action. And yet, I observe a certain performative confidence taken into this public protest and an increasing use of artistic activities to generate interest. Hence, by engaging with an embodied listening practice in the project David learnt something about the affective impact of the object, and this knowledge, I contend, emerged in their lobbying activities. Initially, typical methods were employed, the distribution of leaflets and a petition, but as David informed, this elicited limited results. Therefore, he went on to construct a tower block, following the same design generated collectively within the group. As the final installation of the performance, it broadcast audio stories on the re-developments in the local neighbourhood around the Marshes and furnished the audience with twenty-seven lies to take home. In reproducing the tower, David re-attuned to its agentic capacity to exert affect, so accompanying him to campaign

events it visually lured interest from passing bystanders. But also, I suggest, it acted to imaginatively cement the encounter and its message in the memories of the public.

Not a model development

David Gardiner and Jean Duggleby have launched a new campaign to oppose plans for a skyscraper in Walthamstow

We are concerned about a planned development in central Walthamstow, on the only open space in the area where people can gather and socialise and enjoy leisure activities.

The town square is owned by Waltham Forest Council and is rented out to a development company called Capital & Regional which built and own The Mall, adjacent to the square. This company has now proposed an extension that will reduce public open space by at least 30 percent, along with intensive housing development, to include a 27-storey tower block rising above the rear of the existing shopping mall and throwing the area into shadow.

We attended a token consultation where only the topic of landscaping was allowed to be discussed, and our impression is that very few people know about the scheme. In our view this massive construction is completely out-of-keeping with the open character of central Walthamstow and will constitute a complete eyesore right at its heart. It is unclear whether the block will contain 'affordable' units and whether it will be anything more than luxury housing.

We are starting a petition against the scheme and we have also constructed an eight-foot tall model of the proposed tower block to draw attention to the threat, highlighting the plans to shoppers in The Mall. If you

> **In our view this massive construction is completely out-of-keeping with the open character of central Walthamstow**

would like to help us oppose it, please get in touch.

To support David and Jean's campaign against plans for a 27-storey building in Walthamstow:

Visit gopetition.com/petitions/resist-commercial-exploitation-of-the-mall-walthamstow.html

Email sirat@davidgardiner.net

David (left) and Jean (right) in Walthamstow Town Square with a hand-built model of the development they are opposing, as they seek signatures on a petition

Figure 24: 'Not a model development'.[173] Newspaper article on David and Jean's campaign to halt tower block development. Image: Waltham Forest Echo.

A further instance came in the following year, when Heather, from the girls and women's group, invited me to offer feedback on a work-in-progress solo performance she was devising for local children.[174] Heather, who had been a performer before she had her family, felt her participation in *Tales from the Marsh* reawakened her "passion for watching and making" theatre. As she noted, she "revisited some familiar but forgotten ways of working" and "was reminded to let things take their time to unfold, not to rush or push too hard".[175] In the detail of Heather's feedback, I hear how our performance-making, perceived as singular embodied approaches to time and unfolding, touched her past experiences of theatre. Thus, the knowledge of devising theatre journeying with Heather into the temporary community, but not currently registering in her current role of motherhood, is quickened in the embodied listening encounter, leading her to

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[173] 'Not a model development'. Article on David Gardiner and Jean Duggleby's campaign to oppose plans for the proposed central Walthamstow development by James Cracknell. Waltham Forest Echo, 9th Aug 2016.
[174] Heather created the storytelling performance *Sara's Dress,* presented at Mirth, Marvel & Maud on 3rd and 10th June 2017, as part of the E17 Art Trail.
[175] Heather Burton, email feedback, 11th Sept. 2017.

characterise it as "definitely a time of remembering who I was".[176] It is this sense of remembering that inspired her future action to create a local performance. Moreover, through the embodied listening Heather attuned to a shared "common language", which draws her to invite me to offer feedback because she believed I would afford an "honest opinion in a kind and constructive way".[177] Her decision, I propose, reverberates back to the co-operative social reflexivity engendered in the embodied listening process.

One final resonance is reflected in Jo's experiences within and beyond the project. The trails that brought Jo to engage with *Tales from the Marsh* spiralled out from her ardent affiliation with the marsh itself, illustrated in her involvement in direct action to resist Olympic claims to a temporary re-appropriation. In the process, Jo palpably grew in confidence through the social encounter of collectively exploring and creatively re-interpreting her lived experience. When she began the project, she was not so self-assured, and moreover, I noted the memories she shared often reflected challenging experiences: strict and scolding parents, being packed off to boarding school, times of homelessness in London, feeling unable to be herself. It was significant, then, when she reflected on the discernible difference, she felt between her participation in the one-to-one walking conversation and the social common of creative memory work. As Jo noted:

> I had a personal challenge when I went for the walk and to talk about myself and the history, the interesting things about the marshes. Because a lot of the time I was just fending off negative emotions, I was getting negative memories. And those Marshes mean such a variety of things to me but I was overwhelmed by the negative. And I became more aware of it being interviewed just myself. Whereas in this group, working collectively it just sort of got me to like squash those things, get that negative out the way and try to lead into the positive. So, it gave me a big boost to work with people collectively. It wasn't until I went on the walk on my own that I was reminded what it felt like.

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[176] Heather Burton, email feedback, 11th Sept. 2017.
[177] Heather Burton, email feedback, 11th Sept. 2017.

When I came into the group it was still there, I still have to contend with it.[178]

At this moment along her life trail, it appears that the relationship between Jo's past and present was emotionally problematic. Reasons for this she did not explicitly voice, yet in conversations over tea she confided a sense of feeling "low" and lacking confidence. What is notable, however, is the impact of a collective embodied listening on her capacity to be-with the past. It was, I propose, the reciprocal sharing of memories with others, the opportunity to open up memories in a way that did not fix them to a negative narrative and the recognition of her artistic expertise in rendering creative memory interpretations, conjointly enhanced her confidence.

To consider how this enlivened sense of confidence rippled into Jo's future, I want to look at her involvement in the telling of another personal and collective history, that of the *Poster Workshop* in London, 1968-1971. Founded in the height the "countercultural revolution", the Poster Workshop created posters for a broad range of political causes: housing struggles, civil rights, workers' strikes, student protests, anti-war rallies, radical theatre companies and so forth (Baines 2018: 7). Although Jo did not particularly share this personal history with the group, she discussed with me the aims of a reunion of Poster Workshop members to produce a historical account of their work. Meeting after sessions, she asked advice on oral history methods to generate text and, as many of the posters had been preserved, we talked through possibilities for an exhibition. Reflecting the sensibilities generated in the workshops, we generated a mutual dialogue in which ideas were shared and explored, which as Jo observed provided a useful sounding board prior to meetings with Poster Workshop members. For in contrast to her growing confidence in the *Tales from the Marsh* collectivity, in this other temporary congregation she felt muted by the authority of particular members.

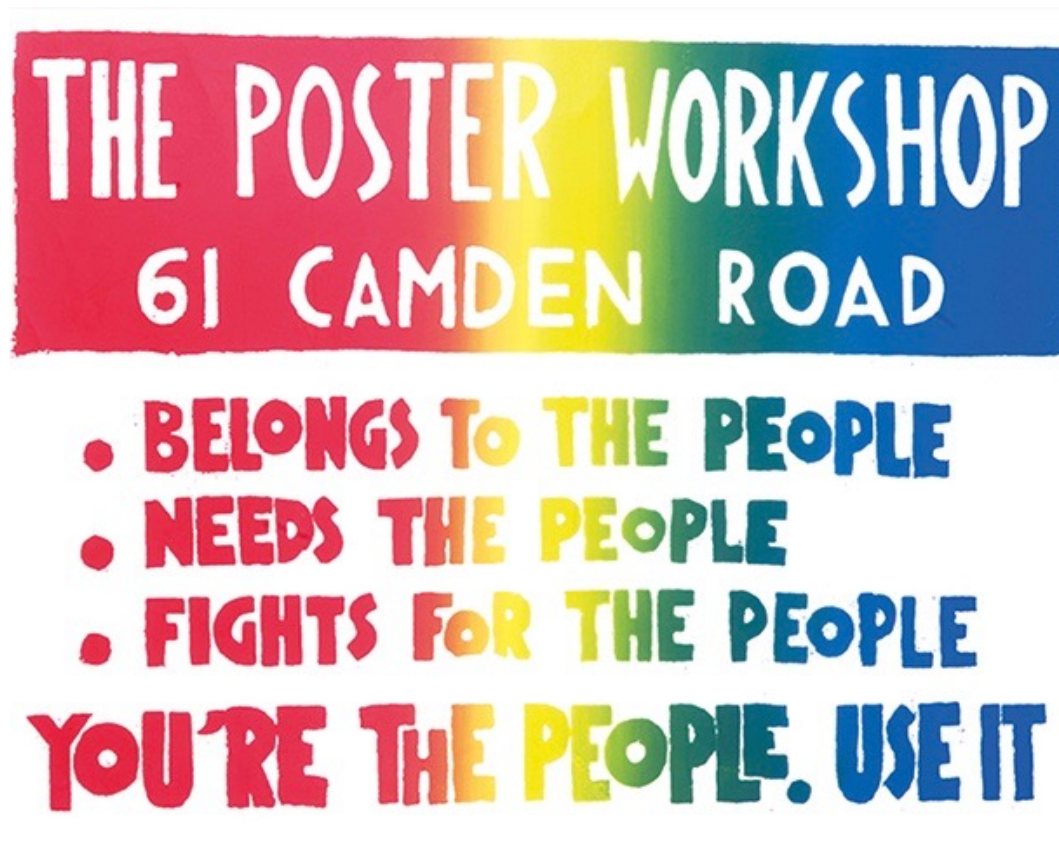[178] Jo Robinson, Older Adults' Group mid-point evaluation, 24th Apr. 2016.

Figure 25: Poster for The Poster Workshop, 1968-1971.
Image: The Poster Workshop.

But in May 2018, as Jo stood up to dynamically address a gathered crowd of art enthusiasts at the launch of the *Poster Workshop 1968-1971* exhibition and book at Tate Britain I attuned to her emboldened authority. [179] She had clearly gained the confidence to re-write and communicate another reiteration of her personal history enfolded in a different culturally significant collective narrative.

Reflecting on the echoes of the embodied participatory listening engendered in *Tales from the Marsh* that have reverberated in the lives of participants beyond the project itself, leads me to consider the resonances that continue to resound in me. One of the most significant ways the being-with-others in this exploratory practice has influenced me is to deepen the sensitivity of my attention as I continue to walk in the Marshes. I attune to

[179] The Poster Workshop exhibition and book launch at Tate Britain, 21st May 2018. Presented by Four Corners Book and Tate Enterprises.

the way narrators travel with me as I journey, arising in my memories as I sensately encounter the environment. In each walk, I recall fragments of the personal and community histories participants have shared, and thus, the Marshes has become a more storied place for me. I especially enjoyed a moment last summer when I came across a sharp divide between long and short grasses in Leyton Marshes. Then, I recognised it was the turf reinstated following the temporary inhabitation by the London 2012 Olympics that Abi had described. As embodied ways of knowing were also accrued through my relationships with participants, so I am developing a habit of listening with more openness to the sound around me without intentionality towards meaning. This is something that I want to carry with me into my future work, both as a way of being-with in participatory settings and as a material practice explored in collaboration with a sound artist.

A second resonance I want to amplify relates to my understanding of the entanglement of discursive, narrative and embodied ways of knowing that developed during this research. Looking back, I realise that at times I have conceived these different regimes of knowledge as being in conflict. Metaphorically, perhaps, this describes something of the struggle I experienced when trying to put embodied experience into words. It also rings with associations of needing to in some way defend the validity of embodied knowledge. However, in listening more attentively, I have come to realise knowledge emerges in-between perceiving sense and sensing perception. Despite the challenge, then, I began to relish playing with words as I tried to find the language that resonated with the bodily doings I aimed to manifest in this thesis. The enmeshment of narrative and embodied means of sense-making is another aspect of the work I aim to carry forward, as I explore other ways to put the narrator's words back into a site.

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