CUCR Occasional paper series

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Brown Youth, Black Fashion and a White Riot, 2007

Brian WALLEYNE
Personal Narrative and Activism: a bio-ethnography of “Life Experience with Britain”

Mette ANDERSON
The Situated Politics of Recognition: Ethnic Minority, Youth and Indentity Work.

Les BACK, Tim CRABBE, John SOLOMOS
Lions, Black Skins and Ragged Gypsies

Andrew BARRY
Motor ecology: the political chemistry of urban air

Zygmunt BAUMAN
City of Fears, City of Hopes

Vikki BELL
Show and tell, passing, narrative and Tony Morrison’s Jazz

Eva BERGLUND
Legacies of Empire and Spatial Divides: new and old challenges for Environmentalists in the UK

Tine BLOM
Dostoevsky’s Inquisitor: The Question of Evil, Suffering and Freedom of Will in Totalitarian Regimes

Bridget BYRNE
How English am I?

Ben CARRINGTON
Race, Representation and the Sporting Body

Stephen DOBSON

Ben GIDLEY
The proletarian other: Charles Booth and the politics of representation

Paul GLUJOY
The status of difference: from epidermalisation to nano-politics

Marianne HENRY
Projecting the “Natural”: Language and Citizenship in International Culture

Larry LOHMANN
Ethnic Discrimination in “Global” Conservation

Ben LOCKER
Exhibiting Imperial London: Empire and City in late Victorian and Edwardian guidebooks

Hirshi OGASAWARA
Performing Sectarianism: Terror, Spectacle and Urban Myth in Glasgow Football Cultures

Garry ROBSON
Class, criminality and embodied consciousness: Charlie Richardson and a South East London Habitus

Flamming ROGILDS
Charlie Nielsen’s Journey: Wandering through Multi-cultural Landscapes

Fran TONKISS
The “marketisation” of urban government: private finance and urban policy

Daniela TURNEY
The language of anti-racism in social work: towards a deconstructive reading

Gordon WALKER and Karen BICKERSTAFF
Polluting the poor: an emerging environmental justice agenda for the UK?

Louisa THOMSON
The Respect Drive: the Politics of Young People and Community

please refer to www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/cucr for downloads and further information.

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photograph on front cover by Britt Hatzius

MA IN CULTURE, GLOBALISATION AND THE CITY
The Centre for Urban and Community Research (CUCR)
Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths College, University of London.

The Urban Globe?
Our world is moving from being a global village to an urban globe. One of the big challenges of the 21st Century is how to understand the social organisation of contemporary urban life. The MA in Culture, Globalisation and the City gives you the theoretical and practical tools to make sense of cities like London, Los Angeles, Nairobi or Tokyo.
The course examines a range of issues from the economics of the global city to the politics of graffiti writing. These include analysing Urban Youth Cultures, Literary and Political Milieux, the Political Economy of the City, Science and the Technology of Urban Life, Urban Multiculture, Hybridity and Racism and the Spatial Politics of Gender and Sexuality. A multi-disciplinary approach is applied that draws on Sociology, Cultural Geography, Cultural Studies, Politics and Social Policy. The MA is dedicated to turning students into active researchers, critics and writers.
The programme consists of 3 core courses, dissertation and a choice of options. It can be followed either full-time or part-time. ESRC funding for one UK resident is currently under review and may not be available next year. Next available entry point: October 2008.

MA IN PHOTOGRAPHY AND URBAN CULTURES
The Centre for Urban and Community Research (CUCR)
Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths College, University of London.

Introducing the MA
The MA in Photography and Urban Cultures has been developed in response to the increasing interest in social theory and the visual representation and investigation of urban life and the physical environments of the city.

Who is it for?
Photographers, visual artists and media practitioners, as well as those with a background in social sciences, interested in exploring the creative interplay between cultural research, urban studies and photographic practice. You should have a degree or equivalent in a relevant area.

Further information and how to apply: UK and EU students: Admissions Office, telephone 020 7919 7060 (direct line), fax 020 7717 3240 or e-mail admissions@gold.ac.uk; Overseas (non EU) students: International Office, telephone 020 7919 7700 (direct line), fax 020 7919 7704 or e-mail international-office@gold.ac.uk;

For further information about the Centre: Please call 020 7919 7390, e-mail cucr@gold.ac.uk or visit www.gold.ac.uk/cucr/
Introduction by Roger Hewitt

If there’s one thing that distinguishes the work of the Centre for Urban and Community Research, it is its hospitality to new ideas and new researchers. Hence its reputation as both a ‘community of researchers’ and a prism reflecting and re-interpreting what is going on in cities around the globe from perspectives originating in sociology, urban studies and visual media. It is not surprising that there has been a porous edge between our graduate student work and the funded research projects, bringing in new blood to the CUCR. Some of our most active research staff started out as students on our MA courses and several of the names featuring in the brief descriptions of our current funded research projects at the end of this introduction graduated from one or other of these.

The flow of ideas is probably what we prize the most, whether they yield a high-profile, research-council funded award or a psycho-geographical group walk through the backstreets of Deptford. The CUCR style is as much evident in the plethora of small events, exhibitions and quirky urban engagements, as it is in its record of community-focused research and prestige publishing and it is an important part of our philosophy to maintain a seamless bridge between the two. For example, in the new year CUCR and Photofusion, a Brixton-based photographic gallery and education project, will be hosting a conference and series of workshop seminars focusing on urban photography. (Details will be available from both CUCR and Photofusion, shortly.) Secondly, a new eBook: ‘A Manifesto for Black Urbanism’ - the text of a lecture given by CUCR Fellow Paul Goodwin at the Royal Society of Arts, London as part of an evening of lectures called “No Leader, Holarchy and Black Urbanism - New Approaches to Gang Culture and the Black Community” with Bonnie Greer and Kevin Spellman. Both of these events link numerous strands of CUCR work, academic, community-oriented, urban analysis, and visual ethnography amongst others. Both open onto new and original modes of urban enquiry.

Some of this kind of vitality and ‘heat exchange’ we hope is as reflected in this issue of Street Signs as it has been in the previous issues. There is a terrific range of contributions to this issue and we have been particularly fortunate in the volume and quality of contributions this time round.

For a little information on some of the projects currently in play at CUCR please refer to the following selection. For more details about the Centre’s work and the MA programmes see http://goldsmiths.ac.uk/cucr/ or contact the Centre’s Administrator, Carole Keegan (02079197390 / c.keegan@gold.ac.uk)

Current projects at CUCR:

‘Beyond the Numbers Game’

Goldsmiths is one of the partners of the ‘Inclusion Through Media’ programme, funded by ‘Equal’ (European Social Fund). ‘Beyond the Numbers Game’ is the CUCR project that has been produced through this partnership. It is based on the premise that the value of participatory media cannot be measured or understood solely by quantitative methods, or ‘numbers’, and that qualitative approaches need to be employed to capture creatively their real impacts. The project looked at fourteen case study projects nationally, delivering a range of programmes involving a range of media which included: film & video, broadband channels, graphic illustration, music technologies, interactive digital drama, animation. Through these projects it aimed to understand what the key ingredients are for successful participatory media, how they engage with marginalised people and groups, and how they can open up new pathways for participants, some of which can lead to professional opportunities within media industries.

The second part of the research involved developing an online interactive toolkit to be used by media projects, so that workers and participants are able to record and share a range of data (session observations, blogs, video clips, etc.). This data can then be selectively retrieved for purposes such as self evaluation, networking, feedback, and accounting to funding bodies. As well as a research report and the toolkit, the project has contributed to the ‘Inclusion Through Media’ book, and presented findings at a number of events, including the ‘Inclusion Through Media’ final event at the BFI South Bank on November 23 and a seminar at the University of East London on December 17.

The research team has been led by Ben Gidley, with Imogen Slater as the principal researcher. The team has also included Tony Dowmunt, Simon Rowe, India Court MacWeeney, Paulo Cardullo and Alison Rooke.

‘Fear or Fashion’

This pilot research project is evaluating the impacts of the ‘Fear or Fashion’ programme, about young people’s perceptions and awareness of weapons and gang culture. The evaluation methodology is being developed with the possibility of being replicated across other South East London based youth projects, which are delivered by the grassroots youth work organisation ‘Kickstart’. The work is being done by Imogen Slater, with Jane Tooke, Ben Gidley and Simon Rowe.
‘Signs of the City’

In a collaborative project initiated by ‘Urban Dialogues’ in Berlin, and developed with colleagues in Sofia, Barcelona, Berlin and London the ‘Signs of the City’ project explores the imagined cities of young people through the medium of photography. The project is funded by the EC Culture Programme and will develop over the next two years. Artists and young people are engaged in dialogues in each of the four cities and will develop work that explores the interplay of place and identity in each of the cities. The photographs created by the young people in the different cities will culminate in an online web platform, which will be available for future explorations. Initial workshops have drawn together sponsor organisations, artists and photographers from each of the four cities. CUCR is principally involved in conducting the evaluation of the project. The ‘Signs of the City’ project also draws on themes of related research within the Centre and the developing work of graduate and PhD students that considers the relationship between visual sociologies of the city and photographic practice. In the UK, Brit Hatzius, Michael Keith and Alison Rooke from CUCR are working on the project along with partners and artists streamed through Waterman’s Gallery in London. For more information, please refer to: www.citipix.net

Governance and Diversity: Solid Structures, Fluid Communities

This ‘Joseph Rowntree Foundation’ funded project, with case studies in Coventry, Newham and Oldham, is coming to an end. We have gathered some extraordinary stories of how communities engage in decision-making structures in areas of extreme demographic churn - and also, of course, the barriers to such engagement. In 2009, we will be involved in a series of public events to disseminate the findings and recommendations of our study. (Marj Mayo, Kalbir Shukra, Ben Gidley)

From Security to Insecurity

This ‘Rothschild Foundation Europe’ funded study is one of the very few serious sociological studies of the British Jewish community. Our thesis so far is that in a previous period, British Jewish communal leaders practised a “strategy of security”, assuring British Jews (and the wider world) of the secure citizenship and belonging of Jews here. More recently, the leadership has practised a “strategy of insecurity”: highlighting the threats to Jewish continuity and existence in the UK, such as the risks posed by out-marriage, declining religiosity and the “new” anti-semitism. We explore this issue by analysing Jewish communal texts and institutions over the last quarter century. (Keith Kah-Harris and Ben Gidley)

The Camberwell Life Stories Project

This is a small project funded by Neighbourhood Renewal in Camberwell. We are working in partnership with the anti-poverty organisation ATD Fourth World to explore the life narratives of residents of a South London estate, and their paths in and out of poverty. For Ben and Alison - if not our funders! - Pierre Bourdieu’s ‘The Weight of the World’ provides an inspiration for this project. The work builds on previous CUCR interventions in Southwark, including the ‘Local Knowledge for Local Solutions’ project, which trained residents to research deprivation issues in their neighbourhoods, and the ‘Camberwell Advocacy’ project (Alison Rooke, Ben Gidley, Karen Wells, Kalbir Shukra), an action research project on two estates in Camberwell to both research the causes of - and provide routes out of - poverty. (Ben Gidley and Alison Rooke)

Re-Visioning Black Urbanism

Re-Visioning Black Urbanism is a research initiative at the CUCR that aims to explore new modes of inhabiting, imagining and making cities from progressive black and culturally diverse perspectives. Black Urbanism at CUCR is developing as a multi-disciplinary platform to explore the multiple modalities and creative potential of the relationship between the expressive cultures of the African diaspora and cities in the UK and beyond. This platform includes: writing, curating, seminars and community education work. Recent developments include a lecture by Paul Goodwin (with Bonnie Greer and Kevin Spellman) on black urbanism as part of ‘“No Leader’, Holarchy and Black Urbanism - New Approaches to Gang Culture and the Black Community” at the Royal Society of Arts on 18th October 2007. Another recent development is a new series of downloadable eBooks that will showcase various aspects of the project. The eBooks will feature theories, ideas, images, work-in-progress, interviews and essays that will emerge from the project research findings and associated events. The objective of the Re-Visioning Black Urbanism eBook Series is to facilitate the widespread dissemination of the project findings and outputs beyond the traditional academic routes that sometimes have limited audiences. The first in the series is “Peckham Rising”. This eBook features the images and texts from the recent exhibition of the same name at the Sassoon Gallery, Peckham (4-9 September 2007). Please see CUCR website for more details or contact p.goodwin@gold.ac.uk
Global Cities Photographic Project
Paul Halliday has been working on an extended photographic essay about cities and urban spaces within the context of globalisation theory. He is interested in exploring how such spaces intersect with, and subvert geographic boundaries and has produced images from Berlin, London, Shanghai and Riga. This year he is planning to visit New York and will continue his work in Berlin and Shanghai. The project should be at, or nearing completion stage by September 2009.

Risk Cultures in China
The ‘Risk Culture in China’ project sponsored by the ‘World Economy and Finance’ Programme of the Economic and Social Research Council is considering the economic sociology of new markets in China. Markets in securities, real estate, and banking form the central empirical focus of the project.

The research has developed case studies of risk and uncertainty in four key areas of ethnographic research, complemented by a number of related studies in Hong Kong, Beijing and Shenzhen. Tyler Rooker has completed the first phase of ethnographic work after spending six months working in trading rooms in Shanghai as the stock market topped record highs.

The partnership with scholars in China has evolved, focusing on the relation with Professor Wang Xiaoming’s China Center for Contemporary Culture Studies at Shanghai University. In March 2007 the collaboration was developed through the visit of Professor Xiaoming to Goldsmiths College which was linked to a series of lectures, seminars and a small conference on the notion of ‘Cities out of Control’ with John Urry and Wang Xiaoming. Professor Xiaoming’s research centre has developed with the research team a case study of the project which examines the behaviour of young Chinese investors through a series of ethnographic interviews. Related work has also seen collaboration developed with visiting Chinese colleagues such as Ma Qingyun, Cui Zhiyuan and Doreen Liu through a public seminar in Autumn 2006 at the Serpentine Gallery that involved architects, artists, social theorists and stakeholders in Chinese real estate participating in a discussion around Chinese urbanism that coincided with the opening of London’s Frieze Arts Festival. We will also be showing some of the work associated with the project at the Architectural biennales in Hong Kong and Shenzhen in January 2008.

(Scott Lash, Michael Keith, Tyler Rooker, Jakob Arnoldi, Wang Xiaoming)

Housing Corporation, Innovation and good practice work
Alison Rooke and Ben Gidley of CUCR are currently evaluating a Housing Corporation funded neighbourhood cohesion project in Kent, drawing out some of the wider lessons of the project. This project, delivered by West Kent Housing Association and Real Strategies, examines the ways in which participatory action research and community development work can increase neighbourhood cohesion. One of the themes to emerge from the project so far is that both residents and agencies need to work together to identify local priorities and in taking action to address these concerns. A second theme is the importance of not framing work in terms of specific communities organised around identity, but rather, working on neighbourhood improvement issues as identified by residents. The project runs until April 2008. Local action has included residents and agencies working together on neighbourhood improvements, identifying local learning needs and ways of reaching adults with literacy problems, while local girls have been making a film about perceptions of the area. In September, Ben and Alison ran two seminars exploring the learning emerging from this project. Emma Jackson has also worked on the project, conducting a media and literature review.

Mobilising Knowledge
Solving the interaction gap between older people, planners, experts and general citizens within the Thames Gateway.

Over the summer, 22 elderly people from Lewisham came to Goldsmiths for two weeks to explore how urban space is planned and to offer their perspective on the city. Activities included making maps, debating with planners and policy practitioners, exploring the local area photographically, remembering old Lewisham, imagining its future and exploring the sustainability of the Thames Gateway. The project came about after considering the ways in which the age profile of London and the UK as a whole will change in the next twenty years. An increasingly large percentage of the population will be made up of elderly people, based on today’s growing ‘baby boom’ and the fact that people live longer due to improvements in health and advances in medicine. Older people however are often disadvantaged in their interactions with the urban environment and their valuable knowledge and experience remain untapped by planners. The summer school critically explored the future development of London, and the Thames Gateway in particular, from the perspective of local elderly people. The results have been compiled in good-practice
guidelines and a ‘how to’ toolkit of workshop modules for people within planning who wish to reach elderly people. This is accompanied by a DVD that can be used in future planning processes. All these results were launched on the 13th November, where participants, their families and diverse public and private actors attended, making both the public and policy-makers aware of older people’s particular requirements within the urban environment. We hope that the results of the project will lead to older people being listened to and planners taking them more seriously. The project was led by Gesche Weurfel and Alison Rooke, (with kind support from Ben Gidley, Michael Keith, Simon Rowe, and Rebecca Maguire from the Business Development Office) This project is supported by the UCL-led UrbanBuzz Programme. (www.urbanbuzz.org).

Lewisham '77

by Ben Gidley

1977: The Battle for Lewisham

On August 13th 1977, the far-right National Front (ancestors of today’s BNP) attempted to march from New Cross to Lewisham in South East London. Local people and anti-racists from all over London and beyond mobilised to oppose them. More than 200 people were arrested, and 100 people injured, in what became known as ‘The Battle of Lewisham’. The day has been seen as a turning point in the fortunes of the NF and the 1970s anti-fascist movement as well as in policing - riot shields were used for the first time in England. (1)

2007: The Lewisham ‘77 project

In the thirtieth anniversary year of the Battle of Lewisham, a number of individuals came together to commemorate the event. The idea came from a conversation between South London historian Neil Gordon-Orr, whose ‘Deptford Fun City’ is the definitive alternative history of New Cross and Deptford (2), and Martin Lux, a veteran of the Battle of Lewisham, whose memoirs ‘Anti-Fascist: A Foot-soldier’s story’ was published the previous year(3).

The Centre for Urban and Community Research organised a series of meetings attended by local activists and residents, and a small group of organisers came together - including people from CUCR, the South London Radical History Group, and the Goldsmiths History and Anthropology departments - to organise a series of events. Our ethos was to represent the range of different perspectives on the event - those of local people and of activists of different political stripes. We wanted to collect as many memories as possible, as a way of commemorating 1977 and its importance. We set up a website, http://lewisham77.blogspot.com, where we showcased some of the material and memories we had collected. A number of encouraging endorsements arrived. For example, the poet (and Goldsmiths graduate) Linton Kwesi Johnson wrote to us that:

“The intervention of the Anti Nazi League was of historic importance in the struggle against racism and fascism. It is important that we remember Lewisham 77. The struggle continues.”

The writer Fred D’Aguair wrote to us to say:

“Enjoyed (not the right word) touring the site and found much to take me back and make me feel proud about the community and our opposition at the time to some very powerful recalcitrant elements charged with our protection but clearly pressed in the service of the anti-democratic extreme Right. I was there and I will write my memory about the day and send it along to you for your important archive. It is good to see Goldsmiths is in on this, steeped as the institution is in the area. I hope the archive can steer current social policy thinking about inner city regeneration rather than simply becoming a passive space where living communal memories are put away perish…to attract graduate research and shape the thinking of a new generation of scholar-activists who may know little or nothing about the radical example of Lewisham 77. Thanks for letting me know about your important recuperative work.”

Sci-fi writer Ken McLeod and author Iain Banks gave us their memories too. Banks wrote:

“all I can recall is the general feeling of prevailing unexpectedly, the sight of the fascists squeezed into a corridor going round a street corridor with half bricks and bits of car exhausts raining down on the them and the cops protecting them and the motorbike on fire (which later turned out to belong to the Sunday Times photographer).”

September 13: The walk

In September 2007, a group of about 70 of us, including over a dozen veterans of the 1977 events, walked from the National Front’s original assembly point of Achilles Street in New Cross, along the scenes of the first confrontations with the fascists around Deptford, to Lewisham where the day ended in violence between police and demonstrators. To reclaim the history of the day, we put up temporary heritage plaques, marking the sites of key events in 1977. Veterans of the day - speaking through an authentic 1970s megaphone - contributed their memories as we went along. Among the speakers were ex- and current members of the Socialist Workers Party, the largest group in the anti-NF mobilisation, as well as anarchists and other militant anti-fascists who gave their account. (4)
November 10: The commemorative event

In November 2007, around 140 people came to an event at Goldsmiths about the Battle of Lewisham. We opened the day by screening the Rock Against Racism documentary ‘I Shot the Sheriff’ (5). Both Lewisham ‘77 and the local branch of ‘Unite Against Fascism’ brought exhibitions on the story of racism locally.

The first session explored different memories of 1977. Ted Parker, then an SWP organiser and now principal of Barking College, told the story of the organisation of the anti-fascist mobilisation, powerfully evoking the extraordinary passion and commitment of rank and file anti-fascist mobilisation, powerfully evoking the Barking College, told the story of the organisation of the National Front in the 1970s in Kent and South London on Asian and leftist targets, and of the defence organised by the Asian Youth Movement and SWP. The anarchist Martin Lux contextualised the events of 1977 against a longer story of mounting conflict between fascists and anti-fascists through the 1970s. Lez Henry, formerly of Goldsmiths Sociology, described the routine harassment of black youth in the area by white adults influenced by the NF and by the police. He also described how resistance to this was informed by mounting political consciousness, exemplified by the black history teaching black youth organised locally. John Lockwood, a teacher who was imprisoned and banned from teaching south of the river for his participation in the Battle of Lewisham, told the story of the Deptford Anti-Racist Committee (DARC) and its involvement in the planning of the August 13th demonstrations. The session was concluded by chair Malcolm Ball, who reflected on the way that the events of that day changed the lives of so many of the local people. This session was followed by a screening of five films commissioned for Lewisham ‘77. Local collaborative filmmaking project Deptford.TV have agreed to help film and archive the Lewisham ‘77 process. A number of Deptford.TV film-makers filmed the September walk, which CUCR PhD student Paolo Cardullo edited into a ten-minute film. Students from the Goldsmiths Screen Documentary MA made a number of short films with veterans of 1977.

A second session moved from commemorating the day to thinking through its contemporary significance. Paul Gilroy, formerly of CUCR and Goldsmiths Sociology, gave a powerful list of some of the things that stood out about that day in 1977 (such as the “masculinism” and “smashism” of much of the left, but also the presence of large contingents of women), and some of the things that have changed today (such as the presence of guns on the streets of South London). Les Back of Goldsmiths Sociology made a moving and thoughtful intervention, contextualising the events of 1977 against a longer story of the routine attacks by the National Front in Kent and South London, the battle of Lewisham model can be imposed today. This was exemplified by the heated debate over whether calling the NF then and particularly the BNP now “Nazis” is an effective anti-racist strategy or whether it plays into a Little England patriotic WWII narrative. It was also exemplified by the debate over the continued relevance of the “no platform for fascists” policy and, for example, whether it should be applied to the handful of NF hands who march through Bermondsey every year.

Lewisham ‘77: Into the future

Lewisham ‘77 continues as a project. We intend to continue collecting memories of 1977 in all their diversity and contentiousness, and using these as part of a multimedia intervention that we can use with children and young people locally and further afield. If you want to get involved, please get in touch (b.gidley@gold.ac.uk).

Notes:

(1) See "Lewisham '77" in Street Signs Autumn 2007
(2) Buy it from http://www.geocities.com/pasttensepublications/
(3) http://www.myspace.com/martin_lux_antifascist
(5) http://www.l果蔬sushiwhateracism.com/about/who-shot-the-sheriff
Midori

Tristan Fennell

street signs : Spring 2008
Everyday life invents itself by poaching in countless ways on the property of others

(Michel de Certeau, 1984)
Harking Back

Alex Rhys-Taylor

“I do not know, sing the bells of old Bow,”
Oranges and Lemons, Old English Nursery Rhyme,

Although light moves pretty fast and can be hard to catch, a visual notion of temporality is developed through what light has imparted to the human activities of painting, drawing, photography and cinematography; all of which involve the conversion of light’s energy into a more resolute type of materiality. It is through a similarly steadfast type of materiality that records of the past’s tactile sensorium endure, preserved in architectures and the artefacts that populate the earth beneath our feet. Given the veracity historically ascribed to truths obtained through what we see and touch, it is of little surprise how these easily visual and tactile records are deemed the foundations out of which the present emerges. Through the repetitious representation of the past’s physiognomy and pigmentation, such ideas coalesce in our imaginations of who ‘they’ were and in doing so feed conceptualisations of who and where ‘we’ are today.

While both tactile and visual aspects of materiality endure and help to construct narratives that situate the ‘us’ in historical time and space, that which presents itself to ‘other’ senses has generally eluded preservation in a more durable materiality. For whatever reason, and there are many possible determinates, ‘The Historical Record’ suffers from a near complete deafness compounded by a severe olfactory impairment. As a consequence we are left with scant notion of time’s sonic composition, nor the aromatic clouds out of which the present emerges.

But even that which seems to have dissipated into the atmosphere retains certain findableness(2). We can, drawing on a number of resources, develop a synaesthetic ‘ideal typification’ of a past. Moreover, within and between our own experiences, it is possible to approach a consideration of how this multi-sensory experience relates to the sociality the past once contained.

Such a consideration is especially plausible when a spatio-temporal moment has been written or spoken about enough as to offer a scaffolding over which the imagination can be draped. Take, for instance the walled City of London circa 1665. In particular take the road named ‘Cheapside’… and take it in early October… ideally in the morning … a cold morning. Like much of central London, much has been spoken and written about both this area and era. And we can, through performing these stories within the theatrics of memory, imagine aspects of what being in this place might have felt like. We can, for instance, imagine the undulating feeling underfoot when walking across the frozen earth of the carriageway that runs close to the inside of the eastern wall of Olde City of London. And we can imagine numb toes curling around the undulated earth inside thick soled boots. We can conceive of how the cold morning air takes the bass out of the morning aroma but increases the treble of that which emanates from rotting leaves mulched into the dirt and detritus underfoot. We can see how the same air would move invisibly through the nostrils, stinging the bridge of the nose, and exiting as mist from the mouth. Actually, we cannot help but imagine there being a lot of mist and fog around, if only because it is what always fills in the gaps that the imagination cannot. But mist doesn’t colour everything and peering through the morning vapour we can also just about imagine seeing on both sides of us luminous otherworldly silks: the streets lining weaved by the haberdashers nestled along it. We can imagine, easily, hearing the gentle trundling of a wooden cart over the hard fluctuations of the ground below. And, perhaps because of their uncanny resemblance to the sound made by the heels of power dressing work horses in the area known as the City today, we can also imagine the sound of eight hooves clopping the cart towards a nearby trough and the remnants of oats and hay that lie in it. But above all we can imagine hearing another sound, again uncanny its dislocated familiarity: the sing song of church bells ringing from the nearby belfry…

Across much of England and much of the northern part of what would later become Europe, the chiming bells of
churches can be expected to have held sonic supremacy across the era’s landscapes. The only real challenges to their supremacy were those presented by the Thunder of Almighty God, or cannons being fired by His local representatives, what we don’t know is what role these sounds played within the experience of the individual or the sociality they stretched across. But there are narratives that might inform a guess.

In 1665 on Cheapside, at south east of extent of the walled City of London(3), stood(4) the weather cocked belfry of St Mary le Bow, wherein hung the famous Bow Bells. From here the voluminous Bow Bells chimed in bursts throughout the day, their reverberations used to signal everything from curfews to church services. There are a number of reasons that the Bells could be said to be ‘famous’, having purportedly sung the siren song that lured Dick Whittington back into London, and having also contributed a giant shrug of the shoulders to the closing stanza of the old English nursery rhyme, Oranges and Lemons. However, their greatest source of fame lies in the fact that it is from the Cockerel shaped weather vein atop their old belfry that the term ‘Cockney’ apparently derives its initial usage. The story being that those typically strident bodies born within the equally vociferous range of the Bow Bells’ resonations were those referred to as “Cocknies, and eaters of buttered tostes”(5).

This particular narrative belongs to the commons of London, presided over by black-cab drivers and in the scripts of tour bus guides. However the folkyness of the story should not detract from the potential veracity of its claims, nor the sociological insights that they offer us, both into the role of audition in the past, and to a historicising of the present. Through an extension of this story we can postulate the relation of a soundscape otherwise disappeared - an assemblage of the regular sounding of bells, sporadic bursts of thunder and occasional cannon - to sociality. Akin to that which has been said about pre-modern sociality throughout Europe(6), in its largely uncluttered and divisible form, the soundscape of Cheapside 1665, especially the bells, can be heard yoking bodies to an arrangement of territory, identity and sociality, and in the process rooting to a discernable space, the generations living within the bells’ audible range. Consequently it serves the narrative of a teleological progress to compare this ideal type East London soundscape of yesteryear, wherein the solitary bell dominated and assured the uninterrupted transmission of communal culture, to the role of the heaving, mechanically amplified heterogeneous cultural dissonance imparted by the sonic-spaces of the cities we know today.

But, as you can also imagine, a selectively sampled misty caricature of one isolated space does not suffice to construct a reliable typification of a sonic sensorium past. In order to gain a better idea of the operation of the role of ambient audition in the past, it helps to sample on evidence from other spaces equally well documented and mythologized, of which London provides many. So, staying within the temporal frame of 1665 but moving out of the towering gates of the fortified City of London. That, is moving about a mile and a half eastwards and slightly north, towards Bishopsgate and then across the fog laden marshy artillery range once frequented Henry the Eighth and his men. From here we move slightly southward again, beyond the burial ground of ‘Spital fields and into the parish of Stepney; one of several hamlets that graze in the shadow of the City of London’s tower and walls. From where we now stand, within an uninterrupted eastward line of sight stands the slender whitewashed tower of St Mary Matfelon’s churc.

In the hundred years that follow 1665 the space we are about to sample will change dramatically, becoming home to the increasingly industrial production of the silks and cloths that we just saw peaking through the fog at Cheapside. Soon thereafter it will become home to the markets of Petticoat Lane and Spitalfields, the latter built upon the old burial ground we just passed over. In about three hundred years from 1665, on the other side of industrialization, the area will change again, with the fabric factories and warehouses giving way to masses of community housing, beneath which will stand shops where Taiwanese fabrics, gloriously coloured with patterns of Africana, will pass through the hands of traders into the hands and onto the heads and backs of London’s many diaporas.

But pay attention to the ‘present’ at hand: early October 1665, the thawing muddy ground of the here and now and the walk just undertaken from Cheapside out of the City’s Walls. We can imagine having toes no longer numb by uncomfortably cold and damp from the trek through the marshland, the discomfort exacerbated by the breathlessness induced by the walk. We can imagine the thick morning vapour having largely lifted to unveil, in the distance, activities of a village in the day - trading, conversing and a drove of pigs being coerced along a tree
lined track dappled by emerging sun light on the horizon. We can also imagine, I’m sure, the presence of squawking of hawks circling above, struggling over the weighty carrion scavenged from a nearby butcher. And again, we can imagine the squawks drowned by bells, but this time with a different tone and song, chiming, as they would have done from the thirteenth century onwards, from a whitewashed tower in the near distance.

The area arrived at above, now known as Whitechapel, has a well documented multi-cultural pedigree and a oft narrated history commonly told in terms of ‘waves’ of demographic change effected by migration. To summarise, first, in the late seventeenth century came the French Protestant Huguenots who found a place in the emerging small scale industrial weaving shops, amidst the poverty of their exile. The Huguenots were, in time, followed by Jewish migrants who filled the spaces (including the places of worship) ardously carved by their Huguenot progenitors. More recently the area has become the famous home to a configuration of Bengali communities, largely with origins in the Sylhet region of Bangladesh, who followed the paths pioneered ancestors who, for two hundred years or more, worked merchant navy shipping paths between Sylhet to Calcutta, and from Calcutta to London. While there is record of this movement along the paths from Sylhet for centuries, the greatly enlarged opportunities that emerged for Sylhetis within the Empire’s Merchant Navy following its depletion in the Second World War made highly accessible the channels for movement along which many bodies flowed throughout the late twentieth century. Quite literally in some instances, churches that were once synagogues became mosques. While each wave is a unique historical event, with its own specific contours, with the more recent arrival of a new wave of work hungry Eastern European, East London and Whitechapel in particular, maintains their pedigree as a natural home to a generative interplay between the city’s thirst for labour and ruptures bought by cultures that quench this thirst.

Yet prior to the 1685 Revocation of the Edict of Nantes’ that drove so many Huguenots into the burgeoning industries of the area, the oft performed narratives of historical process lead to an assumption that the pre-industrial way of life around St. Mary Matfelon’s tower had been as free from ‘external’ influence, and therefore flux, as that of any village. Taking what we suspect of how the church bells root the parishioner, parish and parish life together, at a glance the immutability of pre industrial life seems a reasonable proposition: At the same time as St. Mary-le-Bow was fixing the allegiances of its Cockney parishioners, a large bell built at the nearby bell foundry rang from the heights of St. Mary Matfelon’s famous whitewashed bell tower. As sure as the church of St. Mary le Bow inscribes ‘Cockney’ on its parishioners, the bells of St. Mary Matfelon fixes the parishioners around the white chapel into their place as it had done for generations before them, eventually imparting the name of the tower in which the bells were housed to the area. Thus we can imagine the sound of the bell, its solitary tones fusing the pre-modern individual to a territory via its near uninterrupted ritualistic repetition.

But, listening harder, I cannot help but feel that this notion alone displays a certain deafness of the imagination. Again, don’t forget we’re dreaming of 1665. There are no aeroplanes, no sub-woofers, no sirens, no traffic, no air-conditioning or ventilation units and none of those grand rivers of electricity, sewerage and clean water built by the Victorians. More to the point, unlike today, Thames Water and their cohorts, Clancy Docrwa, are not in the act of slowly, painfully and noisily, “replacing” our “Victorian water mains”. Across the soundscape of the pre-industrial city there are none of those things that supposedly connect us, yet also often exceed their function to disconnect sociality. So what else can we imagine hearing around the Whitechapel?

Return for a moment to Bow Bells of Cheapside which still stand and sound out today. Today given the city’s sonic congestion it is unlikely that anyone other than the suited women and men eating in the vegetarian restaurant in the converted crypt of St. Mary-le-Bow would hear the Bow Bells. As a consequence those within audible range of the bell are a lot less likely to be “Cockneys and eater of buttered tostes” than they are “Hurried city workers and eaters of under salted Thai green curry”. In the late 1600’s, however, other than for the mild dampening effect of occasional mist or the silencing effect of snow, it is easy to forget that there was little suffocate the chimes of St. Mary-le-Bow and stop it reaching the environs of the St. Mary Matfelon’s white chapel. Certainly the walls that constituted the boundary of The City would not have provided a sufficient soundproofing - their hardened walls being more involved, as Dick Whittington might testify in the act of amplifying the seductive song of the bells therein. Nor was there anything hindering the reverberation of chimes from other nearby churches colouring those ringing from St. Mary Matfelon’s white chapel. While the Bells of St. Mary Matfelon’s were audible to those residing beneath the ‘white chapel’, who succumbed to the temporality and practices the marked out by the bells, also audible on any given day were those of nearby churches, St. Mary Aldermary, St. Olaves and of course St. Mary le Bow, each marking out their own times and spaces, yet a time and space that leaked into one and others.

Today at the site St. Mary’s Matfelon’s white chapel, which was destroyed in the same war that opened up opportunities to the economic needs of Bengalis that came to populate the area, stands Altab Ali Park. In the park, within the still visible foundations of the old church, one can hear an incredible array of sounds at any given
moment. Of the most voluminous are of course the ubiquitous screeching of sirens and bombastic bubbles of bass boiling over and above the white noise of the traffic grinding past chattering steel café tables on which excitable mobile phones rest. On Fridays especially at lunch time, the Adhan (Islamic call to prayer) emanating from both the East London Mosque and other smaller mosques provides a complex overdub, increasing in tonal complexity with each repetition, to the industrialized sounds of the street. Occasionally the mix is accompanied by the enthusiastic bell ringing rehearsals undertaken by semi-secular campanologists taken to yanking out a discordant counterpoint to the indelible melodies churned out by ice-cream vans stopping in nearby housing estates.

As some Cockney custodians of myths of Ye Olde Bow Bells might bemoan, the chaotic, fluid and ever shifting sensorium of East London today necessitates the emergence of fluid metropolitan bodies capable of existing without the roots that the solitary bell provided but at home with many micro allegiances and aversions forged, in part, through the polyphony of their surrounds. Such is the volume and heterogeneity of these sounds that the "indefensible ears" routinely caught amongst them, wrought with tension as they may be, find their best option in succumbing to, and inhabiting, the shifting extra-local, trans-global spaces conjured through the area’s sonic composition.

Yet even with such a brief harking back we might hear how, contrary to the narratives that hang on the Old Bow Bells, certain points in the material life of a city like London have long had a knack adding the effect of 'elsewhere’s' and 'other times' to the everyday imaginations of its residents. As sure as the sounding of bells has endured across temporality, so too has the tendency of the lived materiality of the City towards the production of metropolitan bodies. Further still it has done so in a way that precedes any machinic production of consumable hybrid identities akin to those equated with the spaces produced through post-industrial constellations:

References:

Smith, B R The Acoustic World of Early Modern Britain Chicago, University of Chicago Press

Notes:

(1) It could be argued that there is a record of gustatory experience that is even fuller than that of haptic and scopic, in the forms of recipe books and, despite minor alterations, the endurance of many food stuffs and cooking traditions throughout history see Kate Colquhoun (2007) “Taste” for a rich account of Britain’s Gustatory history.
(2) Smith, B R (2003:128)
(3) (at least a mile West from where the East End might now be said to start)
(4) This spire would soon be burnt down in the Great Fire of the following year, to be re-built on the same Norman foundations as one of Sir Christopher Wren’s many commissions at the end of the century.
(6) Corbin, A (1998:95)
(7) Kershen, (A 2005)
(9) Al Asghar, A (1996:58)
(10) The Whitechapel Bell Foundry has an entry in the Guinness book of records as the longest standing industrial business in the world. It was also the foundry that forged ‘The Liberty Bell’ and the famous bell ‘Big Ben’
(11) Please Wait While we Replace London’s Victorian Water Mains is a sign to be found pinned to road works everywhere across London throughout 2006-07 - as though it’s the Victorians fault they haven’t been replaced before now.
(12) ‘The Place Below’ a Vegetarian Cafe open in the oldest Norman Crypt in Britain, 7.30-15:00 weekdays
(13) These churches, most of which were being restored or re-designed under the instruction of Sir Christopher Wren throughout the post-Great Fire Years of late 1660s, were soon to be accompanied by the polyphonic bells of Sir Thomas Hawksmoore’s masterful creations, Christchurch Spitalfields and St Mary Woolnoth’s, in the early 1700s.
(14) Altab Ali Park is named after a young Bengali Man who was killed in the Whitechapel area by the racist muscle of the National Front in the late seventies.
This series is part of a broader body of work that intends to make us think about the tension produced between design, ideology and the daily experience of urban space. In the selected images, paying attention to objects which one would not necessarily look at becomes similar to an intervention on urban fabric, one that allows us to question it and make connections which we would normally not make.
Citadels in Conflict
Santiago Escobar

‘Citadels in Conflict’ examines the spatial perceptions of Colombia’s Ayacucho regiment and the Manizales male prison. Interpreted through the artistic expression of photography, a view of social and urban conflict is portrayed. Both sites are understood as citadels because they include all the social and physical variables of cities. These micro-cities house inhabitants who are directly related to social conflict. They also contain spatial conditions (architectonic and urban) that vary in their similarities and contradictions.

The first stage of this study was to show architecture as an interpreter of the dialogue between territory, space and conflict, and apply theoretical and conceptual references. The study was then structured in four main components: ‘The Structural System’, ‘The Social Environment’, ‘Architecture’ and ‘Urban as a Representation’, and finally, ‘Themes’. Nine themes were developed which supported the composition and understanding of the pictures: context (morphology and public space), topography, security, form (symbology and density), mobility, permeability, activity, order and landscape.

The methodological process involved visits and graphic reports of both sites; (semi-structured) interviews and mental maps of the prisoners/soldiers; ground views planes and photographs of spaces and their relation to the city. Photography was selected as an expressive media, not only because of its capacity to fix reality on objects and spaces, but for allowing interpretation about form and concept differing to the narrative or descriptive. Photography appears as the visual organiser of the essential substance of architecture: space, structural systems, senses, emotions, relations, activity and memory (urban context) are used to understand the spatial perceptions of Ayacucho regiment’s soldiers and the Manizales prison population.
street signs: Spring 2008

'Madre Hay Una Sola'
Peering through the window into the darkness below I can make out well-lit bridges over a dark sea, connecting one island to another. It is 5.00 am and we are beginning our approach to Dubai. But things can be deceptive at such early hours, after a long overnight flight. As the sun begins to rise, it becomes clear that we were not over the sea, but had been passing above the desert. The lights below marked out roads cutting through the undulating sand. In this sense they were still bridges - arteries connecting one pocket of population to another. We begin our final descent into Dubai and by this point the light of the city has all but dissappeared in the morning sunshine.

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A bus transports us from our plane to the arrivals terminal. As if to signal what we should expect from this city, we pass a new terminal, still under construction - an extension an already very large, very modern airport. The construction cranes are hovering over the place like vultures. There is something skeletal about this building site, as if a giant whale belly had been left to decompose in the desert. All that’s left is this massive ribcage, waiting to be bleached by the sun. Only, this isn’t something decomposing, but rather composing itself. This is the “miracle” of Dubai - skeletons are being raised up, waiting to be given life in the scorching heat. The desert is a place of extremes and an extreme effort has created this city.

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Whatever the financial cost of shifting millions and millions of tons of sand, whatever the environmental cost of turning the desert into a permanently green space, whatever the social cost of this playground for the rich being built through underpaid, marginalized labour, whatever the cost - it will be done.

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Dubai is contingent. Everywhere billboards advertise its future. It is still much more a vision than a tangible city. This is the time to visit - when things are still raw, under creation, when everything has yet to take its final shape. Our friend meets us at the airport and, after letting us catch a couple hours sleep in the hotel, picks us up in his BMW. A telling conversation: He asks what we would like to see. Remembering a billboard I saw in the airport I ask, “How about the Old Town?”. He replies, “It hasn’t been built yet”.

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After spending some time driving through the city, I realise that it’s not the towering skyscrapers, but the countless amount of construction cranes that catch my eye. Many of the buildings we pass are still only shells, frameworks yet to get their glass skin. Everything is being built. Everything has just been built. Dubai has that fresh, clean feeling you find in some North American cities. Yet despite being only one small city, Dubai is in someways outdoing that North American drive for bigger and better. Construction has begun on the world’s tallest building, the Burj Dubai. The exact height has so far been kept secret, preventing anyone from building one higher(1). At the base, supporting it all, will be the world’s largest shopping mall. The infamous Palm Jumeirah Islands, along with The World, are being constructed out in the coast. Special overpasses have been built to reach them. There are so many workers involved that many are transported to the area by boat - also a way to keep this underclass out of sight and mind. It is thought that half of Dubai’s population lives in a worker’s camp.

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Our friend has taken a day off from running his business to show us around. But constant calls to his mobile phone mean he eventually pulls up outside his office. It is in a section of the city that is considered old - that is, all the buildings were built between 20-30 years ago. He explains to us that it is a lower middle class neighbourhood, with mainly Indian residents and some of the most affordable housing in the city. But it’s all coming down. There are plans to build a new subway station here and to simply get rid of this “out of date” housing. A testament to the pace of Dubai’s development: even the middle-classes have become the victims of gentrification.

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Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the Emir of Dubai between 1958 - 1971 and 1979-90, had a
saying: "My Grandfather rode a camel, my father rode a camel, I drive a Mercedes, my son drives a Land Rover, but his son will ride a camel." In this saying is the key to Dubai's success. The oil won't last, it will run dry. To rely on it would only see a return to the innocuous Dubai of the past. He and his son, Sheikh Maktoum bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who ruled between 1971-79 and 1990 - 2006, set up a sustainable economy that looked far beyond the oil booms(2). They were responsible for transforming Dubai from being a small fishing and trade port centred at the mouth of Dubai Creek, to being an economic and commercial powerhouse in the Middle East. Many global companies have their MENA (Middle East North Africa) headquarters in Dubai, not only because it is a tax haven, but also because of its status a very secure and stable city in the Middle East. But Dubai's ambitions lay well beyond the Middle East. It has the largest man-made harbour in the world and recently purchased P&O, giving it ownership over the U.K.'s port operations. There are billions of dollars of investment pouring into Dubai, apparently outweighing foreign investment into China(3). The vision is to establish Dubai as a global economic centre.

The Maktoum family are descendants of Bedouin chieftains who settled in the Dubai area in the 1920's, when it was still a British controlled territory. The ruling Emir of Dubai is also appointed Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates. It is the ruling Emir of Abu Dhabi who holds the Presidency.

Politically narrow, but tax free. Undemocratic, but a high standard of life. One ruling family, but a very global city. These are the tensions of a successful city in the contemporary Middle East.

Dubai certainly destroys the usual conceptions we have of the Arab world. It is global city, with large Indian, Pakistani, and Chinese communities, mixed with the traditional Arab population. European tourists flock here for the sun and shopping, and businessmen from around the world live and work in Dubai. There is a word to describe this: hybrid. However, it is a hybridisation solely for the wealthy and elite.

Notes:
(2) Dubai's oil revenue now only accounts for 6% of its GDP- a rather modest amount. See Afshin Molavi, "Dubai: Sudden City" National Geographic 211.1 (Jan. 2007) p. 106
Itacas, as in Konstantino Kavafis’s poem, refers to the search, the journey, and the development of the concept of "home". It also relates to all the idealized islands you may find in Europe.

European cities are in constant change. Part of this metamorphosis is driven by the different communities that inhabit them. Europe has become one of the largest recipients of Latin American migrants, with a significant portion arriving to Spain. Approximately three million of registered Latin Americans live in Europe but it is estimated that the total number is 4.0 to 4.5 million when migrants with irregular situations are included. The majority of these people arrive in search of better opportunities, escaping from the socio and economical problems present in some Latin American countries.

Itacas is a photographic documentary of the life of Latin American migrants living in Madrid. It tries to enter the daily life of these communities and their idiosyncrasies, while they adapt and integrate to their new societies. Ecuadorians, Colombians, Peruvians, Bolivians, Argentinians, Paraguayans and Chileans co-exist with other diverse cultures and are taking part in the construction of a new European identity.
Who Said Boys Hate Flowers?

Sireita Mullings

“...I am sick and tired of repeating my self... take off your hats and no eating in the lab. lunch time was over twenty minutes ago...“. Walking towards the door he stuffs the last bit of patty in his mouth, crumples up the greasy patty bag, pulls on the ribena straw, whilst squeezing the box and mumbles,” I wasn’t even eating.”

“Adrian turn off your mobile phone”. “Bruv I’m at one nine eight, i’ll call you back i’ll call you back.” “That’s it GET OUT.”

Simeon had already been introduced and was sitting, waiting patiently to be given instructions. Before I began to question the irony of chasing young people out and away from our inclusive, creative learning project, I handed Simeon a camera. Taking the batteries from the charger, I told my colleague Kareen we were going out to shoot. I felt as though I was abandoning her, probably her nod followed by a long stare triggered a gulp of guilt. Feeling a little guilty I urged Simeon to come with me. We walked towards Brockwell park I asked him if he had done photography before. He clenched his lips and shook his head saying “emmm, kinda.” “Have you used a camera before?” Simeon looked down at me, knitted his brow, smiling he gave an affirmative “yea.” “See you already know the difference between photography and picture taking.” I told him as we stepped off the zebra crossing and through the Norwood road gate of Brockwell park. We headed up hill toward the country house in the middle of the park, during which I showed Simeon the features of the camera. I began by framing our surroundings and pressing the shutter release. After several clicks our conversation was ignited by the quick spotting of interesting shapes and colour, captured through alternate clicking sounds from both cameras. Each time I focused the camera on a seemingly interesting subject he commented by framing his own subject and releasing his shutter. I saw an unfolding confidence and sensitivity transcend through ‘snap shot-ing’ to photography as Simeon honed in on delicate details of...
Roles, Rules and ‘the Trivial Game’ - Goffman and the artist in the community

Diane Dowling

My initial theoretical perspective was based on Lefebvre’s ideas on ‘Everyday Life’. I was about to embark on a study of a community of artists and could relate to his idea of art as commodity and the alienation of ordinary people through the language of modern art. Lefebvre argues ‘alienation’ is a fundamental condition of everyday life. More specifically, he claims that we are alienated by the power and political structures over everyday life. Another form of alienation is what Lefebvre calls ‘modernity’ by which he seems to mean things like art, architecture, science and music. For instance, Lefebvre claims that ‘abstract art goes together with the growth of commodities’. The language of such specialisations is cut off from common sense; the truth of propositions are internal to them and do not relate to external reality. Thus ordinary people are alienated from modernity. However as I ploughed through this difficult book - it mixes sociology, a bit of literary criticism and some philosophy - I soon realised that although it provided some initial focus for my final visual project, it was not enough to ground my work entirely.

My research seemed to be leading me more in the direction of ‘status’ or ‘role’ of the artist in the community. Eventually, I discovered Goffman’s concept of ‘role’. For many sociologists following Goffman, ‘role’ is a basic element from which social structures are built up. It is used to describe most kinds of stereotypical behaviour or prescribed performance, especially those associated with working and family life. (e.g. student, mother). The roles we perform are accompanied by rules.

At its simplest, the term ‘role’ connotes the bundle of formal and predictable attributes associated with each particular social position. Thus the postman, the doctor, the artist, are called upon to perform a professional role - a role expected of them by themselves and their public audience. Similarly a ‘mother’, ‘friend’, citizen, are also roles with associated rules and expectations, which incidentally, might be quite at variance with their own inclinations of the moment. To put this another way; a ‘role’ is some sort of expectation of behaviour, where the subject ‘acts out’ what is normally expected of them - by the individual following the rules for that particular position.

We can see the point here more clearly when we note that many work roles are supported by uniforms and
linguistic codes. This is obvious in the case of the doctor or postman. The doctor has a linguistic code (a professional way of talking) and less obviously a dress code, the postman has a uniform - a recognised way of dressing, and less obviously a linguistic code. Both of them are expected to conform to the many rules associated with their roles - e.g. doctor-patient confidentiality; the delivery of letters to households. Similarly, most other roles involve rules and expectations imposed by the working or social context - though some can be embraced by the subject alone.

Of course, the rules and expectations of most roles are inexacty defined - they are barely more than intuitively felt guidelines to the correct behaviour for a particular social position in a given situation. At first, it is difficult to identify the uniform and linguistic code of the artist. However, Goffman (1990) associated 'role' with another key concept 'career'. Speaking generally, we might view 'career' as a subject's journey through life. Goffman claims that these two forms, 'role' and 'career', link social interactions to the production of social structures (and their changing relations of power). 'Roles' give people identities - and 'career' gives an analysis to their movements.

In his earlier work, Goffman describes 'roles' as performances that can be either sincere or cynical depending on what the performer believes. He goes on to define roles that we detach ourselves from and this insight has been useful in terms of analysing my artists' pluralities of self which became apparent during interview and observing them during exhibition previews.

As we noted, the roles we perform are accompanied by rules. Some rules, Goffman claims are used in 'foggy' everyday settings and are subject to many contingencies and therefore we become confused about how to follow them. Thus, working by rules, warns Goffman, is always problematic for sociologists. No matter how many categories we use (in our analysis); there is still a degree of ambiguity, which can enter the interpretation.

Goffman has also devised some useful tools, which can be used to describe face-to-face interaction. One such tool is the notion of 'role distance', viz. the extent to which the individual may free herself from the demands of fulfilling a given role, and exploit the possibilities of play and improvisation above and beyond the necessities of correct role behaviour. We spend our life playing a 'trivial game' and the difficulty for any sociologist, who studies groups of people, is not simply understanding the rules governing the group's behaviour but the indexicals associated with these rules. Take, for instance, one of my artists who is a jazz musician. He has studied the rules of traditional classical music but can improvise musical scores. He breaks the rules and at the same time uses them to his advantage. We may consider when listening to the jazz player that straying from the traditional musical score seems overwhelmingly difficult but for the musician it might simply be child's play - something that they do without much analysis.

Goffman's theory of indexicals is useful and helps us understand the importance of not simply codifying the rules that are followed by people but to understand how the rules are used for individual purposes. In terms of institutional codes, when these are broken, sanctions are imposed against offenders. Whilst recognising that rules are inherently indexical, without supplementary information they become meaningless or incomprehensible. This became particularly apparent when I interviewed my artists. If we refer to 'this' or 'that' we need to have additional information about the frame or context of the subject. (see Goffman 1974:Chap.5).

One further question of interest here is where do the roles learn the roles that we perform? Garfinkel (1967) suggests that without realising it, we go through life tacitly adding bits of information to indexical expressions. If people fail to do this, they become frustrated. Thus you learn the role of the artist by imagining yourself in the role - the rules, the lexicon, the indexicals, and so on. In photography, for instance, one such very general rule might be, trying to impose a pattern of experience in a photograph - or recognising the aesthetic enjoyment by others of the pattern you have imposed.

Bibliography
Border Country: 
a visit to the grave of
Raymond Williams

Steve Hanson

I’m no stranger to this. I used to take visitors to see Sylvia Plath’s grave at Heptonstall church. This continued until a friend insisted I take his photograph with one arm around the headstone, while the other gave a ‘thumbs up’, with an accompanying cheesy grin. He was making a comment about the bizarre nature of what I was forcing him to do, turning it into a surreal, ‘Hello!’ magazine snap. Visiting graves is seemingly justifiable if the person in question was known to you, as a family member, friend, or as a famous person. Or perhaps if you’re affiliated to a gothic subculture. Placed outside these categories, it is possible to feel like a morbid lurker. But graveyards are also great levellers, signifying the mortality we all share, flattening celebrity. Of course, graveyards can also be monumentalising fields of spectacle, posthumous stages of ostentation. In this sense, identities can be as saturated with class relations in death as in life.

Raymond Williams’s grave at Clodock Church quietly replaces him in his formative landscape, among some of the residents of his beloved Black Mountains. This site is a mesh of the present and landscape, biography and history. Clodock is a medium walk, or a short drive, from Pandy, Williams’s birthplace. I walked here on the day BBC Radio Wales broadcast Dai Smith’s discussion of ‘Border Country’, Williams’ novel about:

‘...a scholarship boy going away from his working class village and finding his relationship with his father. [which] became a universal experience for a generation of working class people from the 1930s.’ (Smith, 2007).

‘Border Country’ shadows my visit, literally, as the England/Wales border is within scrambling distance, up along Hatterall Ridge, the looming horizon to be seen in the photographs here. This line has always been contested territory and is part of the Offa’s Dyke path, which is now popular as a leisure route for walkers. It was once a defensive earthwork, longer, although less substantially constructed, than Hadrian’s Wall. It is thought to have been built due to trouble with the Princes of Powys, having a relatively short period of employment before being abandoned. King Offa apparently dabbled in overseas politics and economics, having links with Charlemagne in Francia, as well as contact with the Papacy. He established
Jonathan Harris, one of the few writers to attempt a rehabilitation of Williams’s tarnished image, has described how a young Edward Said drew comparisons with Williams’s Welsh identity politics, cathecting them into his ‘own Palestinianeness in America’ (Harris, 2004: 64). Fred Inglis, in his biography of Williams, situates Said ‘at the intersection of so many borders - Palestine, Columbia University New York, wealth and poverty, man of the idealistic Left in a country where Leftism is intolerable…’ (Inglis, 1995: 14). Williams’s work is translatable, into other languages of course, but other places, cultures and situations too.

Here in the Black Mountains, the landscape also frames the culture. The potential for the mining communities of South Wales to exist was formed thousands of years previously, latent in the chaos of volcanic eruption and glaciation. Borengene, one of the Black Mountains, changes geologically half way through. Blaenavon, on the southwest side of it, mined coal and produced iron from the one side rich in minerals. But the nearby towns of Abergavenny and Pandy - on the other side of the mountain - are culturally very different, partly due to this geological accident. So, Raymond Williams’s father worked on the railways, not in the mines. Williams’s concept of ‘cultural materialism’ can be applied here in macro.

James Hamilton described Williams’s ‘popular characterization as a mushy “culturalist”, ostensibly interested only in an impressionistic recovery of “experience” and culture as simply “a whole way of life”’ (Hamilton, 2005: 812). Yet standing in this landscape, there is nothing which is separable. Splitting things into neat, discrete packets, isn’t the point and this ‘popular characterization’ loses its stigma, becomes a merit. Of course, there are dominant themes, border lines, be they geographical or class-cultural, but they are constructed precisely so that we can manage the absolute, the total. Taking myself to this astonishing spot suddenly brings the sum of the area’s narratives together in a huge, overwhelming surge.
Pandy is where Williams was first exposed to class struggle, in the form of a General Strike action during which his father Harry - the signalman at Pandy and more politicised than most - lost his job with GWR in 1926. The event is fictionalised in 'Border Country'. Raymond Williams was only a child when this happened, but the waves of influence rippling out from the event are obvious. It is no surprise that ‘Border Country’ and ‘The Long Revolution’ were published virtually back-to-back. Again, Jonathan Harris states that ‘Williams was exploring representations of merged personal and collective pasts and futures: how both are made and remade in real and varied “discursive forms”’ (Harris, 2004: 65). The General Strike framed him as much as the geology framed the industry of the area, and the railways themselves were inseparable from that. Fred Inglis described how, ‘all his life, Williams simply hated that softening, even tone of the English ruling class even when it was truly meant well, that class drew the best people of the opponent class away from the strong, living webs of connection, and located them at an unbridgeable remove from the places and the people to whom they belonged.’ (Inglis, 1995: 37).

Yet Inglis is also careful to point out that ‘Williams himself answered to those voices when they called’ (ibid) heading off with a scholarship, eventually becoming ‘a Don’. But it’s what Williams said when he answered ‘those voices’ which is important, something true of his contemporaries, Richard Hoggart and later, Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy, to name some obvious examples. Inglis cites Terry Eagleton’s 1988 memorial speech at Conway Hall, describing how Williams routinely said things nobody expected to hear in the upper echelons of privileged academia. Inglis goes on to say that Williams ‘broke with the established, calmly superior assumptions and way of talking in England, but did so with a manner, an idiom and diction themselves so unassailably assured that those on the wrong side of the break couldn’t see how to stop him. And then, into the space made by the break, he dropped his own calm commonplaces about human connection, about solidarity and equality, about those things we had been most fired by as young idealists…’ (Inglis, 1995: 11).

Williams stood against conservative literary traditionalism, formulating a new model in ‘cultural materialism’, which in turn partely gave birth to Cultural Studies as a subject. Jeff Browitt gives as good a potted summary of Williams’s project as is possible: He reminds us of ‘Williams’s central concern with “culture”: how it is deeply and unavoidably implicated in the workings of social domination, but also, importantly, of social resistance.’ (Browitt: 118-9). This tells us ‘not only to how to go about oppositional cultural criticism, but also about how to fashion theoretical responses out of the lived experience of the present and, just as importantly, the moral-political example set by Williams.’ (ibid).

Inglis opens his biography with Williams’s funeral and reception at the Angel Hotel, Abergavenny. A theatrical gathering of the ‘New Left’, with walk-on parts by Terry Eagleton and Tariq Ali. For me, the account of Williams’s funeral, with its sometimes agonistic, academic celebrities, is much less interesting than the context Inglis places Williams’s death in. The sudden shock of his passing in 1988, very near to Margaret Thatcher’s third term, heralding trade union defeat and the dawn of a more instrumentalised era, has left its mark, even if that mark takes the shape of an absence for subsequent generations:

‘The values that come through at the end of Border Country are the ones that Raymond Williams wanted to emphasise in the 1950s. Could an industrial working class survive the new consumer world of the 1950s, the world of mass advertising, of television? And if it could, then what was the nature of those values beyond particular institutional descriptions, the nature of life lived in detail in the 1940s and 50s? And his answer is in some senses ambiguous, which is that things are changing and that there is no point in simply trying to take that forward in a mechanical fashion.’ (Smith, 2007).

I teach Cultural Studies in an art college and show first year undergraduates Williams’s very lengthy entry on ‘Culture’, from Keywords. Culture as a ‘way of life’ can be a frighteningly wide concept, but from this I try to explain how we might break it down over the coming weeks. One student complained that there was ‘too much culture’ in one of his lectures. On that day, for his purposes, he had a point. Many of the students are trying to gain entry to the production sites of mass communications and consumerism, the emergence of which both Williams and Hoggart tried to account for. Yet visiting this landscape made me realise the absurdity of such a statement under Williams’s terms, as though the student had suddenly complained about having too much water in his water.

It’s due to Williams’ and Hoggart’s creation of the subject as I understand it, as well as some of the political and social processes they were beneficiaries of, that I am teaching at all. This is an important strand of Williams’s ‘Long Revolution’ (1965):

‘Williams says that cultural and social formations, deep structures of life within these societies are translatable from one generation to another provided that questions of power and empowerment, of priorities and decision making, are understood to be about conflict. And that conflict is a class conflict.’ (Smith, 2007).

Harry Williams, Raymond’s father, was eventually re-employed, but Pandy Station itself is now gone, eclipsed by the new road from Hereford to Abergavenny. This road seems to turn Pandy into ‘a few, separated clutches of buildings’ (Inglis, 1995: 2). Williams’s term ‘mobile privatisation’ (1974) seems painfully literal here, enforced even. Pandy is a location to be missed in a blink as you speed past, on the way to Abergavenny, where shop windows currently display ‘SUPERTOWN OR SUPERSTORE’ posters. It is clear that Abergavenny has, with its Caffe Nero,
Waitrose and projected Asda, both yielded to and attempted to resist homogenising pressures. Again, Jonathan Harris has described some recent studies of “placenesses” and the corresponding “placelessnesses” and “displacements” inherent in processes of modernisation, which he relates to Williams’s project as a whole (Harris, 2004: 66).

Discussions of class are much more nuanced these days, drawing together complex webs of identity politics, gender and race issues. Jonathan Harris, while attempting to rescue Williams from ignominy, outlines how the expansion of cultural studies into identity politics and globalisation, has both absorbed and overtaken Williams’s legacy. Harris claims that he was ‘…oblivious to virtually all the aspects of identity, body and ‘life-style’ politics that have come to dominate the interests of cultural studies scholars’ (2004: 64). Yet Harris also writes of Williams’s optimism, his perhaps historically-situated ability to speak of culture as a connected whole, brimming with possibilities. Williams’s project was concerned with the transformation of society. Harris then goes on to describe the fractured, individualistic state of our contemporary cultural discourses (ibid). Elsewhere he has described, via an unfortunate metaphor, how Terry Eagleton’s “The Idea of Culture” finally called time on Cultural Studies’ vaunted radicalism: like an exhausted pit, he wanted it closed down.’ (Harris, 2001: 109).

Western cultural identity may now lie with how we mix our gender and sexualities with our blend of national identities, ethnicities and single-issue causes. With our Nike and tweed even, or how our iPod shuffle unfolds. All are legitimate, progressive, or at least highly pleasurable, discursive postmodern forms. But I would argue that all of them are linked to wider processes of nature and culture, which do unite us all. The links to broader notions of cultural materialism are explicit, though often, as with many ideological forms, hidden from immediate view. In this way, I see Williams’s older, unitary project of cultural studies, now ‘discredited’ as capitalised ‘Cultural Studies’, as merely on hold, or latent. It is no coincidence that such an interregnum should occur during our current era of western individualism, underwritten by our often ethically questionable, potentially short-term, era of western plenty. Williams has momentarily receded in the text. Of course, his work will never suddenly become directly, 100% relevant again, the work itself discounts the possibility and rightly so. Cultures change, but some of the broader models via which they change can be translated.

The struggles in ‘Border Country’ may be different to ours, but Williams tried to give us frameworks to address ‘struggle’ as a subject, which have much more longevity than his own lifespan: ‘I think for each generation to rediscover this is to understand that perhaps your grandparents had a sex life and that your uncle and aunt went to the pub, and things happened on the mountain tops, that the worries and fears and psychological difficulties you had were also theirs, in a recognisable location and within recognisable walls. At some level it’s quite simply the rediscovery of a family album. You can see the lineaments, it’s what in posher society, aristocracies you would call heritage. This is our heritage.’ (Smith, 2007).

The intellectual legacy of Williams, coupled with my visit to his final resting place and the landscape it is situated in, yields an acceptance of the temporary, shifting nature of both society and culture. But it also speaks of the importance of understanding and being suspicious of what we are told to be the ‘natural’ or ‘normal’ processes via which culture, society and their landscapes morph, as well as the often unseen sites of struggle which engender these constant, painful rebirths. I suspect these contrasting impulses will be as essential to our coming decades as they were to his, and much of his writing remains effective as a set of approaches to them.

References:

Williams’s fiction has had a rough ride since his death. Yet his unfinished People of the Black Mountains project can retrospectively be seen to shadow Alan Moore’s lauded novel ‘Voice of the Fire’, which also mines layers of time in one location: Iain Sinclair’s main excursion from London, Landor’s Tower, also explores many of the ancient and contemporary myths of the area, especially those surrounding the Vale of Ewyas.
“Public character” is the result of one year of doing street photography in London, as a foreign student and photographer. Between deconstruction and appropriation, estrangement and familiarity, this project establishes a narrative of urban fragments and characters, and consciously looks at the shifting relationship between memory, identity and place. Therefore, “Public Character” stands as a personal documentary of the search for a place in the city and the construction of memories, but also as an exploration on the problematic representation of urban spaces – especially the ambiguous nature of flânerie and the multiple narratives associated to a single body of images.
Loose fieldnotes from 'The Happiest Place on Earth'
Paolo Cardullo

In August 2007 Greenwich Council ran a competition called 'Tour de Greenwich', to celebrate the recent Tour de France, with the theme of 'riding around the borough'. My entry was with a series of pictures accompanied by an abstract, a sort of photo diary, portraying my son scootering around the derelict riverside of the peninsula. The diary won a prize for the adults' section, namely vouchers from the bike shop which sponsored the competition, but I asked for my son to be included in the award. After a few weeks, the Labour councillor for Woolwich offered me three tickets to see the musical 'Disney on Ice', featuring 'The Incredibles' at the O2 Arena, normally worth 30 pounds each.

Puzzled, but curious, we went, despite my complaints to the astonished council officers that the show wasn't suitable for a child. Obviously, I was wrong: the arena was packed with screaming children and enthusiastic parents, who were not troubled by having to pay for the extras, such as three quid for an ice cream, two quid for a small bag of popcorn, in addition to all the souvenirs and gadgets that are an obligatory complement to 'The Happiest Place on Earth'. We even spotted two dads with a tray full of pints of lager.

While trying to convince my nervous child that the show was a big treat, I was really trying hard to put my sociological imagination at work: it would be painfully easy to explain it all with commercialisation and commoditisation of children's public space, with notions of safety and comfort in the Disney's ideology of the mall, and with more recent studies on the role of middle class family's children-consumers. I am aware that the sociological literature around the above subjects is vast and offers insights, but instead I started questioning my own work and visual research on the riverside. As Patricia Holland remarks, referring to the groundbreaking work of Colin Ward, writing on anarchism and urbanism:

'The self conscious realism of this urban imagery sought to reject the moralism and the Romanticism which linked children with the rural and with organic nature, but in treating the town as a space for discovery it created its own urban ruralism. Children
listening carefully, in fact, to what my child had to say as to a ‘thinking, acting individual, with the ability to make sense of the material to hand’ (ibidem). Would such events, I wonder, appear to be the sort they want to use to attract and retain high-income families, in order to design, manage and sustain mixed income communities and neighbourhoods on the Peninsula?.

And so goes Colin Ward’s (utopian?) conclusion of his book: ‘The very concept of a city for children suggests in our day a kind of Disney fantasy, and its built form would be Disneyland. The real world is somewhere else…I don’t want a Childhood City. I want a city where children live in the same world as I do’, a shared city in which ‘the whole environment has to be designed and shaped with their needs in mind’ (1977:204).

References:
From Woolwich to Wonderland: walking through a zone of change

Alison Rooke

On a bright fresh November morning I met a group of students at the Firepower museum located in the Woolwich Arsenal, of the London Borough of Greenwich in South East London. Firepower is dedicated to the Royal Artillery, who have been stationed in Woolwich since the 1800s. The museum sits within the site of the former Woolwich Arsenal which was hidden from public view until 1997. The Arsenal has been established since 1700s and as long ago as the 1500s the site was the dockyard for Henry VIII’s navy. Many of the guns and ammunition which maintained the order of colonialism and imperialism have been made at the Arsenal ever since. The Arsenal’s most famous legacy is the football team which began as a workers kick about on nearby Plumstead Common. It is strange to think that the Arsenal is now closed while the lunchtime players were unknowingly laying the foundations for one of the biggest business in the UK.

For centuries immigrants have arrived into London travelling up the Thames and it is from here that Britain set out on her engagements with the world. Henry VIII’s dockyard was the place where some of the most lavish warships of the 17th Century were constructed. The fortunes of Woolwich and nearby Plumstead have long been tied to the demand for bullets, guns and shells, which varied with the wars and conflicts that Britain was involved in. Museums curate stories of the past and the present, erasing some histories, celebrating others. Firepower and its sister museum ‘the Greenwich Heritage Centre’ tell us little about the consequences of all this industry beyond the local. While the Boer War resulted in a scorched earth policy and the internment of women and children in Kitchener’s concentration camps in Southern Africa, back in Woolwich it brought prosperity to the working classes and economic independence for many women. Two world wars brought tremendous prosperity to Woolwich. In the 1914-18 period 75,000 people, including almost 30,000 women and children worked at the Arsenal. Traces of civic pride and working class solidarity can still be seen when walking around the area: at the Plumstead Radical Club, in meeting halls, chapels, and at the site of the former co-operative building in Powis Street. Looking up from the rather grim ‘Woolwich Work and Learn Centre’ you can still see the inscription ‘all for each and each for all’, testifying to the co-operative principle of returning profits to the community. The signs of the street also tell us of more recent changes: the newly opened mini market selling food and drink from Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria Russia and Poland.

We walked to the Woolwich free ferry whose origins can be traced back to the 1300s when regular boats linked the two shores. The present day free ferry service can be dated back to 1844 when it was established by the London Metropolitan Board of Works. The river can also be crossed via the rather eerie foot tunnel. The entrance is strangely hidden away at the somewhat unkempt rear of the Woolwich Waterfront Leisure Centre. It would be easy to mistake it for a ventilation shaft. NO busking, littering, loitering, spitting, animal fouling. Entering the lift, one has the strange sensation of gradually sliding down to the entrance to the tunnel while watching CCTV screens of the tunnel’s occupants, ghostly figures passing out of view and the camera’s eye. Minutes later you walk the same path knowing that you too will be watched by the lift’s next occupant. The man on the stool in the lift seems more interested in his paper.

I always find it difficult to imagine the past when I visit those obligatory historical sites on holiday. If it is hard to picture the Woolwich of the past through its present day remains, its potential future announces itself with confidence. Woolwich, once part of Kent, situated at the edge of what was once called the Thames Estuary, has had its imagined territories redrawn again under the policy initiative that is the Thames Gateway. The gateway stretches forty miles along the estuary from Canary Wharf in London to Southend in Essex and Sittingbourne in Kent. It is Europe’s largest regeneration programme, aiming to remedy post industrial ‘decline and decay’ and producing a ‘unique location landscape’. We are standing in a zone of change marked out for the future eastwards growth of London, building a city the size of Leeds as London extends itself to the coastal towns of Kent and Essex. It promises the wedded bliss of the ‘need’ for development with a seemingly insatiable the desire for shopping and homes. Standing
at the river looking eastwards, we see expansive sky, traces of industry long gone and ongoing, and hundreds of high rise blocks being built along the river bank. Luxury high-rise living stands shoulder to shoulder with council blocks. The view is the same. The rents aren’t. This is a hint of the developer’s wet dream for Woolwich. By 2012 it is anticipated that 120,000 homes and 180,000 jobs will have been created in the Thames Gateway “growth area”. Undoubtedly many of the new Eastern European Woolwichites will provide the casual labour force for the construction sites that will build the dream of the south east London to come. In providing such ‘flexible’ labour, they will unintentionally postpone the industry from its need to modernise and offer decent and safe working conditions. While the walls surrounding the Arsenal finally came down in 1997 after almost 100 years of Ministry of Defence secrecy, new walls and gates have reappeared, protecting the residents of the Berkeley Homes Arsenal development from the locals on the other side of the busy road.

Occasionally huge ships pass by, reminding us that the Thames is still a working river. We are standing in what has long been the backyard of London, where dead cars go to die, where the dirty work is done and bad smells linger in the air. The mythological home of cockney gangsters and salt of the earth dockers and their wives. Students tell me they never realised that this part of London even existed. Others are reminded of other riverside cities, like Amsterdam. We pass a very busy aggregate plant, a noisy belt transports tonnes and tonnes of gravel and sand off a ship. The raw materials of the London to come blows in our faces. We wonder how long this plant will last wedged between the hyper reality of the O2 arena to the west and the Woolwich development to the east. We finally end up at the pub we were looking for, the Pilot Inn, on the end of a row of uncanny uninhabited terraces with grubby net curtains. The pub is marooned in the English partnership acres of tarmac and weed which are gradually turning into temporary nature reserves behind the miles of freshly painted plywood fencing. It is both a reminder of things as they were and things to come. The spectacle of Canary Wharf shines bronze in the setting sun, the O2’s new LCD screens wink in the distance. It has been a journey of contrasts and surprises, fragments of the past and glimpses of the future with a little grit in our eyes.
Henri Lefebvre writes "'Objects' in space simulate the appearance and disappearance of presences in the most profound way. Time is thus punctuated by presences. They give it rhythm, but it also contains things that are not what they seem, representations that simulate/dissimulate." (Lefebvre 2003) The word 'impression' could be defined as 'a lasting effect, opinion, or mental image' (Encarta 2007) but these 'artist's impressions' are visual devices that hover between concept and reality. The city dissolves and is drawn into its own image, Pictures that stimulate presence, yet are never fixed or fluid and they are indications of what lies in the past and propose what may materialise or remain absent in the future.

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Ambling along the bank of the Thames westward from Woolwich, the skyline of the Greenwich Peninsula appears now and then through the overgrowth, diverting ones attention to that spot in the distance. Up close, you cannot help but think how temporary it all appears. The O2 arena, the structure we all know, originally built to hold the exhibition marking the third Millennium has none of the solid monumental quality that such an occasion warrants, which can be found in other buildings built from stone. The dome is made from PTFE, the material also known as Teflon, the stuff which nothing sticks too, very durable I’m sure... but it doesn’t look that way. Next to the O2 arena, sharing the transport system is the David Beckham Academy, another tensile structure— the fabric forming the roof of this cathedral is pvc. So, the Greenwich Peninsula has been developed, it’s old form, it’s old history cleared to be rebuilt with a structure dedicated to that rare of occasions, the millennium and that rarity of men, David Beckham. Yet, how very temporary it appears... Past civilisations built structures to last for their deities... walk around the corner in Rome and the Pantheon still stands... How fleeting times are.

Rebecca Lock
Manuel Vazquez

‘traces’
Bricklane Walk:

Jaemini Kim

I do not need shoes anymore
'cause I am going to stay here forever.
Jennifer Muscarella

Only the smell of history as a set of unattractive doors stand alone, unopened.

They await their caretaker and as the papered proof of his silent absence grows beyond them rains the dust.

Its insides begin to crumble and its scribbles become secrets, the forgotten books turn into myth and paper becomes mystery.

Within lies the room that became the symbol of an extinguished era, the room of the Golem which has now taken its shape, its integrity, its proof on paper.

Santiago Escobar Jaramillo

'Can you hear us?'
says the pavement of Brick Lane
'Can you hear us?'
cries the ground of Colombia

¿Puedes oírme?
dice el pavimento en Brick Lane
¿Puedes oírme?
grita la tierra en Colombia
London: Two Photographs

by Yi Huang

‘Only you’
This photograph was taken on the 2nd of October 2007. I had only just arrived in London, with no friends, feeling a little lonely. It was a rainy day, the clouds were so heavy they made the sun look very weak. The scene was shot from a moving bus. Seeing that only person in the street made me wonder whether anyone else was feeling as lonely as me. The city is always filled with people, but once alone, can seem so heavy and comfortless.

‘Great Tension’
Taken in front of the Parliament during the protests on the 8th of October 2007, calling for the British Troops to move out of Iraq. The helicopter hovering in the air and the camera pointing towards a ground alert reflected, in this hazy light, my feelings on the day.
Stranger, keep away!
Madli Maruste

During the Soviet times bread and milk could be purchased with a coupon in Estonia. The coupon has now been replaced with a magnet card and at this point I don't mean a credit card. In order to have a lunch in the NoKu or KuKu bars in the centre of Tallinn, you need three recommendations on your key card application. A pretty high price for a lunch. In the Soviet times, being a KuKu club member meant having views that did not necessarily concur with those of the reigning powers. For the Estonian cultural elite, spending time in KuKu was like hiding away in a fortress. Membership was vouched for because everybody had to be able to trust everybody else. It had to be clear that the words spoken in KuKu stayed in KuKu. Although the intelligentsia doesn't need a political sanctuary nowadays, KuKu and NoKu are still closed to the random person on the street. It seems that it is the intention of the club members to isolate themselves into an "ivory tower" with their co-conspirators. NoKus nature as a "youth culture club" embraces a conflict - youth and creativity should go hand in hand with liberal views and openness to everything new.

The whole central Tallinn is segmented into closed zones. This is a sign of our hyper-individualized society. Introvert spaces that represent security, hygiene and privacy actually induce fear and paranoia. It says loud and clear: everything outside is dangerous! Barrier separated living quarters as Tiskre and closed streets in the centre of Tallinn like Kentmanni (the front of the USA Embassy) should make us worry less, but actually all kinds of concealed control mechanisms are being practised on us. In big company buildings, corporations, factories, or even academic and artistic buildings like in The Estonian Academy of Arts secret passwords, codes and key cards must be used in order to move around inside the buildings. Herein lies another paradox - universities, schools and academic institutions should symbolize the idea of freedom and equality.

As in many world cities, Tallinn's public space is decreasing rapidly. A big part of public space in the centre of Tallinn was invaded, when city government sold the Viru square to businessmen and the public square was taken over by a huge mall. In order to get to the other side of the square, you have to find your way in a maze of small shops and boutiques from one end to the other. Adding insult to injury, part of the Viru mall belongs to the Finns, so technically it's them who own the legendary part of Tallinn now. Viru mall drew the line between the chosen and the regular Estonians, as over the top consumerism is available only for successful people. The rest probably don't feel so comfortable on the shiny steps of the merchandise palace, the door of which can be symbolically opened with a gold coin. Young people like to hang around there, but what the young rebels don't understand is that by choosing to spend time in a supermarket instead of going home, they give away what little control they have over their lives. Parents could not keep as good eye on them as supermarkets do. The whole shopping paradise is covered with a net of cameras that tape every move of our young independents.

Tallinn's city centre and the old town is becoming more and more a controlled space, governed by the business sector. By the side of the buildings, dozens of outdoor cafes litter Tallinn's streets in summertime, covering a big part of the town hall square and other places. This is not a 'chilling' place for the citizens any more. This is not a place for kids to sit on the sidewalk and eat ice cream. This is another commercial space with a ticket price. You have to buy your way into the Town Hall Square profit carousel in order to spend time there. Public space doesn't exist anymore to satisfy the needs of the city residents, but those of the tourists. This is not solely Tallinn's problem, but an overall tendency in the capitalist world. In young capitalist countries the income gaps between different groups are bigger and the effects therefore more notable.

During the Soviet times the shorelines of Tallinn were parted from the city and turned into closed military zones. Today, Tallinn's bay is open only quite sporadically. Mainly it's private owned territory or closed territory, that belongs to the City Government. Part of it is occupied by the factory houses and harbour buildings from the Soviet times. These industrial districts could be turned into a public part of
the cityscape. In 2006 there was a flash of hope, when the City Government announced that the old Patarei prison building right on the shore will be renovated for the new building of the Estonian Academy of Arts. Later this project was overturned as being too expensive and the building is turned into a museum until further notice.

Moving the Art Academy to Patarei prison building would have been a good example of how restricted space with a negative aura can be turned into a public space with a positive aura. Well, relatively public, because you would still need a keycard to get in there. On the other hand, a battle would have been lost in the centre of Tallinn, where the Art Academy building stands out in the middle of all those hotels and stores like a sore thumb.

As public space being invaded by businesses and previously public space has been privatized, private space has taken over the role of public space in the society. Activities are practised there that used to be part of parks and squares before. People gladly spend time in the malls. There are no homeless people and drunks, so it is considered a safe environment. Only clean and nice people moving around, who forgot that they are the stalkees, objects of the surveillance. In the centre of Tallinn you are never alone with your friends. There’s always someone else who knows what time you crossed a street, met your buddies and which ATM you used to take out money in order to buy a bottle of wine. Letting all this sink in would cause a serious fits of paranoia and the artificially created notion of safety would collapse. The Paranoiac, as we know, is dangerous to himself as to the people surrounding him or her.
Street Photography and Social Research

Charlotte Bates

The Live Sociology project is a year-long programme of five workshops offering training in the use of new media in ethnographic social research. I was one of the participants in the first group of the programme, which started in 2006. The first workshop, 'Redesigning the observer' was held at Goldsmiths College in South London. The main focus of the workshop was on using digital cameras and the afternoon session was a practice-based exercise in street photography. We formed groups of two or three people and were given a brief and a digital camera (a Panasonic FZ30). Briefs included producing portraits of people in Deptford, images of the 'micro' world of New Cross, movement through urban space or a visual narrative of historic Greenwich. We were then given two hours in which we took to the streets - with some anxiety about being able to work the camera (much larger and more sophisticated than your standard point and shoot), the likelihood of producing something worthwhile and, not being familiar with the area, the possibility of getting lost.

I teamed up with Katherine Davies and we decided to look for inspiration on the streets. After spending some time wandering through Greenwich and discussing the brief, we decided that what we needed was some kind of sociological investigative purpose. Neither of us was comfortable with passing ourselves off as photography students, and we felt that we needed a justification for our activity, an explanation which assured both ourselves and the people who's pictures we wanted to take that we had a good reason to be doing what we were doing. Immediately feeling better after we had asserted our identity as sociologists and excused our inability to handle the camera, as well as having alleviated our anxieties about approaching people in the street, we headed off to take some photos.

We decided to focus on the contrast between the hairdressers and barbershops in New Cross. Thinking about our subject matter as a sociological project we discussed the possibility of taking photographs that would capture the gender differences, social interaction and community function of the salons. Even if we couldn't take a good photo, at least there would be some meaning behind the pictures. We started by photographing the window front of a women's salon on the market corner. Passed with idealised images of perfectly coiffed models, we were just able to catch glimpses of the real women inside and, beginning to feel conspicuous in our activity, we decided to go in, explain ourselves, and ask permission to photograph. The salon was bustling with women and children and was obviously a significant space for socialising. However once inside we had difficulty obtaining permission to photograph from all the customers as well as the owner of the salon. By the time we took the first photograph a number of people had moved away and the lens of the camera had steamed up by the time the second photograph was taken.

The second establishment we chose to photograph was a barbershop that we had seen at the very beginning of our time out with the camera. We had both been struck by the starkness of the window front, which stood out in contrast with the adorned exterior of the hairdressers. Using the powerful zoom on the camera we were able to photograph the interior of the barbershop from across the busy street. Unnoticed on the far side of the high street, we were able to capture the interaction between the two men who were laughing and chatting as they went about their business. While we were pleased with the results, we soon began to feel like covert observers of a private moment. Uncomfortable with our furtive voyeurism and wanting to gain further access we again decided to try our luck and go inside. When we ventured in to take some close up shots we were surprised to find that the shop was full of men waiting for a hair cut, laughing and joking together. From the outside the shop had appeared empty apart from the barber and his one client in the window, and the discovery challenged the assumptions we had been forming through our observation about the gender differences and social functions of male and female salons. We worked hard to negotiate consent and agreed with the barber that we could take a few close-up shots through the window. Although we now had permission, the barber purposefully turned his back when the photographs were taken, obscuring his face and that of his customer. This left us feeling conspicuous and even more voyeuristic than we
had from across the street. The subterfuge of asking to photograph through the window had been sensed and in the last image we took the photographer is reflected in the window, capturing my presence and the situation we had produced.

The photograph is, I think, an exemplar of one way in which “methods not only represent but also shape social realities, have implications for the processes and politics through which our research is crafted, as well as our own situated subjectivities as researchers.” (Exploding Method: A New Scholars Symposium 2007). The image of the barbershop reflects the social and ethical drama on each side of the lens. The men continue with their performance of a private ritual in a public space, allowing me to observe through the window but turning their backs to the lens. Meanwhile, I am captured within the image as the object of my own study, frozen in the alternative world of the barbershop that I am not a part of. But I think that what is interesting about this scenario is not me, my presence or subjective response, but rather the work that the camera is doing. This is not an exercise in reflexivity, the impact of me on the field, rather it is about the impact of method - the camera. Its presence, the process through which my research is crafted, has produced a different social reality.

While I failed to capture the object of my study in this instance, the photograph is not necessarily a bad image or a failed image. Instead it shows two things: that our respondents can always choose to disengage or not to look back, and that as researchers we are literally in the field, even when we think we are not a part of the social reality that we are observing. We may use cameras to observe in private, hidden by the lens and apart from the social situation, but somehow our presence is betrayed by the medium, which is after all a two-way lens. Thirdly, the image shows how observation undermines itself. It is a misnomer that photographs are an objective method of recording, that they can, or even claim to, capture 'the real' unproblematically. I set out to capture the social interaction in a barber shop. Instead I captured my own reflection. The lapse between by intention, what I thought I was photographing, and the end product is indicative of the unfolding and shifting nature of social reality and the complexity of the camera as a method of recording. It illustrates that instead of recording, or even looking for, objective realities captured in photographs we are more likely to find meanings, though they may not be the ones we intended.

TV Drama as Sociology:
In Praise of ‘The Wire’

Keith Kahn-Harris

It’s strange to relate that to find the most indispensable current text in urban sociology you have to turn to one of the less well known cable TV channels - in the UK at least. The American series 'The Wire', currently being shown on FX, brings the contemporary urban condition to life in a way that few sociological monographs have ever done. It is also - and those who haven't seen it will have to trust me when I say that this is not mere hyperbole - the best TV drama ever made (and yes I did watch The Sopranos).

The city of Baltimore is The Wire’s setting and its subject, but it also transcends its location to offer a radical and uncompromising examination of the American city. The programme emerged out of the work of the journalist David Simon, a former crime reporter for the Baltimore Sun. In 1991 he published the book 'Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets', based on the workings of Baltimore's homicide unit. The book provided the inspiration for 'Homicide: Life on the Streets', one of the most sensitive and ground-breaking cop shows, which ran from 1992 to 1999.

Simon later went on to co-write with Ed Burns (a former police officer) the extraordinary 'The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighbourhood'. Based on a year's observation of an African-American West Baltimore family torn apart by drug addiction (and drug dealing), it displays a sensitivity and acuity of observation that makes it every bit the equal of classic American ethnographies such as 'Tally's Corner' or 'Street Corner Society'. As in these other works, the corner becomes the location in which larger social processes are played out and negotiated. In 'The Corner', Simon and Burns show how the 'war on drugs' has caused immense damage to the American city. With devastating authority born from detailed immersion in the lives of those affected, they show up the sheer inadequacy of most political responses to the 'problem' of the inner-city.

From his in-depth exposure to both sides in the drug war, Simon went on to develop 'The Wire'. The first series was aired in the US in 2002 and three subsequent series will be followed by a final run, to begin in January 2008. As first 'The Wire' resembled a classic, if superior, cop show - police and drug dealers confront each other in an endless game of cat and mouse ('the wire' of the title referring to phone taps and other surveillance devices used in investigations). But it quickly became apparent that the programme had much greater ambitions than the 'CSIs' or 'Law and Orders' of this world. Indeed, Simon has described the show as:
...a meditation on the death of work and the betrayal of the American working class... a deliberate argument that unencumbered capitalism is not a substitute for social policy; that on its own, without a social compact, raw capitalism is destined to serve the few at the expense of the many.

This is a long way from the preoccupations of most American TV shows.

‘The Wire’s Baltimore is ravaged, dysfunctional, post-industrial, scarred by massive social divisions. The projects of West Baltimore are ghostly places, full of burnt-out and boarded-up hulks of houses (used as burial places for drug murder victims in series 4). The slick venality of the political class is contrasted with the all-but-abandoned school system (also portrayed in series four) The city’s sleek new dockside apartments and entertainment complexes contrast with the death of the working docks (the focus of series two).

The institutions that serve the city are seen as corrupt and corrupting, not just in the obvious sense (although that too), but in the subtle ways in which institutional politics subvert good intentions. Time and again, the police investigations that form the focus of the show come close to bringing in the major drug lords, but time and again the higher-ups in the police hierarchy squander the possibilities of long-term successes for short-term publicity gains. The possibilities that education can provide to ghetto youngsters are undermined by the inanities of ‘teaching to test’. Yet at the same time, bureaucracies also spawn moments of idealism, even heroism. The most mean-spirited and cynical careerists in the programme sometimes demonstrate moments of care, compassion and drive. The converse is true of course as well as the ‘heroes’ of the show are all deeply flawed in some way.

And then there is the issue of race. Baltimore is 65% African-American, making racial politics a persistent feature of the city and the show. The tensions and possibilities the city’s demographics produce are teased out with exquisite subtlety. An important storyline in series three and four is the attempt by a white city councillor to run for mayor against the black incumbent. Series two focuses on the relationship they have to the political system. The institutions that serve the city are seen as corrupt and corrupting, not just in the obvious sense (although that too), but in the subtle ways in which institutional politics subvert good intentions. Time and again, the police investigations that form the focus of the show come close to bringing in the major drug lords, but time and again the higher-ups in the police hierarchy squander the possibilities of long-term successes for short-term publicity gains. The possibilities that education can provide to ghetto youngsters are undermined by the inanities of ‘teaching to test’. Yet at the same time, bureaucracies also spawn moments of idealism, even heroism. The most mean-spirited and cynical careerists in the programme sometimes demonstrate moments of care, compassion and drive. The converse is true of course as well as the ‘heroes’ of the show are all deeply flawed in some way.

The show features a wider range of black characters than perhaps any other show on American TV. They run the gamut from odious state senators to the drug ‘friends’ of West Baltimore. Inevitably, for a show that focuses on crime and deprivation, residents of the black ghettos caught up in the drugs war are a major part of the show. Here again, our notions of hero and villain are undercut and played with. The most likeable character in the entire show is Omar Little, who makes his living sticking up drug dealers and is a fearless, funny, articulate homosexual whose amorality is underpinned with a strict moral code. There are also horrifying characters such as the drug lord Marlo who orders assassinations without compunction for the slightest defiance. But most of all there are a host of ghetto residents desperately struggling to find dignity in a hopeless environment - the drug dealers and users trying and failing to escape ‘the game’, the teenagers trying to find options where there are none. There are few real heroes among them, but few real villains too.

‘The Wire’ s four seasons have told four interconnected stories whilst tracking the lives of an ever-expanding cast of characters. The show features hundreds of speaking parts, many of them played by unknown actors recruited locally. This ability to simultaneously pursue major social themes whilst paying respect to the extraordinary diversity and richness of individual human lives is the mark of truly great drama. It also makes the programme supremely watchable. I wanted to write this piece partially because, as a fan I am pretty evangelical about The Wire. But I also think it raises questions that are relevant for anyone with an interest in sociology. I do not just mean the questions about race, the city, drugs and crime that are the focus of the show; but also questions concerning where sociological knowledge come from. Few would dispute the ability of journalists such as David Simon to produce books like The Corner that are every bit the equal of academic ethnographic monographs. But how sociology can incorporate dramatic works is a much more difficult issue. Academic sociological writing rarely engages and motivates the way good drama or good fiction can. How do we use that engagement and motivation in sociological work and to what end? What does it mean that the most penetratingly sociological critique of post-industrial capitalism comes from a TV drama, rather than from a sociologist?

Another issue that The Wire raises is the ability of corporate capitalist culture to produce works of critique. The programme is made by HBO in the states. This subscription-only cable channel’s lack of reliance on advertising revenue means that it can withstand some of the more brutal commercial pressures. Even so, it is extraordinary how the channel has stuck with a show that is hardly cheap to make and has always had poor audience ratings. Outside a fairly rarefied critical audience, sections of the African-American community and residents of Baltimore, The Wire is obscure and uncelebrated (even more so in the UK). Is the survival of this explicitly critical show a product of its obscurity? Does HBO stick with it for its critical success alone?

There is something about The Wire that generates rhapsodic tributes from its fans. Those who read The Guardian will know that Charlie Brooker, the normally curmudgeonly and cynical TV critic, becomes a misty-eyed evangelist when talking about the programme. It does that to people. It’s well worth anybody’s time to find out why.
During ten days last September, an unusual sight could be seen on the outskirts of London. Slowly, but purposefully, a skewbald horse pulling a peculiar-looking black carriage made its way around the borders of the M25, stopping along the way to reveal its mysterious load to unsuspecting passers-by. This was not a gypsy wagon in disguise or a circus troupe on the loose, but a mobile art exhibition created by London-based artist Eva Lis in collaboration with Canadian artist Ed Pien.

I visited the exhibition on a clear autumn day, taking the train from Stratford to Brentwood, Essex. As I looked out the window, the barren, pre-Olympic urban landscape of East London gradually gave way to leafy suburbia. When I arrived, the view that greeted me was at first glance idyllic. The carriage was parked on a playing field underneath a tall tree; the horse grazed peacefully nearby. However, as I came closer, the scene took on a rather more sinister character. Bursting out of the shiny black carriage, eerily juxtaposed to the serene surroundings, was a nightmarish assemblage of demons and ghosts, grotesquely contorted with twisted limbs and distorted faces.

Looking at the display, I felt there was something peculiarly urban about these creatures. Strangely out of place, they were not the old-fashioned ghosts of country mansions. Rather, it was as if someone had trawled the city at night, rounded up all the ghosts and spirits hiding in the crevices of the urban landscape, and taken them for a ride. Nobody would notice them in the bustle of the city, but out here they were visible for everyone to see.

I had a quick chat with Eva Lis about the exhibition. ‘It attempts to address issues of migration, displacement and dislocation’, she said. ‘It reflects my personal story – for most of my life I have lived the ghost-like existence of a migrant. I wanted to express the feeling of inbetweenness that comes with living on the margins, of being present but not quite there, invisible and constantly moving.’

Comments left by passers-by suggested they had been both fascinated and slightly disconcerted by the experience. One read ‘Wots that? Is it the ghost train? Are you in the circus? Wot is it?’ Another ‘You shouldn’t have that here, it’s scary for the children’. As I stood there pondering, a young mum with two small children came by. She spent quite a while studying the display, not sure what to make of it but clearly intrigued. So was her young daughter. I overheard the mum asking: ‘Do you like it or do you think it’s a bit strange?’ ‘It’s a bit strange’ the girl replied enthusiastically. I’d like to think that meant she liked it.
Gender as Choreography

Book Review by Emma Jackson

‘Gender, Youth and Culture: Young Masculinities and Femininities’ by Anoop Nayak and Mary Jane Kehily, 2008

Carrie Bradshaw, whiny superfluous consumerist purveyor of bad puns or independent post-feminist icon? Ally McBeal, pathetic simpering fantasist or embodiment of girl power? It depends if you are a Feminist scholar or a Slovenian girl as ‘place-specific interpretations suggest alternative ways of looking’ argue Nayak and Kehily. The theme of the interaction of flows and products of globalisation and the local and particular is a key component of this excellent new book.

Taking on the (not small) question of ‘how boys become men and girls become women in the modern world’, Nayak and Kehily stress the drawbacks of focussing on ‘femininity’ or ‘masculinity’ exclusively as if they were natural categories and Kehily stress the drawbacks of focussing on ‘femininity’ or ‘masculinity’ exclusively as if they were natural categories. Instead the authors draw upon rich ethnographic material, which exposes these processes of co-production interwoven with textual analysis of films, TV programmes and magazines (both writers were post-graduates at the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies).

The book is divided into two parts. In the first (‘Understanding Gender and Youth: Concepts theory and action’) the ‘global ethnography’ is introduced, referring to a use of ethnographic practice which is sensitive to the relationship between the local/global. This global approach also manifests itself in the breadth of the ethnographic references. Case studies from Brazil, the UK, Russia and Tanzania are used to argue for the value of anthropological ethnography in capturing the transitions and resistance to globalisation in different lived experiences.

While examining shifts in the making of gender in late modernity the authors question the ubiquitous ‘Masculinity in Crisis’ thesis - which assumes that young women are inheritors of the (neo-liberal) earth while defunct men retreat into the underworld of bare knuckle boxing (‘Fight Club’) or else resort to stripping (‘The Full Monty’) - by using a combination of queer theory (which insists that masculinity isn’t an essence) and ethnography (which insists on the significance of the local). Rather, they argue that a look at post-war texts on youth and delinquency reveal that young working class men are perpetually portrayed as in crisis. Moreover, the demise of heavy industry in the UK has not necessarily led to the end of the production of industrial masculinities (See Nayak (2003) on the shift from production to consumption in the making of Geordie identity). This is not to suggest that gender relations are unchanging. Nayak and Kehily point to the emergence of new (hyper-) femininities and feminism’s uneasy relationship with these new ‘fluffy’ forms. The authors describe the inequalities in ‘the new girl order’ recognising it as a Western neo-liberal construct ... designed around individual opportunity, personal makeovers and the reflexive production of the self. It is a club that carefully excludes peripheral femininities from ‘pramface’ teenage mums on unemployed estates, to plastic sandal-wearing peasants toiling in the Andean foothills.’ (183)

The second part of the book (‘Performing Gender and Youth: Production, Regulation and Consumption’) begins with a consideration of how gender is produced and regulated, focussing on schools. The authors take a Foucauldian perspective, outlining both the power deployed in schools and its productive nature. So although the school aims to regulate sexual activity through its panoptican-like lay out and through sex education, such ‘official’ discourses are productive of other kinds of power. This becomes evident when young people are critical of the information they receive in class or fill in the silences on subjects such as homosexuality, emotion and pleasure sources using the alternative sources of peer group and popular culture.

In looking at consumption and culture the authors again argue for the importance of place. Here acts of consumption (of ‘Brookside’ or ‘More’ magazine) are viewed as neither negative or positive but a means through which subjectivities are negotiated. In critical dialogue with Beverley Skeggs’ work on gender, class and symbolic value (which they suggest argues that ‘working class women are among the most vilified and excluded of groups’) the authors use examples from across the globe where working class women have managed to capitalise on qualities which transcend the boundaries of class, like beauty or ICT skills. But whether working class women are always the most vilified group in every society or not, this is beside the point. Consider the authors’ image of gender as choreography:

[‘W]e describe the enactment of gender by young people as a mode of choreography, a set of culturally patterned activities which bring the subject into being but at best can only ever approximate the sexoed identity that is desired. Moreover as we have already seen there are occasions where the choreography of gender may occur when an appropriated style forms part of a collective enactment ... Alternatively these choreographies may in turn be recuperated into new discursive formations such as the recent deployment of the ‘ladette’.” (177)

To labour the dance metaphor, while the ladette may seem to be part of a new discursive formation where ‘women drinkers are an increasingly accepted part of the night time economy’ not everyone takes part in the dance on the same terms. Certain moves are more risky for certain bodies. In this deceptively slim volume the authors argue persuasively for the productivity of connecting the theory of Judith Butler to ethnographic material on how young people ‘do’ gender. Bringing Butler to bear on youth studies in this way raises the challenge that queer theory needs to engage
more with everyday life. There is definitely a pro-
ethnography thread to this book, Angela McRobbie and
Judith Halberstam come in for criticism at various points for
reading off bodies rather than engaging with what various
practices mean to people. Conversely, this book also
demonstrates that those committed to studying everyday
life have much to gain through engaging with the
complexities of queer theory.

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‘City of Disappearances’


Book Review by Rachel Jones

Tracing the endless transformations of London’s intricate
web of activity throughout time and space is a difficult and
seemingly impossible task to undertake. Embracing the
complexity and challenge of this overwhelming
eavour, Iain Sinclair delves into the depths of London’s
past in ‘City of Disappearances’. Sinclair’s aim is to uncover
the often hidden traces of the city’s history that continue to
haunt the present and beyond through a series of vignettes
recounted by an array of authors (including Patrick Keiller,
Marius Kociejowski, Jeff Nuttall, Will Self, and Rachel
Lichtenstein).

In ‘Disappearances’ the city becomes text and its streets,
shops and inhabitants come to life through the words of
these writers. Sinclair declares at the outset of the
anthology: “I hoped that the city would begin to write itself”.
Each author has been called upon by Sinclair to produce an
anecdote regarding an aspect of London that is no longer
there, be it a friend, an enemy, a complete stranger, a strip
club, library or even an entire street. The musings of these
writers (contributions received often with much coaxing
from Sinclair) span several centuries and generations and
across many areas of London. Although the stories are
written separately and apparently without direction or
specific brief (other than that mentioned previously), many
of the tales tend to converge and overlap. Sinclair has
grouped these vignettes into broad categories, such as
Bibliomania, Secret Histories and Eastending, in order to
provide some anchor for the reader to grab hold of while
navigating London’s past. However, for the most part the
reader is taken on a journey through the labyrinth of
London in a manner that brings to mind Walter Benjamin
and his penchant for getting lost in the city. Evoking the non-
linearity of Benjamin’s ‘Arcades Project’ (as well as its
considerable length) Sinclair’s prose weaves together
these strands of seemingly disparate material in a jigsaw-like
manner. Like the 19th century figure of the flâneur, I felt like
a spectator meandering through the metropolis, being privy
to sights and events that I could not have otherwise
encountered. It felt rather voyeuristic to read some of the
lurid narratives recalled in the pages of this book, as they are
told with many personal, intimate and revealing details.
Because these are remembrances, however, there is no
distinction between fact and fiction, and I suppose that many
of the authors here have embellished their stories—either
on purpose or without intention due to the workings of the
imagination and memory over time.

This brings us to another important aspect of a book of this
kind: ‘City of Disappearances’ highlights the role of memory
and imagination in how we view the city in the present and
into the future. Memory is inextricably linked to our
perception of the present and inevitably shapes the ‘real’ city
through our eyes and subsequently through our interactions
with it. Lee Harwood notes that the remembrances of the
various authors sometimes corroborate each other: “So the
pieces of the puzzle at times fit together”. While Sinclair
comments that “more frequently, they [these
memories/puzzle pieces] do not: we revise, talk ourselves
up, airbrush shame”. Whether the remembrances of these
authors is wholly accurate is beside the point, their
memories exist and by this very existence claim authenticity.

‘Disappearances’ is both a captivating and frustrating book
to read. I believe it is an important text and Sinclair’s efforts
to attempt to capture the elusive unwritten (until now)
history of London is impressive and inspiring. To be given
a glimpse of someone else’s experience of London, especially
in such a varied and vast offering is a rare treat. It is
frustrating, however, to be given only a short snippet— to be
interrupted abruptly and taken from one enthralling
memory to the next without warning. For instance, I had
become quite attached to Majer Bogdanski and all his
cohorts in Rachel Lichtenstein’s tale of the Friends of
Yiddish society in Brick Lane and did not want that story to
end. I had to put the book down for a short while to digest
the intensity of this story and to let go of the loss of these
characters in order to ready myself for the next tale. This
is perhaps what Sinclair has intended in recalling the
‘disappeared’; the losses and absences that either fade away
or are suddenly removed force us (willingly or unwillingly)
to move on to the next occurrence in the city. Yet the
memories of the previous encounters never fully subside
and continually resonate within ourselves and within the
city of London.
Fallout: Reflecting on ‘Exploding Methods’

Conference, September 2007
by Allan Day, Joe Deville and Yael Gerson

It’s a busy Friday lunchtime in the Goldsmiths canteen. Allan, Joe, and Yael sit down to make good on their promise to do a Street Signs article about the ‘Exploding Methods’ conference that they, along with Della Duna, organised the previous summer. Between bowls of chocolate sponge and custard, a dictaphone is placed.

JD: So, what’s the plan?
YG: I think the plan is that we have a conversation about what the idea behind ‘Exploding Methods’ was...
JD: So what was the idea behind ‘Exploding Methods’?!
YG: Part of it was to continue on from the (Re)Creating Methodologies postgraduate symposium two years ago.
JD: Maybe we should talk about the format? Because that’s what made the conference a little bit different than others.
AD: So where did the symposium structure come from?
YG: For me personally, it was motivated by experiences of conferences where the papers are so diverse that you only ever engage with them on a very superficial level.
JD: Hardly any of the conferences I’d been to had lived up to what I think a conference is supposed to be about, which is about getting feedback on your work, on your writing.
AD: There were a couple of models we were working off, weren’t there? There was the Nylon format...
JD: Why don’t you tell us what that is?
AD: Good idea! As I understand it, in the Nylon seminars a paper will be circulated prior to the event and then someone other than the author presents the paper. That way, the feedback mechanism is built quite strongly into the framework, which is something we certainly mimicked. Do you think people responded well to that?
JD: I think they did. As you know, we divided everyone into four streams. Within each stream, people were paired up so that each person in the pair would respond to the other’s paper. In my stream the convergences between papers worked really well.
Also, having small groups of, say six people, where everyone had read all the papers in advance meant there was quite a lot of bleed between papers, which you don’t really get in a conventional conference setting. Maybe we should try and give a flavour of some of the kinds of themes that were discussed on the day!

YG: Yes! My stream dealt with what we termed innovative methods, which included doing sensory research, using visual methods, auditory methods. For example, how do you research a history of music when audio recordings do not exist from that period?
AD: In the session before the final round table, each group spent a little while summarising what they had previously discussed during the day. When my group did that, the main thing that came through for me were issues relating to representation and the politics of representing others. In the end, my group created a ‘round’. Each of us called out the items on the group’s list of topics and concerns, speaking over one another. It worked really well in conveying a sense of all these circulating, interconnected issues.
JD: It was a bit of a methodological cacophony, wasn’t it?
AD: Yes, it communicated in many ways!
JD: Indeed! A lot of the discussion in our stream was about method intervening in a particular situation, whether that be a research context or the life of the researcher, the ways in which method can create phenomena as much as it studies them I guess...
YG: …I suppose in that respect it overlaps with the discussion in the ‘innovative methods’ stream, particularly dealing with how to present results when using sensory methods.
AD: …see what comes back together. Explosions are always creative, they always re-assemble in some way. I think as an overarching concept it may be problematic, but Howard Becker made the point that there is a tendency amongst European academics to often use very violent metaphors to describe their practice.
JD: Indeed! A lot of the discussion in our stream was about method intervening in a particular situation, whether that be a research context or the life of the researcher, the ways in which method can create phenomena as much as it studies them I guess...
AD: I liked it for its forthrightness. It’s quite a brave proposition and it gave the conference an edginess which I think was warranted. There is a danger for methodology to have a self-affirming tone. I think ‘explosion’ is appropriate in that scenario.
YG: Yes! It didn’t view exploding as a violent word, or as being negative. Destroying method would’ve been violent. Exploding, I think, was more intended to pull method apart and then...
AD: …what comes back together. Explosions are always creative, they always re-assemble in some way. I think as an overarching concept it may be problematic, but as you say, in terms of giving the conference an edge, I think it worked as we intended it to. What about Howard [Becker]? We had a session with him and Les [Back] where everyone came together in discussion. What were the aims of that session and do you think we achieved them?
YG: We wanted to take what had been discussed in the parallel streams into a wider discussion with everyone else. I don’t think it was as successful as it could have been, personally. We’d all been in dialogue with each other all day, and the final session lacked the same intimacy.
AD: It’s good to have a coming together though, that's
what a conference is about. What really worked, I think, was to hear how Les and Howard were able to approach some of the themes that emerged throughout the day from a different perspective.

JD: What can we take forward from the day?

AD: One of the things that I thought was important about the conference was that we were borrowing from events that we’d experienced previously. In a sense, it was a methodological experiment into the conduct of conferences. I’m quite keen to try to disseminate what we learnt so that people can experiment with our format in their own ways.

YG: I agree, in the same way that we drew on our previous experiences, it would be nice for people to use theirs when coming up with their own events.

AD: Sociologists playing at being social experimenters!

JD: Yes, it was a methodological experiment and that itself did feed quite well into the discussions on the day I think.

AD: One thing I was going to ask, what was your most vivid memory of the conference?

JD: I couldn’t isolate one memory. Because of all the organising, I end up remembering very mundane things. I have a tendency to stress and over-organise, so for me the excitement came from the fact that the event ran as planned and that everyone generally seemed really happy with it.

YG: For me it is a combination of the image of the balloons and just people talking. Because I spent some of the time outside the streams, it was really nice to just hear all these conversations going on, even if you couldn’t hear exactly what they were saying. I really liked that. To me that’s success. I hate silence.

AD: I remember the evening before, frantically sticking stickers to folders, assembling all these printed materials, being tired, the sense of anticipation and fear. Then the next morning, being tense, and the bus not arriving on time. Then, rushing in and people arriving. All that sits quite heavily in my memory somewhere.

YG: Oh, one more question, did we end up being too reflexive?

JD: Well people can maybe judge from this interview! [Laughs] That’s up to them.

AD: We’re not!

YG: [Laughs]

JD: Shall we call it a rap?

YG: Yes.

Thanks to Britt Hatzius for her work on the installation. Photographs courtesy of Yael Gerson and Charlotte Bates.

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MA IN CULTURE, GLOBALISATION AND THE CITY
The Centre for Urban and Community Research (CUCR)
Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths College, University of London.

The Urban Globe?
Our world is moving from being a global village to an urban globe. One of the big challenges of the 21st Century is how to understand the social organisation of contemporary urban life. The MA in Culture, Globalisation and the City gives you the theoretical and practical tools to make sense of cities like London, Los Angeles, Nairobi or Tokyo.

The course examines a range of issues from the economics of the global city to the politics of graffiti writing. These include analysing Urban Youth Cultures, Literary and Political Milieux, the Political Economy of the City, Science and the Technology of Urban Life, Urban Multiculture, Hybridity and Racism and the Spatial Politics of Gender and Sexuality. A multi-disciplinary approach is applied that draws on Sociology, Cultural Geography, Cultural Studies, Politics and Social Policy. The MA is dedicated to turning students into active researchers, critics and writers.

The programme consists of 3 core courses, dissertation and a choice of options. It can be followed either full-time or part-time. ESRC funding for one UK resident is currently under review and may not be available next year. Next available entry point: October 2008.

MA IN PHOTOGRAPHY AND URBAN CULTURES
The Centre for Urban and Community Research (CUCR)
Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths College, University of London.

Introducing the MA
The MA in Photography and Urban Cultures has been developed in response to the increasing interests in urban theory and the visual representation and investigation of urban life and the physical environments of the city.

Who is it for?
Photographers, visual artists and media practitioners, as well as those with a background in social sciences, interested in exploring the creative interplay between cultural research, urban studies and photographic practice.

You should have a degree or equivalent in a relevant area. Cultural research, urban studies and photographic practice.

Structure
A combination of written and practical work to include a research dissertation and a portfolio of photographs and final exhibition. It can be followed either full-time or part-time. Next available entry point: October 2008.

The MA is run by the Centre for Urban and Community Research (CUCR), a national and international leader in research on urban and community life. CUCR is multi-disciplinary and focuses on issues such as citizenship and cosmopolitanism; social exclusion and cultures of racism; sport, popular culture and music; regeneration and wealth creation; issues of crime and community safety; technology and new patterns of digital culture.

Further information and how to apply: UK and EU students: Admissions Office, telephone 020 7919 7060 (direct line), fax 020 7717 2240 or e-mail admissions@gold.ac.uk; Overseas (non EU) students: International Office, telephone 020 7919 7700 (direct line), fax 020 7919 7704 or e-mail international-office@gold.ac.uk;

For further information about the Centre: Please call 020 7919 7390, e-mail cucr@gold.ac.uk or visit www.gold.ac.uk/cucr/
CUCR Occasional paper series

Margarita ARAGON
Brown Youth, Black Fashion and a White Riot, 2007

Brian WALLEYNE
Personal Narratives and Activism: a bio-ethnography of "Life Experience with Britain"

Mette ANDERSSON
The Situated Politics of Recognition: Ethnic Minority, Youth and Indentity Work.

Les BACK, Tim CRABBE, John SOLOMOS
Lions, Black Skins and Ragga Gyals

Andrew BARRY
Motor ecology: the political chemistry of urban air

Zygmunt BAUMAN
City of Fears, City of Hopes

Vikki BELL
Show and tell: passing, narrative and Tony Morrison’s Jazz

Eva BERGLUND
Legacies of Empire and Spatial Divides: new and old challenges for Environmentalists in the UK

Tine BLOM
Dostoevsky’s Inquisitor: The Question of Evil, Suffering and Freedom of Will in Totalitarian Regimes

Bridget BYRNE
How English am I?

Ben CARRINGTON
Race, Representation and the Sporting Body

Stephen DOBSON

Ben GIDLEY
The proletarian other: Charles Booth and the politics of representation

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The status of difference: from epidermalisation to neo-politics

Michael STONE
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Colin KING
Play the White Man: The Theatre of Racialised Performance in the Institutions of Soccer

Larry LOHMANN
Ethnic Discrimination in “Global” Conservation

Ben LOCKER
Exhibiting Imperial London: Empire and City in late Victorian and Edwardian guidebooks

Hiroki OGASAWARA
Performing Sectarianism: Terror, Spectacle and Urban Myth in Glasgow Football Cultures

Garry ROBSON
Class, criminality and embodied consciousness: Charlie Richardson and a South East London Habitus

Flemming ROGILDS
Charlie Nielsen’s Journey: Wandering through Multicultural Landscapes

Fran TONKISS
The ‘marketisation’ of urban government: private finance and urban policy

Daniele TURNER
The language of anti-racism in social work: towards a deconstructive reading

Gordon WALKER and Karen BICKERSTAFF
Polluting the poor: an emerging environmental justice agenda for the UK?

Louisa THOMSON
The Respect Drive: the Politics of Young People and Community

please refer to www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/cucr for downloads and further information.

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