

*Détour* and *Retour*: Practices and poetics of salt as narratives of  
relation and re-generation in Brixton

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I, Katherine Lusi Emma Beinart, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.



## Abstract

Drawing on the work of Martiniquan poet Edouard Glissant and his 'poetics of Relation' (1990), this practice-based PhD explores how salt features in relationships of migration and change in urban places, in particular the context of Brixton, an area of London with a strong migrant identity.

Following Glissant's notion of *détour* and *retour*, this thesis moves between geographical locations through a series of four narrative journeys from Brixton, outwards to South Africa, Eastern Europe, Portugal, and Haiti, returning each time to Brixton as a 'homeplace'. Each chapter is arranged as a *détour* and *retour*, developing a practice and poetics of salt that offers a productive reading of Brixton's current regeneration.

I explore salt's use in offering forms of protection, preservation and reawakening through re-enacting rituals found in everyday and religious practices from across different diasporas. I engage with auto-ethnographic research into my family history and Jewish cultural customs around salt, as well as engage with others' stories and salt products that link to specific places through migration. Using practices that performatively engage with the materiality of salt, I build on work by artists including Robert Smithson and Sigalit Landau.

Overall, this thesis argues that practices and poetics of salt can be linked to processes of migration and regeneration. The thesis shows how salt practices can be used to understand the particular poetics of salt and how salt acts as an index in artworks that point to ideas of migration and diaspora. These material and poetic qualities of salt make it a rich vehicle for alternative approaches to regeneration, particularly in sites such as Brixton. I argue for a re-negotiation of the language of regeneration of these sites, instead proposing a 'poetics of re-generation' through a re-reading of Glissant's terms of *détour* and *retour* as well as his poetics of Relation.



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## List of abbreviations

Key texts are referred to as follows:

- PR* Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997)
- PdR* Édouard Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990)
- DA* Édouard Glissant, *Le Discours Antillais* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1981); English
- CD* Édouard Glissant, translation by J. Michael Dash, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989)
- SN* Édouard Glissant, *Le Sel noir* (Paris: Seuil, 1960);
- BS* Édouard Glissant, translation by Betsy Wing, *Black Salt* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

Blogs and websites by the author are referred to as follows. Full references and urls are below and in bibliography.

Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Origination* Blog:  
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Katy Beinart, 'Salted Earth' Blog: <<http://saltedearth.net>>

Anchor & Magnet website: <<http://www.anchorandmagnet.org/blank-md97r>>

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Easy now.  
One Love.





To my ancestors, whose journeys inspired me to ask questions.  
And to Abie Beinart, a whole new journey.

*to the sea  
for the salt it signifies.*

(Edouard Glissant, *Black Salt*)



## **Prologue**



Image 0.1: Malmesbury Cemetery entrance (2010)

Image 0.2: Woolf and Gittel Beinar's graves, Malmesbury Cemetery (2010)

In the early 1900s, my great-grandfather Woolf Beinart (who was born in 1878) left the village of Obeliai in north-eastern Lithuania and travelled, first by land, then by ship, to South Africa. His exact movements on arrival are not known, but by the 1910s he was living in Malmesbury, a small town in the Western Cape. He became a trader and general dealer and, by the 1930s, he had developed a new business called the Darling Salt Pans and Produce Company. He owned one of about fifteen circular salt pans in the district, and I found that this salt pan featured in family memory. He died in 1948 and his grave can be found in a semi-derelict cemetery on a hill outside Malmesbury, abandoned because the Jewish community had moved away.



## **Introduction: In search of salted earth**





‘Sal terrae est anima’<sup>1</sup>  
(The salt of the earth is the soul)

‘There is no place that does not have its elsewhere. No place where this is not an essential dilemma. No place where it is not necessary to come as close as possible to figuring out this dialectic of interdependencies...’<sup>2</sup>

This thesis grows out of my work as an artist which draws on my personal history and, has investigated relationships between migration, diaspora, materiality, belonging and identity. It also draws on my artistic and community work using community participation in social and architectural regeneration processes. In my Master’s dissertation, ‘Healing Place: Creative spatial interventions as catalysts for reconstructing community identity’, I investigated community participation in artistic and spatial production which can offer a catalyst for producing new communal identities of place and a potential ‘healing’ of past contestations or traces of previous acts of violence.<sup>3</sup> In one of my Master’s case studies, about the District Six area of Cape Town in South Africa, I came across the term ‘salted earth’, which refers to a place that is no longer usable.<sup>4</sup> This put the connection between salt and healing place in my mind: it suggested how place becomes a holder of some trauma which then requires healing or renewal.

The use of the term ‘salted earth’ for District Six in Cape Town referenced the consequences of a forced removal of about 60,000 black and minority ethnic people under apartheid. The active memory of the former use of the place (as a district that housed families from different racial and ethnic backgrounds) made the area of District Six, still largely empty of its former inhabitants, a focal point of protest. Even the post-apartheid African National Congress government found it difficult to advance with rebuilding and regenerating this area. The legacy of anger about the removal of the residents and the destruction of their homes, coupled with the complexity of restitution claims, has prevented a healing solution that adequately respects the memory of the people who were forcibly removed and the place itself. The emotional connection between former residents and place survived thanks to an ongoing campaign, which eventually

<sup>1</sup> Full quotation: ‘The Salt of the earth is the soul; it coagulates all things, is in the midst of the earth when the earth is destroyed; nor is there anything on the earth like its tincture.’ Arthur E. Waite, *The Hermetic Museum* (London: James Elliott and Co., 1893), p. 88 (Waite’s translation of the Latin original in *Museum Hermeticum* (Frankfurt, 1678), p. 17).

<sup>2</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 153.; originally published in French as *Poétique de la Relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990)

<sup>3</sup> Katy Beinart, ‘Healing Place: Creative spatial interventions as catalysts for reconstructing community identity’ (MA dissertation, Oxford Brookes University, 2006), <<http://www.katybeinart.co.uk/writing.html>> [accessed 7 August 2017].

<sup>4</sup> Neville Dubow, ‘District with a view of the bay’, *Mail & Guardian*, 24 November 1995, <<http://mg.co.za/article/1995-11-24-district-with-a-view-of-the-bay>> [accessed 28 July 2014].

became the District Six archive and museum;<sup>5</sup> the metaphor of salt suggests emotional memory (salty tears) and the need to preserve that memory, as well as containing a trace of resistance.

Through *Origination*, the art project I have been working on since 2008 with my sister Rebecca, we have made a series of journeys to explore and retrace our family history and to discover how the identities of our grandparents, great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents changed as a result of leaving a familiar home and migrating to new places and environments. On these journeys, I found family links to the salt trade. In the *Origination* project, salt appeared in my family history as a means of economic survival in a new country, one that was connected to ritual practice, preservation and memory. I first visited District Six with my father, who remembered the area before the forced removals. Later, I found out that the area had been the point of arrival in Cape Town for many Jews from Eastern Europe and that it was probably the first location my great-grandfather Woolf would have headed to on his arrival in the city.<sup>6</sup> After he had moved to Malmesbury and set up his business, he established a tanning factory in the area of Salt River in Cape Town, next to District Six.

In 'Healing Place' and *Origination*, salt appeared as both a material substance and a metaphor of the connection between identity and place. The projects also highlighted two key aspects of my practice I wanted to develop and test and understand further: the ancestral salting practice, and the poetics that the particular material might produce. Linking the history of District Six with my family history, it seemed that working with narratives of migration based around salt could offer a specific kind of salting practice and material poetics. Through relating these practices and poetics of salt to specific places, they also offered potential new understandings of the links between regeneration, place-making and identity. In turn, this might produce connections to understandings of how the heritage of a place is negotiated and produced, particularly in places where heritage is contested.

Both 'Healing Place' and *Origination* also demonstrated and explored the connection between identity and place, by looking at how participation in place-making forms relationships, individual identities and, through these, place identities. I have suggested that connections between identity and place are produced through everyday material and spatial practices that physically engage in that place, and that relationships are also produced through these practices. Both projects also work with memory as a way of mediating between the past and the present, using an understanding of the past to think about the present and the future. These projects have fed my interest in meanings and definitions of regeneration, relational processes, identity, place and site. I wanted to understand how regeneration might contain both a physical renewal of place but also an intergenerational handing down of stories about place, rituals of place, and

<sup>5</sup> District Six Museum website: <<http://www.districtsix.co.za>> [accessed 7 August 2017].

<sup>6</sup> Esther Wilkin, 'District 6 (Western Cape)', Jewish Digital Archive Project, <<http://jdap.co.za/roots-2/dorps-towns/dorps-towns/district-6-western-cape/>> [accessed 7 August 2017].

material poetics of place through the sensory - taste, touch and smell.

As my interest in meanings of regeneration developed, I identified a question about how to link migration and memory with regeneration. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'regeneration' as:

- a. The action of coming or bringing into renewed existence; recreation; rebirth; restoration and
- b. (In extended use:) renaissance; renewal, spec. of a geographical area by the improvement of its economic and social conditions<sup>7</sup>

This definition connects regeneration with a specific place, or location. However, current uses of the term 'regeneration' are problematic as they often do not acknowledge the past and its relation to renewal, or they present the past in a way that is a pastiche and edits out complexities or contestations of that past.<sup>8</sup> Framing regeneration through migration could offer a different approach. Regeneration in relation to migration sees place as related to, and constructed by, the movement and memory of people through time.

This thesis proposes an alternative term, 're-generation', which acknowledges the need for an ethical engagement with a place's past and present in relation to renewal and rebirth. I call this a 'poetics of re-generation'.<sup>9</sup> To develop this poetics of re-generation, I engage in a re-reading of the *oeuvre* of the Martinican poet, novelist and literary theorist Édouard Glissant, and in particular his 'poetics of Relation'. And I test this poetics by using salt as a specific material poetics of migration and regeneration.

My thesis offers a framework for exploring how migrations relate to questions about the heritage and regeneration of place, with a focus on a specific area of south London: Brixton. It does so through a re-reading of the work of Glissant, as well as through a theoretical discussion of the material and poetic qualities of salt and its use as a metaphor and indexical symbol in other cultural works, including art, poetry and literature, and in cultural rituals and practical usage. I develop a discussion of salt that describes and reflects on my salt-based artistic practice on a series of journeys. Taking Brixton as a starting point, I trace and explore associations with salt, among which are processes and themes related to memory, preservation, migration, exchange and ritual.

<sup>7</sup> 'regeneration', OED Online, <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/161223?redirectedFrom=regeneration&>> [accessed 7 January 2018].

<sup>8</sup> See my discussion in 'Part 1: Section 2'.

<sup>9</sup> Glissant uses hyphens in a very deliberate way, which I expand on in 'Questions and aims of the thesis.'

My research journey began at a point where I was placeless - I had left my home town, and home, and was on a ship southward from Europe to South Africa, when I wrote a first draft of my PhD proposal. Before I left England, I had met with curator Barby Asante in Brixton to discuss a potential residency and exhibition on our return from South Africa. As I wrote my research proposal, Brixton became woven into the fabric of the PhD as a 'homeplace',<sup>10</sup> to use bell hooks term; not that I made a claim to any subjective belonging to Brixton, or a personal inheritance of African-Caribbean and African-American meanings involved in hooks term homeplace; but as a place of entanglement, a place I kept coming back to through coincidences of past and present.<sup>11</sup> hooks' definition of 'homeplace' in African American history has a subversive value as a site of resistance and safety.<sup>12</sup> Brixton has been a place of safety and resistance for the black British community. At the moment of my re-engaging with Brixton in 2009/10, changes were taking place which were being resisted by the local community, and I identified with an active involvement with resistance through my local activism in my hometown which I had left.<sup>13</sup> I understood myself as an outsider and visitor to Brixton, and acknowledged that otherness, but I was interested in how through my otherness, I could ethically engage in relationships made through art practice. I wanted to understand how my own story of family migrations might relate to others' stories. As I developed my salting practices, I was interested in the resonances they held in Brixton (and elsewhere) and how that could produce dialogues that asked questions about the ethics and politics of the regeneration process in Brixton.

The artworks I have made in different places connect particular salt-related processes and themes. In Project 1, a journey to South Africa explores the associations of salt and exchange, through reflection on my own family's business. In Project 2, my journey to Eastern Europe explores the links between salt and memory by using ritual. In Project 3, my journey to Portugal highlights the role of salt in the preservation of food in the saltfish trade; while in Project 4, my journey to Haiti in the Caribbean highlights salt as a precursor to Atlantic trade and the forced migration of slavery. These journeys connect salt to multiple cultural associations and histories; these connections can also be valuable in understanding the relationships between self and other in diverse and contested sites of potential regeneration, both physical and non-physical. By exploring these associations, a web of connections is created that reflects the complex relationships between the various communities inhabiting and using different places. In this way, through my art practice and reflections upon it, this thesis aims to contribute to creating a poetics of re-generation.

<sup>10</sup> bell hooks, 'Homeplace (a site of resistance)', in *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), pp. 41-49.

<sup>11</sup> I discovered from family conversations that my Great Uncle David Shade had been a market trader there.

<sup>12</sup> hooks, 'Homeplace (a site of resistance)', p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> As part of community organisation Right Angle Productions, I organised projects for young people which engaged them with local issues and presented their voices back to decision makers.

Taking a practice-led approach to research through art has allowed me to explore connections and forms of knowledge that may be overlooked in more traditionally academic approaches. The sensory qualities of using salt to make artwork is a key aspect of my approach to practice-led research, as are the relational aspects of making participatory or collaborative work. My practice relates to theory, and I discuss this relationship further in Part 1 (Section 3). Through the development and making of a series of artworks, I have worked with materials and practices that connect with the places I encounter. This direct, embodied experience of the material qualities of the journeys and places has fed into the artwork I make, which I then reflect on via relevant theoretical texts, with a focus on Glissant's writing.

Glissant is now acknowledged as a key postcolonial literary critic and thinker, as well as a poet and novelist whose works (written in French) include novels such as *La Lézarde* (1958), *Le Quatrième siècle* (1964), *Malemort* (1975), *La Case du commandeur* (1981), *Mahagony* (1987), *Tout-Monde* (1995), *Sartorius: le roman des Batoutos* (1999), and *Ormerod* (2003); plays such as *Monsieur Toussaint* (1961); and poetry collections such as *Le Sel noir* (1960), *Les Indes, Un Champ d'îles*, *La Terre inquiète* (1965) and *Pays rêvé, pays réel* (1985).<sup>14</sup> His novels, often set in Martinique, tell stories related to slavery. In a series of essays written from the 1950s to the late 2000s, which work in tandem with his poetry and novels (so that all his work should be seen as interrelated), Glissant set out his *poétiques*, or poetic theories, addressing issues of colonialism, identity and diversity.<sup>15</sup> Key *poétiques* include *Soleil de la conscience* (1956), *Le Discours Antillais* (1981), *Poétique de la Relation* (1990), *Introduction à une poétique du divers* (1995), *Traité du Tout-Monde* (1997) and *Philosophie de la Relation* (2009).<sup>16</sup> In this thesis, I draw on two of his key *poétiques*: *Le Discours Antillais* (1981) (translated into English as *Caribbean Discourse*),<sup>17</sup> in which Glissant begins to explore the concepts of *détour* and *retour*; and *Poétique de la Relation* (translated as *Poetics of Relation*) in which Glissant explores concepts including Relation, opacity and *errance*, setting out his 'poetics of Relation'.<sup>18</sup> Alongside these works, I also draw on his collection of poetry *Le Sel noir* (translated as *Black Salt*).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> A full bibliography of Glissant's works is available at <<http://ile-en-ile.org/glissant/>> and at <<http://www.edouardglissant.fr/bibliographie.html>> [accessed 10 January 2017].

<sup>15</sup> Édouard Glissant website: <<http://edouardglissant.fr/essais.html>> [accessed 14 January 2018].

<sup>16</sup> Also see: <<http://edouardglissant.fr/essais.html>> [accessed 14 January 2018].

<sup>17</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Le Discours Antillais* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1981); English translation by J. Michael Dash, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989).

<sup>18</sup> Glissant, *PR, PdLR*. For bibliographic details, see fn. 9 above.

<sup>19</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Le Sel noir* (Paris: Seuil, 1960); English translation by Betsy Wing, *Black Salt* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999).

Read together, these works set out Glissant's key concepts, including 'Relation', 'opacity', *errance*, *détour* and *retour*, and 'trace'.<sup>20</sup> In brief, 'Relation' is Glissant's overarching concept, which both acknowledges the difference and the particularity of the Other, but also connects with the Other through a fluid and non-hierarchical interrelatedness.<sup>21</sup> 'Opacity' is an allowance and respect both of difference and of the ability of the Other to hide or conceal parts of themselves; it is a protection against transparency.<sup>22</sup> *Errance* ('errantry') is a kind of movement or wandering in an ongoing relation.<sup>23</sup> While *errance* is used to refer to actual movement, it is linked to the terms *détour* and *retour*, which Glissant tends to use in reference to strategies of resistance through language, and which I explore more fully below.<sup>24</sup> And 'trace' (*la trace*), refers to history and memory, but also the movement through place that creates and connects to memory.<sup>25</sup>

In Glissant's writing, place and memory are inextricably linked, and place (*lieu*) itself is uncircumventable: 'le lieu est incontournable'.<sup>26</sup> Both Glissant's essays and literature start from the point of place, usually the place he came from, the island of Martinique, and place forms the frame, motif and structure of Glissant's language.<sup>27</sup> But place is always in relation to an elsewhere, and it acknowledges the *ici-là*, the 'here-there', as well as how the place of origin frames relations between centres and peripheries.<sup>28</sup> It is through the use of terms such as *détour* and *errance* that Glissant strategizes possibilities of resistance through language, but it is no coincidence that these words encompass forms of movement and travel. And trace, a term used by Glissant to refer to memory, has another meaning as the word for a small path that connected villages in Martinique.<sup>29</sup> These forms of resistance through language connect the here and the elsewhere as part of Glissant's overall concept of Relation.

<sup>20</sup> Note on translation and terms from Glissant's work, and other use of foreign language works in the thesis: I have used italicized words when referring to terms in another language. When using a term taken from Glissant's work in translation, I have retained the original use of capitalization and the original English translation of terms, but noted also the term in Glissant's French, as translations vary. Terms in translation are introduced in quotation marks where relevant (especially with first use). In the specific case of Glissant's term 'Relation', I use a capital R when referring to the concept. Glissant himself used a combination of 'Relation' and 'relation' throughout his texts. And in the case of 'Other', I use capitalization when referring to Glissant's use.

<sup>21</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 27; Celia Britton, *Édouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1999), p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 62.

<sup>23</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, pp. 25-29.

<sup>25</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 11; Glissant, *Traité du Tout-Monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), pp. 18-19.

<sup>26</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Tout Monde* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), p. 513; Mary Gallagher, 'Introduction: between "here" and "there" or the "hyphen of unfinished things"', in Gallagher (ed.), *Ici-Là: Place and Displacement in Caribbean Writing in French* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), p. xix.

<sup>27</sup> Pascale Guibert, "'Common place: Common-place" A presentation of Édouard Glissant's poetics of the compounding of places – Part 1', *Commonwealth: Essays and Studies*, 38 (2016), pp. 123-32, at p. 124.

<sup>28</sup> Glissant, *PR*, pp. 28, 37, 153.

<sup>29</sup> J. Michael Dash, 'Introduction', in Glissant, *CD*, p. xxxii

In this thesis, I use the term 'place' in Glissant's sense of a starting point, but one that contains connections to an elsewhere and to memory (and the past). Glissant was taught by Gaston Bachelard at the Sorbonne, and he acknowledged Bachelard's thinking on the imaginary and the poetics of place in the way he developed his own poetics of place.<sup>30</sup> I also acknowledge the complexities of 'place' as a term, and to understand how my art practice relates to the terms 'place' and 'site' (which I expand on in Part 1, Section 3) I use the term 'site' when discussing an artwork or action that is performed in place. Performance art theorist Nick Kaye has written about the need to understand 'site' as more than location, and to carefully unpick the meanings of the terms 'place', 'space' and 'site' in the discussion of artwork that is usually termed 'site-specific'.<sup>31</sup> Kaye argues that site-specific visual art can be seen as an approach to site read through the terms of performance.<sup>32</sup> Rather than fixing a location, site-specific art 'performs' place.<sup>33</sup> Using the term 'site' in the thesis therefore points to a particular performance of place, or to a non-located site, such as a theoretical position. For instance, the term 'contested sites' in reference to Brixton acknowledges not just the physical location of Brixton but also the theoretical and practical contestations over its identity and regeneration. In this thesis, I search for other sites and homeplaces, which may be found not just in place but also in practice and dialogue.

The homeplace of theory is one such example. Glissant's work emerged alongside other postcolonial writers including Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon.<sup>34</sup> Both Fanon and Glissant were taught by Césaire at the Lycée Schoelcher in Martinique, but while Césaire and Fanon were associated with the negritude movement, Glissant moved away from this in his later work.<sup>35</sup> Glissant's relationship with postcolonial theory will be discussed at greater length in Parts 1 and 2, but here it is worth clarifying that while certain terms in Glissant's work may be seen as linked to others' use of the same terms, such as Bhabha on hybridity (which Glissant breaks down into *métissage* and creolization), and Said and Spivak on the 'other', these terms retain particular meanings in Glissant's work.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Raphael Lauro, trans Emily A. Maguire, 'Edward Glissant's Excursions and Detours', *Discourse*, 36 (2014), pp. 3-30, at pp. 11, 16.; Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992 [originally published 1958]); Gaston Bachelard, *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter* 3rd edn (Dallas: Dallas Institute for Humanities & Culture, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-12.

<sup>32</sup> Kaye, *Site-Specific Art*, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> Kaye, *Site-Specific Art*, p. 220.

<sup>34</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 5.

<sup>35</sup> Dash, 'Introduction', in Glissant, *CD*, pp. xiv, xvi; Glissant, *CD*, pp. 24-26. See Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'Un Retour au Pays Natal* (Paris: Bordas, 1947); Frantz Fanon, *Peau Noire, Masque Blancs* (Paris: Seuil, 1952), trans. by Richard Philcox as *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1952).

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Edward Said, 'Travelling Theory', in *The World, The Text and The Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 226-47; Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1978); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 271-313.

Glissant avoids essentializing identity, while also maintaining the need for understanding how place and identity are linked. He does this through an understanding of identity as relational rather than rooted, which for him emphasizes not a return to origin but rather an ongoing engagement with the 'point of entanglement' with difference. He terms these different approaches 'root-identity' and 'relation-identity'.<sup>37</sup>

## Questions and aims of the thesis

Salt has long been used in rituals of homecoming and threshold crossing. It has been central to preserving food, thereby helping societies to exist through periods of scarcity and enabling long journeys and migrations.<sup>38</sup> This everyday material has been invoked both in memories of past migration and in rituals of adaptation to new homes and lives, for example in the sharing of bread and salt at Passover meals in Jewish families.<sup>39</sup> Salt is used in threshold rituals that both bless new homes, such as in the Eastern European and Russian *khlebosolny* ritual, and protect existing homes.<sup>40</sup> In the past, salt was regarded as a protective substance and was placed next to newborn babies prior to their baptism, and at the doorways of houses to prevent witches entering.<sup>41</sup> Protection and nurture are absent from other attributions of the power of salt, such as 'salting' the earth after military conquest.<sup>42</sup>

Salt has taken on a linguistic life beyond its basic meaning in many languages; for example, it is etymologically at the root of 'saliency' (a term for wisdom) and 'salaciousness' (a term for piquancy).<sup>43</sup> In alchemy, salt represents the soul.<sup>44</sup> As a chemical substance, salt can preserve, but it can also dissolve and corrode. Salt is widely used not only as a metaphor but also as an index whereby it connects directly to the meaning to which it is pointing. Therefore, salt can act as an index for both change and preservation, and it can be read as a substance both mobile and stable, and both soluble and fixed. Between these readings, there is also a possibility of equilibrium, of finding a balance through salt between preservation and change. Part I Section 1 of this thesis develops a discussion of salt's meanings further.

<sup>37</sup> Glissant, *PR*, pp. 141-44.

<sup>38</sup> Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History* (London: Vintage, 2003).

<sup>39</sup> Ruth Fredman Cernea, *The Passover Seder: An Anthropological Perspective on Jewish Culture* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995).

<sup>40</sup> *Khlebosolny* means bread and salt in Russian.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Means Lawrence, 'The folk-lore of common salt', in *The Magic of The Horse Shoe and Other Folk-Lore* (London: Gay & Bird, 1898), pp. 154-205, at pp. 158-60, 174-5.

<sup>42</sup> Stanley Gevirtz, 'Jericho and Shechem: A religio-literary aspect of city destruction', *Vetus Testamentum*, 13 (1963), pp. 52-62.

<sup>43</sup> Ernest Jones, *Essays in Applied Psychoanalysis*, vol. 2 (London: Hogarth Press, 1951), reprinted as *Psycho-Myth, Psycho-History*, 2 vols (New York: Hillstone, 1974), p. 35.

<sup>44</sup> Waite, *Hermetic Museum*, p. 10.



The reference to District Six as ‘salted earth’ indicates that the area was unable to be developed and so remained in stasis, while the memory of its past use was also powerful. I suggest that, metaphorically, the earth needs ‘unsalting’: the memory needs to be acknowledged in the future use, rebuilding or regeneration of the place. The use of salt practices in this thesis is an attempt to generate a poetics of re-generation, which potentially offers new readings of urban change and mobility, while also respecting the past. Salt offers a different way of giving meaning to a place undergoing regeneration by acknowledging the relational aspects of a place, its ‘elsewheres’ and ‘pasts’. An idea of ‘re-generation’ as a relational process, formed through new cultural hybridities being brought to particular places, can be understood as an (ongoing) re-birth of place. This thesis argues that the process of ‘re-generation’ should properly acknowledge the past in its process of renewal.

My use of the prefix ‘re-’ is another reference to Glissant, whose use of terms which included the prefix ‘re-’, often with intentional hyphenation, highlighted what for him was an important point about iterations and cycles.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, in his writing the hyphen has a particular role as being able to ‘assemble and disassemble’ at the same time; rather than underlining a permanent state, the hyphen enables a kind of ongoing (re)construction.<sup>46</sup> I discuss this further in Part 1 Section 1. In the context of regeneration, ‘re-generation’ highlights the creative act inherent in the term, as well as its link to generational inheritances and the intergenerational meanings carried in and through place.

Many places, especially in fast-changing urban environments, have multiple histories and layers of association for different communities and users. In such places with multiple reference points to different cultural and historical contexts, issues of regeneration, heritage and displacement can become contested. Individual migration stories, or those carried down through generations, create links to an elsewhere, so that the heritage connected with these places often has multiple meanings beyond the place itself. Therefore, through understanding the diasporic connections of migration narratives, new understandings of place can be formed, such as the concept of ‘diaspora space’ proposed by Avtāh Brah.<sup>47</sup> These narratives have the potential to form part of a poetics of re-generation.

I propose an understanding of a place as formed through relational processes. I therefore discuss the journey, a physical *détour*, as an artistic method of understanding a place, by going outside the place itself. The journeys in this thesis enable an understanding of how material culture shifts through movement, and they are a means of finding and constructing languages of movement

<sup>45</sup> Seanna Sumalee Oakley, *Common Places: The Poetics of African Atlantic Postromantics* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), p. 55.

<sup>46</sup> Manuel Norvat, *Le Chant du Divers: Introduction à la philopoétique d'Édouard Glissant* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2015), pp. 135-6.

<sup>47</sup> Avtāh Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996).

that can be brought back to place. Using salt as a metaphor for migration and belonging, and as an indexical trace of the journey, I discover how salt relates to heritage and regeneration. I ask: Does salt offer a poetics of re-generation in places which have strong histories of migration? How does it do this? I also ask whether the poetics of art can potentially play a role in the politics of heritage and regeneration.

This thesis suggests that salt's role as a carrier of historical migrations might be one that challenges conventional understandings of the meanings of heritage and regeneration, and explores this through the development of an original salting practice. And the thesis offers a redefining of the meaning of regeneration in particular places – as re-generation. The poetics that salt offers in these places connects to their diasporas, it highlights points of entanglement and networks of relation, and it offers a form of resistance through *détour*, which, rather than being co-opted into regeneration processes, steps around and outside them, thereby highlighting difference and resistance as well as adaptation and relation in these places. Through the possibilities of opacity, I suggest approaches to regeneration that might allow difference to remain opaque. The aim of this thesis is, therefore, to work artistically with a salting practice that explores the material poetics of salt in relation to places and their diasporas, and to do so with a focus on migration and regeneration in Brixton.

### **The journey as structuring device: *Détour* and *Retour***

My great-grandfather Woolf departed Europe, never to return to his place of origin. He adapted to his new home, and his seven sons grew up as South Africans. Departure from his home and place of origin transformed not just his own identity and life, but also his descendants' relationship to place and identity. However, subsequent generations continued to make journeys back and forth between Europe and South Africa, sets of departures and returns which continued networks of affection and memory. Departure and return relate to autobiography and biography. As we narrate our lives, we are complicit in, but also standing outside, the story we tell. Departure and return can, therefore, be both a spatial movement and a metaphor for a journey away from and back to 'home', in which we 'go outside' ourselves to gain some new understanding and then 'return' with this knowledge. Departure is also a new beginning that can unlock insights into 'home'.

In this thesis, I make a series of journeys away from and back to Brixton, which I term *détours* and *retours*. These journeys have been a means of developing the research, enabling knowledge and understanding to be gained from the embodied practice of journeying. I have performed these journeys as a form of secular pilgrimage to find the origin of salt products in Brixton Market, and, in doing so, I have narrated my own and others' stories of migration. In *Le Discours Antillais*, Glissant proposed the notions of *détour* and *retour* as ways of engaging

with the search for origin and identity; that is, *détour* as a literary device is akin to *détour* as subversion, errancy and nomadism, and *retour* is a return to the point of entanglement (*point d'intrication*):<sup>48</sup>

Diversion is not a useful ploy unless it is nourished by reversion: not a return to the longing for origins, to some immutable state of Being, but a return to the point of entanglement, from which we were forcefully turned away; that is where we must ultimately put to work the forces of creolization, or perish.<sup>49</sup>

In the original French version of the above passage, Glissant wrote:

Le Détour n'est ruse profitable que si le Retour le féconde: non pas retour au rêve d'origine, à l'Un immobile de l'Être, mais retour au point d'intrication, dont on s'était détourné par force; c'est là qu'il faut à la fin mettre en oeuvre les composantes de la Relation, ou périr.<sup>50</sup>

In his English translation above, J. Michael Dash renders *détour* and *retour* as 'diversion' and 'reversion'. Indian postcolonial scholar Vivek Dhareshwar suggests that, rather than using 'diversion' and 'reversion' to translate *détour* and *retour*, 'detour' and 'return' are more productive terms, since they stick more closely to Glissant's intended meaning:

The choice of 'diversion' and 'reversion' instead of the obvious 'détour' and 'return' seems particularly unjustified given the dominant connotation of the first two in contemporary usage. And the rendering of the deliberately abstract concept 'la Relation' by 'creolization' is equally problematic.<sup>51</sup>

Dhareshwar's use of 'detour' (which I expand on further in Part 1) aims to establish a 'Poetics of Detour'. Through this poetics, he argues that the postcolonial identity, which has been based on a poetics of *détour*, must now initiate a poetics of *retour* (re-turn).<sup>52</sup> The problematic Dhareshwar refers to, but does not spell out, nevertheless highlights the problems involved in translating Glissant's terms, which hold very particular meanings in the original versions.

Dhareshwar's view correlates with Betsy Wing's translation of Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* where

<sup>48</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, pp. 25-29; Jason Allen, 'Daniel Boukman: A Poetics of Détour', MPhil thesis, University of the West Indies, 2005.

<sup>49</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 24.

<sup>50</sup> Glissant, *DA*, p. 36.

<sup>51</sup> Vivek Dhareshwar, 'Toward a narrative epistemology of the postcolonial predicament', in James Clifford and Vivek Dhareshwar (eds), *Traveling Theories, Traveling Theorists* (Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Cultural Studies, 1989), pp. 135-57, see Notes, p. 155.

<sup>52</sup> Dhareshwar, 'Toward a narrative epistemology', pp. 141, 144.

she comments on Dash's translation of *détour* as 'diversion' and *retour* as 'reversion':

This is particularly interesting if one is attentive to the sense of 'version', thus connecting it with an important meaning of Relation, i.e. 'telling.' I believe, however that Glissant is vastly more interested in the movement implicit in both *détour* and *retour* and therefore translate these words as *détour* and *return* – or *go back*, etc. in the case of the latter.<sup>53</sup>

Wing also comments that Glissant used a number of key words (including *détournement*, *détourner*, *détour* and *retour*) in 'a very active sense, implying a real change of direction'.<sup>54</sup>

Following the critique of Dash's translation by Dhareshwar and Wing, I will use *détour* and *retour* in Glissant's terminological sense as containing the active sense of a journey. Rather than translate the latter as 'return', which has a number of other implications, I prefer to retain the original French word as a reminder to stay true to Glissant's intention of the relationship between *détour* and *retour*. According to Dhareshwar, Glissant used *détour* to refer to the dislocation forced by the violence of colonialism, but also as a strategy to deal with that very dislocation.<sup>55</sup> By *retour* he meant a return not to some mythical original state that no longer exists, but to the point of entanglement, where the *détour* or turning away began. Glissant follows postcolonial theory in emphasizing the forces of cultural hybridity in colonialism.<sup>56</sup> For Glissant, *détour* and *retour* do not refer so much to exact points in time as to individuals' experiences of hybridity at different times in their lives.

On the paternal side of my family's story there were a series of departures, firstly from a village in Lithuania to South Africa, then from South Africa to England. I see my grandfather's and father's *détour* to England as an escape from the apartheid politics of South Africa. The point of entanglement is the cultural change that took place when my great-grandfather Woolf made a life in South Africa – an entanglement with a colonial society, with entirely new types of cultural hybridity, which their family became a part of.<sup>57</sup> My father's family became connected with various communities that were deeply divided by place, language, identity and race. This is the point of entanglement I am engaging with as I try to understand how narratives of migration bring people into new cultural hybridities in particular places – hybridities to which they add. My family's migration narrative generated a specific element in the poetics of salt that came

<sup>53</sup> Betsy Wing, 'Translators note', in Glissant, *PR*, p. 216, n. 4.

<sup>54</sup> Wing, 'Translators note', p. 212, n. 4. Celia Britton also prefers to stick with 'detour' over Dash's translation: see Britton, 'A note on translation,' in *Glissant*.

<sup>55</sup> Dhareshwar, 'Toward a narrative epistemology', p. 141.

<sup>56</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>57</sup> My grandfather Ben, a Professor of Roman Law at UCT, accepted several visiting fellowships abroad, and left South Africa in 1976 to live in England. My father came to England as a postgraduate student in the early 1970s and, after travelling back and forth, settled in England from 1977, the year I was born.

out of one of the places I journey to in this thesis. So I use *détour* and *retour* as a productive framework with which to structure this thesis. This framework of *détour* and *retour* includes physical journeys in time and space, but it also corresponds to a transformative process, one in which the unfolding argument of the thesis is developed as knowledge is gained through the movement between home and away. Through this movement between home and away, the *détours* to find salt origins are brought back to the ‘site’ of salted earth in the *retour* to the point of entanglement, Brixton. Therefore, by reworking Glissant’s concepts of *détour* and *retour* through the journeys I make in search of salt, I develop an understanding of regeneration through Glissant’s terms, to propose a ‘poetics of re-generation’.

### **Structure of the thesis**

In this introduction I have set out the overall structuring device of the thesis as a series of *détours* and *retours*, which move between the ‘homeplace’ of Brixton and a series of journeys to other connected and diasporic places.

In Part I, the main theoretical framework and artistic methodology of the thesis is expanded on. In ‘Section 1: Salting Practices: A “Poetics of Relation”’, I draw on Glissant’s *Poetics of Relation* to discuss the theoretical context of the thesis, setting out existing knowledge around three key conceptual frames: salt, poetics and relation. I use poetics as a framework for artistic practice, in which the index can be used artistically. I focus on ideas around a material poetics and on what messages artworks convey.

Following this, in ‘Section 2: Journeys and narratives of *détour* and *retour*’, I expand on Glissant’s terms *détour* and *retour* with particular reference to his book *Caribbean Discourse*, I discuss the term *détournement* in his and other’s work. The writing then explores how his concept of *errance* relates to meanings of migrations and diaspora, before discussing the links between *errance* and identity through the meanings of travel, journey and pilgrimage. Bringing the journey or *retour* back to the ‘homeplace’ prompts a discussion of meanings of place and entanglement. I then set out different readings of ‘regeneration’, a term central to the thesis. I develop Glissant’s concept of ‘trace’ alongside the work of Karen Till on ‘spectral traces’ to understand the role of memory in regeneration processes. Following this, I contextualize Brixton from historical migrations to the current proposed changes.

In ‘Section 3: Salting Practices in Brixton’, I set out the methodological context of this practice-based PhD by discussing the context of art practices and writing in relation to academic writing and research practices. I then move into the sites of practice, through an exploration of site- and place-specificity and relational and socially engaged art practices, and the relationship between travelling and writing which produces the particular writing practices in the thesis. I

then explain how my site- and place-specific practices in Brixton have developed alongside a discussion of performance, visibility and opacity, and finally the specific salting practice which forms the basis of the artworks.

Part II contains the four journeys or *détours* and *retours* I make. The first *détour* I made was a journey by ship to South Africa (2009-10). From here my research into my personal family history led to a series of artworks made with salt that explore salt as a medium of exchange. I discuss this in Project 1; in the second part, the *retour* to Brixton, I bring this personal use of salt into an exchange with the stories of migration told by others in Brixton Market through a stall trading memory salts which I set up in 2011 with my sister Rebecca.

In Project 2, I travelled to Eastern Europe to follow the trail of my ancestors and explore contexts for the practices of ritual and pilgrimage in both art and spirituality. The artworks that I made on the trip explore connections between salt and memory, through the haptic qualities of touch and taste. Returning to Brixton, *Anchor & Magnet* (2012), a collaborative residency with two other artists, produced a series of events using material cultures to document and record attitudes to heritage and regeneration.

In Project 3, I made a *détour* to Portugal following the trail of the saltfish sold in Brixton Market. This resulted in a series of artworks which explore the preservative qualities of salt. These works were shown in two exhibitions for the Lisbon Architecture Triennale (2013). In Brixton, ideas of preservation were explored through a series of events and texts, resulting in a new proposal for a final artwork which related heritage, preservation and salt processes.

In Project 4, a journey to Haiti in search of the magical and ritual meaning of salt in Vodou then became a performance and publication text made for the Ghetto Biennale (2013). On my return to Brixton, a film and a mobile art work, *Brixton Conversations* (2015) and the *Brixton Museum* (2015), brought together my ideas around the preservation of place, magic and residue.

Finally, in the Conclusion, I draw together the meanings and practices of salt I have found through the *détours* and *retours* and my art practices to produce specific knowledge and understandings of the material poetics of salt. I consider the contribution these practices have made to art practice and theory, including how my practice speaks back to debates in socially engaged art practice. I then develop how through my practice I have contributed debates in architecture, urban studies and planning about regeneration and heritage of place, through the possibility of a 'poetics of re-generation' which rethinks regeneration in relation to Brixton. Through expanding on what the actual practice of this might be, I discuss the possibilities and limitations of artistic practices in creating more ethical approaches to re-generation. And I reflect on how my practice intervenes in discussion of Glissant's work, and how this can contribute to a taking of his concepts into a different realm of knowledge.







## **Part I**



**Section 1: Salting practices: A 'poetics of Relation'**



Practices and poetics of salt, and their relationship with migration narratives and processes of regeneration, recur throughout the thesis. In this chapter, I link salting practices, poetics and Glissant's poetics of Relation to provide a conceptual basis for the practices and poetics of salt that I explore in the projects.

My discussion aims to develop an understanding of the poetics of salting practices and their elaboration in the thesis. To develop this, in the first sub-section on 'The Poetics of Salt' I begin with a psychoanalytic text written by Ernest Jones in the early twentieth century, which sought to categorize the symbolic qualities of salt.<sup>1</sup> His writing particularly focuses on cultural ritual and symbolical meanings of salt, which provides a framework for both setting out the potential poetic qualities of salt, and the precedents for salting practices. Then, in 'The Poetics of Salt in Art Practice', I explain artistic works that test these poetic qualities. I argue that these poetic qualities highlight the cross-cultural value of salt itself.

In the third sub-section, 'A Poetics of the Index', my aim is to highlight how key theories around the notion of the 'index', the 'indexical symbol', and the 'shifter' offer an understanding of my practice and the artworks I create as indexical and context-dependent. I set out a theory of poetics to develop an understanding of the poetics of the index operating through salt in the thesis. I highlight key theory around semiotics through the work of Charles S. Peirce on the index, and Roman Jakobson on the 'shifter' and the indexical symbol. I then look at readings of the index in art, by Victor Burgin and Rosalind Krauss, as well as Kristin Kreider's more recent writing on 'material poetics' which, according to her use of Jakobson's material signifier, operates through the viewer's reception of an artwork. I argue that the possibility of a material poetics in which the textual element is absent can offer another kind of indexical relationship between artwork and viewer. Finally, Lisa Salzmann's work on absence in art and the idea of the 'postindexical' offers a possible route to consider how my artworks might act indexically to offer a particular material poetics, which connects to and contains absence and presence.

In the fourth sub-section, 'Towards a poetics of Relation', I link the discussion of poetics and the index to Glissant's theory of a poetics of Relation as a basis to further explore the relation between self and other. Developing this relationship in a spatial context through Jane Rendell's work, I briefly look at psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche's examination of how the self relates to the other through forms of address. Linking Laplanche's idea of the 'enigmatic other' with Glissant's concept of opacity suggests that alternative understandings of relation between self and other in cross-cultural contexts could be developed.

<sup>1</sup> Ernest Jones, 'The symbolic significance of salt in folklore and superstition', in Ernest Jones, *Essays in Applied Psychoanalysis*, vol. 2 (London: Hogarth Press, 1951). This essay originally appeared in the first issue of *Imago*, the Viennese journal established in 1912 by Sigmund Freud, Hanns Sachs and Otto Rank. It was later reissued in Ernest Jones, C.G. Jung and James Hillman (eds), *Salt and the Alchemical Soul: Three Essays* (Woodstock, Conn.: Spring Publications, 1995).



## The Poetics of Salt

In his 1912 essay on 'The Symbolic Significance of Salt in Folklore and Superstition', the British neurologist and psychoanalyst Ernest Jones asks why it is that salt has been invested with a significance 'far exceeding that inherent in its natural properties'.<sup>2</sup> Jones notes 'the importance attached to [salt] in religious ceremonies, covenants, and magical charms':

That this should have been so in all parts of the world and in all times shows that we are dealing with a general human tendency and not with any local custom, circumstance or notion. Secondly, the idea of salt has in different languages lent itself to a remarkable profusion of metaphorical connotations, so that a study of these suggests itself as being likely to indicate what the idea has essentially stood for in the human mind, and hence perhaps the source of its exaggerated significance.<sup>3</sup>

Drawing on a literature review of the historical, religious, and symbolic uses of salt, Jones establishes the idea of salt as a symbol of belief.<sup>4</sup> He outlines the characteristic properties of salt which have given rise to its symbolic value, and he proposes that, in psychoanalytical terms, salt is a typical symbol for semen, and prior to this had also been a symbol for urine. While the aim of this thesis is not to test Jones's proposal, his outline of the characteristics of salt provides a useful contextual starting point for understanding the cultural history of salt. In the following discussion, I consider Jones's categorization of the characteristics of salt, making reference to other texts on salt to reflect on each of Jones's categories and to trace a genealogy of the symbolisms he refers to.

The first quality Jones describes is the 'durability of salt and its immunity against decay' and, therefore, how salt is emblematic of permanence, eternity and immortality.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, and associated with permanence, salt is 'an emblem of wisdom or learning'. Thirdly, salt's durability has led to an association with 'friendship and loyalty', and through this to 'hospitality'. Connected with this association, salt has been used to 'confirm oaths and contracts'. The idea of incorruptibility has led to a fourth association: salt's ability in 'preserving other bodies from decay'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Jones, 'Symbolic significance of salt'.

<sup>3</sup> Jones, 'Symbolic significance of salt', p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Among other texts, Jones considers Victor Hehn, *Das Salz: Eine kulturhistorische Studie* (Berlin: Gebrüder Borntraeger, 1873); Matthias Jacob Schleiden, *Das Salz: Seine Geschichte, seine Symbolik und seine Bedeutung im Menschenleben: Eine monographische Skizze* (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1875); Siegfried Seligmann, *Der Böse Blick und Verwandtes: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Aberglaubens aller Zeiten und Völker* (Vienna: A. Amonesta-Verlag, 1910).

<sup>5</sup> Jones, 'Symbolic significance of salt', p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Jones, 'Symbolic significance of salt', pp. 23-25.

Turning to the alchemical associations of salt, Jones outlines a fifth meaning of salt as ‘the essence of things, particularly of life itself’ and to be equivalent to the soul.<sup>7</sup> Other texts suggest that salt’s generative quality in alchemy led to this association. Anne-Marie Roos looks at the evolution of theories of matter through an investigation into the concept and uses of salt in the early modern period.<sup>8</sup> She argues that changing definitions of salt were crucial to understanding the transition from alchemy to chemistry. Salt’s role as a generative substance in alchemical experiments is traceable to seventeenth-century texts on alchemy in which salt, as one of the triad of alchemical ingredients (the others being sulphur and mercury), is equated to soul in alchemical processes.<sup>9</sup> James Hillman also writes of salt as soul, as the ‘mineral substance or objective ground of personal experience’ and of how salt represents the drive to remember, and a trauma is a salt mine; it is a fixed place for reflection about the nature and value of our personal being, where memory originates and personal history begins.<sup>10</sup>

Drawing on linguistic associations of the word ‘salt’, the sixth connection Jones notes is to ‘money or wealth’, and he describes how the word ‘salary’ derives from the use of salt as a form of currency and payment from sixth-century Africa to England and Asia in the Middle Ages.<sup>11</sup> Jones’s seventh attribute of salt is its ‘general importance’ in the popular mind based on its value; he gives examples that include the particular placement of the salt on the table, and the carrying of salt to a new dwelling, on journeys, and when going about transactional relations.<sup>12</sup>

The eighth value Jones highlights stems from salt’s high commodity and cultural value: salt became associated with ‘magical powers’ and the ability to ward off evil spirits. He traces a particular use of salt as connected to babies and children, noting the customs of placing salt on the tongue of newborn infants or immersing a baby in salty water, as protections against harm which apparently ante-dated Christian baptism.<sup>13</sup> Jones’s ninth association is the use of salt for

<sup>7</sup> Jones, ‘Symbolic significance of salt’, p. 26. (Emphasis in original.)

<sup>8</sup> Anne-Marie Roos, *The Salt of the Earth: Natural Philosophy, Medicine, and Chymistry in England, 1650-1750* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Johann Grasshoff and Luca Jennis, *Dyas chymica tripartita, das ist, Sechs herzliche deutsche philosophische Tractätlein* (Frankfurt: Bey Luca Jennis, 1625); Elias Ashmole, *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (London: J. Grismond for Nath. Brooke, 1652); Arthur E. Waite, *The Hermetic Museum* (London: James Elliott and Co., 1893), p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> James Hillman, *A Blue Fire* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), p.125. Also see Jones, Jung and Hillman, *Salt and the Alchemical Soul*.

<sup>11</sup> Jones, ‘Symbolic significance of salt’, referring to John Brand, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain: Chiefly Illustrating the Origin of our Vulgar and Provincial Customs, Ceremonies and Superstitions* (Henry G. Bohn, 1849), p. 436; and Schleiden, *Das Salz*, p. 82.

<sup>12</sup> Jones, ‘Symbolic significance of salt’, p. 28, referring to Robert Means Lawrence, ‘The folk-lore of common salt’, in *The Magic of The Horse Shoe and Other Folk-Lore* (London: Gay & Bird, 1898), pp. 197-205; and Adolf Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube der Gegenwart*, 3rd edition (Berlin: Wiegandt and Grieben, 1900), p. 396.

<sup>13</sup> Jones, ‘Symbolic significance of salt’, p. 29, referring to M.C. Conway, *Demonology and Devil-Lore*, vol. 2 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1879), p. 217; Lawrence, ‘The folk-lore of common salt’, pp. 174-5; Seligmann, *Der Böse Blick*, p. 34; Wuttke, *Der deutsche*, pp. 382, 387.



‘medicinal purposes’, both the prevention and curing of disease, ‘particularly those caused by occult influences’.<sup>14</sup> It is difficult to pinpoint whether salt’s association with magic and medicine can be sourced back to its use in religious ritual, and which came first. Jones finds documented sources of the use of salt in ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman ritual sacrifices and a large number of references to salt in the Bible. The Catholic Church used salt in baptismal rites from the fourth century onwards, a use that derived from the role of salt in Jewish circumcision rites.<sup>15</sup>

Jones’s primary aim is to establish a link between salt and semen, and his next (tenth) category concerns ‘fecundity’: salt as a ‘symbol of procreation’.<sup>16</sup> In addition to listing cultural examples of the use of salt to promote conception and virility, he finds evidence of salt’s mythological powers of generation in the myth of Aphrodite in which the salty sea foam, the semen of Uranos, generates the goddess.<sup>17</sup> The link between the sea and salt is also evident in the etymology of the word salt: the ancient Greek word *Hals* (Latin *sale*) means both ‘salt’ and ‘sea’.<sup>18</sup>

The connection between taste and language is the eleventh characteristic Jones describes, as the influence of salt on other foods explains the belief in its powers.<sup>19</sup> Lawrence writes that ‘owing to the importance of salt as a relish, its Latin name *sal* came to be used metaphorically as signifying a savoury mental morsel, and, in a general sense, wit or sarcasm’.<sup>20</sup> Jones gives examples of the use of salt as a metaphor in language, such as ‘an insipid man as “having no sense or salt”, lacking in piquancy or liveliness, just as in Latin the word *insalsus* (unsalted) meant stupid’.<sup>21</sup> He suggests that this metaphorical attribute of salt is close to the characteristic of salt as an essence.

Jones’s twelfth category is salt’s ability to ‘enter into combination with a second substance’.<sup>22</sup> He highlights two examples: firstly, the ability of salt to ‘dissolve in water’, noting that, in so doing, ‘though leaving no visible trace of its presence, [salt] should endow the water with its peculiar properties (capacity to preserve from decay, pungent taste, etc.)’;<sup>23</sup> and secondly, the particular association of bread and salt, which together form a potent cultural trope as bringing good luck and averting evil, such as the practice of carrying salt to a new dwelling to avert evil influences

<sup>14</sup> Jones, ‘Symbolic significance of salt’, p. 31.

<sup>15</sup> Jones, ‘Symbolic significance of salt’, p. 33, referring to Schleiden, *Das Salz*, p. 76; Brand, *Observations*, p. 161; Arrian, *De Expeditionis Alexandra* (Geneva: H. Stephanus, 1575), III.1. See also Pierre Laszlo, *Salt: Grain of Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> Jones, ‘Symbolic significance of salt’, p. 31; Schlieden, *Das Salz*, pp. 92-3.

<sup>17</sup> Jones, ‘Symbolic significance of salt’, p. 31, referring to Schlieden, *Das Salz*, pp. 92-3.

<sup>18</sup> Jones, ‘Symbolic significance of salt’, pp. 82, 99.

<sup>19</sup> Jones, ‘Symbolic significance of salt’, p. 35; referring to Seligmann, *Der Böse Blick*, p. 278.

<sup>20</sup> Lawrence, ‘The folk-lore of common salt’, p. 161.

<sup>21</sup> Jones, ‘Symbolic significance of salt’, p. 36.

<sup>22</sup> Jones, ‘Symbolic significance of salt’, p. 37.

<sup>23</sup> Jones, ‘Symbolic significance of salt’, p. 36.

and to bring good luck.<sup>24</sup> The final (thirteenth) characteristic in Jones's list is the use and value of salt as a 'means of purification'.<sup>25</sup> He gives the example of the use of saltwater in baptism in the Catholic Church, a rite denoting purification from sin.<sup>26</sup>

Jones discusses the particular 'ambivalency' of salt symbolism, giving the examples of fruitfulness/barrenness, creation/destruction, value/worthlessness, health/unhealthiness, purity/impurity, and friendliness/unfriendliness.<sup>27</sup> More recently, Aaron Cheak, in his study of the meaning of salt in alchemical works, draws on the work of Margaret Visser to suggest a fundamental ambivalence or contradiction in the ability of salt to both corrode and preserve.<sup>28</sup> In alchemical terms, this ambivalence is proposed as a sign of unity, with salt as both active function and passive resistance, and therefore as the fulcrum of death and revivification.<sup>29</sup> In a contemporary sense, this ambivalence can be seen in the traditional processes of natural salt harvesting as being in balance with natural cycles, and, in opposition to this, the emergence of industrial salt production and the use of salt as integral to modern pesticides and other industrial products that cause pollution and harm to the natural environment.<sup>30</sup> And, in a more symbolic use of salt, literatures of slavery refer to salt as both enslaving and liberating, ideas that will be explored further in Project 4.

Ruth Cernea has written about the use of salt water and of bread and salt in Jewish ritual ceremony (which I develop in Project 2). For example, bread and salt in combination hold particular qualities: 'hallowed and dipped in the salt of the covenant, bread changes consumption to communion.'<sup>31</sup> R.E.F. Smith and David Christian write about the social and economic value of bread and salt in Russian history and culture, citing the use of bread and salt in ceremonies of hospitality and welcome.<sup>32</sup> Salt's commodity value in a wider context is developed in recent historical writing by Samuel Adshead, Mark Kurlansky and Jean-François Bergier.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Jones, 'Symbolic significance of salt', p. 38, referring to Seligmann, *Der Böse Blick*, p. 37.

<sup>25</sup> Jones, 'Symbolic significance of salt', p. 38.

<sup>26</sup> Jones, 'Symbolic significance of salt', p. 70; see also Toussaint-Samat, *A History of Food*, p. 429.

<sup>27</sup> Jones, 'Symbolic significance of salt', p. 94.

<sup>28</sup> Margaret Visser, *Much Depends on Dinner: The Extraordinary History and Mythology, Allure and Obsessions, Perils and Taboos, of an Ordinary Meal* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), p. 75, cited in Aaron Cheak, 'Light Broken Through the Prism of Life: René Schwaller de Lubicz and the Hermetic Problem of Salt', PhD thesis, University of Queensland, December 2011, pp. 27, 42.

<sup>29</sup> Aaron Cheak, 'The hermetic problem of salt', available at <<http://www.aaroncheak.com/hermetic-problem-of-salt>> [accessed 30 August 2017].

<sup>30</sup> Robert Multhauf, *Neptune's Gift: A History of Common Salt* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

<sup>31</sup> Ruth Fredman Cernea, *The Passover Seder: An Anthropological Perspective on Jewish Culture* (Langham, MA: University Press of America, 1995), p. 85.

<sup>32</sup> R.E.F. Smith and David Christian, *Bread and Salt: A Social and Economic History of Food and Drink in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> S.A.M. Adshead, *Salt and Civilization* (New York: St. Martins, 1992); Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History* (London: Vintage, 2003); Jean-François Bergier, *Une Histoire du Sel* (Fribourg: Office du Livre,

In examples of salt-related poetry and literature, salt often seems to connect themes of preservation, loss and longing, standing in for distance and travel. Connections to trade and to the sea are illustrated in poetry by European and Latin American writers, including Pablo Neruda, Rafael Alberti and Fernando Pessoa, whose works I refer to in Project 3.<sup>34</sup> Novels and poetry by black Caribbean or Caribbean diaspora writers, including Glissant's *Black Salt* (which I draw on in Project 4), all connect salt to the Black Atlantic, slavery and colonialism, and reference the magical, healing and religious associations of salt as well as the ambiguity between generating and enslaving.<sup>35</sup> Literary theorist Meredith Gadsby connects taste, language and survival through migration narratives in a study of Caribbean women writers.<sup>36</sup> She analyses work by Glissant, as well as Toni Cade Bambara, Nalo Hopkinson, Edwidge Danticat and Earl Lovelace to discuss the image of 'sucking salt' as a signifier of how Caribbean women both endured hardship and found ways to transcend it.<sup>37</sup> Gadsby develops an analysis of the poetics of salt in specific relation to place and narratives of mobility and migration. Her reference points are largely to the Caribbean and to the role of the sea and slavery; my approach expands on these different meanings, linking these points to other geographical narratives.

Before moving on, I want to draw out from Jones's thirteen 'values' of salt the main meanings or associations that might inform a poetic practice of salt. These include: preservation and durability; hospitality, contracts and loyalty; money, value, commodity and transaction; essence and soul; protective qualities (magic, medicine, religion and ritual); procreative, generative and life-giving qualities; taste and language; solubility and ability to combine with other materials; and purification and cleansing. I draw upon these categories in the following descriptions of the meaning of salt in art practice.

1982). See also Albert Calvert, *Salt and the Salt Industry* (London: Pitman, 1919).

<sup>34</sup> Pablo Neruda, 'Oda al Sal'/'Ode to Salt', trans. Margaret Sayers Peden, in Neruda, *Selected Odes of Pablo Neruda* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000); Rafael Alberti and Jose Luis Tejada, *Marinero en tierra de Rafael Alberti* (Cádiz: Diputación Provincial, 1987); Fernando Pessoa, *Message/Mensagem*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Black Salt*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

<sup>36</sup> Meredith Gadsby, *Sucking Salt: Caribbean Women Writers, Migration and Survival* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006), p. 4; Toni Cade Bambara, *The Salt Eaters* (New York: Random House, 1980); Nalo Hopkinson, *The Salt Roads* (New York: Warner Books, 2003); Edwidge Danticat, *Breath Eyes Memory* (New York: Soho, 2004); Edwidge Danticat, *Claire of the Sea Light* (London: Quercus, 2014); Earl Lovelace, *Salt* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996).

<sup>37</sup> Gadsby, *Sucking Salt*, p. 4.

## The poetics of salt in art practice

Salt has been used as a symbol in artworks and as a material or medium to make artworks with. In both of these cases, salt operates poetically. It is only relatively recently that the actual substance of salt has been used directly in artworks, although the beginnings of photography used salt in the process, and the first prints were named 'salted paper prints'.<sup>38</sup> In the last 50 years, salt has been used in environmental artworks such as those by Robert Smithson and Denis Oppenheim, installation artworks such as those by Sigalit Landau, Julia Davis, Motoi Yamamoto and Anselm Kiefer, and sculptural works including those by Belei Lui and Phil Hall-Patch. In the following texts, I use Jones's categories of salt characteristics to discuss the poetic qualities of these artworks.

Israeli artist Sigalit Landau utilizes salt in a series of works that explore the relationship between the poetics and politics of the Dead Sea region, and which reference salt's ability to preserve.<sup>39</sup> Her installation *One Man's Floor is Another Man's Feelings*, at the 2011 Venice Biennale, contained a series of spaces through which flowed piped water; on the upper floor, a film was screened of a pair of shoes, covered in salt, slowly sinking into a frozen lake. The shoes, previously salted through dipping in the Dead Sea, were now melting the ice of a lake in Gdansk.<sup>40</sup> Landau has used salt extensively in her work, including *Salt Bride* (2016), in which she placed a black dress in the Dead Sea, resembling one 'worn by a character called Leah in the Yiddish play *The Dybbuk*, which tells the story of a young bride whose soul is possessed by an evil spirit'.<sup>41</sup> The black dress gradually becomes white as the salt crystals adhere to the fabric, transforming it from 'a symbol associated with death and madness into the wedding dress it was always intended to be'.<sup>42</sup> Landau's website refers to the 'death-bearing to life-sustaining alchemy of salt'.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Malcolm Daniel, 'William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877) and the invention of photography', Metropolitan Museum of Art website, 2004: <[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tlbt/hd\\_tlbt.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tlbt/hd_tlbt.htm)> [accessed 29 August 2017].

<sup>39</sup> *One Man's Floor is Another Man's Feelings* (2011), press release, kamel mennour website: <<http://www.kamelmennour.com/media/exhibition/s3/id251/presskitslandau.pdf>> [accessed 30 August 2017]; Sigalit Landau, 'Selected Projects', artist's website: <<https://www.sigalitlandau.com/selected-projects>> [accessed 30 August 2017].

<sup>40</sup> Landau, 'Selected Projects'.

<sup>41</sup> Sigalit Landau, *Salt Bride* (2016), exhibited at Marlborough Contemporary, London, 29 July 2016–3 September 2016; Rachael Revesz, 'Salt Bride: Black dress submerged in Dead Sea by artist undergoes dramatic transformation', *The Independent*, 26 August 2016, <<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/salt-bride-black-white-sigalit-landau-dead-sea-artist-marlborough-gallery-a7212166.html>> [accessed 30 August 2017].

<sup>42</sup> Rachael Revesz, 'Salt Bride'.

<sup>43</sup> Sigalit Landau, 'Salt Years: A Journey of 15 years', artist's website: <<https://www.sigalitlandau.com>> [accessed 30 August 2017].

Landau's use of salt is sometimes directly symbolic, at other times indexical. Sometimes salt acts as a visual reference, and at other times the salt is actually of another place and points indexically to an elsewhere. Her work recognizes the power of salt to hold a balance between preservation and decay, while most of her work focuses on the power of salt to transform an existing object, rather than the material itself transforming.

Salt's ability to preserve (through which it references duration), as well as its solubility, has been tested in Australian artist Julia Davis's work, which explores the body in relation to place and temporality. *Salt Shadow* (2003) is a cast made of salt in the shape of a gum tree, which slowly dissolves with the tides into the mangrove swamps at the edge of the Noosa river over a duration of nine months. According to Davis, the Noosa river had been an area where early European settlers began logging in the nineteenth century, impacting the landscape.<sup>44</sup> Of another work, *Headspace* (2010), the artist has said: 'salt harvested from Lake Brown was used to create a cast of my head and shoulders. The form was subsequently reintroduced to the lake and its dissolution progressively documented over 9 weeks.'<sup>45</sup> Davis's other salt works include *Passage* (2005), in which a large floor-to-ceiling pillar of salt interacts with the humidity of the atmosphere and a projected light, and *Residuum* (2007), a series of cast salt plinths holding a cast iron ball and its residue of iron slag.<sup>46</sup> In these works, Davis used salt to explore temporality. The materiality of the salt changes over time, eroding, shifting or dissolving. However, while Davis's work references the history of the sites she uses, the objects do not directly address cultural processes. Through my practice with salt, I am interested in how material practices can reference both natural and cultural processes.

The material quality of salt and its chemical ability to both preserve and dissolve has also been explored by a number of artists. Chinese American artist Beili Lui's *Current* (2003) is a series of glass globes filled with a mixture of salt, water and carbon powder. Salt crystals grow along the globe's surfaces, while water evaporates. The artist has commented on this work: 'Salt is white, carbon is black, water is clear, water dissolves salt, carbon traces rupture and drift. The materials perform a subtle and gradual change through time.'<sup>47</sup> Architect and artist Philip Hall-Patch's sculptures explore the chemical qualities of salt crystals and how they form or disintegrate over time, in works such as *salt |water* (2012), a sculpture series formed from salt blocks 'with the sole use of water as a carving tool, each subjected to a verb (after Serra): drip,

<sup>44</sup> Julia Davis, *Salt Shadow* (2003), artist's website: <<http://www.juliadavis.com.au/Salt-Shadow>> [accessed 29 August 2017].

<sup>45</sup> Julia Davis *Headspace* (2010), artist's website: <<http://www.juliadavis.com.au/Headspace-Lake-Brown>> [accessed 29 August 2017].

<sup>46</sup> Julia Davis *Passage* (2005), artist's website: <<http://www.juliadavis.com.au/Passage>> [accessed 29 August 2017]; Julia Davis *Residuum* (2007), artist's website: <<http://www.juliadavis.com.au/Residuum>> [accessed 29 August 2017].

<sup>47</sup> Beili Lui, *Current* (2003), artist's website: <<http://www.beililiu.com/Current>> [accessed 30 August 2017].

splash, spray, soak... each leaving its mark on the surface of the marble like block.<sup>48</sup> Both these artists' works reference salt's ability to change state, which highlights what Jones termed as an ambivalence or contradiction inherent in salt. I am interested in how, through my practice, this change of state could enable me to understand the poetics of salt and how its materiality applies to other ambivalences. For example, in two works by Brazilian artist Artur Barrio, salt is used deliberately as a metaphor for ephemerality and impermanence.<sup>49</sup> Barrio often refers to his work as 'situations' and uses everyday perishable materials to create works that are intentionally ephemeral.<sup>50</sup> *(Ex) tensões y Pontos* (2011) is a mixed media installation using everyday materials, which includes a box of fish heads buried in salt.<sup>51</sup> In *O Ignoto* (1996), 'marine salt, the installation's primordial element, is crushed as the visitor moves through the work, suggesting metaphors of conservation and corrosion, permanence and impermanence'.<sup>52</sup>

Salt's ability to dissolve and change state was intrinsic in the development of two artists' works within the emergence of what later became termed 'land art'. In the late 1960s in America, Denis Oppenheim and Robert Smithson both created large-scale site-based installations using salt. In his 1968 work *Salt Flat*, Oppenheim spread 1,000 pounds of salt into a 50 x 100 feet rectangle in a parking lot in New York, intending also to place salt blocks of identical weight on the ocean bed off the Bahamas and along the surface of the Salt Lake desert in Utah. In each context, the salt would undergo change, whether spreading out, disintegrating in water, or becoming incorporated into a solid salt surface. These later actions were never carried out.<sup>53</sup> Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970), a permanent sculptural form in the Great Salt Lake in Utah, uses the changing natural salt and algae of the lake to form the work.<sup>54</sup> In an earlier work, *Mirror Displacement (Cayuga Salt Mine Project)* (1969), Smithson used rock salt from the Cayuga salt mine. It may have been a coincidence that both Smithson and Oppenheim used salt in their work, but as Jack Burnham's review of the land art of the period, *Great Western Salt Works*, suggests, there was a spatial quality to the works.<sup>55</sup> Salt was a critical material element at

<sup>48</sup> Philip Hall-Patch, *salt | water* (2012 [ongoing]), exhibited at *A Matter of Substance*, APT Gallery, London, July 2013, and *Random Acts of Time*, Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, May/June 2012. Philip Hall-Patch, artist's website: <<https://philliphall-patch.co.uk/salt-water/>> [accessed 30 August 2017].

<sup>49</sup> Artur Barrio, Instituto Inhotim website: <<http://www.inhotim.org.br/en/inhotim/arte-contemporanea/obras/o-ignoto/>>.

<sup>50</sup> 'About the Artist', Brazil Pavilion at 54th Venice Biennale website: <[http://www.54bienalveneza.org.br/site\\_veneza\\_en.html#](http://www.54bienalveneza.org.br/site_veneza_en.html#)> [accessed 29 August 2017].

<sup>51</sup> Artur Barrio, *(Ex) tensões y Pontos* (2011), exhibited at Brazil Pavilion at 54th Venice Biennale: see <[http://www.54bienalveneza.org.br/site\\_veneza\\_en.html#](http://www.54bienalveneza.org.br/site_veneza_en.html#)> [accessed 29 August 2017].

<sup>52</sup> Artur Barrio, Instituto Inhotim website.

<sup>53</sup> Tate website: <<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/oppenheim-salt-flat-t01773>> [accessed 29 August 2017].

<sup>54</sup> *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. by Jack Flam (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 143-53.

<sup>55</sup> Jack Burnham, *Great Western Salt Works: Essays on the Meaning of Post-Formalist Art* (New York: George Braziller, 1974).

the beginning of large-scale land art. As well as using the ambivalent qualities of salt to both preserve and dissolve, these artworks have a relationship between what Smithson termed 'site and non-site', whereby the work on the site is also represented in a gallery space, the non-site. I argue that the gallery-based work acts as an indexical symbol of the site.<sup>56</sup>

In alchemy, salt is a generative substance and an essence, and the German installation artist Anselm Kiefer has drawn directly on the alchemical symbolism of salt in several of his works. In *Der Salz der Erde (The Salt of the Earth)* (2011),<sup>57</sup> a mixed media relief work that combines a photographic image with other textures, both the materiality and the title of the work point to salt's essential nature and part in the creation of work. In another work, *Salz, Merkur, Sulfur* (2011),<sup>58</sup> salt is referenced in the title as part of the basic alchemical elements, and the diagram in the relief painting is akin to an alchemical diagram. The French conceptual artist Marcel Duchamp also played on the linguistic indexicality of salt, according to art critic Jack Burnham. It is claimed by Burnham and others that Marcel Duchamp's pseudonym, *Rose Sel-a-vie (Rose Salt of Life)*<sup>59</sup> and the title of his book, *Marchand du Sel (Salt Seller)*, are symbolic references to the philosopher's stone that Duchamp uses as a catalyst to transform matter.<sup>60</sup>

These examples suggest that, beyond its physical materiality, salt could drive art practice conceptually, through its poetic, linguistic or cultural associations. In a 1978 artwork by architecture practice Superstudio, *La Moglie di Lot (Lot's Wife)*, the dual role of salt as a conceptual reference and a material is used.<sup>61</sup> Five sculptures made from salt are lined up in a row, each depicting examples of iconic architecture from history. An apparatus drips water on the sculptures, slowly eroding the forms to reveal a symbolic object enclosed within.<sup>62</sup> According to Superstudio, the work reflects the ephemerality of architecture: both in the way time acts on architecture – allowing only its symbolic meaning to survive – and in the way that architecture, 'presuming to impose itself on nature and its laws, is instead swept away by those same forces'.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Robert Smithson, 'A provisional theory of non-sites' [1968] in *Smithson: Collected Writings*, p. 364.

<sup>57</sup> Anselm Kiefer, *Der Salz der Erde* ('The Salt of the Earth') (2011), exhibited at Anselm Kiefer: Alkahest, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Salzburg, 28 July 2011–24 September 2011.

<sup>58</sup> Anselm Kiefer, *Salz, Merkur, Sulfur* (2011), exhibited at: Anselm Kiefer: Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen, White Cube, Hoxton Square London, 3 November 2011–4 September 2011.

<sup>59</sup> Anne Umland, Adrian Sudhalter and Scott Gerson (eds), *Dada in the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), p. 228; Marcel Duchamp, 'Rose Sel-a-vie (rayograph)', *The Little Review*, 9.1 (1922), p. 61.

<sup>60</sup> Robert Pincus-Witten, 'Theater of the conceptual: Autobiography and myth', in J. Masheck, *Marcel Duchamp in Perspective* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2002), pp.162-72, at p. 167; J. Moffitt, *Alchemist of the Avant-Garde* (Albany: SUNY press, 2012), p. 140.

<sup>61</sup> Superstudio, *La Moglie di Lot (Lot's Wife)*, 1978/2014, Venice Biennale 2014/Permanent collection, FRAC Center, Orléans, France: <<http://www.frac-centre.fr/collection-art-architecture/superstudio/moglie-lot-64.html?authID=185&ensembleID=1314>> [accessed 30 November 2017].

<sup>62</sup> Simone Menegoi, 'Artforum Picks. Superstudio, *La Moglie di Lot*, Venice Biennale 2014', *Artforum*: <<https://www.artforum.com/index.php?pn=picks&id=46743&view=print>> [accessed 30 November 2017].

<sup>63</sup> Menegoi, 'Artforum Picks'.

The ability of salt to hold both conceptual and material qualities can also be seen in the artworks of Japanese artist Motoi Yamamoto who uses salt to tell, or meditate on, his own story of loss, making giant floor-based patterns from grains of salt.<sup>64</sup> According to Yamamoto, the reason he uses salt is because of its association with funerals and mourning in Japanese culture, as he began making the salt installations after his sister died of brain cancer.<sup>65</sup> In traditional Japanese culture and religion, the use of salt is associated with purification and cleansing.<sup>66</sup> In an interview about his work with Seth Curcio, Yamamoto says that his work is not about *preserving* memory, but is 'rather a way to try and recall all the memories as much as I can'.<sup>67</sup> The impact of his work reaches others who have also felt loss, as he relates in an example:

In 2006, I had an exhibition as a part of *Force of Nature* at the main library of the College of Charleston. A locksmith of the College of Charleston who lost his father because of a brain tumor, asked if he could dismantle my work and bring the salt back to the ocean.<sup>68</sup>

The ability of salt to transcend individual cultural meanings, and to become an index that travels across continents and makes relations, illustrates its potential as a cross-cultural material poetics.

Another example of salt having a quality of cleansing, in this case of a contested site, can be seen in a public artwork on the site of District Six in Cape Town (which is mentioned in the introduction to this thesis as a site of 'salted earth').<sup>69</sup> South African artist Randolph Hartzenberg's work, *Salt Tower*, for the public sculpture festival which took place in 1997, muffled the bell of St Mark's Church with sacks of salt, symbolizing the silencing of the district after its population was forced to move out.<sup>70</sup> Hartzenberg used salt because of its many associations: he makes reference to the pain caused by rubbing salt in a wound, but also invokes salt as a material for cleansing.<sup>71</sup> On the site of District Six, Hartzenberg used the reference to

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<sup>64</sup> Seth Curcio, 'Return to the sea: An interview with Motoi Yamamoto', Daily Serving website, 14 June 2012: <<http://www.dailyserving.com/2012/06/return-to-the-sea-an-interview-with-motoi-yamamoto/>> [accessed 29 August 2017].

<sup>65</sup> Curcio, 'Return to the sea'.

<sup>66</sup> Daniel Clarence Holtom, *The National Faith of Japan: A Study of Modern Shinto* (London: Routledge, 2014; originally published 1938), p. 30.

<sup>67</sup> Curcio, 'Return to the sea'.

<sup>68</sup> Curcio, 'Return to the sea'.

<sup>69</sup> Neville Alexander, 'A homing pigeon's view of forced removals', in Crain Soudien and Renate Meyer (eds), *The District Six Public Sculpture Project* (Cape Town: The District Six Museum Foundation, 1997), p. 10.

<sup>70</sup> Randolph Hartzenberg, *Salt Tower* (1997), 60 bags of salt installed in St Mark's Church on the District Six Sculpture Project. See 'Randolph Hartzenberg Art Bio', August 1998: <<http://www.artthrob.co.za/aug98/artbio.htm>> [accessed 29 August 2017], and Emma Bedford and Tracy Murinik, 'Re-membering that place: Public projects in District Six', in Soudien and Meyer (eds), *District Six Public Sculpture Project*, pp. 12-22.

<sup>71</sup> 'Randolph Hartzenberg Art Bio'.



salted earth and made the salt a physical index to a silencing and forced removal.<sup>72</sup> Again, the ambivalent quality of salt is both to cause pain and to heal.

Fundamental to many of these artworks is salt's ability to shift material or meaning, so as to contain ambivalences, contradictions, or questions. Many of the artworks, such as those by Smithson, Oppenheim, Davis, Landau, Barrio and Yamamoto are ephemeral or durational in their materiality. The artworks I have described range in scale from the small-scale gallery works of Beili Lui and Philip Hall-Patch to large-scale land art pieces by Smithson and Oppenheim, or Yamamoto's installations which spread across a gallery floor, and Kiefer's large installation works. Within this range, I have attempted to draw out what a poetic practice of salt might include, in order to generate further practice that asks what salt's poetics could offer to regeneration. In the next section, I discuss the operation of the material poetics of salt through the index.

<sup>72</sup> Bedford and Murinik, 'Re-memering that place'.

## A poetics of the index

A poetic framework applied to practices of salt, in particular relating to regeneration, offers the potential of a structure that can uncover the relationship between the material and the meaning. In the case of salt, this allows for different readings of the material qualities of salt and of the way it has become part of culture, language and action, in part through its ability to act as an 'index', a category of sign. An approach to poetics through the index offers an understanding of how materiality and relation could combine to form a poetics of regeneration. Discussing how I use salt as an index in my practice, I look at poetics and indexicality in linguistic and semiotic theory, and then in art theory, to define how the indexicality of salt works through my practice in this thesis. Crucial to understanding the potential meaning of salt as a material and poetic index in artworks is its relationship with the audience, or viewer. So I discuss how the development of a 'material poetics' could offer a framework for relating the work and the viewer.

To set out a groundwork for this approach, I begin with reading poetics and the index through the literary theorist Terence Hawke's introduction to structural and semiotic theory, *Structuralism and Semiotics*.<sup>73</sup> Through Hawkes's discussion of the linguistic theorists Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce and Roman Jakobson, and their original texts, I develop an understanding of the specific meaning of the index and key terms, in particular Jakobson's 'shifter' and 'indexical symbol'.<sup>74</sup>

Poetics has its origin in a theory of making, in which both form and content are analysed.<sup>75</sup> While the term 'poetics' is usually identified with the theory of literary forms, it has been expanded as a term to cover aesthetics and can be seen as an element in the structuralist model of understanding relationships and structures of forms.<sup>76</sup> Hawkes writes:

Poetic language is deliberately self-conscious, self-aware ... words in poetry have the status not simply of vehicles for thoughts, but of objects in their own right, autonomous concrete entities. In Saussure's terms, then, they cease to be 'signifiers' and become 'signifieds'. Poetry, in short, does not *separate* a word from its meaning, so much as *multiply* – often bewilderingly – the

<sup>73</sup> Terence Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2003; originally published 1977).

<sup>74</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959); C.S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932–1974); Roman Jakobson, 'Shifters, verbal categories, and the Russian verb', in *Selected Writings II: Word and Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1956; 1971), pp. 130–147; Jakobson, 'Closing statement: Linguistics and poetics', in Thomas A. Sebeok (ed.), *Style in Language* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), pp. 350–77.

<sup>75</sup> See Rad Borislavov, 'Poetics', The Chicago School of Media Theory website: <<https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/poetics/>> [accessed 30 November 2017].

<sup>76</sup> Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, pp. 44–100 (on 'the structures of literature').

range of meanings available to it.<sup>77</sup>

The connection, therefore, from literary poetics to a poetics of another kind of form (or system) can be understood as entailing a transition from the signifier to the signified; in poetic language, the word is both the medium and the message. In Saussure's terminology, language is 'a system of signs that express ideas', and the signifier is the part of the sign that can be grasped, while the signified is that which is absent, the meaning; the sign is the combination of the two.<sup>78</sup> Hawkes describes how C.S. Peirce, expanding on Saussure's work, proposed three main models of signs:<sup>79</sup>

the icon, something which functions as a sign by means of features of itself which resemble its object; the index, something which functions as a sign by virtue of some sort of factual or causal connection with its object; and the symbol, something which functions as a sign because of some 'rule' of conventional or habitual association between itself and its object.<sup>80</sup>

Peirce did not see these categories as mutually exclusive.<sup>81</sup> In other words, there is flexibility within the use of the categories of index, icon and symbol, which does, however, leave Peirce's distinctly categorized definitions open to question. For example, Arthur W. Burks proposed that the fundamental indexical sign is the indexical symbol (rather than the pure index), which combines both the function of the symbol and the function of the index.<sup>82</sup>

Jakobson developed Burks's work on Peirce's idea of the indexical symbol, and proposed that his 'functional' terms of language had the quality of a 'shifter', or indexical symbol.<sup>83</sup> A shifter, as first defined by Danish linguist Otto Jespersen, was that which could not be defined without reference to the message.<sup>84</sup> Jakobson emphasized an orientation towards context in the shifter, as can be seen in his definition of a 'speech event' in the following diagram:<sup>85</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, p. 48.

<sup>78</sup> Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, p. 16; Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, pp. 13, 105.

<sup>79</sup> Peirce, *Collected Papers*; Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, pp. 103-5.

<sup>80</sup> Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, p. 104.

<sup>81</sup> Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, p. 105; Peirce, *Collected Papers*.

<sup>82</sup> Arthur W. Burks, 'Icon, index and symbol', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 9 (1949), pp. 673-89, at pp. 679-80.

<sup>83</sup> Jakobson, 'Shifters', p. 132.

<sup>84</sup> Jakobson, 'Shifters', p. 131, referring to Otto Jespersen, *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1923; 1959), pp. 123-24.

<sup>85</sup> Jakobson, 'Shifters', p. 132; Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, p. 65.

Context (referential)  
Message (poetic/aesthetic)

Addresser (emotive)-----addressee (conative)

Contact (phatic)  
Code (metalingual)

In this diagram, the meaning resides in the total act, and it can therefore change according to context, contact and code. As Jakobson says: 'the verbal structure of a message depends primarily on the predominant function. But even though ... an orientation towards the CONTEXT ... is the leading task of numerous messages, the accessory participation of the other functions in such messages must be taken into account.'<sup>86</sup> Therefore, the message does not supply all of the meaning in the transaction: it is context-dependent and is what Jakobson describes as a shifter, or an indexical symbol. Shifters are therefore context-sensitive, and are 'distinguished from all other constituents of the linguistic code solely by their compulsory reference to the given message'.<sup>87</sup> In Karl Simm's analysis of the indexical symbol or shifter, for an indexical symbol to have full meaning both the symbolic meaning and the indexical meanings must be known, that is, we must know its general meaning and its specific (temporal and spatial) context.<sup>88</sup>

Taking semiotics into art theory, in 1969 artist and theorist Victor Burgin argued that emerging conceptual art practice focused on message rather than materials, and used aesthetic systems to generate objects.<sup>89</sup> According to Burgin, these objects or artworks, like Jakobson's description of poetic function, are 'contingent upon the details of the situation for which it is designed'.<sup>90</sup> For example, Burgin describes an artwork which is an instruction to conceal an interior wall of a room with a 'skin' that is parallel to and the same colour as the wall it conceals. This instruction is not an object, but the perceptual behaviour it creates may generate an 'object'.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, the object becomes or does not become a work of art in direct response to the inclination of the perceiver, so the specific nature of any work of art is highly subjective.<sup>92</sup>

Basing his work on semiotic theory and the application of semiotics to the analysis of photographic images by Jacques Durand, Roland Barthes and others, Burgin then developed a poetics of the visual image, which enables the message of an image to be 'read' and contingent

<sup>86</sup> Jakobson, 'Closing statement', p. 353.

<sup>87</sup> Jakobson, 'Shifters', p. 132; Hawkes, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, p. 66.

<sup>88</sup> Karl Simms (ed.), *Language and the Subject* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), pp. 79-81, at p. 84.

<sup>89</sup> Victor Burgin, 'Situational aesthetics' [1969], in *Situational Aesthetics: Selected Writings by Victor Burgin*, ed. by Alexander Streitberger (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009), pp. 7-14.

<sup>90</sup> Burgin, 'Situational aesthetics', p. 7.

<sup>91</sup> Burgin, 'Situational aesthetics', p. 8.

<sup>92</sup> Burgin, 'Situational aesthetics', p. 11.

ideologies to be unpicked.<sup>93</sup> He recognized the complex interplay of the visual and verbal, and the implications for both art practice and theory, suggesting that this had the potential to transform art practice.<sup>94</sup>

While Burgin's work on semiotics was primarily focused on photography, art critic Rosalind Krauss used the index and semiotics in analysing site-based conceptual art practices, arguing that the index is different to other kinds of signs because it establishes its meaning along the axis of a physical relationship to the referent.<sup>95</sup> Marcel Duchamp's work *Dust Breeding* (1920) is an example of this, as the accumulation of dust is a kind of physical index for the passage of time.<sup>96</sup> In other examples, Krauss argues that a 'pure' index is present, such as in works by Oppenheim and David Askevold, where an 'empty' indexical sign is 'filled' with a presence. For example, she discusses Oppenheim's *Identity Stretch* (1975), in which he transfers an image of his thumb magnified thousands of times onto a large field of asphalt, making traces in the asphalt; in the gallery, all that is shown is documentation of the work, so 'the meaning of this work is focused on the pure installation of presence by means of the index'.<sup>97</sup> Krauss also refers to work by Lucio Pozzi, in which he made a series of wooden panels painted in two colours (divided by a line), installed at points in the exhibition space of PS1 (a former school building) in New York in 1976, where a change in paint colour had been used to denote different uses of space. What is important to Krauss is the physical presence (of an artwork) as a trace of an absence, but which (as in Pozzi's work) does not explicitly make that absence known. Pozzi's paintings are indexical, as the colour and line of Pozzi's paintings are strictly accountable to the wall setting they are generated by, and they are shifters: empty of meaning, except when juxtaposed with a referent.<sup>98</sup>

In order to understand how the index, or the *form* of signifier, might be important in the reception of a site-specific artwork, I now turn to poet and artist Kristin Kreider's work, which links poetry, art and spatial practice, and builds on the theories of Peirce, Jakobson and Burks on the index to examine how and where the 'message' is communicated in different artworks.<sup>99</sup> Kreider asks: 'how do the artworks "speak" (and how do we listen and respond)?'<sup>100</sup> She connects Jakobson's theory of the 'speech event' to a broader understanding of the 'communication event' (or contact), which she suggests offers a framework through which to consider the

<sup>93</sup> Victor Burgin, 'Photographic practice and art theory' [1975], in Burgin, *Situational Aesthetics*, pp. 63-105, at p. 68.

<sup>94</sup> Burgin, 'Photographic practice', p. 101.

<sup>95</sup> Rosalind Krauss, 'Notes on the index: Seventies art in America, Part 1', *October*, 3 (1977), pp. 68-81; and Krauss, 'Notes on the index: Seventies art in America, Part 2', *October*, 4 (1977), pp. 58-67.

<sup>96</sup> Krauss, 'Notes on the index, Part 1', pp. 74-5.

<sup>97</sup> Krauss, 'Notes on the index, Part 1', p. 80.

<sup>98</sup> Krauss, 'Notes on the index, Part 2', p. 64.

<sup>99</sup> Kristin Kreider, *Poetics and Place: The Architecture of Sign, Subjects and Site* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

<sup>100</sup> Kreider, *Poetics and Place*, p. 1.

communicative capacity of any artwork situated at the crossover of poetry, art, material and spatial practice.<sup>101</sup> She posits that artworks employing a *verbal* message, through the focus on the contact, reveal an orientation towards the message, and that this is material poetics.<sup>102</sup> However, she is also interested in how artworks generate meaning through their *material* properties, noting: 'Material poetics enable an artwork to relate to its context not just through an arbitrary linguistic relation, but through the physical and existential relation that an artwork's material properties have with the world of objects and things.'<sup>103</sup>

In addition, Kreider argues that these artworks generate meaning through the practice of a place.<sup>104</sup> She suggests that the indexical symbol, or shifter in the material sense, is an overlap of message, contact and code.<sup>105</sup> The relationship between 'I' and 'you' (where 'I' is the artwork and 'you' is the recipient) is framed by the contact (a physical and/or psychic connection), and the material poetics of the artwork is located in this contact, which can also be considered an artwork's 'voice'.<sup>106</sup>

Kreider's encounter with the artwork is mediated through the verbal description. Aside from a piece by Roni Horn, *Pair Object III: For Two Rooms* (1988), which Kreider uses to set out her ideas around the index, the artworks Kreider examines all have an ability to make contact through the verbal: they *contain* words, either in textual elements or as spoken words alongside the visual element. So their materiality, as she describes, includes a written or verbal language element.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, Kreider does not directly encounter Horn's work, but instead she reads it through a series of photographs documenting the work, plans of the gallery space, and a description of the work by the artist, an approach that suggests another level of reading *apart* from the materiality of the objects themselves, and one which gives primacy to the 'voice' or verbal. She acknowledges this, commenting that the artworks she is looking at employ a verbal message, although she is interested not only in the verbal poetics but also in how they generate meaning through their material poetics.<sup>108</sup> Kreider's description of a 'material poetics' as characterized as a poetic function may vary when applied to artworks that do not include the additional language-based element that enables the 'reading' of the work to take place (the deciphering of the sign). In my work, I am interested in developing Jakobson's idea of the shifter or indexical symbol into a context of artworks that do not contain a textual or verbal element.

<sup>101</sup> Kreider, *Poetics and Place*, pp. 16, 25.

<sup>102</sup> Kreider, *Poetics and Place*, p. 21.

<sup>103</sup> Kreider, *Poetics and Place*, p. 19.

<sup>104</sup> Kreider, *Poetics and Place*, p. 7.

<sup>105</sup> Kreider, *Poetics and Place*, p. 25.

<sup>106</sup> Kreider, *Poetics and Place*, p. 33.

<sup>107</sup> See Chapters 1–5 of Kreider, *Poetics and Place*.

<sup>108</sup> Kreider, *Poetics and Place*, p. 19.

So, what is the difference between a material or spatial poetics which includes a textual element, and one which does not? If the textual element is removed, are we left with a 'pure' index? If, as Kreider suggests, the material qualities of contact are located in the 'voice', how does this shift where there is not a voice (that is, a textual or language based element)? Where does the 'contact' then lie? Perhaps it could lie in another form of contact, such as touch. If the material poetics of the artwork is located in the contact, or physical connection, the power of an artwork might be about how much it either reveals or conceals its connection (to the real).

The question of absence and presence seems vital in understanding how contact operates in artworks without text. Liza Saltzman writes about art as a form of mnemonic device, setting out work by artists including Rachel Whiteread, Krzysztof Wodiczko and Kara Walker, who, she argues, question and critique the capacity of the index, since they renunciate 'a certain relation to the real': 'animated monuments and amnesiac apparitions, vaudevillian silhouettes and ghostly processions, sepulchral casts and incinerated architectures, these are some of the postindexical strategies at play, the not-quite indexical structures at work.'<sup>109</sup>

Saltzman argues that these artworks, therefore, present the index as a *form* rather than a function, emptied of its direct relationship with the real, a type of work she terms 'postindexical'.<sup>110</sup> For example, in Whiteread's *House* (1993), the original walls of the house were filled with concrete before being demolished to reveal a complete casting of the space within. Though the cast acts as an index of the house, the absence of any remaining original element of the house means the index points to that absence rather than to a presence, and the materiality of the cast acts as a postindexical form of the index: 'a materialization of absence'.<sup>111</sup> Wodiczko's *Bunker Hill Monument Project* (1998) is also a temporary memorial, lasting three days before disappearing, but leaving an absence, a memory of the event. In this video projection piece, mothers and siblings of young men lost to gang violence are projected onto a monument, turning it from a static war memorial to a contemporary memorial to another kind of battle.<sup>112</sup> In Walker's work, silhouettes based on stylized representations of figures from the era of slavery in the United States point to imagery of enduring stereotypes of racial identity and racial difference, but, as they hold no connection to real bodies, these are 'pure forms, the silhouette emptied of its functional relation to the real'. Saltzman comments that each of these artists pursues something of the indexical capacity of the image, only to question that capacity, and that the index therefore becomes a form rather than a function of representation.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Lisa Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 13.

<sup>110</sup> Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>111</sup> Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter*, p. 83; see also Joan Gibbons, *Contemporary Art and Memory* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 31.

<sup>112</sup> Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter*, pp. 16, 32.

<sup>113</sup> Saltzman, *Making Memory Matter*, pp. 12-13.

Linking Saltzmann's idea of the 'postindexical' and Kreider's analysis of material poetics, the poetic basis for the artworks I make in this thesis may be indirectly rather than directly indexical. Using salt as a material, I set out to discover how it relates to the poetics of Relation, as of *détour* and *retour*, in the work of Glissant, and I consider whether the contact in the artwork is revealing of a presence or an absence (of touch). Therefore, the material poetics of salt may be more like the shifter, and, depending on context, its meaning may be read differently. With the artwork that is a shifter (that is, an indexical symbol), the object only 'becomes' an artwork through its context; and it is through the interpretation of the viewer, and the relationship between artwork, place and viewer, that knowledge is gained. Using salt as a material, I make artworks with salt that begin with intuitive responses to material, site and context, but, through an ongoing process of critical reflection, seek to understand salt's relationship with subject and place through its material poetics. In particular, through the writing of the thesis I try to uncover how the qualities of salt might allow the artworks to act as shifters. Through analysing how the artworks I make perform a material, spatial and specifically salt-based poetics of the index, I aim to generate a poetic practice of salt connected to regeneration – a key intention of this investigation.

The potential of artworks not only to represent but also to understand and change reality is contingent on the relationship to the viewer. Therefore, in the next section I turn to Glissant's poetics of Relation to frame the relational encounter between the self and other.



## Towards a 'poetics of Relation'

Edouard Glissant began to construct his idea of a 'poetics of Relation' in *Le Discours Antillais* (translated as *Caribbean Discourse*), where he writes of the 'mingling of experiences ... producing the process of being'.<sup>114</sup> He then developed this more fully in *Poetics of Relation*, in which he defines identity – both aesthetic and political – as constructed in relation to an 'Other'.<sup>115</sup> He argues that a dialectics of rerouting (*détournement*) would assert 'the rhizome of a multiple relationship with the Other and basing every community's reasons for existence on a modern form of the sacred, which would be, all in all, a Poetics of Relation'.<sup>116</sup>

According to Glissant, Relation is firstly a meeting with the Other, acknowledging difference, and an entering into a system of interrelatedness rather than a series of separate, singular relations.<sup>117</sup> *Poetics of Relation* starts with an imaginative text titled 'The Open Boat', a poetic retelling of the journey slaves made from Africa to the Caribbean. The openness of the boat is the beginning of the definition he is seeking for Relation, and of the open subject:

at the bow there is still something we now share: this murmur, cloud or rain or peaceful smoke. We know ourselves as part and as crowd, in an unknown that does not terrify. We cry our cry of poetry. Our boats are open, and we sail them for everyone.<sup>118</sup>

Glissant comments: 'roots make the commonality of errantry and exile, for in both instances, roots are lacking. We must begin with that.'<sup>119</sup> Beginning with openness, and the lack of roots, he is looking for a different way to find connection, rather than a myth of origin or unique root, and so draws upon Deleuze and Guattari's work on the rhizome:

The notion of the rhizome maintains therefore the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root. Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other.<sup>120</sup>

Through the rhizome, Glissant moves from the fixed root to the 'relative' rhizome.<sup>121</sup> Rather

<sup>114</sup> Dash translates 'poétique de la relation' as 'cross-cultural poetics'; Glissant, *CD*, pp. 14, 134. See also Jeannie Suk, *Postcolonial Paradoxes in French Caribbean Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), pp. 58-9.

<sup>115</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 17.

<sup>116</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 16.

<sup>117</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 11.

<sup>118</sup> Glissant, 'The open boat', in *PR*, pp. 5-9, at p. 9.

<sup>119</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 11.

<sup>120</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 11.

<sup>121</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 14.

than return to the mythic root, Glissant argues for a return to a *point d'intrication*, which is the moment of entanglement, that is, the moment of encounter with the Other and the beginning of a process of hybridization and creolization.<sup>122</sup> This process, in the case of those shipped as slaves, is an acknowledgment of the brutal force that brought them to their present place.

Britton writes of Glissant's Relation as in opposition to essence: it 'lack[s] any permanent, singular, autonomously constituted essence.'<sup>123</sup> Glissant argues that the break in experience through forced transportation (of slavery) destroys the conception of being as permanent essence, unlike in the case of a population which moves and manages to maintain elements of its culture; he gives the example of the Jewish Diaspora.<sup>124</sup> At another point in *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant states: 'Relation is movement.'<sup>125</sup> In opposition to essence, Glissant uses two terms: *métissage* and 'creolization'.

For Glissant, *métissage* is the mixing of races and cultures (occurring through colonialism and its aftermath), which sweeps away notions of racial purity and singular origin; in short, 'the poetics of *métissage* is the poetics of Relation'.<sup>126</sup> Creolization is also critically opposed to essence; Glissant derives his theory of creolization from the development of creole language, which he discusses in *Caribbean Discourse* as 'the first area of diversion' (i.e. *détour*).<sup>127</sup> In *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant writes: 'Creolization, one of the ways of forming a complex mix – and not merely a linguistic result – is only exemplified by its processes and certainly not by the "contents" on which these operate.'<sup>128</sup> Unlike *métissage*, in Glissant's definition creolization is unpredictable and unfixed. Identities and differences remain in process.

Postcolonial literary theorist Anjali Prabhu positions Glissant's use of *métissage*, creolization and Relation within what she calls his 'theory of hybridity'.<sup>129</sup> In doing so, Prabhu reads Glissant's work in the context of a wider field of postcolonial studies on hybridity which she notes is 'a rather loose set of terms that have not been problematized'.<sup>130</sup> She situates Glissant's theory of hybridity alongside other writers:

<sup>122</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 31.

<sup>123</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, pp. 14-15; Glissant, *PR*, pp. 199-202; Glissant, *CD*, p. 14.

<sup>124</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 15.

<sup>125</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 171.

<sup>126</sup> Glissant, *DA*, p. 251, in Britton, *Glissant*, p. 16.

<sup>127</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 20.

<sup>128</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 89.

<sup>129</sup> Anjali Prabhu, 'Interrogating hybridity: Subaltern agency and totality in postcolonial theory', *Diacritics*, (2005), p. 77.

<sup>130</sup> Anjali Prabhu, *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), p. 2.

within postcolonial studies it is no longer clear what is being implied with the use of terms such as diaspora (when Stuart Hall uses the term diasporization it is quite close to what Glissant might mean by creolization), hybridity (when used by Bhabha has a variety of particular meanings that are often not clearly specified in many critical appropriations of his work), *métissage* (means entirely different things for Lionnet, Glissant and Verges), intercultural interaction, or even multiculturalism.<sup>131</sup>

One problem with understanding the meanings and relations between hybridity, *métissage* and creolization in Glissant's work is that different translations render meanings differently.<sup>132</sup> Britton explains hybridity initially as the English language version of *métissage*, but goes on to say that hybridity is a constant in Glissant's work and also forms the basis of creolization, which is more 'hybridity as principle'.<sup>133</sup> Following Britton's and Prabhu's views, I understand Glissant's hybridity as throughout Relation, and as formed of a series of stages, including *métissage* and creolization.<sup>134</sup> Comparisons can be made to Homi Bhabha's theorization of hybridity, in particular his reading of hybridity as an ongoing negotiation.<sup>135</sup> The difference between Glissant's and Bhabha's hybridity centre on the meaning of 'totality' (or wholeness). According to Prabhu, for Bhabha totality remains a fixed state.<sup>136</sup> For Glissant, totality is in opposition to Relation; it is also static and is 'relation at rest'.<sup>137</sup> However, Glissant's terms '*tout-monde* (the world in its entirety), *écho-monde* (the world of things resonating with one another) and *chaos-monde* (a world that cannot be systematized)' together offer a different kind of totality.<sup>138</sup>

Britton writes that Glissant's version of hybridity redefines our relation to the Other: 'if contemporary social reality is hybrid in its very principle, then identity (the "Same") is never pure, and *neither is otherness*. The Other is never absolutely other.'<sup>139</sup> Rather, we are constantly reassessing our relation to the Other, as, according to Britton, 'otherness is relative, because we

<sup>131</sup> Prabhu, *Hybridity*, p. 13; see also Stuart Hall, 'Creolité and the process of creolization', in Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez and Shirley Anne Tate (eds), *Creolizing Europe: Legacies and Transformations* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), pp. 12-25.

<sup>132</sup> See Charles Forsdick, 'From the "Aesthetics of Diversity" to the "Poetics of Relating": Segalen, Glissant and the genealogies of Francophone postcolonial thought', *Paragraph*, 37 (2014), pp. 160-77, at p. 167; see also Glissant, *PoRR*, p. 46; for Britton's translation, see *Glissant*, p. 16; cf. Wing's translation in Glissant, *PR*, p. 34.

<sup>133</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 16.

<sup>134</sup> Prabhu, 'Interrogating hybridity', p. 89.

<sup>135</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 2, in Britton, *Glissant*, p. 16.

<sup>136</sup> Prabhu, 'Interrogating hybridity', p. 90; Prabhu, *Hybridity*, p. 121; Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, p. 177.

<sup>137</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 171.

<sup>138</sup> Ulrich Loock, 'Opacity', *Frieze Magazine*, 7 November 2012, <<https://frieze.com/article/opacity/?lang=en> and see > [accessed 16 February 2018]; and see also Global Social Theory website, <<https://globalsocialtheory.org/thinkers/edouard-glissant-2/>> [accessed 16 February 2018].

<sup>139</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 17.

know that the relation to the Other is always precisely a *relation*, and, quoting Glissant, 'the Other is in me, because I am me. Equally, the I from whom the Other is absent (abstracted) perishes'.<sup>140</sup> In *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant argued: 'We "know" that the Other is within us and affects how we evolve as well as the bulk of our conceptions and the development of our sensibility.'<sup>141</sup>

In terms of identity, therefore, a polarity of self and other gives way to 'a situation in which identity exists only as a shifting term in a network of multiple relations with the Others who constitute it'.<sup>142</sup> Glissant returns to the root and the rhizome to make a series of distinctions between what he calls 'root-identity' and 'relation-identity'. Root-identity 'is preserved by being projected onto other territories, making their conquest legitimate', and it has, therefore, 'rooted the thought of self and of territory and set in motion the thought of the other and the voyage'. Relation-identity 'does not think of land as a territory from which to project to other territories but as a place where one gives-on-and-with rather than grasps'. Therefore, relation-identity 'exults the thought of errancy and of totality'. It is the clash between these two forms of identity that Glissant calls the 'shock of relating'. He gives the example of the French culture touching Martinique, which has 'no solid rootstock' and is therefore 'fragile in the extreme, wearing down through contact with a masked colonization'.<sup>143</sup>

The relationship between these two types of identity lead to another aspect of Relation, which for Glissant is 'an anti-imperialist project'. In Glissant's analysis, 'Relation' is the story of Western colonialism. Paradoxically, Glissant thinks it is through their colonialist ambitions and actions that Western countries created the situation of different cultures coming into Relation and thereby 'undermined the unity of the West'. However, despite having created a situation where they must engage with other cultures, these Western nations have a fixed worldview and find it difficult to actively participate in Relation, which would ask them to let go of their need to be the dominating power.<sup>144</sup> Jacques Coursil suggests that Glissant's Relation is a kind of retelling of history, which instead acknowledges those whose worlds were shattered by the colonial acts of the Western countries.<sup>145</sup> The resistance offered by Glissant's work is in the *language* of retelling history.<sup>146</sup> Relation also offers a creative shift in thinking, one that has the

<sup>140</sup> Glissant, *L'Intention Poétique*, p. 101; Britton, *Glissant*, p. 17.

<sup>141</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 27; Britton, *Glissant*, p. 17.

<sup>142</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 17.

<sup>143</sup> Glissant, *PR*, pp. 143-44. For discussion of 'gives-on-and-with' (*donner-avec*), see Seanna Sumalee Oakley, *Common Places: The Poetics of African Atlantic Postromantics* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011), p. 55.

<sup>144</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 12.

<sup>145</sup> Jacques Coursil, 'Categories in Edouard Glissant's Writings' (2nd version), Colloque International E. Glissant (Sorbonne, 1998), p. 6, available at <[http://www.coursil.com/bilder/3\\_language/Literature/Edouard%20Glissant's%20categories.pdf](http://www.coursil.com/bilder/3_language/Literature/Edouard%20Glissant's%20categories.pdf)> [accessed 8 January 2014].

<sup>146</sup> Britton, 'Globalization and political action', p. 6.

potential to be transformative. Lorna Burns sees Glissant's work as an understanding of the historical experience of slavery as both a violence and a potentiality for creativity: 'Loss and the creation of something new, this is a recurring trait in Caribbean thought and is at the heart of creolization theory, making possible transculturation.'<sup>147</sup>

According to Britton, diversity is, for Glissant, a prime value of Relation, because it is at odds with the 'universalizing force of Western Humanism to reduce everything to "the same"', and 'recognising the value of diversity allows the creation of a relation that sees the Other as equal, and as a presence that is necessary *because* it is different', rather than it being a pretence that a perfect understanding between cultures is possible.<sup>148</sup> This means, Glissant writes, that Relation operates in a totality that needs the presence of its diverse and equal elements:

Relation is not to be confused with the cultures we are discussing nor with the economy of their internal relationships nor even the intangible results of the intricate involvement of all internal relationships with all possible external relationships. Nor is it to be confused with some marvellous accident that might suddenly occur apart from any relationship, the known unknown, in which chance would be the magnet. Relation is all these things at once.<sup>149</sup>

Relation, for Glissant, remains unfixed, and is instead open and constantly mobile.<sup>150</sup> Additionally, actions in Relation must be specific to a place, not generalized.<sup>151</sup>

*La Relation relie, (relaie), relate.* [Relation links (relays) relates]<sup>152</sup>

In this short sentence, an important aspect of Relation is contained. The meaning of Relation is told, or relayed, through the relating (or recounting) of stories. The 'relay' makes implicit a passing between a number of subjects, with no singular authorial voice but rather with an ongoing discourse.<sup>153</sup> Glissant uses the French word *relater*, which means both to relate in a relational sense and to relate as in to tell a story.<sup>154</sup> And in French, there is a closeness between *relater* and *raconter*, as *relater* can mean 'to narrate', and *raconter* 'to tell' (as in a *raconteur* being someone who tells a story). Glissant sees Relation as a complex and comprehensive container

<sup>147</sup> Lorna M. Burns, 'Becoming-postcolonial, becoming-Caribbean: Édouard Glissant and the poetics of creolization', *Textual Practice*, 23 (2009), pp. 99-117, at p. 106.

<sup>148</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 12, referring to Glissant, *DA*, p. 191. See also Coursil, *Categories*.

<sup>149</sup> Glissant, *PR*, pp. 170-71.

<sup>150</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 206.

<sup>151</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 196.

<sup>152</sup> Glissant, *PdIR*, p. 187.

<sup>153</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 164.

<sup>154</sup> Glissant, *PR*.

for all types of relating, which ‘requires a constant figuring of the entire totality within which specific concepts and interactions become coherent’.<sup>155</sup> Therefore, Relation is, among other things, a principle of narration, what is told, and what is relayed from one person to another, forming a chain or network of narrative ‘relations’. In this sense, relay has a double significance: as a non-hierarchical diversity of narrative structure, and as a break or space in the relation between subject and language.<sup>156</sup> This latter destabilizes connections between identity and language in Glissant’s works.<sup>157</sup> Through disowning the discourse, the narrators instead produce a subversive, interwoven text that cannot be appropriated by authority or pinned down to individual identity.<sup>158</sup>

Inherent in the idea of relay is the idea of reiteration. As stories are told and retold, the narrative shifts. Seanna Sumalee Oakley, writing about the ‘commonplace’ in Glissant’s work, sees the procedure of his poetics as one of non-identical repetition, iteration or citation.<sup>159</sup> The use of ‘re-’, therefore, is important both as a (methodological) device for narrating, and as a theoretical model for understanding how Glissant’s poetics work.

The hyphen, or *trait d’Union* in French, has a provisional character, which Glissant uses to destabilise fixed meanings.<sup>160</sup> Manuel Norvat writes of Glissant’s use of the hyphen in his term ‘Tout-Monde’ as speaking of a world that is being named, constructed and made visible at the same time, not fixed or permanent.<sup>161</sup> I understand the hyphen in Glissant’s work to signal an unfixing, unfinished, and ongoing action. In this thesis, I use ‘re-’ in a particular way to emphasize the element of repetition inherent in what I suggest. ‘Re-generation’ rather than ‘regeneration’ emphasizes the repetitions of generations or generating in the process of regeneration, rather than a singular rebirth. Re-generation resists fixed outcomes and sees place as in a continual process of becoming. The use of ‘re-’ is also a methodological, artistic tool I use to develop practices that re-trace routes or re-enact activities.

Glissant’s (spatialized) relation between the self and the other links to Kreider’s discussion of the encounter between the artwork (which she calls ‘I’) and the viewer (‘you’); Kreider, in turn, had taken the idea of the spatialization of the ‘I/you’ encounter from Jane Rendell’s *Site-Writing*, in which Rendell is interested in spatializing the relationship between the art critic and the artwork. Rendell suggests that, as criticism always has an ‘other’ in mind, the central task of

<sup>155</sup> Prabhu, ‘Interrogating hybridity’, p. 78.

<sup>156</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 164; Coursil, *Categories*, p. 5.

<sup>157</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, pp. 168-72.

<sup>158</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, pp. 176-78.

<sup>159</sup> Oakley, *Common Places*, p. 55.

<sup>160</sup> Muriel Roseberg, ‘Édouard Glissant’s geopoetics, a contribution to the idea of the world as the world’, *L’Espace Géographique*, 2016/4 Volume 45, pp. 321 – 334.

<sup>161</sup> Manuel Norvat, *Le Chant du Divers: Introduction à la philopoétique d’Édouard Glissant* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2015), p. 136.

criticism is therefore to address the question of how one relates to an 'other'.<sup>162</sup>

Rendell draws on the work of psychoanalytic thinkers, including Jean Laplanche, to understand this question. She uses Laplanche's idea of the enigmatic message, and the location of its transference, to position the critic between work and audience, and to conceptualize questions of relation in criticism.<sup>163</sup> Laplanche proposed that from very early on we are open to signifiers from the adults around us, and that these are 'enigmatic signifiers'; in other words, we internalize messages from 'enigmatic others' without fully understanding what they mean. Rather than *étrangeté*, which means 'strangeness', to describe otherness, Laplanche used the French word *étrangèreté*, which translates as 'stranger-ness', 'foreign-ness', 'alien-ness'.<sup>164</sup> Connections can be made here to Glissant's (cross-cultural) theorization that the self and Other are in continual relation and that 'we "know" that the Other is within us'.<sup>165</sup> Bringing Laplanche and Glissant together underpins how understandings of Otherness relate to spaces of Relation in my poetic salting practices.

Rendell proposes to use the possibilities offered by Laplanche to suggest that 'criticism involves such a double movement to and fro between inside and outside; works can take critics outside themselves, offering new geographies, new possibilities, but they can also return critics to their own interiors, their own biographies'.<sup>166</sup> Through her writing, Rendell spatializes relation, both in the actual encounter between critic and artwork, and in the translation of that encounter onto the page.<sup>167</sup>

In Kreider's material poetics, the relation of 'I' to 'you' translates to an emphasis on the setting of the artwork as part of the 'voice' of the work, and it suggests that some works are more opaque; Kreider argues that an ethics of aesthetic relation would respect the limitations of that opacity while seeking to listen and understand.<sup>168</sup> Opacity was also a central concept for Glissant, who wrote about opacity as a strategy of resistance.<sup>169</sup> For Glissant, opacity safeguards difference; it is 'welcome opaqueness, through which the other escapes me'.<sup>170</sup> Accepting opacity means accepting the lack of universal truths.<sup>171</sup> And opacity becomes a right, and a freedom: 'their

<sup>162</sup> Jane Rendell, *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), p. 7

<sup>163</sup> Rendell, *Site-Writing*, p. 10.

<sup>164</sup> Jean Laplanche, trans. Luke Thurston, in John Fletcher (ed.), *Essays in Otherness* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 47, cited in Ladson Hinton, 'The enigmatic signifier and the decentred subject', *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 54 (2009), pp. 637-57, at p. 641.

<sup>165</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 27.

<sup>166</sup> Rendell, *Site-Writing*, p. 14.

<sup>167</sup> See for example, Nathan Coley, *Black Tent* (2003), in Rendell, *Site-Writing*, pp. 74-84.

<sup>168</sup> Kreider, *Poetics and Place*, p. 129.

<sup>169</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 6.

<sup>170</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 162; Britton, *Glissant*, p. 19.

<sup>171</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 19.

[opacity], which is nothing, after all, but their freedom.<sup>172</sup> As a defence against understanding, Glissant views opacity in contrast to transparency, an enforced act with the other as an object of knowledge.<sup>173</sup> Connecting this view of opacity with Laplanche's understanding of enigma poses an interesting question over the ethics of opacity/enigma. While I do not aim to resolve this question here, it is an area that could be developed further in future work.

In the context of this thesis, Glissant's work offers a rich theoretical basis to understand both the 'homeplace' of Brixton and the places to which I journey in the *détours* and *retours*, and in the next section I develop theoretical readings of these key concepts. Using the poetics of the index and of salt as a basis to develop my practice and to reflect upon the artworks made through that practice, I will read questions of relation through Glissant's work. Bringing in specific questions around the material poetics of salt and the spatialization of relation, I will return to the work of Kreider and Rendell to inform and build on Glissant's poetics.

<sup>172</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 256; Britton, *Glissant*, p. 19.

<sup>173</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 19; Murdoch, 'Glissant's Opacite', p. 25; Headley, 'Glissant's existential ontology of difference', p. 92.







**Section 2: Journeys and narratives of *Détour* and *Retour***



This section takes Édouard Glissant's terms *détour*, *retour*, and *détournement* to map how the movement away from and back to the 'homeplace' of Brixton will be discussed in the thesis, through forms of what Glissant calls *errance*.<sup>1</sup> I propose that reviving *détournement* through Jane Rendell's spatialized reading and the work of the Situationist International offers new artistic possibilities.

In order to discuss the journeys I make in this thesis, and the way they act as connections between homeplace and diaspora, key theoretical material around concepts of migration and diaspora by Glissant and Paul Gilroy are both discussed and expanded upon with reference to the work of James Clifford and Avtaḥ Brah on diasporic spaces and identities. An understanding of travel, journey and pilgrimage as a search for knowledge, spiritual enlightenment, or a particular place are connected to Glissant's *errance* and 'relation-identity'. I then expand on meanings of place in relation to space by considering the work of Yi Fu Tuan and Doreen Massey, and in relation to entanglement by discussing the work of Tim Ingold and Allen Pred. With reference to Brah's work, approaches to Brixton are developed as a diasporic space linking different identities but also, using bell hooks' term, as a homeplace with a specific identity. Integral to understanding regeneration is the idea of the 'trace', connecting past and present, home and away, which may contain echoes of trauma. I discuss the meanings of trace in the thesis through Glissant's *trace* and geographer Karen Till's work on 'spectral traces', to develop how memory and place are connected in regeneration.

The writings of Rob Furbey and Ben Campkin on regeneration as a metaphor critiquing conventional uses of the term in the social sciences are then explored, before I turn to literary and poetic sources which offer a reading of regeneration as relational. I discuss the potential of 're-generation' as a term that allows for a reading of regeneration via Glissant's ideas. Following this, I set out the context of Brixton as a focus for the thesis, giving a historical overview of how the area's cultural diversity has evolved through a reading of Paul Gilroy's work on the Black Atlantic.<sup>2</sup> I describe the development of Brixton's street and indoor markets, including the currently contested regeneration plans for the area, and the local community resistance to these plans.

<sup>1</sup> bell hooks, 'Homeplace (a site of resistance)', in *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), p. 42, and see '(Home) Place and Entanglement' in this section. *Errance* has been translated as both 'errantry' and 'wandering'; see the second sub-section of this Section, 'Migration and diasporas'; Glissant, *CD*; Glissant, *PR*.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1995).

## *Détour and retour*

In *Caribbean Discourse*, Glissant sets out his vision for an understanding of cultural interrelation through the context of Martinique and its relationship with France and the rest of the Caribbean.<sup>3</sup> The first section, under the sub-title 'Landmarks: the chronological illusion', begins with list of 'facts' about Martinican history from the moment of 'discovery' by Columbus in 1502. These facts, as Glissant points out, fail to include any of the real history of Martinique:

Once this chronological table has been set up and completed, the whole history of Martinique remains to be unraveled. The whole Caribbean history of Martinique remains to be discovered.<sup>4</sup>

Following this, Glissant sets out the basis of his theory of *détour* and *retour*.<sup>5</sup> He discusses the experience of those who are transplanted, and how they respond with a desire for return to origin:

The first impulse of a transplanted population which is not sure of maintaining the old order of values in the transplanted locale is that of reversion (*retour*). Reversion is the obsession with a single origin: one must not alter the absolute state of being. To revert is to consecrate permanence, to negate contact. Reversion will be recommended by those who favor single origins.<sup>6</sup>

However, he says that those who undergo the forced transplantations of slavery are not able to maintain the impulse to revert, and that gradually, once they realize that return is inconceivable, they try to 'exorcise the impossibility of return [*retour*] by what I call the practice of diversion [*détour*]'.<sup>7</sup> This *détour*, which Glissant calls the 'ultimate resort of a population whose domination by an Other is concealed', is a 'strategy of trickery', and it is in the Creole language that the first area of *détour* is found.<sup>8</sup> Glissant refers to Creole as:

originally a kind of conspiracy that concealed itself by its public and open expression. For example, even if Creole is whispered (for whispering is the shout modified to suit the dark), it is rarely murmured. The whisper is determined by external circumstances; the murmur is a decision by the

<sup>3</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> In Dash's translation, 'diversion' and 'reversion'.

<sup>6</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 20.

speaker. The murmur allows access to a confidential meaning, not to this form of nonsense that could conceal and reveal at the same time a hidden meaning.<sup>9</sup>

Glissant illustrates here the subversive quality of *détour* and hints at its relationship to his concept of 'opacity'. Celia Britton, who has written extensively on Glissant's theoretical and literary works, explains that, from the start, Creole was developed not simply to communicate but to conceal its meanings, thereby turning the language of the oppressors against them.<sup>10</sup> H. Adlai Murdoch, another Glissant scholar, has commented that '*détour* inscribes itself as the province of alternative praxes of subjectivity, posing an implicit challenge to nation on the one hand, while functioning as a key tool of resistance on the other'.<sup>11</sup> Glissant himself writes that:

First of all, from the perspective of the conflict between Creole and French, in which one has thus far evolved at the expense of the other, we can state that the only possible strategy is to make them opaque to each other. To develop everywhere, in defiance of a universalizing and reductive humanism, the theory of specifically opaque structures.<sup>12</sup>

Both Britton and Murdoch link *détour* to opacity, which Murdoch describes as 'a key armature of subjective resistance and as a counter to the universalizing and appropriating assumptions of Western colonial culture'.<sup>13</sup> Clevis Headley also writes of opacity as 'a form of ontological self-defense', against what Glissant calls 'the alienating notion of transparency'.<sup>14</sup>

Britton also highlights the difference between opacity and *détour*: opacity is above all an ethical value and political right, whereas *détour* is a tactic. Specific to *détour* is the idea of a rerouting, a 'getting around' rather than a head-on resistance, and in the Creole language this functions through its ambiguities, which both express and hide meanings, a quality which, according to Britton, is fundamental to all types of *détour*. Britton introduces Glissant's idea of 'counterpoetics' when there is an antagonistic or subversive relationship to language, a language which must nevertheless be used.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Glissant, *CD*, pp. 124-25.

<sup>10</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> H. Adlai Murdoch, 'Glissant's *opacité* and the re-conceptualization of identity', in John E. Drabinski and Marisa Parham (eds), *Theorising Relation: Sites and Citations* (London and New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), pp. 14-38, at p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 133.

<sup>13</sup> Murdoch, 'Glissant's *opacité*', p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> Clevis Headley, 'Glissant's existential ontology of difference', in Drabinski and Parham (eds), *Theorising Relation*, pp. 69-102, at p. 95; Glissant, *CD*, pp. 154-55.

<sup>15</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, pp. 25, 27, 30-31.

Mireille Rosello has written about the *détour* as working through a kind of ‘mimetic opposition’, which is problematic because, by remaining so close to the existing powers the Martinicans are in opposition to, they risk sabotaging their own attempts at change.<sup>16</sup> Rosello goes on to use Michel de Certeau’s concept of *la tactique* (tactic) to explore modes of action and reaction, but she does not make the connection between *tactique* and *détour* explicitly.<sup>17</sup> Britton expands on possible connections between *tactique* and *détour*, suggesting that this may be a feminist approach to struggle: less a direct confrontation than ‘ruse and indirectness’. Rosello and Britton refer to the undoing of (male) heroism in Glissant’s novels.<sup>18</sup>

That *détour* holds within it the potential for change is a matter of debate. According to Glissant, ‘diversion [*détour*] can lead somewhere when the obstacle for which the *détour* was made tends to develop into concrete “possibilities”’.<sup>19</sup> He describes how the writer and activist Frantz Fanon, through acting on his ideas (referring to the fact that Fanon left Martinique to enact his political ideology in Algeria), made a complete break, which Glissant calls ‘the extreme edge of the process of diversion [*détour*]’.<sup>20</sup> However, *détour* ‘leads nowhere when the original trickster strategy does not encounter any real potential for development’.<sup>21</sup> Glissant frames the question of the potential for *détour* to go beyond an immediate tactic of everyday resistance in relation to *retour*. In the thesis introduction, I quoted Glissant’s view of *détour* as needing a particular kind of *retour*:

Diversion [*détour*] is not a useful ploy unless it is nourished by reversion [*retour*]: not a return to the longing for origins, to some immutable state of Being, but a return to the point of entanglement, from which we were forcefully turned away; that is where we must ultimately put to work the forces of creolization, or perish.<sup>22</sup>

The use of *retour* in Glissant’s work seems to shift from an initial meaning of return to a single origin, to a second meaning of a return to the point of entanglement (*point d’intrication*). Within postcolonial theory, meanings of *détour* and *retour* have been developed by theorists including Vivek Dhareshwar, who writes about a ‘Poetics of Detour’ and a ‘Poetics of Re-tour’.

<sup>16</sup> Mireille Rosello, *Littérature et identité aux Antilles* (Paris: Karthala, 1992), pp. 15-16.

<sup>17</sup> Rosello, *Littérature et identité*, p. 36; Britton, *Glissant*, p. 28.

<sup>18</sup> Rosello, *Littérature et identité*, pp. 37, 39; Britton, *Glissant*, p. 29. See also Glissant, ‘Entretien avec le CARE’, *CARE*, 10 (1983), pp. 17-26, at pp. 10, 22; Bernadette Cailler, ‘Edouard Glissant: a creative critic’, *World Literature Today*, 63 (1989), pp. 589-92.

<sup>19</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 22.

<sup>20</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 25.

<sup>21</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 23.

<sup>22</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 26.



Dhareshwar sees the 'Poetics of Detour' as one in which postcolonial identities have been shaped through a process of *détour* as a turning away from home language and landscapes towards a metropolitan gaze. He suggests that the inventions of postcolonial identities have entailed a constant negotiation of violence and violation. He argues that rather than a search for essence, or a return to an idea of origin, remaking postcolonial identities requires a 'Poetics of Re-tour', which is not a 'reversion' (as *retour* is translated by Dash) but a return to the dissonance of the *détour* and to the point of entanglement.<sup>23</sup> This kind of poetic dissonance within language might be a form of counterpoetics, as described by Glissant, relating to the ongoing tension between Creole and French.<sup>24</sup> Referring to a text relating to cultures that had English as the colonial language, *The Empire Writes Back*, Britton writes that there is a conflictual yet necessary relationship to the colonial language, illustrating that Glissant's ideas of *détour* and counterpoetics went beyond the French colonial context, as *détour* and counterpoetics offer both resistance and accommodation.<sup>25</sup>

Another potential use of *détour* has been suggested by Heidi Bojsen, who explores how a recognition of Glissant's concepts of *détour*, opacity, *errance* and Relation could be useful in development practices.<sup>26</sup> Bojsen suggests that in the context of partnership work, where relationships between communities and development or aid workers are inevitably structurally unequal, communities might use *détour* as a tactic that is not verbalized but that challenges the influence or transparency imposed by the 'stronger party' in the partnership. Therefore, the concept of opacity can also be useful in accepting a lack of understanding between partners.<sup>27</sup> A *détour* can be a time of 'investigation and deliberation' which may seem unnecessary but which enables the community to find a way of coming to terms with what is on offer rather than just accepting it without question, which, Bojsen suggests, relates to Glissant's idea of *pensée de l'errance* (wandering-thinking).<sup>28</sup> This reframing of *détour* and opacity in a different practical disciplinary context raises an interesting question about the narration of projects. Narratives tend to be authored by donor countries and aid agencies rather than communities themselves. Bojsen highlights a paradox in development work, which sometimes uses aesthetic expression and poetic understandings in practice but does not incorporate it in development studies (the theoretical arm). Using Glissant's poetic approach in development studies could emphasize the relational aspects of knowledge produced in specific local contexts, where there is a two-way modification and learning; it could also 'explore aesthetic manifestations as sites that can

<sup>23</sup> Dhareshwar, 'Toward a narrative epistemology,' pp. 7, 9-10.

<sup>24</sup> Glissant, *CD*, pp. 121, 128, 132, 160-165; Britton, *Glissant*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>25</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 34; Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (Brantford, Ontario: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> Heidi Bojsen, 'Taking Glissant's philosophy into social sciences? A discussion of the place of aesthetics in critical development discourse', *Callaloo*, 36 (2013), pp. 995-1013, at p.995.

<sup>27</sup> Bojsen, 'Taking Glissant's philosophy', pp. 1003, 1006.

<sup>28</sup> Glissant, *Philosophie de la Relation*, pp. 61-62; Bojsen, 'Taking Glissant's philosophy', pp. 1001, 1004.

produce new theoretical tools for development practice'.<sup>29</sup>

How are stories of *détour* and *retour* to be told? In Glissant's introduction to *Poetics of Relation*, he refers to the 'founding works', epics such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, which were books about exile and errantry. He comments:

I began wondering if we did not still need such founding works today, ones that would use a similar dialectics of rerouting [*détournement*], asserting for example, political strength but, simultaneously, the rhizome of a multiple relationship with the Other and basing every community's reasons for existence on a modern form of the sacred, which would be, all in all, a Poetics of Relation.<sup>30</sup>

His translator, Betsy Wing, notes: 'the word I have translated here as "rerouting" is *détournement*.' Wing suggested (as I noted in the introduction) that Glissant uses the words *détournement*, *détourner*, *détour* and *retour* in 'a very active sense, implying a real change of direction'.<sup>31</sup> While a *détour* is a turning away, a dialectics of *détournement* is a narrative of both turning away and reconnecting, of making a 'poetics of Relation'. In my thesis, I take Glissant's strategy of *détournement* as a literal rerouting through the making of a journey away from (*détour*) and back to (*retour*) the homeplace of Brixton. Therefore, I suggest that *détournement* is a spatialization of *détour*.

Glissant does not directly acknowledge the French Situationist International movement in his work, but his use of the term *détournement* can be compared to theirs. Guy Debord and Gil Wolman, members of the Situationist International, set out their view of *détournement* as a strategy which could be used to resist what they termed the 'society of the spectacle'.<sup>32</sup> Raoul Vaneigem wrote that *détournement* was a tactic that could take into account the strength of the enemy and its ability to recuperate, in order both to warn against and to act against 'power and its spectacle'.<sup>33</sup> Debord and Wolman argued that *détournement* removes the commodity basis of artworks by subverting existing works through the addition of details to those works or cutting up and mixing works to create something other, which can then be used as a political tool to

<sup>29</sup> Bojsen, 'Taking Glissant's philosophy', pp. 1004, 1008, 1011.

<sup>30</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 16.

<sup>31</sup> Betsy Wing, 'Notes', in Glissant, *PR*, p. 212.

<sup>32</sup> Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1967), trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith as *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1994).

<sup>33</sup> Raoul Vaneigem, 'Banalités de base (II)', *Internationale Situationniste*, 8 (1963), pp. 34-37, section 19, trans. as 'Basic Banalities II' by Ken Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2007), pp. 121-29.

subvert the society of the spectacle.<sup>34</sup> Jane Rendell notes that there is both criticality and self-criticality in the Situationist International theory of *détournement*.<sup>35</sup> She argues that there is a possible use of *détournement* in altering and subverting our understanding of contemporary urban place and architecture, through a process she calls 'site-writing', which spatializes the position of the critic.<sup>36</sup> The relationship between *détournement's* use in the Situationist proposals for artworks, Rendell's writing about artworks, and Glissant's dialectics of rerouting through language emphasizes its possibility as a strategy and term that is both linguistic and spatial. Debord and Wolman mention the idea of *ultradétournement*, that is, the tendencies for *détournement* to operate in everyday social life.<sup>37</sup> According to them, this applies where gestures and words can be given other meanings, which seems to map onto Glissant's concept of *détour*.

In a 2009 interview between Vaneigem and curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, Vaneigem said: 'I welcome the appeal by Chamoiseau, Glissant, and their friends for the creation of an existence in which the poetry of a life rediscovered will put an end to the deadly stranglehold of the commodity.'<sup>38</sup> The reason I highlight this here is the possibility of reviving *détournement*, building on Rendell's work in *Site-Writing*, and using *détour* and *retour* as strategies of spatialized resistance. If Glissant's *détournement* offers a form of resistance through language, and the Situationists through artworks, is there a potential for a spatial poetics of resistance to forms of gentrification, which uses Glissant's poetics of Relation as a basis? In the *détours* and *retours* I make, I understand the *détour* as connected to Brixton's migrant and diasporic communities and their histories. These *détours* are performed as journeys that retrace migration stories of people and of salt products found in Brixton. The *retours* then connect back to Brixton as a diasporic space, one which represents home as a point of entanglement.

<sup>34</sup> Guy Debord and Gil J. Wolman, 'A user's guide to *détournement*' [1956], in Ken Knabb (ed. and trans.), *Situationist International Anthology*, 3rd edition (Berkeley, CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1995), pp. 14-21; Guy Debord and Gil J. Wolman, 'Détournement as negation and prelude' [1959], in Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>35</sup> Jane Rendell, *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), p. 290, n. 95.

<sup>36</sup> Rendell, *Site-Writing*, p. 225.

<sup>37</sup> Debord and Wolman, 'User's guide'.

<sup>38</sup> Hans Ulrich Obrist, 'In conversation with Raoul Vaneigem', *e-flux*, 6 (May 2009): <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/06/61400/in-conversation-with-raoul-vaneigem/>> [accessed 1 December 2017].

## Migrations and diasporas

Glissant's term *errance* has been translated as both 'wandering' and 'errantry'. Wing uses the word 'errantry' to emphasize that, while *errance* is not the same as nomadism, it is not an 'idle roaming'.<sup>39</sup> Glissant refers to *errance* as 'the tale of Relation', and writes that it is one of ongoing relation-identity; it is not an act of rejection or abandonment of one's origin.<sup>40</sup> He makes a contrast between exile and *errance*: 'Whereas exile may erode one's sense of identity, the thought of errantry [*errance*] – the thought of that which relates – usually reinforces this sense of identity.'<sup>41</sup>

According to Murdoch, *errance* posits a critical, even a strategic form of wandering.<sup>42</sup> For example, Glissant links *errance* to *détour*, and to *marronage* (the act of fugitive slaves who escaped slavery, and their ongoing forms of cultural opposition to slavery).<sup>43</sup> *Errance* could be seen to link to migration and diaspora in the ongoing relations of movement inherent in these terms. Definitions of 'migration' include the movement of people; journeys (of material or immaterial objects, ideas, etc.); and the action of passing from one place to another.<sup>44</sup> In this thesis, the use of the term 'migration' is multiple. I use it to describe the act of migration of people from one place to another; the act of a journey (a temporary movement); and the changing nature of places, objects, and cultures. I suggest that, as we migrate, we write ourselves into and out of places; we form narratives based on the places we come from and have left behind, and on the new ones we encounter.

The role of the migrant in remembering the place they have left behind differs according to the context of their migration. As Glissant theorized in *Caribbean Discourse*, the memory of the migrant is dependent in part on the circumstance of departure: forced migration engenders a leaving behind of fixed being, while sustained diaspora through migration allows the ongoing transmission of cultures.<sup>45</sup> Diaspora, literally meaning 'the scattering of seeds', is derived from the Greek verb *speiro* (to sow) and the preposition *dia* (over).<sup>46</sup> The idea of the diaspora can suggest either a clinging to memories or a liberation from the past, either a feeling of homelessness or a sense of being rooted elsewhere in a fictional homeland.

<sup>39</sup> Wing, 'Notes', p. 211; Wing, 'Translator's Introduction', in Glissant, *PR*, p. xvi.

<sup>40</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 18. See also Max Hantel, 'Errant notes on a Caribbean rhizome', *Rhizomes*, 24 (2012): <<http://www.rhizomes.net/issue24/hantel.html>> [accessed 1 December 2017].

<sup>41</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 20.

<sup>42</sup> Murdoch, 'Glissant's *opacité*', p. 25.

<sup>43</sup> Glissant, *PR*, pp. 15, 68; see also the glossary in the same work, p. xxii.

<sup>44</sup> 'migration, n.' *OED Online*: <<http://www.oed.com>> [accessed 30 September 2014].

<sup>45</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 15.

<sup>46</sup> Jen Ang, 'Diaspora', in Lawrence Grossberg, Meaghan Morris and Tony Bennett (eds), *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), pp. 82-84, at p.83.

The most well-known, long-standing, and distinct use of the term occurs with reference to the history of the forced dispersion of the Jewish people. Diasporic experience is often described negatively in terms of exile, isolation, and loss, of displacement from the ancestral homeland as a traumatic experience, where some catastrophic event – often but not always of a political nature – is collectively remembered as the starting point of the original dispersion.<sup>47</sup> Concomitantly, a longing for a return to the homeland is classically assumed to be integral to diasporic consciousness.<sup>48</sup> This approach to diaspora tends to emphasize three elements: the significance of a connection to the point of origin; the renewal of a distinct ethnic, racial, or religious identity through time; and, as a corollary of these two points, the sense that all peoples have (and should have) a territorially specific homeland, and that living away from it is an unnatural and undesirable condition. These are all problematic conceptions. Many migrations involve a loss of the country or culture of origin and the adoption of new identities. And, at the very least, migration results in the adoption of new languages and cultural hybridities, or to use Glissant's terms, *métissage* and creolization.<sup>49</sup> For diasporas to survive as ethnically specific identities, they often require specific political, social and religious movements or responses.

Glissant theorized that the difference between the Jewish Diaspora and the African diaspora was that the Jewish Diaspora maintained their traditional texts and practices, a deliberate passing on in the face of persecution, while:

The latter [the African diaspora] has not brought with it, not collectively continued, the methods of existence and survival, both material and spiritual, which it practiced before being uprooted. These methods only leave dim traces or survive in the form of spontaneous impulses.<sup>50</sup>

Clifford and Gilroy also write about the connections between the black African diaspora and the Jewish Diaspora. For Clifford, the term 'diaspora' does not constitute an 'ideal type', and while he recognizes features of the Jewish Diaspora as historically important, he argues that the term can also shift and be appropriated, for instance in the way black diaspora culture is used by black British people.<sup>51</sup> Gilroy also notes that Jewish Diaspora concepts may have provided philosophical models for Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism, and he refers to the 'work of Jewish thinkers' as a resource to map ambivalent experiences of blacks inside and outside modernity.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Ien Ang, 'Diaspora'.

<sup>48</sup> William Safran, 'Diasporas in modern societies: Myths of homeland and return', *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 1 (1991), pp. 83-99.

<sup>49</sup> Glissant, *DA*, p. 251, in Britton, *Glissant*, p. 16.

<sup>50</sup> Glissant, *CD*, p. 15.

<sup>51</sup> James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 248-9.

<sup>52</sup> Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, pp. 205-6.

In this thesis, the examples of migrant narratives all involve people who left their place of origin but maintain some form of connection or diasporic link. This might be more through a *détour* or *errance* than through an actual act of return. I am interested in the idea of diaspora as applied to a minority group or individual who is somewhat marginalized by the 'host' country they live in, and is part of a larger imagined community that lies beyond the boundaries of the nation state (such as is the case with the black British community).<sup>53</sup> In this sense, their scattering or dislocation is located in the present rather than the past. One pertinent example of this is Gilroy's theorization of a 'Black Atlantic', developed later on in this Section in the sub-section on Brixton. Gilroy suggests that a myth of origin and return to 'home', and a connection of suffering, link Jewish and black culture through the idea of diaspora.<sup>54</sup> Tracing the genealogy of the diaspora in black cultural history, he notes the central place of metaphors of journey and exile in both Jewish and black cultures.<sup>55</sup> Gilroy suggests that, rather than a return to roots, the conditions of diaspora enable a constant renewal and transformation of identity; therefore, he substitutes 'routes' for 'roots', while maintaining a dialogue between the two.<sup>56</sup> This parallels Glissant's shift of root-identity to relation-identity, and it suggests that Glissant's distinction between Jewish and African diasporas is more nuanced than he proposed.<sup>57</sup>

Rachel Garfield's study of Jewish artists' subjectivities reiterates this nostalgia for return. She comments that the work of Jonathon Boyarin 'suggests that nostalgia is a denial of the state of sustained rediasporisation, which is the nature of Jewish history'. Instead, she proposes that 'diasporic subjectivity offers the contemporary world a way of understanding community without statehood or attachment to territory ... the emphasis is not on where you are from, but where you are going.'<sup>58</sup> Both Gilroy's and Garfield's ideas connect back to Glissant's notion of Relation as productive of hybrid identities and not as a condition of return to a mythical homeland.<sup>59</sup> This view of diaspora offers, therefore, a disentanglement from narratives of orthodoxy, as well as an acknowledgement of the complex and changing nature of heritage. It recognizes that, while some may hold on to practices during migrations, others may move away from these and build new hybrid identities.

<sup>53</sup> Ien Ang, 'Diaspora', p. 83.

<sup>54</sup> Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, p. 15.

<sup>55</sup> Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, p. 211.

<sup>56</sup> Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, p. 19.

<sup>57</sup> Glissant, *PR*, pp. 143-44.

<sup>58</sup> Rachel Garfield, 'Towards a re-articulation of cultural identity: Problematising the Jewish subject in art', *Third Text* 78, 20 (2006), pp. 99-108, at pp. 101, 103.

<sup>59</sup> See also Sam Coombes, 'Black postcolonial communities in a globalised world as articulated in the work of Paul Gilroy and Edouard Glissant: A comparative analysis', *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 36 (2014), pp. 11-18.

This notion of hybridity also relates to Avtaha Brah's idea that 'the *concept* of diaspora places the discourse of 'home' and 'dispersion' in creative tension, *inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins*'.<sup>60</sup> Brah suggests the specific term 'diaspora space', where concepts of diaspora, border and the politics of location are made immanent, and are played out in between and in relation to political, cultural, and social processes.<sup>61</sup> According to Brah, diaspora space is the point at which boundaries, such as those between belonging and otherness, or between us and them, are contested.<sup>62</sup> Brah's diaspora space could be seen as similar to Glissant's ideas of Relation and his point of entanglement. She also writes that the concept of diaspora space references the global condition of what Clifford terms 'culture as a site of travel', one which engages both those doing the travelling and those staying put:

Diaspora space as a conceptual category is 'inhabited' not only by those who have migrated and their descendants but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words, the concept of diaspora space (as opposed to that of diaspora) includes the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put'.<sup>63</sup>

Brah's project is (in part) a mapping of the politics of intersectionality, which highlights the narratives that are the process by which ethnicities are built and boundaries are formed.<sup>64</sup> Feminist writer Kimberlé Crenshaw explains intersectionality as the various ways that race and gender intersect in shaping experiences – for example, the structural and political aspects of violence against women of colour, or employment experience. Crenshaw notes that intersectionality is not a totalizing theory of identity, but rather one that highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed.<sup>65</sup> Thus, narratives of identity can form an important role in understanding how aspects of identity intersect and construct spaces of experience.

<sup>60</sup> Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, p. 189. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>61</sup> Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, pp. 16, 205.

<sup>62</sup> Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, p. 205.

<sup>63</sup> James Clifford, 'Travelling cultures', in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (eds), *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 96-116, cited in Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, pp. 16, 205.

<sup>64</sup> Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, pp. 234, 237. See also Susan Stanford Friedman, *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>65</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color', in Martha Albertson Fineman and Rixanne Mykitiuk (eds), *The Public Nature of Private Violence* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 93-118, at pp. 93-94; Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, (1989), pp. 139-167.

## Travel, journey and pilgrimage

Meanings of travel, journey and pilgrimage connect to concepts of *errance*, identity and Relation. Clifford describes how *travel* ‘emerged as an increasingly complex range of experiences: practices of crossing and interaction that troubled the localism of many common assumptions about culture.’ According to Clifford, ‘travel’ is a term for movement with engagement, or interaction – a movement that entails a questioning.<sup>66</sup> To ‘travel’ is ‘to make a journey’, and ‘journey’ describes both ‘an act of travelling’ and the ‘process of personal change and development’.<sup>67</sup> These definitions suggest that travelling and journeying could refer to the physical experience of change or difference through travelling across external terrains, but could also refer to internal change in the traveller, and to a dialogue between internal and external changes, both those within the individual and those of the individual in relation to encountering an Other, to use Rendell’s concept.<sup>68</sup>

Clifford discusses the relationship between travel and understanding where to place theory and to find a ‘theoretical’ place.<sup>69</sup> In his essay ‘Traveling Theory’, Edward Said asks questions about the sites of production, reception, transmission and resistance to specific theories, offering a way of thinking about the location and dislocation of theory.<sup>70</sup> However, Clifford argues for a modification of Said’s fairly linear four stages of travel into a postcolonial nonlinear zone that Clifford calls ‘betweenness’: ‘a hybridity composed of distinct, historically-connected postcolonial spaces.’<sup>71</sup> This has parallels with Glissant’s Relation and his idea of ‘totality’.<sup>72</sup> My performative practice of journeys of *détour* and *retour* can be seen as engaging in ‘betweenness’ and Relation.<sup>73</sup> Through the journeys, practices and theoretical ‘places’ are developed in relation to one another, and in the Project chapters I draw on the theory of travel and tourism to build arguments around the relationship between internal and external changes, for example in writing by Ning Wang and Dean MacCannell on authenticity and travel.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Clifford, *Routes*, p. 3.

<sup>67</sup> ‘travel, n.’ and ‘journey, n.’, *OED Online*: <<http://www.oed.com>> [accessed 1 September 2017].

<sup>68</sup> Rendell, *Site-Writing*, pp. 69-73.

<sup>69</sup> James Clifford, ‘Notes on travel and theory’, *Inscriptions*, 5 (1989), available at: <<https://culturalstudies.ucsc.edu/inscriptions/volume-5/james-clifford/>> [accessed 1 September 2017].

<sup>70</sup> Edward Said, ‘Travelling theory’, p. 227.

<sup>71</sup> Clifford, ‘Notes on travel and theory’.

<sup>72</sup> Glissant, *PR*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>73</sup> See also Rendell’s term ‘a place between’, in Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

<sup>74</sup> Ning Wang, ‘Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience’, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26 (1999), pp. 349-370; Dean MacCannell, ‘Staged authenticity: arrangements of social space in tourist settings’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 79 (1973) pp. 589-603.



I also use the idea of 'pilgrimage' to discuss the *détours* because of the particular quality of my journeys and the ways in which they are generated through processes of seeking. Clifford uses the metaphor of pilgrimage to understand how practices of displacement can be constitutive of cultural meaning, and both Clifford and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman propose the term 'pilgrim' as a metaphor for a search for identity.<sup>75</sup> Bauman describes the pilgrim's experience as that of being temporarily dislocated, and without identity, and therefore as one allowing a space of self-realization.<sup>76</sup>

Delving back into Western anthropological understandings of pilgrimage, Victor and Edith Turner have proposed pilgrimage as a liminal state, where pilgrims elude the 'normal network of classifications' and are located outside patterns of usual societal behaviour.<sup>77</sup> The Turners thought that, through pilgrimage, journeying could bring about social and/or psychological transformation, even if only on a temporary basis.<sup>78</sup> Anthropologists Simon Coleman and John Eade attempt to reframe pilgrimage, arguing that locating pilgrimage solely within an 'extraordinary' dimension of experience reduces its possibilities; instead, they propose that everyday processes are linked to the religious practices highlighted by the Turners.<sup>79</sup> The crossing of everyday and religious practices can also be found in heritage and roots tourism studies, which I expand on in Project 1, and connections between personal journeys in search of meaning have overlapped with studies of pilgrimage, for instance in the work of anthropologist Paul Basu, and geographers Avril Maddrell and Veronica della Dora.<sup>80</sup> I argue that a secular pilgrimage in search of identity might, therefore, take on aspects and practices of the sacred, such as ritual.

That these journeys in search of identity are intimately connected with finding a way of relating to the wider world, or what Glissant would term relation-identity, suggests that they are forms of *errance*. *Errance* has overtones of pilgrimage, as it is not an idle roaming, but neither is it a straightforward trajectory; rather, it is a journey which includes a 'sacred' motivation, one which

<sup>75</sup> Simon Coleman and John Eade, *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 5; Zygmunt Bauman, 'From pilgrim to tourist – or a short history of identity', in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds), *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996), pp. 18-37.

<sup>76</sup> Bauman, 'From pilgrim to tourist', p. 26.

<sup>77</sup> Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 250; Ellen Badone and Sharon Roseman, *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2004), p. 3; Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969).

<sup>78</sup> Coleman and Eade, *Reframing Pilgrimage*, p. 2.

<sup>79</sup> Coleman and Eade, *Reframing Pilgrimage*, p. 5.

<sup>80</sup> Paul Basu, 'Cairns in the landscape: Migrant stones and migrant stories in Scotland and its diaspora', in Arnar Arnason et al. (eds), *Landscape Beyond Land* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2009), pp. 116-38, at p. 117; Veronica della Dora and Avril Maddrell, 'Crossing surfaces in search of the holy: Landscape and liminality in contemporary Christian pilgrimage', *Environment and Planning A*, 45 (2013), pp. 1105-26, at p. 1105.

for Glissant is connected to the imaginary.<sup>81</sup> As Glissant writes, ‘in reality errant thinking is the postulation of an unyielding and unfading sacred’.<sup>82</sup> The journeys return through the *retour* to the point of entanglement, the homeplace, bringing back new understandings of identity and Relation, and new imaginaries of place and practice.

<sup>81</sup> Wing, ‘Translators Introduction’, in Glissant, *PR*, p. xvi; Édouard Glissant, Manthia Diawara and Christopher Winks, ‘Édouard Glissant in Conversation with Manthia Diawara’, *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, 28 (2011), pp. 4-19, at p. 12.

<sup>82</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 21.

## (Home) place and entanglement

In this thesis, I use the *détour* and *retour* to develop practices with salt, to understand how the poetics of re-generation might be approached through using salt as an index for urban change. In the introduction, I discussed how Glissant's understanding of place was in part formed through the work of Gaston Bachelard's poetic approach to place and space, connecting imagination and memory to our understanding of places.<sup>83</sup> Place for Glissant is primary – it is a starting point and a source – but, relating to Bachelard's idea that there is no causality in the space of the imagination or limits to poetic space, Glissant saw place as not linear in time, but moving between past, present and future.<sup>84</sup> For Glissant, landscape holds traces of memory, and 'history is spread out beneath this surface'.<sup>85</sup>

In the introduction I also discussed the relationship between place and site in this thesis, and in Part 1 Section 3, I develop ideas around practices of site- and place-specificity, but here I expand on understandings of place, and the related terms 'entanglement' and 'homeplace', to argue for particular understandings of place in the thesis.

Debates over place and space have tended to oppose the two terms, while recognizing that they exist in relation to each other.<sup>86</sup> Yi Fu Tuan suggests that 'what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value', and if we think of space 'as that which allows movement, then place is pause';<sup>87</sup> that is, place as pause, and as filled with value; space as mobile, and empty. Another theorist on space and place, Michel de Certeau, has also argued that space is dynamic and constituted through practice, and that space is 'situated as an act of a present'; that is, 'space is a practised place'.<sup>88</sup> De Certeau used linguistic practices to define space and place, with place as the set of rules (or language) and space as the practice of speech (or *parole*), in reference to Saussure.<sup>89</sup> Rendell points out that the problematic in de Certeau's arguments is his view of place as 'fixed and passive'.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>83</sup> See: Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*; Bachelard, *Water and Dreams*.

<sup>84</sup> Lauro, 'Excursions and Détours', p. 16; Christina Kullberg, *The Poetics of Ethnography in Martinican Narratives: Exploring the Self and the Environment* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013); Dash, 'Introduction', in Glissant, *CD*, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

<sup>85</sup> Glissant, *CD*, pp.10-11.

<sup>86</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), p. 6.

<sup>87</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), p. 6.

<sup>88</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 117-18.

<sup>89</sup> de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 117-18, cited in Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>90</sup> Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 18.

Doreen Massey challenges divisions between place and space, such as *place* as grounded and real and *space* as abstract and unreal.<sup>91</sup> Instead, Massey points out the fundamental mobility of things and argues for an understanding of the specificity of space, and for space as the dimension of multiplicity.<sup>92</sup> She sees *place* as the moment of intersection between people, in space and with space, and both space and place as relational, grounded and real, and she argues for a relational ethics of space and place.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, place is defined largely by relationships. This approach to place operates, as Rendell comments, as an ‘unfixing’ that moves away from the dangers of essentializing specific places, while still recognizing how these specifics operate as part of larger networks, systems and processes.<sup>94</sup> The relation between place-specificity and wider relational networks of engagement links to Glissant’s idea of place as unique but in relation to a wider world, and to Clifford’s thinking on the entanglement of the particular with networks of power and communication.<sup>95</sup>

Cultural geographer Tim Cresswell has highlighted the work of de Certeau, as well as of Nigel Thrift and Allen Pred, to emphasize place as in process rather than fixed.<sup>96</sup> Pred sees mobilities as the key to understanding place and he proposes a view of place as a ‘historically contingent process’.<sup>97</sup> Place is, therefore, understood in his work as produced through action, and action is produced in place through a constant reiterative process.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, anthropologist Tim Ingold sees place as produced by movement, and proposes that we view our environment as a zone of entanglement, created by the life paths and movements of people.<sup>99</sup> So, place is formed through mobilities of practice, or a momentary intersection between people and space, highlighting what Glissant calls Relation as inherent to place.<sup>100</sup> Glissant’s work develops a poetics of place that also acknowledges the entanglements of place, and he refers to what he calls ‘commonplaces’ [*lieux communs*] as revealing of the ‘entanglement of world-wide relation’.<sup>101</sup>

So, through understanding entanglement as a point of connection which must be engaged with to understand difference, I return to Brah’s ‘diaspora space’ which ‘foregrounds the entanglement

<sup>91</sup> Massey, *For Space*, pp. 6, 68, 187.

<sup>92</sup> Massey, *For Space*, p. 91.

<sup>93</sup> Massey, *For Space*, pp. 130, 188, 193.

<sup>94</sup> Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 20.

<sup>95</sup> ‘Interview with James Clifford’, in Alex Coles, *Site-Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn* (London: Black Dog, 1999), pp. 52-71, at p. 59.

<sup>96</sup> Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (New York: Wiley, 2013), p. 39.

<sup>97</sup> Allan Pred, ‘Place as historically contingent process: Structuration and the time-geography of becoming places’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 74 (1984), pp. 279-97, at p. 280.

<sup>98</sup> Pred, ‘Place’, p. 282.

<sup>99</sup> Tim Ingold, ‘Bindings against boundaries: Entanglements of life in an open world’, *Environment and Planning A*, 40 (2008), pp. 1796-1810, at p. 1807.

<sup>100</sup> Glissant, *PR*, pp. 28, 37, 153.

<sup>101</sup> Glissant, *PR*, pp. 31, 45.

of genealogies of dispersion with those of staying put'.<sup>102</sup> In the context of the homeplace in the thesis, entanglement highlights the 'simultaneity of diasporisation and rootedness' encapsulated in a place. Here, the 'diasporian is as much a native as the native now becomes a diasporian'.<sup>103</sup> In other words, home and away are in constant interrelation. Brah also argues for a diasporic sense of home constructed not necessarily for an ideology of return, but she makes a distinction between 'feeling at home' and declaring a place as home.<sup>104</sup> Here, identities are continually in relation, not seeking rootedness.<sup>105</sup>

The feminist writer bell hooks' definition of 'homeplace' in African American history highlights its subversive value as a site of resistance: 'Throughout our history, African-Americans have recognized the subversive value of homeplace, of having access to private space where we do not directly encounter white racist aggression.'<sup>106</sup> hooks' definition of homeplace as site of resistance is a useful concept for thinking about Brixton as homeplace. It offers a space of difference, which is also a haven and a place where diasporians can 'feel' at home. However, the homeplace of Brixton is a contested one, as multiple readings exist and are currently in disagreement. Homeplace is where diaspora and staying put are in constant interrelation. But drawing on hooks' work, we can also understand homeplace as 'a space where we return for renewal and self-discovery'.<sup>107</sup> The link between homeplace and re-generation is one of symbiotic need: a homeplace is needed for the safe renewal of an individual, community and place, but through re-generation the homeplace is also renewed and reinvested with strength – it is rebuilt.

In the process of *détour* and *retour* – between the homeplace and other, entangled, places – there is a connection to the idea of return as the return of the unresolved ghost, or of the repressed emotion. The presence of 'trace' as a connection to the past is an important concept which Glissant develops further in the term *pensée de la trace* (trace-thought), a way of thinking the past in the present.<sup>108</sup> Describing how slaves were cut off from all cultural forms of their past, Glissant proposes the trace-thought to understand how their descendants recomposed language, music and culture based on the traces of their past.<sup>109</sup> Dash writes of the meaning of 'trace' in Glissant's novels as both a literal path and one that represented a connection to the past, which encapsulates the connection to place and the movement inherent in trace and trace-thought.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, p. 16.

<sup>103</sup> Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, p. 283.

<sup>104</sup> Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, pp. 190, 194.

<sup>105</sup> Glissant, *PR*, pp. 133-4, 141.

<sup>106</sup> hooks, 'Homeplace', p. 42.

<sup>107</sup> hooks, 'Homeplace', p. 49.

<sup>108</sup> Glissant, *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers*, pp. 17-18 (my translation).

<sup>109</sup> Glissant, *Introduction à une Poétique du Divers*, p. 17.

<sup>110</sup> Dash, 'Introduction', in Glissant, *CD*, p. xxxii.

Glissant's trace may contain and reveal hidden pasts, some of them traumatic.<sup>111</sup> I suggest that there is a link between the spatialized trace and trace as holding a trauma, which can produce a 'spectral trace', to use Karen Till's term.<sup>112</sup> I also use Kevin Hetherington's idea of *praesentia* as 'an intimate and touching encounter with the presence of an absence that is Other to direct and previously known representations', to suggest that, through a physical encounter with place, absences may be re-traced.<sup>113</sup>

In her work on the relationship between place and memory, Karen Till identifies the ability of place to hold memory, or 'spectral traces', of the past, and the possibility of creative practices to ethically work with place and memory.<sup>114</sup> Till has also used the term 'spectral traces' to describe sites that become contested due to unresolved hauntings. In Till's work on the spectral traces of slave graves in Cape Town, she asks how we might 'represent spectral traces – phantoms, histories, remnants, submerged stories and ways of knowing – in a way that is recognizable to all those who inhabit the postcolonial city, while also respecting them as silences and gaps.'<sup>115</sup> Till suggests the need for an ethical relationship with spectral traces which 'recognizes how these past presences occupy the realities of our lived worlds'.<sup>116</sup> In her work on memory in Berlin, she develops the idea of the trace as material evidence: 'how place is constructed as trace ... embodies those generational and personal relationships to the past, as well as the different desires that people in the present have to make these places speak.'<sup>117</sup>

In this thesis, I am interested in structures of intergenerational memory that might contribute to ideas around re-generation. In the Project chapters, I develop ways that traces and memory work can contribute to re-generation processes in specific places, in the process also drawing on the work of Marianne Hirsch, whose term 'postmemory' describes second-generation Holocaust survivor relationships to experiences they did not have but received from first-generation survivors.<sup>118</sup> Understanding how trace and spectral trace transmit and reveal pasts can contribute

<sup>111</sup> Peter Poiana, 'The passion for origins in the epic poems of Edouard Glissant', *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 16 (2013), pp. 151-65, at p. 151; See also Headley, 'Glissant's existential ontology of difference', p. 194.

<sup>112</sup> Karen E. Till and Julian Jonker, 'Mapping and excavating spectral traces in post-apartheid Cape Town', *Memory Studies*, 2 (2009), pp. 303-35.

<sup>113</sup> Kevin Hetherington, 'Spatial textures: Place, touch, and praesentia', *Environment and Planning A*, 35 (2003), pp. 1933-44, at p.1937.

<sup>114</sup> Till and Jonker, 'Mapping and excavating spectral traces'; Karen E. Till, *Mapping Spectral Traces* (Blacksburg, VA: Virginia Tech College of Architecture and Urban Affairs, 2010); Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Paul C. Adams, Steven D. Hoelscher and Karen E. Till, *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

<sup>115</sup> Till and Jonker, 'Mapping and excavating spectral traces', p. 306.

<sup>116</sup> Till, *Mapping Spectral Traces*, p. 9.

<sup>117</sup> Till, *The New Berlin*, p. 208.

<sup>118</sup> Marianne Hirsch, 'The generation of postmemory', *Poetics Today*, 29 (2008), pp. 103-28, at p. 103.

to the poetics of re-generation I develop in this thesis, and connect to my understanding of the *détour* and *retour*, away from and back to the homeplace.

## Regeneration

The ideas of regeneration as a natural process of change, and of the city as a socio-biological organism, have long roots. Over the past century, the term 'regeneration' has emerged in different disciplines, from socio-economic urban studies to cultural studies. In this sub-section, I begin with a discussion of regeneration as a metaphor, then as a term in social science and policy-focused writing, and finally as a trans-disciplinary topic that is currently the focus of debates across a range of disciplinary settings.

Architectural historian Ben Campkin traces the roots of the word 'regeneration' to ideas of spiritual rebirth and biological growth, and he notes that it is not until the sixteenth century that its use is connected to place, and not until the mid-nineteenth century that 'urban regeneration' first appears as a term.<sup>119</sup> Sociologist Robert Furbey notes that in Latin 'regeneration' means 'rebirth' and in Greek it refers to 'becoming new again' or 'reconstitution'.<sup>120</sup> This extends to Judeo-Christian traditions and Hindu and other beliefs around rebirth, personal transformation, reawakening and remaking which have carried through to modern ideas of self-development. But while regeneration is 'a signifier of profound change in many religious traditions and political ideologies, both radical and conservative', Furbey comments that, in practice, regeneration is dominated by more conservative meanings, giving contemporary urban regeneration a limited perspective.<sup>121</sup>

Furbey also identifies regeneration's adoption by sociological organicism, which sees society as a natural, organic entity which can be improved through 'socio-medical intervention'.<sup>122</sup> In the 1920s, W.H.R. Rivers, an anthropologist and psychiatrist, explored the idea of a 'social medicine' that could be applied to social problems; Rivers 'pushed the organic analogy towards an explicit interventionism'.<sup>123</sup> These approaches can be seen in contemporary approaches to regeneration and its sister term 'gentrification'. According to Furbey, the danger of the regeneration metaphor is that it can impose consensus, mediate or co-opt voices, and use rhetorical terms like 'participation' to appeal to local stakeholders, which in practice do not match what are usually centralized and top-down processes.<sup>124</sup> Regeneration, Furbey argues, is then offered only on terms which refer to the excluded (those who are deprived, or live in deprived areas), not taking into account the role of the included who do the excluding (that is, those who decide who is

<sup>119</sup> Ben Campkin, *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), p. 4.

<sup>120</sup> Robert Furbey, 'Urban "regeneration": Reflections on a metaphor', *Critical Social Policy*, 19 (1999), pp. 419-45, at p. 422.

<sup>121</sup> Furbey, 'Urban "regeneration"', p. 419.

<sup>122</sup> Furbey, 'Urban "regeneration"', p. 425.

<sup>123</sup> Greta Jones, *Social Darwinism and English Thought: The Interaction Between Biological and Social Theory* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), p. 60, cited in Furbey, 'Urban "regeneration"', p. 426.

<sup>124</sup> Furbey, 'Urban "regeneration"', p. 432.



deprived, or who see themselves as outside that category).<sup>125</sup>

In contemporary social science regeneration literature, there is still a debate between those who see the city as a natural process and those who see it as an expression of class struggle, inclusion and exclusion. For example, scientist Philip Ball has argued that gentrification is a healthy process of 'natural evolution' in cities that follows from idea of the city as an organism.<sup>126</sup> Geographer Tom Slater responded by commenting that cities are not natural organisms, but expressions and arenas of political struggles, and that Ball's article distorts the role of capital, class privilege and profit in shaping the city.<sup>127</sup>

However, urban theorist John Lovering suggests a move away from the reductionist approaches taken by both neoliberal models and neo-Marxist analyses of urban regeneration, instead calling for a move towards looking at the actual substance of regeneration. What definitions fail to recognize, Lovering argues, is that the 'floating signifier' of regeneration does not float very far, that in fact most urban regeneration has a standardized and familiar repertoire, and that the bulk of the literature on urban regeneration has a descriptive or 'cookbook' approach.<sup>128</sup>

For instance, recent definitions of urban regeneration by planners and urbanists, such as Peter Roberts and Ivan Turok, discuss aspects that include solving urban problems, bringing about improvements, and involving communities in the process.<sup>129</sup> Michael Leary and John McCarthy, who agree with Lovering that regeneration is a 'floating signifier', also offer a definition which they term a type of 'aspirational regeneration', but which does not differ hugely from the analysis of Roberts or Turok.<sup>130</sup> The focus remains on the people who suffer from deprivation; it does not take into account the role of the included who exclude.

<sup>125</sup> Furbey, 'Urban "regeneration"', p. 437.

<sup>126</sup> Philip Ball, 'Gentrification is a natural evolution', *The Guardian*, 19 November 2014, <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/nov/19/gentrification-evolution-cities-brixton-battersea>> [accessed 28 November 2014]

<sup>127</sup> Tom Slater, 'There is nothing natural about gentrification', New Left Project, 24 November 2014, <[http://www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article\\_comments/there\\_is\\_nothing\\_natural\\_about\\_gentrification](http://www.newleftproject.org/index.php/site/article_comments/there_is_nothing_natural_about_gentrification)> [accessed 28 November 2014].

<sup>128</sup> John Lovering, 'The relationship between urban regeneration and neoliberalism: Two presumptuous theories and a research agenda', *International Planning Studies*, 12 (2007), pp. 343-66, at pp. 344-5.

<sup>129</sup> Peter Roberts, 'The evolution, definition and purpose of urban regeneration', in Peter Roberts and Hugh Sykes (eds), *Urban Regeneration: A Handbook* (London: Sage, 2000), pp. 9-36, at p. 17; Ivan Turok, 'Urban regeneration: What can be done and what should be avoided?', in *Istanbul International Urban Regeneration Symposium* (Istanbul: Kucukcekmece Municipality Publication, 2009), pp. 57-62, at p. 57, cited in Andrew Tallon, *Urban Regeneration in the UK*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 5.

<sup>130</sup> Michael E. Leary and John McCarthy, *Companion to Urban Regeneration* (Oxford: Routledge, 2013), p. 9.

Several academics, including Lovering, Campkin, Michael Edwards and Loretta Lees, have noted that urban regeneration is under-theorized.<sup>131</sup> Lees notes failures both on the part of the government and of the gentrification research community to communicate findings from three decades of research.<sup>132</sup> She explains that the usage of the term 'regeneration' instead of 'gentrification' has masked widespread 'state-led gentrification' as a public policy tool.<sup>133</sup> She highlights that research findings consistently show that market-led urban redevelopment produces spatial and social inequalities, and she suggests that further research is needed to reject current policy ideas of gentrification.<sup>134</sup>

Based on Lovering's and Furbey's analyses of regeneration, I suggest that moving outside social sciences into a trans-disciplinary approach that includes other fields, such as literature and poetics, might offer new readings and theorizations of the word.

According to Lovering, regeneration is a performative visual act, in part an act of 'performing governance', and in part an act of effecting change through discourse, which transforms relationships. So for Lovering, regeneration is about altering the way spaces are signed as part of what he calls 'an official strategy to modify the gaze', which he regards as an ethical matter, since 'the form of urban regeneration carries messages concerning which values are endorsed and which marginalised, both explicitly (through signage) and implicitly (through absence)'.<sup>135</sup>

This thesis explores, therefore, the idea that what regeneration signifies is vitally important. Glissant's poetics of Relation enters in to both what is present and what is absent in regeneration processes. Relation includes what is not seen, and what is past as well as what is present; Relation requires the recognition and respect of the difference of the Other, and it also requires the willingness for mutual transformation.<sup>136</sup> If the word 'regeneration' can shift meaning and contain within it a relationship between subject and object, between the speaker and the spoken to, it would therefore contain a relational poetics which recognizes both the agent of change and the object of change as acting upon each other.

In *Regeneration*, novelist Pat Barker's trilogy about the First World War, W.H.R. Rivers is a central character who treats psychologically distressed soldiers returning from the trenches

<sup>131</sup> Lovering, 'The relationship', p. 343; personal notes from Bartlett Research Exchange: Regeneration x10, 12 November 2012, hosted by UCL Urban Lab at University College London.

<sup>132</sup> Loretta Lees, 'Policy (re)turns: Gentrification research and urban policy', *Environment and Planning A*, 35 (2003), pp. 571-74.

<sup>133</sup> Lees, 'Gentrification and social mixing: Towards an inclusive urban renaissance?', *Urban Studies*, 45 (2008), pp. 2449-70, at p. 2452.

<sup>134</sup> Lees, 'Policy (re)turns'; Lees, 'Gentrification and social mixing', p. 2464.

<sup>135</sup> Lovering, 'The relationship', pp. 360, 362-63.

<sup>136</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 11.

with symptoms of trauma.<sup>137</sup> What emerges through Rivers' direct experience with patients, in particular the poet Siegfried Sassoon (and his memories of anthropological expeditions in the Torres Strait), is the idea that regeneration is not a one-way process. While treating the object (the patient), the subject (Rivers) is also changed. Taking this relational approach to regeneration (alongside Glissant's poetics of Relation), it seems crucial to recognize regeneration as a process of mutual change.

Pulling apart the meaning of 'social medicine' could show where both the pitfalls and potential value of past meanings of regeneration might be better understood. The poetics of regeneration as social medicine are its powers to transform in relation, offering a form of 'healing' place. But it is also a violent act of enforced 'medication', where displacement and demolition are carried out in the name of improving social and economic conditions.<sup>138</sup> The emergent re-generation is a reiteration of generation in relation, or a re-birth. My argument is that regeneration is a fundamentally relational process, which is reflected in the linguistic quality of the word. We could understand regeneration as intergenerational, in that changes are produced through generations and impact on generations. Recognizing place and community as having a genealogy, as well as understanding the genealogy of regeneration processes themselves, and how individuals shape, practise and re-make places, seems vital to better ways of conceptualizing and understanding the potentials, pitfalls and poetics of regeneration.

<sup>137</sup> Pat Barker, *The Regeneration Trilogy* (London: Penguin, 2014; originally published 1991).

<sup>138</sup> Southwark Notes, 'Regeneration is violence', *Mute Magazine* (online), 24 February 2015, <<http://www.metamute.org/community/your-posts/regeneration-violence>> [accessed 1 September 2017].

## Brixton

In the introduction I set out how my practice led me to an interest in narratives of *détour* and *retour*, and in particular how I discovered a personal family narrative of salt. Wanting to understand how this practice could investigate regeneration, I identified Brixton as a site in London that would link my previous research and practice about diaspora and family to a wider set of narratives. I chose to make Brixton a key location for the thesis because of its strong migration narratives and diasporic links, in particular with the Atlantic (one of the main streets in Brixton is Atlantic Road), which were coupled with regeneration plans that are currently underway in the area.

In *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy develops the image of slave ships crossing the Atlantic as a symbol for the Atlantic as a system of cultural exchange:

I want to develop the suggestion that cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective.<sup>139</sup>

Gilroy traces the idea of links between Jewish and black communities through the idea of diaspora, discussed earlier, where both groups have a myth of origin and potential return to a 'home'; in both cultures, metaphors of journey (and exile) hold a central place.<sup>140</sup> I had crossed the Atlantic myself, southward, by container ship from Europe to South Africa in 2009, and I felt that the potential of Gilroy's idea could be explored through the site of Brixton and its diasporic cross-Atlantic links, which connected slavery with other (later) migrations, some of which I could connect to my own family experiences. In particular, Brixton had a historic Jewish community, and one of my great-uncles had traded in the market. I also knew of South African links to the area through the campaigns with which my family were involved. The Atlantic sea also offers connections with salt through migration, trade and slavery.

Brixton has become emblematic of the black diaspora, and as well as the generation of 'Windrush' immigrants who settled in the area, key political figures are now commemorated there, such as the Trinidadian historian and journalist C.L.R. James, who lived on Railton Road in Brixton.<sup>141</sup> South African academic Grant Farred has written of Brixton as both a metaphorical and literal expression of the postcolonial settlement that James helped achieve, a space where the metropolis could be slowly disarticulated from, and simultaneously reconstituted

<sup>139</sup> Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, p. 15.

<sup>140</sup> Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, p. 208.

<sup>141</sup> An English Heritage blue plaque on the wall of 165 Railton Road, Brixton, SE24 0JX, reads: 'CLR James, 1901-1989. West Indian writer and political activist lived and died here.'

by, its colonial past:

Brixton ... can stand as the symbol of the negotiations that James conducted between the various British communities with whom he was involved. The South London neighbourhood can also serve as an icon for the unresolved (at best, temporarily resolved) tensions (racial, ideological, cultural), hybridity, and ambiguity, at the core of James's intellectual life. Much like James, therefore, Brixton, where he passed the final days of his life, had to negotiate its own implication in the process of London's postcolonial recomposition.<sup>142</sup>

Brixton had been a middle-class Victorian suburb until heavy bombing in World War Two, as well as rent controls and slum clearances, affected housing stock.<sup>143</sup> Subsequently, there was a demographic shift and, when the first Afro-Caribbean migrants began to arrive in the UK in the 1950s, Brixton was one of the areas they settled in. The covered market, which had been built in the 1930s, became a focal point for the community, selling produce from around the world. In 2010, the market was listed for its cultural heritage after a campaign by local group Friends of Brixton Market.<sup>144</sup> At the same time, however, there was an increasing spotlight on Brixton as a place where gentrification was rapidly encroaching.<sup>145</sup> Gentrification was in part brought about by a scheme to save the market; this scheme, developed by an organization called Spacemakers, who were approached by London & Associated Properties and Lambeth Council 'to come up with a Plan B', offered low unit rents to new traders who had started restaurants and boutiques.<sup>146</sup> This contestation over identity and ownership was coupled with Lambeth Council's proposed regeneration scheme, which included a 'Townscape Heritage Initiative', and the opening of a new building housing the Black Cultural Archives, making Brixton a focal point for discussions around migration, heritage and regeneration.<sup>147</sup> A key debate was how the

<sup>142</sup> Grant Farred, 'Victorian with the rebel seed: C.L.R. James, postcolonial intellectual', *Social Text*, 38 (1994), pp. 21-38, at p. 22.

<sup>143</sup> 'Brixton: A short history', Urban 75 website: <<http://www.urban75.org/brixton/history/history.html>> [accessed 27 January 2015].

<sup>144</sup> Stephen Adams, 'Brixton market given Grade II listing', *The Telegraph*, 1 April 2010, <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturenews/7545490/Brixton-market-given-Grade-II-listing.html>> [accessed 27 January 2015]; Tom Mendelsohn, 'Gentrification game: Defending traditional market', *The Independent*, 12 April 2010, <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/gentrification-game-defending-traditional-markets-1941817.html>> [accessed 27 January 2015].

<sup>145</sup> Philip Dayle, 'Brixton: regeneration or gentrification', *The Guardian*, 24 October 2010, <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2010/oct/24/london-race>> [accessed 27 January 2015].

<sup>146</sup> Spacemakers website: <<http://www.spacemakers.info/projects/brixton-village>> [accessed 27 January 2018]; Richard Godwin, 'Is gentrification killing Brixton Market?', *Evening Standard*, 25 January 2013. <<http://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/esmagazine/is-gentrification-killing-brixton-market-8465017.html>> [accessed 27 January 2015].

<sup>147</sup> Clare Melhuish, 'Case Study 5, Lambeth Council, Brixton Green and Ovalhouse Theatre in South London: A co-operative community-led development in inner London', UCL Urban Laboratory, September 2015: <<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/urbanlab/docs/case-study-5-lambeth-council>> [accessed 19 August 2017].

cultural identity Brixton had become known for was at risk of being displaced.<sup>148</sup>

In a study carried out for UCL's Urbanlab, Clare Melhuish has documented the area's ethnic mix, as well as the potential impact of displacement through gentrification. According to data from the 2001 census, 44.3 per cent of residents in the ward were black or black British, but by 2013–14 studies suggested that the figure had fallen by 8 per cent, despite an overall population increase.<sup>149</sup> Melhuish comments: 'While the area's appeal is largely attributed to the cultural vitality that this diversity has generated, the spectre of gentrification is closely linked to the displacement of those ethnic groups who have given Brixton its distinctive identity.'<sup>150</sup>

How does the shifting social and cultural identity of Brixton link to its architectural structures and public realm? The listing of the covered market in 2010 was in part for its architectural heritage, but above all it was for its historic interest as a site of cultural and social change in post-war Britain:

The successful adoption of the markets is the clearest architectural manifestation of the major wave of immigration that had such an important impact on the cultural and social landscape of post-war Britain, and is thus a site with considerable historical resonance.<sup>151</sup>

Brixton's covered market arcades (Granville Arcade, Market Row and Reliance Arcade) were built between 1924 and 1937 in response to the use of the streets by traders. There had been a street market on Atlantic Road since the 1870s, which was a popular and busy attraction.<sup>152</sup> The Brixton arcades were built much later than the spate of market halls constructed in the Victorian era, which James Schmiechen and Kenneth Carls write of as having intentions of social behavioural control and creating order; nevertheless, a similar intention of ordering and controlling behaviour seems to have been key to the shift from street to indoor trading in Brixton.<sup>153</sup>

<sup>148</sup> Godwin, 'Is gentrification killing Brixton Market?'

<sup>149</sup> Melhuish, 'Case Study 5', pp. 8-9; and see Robin Pharoah et al., 'A Caribbean Critique? Exploring black Caribbean experiences of and attitudes to Lambeth Council', ESRO Lambeth, October 2011, available at: <<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Lambeth-black-caribbean%20report%202011.pdf>> [accessed 19 August 2017].

<sup>150</sup> Melhuish, 'Case Study 5', pp. 8-9; Pharoah et al., 'A Caribbean Critique?'

<sup>151</sup> 'List entry for Brixton Markets – Reliance Arcade, Market Row and Granville Arcade (Brixton Village)', *National Heritage List for England*, Historic England website: <<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1393881>> [accessed 19 August 2017].

<sup>152</sup> 'Brixton Conservation Area: Conservation Area Statement', London Borough of Lambeth, March 2012, p. 22, available at: <<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/pl-BrixtonConservationAreaStatement26March2012.pdf>> [accessed 31 August 2017].

<sup>153</sup> James Schmiechen and Kenneth Carls, *The British Market Hall: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 26; 'Brixton Conservation Area', p. 22.

During the nineteenth century, most British towns placed either complete or partial bans on street selling, although in London there was an exception.<sup>154</sup> The alternative, a decentralized market that was spread around towns, was not seen as successful, as it meant that shoppers were scattered; the solution was to bring everything under one roof.<sup>155</sup> This meant relocating the market to an enclosed central market space cut off from the street, which freed the market from non-marketing activities that the traditional street market allowed, as well as limiting and separating access for pedestrians/shoppers and traders. The new market halls allowed for spatial and architectural experimentation.<sup>156</sup>

Many markets also sought to sell themselves as proponents of a modern intellectual viewpoint, for example by using references to ancient symbols that were at the time fashionable, with the aim of elevating people from street life through visual language. Market halls were seen to have a moral purpose of educating and controlling the populace, and of protecting female shoppers. However, despite inventive and experimental designs for the Victorian market hall structures and interiors, the external facades often used a different, more conservative architectural language. This varied from a shopfront facade to the use of historical styles (the 'classical wrap') ranging from Renaissance to Gothic and eclectic. By the early 1900s, market building was in decline.<sup>157</sup> The new department stores, chain stores and co-operative shops created competition for the market halls. As the middle classes moved to the suburbs, there was a shift away from the intensive centralization of food supplies and towards distribution networks that involved regional and national food marketing firms acting as middlemen rather than direct sales.

By the early 1900s, Brixton was a growing suburb and a popular shopping destination with both department stores and street markets:

Brixton street market began on Atlantic Road in the 1870s; complemented by the creation of retail units in the railway viaduct arches; inexpensive trams and trains brought customers from across the wider area. On Saturday evenings the market was a particularly popular attraction with less well-off shoppers being entertained by street musicians and bands and seeking out discounted fresh goods.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>154</sup> Schmiechen and Carls, *The British Market Hall*, p. 27.

<sup>155</sup> Schmiechen and Carls, *The British Market Hall*, p. 28, referring to *The Hampshire Chronicle*, 3 October 1857. For earlier histories of arcades, see Johann Friedrich Geist, *Arcades: The History of a Building Type* (London: MIT Press, 1989); Jane Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Gender, Space and Architecture in Regency London* (London: Athlone Press, 2002); and Jane Rendell, 'Subjective space: A feminist architectural history of the Burlington Arcade', in Katerina Rüedi, Sarah, Wigglesworth and Duncan McCorquodale (eds), *Desiring Practices: Architecture, Gender, and the Interdisciplinary* (London: Black Dog, 1996).

<sup>156</sup> Schmiechen and Carls, *The British Market Hall*, pp. 47-51.

<sup>157</sup> Schmiechen and Carls, *The British Market Hall*, p. 55.

<sup>158</sup> 'Brixton Conservation Area', p. 22.

However, local council concerns over street hawking led to the proposal for and building of three covered indoor market arcades, an exception to the shift in other parts of the country, and an exception in terms of the scale of densely networked indoor markets across Brixton's centre. The three arcades still exist today, along with the street markets on Pope's Road and Brixton Station Road, while shops and traders set up under the railway arches in Atlantic Road and Brixton Station Road on both sides of the viaduct.<sup>159</sup>

The success of the market areas fluctuated throughout the twentieth century. Influxes of African-Caribbean migrants in the late 1940s and 1950s transformed the market into a multicultural hub, which architecture and travel writer Ian Nairn described in 1966 as:

Electric, all right, and high voltage too. A whole area east of Brixton Road, opposite the jolly town hall, where the ground floor has dissolved and reformed as a magic cave of people and goods. Stalls everywhere, arcades everywhere, diving through buildings and under the railway. Meat, fish, nylons, detergent: an endless, convoluted cornucopia ... this cockney centre has kept all its Victorian vitality.<sup>160</sup>

However, the political tensions and the riots of the early 1980s led to a focus on the need for urban change in Brixton. In his report in the aftermath of the riots in Brixton, Lord Scarman noted that 'a top down approach to regeneration does not seem to have worked' and that 'local communities should be more involved in the decisions which affected them'. He also suggested that 'a deficiency lay in the extent to which the private sector is involved in inner city regeneration' and that 'large-scale redevelopment is not necessarily a successful solution'.<sup>161</sup> Despite this, in 1993 the government allocated £37.5 million of City Challenge funding to regenerate the area, with an aim to 'attract public and private investment which would create new opportunities for local people'.<sup>162</sup> This was not enacted and the town centre continued to degrade physically. By 1994, planning hold-ups and mismanagement of funds had led to problems and the City Challenge funding was frozen.<sup>163</sup>

By 2008, the recession had led to an economic downturn in Brixton.<sup>164</sup> The indoor market

<sup>159</sup> 'Brixton Conservation Area', pp. 9, 22.

<sup>160</sup> Ian Nairn, *Nairn's London* (London: Penguin, 1966), p. 193.

<sup>161</sup> Lord J. Scarman, *The Scarman Report: The Brixton Disorders, 10–12 April 1981* (London: HMSO, 1981), part 6.

<sup>162</sup> Mike Rahman, 'A dream unfulfilled', *The Independent*, 15 December 1995, <<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/a-dream-unfulfilled-1525824.html>> [accessed 31 August 2017]; Melhuish, 'Case Study 5', p. 4.

<sup>163</sup> 'Brixton Challenge gets 6 month reprieve', *The Independent*, 27 June 1994, <<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/brixton-challenge-gets-six-month-reprieve-1425524.html>> [accessed 31 August 2017].

<sup>164</sup> 'Interview with Eleanor from Brick Box', in Shuhei Okada, 'Transformation of spaces and places in inner cities: The case of gentrification in Brixton since the riot in 1981', PhD thesis, Royal Holloway University of London, 2014, p. 211.



arcades were underused and run down. The market freeholders, London & Associated Properties (L.A.P.), planned to redevelop the market in 2009, and at this point Lambeth Council brought in the Spacemakers agency. This resulted in the revival of the market, but at the cost of perceived gentrification and higher rents. By 2012, there was a clear shift in the Granville Arcade covered market, renamed Brixton Village, with a higher proportion of 'incoming' restaurants and shops.<sup>165</sup>

Lambeth's 2012 re-organization as a Co-operative Council, under Council leader Stephen Reed, led to the approval of a new set of principles, and the architects and urban designers Allies and Morrison were commissioned to produce a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This was published in December 2012 and adopted in June 2013. While building on the Masterplan, it also identified key areas for development.<sup>166</sup> The SPD built on the 2009 Future Brixton Masterplan which had set out a 'comprehensive development strategy for the town, as well as detailed guidance on a number of key potential developments across the centre'.<sup>167</sup> These documents set out an agenda for the programme Lambeth called 'Future Brixton', which 'intended to achieve corporate and regenerative priorities through utilising its own assets', and highlighted 'major land use change and intensification in the Pope's Road, Somerleyton Road and SW2 areas'.<sup>168</sup>

The SPD identified four key regeneration projects in central Brixton, which included housing on Somerleyton Road, a 'new' Town Hall, and the expansion of the 'offer' in central Brixton alongside a 'Townscape Heritage Initiative' to upgrade historic buildings.<sup>169</sup> While the Council had emphasized the 'regenerative priorities' of their plans, some local community groups questioned the intentions behind the Council's plans. These included users of the Urban 75 blog forum, and market traders and users who believed that continuing redevelopment could shift the demographic of Brixton Market by pushing out those who had given it a strong identity as a place of diversity.<sup>170</sup> Alongside the Council's policy-making, local residents and

<sup>165</sup> Godwin, 'Is gentrification killing Brixton Market?'; Spacemakers website.

<sup>166</sup> Allies and Morrison, 'Brixton SPD', December 2012, p. 4, available at Future Brixton website: <[http://futurebrixton.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/brixton\\_spd\\_cabinet\\_approved\\_10\\_june.pdf](http://futurebrixton.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/brixton_spd_cabinet_approved_10_june.pdf)> [accessed 18 August 2017].

<sup>167</sup> Lambeth Council, 'Future Brixton Masterplan', July 2009: <<https://moderngov.lambeth.gov.uk/documents/s57901/01%20Future%20Brixton%20Masterplan%201.pdf>> [accessed 18 August 2017]; Allies and Morrison, 'Brixton SPD'.

<sup>168</sup> Allies and Morrison, 'Brixton SPD', p. 3.

<sup>169</sup> Allies and Morrison, 'Brixton SPD', pp. 11, 33; Lambeth Council website: <<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/housing-and-egeneration/regeneration/regeneration-activity-in-lambeth>> [accessed 18 August 2017].

<sup>170</sup> See 'Council consults on vision for future of Brixton', 7 May 2012; 'The New Brixton Plan (Supplementary Planning Document)', 5 January 2013; Urban 75 website forums: <<https://www.urban75.net/forums/threads/council-consults-on-vision-for-future-of-brixton.293043/#post-11148243>>; <<https://www.urban75.net/forums/threads/the-new-brixton-plan-supplementary-planning-document.304512/#post-11857009>> [accessed 18 August 2017].

journalists highlighted gentrification, which traded on this identity, as an encroaching issue for Brixton.<sup>171</sup> Geographer Loretta Lees has theorized that the problematic rise of ‘state-led, “positive” gentrification’ is an attempt to socially engineer, and even to socially cleanse, cities.<sup>172</sup> The campaign focusing on saving Brixton Market was one of the earliest and most prominent of recent London campaigns to save local markets, but other campaigns have also highlighted markets as key battlegrounds in regeneration and gentrification conflicts.<sup>173</sup>

In the next section, I set out how the relationship between the theoretical alignments discussed in the previous sections, and my art practice work together in the thesis to produce and define practice as research, beginning from the wider contexts of practice and then defining how my practice responds to the specific context of Brixton.

<sup>171</sup> ‘Professionals fuel 15 per cent property price surge in Brixton’, *Evening Standard*, 11 April 2012, <<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/professionals-fuel-15-per-cent-property-price-surge-in-brixton-7636474.html>> [accessed 18 August 2017]; Adam Nelson, ‘Comment: Gentrification of Brixton leaves me conflicted’, Brixton Blog, 18 April 2012: <<http://www.brixtonblog.com/comment-gentrification-of-brixton-leaves-me-conflicted/4405>> [accessed 18 August 2017]; Urban 75 website.

<sup>172</sup> Loretta Lees, ‘Gentrification and social mixing’, p. 2465; Loretta Lees, Tom Slater and Elvin Wyly (eds), *Gentrification* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>173</sup> Southwark Notes website: <<https://southwarknotes.wordpress.com>>; Lizzie Dearden, ‘London market demolition triggers UN investigation into area’s gentrification’, *The Independent*, 27 October 2017, <<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/london-un-gentrification-investigation-seven-sisters-market-demolition-pueblito-paisa-latin-village-a8023811.html>> [accessed 18 February 2018].





### **Section 3: Salting practices in Brixton**



In this section, I build on discussions of salt practices, poetics and relation, to describe how I work with the place of Brixton and the material of salt to generate my poetic art practice. Firstly, I set the wider context of 'Practice-based research', which is informed by the work of Estelle Barrett and developed through questions around intuitive practices, knowing, and artwork as knowledge. Following this, I set out the field of my site-related, place-specific practice through a discussion of site- and place-specificity. I begin with an understanding of past and current meanings of site-specific art, then look at how current debates in relational art practice relate to my practice of *détour* and *retour*. I then examine subjectivities of practitioner, critic and participant, and how these subjectivities might relate to ideas of place and movement.

In 'Writing (and Travelling)', I investigate how overlaps between autobiography, biography and writing about place form strategies for writing in the thesis. I use the specific context of Brixton to develop ideas for art practices that use performance, ritual and remaking. Through connecting theory on the gaze, performance and memory studies with Glissant's concept of opacity as a form of resistance, I argue for practices of performance in Brixton that reference ritual and repetitive practices. Finally, I address how these approaches combine in 'Salting Practices', which describes the specific approach I use in the thesis to test the poetics of relation in and through place, and to develop a poetics of re-generation.

## Practice-based research

My artistic practice is interdisciplinary and relates to ‘critical spatial practice’, having evolved from architectural training, community work, and artistic collaborations and commissions.<sup>1</sup> My work includes elements of research and public engagement within the practice, some of which are represented in the artworks. The specific methodology I employ emerges as a response to the context of the work, which is usually place-specific. These emergent responses are often hard to predict, and they involve an element of intuition. However, formalizing this practice as a basis for academic research places different demands on the process of making artworks and writing about them.

In setting out a methodology for the thesis, I first examine some questions around artistic practice as research, which Estelle Barrett proposes can:

be viewed as the production of knowledge or philosophy in action ... we demonstrate further that practice-led research is a new species of research, generative enquiry that draws on subjective, interdisciplinary and emergent methodologies that have the potential to expand the frontiers of research.<sup>2</sup>

Taking Barrett’s definition, in practice-led or practice-based research<sup>3</sup> the research emerges out of the practice; therefore, practice and research are symbiotic and not separate. In the process of generating knowledge in a practice-based thesis, what Barrett terms the ‘practitioner/researcher’ shifts away from the idea of artwork as product and instead focuses on a studio-based enquiry and the outcomes of this as a process.<sup>4</sup>

If innovation and generation of knowledge are derived from emergent methods that cannot always be predetermined, and ‘outcomes are *necessarily* unpredictable’, where does this leave the task of defining a methodology for an artistic practice-based PhD?<sup>5</sup> To address such a question, Barrett refers to Pierre Bourdieu’s writing on reflexivity, which suggests that both the researcher and their methods should be submitted to the same questions that are asked of the object of enquiry, which would result in methodologies that are *necessarily* emergent.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jane Rendell, ‘Critical spatial practice: Curating, editing, writing’, Jane Rendell website: <<http://www.janerendell.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Curating-Editing-Writing-....pdf>> [accessed 30 August 2017]; Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Estelle Barrett, ‘Introduction’, in Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, *Practice as Research: Context, Method, Knowledge* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 1-14, at p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The exact term is a matter of debate. Barrett uses both terms; I continue with ‘practice-based research’.

<sup>4</sup> Estelle Barrett, ‘Foucault’s “What is an Author”: Towards a critical discourse of practice as research’, in Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research*, pp. 135-46, at pp. 135, 137.

<sup>5</sup> Barrett, ‘Introduction’, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Barrett, ‘Introduction’, p. 6. See also Jane Rendell’s discussion of an emergent form of critique in *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), p. 5.



Jane Rendell has suggested that key aspects of critical theory derived from the Frankfurt school, in particular self-reflection and social transformation, can be brought into contemporary debates on practice. In doing so, she highlights how critical practice can also be understood as self-reflective with the *potential* to socially transform.<sup>7</sup> Alongside Barrett's definition of practice-based research as one that takes an emergent and subjective approach, I take Rendell's view of the potential of critical theory and practice to be reflective and generative as informing my own critical practice-based methodology.

A practice-based methodology that includes a critical process of self-reflection mirrors what Christopher Frayling defines as 'research *through* art', where knowledge is produced through the process of art-making and evidenced through documentation.<sup>8</sup> Frayling also identifies this process as being 'as much about autobiography and personal development as about communicative knowledge'.<sup>9</sup> Connecting Bourdieu's suggestion that the researcher should also be the focus of their enquiry with Frayling's identification of practice-based research as a process of personal development, I posit artistic practice both as a research methodology that co-determines the artwork as knowledge and as an articulation of practice.

Frayling suggests that research in art and design is a *convergent* activity, and I propose that working with both artistic and architectural methods can generate interdisciplinary methodologies of practice.<sup>10</sup> For example, socially engaged art practices can open up dialogues and exchanges with users of places, offering possibilities to architectural ideas of agency. These practices can also offer what Rendell calls 'a place between', which is an undefined place where new ideas can emerge.<sup>11</sup> In his practice of 'essaying', which interweaves voices through art practice and writing, artist Iain Biggs has identified a 'space-between' that continually puts the self in question: 'a writing and making self that is always both *more* and *less* than its categorization.'<sup>12</sup> Biggs's work asks us to identify all parts of our lived experience, and the movements we make between the territories of the art world and academia. However, he questions the usefulness of the term interdisciplinary, proposing that 'hybrid' may be more appropriate for artists' work.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Frayling, 'Research in art and design', *Royal College of Art Research Papers*, 1 (1993-4), p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Frayling, 'Research in art and design', p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Frayling, 'Research in art and design', p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Rendell, *Art and Architecture*. See also 'A Place Between', a special issue of *The Public Art Journal*, 2 (1999), edited by Rendell; Jane Rendell, 'Public art: Between public and private', in Sarah Bennett and John Butler (eds), *Locality, Regeneration and Diversities: Advances in Art and Urban Futures* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2000), p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> Iain Biggs, 'Deep mapping as an "essaying" of place', talk given at the Bartlett School of Architecture, 9 July 2010, < <http://www.iainbiggs.co.uk/text-deep-mapping-as-an-essaying-of-place/>>, [accessed 30 August 2017].

<sup>13</sup> Iain Biggs, 'Art as research, doctoral education, and the politics of knowledge', *Engage*, 18 (2006), pp. 1-8, at p. 2.

Rendell also highlights the potential problems of interdisciplinary work, citing Julia Kristeva's writing on interdisciplinarity as a 'site where expressions of resistance are latent' and face the difficulty of jealously guarded domains of specialist knowledge.<sup>14</sup> As Rendell suggests, the challenge of interdisciplinarity is that it brings everything into question, which is potentially destabilizing to dominant power structures.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, in siting my practice in 'a place between', there is a necessity for the practice to be critical in order to offer a potential for transformation. This criticality entails both a reflexive process on my part and a critical engagement with the different spaces inside and outside the work, as well as with the others taking part in the work, both those participating in artistic practice and those engaged in critiquing and commenting on work from inside and outside the institution.

Since practice-based research happens both inside and outside the institutional framework of the university, the outcomes can have different forms of authorship. How these are acknowledged varies in different settings. In Barrett's definition of artistic practice-based research, she is referring to studio-based art practice made for the gallery context, and one that therefore contributes to another institution, that of the art world. Practising art in public and with publics adds a different dimension to artistic practice-based research, as it does not necessarily sit within the (formal/institutional) art world. So, my use of institution refers to the university, which in the case of my practice-based PhD sets the terms of research and judges the outcomes. When operating in public places, I see this as outside an institutional setting, except for when documents of the work or artworks are shown in a gallery setting. The extra-institutional quality of my practice-based research inevitably crosses into other territories and can make it harder to define how research produces knowledge (and what kind of knowledge it produces), since the institutional criteria are less evident. But working inside and outside institutions is a productive critical space to envision other possibilities.<sup>16</sup> And an ongoing poetics of Relation between the settings of practice and research offers the possibility of acknowledging difference while holding different meanings together in a shared space.

Artist Ann Hamilton describes the relationship between making art and knowledge as one in which the artist has to embrace a 'not-knowing', which she says is 'a permissive and rigorous willingness to trust, leaving knowing in suspension, trusting in possibility without result, regarding as possible all manner of response'.<sup>17</sup> Rebecca Fortnum has also written about the

<sup>14</sup> Julia Kristeva, 'Institutional interdisciplinarity in theory and practice: An interview', in Alex Coles and Alexia Defert (eds), *The Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity, De-, Dis-, Ex-*, vol. 2 (London: Black Dog Publishing, 1998), pp. 5-6; Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Rendell, 'Critical spatial practice'.

<sup>16</sup> See also Iain Biggs, 'Art as research'.

<sup>17</sup> Ann Hamilton, 'Making not knowing', in Mary Jane Jacobs and Jaquelynn Baas (eds), *Learning Mind: Experience into Art* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 66-73.

importance of not-knowing in artists' practice, and she refers to Mike Jarvis's writing on how it is in the balance of planning and intuitive action where the expertise of the artist lies.<sup>18</sup> I suggest that there is a type of structured intuition at play in this thesis, where the place of intuition in the practice is acknowledged and given space, while remaining bounded to a degree.

So, what exactly is the role of intuition, not-knowing and knowing in a practice-based thesis? How can practice embody knowledge? Barrett argues for an embodied knowledge of the artwork, and also for the potential of writing from different positions (both poetic and prosaic) to understand the work fully, which combines with what Frayling terms research *through* art and research *for* art, as well as relating to Biggs's hybrid practices.<sup>19</sup> In a practice-based thesis, a written element is required, which perhaps directs the process and form of art-making more towards particular types of artworks and artists. In the case of my thesis projects, relational processes and the narration of these as a reflective process are important to the research process, so that the relationships between artwork and text are integral to the process of the research.

To summarize, Barrett's definition of practice-based research as one that uses emergent methods can be expanded to include the critical – an approach, following Rendell's reading of Frankfurt school critical theory, that is both reflective and transformative. Through reflective approaches, practice-based research can produce both knowledge as outcome and a deeper understanding of practice for the practitioner. The balance between planned and intuitive ways of working can create understandings of what processes of knowing and not-knowing produce together. Acknowledging the 'in-between' state of practice-based research as that which takes place inside and outside the institutions of both the art world and the university asks the practitioner–researcher to make research relational by using 'in-between' modes of practice to facilitate interactions. Here, the practitioner–researcher could ask *how* the work produces knowledge through the making of relations and their communication through the works produced – poetically and indexically. What this might produce is a potential poetics of relation of knowing, which acknowledges Glissant's 'archipelagic thought': 'a nonsystematic, inductive thought that explores the unforeseen of the world-totality and attunes the written to the oral and the oral to the written.'<sup>20</sup> 'Archipelagic thought' suggests that knowledge is produced *through* relation.

<sup>18</sup> Rebecca Fortnum, 'Creative accounting: Not knowing in making and talking', in Rebecca Fortnum and Elisabeth Fisher (eds), *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think* (London: Black Dog, 2013); Mike Jarvis, 'Articulating the tacit dimension in artmaking', *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 6 (2014), pp. 201-13, at p. 210.

<sup>19</sup> Barrett, 'Foucault's "What is an Author"', pp. 145-46; Frayling, 'Research in art and design', p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> Édouard Glissant, 'From introduction to a poetics of the diverse' (trans. Pierre Joris), *Boundary 2*, 26.1 (1999), pp. 119-21, at p. 120.

## Site- and place-specificity

Over the past fifty years, the term 'site-specific art' has shifted meaning. Initially it referred to artworks that were sited in particular locations and defined by the historical, geographical and social contexts of a site.<sup>21</sup> As the term 'site-specific' became recognized as referring to a field of knowledge, structured not only spatially but also intertextually, it came to be no longer a noun/object (specific space) but a verb/process (e.g. situated) – a recognition of the *impermanence* of site/situation.<sup>22</sup> As I discussed in the Introduction and Section 2, definitions of and relationships between 'site' and 'place' have evolved. The term 'place-specific' has been used by critics and curators, including Lucy Lippard and Cameron Cartiere, to describe artworks that respond to, and highlight aspects of, particular places, and that often include a 'social dimension'.<sup>23</sup>

I position my work as place-specific, responding to the context of specific places while offering a relationship to site-specificity through the modes of practice. Current debates over the function and meaning of relation in site- and place-specific art practice connect to my practice of *détour* and *retour*. Through these debates, I aim to understand my practice's contribution to site- and place-specificity and how thinking through Glissant highlights a different way of approaching the relational, through for example the journey between site and non-site as *détour* and *retour*. I also look at how, in writing about relational art practices, subjectivities of practitioner, critic and participant produce different views of the way these practices should be critiqued.

The term site-specific emerged from practice and writing by artists in the 1960s, such as Denis Oppenheim and Robert Smithson, which related to particular sites outside conventional gallery spaces.<sup>24</sup> Smithson developed his idea of 'site' and 'non-site', relating work in the gallery (the 'non-site') to work in a location outside the gallery (the 'site'), which he said become interactive reflections.<sup>25</sup> I take Smithson's idea of the interrelationship between site and non-site as important to my practice of making work in connected, related locations. Smithson's thinking also contained the seeds of a later expansion of site-specific practice. By the 1990s, art criticism

<sup>21</sup> Erika Suderburg (ed.), *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 4; Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 15; Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-12.

<sup>22</sup> Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), pp. 3, 159; James Meyer, 'The functional site; or, the transformation of site specificity', in Suderburg (ed.), *Space, Site, Intervention*, pp. 23-37.

<sup>23</sup> Cameron Cartiere, 'RE/placing public art: The role of place specificity in new genre public art', PhD thesis, University of the Arts London, 2003; Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local* (New York: New Press, 1997), pp. 274, 290.

<sup>24</sup> Dennis Oppenheim, *Sitemarkers* (1967); Robert Smithson, 'A provisional theory of non-sites' [1968], in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. by Jack Flam (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), p. 364.

<sup>25</sup> Smithson, 'Provisional theory'; Robert Smithson and Tony Robbin, 'Interview' (1968), in Alexander Nagel, 'Robert Smithson removed from the source', *RES: Anthropology & Aesthetics*, 63/64 (2013), pp. 287-88.

reflected this expansion, with curator James Meyer's idea of a 'functional site' as a *process* between sites or places rather than a fixed place. Meanwhile, the expansion of site-specific practice into participatory practice had led artist Suzanne Lacy to propose the term 'new genre public art', to describe public art projects where engagement was a key part of the making of the artwork.<sup>26</sup>

Following Meyer, critic Miwon Kwon suggests site is now intertextual rather than spatial, itinerary-based rather than location-based, with the artist as narrator of a nomadic narrative.<sup>27</sup> Kwon's analysis of a multitude of new terms for site-specific practice reflects the way site-specific work has shifted into relational practice, with two directions evident in the terms.<sup>28</sup> The first is site as itinerary, a fragmentary sequence of events and actions *through* spaces, without physically tying the artwork to a specific location. The second is site as relational, with audience, social issues, and community taking primacy, which connects to 'new genre public art' and 'place-specific' art.<sup>29</sup> The two directions enable a discussion of how my practice in the thesis evolves in relation to places and relational contexts, while they highlight current contestations over value in site- and place-specific art.

My practice is neither tied to one particular place nor is it purely nomadic. In the work I make in the *détours* and *retours*, I use the journey to connect a series of events in places. These could be seen to connect to Smithson's writing on a journey between site and non-site, which he describes as a kind of 'anti-travel'.<sup>30</sup> They also link to Kaye's idea of site-specific art as not fixed in location, but as 'performing' place.<sup>31</sup> In my art practice, my role in narrating the (literal and discursive) sites on the *détour* is in relation to the *retour* and to the 'homeplace'. Therefore, my practice is both place-specific and relational.

Discussing the shift in contemporary art towards dialogical artworks, Rendell has written that the interest in relationships between subjects demands that ethics as well as aesthetics are considered, and she asks: 'what is at stake in the making of relationships to produce and interact with art and architecture?'<sup>32</sup> Rendell sees the work of the generation of feminist artists such as Lacy as setting the foundations for a next stage of relational practice which has since been described by curator Nicholas Bourriaud as 'relational aesthetics' without his explicit acknowledgment of the genealogy of this term.<sup>33</sup> I want to explore Rendell's question of what is

<sup>26</sup> Suzanne Lacy, 'Debated territory: Toward a critical language for public art', in Lacy (ed.), *New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), pp. 171-85, at p. 178.

<sup>27</sup> James Meyer, 'The functional site', pp. 23-37; Kwon, *One Place after Another*, pp. 29, 51.

<sup>28</sup> Kwon, *One Place after Another*, pp. 1, 2, 109, 168.

<sup>29</sup> Kwon, *One Place after Another*, p. 109.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Smithson, Irving Sandler and Alexander Nagel, 'An interview', *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 63/64 (2013), pp. 289-98, at p. 297.

<sup>31</sup> Kaye, *Site-Specific Art*, p. 220; Kwon, *One Place after Another*, p. 51.

<sup>32</sup> Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, pp. 148, 151-2.

<sup>33</sup> Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 150; Nicholas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du

at stake through critical writing about relational art practice, and to understand how this relates to my practice as framed through Glissant's work.

Bourriaud defines relational aesthetics as 'a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space'.<sup>34</sup> Within these artworks, art is an encounter, and the domain of exchange is critiqued on its aesthetic criteria: the art object is unimportant, and acts rather as the means for producing relations.<sup>35</sup> Bourriaud's reading is that the artwork offers a form of resistance to dominant ideologies.<sup>36</sup> However, Claire Bishop argues that this type of work is not automatically democratic, since the relations created 'rest too comfortably within an ideal of subjectivity as whole and of community as immanent togetherness'.<sup>37</sup> Bourriaud has acknowledged that it is important to consider the 'what for?', but he evades the responsibility entailed by relational subjectivities and avoids the question of what the *relation* might produce.<sup>38</sup> As Bishop asks: 'if relational art produces human relations, then the next logical question to ask is what *types* of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?'<sup>39</sup> In other words, what is at stake?

While Lacy's new genre public art sets out the importance and responsibility of relational work, Kwon has questioned whether her view of such work was too celebratory.<sup>40</sup> Kwon sees artists who work with communities as sometimes providing a 'service' in discovering and re-presenting the identity of places, which can make it easy to erase difference and commodify places, thereby co-opting artists' practice.<sup>41</sup> The risk of such appropriation of artists' work is that uncritical versions of the past and present identities of places are presented.<sup>42</sup>

Artist Grant Kester seeks to redefine how socially engaged art practices are evaluated and critiqued.<sup>43</sup> In describing his involvement with particular projects, Kester shows how these

r el, 2009).

<sup>34</sup> Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p. 113.

<sup>35</sup> Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p. 42.

<sup>36</sup> Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p. 16.

<sup>37</sup> Claire Bishop, 'Antagonism and relational aesthetics', *October*, 110 (2004), pp. 51-79, at p. 67.

<sup>38</sup> Simpson, Bennett, 'Public Relations: An Interview with Nicolas Bourriaud', *Artforum*, April 2001, p. 48; Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p. 23; Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 46. In his more recent writings, Bourriaud has developed his ideas around subjectivity: see Nicholas Bourriaud (ed.), *Altermodern* (London: Tate Publishing, 2009); Nicholas Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, trans. James Gussen and Lili Porten (New York: Sternberg Press, 2009).

<sup>39</sup> Bishop, 'Antagonism and relational aesthetics', p. 65.

<sup>40</sup> Kwon, *One Place after Another*, p. 142.

<sup>41</sup> Kwon, *One Place after Another*, pp. 52, 55.

<sup>42</sup> Kwon, *One Place after Another*, pp. 148-9; see also Bruce Robbins (ed.), *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Chantal Mouffe, 'Citizenship and political identity', *October*, 61 (1992), pp. 28-32.

<sup>43</sup> Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley, CA:

collaborative, socially engaged artworks are structured through ‘a cumulative process of exchange and dialogue rather than a single and instantaneous shock of insight’.<sup>44</sup> He offers an alternative to Kwon’s critique of artists as essentializing communities and places, suggesting that the alternative to the potential paternalism of the artist as speaking on behalf of the community is the potential paternalism of the artist bringing the gift of insight or self-reflexivity to the critically flawed viewer.<sup>45</sup> In either case, Kester argues, the viewer or participant is left with little agency, and Kwon’s position fails to deal with the realities of projects. Kester’s view highlights the subjectivities involved in writing about this work, as well as the difference between the artist writing with direct experience of working on projects and the critic or curator writing about projects either from seeing the outcomes or documentation.

An alternative perspective, which draws on Glissant’s writing on the Relation between self and other, would be to privilege the possible opacity of both artist and participant: to understand that we are always partly of another, as well as to preserve our own difference; and to see relational processes as processes of negotiating identities, and mutual ‘re-generation’.. Connecting to Rendell’s writing on feminist theory of subjects in relation to each other as productive of contingent and partial knowledge, I propose that, within relational exchange, both artist and participant (and possibly critic) choose what they reveal or conceal.<sup>46</sup>

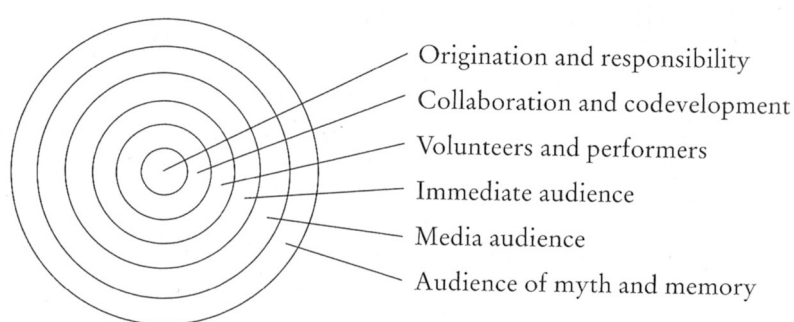


Image 0.3: Diagram 6, from Suzanne Lacy, ‘Debated territory: Toward a critical language for public art’, in Lacy (ed.), *New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), pp. 171-85, at p. 178.

Thinking through relations between artists, artwork, and participant or audience, I return to Suzanne Lacy and her mapping of layers of engagement between artwork and audiences (see Image 0.3). Lacy’s diagram demands an understanding of how an audience relates to an artwork from its inception to completion. In another diagram (Image 0.4), Lacy defines four ways artists can practice engagement:

University of California Press, 2004); Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 148.

<sup>44</sup> Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, p. 12.

<sup>45</sup> Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, p. 161.

<sup>46</sup> Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, pp. 150-51.

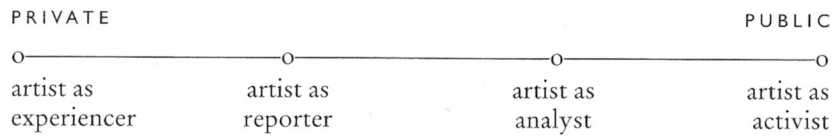


Image 0.4: Diagram 5, from Lacy, 'Debated territory', p. 174.

Art critic Cameron Cartiere asks whether, by separating artist and audience, Lacy does not acknowledge possible connections between artist, artwork and audience.<sup>47</sup> Sophie Hope has written a useful comparison of Lacy's categories and others' writings on stages of engagement in public art, which range from the artist as an outsider who imposes their ideas, to the artist as an activist who engages in transformative work which potentially transforms the artist too.<sup>48</sup> I suggest there is a need to reformat Lacy's diagram 6 and specifically position the artist within the layers of interaction between audience and work, so that the diagram gets reworked as a three-way set of relations between the work, the artist, and the audience (Image 0.4). I understand my own practice as operating between these sets of relation. Instead of operating at one of those four stages, in my practice I define the state of engagement, at each stage of a piece of work, through critical engagement with both work and audience.

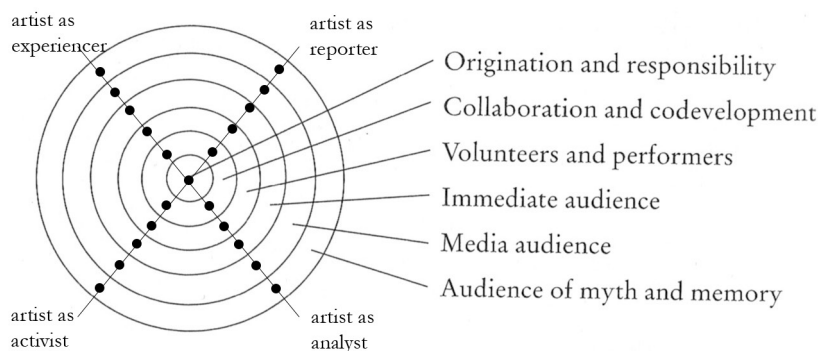


Image 0.5: Katy Beinart, revised version of Suzanne Lacy's diagrams

I therefore define my practice as what Rendell has termed 'critical spatial practice', to refer to work that happens in place and is both critical and spatial.<sup>49</sup> Rendell builds on work by Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau on spatial practice.<sup>50</sup> Lefebvre argues that a bi-directional,

<sup>47</sup> Cartiere, 'RE/placing public art', p. 127.

<sup>48</sup> Sophie Hope, 'Four Stages of Public Art': <[http://welcomebb.sophiehope.org.uk/Sophie\\_ActionResearch/4stages.html](http://welcomebb.sophiehope.org.uk/Sophie_ActionResearch/4stages.html)> [accessed 30 August 2017].

<sup>49</sup> Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 1; Rendell, 'Critical spatial practice'.

<sup>50</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (London: Blackwell, 1991); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of*



socio-spatial dialectic would be a better way of seeing the relationship between the social and spatial, rather than what he sees as a tendency to understand spatial practice as social encounter in the spatial field. Therefore, according to Rendell, social relations are also spatially produced.<sup>51</sup> De Certeau's understanding of 'space as a practised place', which I introduced in Section 2, leads Rendell to suggest that, in practising specific places, some artworks 'produce critical spaces'.<sup>52</sup> The practice of place in my thesis highlights the relational dimension of my work and is one location where critical spatial practice happens.

Whether and how relational art practices should be critical and critiqued was debated further in a dialogue between Kester and Bishop that took place through *Artforum* magazine in 2006. Bishop argued that, while she acknowledges the importance of the politics of participation in re-humanizing or de-alienating, the situation it has led to is one in which 'collaborative practices are automatically perceived to be equally important *artistic* gestures of resistance'.<sup>53</sup> The problem, according to Bishop, is that the critique then becomes purely based on criteria of ethical value, with Bishop citing Kester's writing as an example.<sup>54</sup> Kester's response was that Bishop's demands were based on her own need as a critic to feel she is necessary to decode the works.<sup>55</sup> Bishop responded by highlighting Kester's aversion to authorship and how his ethical stance removes the possibility of provocative thinking.<sup>56</sup>

The difficulties and challenges of the artist bringing their own subjectivity into contact with others seems to be erased by Bishop and Kester, and evaded by Bourriaud. For Bishop, the importance is the ability of the artwork to provoke at the moment of reception by an audience, which does not detail the (often provocative) process of negotiation entailed in making the work. In Kester's case, the ethical value of the process seems to smooth over potentially antagonistic aspects of relational work. Each of their positions seems to forget the 'in-between' place where there may be crossovers of both ethical, dialogical work and provocative, aesthetic moments. Bourriaud's argument that the relations are produced by the artwork does not acknowledge how subjectivities play out in the process.

Curator Maria Lind offers an alternative approach which highlights the question of subjectivity. Lind comments that it is crucial to distinguish between the intention of the artist, the work itself, and someone's interpretation of the artwork.<sup>57</sup> To return to Rendell's question about what

*Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988).

<sup>51</sup> Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 8; Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 17.

<sup>52</sup> De Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 117-18, Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 19.

<sup>53</sup> Claire Bishop, 'The social turn: Collaboration and its discontents', *Artforum*, February 2006, pp. 179-85, at p. 180.

<sup>54</sup> Bishop, 'The social turn', p. 181.

<sup>55</sup> Grant Kester, 'Response to Claire Bishop', *Artforum*, May 2006.

<sup>56</sup> Claire Bishop, 'Response to Grant Kester', *Artforum*, May 2006.

<sup>57</sup> Lind, Maria, 'The collaborative turn', in Joanna Billing and Lars Nilsson (eds), *Taking the Matter into*

is at stake in the making of relationships to produce and interact with art and architecture, what might be at stake is the subjectivities – of who is making work and writing about the work, from where and for whom.

The above discussion highlights the possibility that Glissant's work offers to artists, critics, and curators in thinking about relational site- and place-specific practice.<sup>58</sup> Through Glissant's poetics of Relation, ethics and aesthetics of relation can be connected, and individual subjectivities can be seen as part of a wider Relation. The specifics of place can also be understood not as a nostalgic singularity but as being in relation to networks of entangled places and sites.

In my practice, it is the journey between 'site' and 'non-site', or the *détour* and *retour* away from and back to the homeplace, that offers a different way of approaching the relational. This is not a linear movement through a series of (discursive or) actual sites, but a place-specific movement that, through *détour* and *retour*, relates places and people.

*Common Hands: On Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices* (London: Black Dog, 2007) pp.15-31, p. 22.

<sup>58</sup> See also Hans Ulrich Obrist and Asad Razā, *Mondialité: or the Archipelagos of Édouard Glissant* (Paris: Skira, 2017).

## Writing (and travelling)

In order to relate the practice of journeying to writing in the thesis, I use different writing practices to reflect on aspects of each journey, and I ask: how might writing about these journeys pick up on and produce different subjectivities? And how might art practices, which play with fictionalization, encounter writing practices that are sited between fact and fiction? I therefore explore practices of writing, including autobiography, biography and writing about travel and place, asking how clearly the lines between these categories are defined. Autobiography and biography come under the umbrella term ‘life-writing’, a term that Margareta Jolly notes has the ability to move across genres and encompass writing of one’s own or another’s life.<sup>59</sup> Lines of definition between autobiography and biography are often, sometimes deliberately, blurred.<sup>60</sup> My writing practice acknowledges the blurred boundaries between types of life-writing, to include other practices such as auto-ethnography, travelogue, place-narrative and site-writing.<sup>61</sup> The latter two practices enable a blending of autobiography and biography with art practices by weaving narratives through and about particular places.

How do autobiography and fiction relate to each other, and is the interplay between the two different in art and in writing? In Glissant’s novels, the singular voice is often abandoned; different voices take up parts of a story that is ostensibly autobiographical, but which has elements that become unclear as to whether they are fictional or not. *Détour* and *retour* are practices that often fictionalize, play with or subvert language and narrative.<sup>62</sup> The narration of journeys in this thesis can be seen as acts that both fictionalize and tell of the past and the present, and which perform movements through places in a search to reconnect specific lost memories or events to specific places. They are acts of geographical imagination, blending the reality of present place and the fantasy of the past. The journeys, and the practices carried out during the journeys, are in part autobiographical acts. They also reimagine the biographies of others through making and narrating art practices. And they connect to auto-ethnographic practices that relate autobiography and ethnography.

Performance studies scholar Tami Spry defines auto-ethnography as ‘a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts’. Reviewing the literature in this field, she identifies how auto-ethnography emerged as a form of resistance to ‘objective research that decontextualizes subjects and searches for singular truth’.<sup>63</sup> Spry is particularly

<sup>59</sup> Margareta Jolly, ‘Editor’s note’, in Jolly (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), p. ix.

<sup>60</sup> Hermione Lee, *Body Parts: Essays on Life-Writing* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2005), p. 100.

<sup>61</sup> For ‘place narrative’, see Torrunn Selberg, ‘Journeys, religion and authenticity revisited’, in Britta Timm Knudsen and Anne Marit Waade (eds), *Re-Investing Authenticity: Tourism, Place and Emotions* (Bristol: Channel View, 2010), pp. 228-40, p. 229; for ‘site-writing’, see Rendell, *Site-Writing*.

<sup>62</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, p. 139.

<sup>63</sup> Spry, ‘Performing autoethnography’, pp. 710, 711.

interested in the situating of auto-ethnography in performance studies, with the body as a site of meaning-making. In performing the journeys and in making performances in this thesis, I also acknowledge these as auto-ethnographic acts, which in the writing down of performance becomes the production of auto-ethnographic texts. There is also a part of the cycle of practice where texts can become performances. And in my art practice, the autobiographic/auto-ethnographic impulse is carried out in a deliberate movement through a particular place or places, which relate both to my own family history (and biographies of members of my family) and to the life stories of others. My journeys spatialize the performance of auto-ethnography.

The question of voice is important in the narrating of the journeys. In *Site-Writing*, Rendell uses several different writing 'voices'. A series of encounters are described in a first-person voice in a diary and the present tense, while being reflected upon separately in a third-person voice which is sometimes historical, at other times theoretical.<sup>64</sup> The diary entries and stories, as Rendell comments, do not illustrate a previously held theoretical position, but rather the reverse: through sketching out the stories, she discovered resonances with Susan Stanford Friedman's discussion of the way postcolonial theory discusses cross-cultural encounter.<sup>65</sup> As Rendell argues, the meaning is produced in the act of meeting the 'other', whether that other is a person, a place, or an object.<sup>66</sup> I am interested in this way of recording the direct encounter and then having a later dialogue with it, and in how I position my and others' voices in the writing of the journeys. When I engaged in conversations (through artworks, interviews or informally) that are relayed in the thesis, I asked each person to sign a consent form (see Appendix), which they agreed would allow me to use the conversation for artworks, research and publications. I agreed however not to use their name unless they specified that I could. In the thesis I anonymize names or use an alternative name except in the case where I had permission to use the person's name.

In my thesis, the practice of journeying through *détours* and *retours*, and the narratives I tell, began from a search for self, as understood through lost Jewish culture and family history. Contemporary Jewish heritage travel memoirs are often journeys of self-discovery as much as travel literature. For example, in Jonathon Safran Foer's novel *Everything is Illuminated*, the protagonist searches for his family roots but is very much stuck in his own subjective present.<sup>67</sup> There are elements of this writing that can be traced back to older Jewish travel literature. Leah Garrett traces travel literature in Yiddish (the colloquial language of Eastern European Jews) between the 1870s and 1930s as a means of reinventing geographical surroundings and centralizing the often marginalized Jewish experience.<sup>68</sup> Leaving behind the known territory

<sup>64</sup> Rendell, *Site-Writing*, pp. 201-7.

<sup>65</sup> Rendell, *Site-Writing*, p. 201, referring to Susan Stanford Friedman, *Mappings*.

<sup>66</sup> Rendell, *Site-Writing*, pp. 69-73.

<sup>67</sup> Jonathon Safran Foer, *Everything is Illuminated* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

<sup>68</sup> Leah Garrett, *Journeys beyond the Pale: Yiddish Travel Writing in the Modern World* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p. 4.

of the shtetl, or home village, these writers Judaized the experience of the journey as a place that was safer (than their reality).<sup>69</sup> The larger concept of *galut* (exile) that existed in the Jewish consciousness meant that ‘home’ and ‘away’ had multiple meanings, and Yiddish travel literature transported the reader into an imagined geography, a metaphor for searching for one’s place in the world.<sup>70</sup>

Hélène Cixous also works with personal family history and place-narrative in *Rootprints*.<sup>71</sup> Using a family tree and photograph album as starting points, her text builds from a historical narrative of different geographies, to a personal sense of her identity and how this might have been influenced by the different places her family had moved through and lived in. She describes a childhood spent in ‘recounted Europe’: the overlaying of the real place of her childhood with a narrativized place of her grandmother’s memory.<sup>72</sup> The use of voice is important in her writing, and sometimes the voice of other family members becomes mingled with her own voice. This highlights what Cixous terms a ‘memory problem’: of trying to understand what is memory and what is invented.<sup>73</sup> Her work plays on the uncertainty of memory and the fictionalization of family history in place of absence.

The blurring of life and art, fiction and reality in art practice might be transferable to artists’ writings, but it needs a precision of intention in the use of different forms of writing.<sup>74</sup> In this thesis, I choose to delineate texts I wrote during the journeys from my later reflective writing, to offer a precision of voice. In the course of the journeys, I kept a journal, usually written up as an online diary. I use this writing in the *détour* sections as a way of presenting the experience of the encounters in specific places, the moment of a performance, or the making of an artwork. This approach asks whether it is possible to maintain a dialogue between a more spontaneous form of writing and a more conventional mode of academic writing within the thesis, which reflects the dialogue between intuition and reflection in the practice.

<sup>69</sup> Garrett, *Journeys beyond the Pale*, p. 5.

<sup>70</sup> Garrett, *Journeys beyond the Pale*, pp. i, 6, 18.

<sup>71</sup> Hélène Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber, *Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing* (London: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>72</sup> Cixous and Calle-Gruber, *Rootprints*, p. 183.

<sup>73</sup> Cixous and Calle-Gruber, *Rootprints*, p. 201.

<sup>74</sup> Jan Svenungsson, ‘The writing artist’, *Artistic Research*, 2 (2009), available at: <<http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/svenungsson.html>>; see also Biggs, ‘Deep mapping’.

## Practising Brixton: Performance, ritual, re-making

In my artwork in this thesis, I wanted to evolve practices that reflected Brixton as a place and that were specific to Brixton's particularities. The way trade in the market is performed, the street culture, and the objects for sale offered me clues for modes of practice through which I would develop artworks. Performing dialogue or conversation was an essential part of the traders' work, and I wanted to see how this could be adapted or used in collecting stories and exchanging information in the research process. Performance's ephemeral and repetitive actions are explored through ideas of performance and the gaze, visibility and opacity, and through connections between performance and cultural memory. I then describe specific practices that come from observations of Brixton Market and the area around it, including performance (and performative objects), ritual, and remaking.

In her writing about performance, Peggy Phelan highlights the question of visibility and exposure. By its nature, performance is ephemeral and quickly vanishes; because of this, it offers more resistance to representation and co-option.<sup>75</sup> Performative practices offer, therefore, a useful way of negotiating some of the complex politics of Brixton. In Phelan's proposition, it is through vanishing and loss that identity is revealed.<sup>76</sup> The idea of vanishing as an act of resistance links to Glissant's concept of opacity as a form of resistance. For Glissant, opacity is the right not to be understood.<sup>77</sup> He identifies transparency as concomitant with the West's idea of a universal human essence, which makes it hard for the West to accept the difference of the Other.<sup>78</sup> Transparency 'demands the right to assimilate the Other within the Same'.<sup>79</sup> Opacity is, therefore, a defence against the objectifying gaze, possible assimilation, or appropriation.<sup>80</sup>

In Brixton, the objectifying gaze correlates with what John Urry calls the 'tourist gaze', for instance when visitors come to sample the multicultural experience of the market. For Urry, the 'tourist gaze' means both the tourist's expectations of a place and the way a host community produces their place in order to meet the tourist's expectations.<sup>81</sup> In current regeneration processes, Brixton's offer as a cultural destination is built upon to entice more visitors. More recently, Urry has adjusted the concept of the tourist gaze to be considered as performative and

<sup>75</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 19.

<sup>76</sup> Phelan, *Unmarked*, pp. 3, 19, 27.

<sup>77</sup> Glissant, *PR*, pp. 189-94; Britton, *Glissant*, p. 19.

<sup>78</sup> Celia Britton, 'Opacity and transparency: Conceptions of history and cultural difference in the work of Michel Butor and Édouard Glissant', *French studies*, 49 (1995), pp. 308-20, at p. 310.

<sup>79</sup> Clevis Headley, 'Glissant's existential ontology of difference', p. 95.

<sup>80</sup> Britton, 'Opacity and transparency', p. 310.

<sup>81</sup> John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London: Sage, 1990); see also Laura Mulvey 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', *Screen*, 16 (1975), pp. 6-18; Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment (eds), *The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture* (London: The Women's Press, 1988), pp. 5-7; Jane Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Gender, Space and Architecture in Regency London* (London: Athlone Press, 2002).

bodily, and not purely visual.<sup>82</sup> Tourists experience places in ways that involve bodily sensations and affect (emotion), and a consideration of the performance of the gaze acknowledges places as continually reproduced and contested through being performed.<sup>83</sup> So, practices of performance contain possibilities of disrupting or even reversing the gaze.<sup>84</sup> I draw on these connections in Project 4 to consider how the gaze, visibility and opacity shifts in different contexts as I make the *détours* and *retours*.

The ephemeral quality of performance gives it a particular relationship with memory. Joseph Roach, drawing on performed practices of memory described by Paul Connerton and Pierre Nora, suggests that performance can act as a transmitter of memory.<sup>85</sup> Roach describes how 'genealogies of performance' are held in the body, so the body's interactions are a form of 'living memory' as defined by Nora, in contrast to the artificial sites of *lieux de mémoire* (official places of memory).<sup>86</sup> Roach also refers to Connerton's 'incorporating practice' of memory, which is 'sedimented or amassed in the body'.<sup>87</sup> According to Roach, cultural memory is transmitted through the repetition of a performance, with revision, and often through a surrogate of the 'traditional' version of a performance, rather than through direct reproduction.<sup>88</sup> In this process, cultural transmission may be *détour*-ed, as it moves away from a search for origin and towards a hybrid version, containing just a memory of its origin. Links can be made here with Glissant's 'trace' and *détour*. Britton has written about how, in Glissant's work, repetition is a form of *détour*, how his narrative shifts through repetition and reiteration, and how the sense of a story told in relay by multiple voices and authors is made evident.<sup>89</sup> In my work, the idea of a *détour*-ed tradition is something I explore through repeated performed actions.

Embedding memory in performed, embodied actions are forms of *détour* that hold memory in more opaque ways, and which constitute resistance against possible oppression. Similarly, objects in performances may become imbued with memory in ways that offer more opaque meanings. But I am also interested in how objects may contain traces of performed actions. In this thesis, I consider the objects I use in performances as 'performative objects' which, according to artist

<sup>82</sup> John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (London: Sage, 2011).

<sup>83</sup> Urry and Larsen, *Tourist Gaze 3.0*, pp. 190, 193.

<sup>84</sup> Darya Maoz, 'The mutual gaze', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33 (2006), pp. 221-39. Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Show and the Gaze of Theatre: A European Perspective* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997), p. 231.

<sup>85</sup> Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984-1986), translated as *Realms of Memory* by Lawrence D. Kritzman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996-1998).

<sup>86</sup> Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, p. 25.

<sup>87</sup> Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, p. 72.

<sup>88</sup> Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, p. 29.

<sup>89</sup> Britton, *Glissant*, pp. 139, 163.

Karen Niedderer, make the user aware of, and reflect on, social interactions.<sup>90</sup> Objects in this thesis hold a particular material poetics, and it is through the performance of the object that the poetics is understood. One of the starting points for my work in Brixton were the ritual objects that I found for sale in the market.

Ritual represented (for me) part of the culture of place in Brixton, and it was a key practice I used in the thesis. I was fascinated by the market stalls selling magic spells and charms which promised the customer everything from good luck, business success, power and control over enemies, and love, to the removal of jinxes. These incarnations of magical rites and Vodou spells also played on the associations of salt with both the language and substance of diasporic superstitions. In Brixton, the actual rituals often remain hidden, but the presence of the material culture of ritual in the area was a strong index of the practices people used. Ritual therefore connects to performed, reiterated practices and the use of objects such as votive candles, magic salts, or bundles of herbs.

Practices of performance, particularly those that involve rituals and acts of repetition, can be considered in terms of re-making. Re-making offers the potential to make a record, by-product or trace of dialogue, ritual, performance and journey. In my practice, repeated actions, such as re-making bread, practising the bread and salt threshold ritual, or holding a dinner party, are carried out in different contexts. Performances which vary according to site, context and participants can be traced from 'event scores', a term that came out of the practices of the Fluxus group in the 1960s and 1970s. The Fluxus event scores and performances, which were open-ended and introduced a possibility of random chance encounters, often questioned authorship and spectator participation.<sup>91</sup> My performative practices involving ritual and re-making allow chance and change to occur, according to context and iteration. The practices might be seen as artistic and spatial forms of *détour* and *retour*, which, through re-using familiar practices in subverted ways, are small acts of questioning or resistance. They offer Brixton-specific ways of critically engaging with regeneration processes, without fixed or predefined outcomes.

<sup>90</sup> Karen Niedderer, 'Designing mindful interaction: The category of performative object', *Design Issues*, 23 (2007), pp. 3-17, at p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> Anna Dezeuze, 'Origins of the Fluxus score', *Performance Research*, 7 (2002), pp. 78-94, at pp. 78-79.



## Salting practices

As a key aim of my art practice in Brixton has been to create a poetic index through salt, I develop practices to work with salt as the overarching material, and to discover how salt can form a poetics of re-generation which uses Glissant's poetics of Relation as a basis.

The practice of salt can be a means of collecting stories in Brixton and its related places, and an aim of the practice is to keep (preserve) the stories. This can be metaphorical, but it might also be represented through a physical 'salting'. I initially identified four key practices associated with salt: extraction, protection, preservation, and residue (see Image 0.6). I described them as follows:

Extraction – Salt as process/medium: collecting relics of place

Protection – Salt as currency: collecting and extracting narratives of migration through market stalls

Preservation – Salt as element: re-presenting narratives into Brixton

Residue – Salt as residue: exhibiting the process

However, through the process of the PhD, and the making of art, this list grew and changed in nature. Firstly, I noticed that these categories were overlapping in the practices I used; for instance, some work involved both extracting and protecting, or protecting and preserving. I also found more terms relating to salt processes, from the analysis of Jones's text on the symbolism of salt and then my examination of artists' works, as well as through visits to salt-production sites and by discovering salt's other states and material processes. These new terms were:

- Cleansing
- Concentration
- Corrosion
- Crystallization
- Desalination
- Dispersion
- Distillation
- Evaporation
- Mining
- Solution

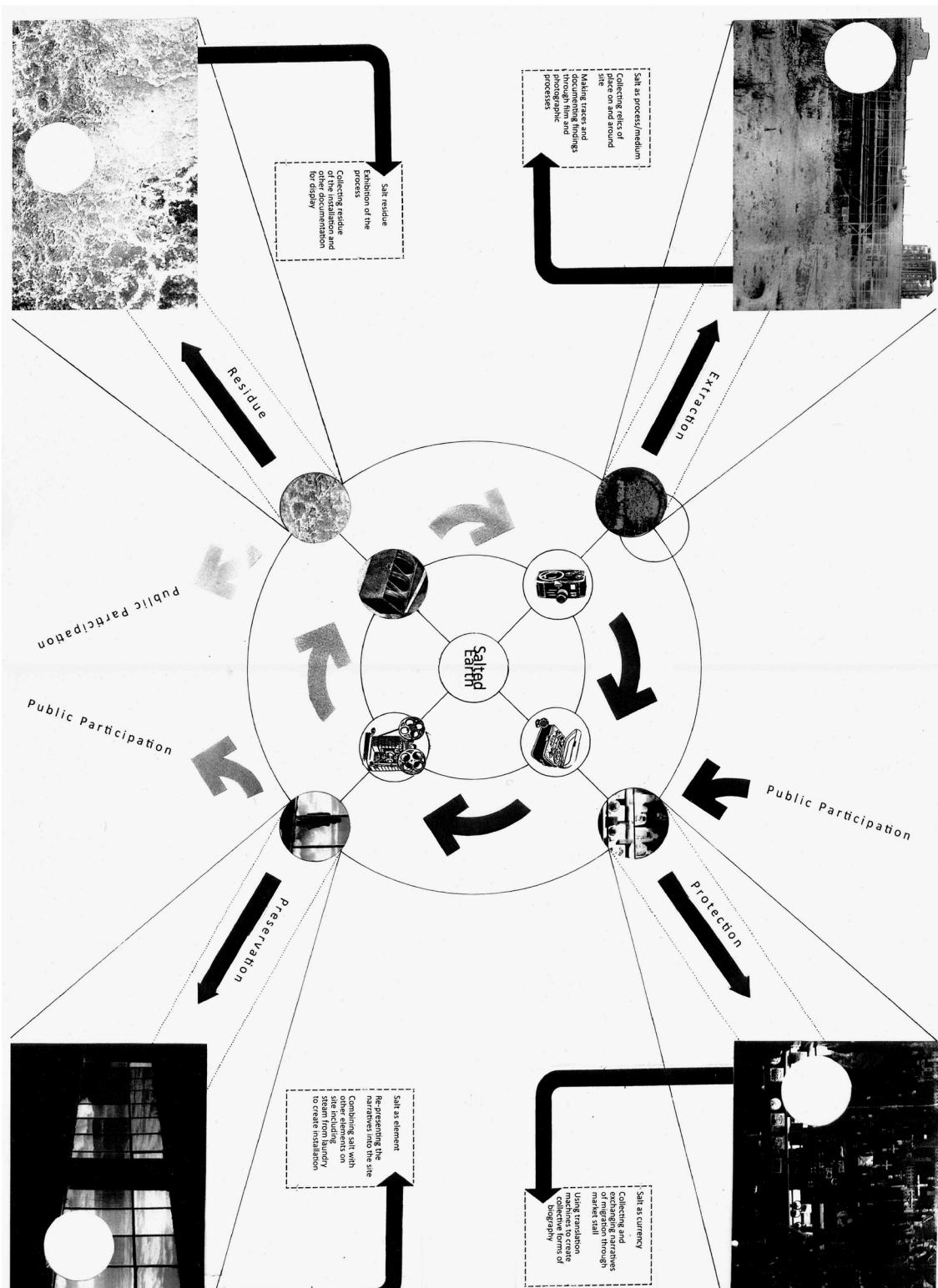


Image 0.6: Katy Beinart, Salting methodology diagram

I decided that, through the process of the thesis, the making of salt artworks, and the reflective writing on these works, I would aim to understand salt as a practice. In order to research Brixton's diasporas, I made a series of journeys which connected with salt products found in Brixton to their sites of production elsewhere. These journeys, or *détours*, became the central structuring device of the thesis. They allowed me to make connections between the local and the diasporic, using journeying and story-telling to make links between Brixton and related places elsewhere. These physical journeys enabled me to make *détours* from Brixton, to discover the poetics of Relation in the diasporic links through salt, and to bring these narratives back to Brixton through the practice of *retour*.

The journeys I made are at the heart of my salt practice, and they are framed by my understanding of Glissant's concept of the poetics of Relation and the interlinked journeying of *détour* and *retour*. (See Image 0.7)

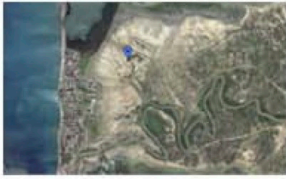
The first type of journey I made was in search of personal identity, which is a retracing of a personal family story of migration, in this case one that led me to find my family connection to salt and to use salt as a means of extraction and exchange. The *retour* of this journey was the beginning of a link between the personal story of my family and a set of connections to the homeplace, Brixton, where I connected to other individuals' migration stories. This type of journey forms the basis of Project 1.

The second type of journey I made was in search of personal identity, in which there was a more uncertain reconstruction of a personal family story of migration, one which revealed absences as well as presences, but through which I developed practices of salting in rituals of remembrance. The *retour* of this journey was the link between a collaboration (Anchor & Magnet) and the related spaces of multiple voices this collaboration created in the homeplace. This type of journey forms the basis of Project 2.

The third type of journey I made was in search of another's story. Through these journeys, I discovered, first, salt's ability to make images and to emblemize processes of crystallization, scale, duration and change, and, second, salt's potential to hold meanings of liberation, awakening and regeneration, and transitions between states. On the *retours*, the biographies of others were told to become part of a social heritage or biography of place in Brixton, and to create further artworks that invited dialogue on the questions of heritage and regeneration. This type of journey forms the basis of Projects 3 and 4.

Through these three types of journeys, I set out the following four projects (chapters) which develop a salting practice in the *détour* and return to questions of regeneration in Brixton in the *retour*. These journeys are the basis on which I build my argument for a poetics of re-generation that uses salting practice as a poetic and material case study.

Grande Salines, Haiti



Setubal, Portugal



Carrickfergus, Ireland



Salt & Story Origins

Magical: Magic salts  
Religious aids shop



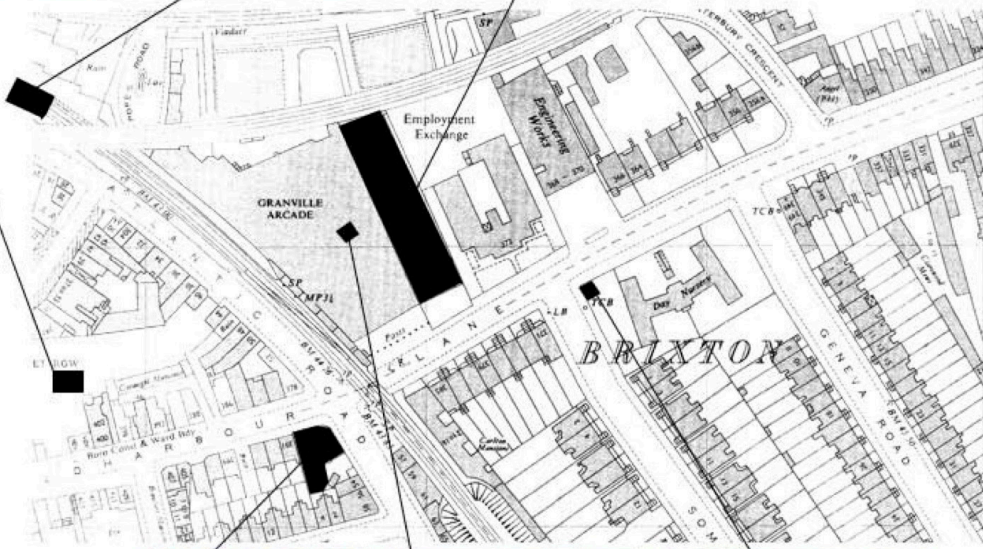
Preserving; Salt Cod  
Jose and Bella's Deli



Cleaning: Laundry Salts  
Walton Lodge Laundry



Salt Action  
Location in Brixton



Salt Action  
Location in Brixton

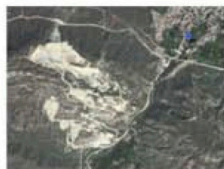
Flavouring: Hot Pepper Sauce  
Carribbean social club



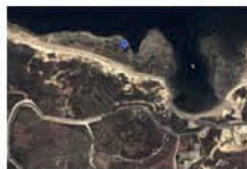
Rising: Sourdough Bread  
Bakers in Market



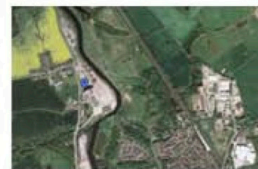
Eroding: Street Cleaning  
Road Salt Dispenser



Salt & Story Origin: Las Salinas, Dominican Republic



Xejeni, Gozo



Winsford, Cheshire, UK

Image 0.7: Katy Beinart, Salt-sites in Brixton and their diasporas.





## **Part II**





**Project 1: Journey to South Africa (and back): *Don't Look Back* (2010)/  
*Memory Preservation Salts* (2011)**



## Introduction

This chapter begins by investigating the transformational effects of undertaking a ‘roots journey’, that is, a form of travelling where the primary aim is to discover and visit a place of origin in one’s family or cultural history.<sup>1</sup> This type of travel is also termed ‘heritage tourism’. While precise definitions of the wider category of heritage tourism vary, it is generally agreed to apply to tourism related to what we have inherited.<sup>2</sup> The specific terms ‘diaspora tourism’ and ‘legacy tourism’ are used to reflect types of heritage tourism where the aim is to visit sites relating to personal family and cultural history.<sup>3</sup> Tim Coles and Dallen Timothy have conceptualized diaspora tourism as produced, consumed and experienced by diasporic communities.<sup>4</sup> In this chapter, I explore these concepts further through a personalized account of a trip my sister Rebecca and I took in 2009, which made links between heritage and diaspora tourism, pilgrimage and performative art practice.

For those living in diasporic communities, travelling in search of particular inheritances could be identified as a form of *détour*. According to Salmishah Tillet, African Americans travelling to West African countries today do so as heritage tourists, as part of a process of self-identification and cultural affirmation that seeks what Glissant termed the ‘point of entanglement’ (*point d’intrication*).<sup>5</sup> For these travellers, the point of entanglement is a slave fort in Ghana rather than a specific ancestral village. Through this type of *détour*, I argue that a poetics of relation in the present emerges. Through our *détour* to South Africa, I suggest we bring our personal inheritances to bear in the subjectivities of relating in regeneration in Brixton.

Introducing the *détour*, I set out the specific context of Jewish genealogy and heritage tourism, describing both problematic issues we encountered around the promotion of versions of Jewish identity and the desire for authentic experience of roots. I then discuss links between our journey, forms of pilgrimage and performance art, which set up our journey as a more heterodox experience than a straightforward Jewish roots journey. I explain the complex inheritances of race and culture in the South African Jewish context, and how this brings up questions of guilt

<sup>1</sup> Dallen J. Timothy, ‘Tourism and the personal heritage experience’, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24 (1997), pp. 751-54; Paul Basu, ‘Route metaphors of “roots-tourism” in the Scottish Highland diaspora’, in Simon Coleman and John Eade (eds), *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 150-74.

<sup>2</sup> Gary McCain and Nina Ray, ‘Legacy tourism: The search for personal meaning in heritage travel’, *Tourism Management*, 24 (2003), pp. 713-17, at p. 713; Pat Yale, *From Tourist Attractions to Heritage Tourism* (Huntingdon: ELM Publications, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> Timothy, ‘Tourism’; Tim Coles and Dallen J. Timothy (eds), *Tourism, Diasporas and Space* (London: Routledge, 2004); McCain and Ray, ‘Legacy tourism’, p. 713.

<sup>4</sup> Tim Coles and Dallen J. Timothy, ‘My field is the world: Conceptualizing diasporas, travel and tourism’, in Coles and Timothy (eds), *Tourism, Diasporas*, pp.1-30, at p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Salmishah Tillet, *Sites of Slavery: Citizenship and Racial Democracy in the Post-Civil Rights Imagination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 98.



and shame in the context of heritage and inheritance. I suggest this might connect to ideas of the spectral trace which I described in Part 1, Section 2.<sup>6</sup>

I describe the journey to South Africa and our subsequent residency in Cape Town. On the journey, we kept a journal, and as part of the residency we wrote an online blog. This diary voice is used in the *détour* to present an autobiographical account of the journey, as well as to understand our auto-ethnographic observations of our interactions. These diary entries are contrasted with excerpts from records of migration journeys by ship on the same journey from Europe to South Africa in the late 1800s and early 1900s.<sup>7</sup> The diary entries begin each of the subsections that describe a particular artwork.

Through the *détour*, I try to define how my own subjectivity sits within a wider inheritance of race and culture that I found in investigating my family's genealogy. In the *retour*, I return to Brixton and consider the subjective self in the encounter between self and other: how my role as practitioner, and others' views, affect relationships during practice-based work. With Rebecca, I make a series of new artworks, which begin with a market stall highlighting the role of the 'performative object' in creating opportunities to relate to others. I then reflect on how this public practice relates to recent debates (introduced in Part 1) around participatory art. Through engaging with these debates, I also consider how my experience and understanding of a roots journey could be expanded to relate to diverse Brixton heritages and current regeneration debates.

<sup>6</sup> Karen E. Till and Julian Jonker, 'Mapping and excavating spectral traces in post-apartheid Cape Town', *Memory Studies*, 2 (2009), pp. 303-35.

<sup>7</sup> Gwynne Schrire Robins, *From Eastern Europe to South Africa: Memories of an Epic Journey 1880-1937* (Cape Town: Jacob Gitlin Library, Western Province Zionist Council, 2007).

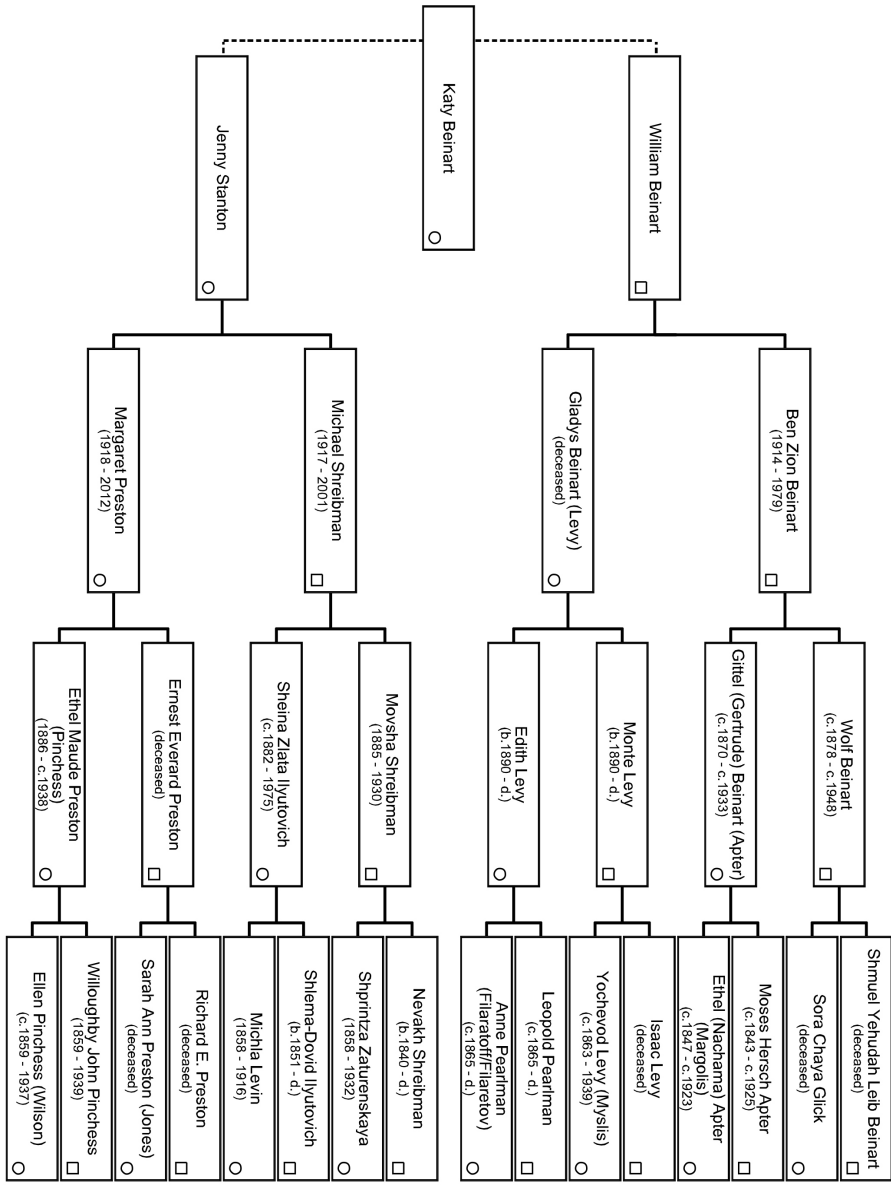


Image 1.1: Family Tree

## Section 1: Journey to South Africa (*détour*)

In December 2009, my sister and I took a container ship to Cape Town, trying to retrace a journey undergone in the early 1900s by our great-grandparents Woolf and Gittel Beinart (see Image 1.1), who had left behind their homes in Obelai, Lithuania. They had travelled over land to Klaipeda in northern Lithuania, then by ship to Hamburg, from where they took another ship to England, probably to Hull or London. From there they travelled overland to Southampton where they took another ship to Cape Town. The journey would have taken weeks or even months. We were unable to travel from Southampton, as there is no longer a passenger route to South Africa, so the closest we could arrange was to travel overland to Antwerp from where we boarded a container ship to Cape Town.

Coming from a partially Jewish ancestry, the context of heritage tourism or roots journeying was a problematic terrain for us. In the field of heritage tourism studies, Lilach Lev Ari and David Mittelberg have described the 'reconstructed narrative' of Jewish heritage being offered to those embarking on roots journeys as a deliberate promotion of a particular collective identity.<sup>8</sup> We were aware of the potential dangers of 'staged authenticity' for the consumption of a tourist audience.<sup>9</sup>

Books such as *Jewish Ancestors: A Guide to Jewish Genealogy in Lithuania* and websites like JewishGen.org offer plentiful warnings of the difficulty of finding authentic records, but these draw on a longer genealogical tradition which emerged in the 1920s in Germany.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, this was around the same time the Nazis were beginning to use genealogy to establish a pure Aryan race. The emergence of a post-war interest in Jewish genealogy gathered pace in the late 1970s with the founding in New York City of the first Jewish Genealogical Society.<sup>11</sup> In 1980, Arthur Kurzweil published a guide to exploring Jewish roots, and Jewish genealogical research spread quickly with the result that more than 70 societies now exist worldwide, as well as a dedicated magazine, *Avotaynu*.<sup>12</sup> One of the subsequent growth activities has been of individuals

<sup>8</sup> Lilach Lev Ari and David Mittelberg, 'Between authenticity and ethnicity: Heritage tourism and re-ethnification among diaspora Jewish youth', *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 3 (2008), pp. 79-103, at p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Dean MacCannell, 'Staged authenticity: Arrangements of social space in tourist settings', *American Journal of Sociology*, 79 (1973), pp. 589-603.

<sup>10</sup> Sam Aaron, *Jewish Ancestors: A Guide to Jewish Genealogy in Lithuania* (London: Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain, 1996); Dan Leeson, 'A Jewish Genealogical Fable' (1996), JewishGen website: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/infofiles/dlfable.html>> [accessed 26 August 2013]; Arnon Hershkovitz, 'Early Jewish genealogy organizations in Berlin and Jerusalem', *Avotaynu*, 27 (2011), pp. 23-26; Arnon Hershkovitz, 'In Ben-Yehuda Strasse with Apfelstrudel: The beginnings of organized Jewish genealogy in Germany and in Israel', *Sharsberet HaDorot*, 25 (2011), pp. 5-13.

<sup>11</sup> Sallyann Sack-Pikus, 'Evolution of Jewish genealogical studies', in M. Avrum Ehrlich (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Jewish Diaspora: Origins, Experiences and Culture*, vol. 3 (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008), pp. 292-94.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Kurzweil, *From Generation to Generation: How to Trace Your Jewish Genealogy and Family History*





wanting to undertake an actual journey to visit sites connected to their ancestors, leading to a tourist industry.<sup>13</sup>

My reason for setting off on my own roots journey was not to look for a sense of connection with Jewish religion and homeland; rather, I recognized that, since my cultural background includes artistic practice, historical research, secularism, unorthodoxy and rebellion, as well as a strong sense of South African and British politics, any 'authentic' experience of roots for me would need to incorporate these aspects into my experience of Jewish history and genealogy. Noga Collins-Kreiner and Dan Olsen emphasize the consumption of heritage through intermediaries such as tour operators and agencies, with a focus on promotion by websites.<sup>14</sup> However, many of these products, such as the 'birthright Israel' trip, promote an orthodoxy and connection to 'homeland' that provides a basis for the construction of a collective identity. In the case of young people from North America and the former Soviet Union on 'birthright Israel' trips, Lev Ari and Mittelberg argue that authenticity is 'both subjective and dialectically generated *differentially* depending on the background of the tourist'.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the cultural background of the tourist frames their gaze, so that their experience of authenticity is located in their subjective interpretation. As a result:

At the subjective level of the participant, the authenticity of this experience is not contingent on being an exchange with an unspoiled other, rather following Wang (1999), on a *meaningful* encounter with one's self and one's people, for whom heritage has been central by the experience.<sup>16</sup>

A consequence of the experience is that these young people 'embed this individual experience in a new structure of belonging'.<sup>17</sup> In the search for belonging, meaning can be found precisely in the subjective view of interaction with another. But meaning can also elude discovery if that subjective view comes from a different cultural background.

Growing up, I had been aware of our family archive: a collection of photographs, postcards and a *kist* full of salt-spoiled silver and linens.<sup>18</sup> My father grew up in South Africa and told the story

(New York: Schocken Books, 1980); International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies World Map <<http://www.iajgs.org/blog/membership/jgs-world-map/>> [accessed 20 January 2015].

<sup>13</sup> Noga Collins-Kreiner and Dan Olsen, 'Selling diaspora: Producing and segmenting the Jewish diaspora tourism market', in Coles and Timothy (eds), *Tourism, Diasporas*, pp. 279-90; <<http://www.avotaynu.com/journal.htm>> [accessed 10 November 2017].

<sup>14</sup> Collins-Kreiner and Olsen, 'Selling diaspora'.

<sup>15</sup> Lev Ari and Mittelberg, 'Between authenticity and ethnicity', p. 81.

<sup>16</sup> Lev Ari and Mittelberg, 'Between authenticity and ethnicity', p. 101, referring to Ning Wang, 'Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26 (1999), pp. 349-70.

<sup>17</sup> Lev Ari and Mittelberg, 'Between authenticity and ethnicity', p. 101.

<sup>18</sup> Kist: South African name for a chest used to store clothes and linen.



of coming to England by sea. Our archive evidenced a diasporic family, starting out in Lithuania and Russia and making their way variously to England, South Africa, Australia and America. But perhaps my own journey started most of all from a sense of the absence rather than presence of religion, ritual and roots. My father's parents died by the time I was five. He had not practised since his early teens, and my mother had a Jewish father and English mother with strong left-wing political commitments who were both disdainful of religion.

Tradition came up in a few truncated stories of place, associated with memorabilia in the archive, but the only link with specifically Jewish culture came with the borscht served at dinner, a few Yiddish words, silver candlesticks, and the long-discarded prayer shawls and yarmulkes mothballed in the *kist*. But then, at a transitional point in my own life, it seemed that my ancestors resurfaced and demanded my attention. Through discussions with my sister Rebecca, who was also interested in the project of finding out more about our family background, we decided to apply for an artist's residency in South Africa to research our family's history. We also decided to make the journey by cargo ship. Far from the reconstructed narrative of heritage and a search for 'homeland', we were seeking instead the journey itself, trying to understand better how migrations had shaped our family. Perhaps we were unwittingly seeking the transformational experience of the pilgrimage and carrying out a kind of *errance*: wandering without an aim but within the frame of seeking something, a sense of Relation.

In terms of our journey, I felt that using 'pilgrimage' as an alternative or addition to 'roots journey' made it more evident that 'route' was as important as 'root'.<sup>19</sup> Like Glissant's term *errance*, pilgrimage highlights aspects of the sacred in our travelling. In Part 1, I set out recent thinking that suggests pilgrimage can be seen alongside more everyday social, cultural and political processes.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, the term can be used in a non-religious way to conceptualize how practices of displacement are integral to making meaning.<sup>21</sup>

Our journey was less a precise re-enactment and more an embodied experience of the emotions and sensations we imagined our ancestors might have felt. Though we did not set out on a religious pilgrimage, elements of our experience were personally transformational and had parallels with sacred journeys, similar to those identified by Basu, Maddrell and della Dora.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 199), pp. 4-6.

<sup>20</sup> Coleman and Eade (eds), *Reframing Pilgrimage*, p. 3; MacCannell, 'Staged authenticity', p. 593.

<sup>21</sup> Clifford, *Routes*, p. 39.

<sup>22</sup> Avril Maddrell and Veronica della Dora, 'Crossing surfaces in search of the holy: Landscape and liminality in contemporary Christian pilgrimage', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 45 (2013), pp. 1105-26; Paul Basu, 'Cairns in the landscape: Migrant stones and migrant stories in Scotland and its diaspora', in Arnar Árnason, Nicolas Ellison, Jo Vergunst and Andrew Whitehouse (eds), *Landscapes and Beyond Land: Routes, Aesthetics, Narratives* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2012), pp. 116-38.



Much of our family culture had come from migrating, from adapting oneself to changing environments, and from negotiating language, gender roles and cultural practices. We came to understand that whether or not they sought it out, our ancestors left behind certainty, and clear religious and cultural identity, for the unorthodox, unfamiliar and liminal place of being-in-transit.

Our ancestors, like many others, emigrated after pogroms in Lithuania made life increasingly difficult, and in doing so they unwittingly escaped the Holocaust. On 25 August 1941, the remaining Jewish community in their village was exterminated: 1,160 men, women and children were murdered (I visit the village in Project 2).<sup>23</sup> While this narrative of escape and persecution remained in my wider consciousness, I was also aware that my great-grandparents' subsequent economic success in South Africa made for a troubled and complex relationship between victim and perpetrator, and past and present, one in which identities continued to be renegotiated by subsequent generations.

Since the Second World War, numerous written, filmed and oral testimonies have told of the experiences of Holocaust survivors. Many of these testimonies mention feelings of guilt, from which grew psychoanalytical attempts during the 1960s and onwards to theorize 'survivor guilt'.<sup>24</sup> More recently, Ruth Leys has written about the shift from guilt to shame in trauma theory, by critiquing writers including Lawrence Langer and Giorgio Agamben, who have identified problems with guilt in that it identifies the victim as imitatively identifying with or colluding with the perpetrators.<sup>25</sup> Langer and Agamben have proposed shame as an alternative, which, according to Leys, shows a 'move away from the "moral" concept of guilt in favour of the ethically different or freer concept of "shame"'.<sup>26</sup> Shame can be understood in a larger context of anti-mimetic theory, according to which the subject, rather than being caught up in the shock, remains a spectator, not identifying with the perpetrator's actions (which leads to guilt).<sup>27</sup> However, Leys is critical of this turn towards shame, arguing that it is problematic in the way it deals with the emotions of survivors. Meanwhile, Katharina Von Kellenbach has written about perpetrator guilt as a shadow that continues to hang over German families and has grown over

<sup>23</sup> Raphael Julius, "Abel" (chapter from Pinkas Hakehillot Lita), in *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Lithuania (Obeliai, Lithuania)* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996), <[http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas\\_lita/lit\\_00113.html](http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_lita/lit_00113.html)> [accessed 24 January 2015].

<sup>24</sup> Primo Levi, *If This is a Man* (London: Orion, 1958) and *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Summit Books, 1986); Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (Paris: Fayard, 1987); Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992); Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); Bruno Bettelheim, *Surviving and other essays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

<sup>25</sup> Lawrence Langer, *The Age of Atrocity: Death in Modern Literature* (Boston:

<sup>26</sup> Ruth Leys, *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 6-7.

<sup>27</sup> Leys, *From Guilt to Shame*, p. 9.



time.<sup>28</sup> Whether or not those implicated in the Holocaust as victims or perpetrators continued to identify as such, the wider narrative of victimhood, persecution and escape, as well as guilt and shame, continue to define Jewish communities in the Diaspora.

Gideon Shimoni traces two main trajectories of identity among Lithuanian Jewish migrants to South Africa. Some 'accepted the privileges' and allowed themselves to be served by the Africans just as all the other whites did, while also strongly engaging with Zionism, whereas a second, less common, 'deviant' group of South African Jews 'balked at the established social order'. The former category did not protest at the segregation and racism of their adopted country, while the latter became actively involved in politics, for example during the campaign for rights for the South African Indian population spearheaded by Gandhi and aided by radical Jewish lawyer Henry Polak.<sup>29</sup> My family initially settled in a small town in the mainly Afrikaner rural Western Cape; they were, therefore, identified as *Boere-jood* (Boer Jews). My father describes the original processes of assimilation as 'becoming white'; although Jews had white skin, they were not initially seen as culturally white.<sup>30</sup>

By the next generation, however, Woolf's sons (including my grandfather Ben) largely became professionals, moved to Cape Town and shifted to an English-speaking South African identity. My grandfather Ben was an academic and liberal political dissident; his son (my father) remembers growing up in a white South African culture, with a privileged lifestyle, in which Jewish families had been largely absorbed. My father felt deeply frustrated by the hypocrisy of those discussing the Jews as victims of the Holocaust while simultaneously perpetrating a colonial and racist system. This contributed to his rebellion, political activism and open criticism of Jewish nationalism, which he compared to Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid.

So within my family story there were traces of victimhood, perpetrator and deviant – an uncomfortable mix of clashing identities. My journey to find out about their lives was not a straightforward one of sentimental admiration for the hard life or an amazing escape from the Holocaust. Jane Rendell has written of acknowledging this discomfort with one's family past; the acknowledgement of one's own position, even if it sits uncomfortably, can be seen as connected to Glissant's ideas of Relation and relation-identity.<sup>31</sup> In trying to understand how my ancestors' mobility reached forward in time to my generation, I needed to find out what I wanted to accept of that past in my life, what I might need to forgive (and forget), and what

<sup>28</sup> Katharina von Kellenbach, *The Mark of Cain: Guilt and Denial in the Post-War Lives of Nazi Perpetrators* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> Gideon Shimoni, *Community and Conscience: The Jews in Apartheid South Africa* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2003), p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> Under proposed immigration legislation in 1902-3, anyone who could not write in a European language – and Yiddish was not included as a European language – was not to be allowed into South Africa; see Shimoni, *Community and Conscience*, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> Jane Rendell, *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 69-73.





the ancestral ghosts wanted from me. I wanted to be aware of the possibility of finding failure, disappointment and *unfamiliarity*.

Rather than gathering information that can fold into the known, art practices allow the interrogation of truths, failure and not knowing. Conceiving our journey as a performance, we took with us ingredients for our attempts at re-enactment. The rituals we brought on the journey, and the performative actions we carried out, were written into our own lives as memorials to past generations. These memories filtered through our cultural, environmental and educational heritages, which have formed us as much as our genetic inheritance. ‘Material objects’, Adrian Forty argues, ‘have less significance in perpetuating memory than embodied acts, rituals and normative social behaviour’; Forty is interested in how it is that societies *forget*.<sup>32</sup> In our family, forgetting had been a choice, and the scraps of remembering we could use as a basis for our journey and our re-enactments were mostly the behaviours, actions and rituals we had been told in stories by family members, or had simply observed in their everyday actions.

Tim Ingold writes of the idea of ‘wayfaring’ (as opposed to ‘pre-planned navigation’), in which it is only on reaching the destination that the traveller can be said to have found his or her way.<sup>33</sup> Discussing the way medieval thinkers travelled as they read, Ingold comments that ‘the act of remembering *was itself conceived as a performance*: the text is remembered by reading it, the story by telling it, the journey by making it.’<sup>34</sup> Rebecca’s and my journey was, therefore, an act of performed memory, but nevertheless one which had unknown outcomes and destinations, linking again to pilgrimage and *errance*, in which, although a similar route may be taken, the meaning of the journey can be different.

Making this trip and forming a link between our own artistic practice and the past were more authentic means of reconnection for us than trying to directly perpetuate lost cultural or religious practices. We recognized the multiple points of departure and arrival – a complex of journeying – of our family. This destabilized the idea of singular roots for us, suggesting rather the rhizomatic, tangled roots of belonging, and the differential, personal nature of authenticity in roots journeying, which connects to Glissant’s idea of relation-identity as opposed to root-identity.<sup>35</sup> These tangled roots do not adhere to notions of collective identity or links to a particular ‘homeland’; rather they remain diasporic and non-hegemonic, bridging past and present. For Glissant, the trace was a means to link past and present, as well as a physical, geographical wandering that brought people into relation with one another.<sup>36</sup> The trauma

<sup>32</sup> Adrian Forty and Susanne Kuchler (eds), *The Art of Forgetting* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), p. 2, referring to Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>33</sup> Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 15-16

<sup>34</sup> Ingold, *Lines*, p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> Wang, ‘Rethinking authenticity’; Glissant, *PR*, pp. 143-44.

<sup>36</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Introduction à une poétique du divers* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), pp. 17-18.



inherent in the trace, which I take to mean both in the sense of a residual memory and a route through physical place or landscape, could be brought to the surface through wandering the route of the trace.



## The Journey

We arrived at the small railway station from where we would embark for Libau. 'Be careful you don't trip over the signal wires' my mother said, as we alighted from Berchik's wagon and crossed to the other side of the railway-line. I stepped over the glistening rails and wires. Hours passed; then with a mighty roar the engine bore down on us ... The first mishap of the journey happened early on: the train window through which I was watching the world unfold itself came crashing down on my fingers. 'The Russian trains are as ramshackle as their empire' an elderly Jew standing next to me said. This empire tumbled into dust a few years later.<sup>37</sup>

20th December 2009

We travelled by train to Antwerp, via Brussels. I read *Maus* on the train and was transported between times, other trains and travels across Europe, people fleeing for their lives or captured and in transit to camps.<sup>38</sup> At the station we were met by a dis-gruntled taxi driver who proceeded to issue warnings about the crew's desperation for female company, so that our arrival at port was tempered by a certain wariness. We weren't on any lists and we weren't expected. A man casually looked at our passports and waved us on to the Green Cape, which was loading cargo. We had to climb a rickety staircase leaving our luggage on the dock where it was unceremoniously hoisted up by crane and dumped onto deck. The Steward, Niko, welcomed us with a little too much enthusiasm and showed us our cabin, and we breathed a sigh of relief. It had a lockable door.<sup>39</sup>

We had set off with a pile of books and texts, unsure as to how these would coincide on the journey to unravel our identity myth. Elena Bastea ventures that 'going back to a place of the past may be the best way we have to take ourselves back in time'.<sup>40</sup> And in *Austerlitz* by W.G. Sebald, which centres on a search for lost identity, the main character explores narratives of place to re-find lost memories of self:

And might it not be, continued Austerlitz, that we also have appointments to keep in the past, in what has gone before and is for the most part extinguished, and must go there in search of places and people who have

<sup>37</sup> Schrire Robins, *From Eastern Europe to South Africa*, p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Art Spiegelman, *Maus* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991).

<sup>39</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, 'Journey to boat and arrival on board', *Origination* (blog), 20 December 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Elena Bastea, *Memory and Architecture* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), p. 12.



Image 1.2: *Starter Culture and Bread-making suitcase*

some connection with us on the far side of time, so to speak?<sup>41</sup>

John Wylie has written of the geographies of Sebald's work as 'more essentially spectral in that their concern is with the unsettling of places and selves as a primary and generative process'.<sup>42</sup> We hoped to connect with the spectral geographies of our ancestors and, through re-embodiment their journey, touch moments they had experienced, but we were aware that this very spectrality could unsettle and regenerate our existing modes of being.

### ***Starter Culture and Khleboslony (2009-)***

Being so religious mad, we lived on black bread dipped in sugar water and dried out, which we had with tea and eggs.<sup>43</sup>

19th January 2010

Meal times on the boat are strictly timed, and we must eat what we're given or not eat at all. The meals in the officer's mess offer us our main daily interaction with other people. The menu is Polish, and heavily based around meat and potatoes, which is challenging for me as a vegetarian. On one occasion I am presented with a plate of potatoes accompanied by a large boiled carrot, in imitation of a steak. It makes us realise what a fundamental part of our culture and identity food is.<sup>44</sup>

For a secular family, food was extremely important to us while growing up, and perhaps more so given the lack of other rituals in our lives. Michel de Certeau writes of bread as a 'memorial', a cultural symbol of escape from poverty, and of the hardships of life and work.<sup>45</sup> Our *Starter Culture* contained a remnant of home that became all the more important in the unfamiliar context of the ship.

*Starter Culture* is an ongoing artwork, a bread culture made from grapes from our home in England, which, along with equipment for making bread, was carried in a suitcase used by previous generations of our family on the same route between Europe and South Africa. *Starter Culture* operates as metaphor, as the nature of the culture changes from place to place and is

<sup>41</sup> W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (New York: Random House, 2001), pp. 359-60.

<sup>42</sup> John Wylie, 'The spectral geographies of W.G. Sebald', *Cultural Geographies*, 14 (2007), pp. 171-88, at p. 175.

<sup>43</sup> Schrire Robins, *From Eastern Europe to South Africa*, p. 25.

<sup>44</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, 'Bread and Salt', *Origination* (blog), 19 January 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol (eds) *The Practice of Everyday Life, Volume 2: Living and Cooking* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 86.



Image 1.3: *Khleboslony* at the equator



repeatedly renewed with local flour and water; it is also part of a re-invented ritual, referring to the Russian, Eastern European and Jewish practice called *khlebosolny*, from the Russian *Khleb-Sol*, meaning bread and salt, and literally a term for hospitality.<sup>46</sup> Salt had a purifying and transformative role in Jewish culture, and, in the *khlebosolny* ritual, it has a sacred and protective function, whereby crossing the threshold to a new home is celebrated with bread and salt, the bread representing blessing, and salt the preservation of the blessing. Hallowed and dipped in the salt of the covenant, bread changes consumption to communion.<sup>47</sup> Our re-enactment of this ritual had parallels with the prayers and rituals of pilgrims that make the journey itself a ritual.<sup>48</sup>

But our ritual also drew on performance art traditions dating from the 1960s and 1970s. Allen Kaprow, for example, re-enacted everyday actions or 'happenings' as artworks.<sup>49</sup> Instructions given to us by friends and family to carry out or repeat during the journey bore similarities to the 'event scores' of the performance art group Fluxus.<sup>50</sup> (See Appendix – Invitation for ideas and list of ideas.)

On Christmas Day, we baked bread on the ship, using our *Starter Culture* from England, and shared it with the sailors, who said it reminded them of the bread they had back at home in Poland. The night before, we had been invited to share and exchange tiny pieces of communion wafer with all the officers and crew. Sharing the wafers and our bread seemed to represent the importance of exchange and communication on the ship. The repeating ritual of making bread and sharing the bread and salt was an act of exchange, as the culture changed each time we added to it and made new bread. For us, this shift was representative of the way our family and others' families shifted and changed as they moved.

We re-enacted the *Khlebosolny* ritual at the crossing of the equator. Waking up at dawn in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, we ate the bread and salt and thought about the passage of time and the movement through space on our journey. This private gesture, or ritual, became an important way for us to retain the link of personal memory to our journeying; it created a performative language that connected past to present, and it recognized the internal changes taking place.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>46</sup> R.E.F. Smith and David Christian, *Bread and Salt: A Social and Economic History of Food and Drink in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>47</sup> Ruth Friedman Cernea, *The Passover Seder: An Anthropological Perspective on Jewish Culture* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995), pp. 79, 85.

<sup>48</sup> Simon Coleman and John Elsner, *Pilgrimage Past and Present: Sacred Travel and Sacred Space in the World Religions* (London: British Museum Press, 1995), pp. 25-27.

<sup>49</sup> Allen Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>50</sup> Ken Friedman (ed.), *The Fluxus Reader* (Chichester: Academy Editions, 1998).

<sup>51</sup> Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, p. 58.



Image 1.4: *Family Photograph*

Image 1.5: Photograph of Ben and Gladys Beinart on board the *Queen Mary*.

### *Family Photograph (2009)*

They travelled with crates and packages – bedclothes, odd bits of furniture, tea kettles, baskets of food, samovars, phylacteries and prayer shawls. The Russian officers, leaning against the deck-rails, laughed derisively at the bedraggled mass of humanity.<sup>52</sup>

12th January 2010

What was curious was the change in sense of self, as Rebecca felt herself filling out the enormous jacket and shoes of her Grandad Ben, and Katy felt herself taking on the airs and graces of her Great-Grandmother, Edith. The photographs themselves are a deliberately unhistorical reconstruction, a hotchpotch of times and places; the setting is a ship constructed in the 1980s, the clothing dates from the 1930s and 1950s. But perhaps this is a more honest attempt to explain our confused identities than a deliberately accurate reconstruction of the past.<sup>53</sup>

For *Family Photograph* (Image 1.4), we reconstructed family photographs taken on board ship (Image 1.5), dressing in garments belonging to grandparents and great-grandparents. Our family archive seemed to represent a conflict between home and diaspora, with image after image of family members, going back generations, on board ships. We had photographs of different generations travelling by ship, mainly making the journey back and forth between England and South Africa, but also travelling from England to America. These photographs were not of the earlier migrations we had set out to re-enact, but of later journeys once the family had established itself and prospered in South Africa. Edith's father Leopold (Image 1.1) had been a tailor, first in Hull (having migrated there from Russia) and later in South Africa. The dinner jacket Rebecca wore had Leopold Pearlman's label inside and was beautifully stitched. The dress I wore had belonged to Edith and was of a delicate silk with hand-embroidered silver thread.

Taking the photographs, we were not aiming for historical accuracy. Rather we sought an intentional re-enacting of our family's past, learning the postures and performances of our ancestors through an imaginative reproduction. There is a specific set of issues around 'going back' for many Jewish families, given that these histories often contain forced removals, loss and frequent resettlement. To further complicate the mix of identities, Edith, my grandmother's mother, had been born and brought up in Hull, had trained as a pianist, and had thought of herself as English. Ben, my grandfather, son of Woolf from Lithuania, had anglicized himself. So the tradition of travel that the photograph reconstructs is not of the impoverished migrant, but of the later and more successful generations who could afford to travel in style. In this sense, the

<sup>52</sup> Schrire Robins, *From Eastern Europe to South Africa*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>53</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, 'Identities Part 1', *Origination* (blog), 12 January 2010.



diaspora we connect with varies from generation to generation.

We were not seeking a return to the past but rather, like our ancestors, more of a disentanglement from narratives of orthodoxy, one that acknowledges the complexities of heritage, while also seeking to understand the mix, with Jewishness featuring as only one part in our more heterogenous identity. In *Maus*, the comic-book version of his family's history, Spiegelman describes how his father places selective importance on events. When his father asks him not to tell the story of a significant relationship in his youth, declaring that 'It has nothing to do with Hitler, or the Holocaust', Spiegelman retorts: 'but Pop, it's great material. It makes everything more real – more human.'<sup>54</sup>

It is precisely the everyday details and handed-down elements of diasporic existence and migration that constitute the human identities of our family. For us, it is not archetypal traditions but rather a specific family recipe that allows us to reconstruct an identity. And it is the changes in these elements that capture the sense of that diaspora as temporal rather than territorial. There is no better 'place' to realize the lack of territorial boundaries than on board ship, a no-country, a non-place and a liminal space, where the lack of usual boundaries and the seclusion from mainstream society allows for a blurring of identities and positions.<sup>55</sup>

### *A Family Recipe (2009)*

In the mornings the waiter would ask me if I had finished. I thought 'finish' meant fish so I would sit and wait for the fish. When we got to Madeira, I was given grapes and bananas. I ate the grapes, but I threw the bananas overboard. They tasted awful. I did not know you had to peel them first.<sup>56</sup>

12th January 2010

The written language of the ship is in a multitude of words: German/ Polish/Italian/English. A palimpsest of makers/users/voyagers. Original signage has aged and one language has gradually replaced another, hastily typed and pasted over. The crew speak Polish, and we write out a series of questions for them, and ask the Captain to translate for us. Somehow the question 'can you give us a family recipe?' gets confused ... We provoke angry, difficult, upset responses, without meaning to. By the time we work out that the word 'recipe' has been confused with the word 'receive' we have already had some difficult but interesting

<sup>54</sup> Spiegelman, *Maus*, p. 12.

<sup>55</sup> Maddrell and della Dora, 'Crossing surfaces in search of the holy'; Turner, *Ritual Process*;

<sup>56</sup> Schrire Robins, *From Eastern Europe to South Africa*, p. 26.

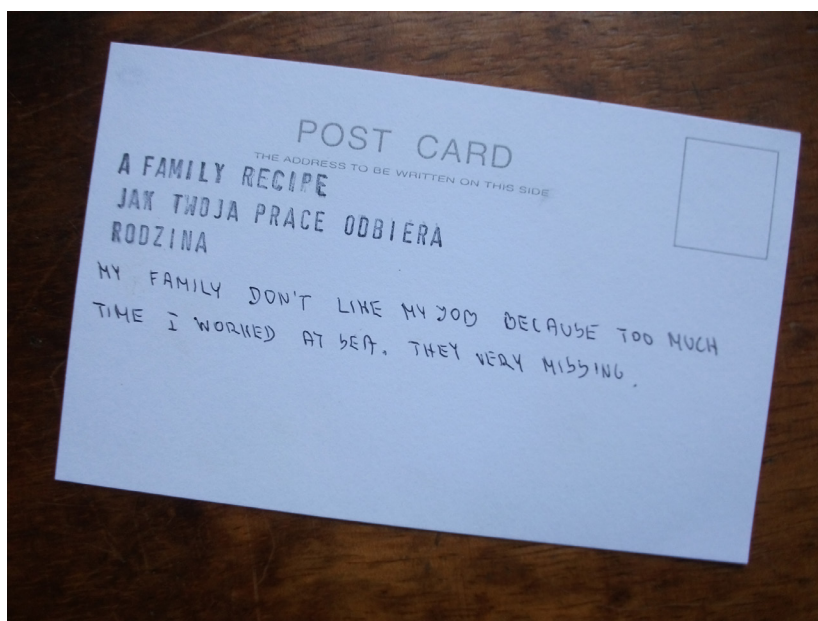


Image 1.6: *A Family Recipe*

conversations about the hardships of their lives, one perhaps we would have avoided with a question about the culture of food.<sup>57</sup>

Migrants, like tourists, often suffer from the mistranslation of familiar phrases into unfamiliar and strange meanings. Paul Basu writes that ‘Translation, which derives from the Latin *Transfere*, meaning “to bring across”, can be seen as a metaphor for migration’.<sup>58</sup> An object transferred takes on a new set of significances – or may be evoked using new objects which ‘stand for’ the original. For example, recipes had been handed down in our family from generation to generation and had been translated through different languages. We could see a family recipe as a kind of trace of our family, containing some essence of a combination of ingredients which was difficult for us to replicate exactly, but which we could emulate with the ingredients we were able to access. After we had made bread on the ship, we shared it with the sailors, and we thought it would be interesting to ask them for a family recipe. We printed onto index cards, like those on which our family had recorded recipes, the title ‘A Family Recipe’ and asked one of the sailors to translate it into Polish. The Polish words they wrote, *jak twoja prace odbiera rodzina*, translate as ‘how does your work take away your family?’

The mistranslation brought to the fore the present emotional geographies we were experiencing, which contrasted with the spectral geographies we were looking for.<sup>59</sup> In seeking what Ning Wang calls the ‘inter-personal authenticity’ of our family ties, we stumbled instead into the interpersonal authenticity of ‘communitas’, to use Victor Turner’s term for the state of shared experience during a rite of passage or pilgrimage.<sup>60</sup> In this unintended space of confusion over a translation, the relationship between, and the roles of, ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’ on board the ship became fluid: structures broke down and our exchanges became more honest and direct.

<sup>57</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, ‘(Mis)Communication’, *Origination* (blog), 12 January 2010.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Basu and Simon Coleman, ‘Migrant worlds, material cultures’, *Mobilities*, 3 (2008), pp. 313–330.

<sup>59</sup> Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi and Mick Smith (eds), *Emotional Geographies* (London: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>60</sup> Wang, ‘Rethinking authenticity’, p. 364; Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969); Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).



Image 1.7: Salt residues on board ship

Image 1.8: *Khlebosalny* at Cape Town Docks



## ***Khlebosalny at the docks***

*We were more than pleased when our wandering had come to an end. The ship now lay peacefully in the harbour and our wonder grew as we looked at Table Mountain with its tremendous tablecloth of cloud. It was one of the most magnificent sights I had seen in my life ... as wonderful was the sight of houses on the slopes of the mountain as if they had been built into its haunches. And even more wonderful when night fell and the illumined dwellings ringed the slopes higher and higher, curving this way, then that. It was truly a city of magic.<sup>61</sup>*

19th January 2010

On Saturday 9th January 2010, Table Mountain appeared, distant and hazy on the horizon. We watched all day as it grew larger and more solid, the city eventually becoming visible at the base of the mountain. We dropped anchor in Table Bay and spent twenty hours waiting for a space in the harbour. On Sunday 10th January 2010, twenty-five days after leaving Antwerp, the Green Cape docked in Cape Town, and we lined up our bags, ready to disembark. As soon as the Captain allowed, we triumphantly left the ship, skipping down the rickety steps to stand on South African soil. We carried out our Khlebosalny ritual on the dockside, marking our arrival. Several hours later, we were still sitting on the harbour-side, waiting for a mythical taxi that was supposed to take us to immigration.<sup>62</sup>

While on board ship, we noticed the residue of salt from seawater that had been washed onto the decks and had later dried out in the sun as we travelled further south. Rebecca took small bags and scraped up samples of salt from different locations on the ship, noticing the small differences in the size of the crystals, their purity and dryness. These later became part of a work made for the exhibition in Cape Town. And we used the salt on our arrival in Cape Town to carry out the threshold ritual we had also performed when crossing the equator.

Arriving at the docks in Cape Town, we knew little about the experience previous generations would have encountered. There was a sense of dislocation on arrival – the end of the journey, and the end of a mode of practice. It was not the first time we had visited South Africa, but arriving at the port was different on this occasion. Performing the *Khlebosalny* ritual at the docks gave us a sense of crossing a threshold and beginning the process of making a connection to our South African past.

<sup>61</sup> Schrire Robins, *From Eastern Europe to South Africa*, p. 28.

<sup>62</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, 'Arrival', *Origination* (blog), 19 January 2010.



## South Africa: *Don't Look Back* (2010)

Seeking to find out more about our great-grandfather Woolf, we visited the Cape Town archives where we discovered material relating to a company he set up. There were letters, blueprints and other documents relating to the Darling Salt Pans and Produce Company with Woolf Beinart as head, and they seemed to refer to a trade in salt based around Darling in the Western Cape and a tannery in Cape Town. We decided to try to find the salt stores and pans to which the documents referred.

19th January 2010

From Darling we head north down a dirt track to Kikoosvlei, which consists of a railway siding and a sign. We look for evidence but find nothing, and so we head to the nearby farm. The farmer turns out to know the local history, and takes us to the site where he says the salt stores were, in his 4 x 4, past the Ostrich farm. There we find some remains of foundations ... Then we drive to Koekiespan, another farm, and the site of a salt pan. It is an eerie, uncanny place, a vast stretch of white emptiness under the blue sky. You walk onto it and it feels like desert, but also like ice, and you feel it could give way at any moment. I take photographs and the light is blinding. I feel a bit like I have landed on the moon. We collect the salt and add to our collection of envelopes, started with salt from the decks of the ships where sea-water has pooled and evaporated, leaving white crystals in patterns on the green paintwork.<sup>63</sup>

Later, we visited another nearby salt pan called Burgerspan to which the documents refer.

We see an even larger salt pan where hand-harvesting is still active. There are small mounds of salt lined up across the pan, like a marching army frozen under a spell.<sup>64</sup>

Amazingly, the farmer at Burgerspan had some old photo albums in the attic, which included some pages of the salt pans being worked in the 1930s and 1940s, around the time Woolf's business was established. It was hard to tell if these images of men standing proudly in front of piles of salt were really of our ancestors, but it was fascinating to see the unchanged process of harvesting and the piles of salt. It was also uncomfortable to notice the black workers, toiling with wheelbarrows and shovels of salt, while the white men in suits stood by.

<sup>63</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, 'Oh! Darling', *Origination* (blog), 19 January 2010.

<sup>64</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, 'Cupid's clues and the salt army', *Origination* (blog), 19 February 2010.



Image 1.9–1.10: *Don't Look Back*

This discomfort became the impetus for a new artwork, *Don't Look Back*<sup>65</sup> (Images 1.9–1.10), which formed part of an exhibition we held at the University of Stellenbosch gallery, in Stellenbosch, a small rural university town about 50 kilometres outside Cape Town. *Don't Look Back*, an installation, filled the main gallery space. Billboard-sized prints of the salt pan that I had taken on a medium-format camera were placed on every wall so that they enclosed the space, and two and a half tons of salt were spread over the floor. Visitors were invited to remove their shoes and walk out into the 'salt pan'. Once they entered, and looked back, they saw a projection onto one of the images of the old photographs of the salt pan, a ghostly presence that was hard to read. The viewer had a visceral experience of the sensory qualities of the salt, its harsh texture on the feet, the smell of salty brine, and the sound of it crunching beneath them. Being visually surrounded by images of the salt pan as it is today and then discovering the images of the salt pan as it once was could evoke a sense of continuity, but also one of discomfort, as, in the contemporary South African context, the past tends to be associated with wrongdoing.

We wrote an exhibition text, referring to the multiple connections of salt:

The title refers to the migrant's dilemma, and particularly that of the Jewish diaspora – whether to attempt to preserve the customs and traditions of the old home, or to leave them behind, and start anew, adapting to the new environments they find themselves in. The title also refers to the story of Lot's wife, who in the Bible is punished by looking back at Sodom by being turned into a pillar of salt. It raises a question about the very nature of genealogical research; is it wise to try and uncover one's origins?<sup>66</sup>

South African literary theorist Sarah Nuttall's work on Glissant's point of entanglement suggests this as the point from which creolization begins, and the point which (she says) must be returned to in order to theorize race and class in post-apartheid South Africa.<sup>67</sup> In Colin Richards's view, however, the idea of 'cross-cultural osmosis' (or creolization) is overused, and he suggests that the reality of historical cultural change in South Africa is much closer to forced grafting, that is, a violent and coerced transition from one culture to another.<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, Glissant was aware of the question of violence, and the starting point for his poetics of relation was the violence of the forced migration endured by slaves.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Don't Look Back*, 2010.

<sup>66</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, Exhibition Text, *Origination*, University of Stellenbosch Gallery, 2010.

<sup>67</sup> Sarah Nuttall, *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009), p. 12.

<sup>68</sup> Richards, 'Graft'.

<sup>69</sup> See Glissant, *PR*.



Historian Catherine Poupeney-Hart, writing in relation to Latin American *metizaje*, argues that Glissant used the term *métissage* to refer to cross-cultural mixing whereby the outcomes were predictable, likening it to botanical grafting by which a particular outcome is expected.<sup>70</sup> According to Glissant, creolization was different because it ‘added something new to the components that participate in it’ and could contain possible resistance to colonialism.<sup>71</sup> Denis-Martin Constant, writing about the possibilities of applying concepts such as *métissage*, hybridity and creolization to South Africa, maintains that creolization is most applicable because ‘it was meant to account for the confrontations and violence caused by encounters, without downplaying the creative dynamics unleashed by these conflictive meetings’. In this sense, Constant proposes that South Africa is a continuously creolizing country.<sup>72</sup>

Kathryn Smith, an artist and curator who helped us to organize our exhibition in Stellenbosch, comments on the notion of grafting as ‘a metaphor which possesses both surgical and botanical applications, involving edges, boundaries, incisions and contact that may or may not be regenerative or reparative’.<sup>73</sup> Richards’s metaphor and Smith’s interpretation of it suggest that there is trauma inherent in these cultural translations and transmissions, as does Constant’s suggestion that creolization in South Africa contains conflict. This trauma inherent in the wound (or splice, to use the metaphor of the graft) is also something that Karen Till has referred to in her work on spectral traces in contested sites in South Africa.<sup>74</sup>

Reading these concepts alongside Glissant raises an important question about where the trauma might exist within a poetics of relation in South Africa. I am interested both in Glissant’s concept of trace, which I interpret as both a trace of residual memory and a physical path through a landscape, and in Till’s concept of spectral traces. Through the trace, memories and past traumas are also brought to the surface. In South Africa, the metaphors of graft and trace become physical references to the landscape, such as in the spectral trace, which refers to specific sites of trauma and the ghosts that remain.<sup>75</sup> I suggest that these traumas require a return to the point of entanglement in order to understand and theorize relation in South Africa.

<sup>70</sup> Catherine Poupeney-Hart, ‘Mestizaje: “I understand the reality, I just do not like the word”’, in Rita de Grandis and Zilá Bernd (eds), *Unforeseeable Americas: Questioning Cultural Hybridity in the Americas* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 34–55, at p. 49.

<sup>71</sup> Édouard Glissant, ‘Creolization and the Making of the Americas’, in Vera Lawrence and Rex Nettleford (eds), *Race, Discourse, and the Origin of the Americas* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), pp. 286–75, at p. 269.

<sup>72</sup> Denis-Constant Martin, *Sounding the Cape: Music, Identity and Politics in South Africa* (Somerset West: African Minds, 2013), p. 67.

<sup>73</sup> Kathryn Smith, ‘The technology of representing cultural translations’, *The Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts Newsletter*, 91 (February–March 2003), archive available at <[http://www.isea-web.org/\\_archives/newsletters/](http://www.isea-web.org/_archives/newsletters/)> [accessed 10 February 2018].

<sup>74</sup> Till and Jonker, ‘Mapping and excavating spectral traces’.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.



image 1.11: *Offere* (still). Photograph by Emmett Walsh.



For Jewish migrants, their assimilation into white South African society may have involved compromises, but it was largely beneficial for themselves and their children. Black South Africans, however, were forced through conquest to graft with elements of new languages and cultural practices, but despite this grafting were unable to gain the benefits of white South African society. Grafting is also a South African slang word for hard work, and, in the case of our ancestors and the businesses they set up on arriving in South Africa, I am torn between, on the one hand, admiration of their graft and quick adaptation to a new environment, and, on the other, discomfort about their acceptance and integration into a society that actively promoted unequal opportunities between black and white.<sup>76</sup> That first generation Jews in South Africa often had a difficult time assimilating does not change the discomfort of knowing that they participated in a racist society. This, for me, is the dilemma of looking back, of wanting to know, but perhaps not liking what is discovered.

### **South Africa: *Offere* (2010)**

19th February 2010

We visit the Jewish cemetery in Malmesbury, and wander among the headstones, finding our great-grandparents, Woolf's and Gittel's, graves covered in dust and fallen bark from the bluegums which tower overhead. We collect bark, twigs, earth and weeds from the grave; a plant is growing that is reminiscent of tarragon, a herb that originates from Southern Russia. I imagine the bodies of my ancestors containing seeds from their homeland, growing up through the red African earth. It is hot, and I shelter in a small derelict building at the entrance to the site and notice a line of stones which lead to the graves. I have a distant memory of being about four, sitting in a hut in rural Transkei, and staring out at piles of white stones, which marked the burial places of the village ancestors.<sup>77</sup>

When we visited Malmesbury, the small town in the Western Cape where Woolf had lived with his family and run his salt business, there were remnants of evidence of the family's presence in the town. Apart from the headstones in the cemetery, the former synagogue was now a town museum, and clippings housed by the museum showed pictures of Woolf and other Beinarts. The museum also had remnants of religious and cultural rituals carried out by the Malmesbury Jewish community. We did not want to recreate an exact experience of these rituals, which had no direct connection to us, but we wanted to make an artwork which used rituals and objects to

<sup>76</sup> Carol Becker, *Surpassing the Spectacle: Global Transformations and the Changing Politics of Art* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), p. 110.

<sup>77</sup> Katy Beinart and Rebecca Beinart, 'Ancestor Rituals', *Origination* (blog), 19 February 2010.



Images 1.12: *Offere* (still). Photograph by Emmett Walsh.

communicate with our ancestors in a more imaginative, poetic way.

*Offere* means, in Latin, to bring across, in the sense of an offering or gift.<sup>78</sup> In this case, we used the idea of ‘bringing across’ as an attempt to communicate with ancestors, and to try to find their ghosts in a place where they had worked. We also wanted to bridge time and find a window into the past. We decided to follow the rituals of many cultures, whereby ancestors are made an offering, often of food and wine. For example, among the Suku of south-western Congo, ancestors are appealed to at times of crisis. At night, the elder men sit on the graves, or at a crossroads:

The old men ‘feed’ the dead certain foods considered to be their favourite: particular kinds of forest mushroom and wild roots, palm wine, and sometimes even manioc, the Suku staple. A small hole is dug in the ground and the food is put into it.<sup>79</sup>

The second work we made from the salt pan, entitled *Offere*, is a short film which mixes rituals with objects from different moments in time. In the film, we ‘feed’ our invisible ancestors a meal on the salt pan. Table and chairs borrowed from a nearby farmhouse are placed in the centre of the pan, and the table is laid with great-grandmother Edith’s second best tableware, which we had borrowed from relatives in Cape Town. Rebecca and I are dressed, one in a family heirloom and one in a hired dress, and we walk in bare feet over the wet surface of the pan towards each other, carrying a tureen of borscht and a loaf of black bread (Image 1.11). We serve the soup and bread, and the food is animated to appear as if it is slowly disappearing (Image 1.12). Finally, we return and clear the meal away.

Our film transposes objects, rituals and cultural references to recreate an invented idea of our family history, which combines fact and fantasy. In part, this is circumstantial, since we had to use what we had brought with us or borrowed. But it is also intentional, as again we did not aim for a precise recreation of a past event but rather, as discussed in the work *Family Photograph*, we brought an imaginative response to a possible scene. Making the film on the salt pan, the objects and artefacts lost their distinction as authentic heirlooms or borrowed objects. The salt became the carrier between past and present. As we walked across its surface, water pooled over our footprints, erasing their trace. When we removed the furniture, nothing was left. Salt can both preserve and erase.

<sup>78</sup> ‘Offer (v)’, Online Etymology Dictionary: < <https://www.etymonline.com/word/offer> > [accessed 10 January 2018].

<sup>79</sup> Igor Kopytoff, ‘Ancestors as Elders in Africa’, *Africa*, 41 (1971), pp. 129-42.



Image 1.13: Rebecca, Beinart, *Sal Sapit Omnia* installation. Photograph by Douglas Gimberg.

### South Africa: *Sal Sapit Omnia* (2010)

Returning to the salt pans, Rebecca decided to make pickled vegetables with the salt. Having tested the idea with the salt we had gathered on board ship, she then constructed a cart which held everything she needed to pickle vegetables on the salt pan. In the exhibition at the University of Stellenbosch gallery, her cart was shown alongside glass jars containing the pickled vegetables, as well as salt pan plant samples. Rebecca also exposed the salt found on the ship through an enlarger to make photograms, and she hung these alongside the salt samples.

The salt wagon is a tool for playfully investigating the salt pans. The wagon is designed to conduct experiments in harvesting and preservation. Salt is a powerful preservative, both physically and metaphorically – ‘its ability to protect against decay, as well as to sustain life, has given salt a broad metaphorical importance – we associate it with longevity and permanence’ (Mark Kurlansky, *Salt*, 2002). The form of the salt wagon is also a reference to the Smous wagons of early Jewish migrants to South Africa, who were travelling pedlars, traversing remote rural areas to sell goods to farmers. The directness of collecting and pickling at Burgerspan embodies imagined processes from history, reinventing and adapting fragments of knowledge.<sup>80</sup>

Rebecca used recipes from an old family cookbook to preserve beetroot, cucumber and cabbage, important elements of the Jewish migrants’ diet, especially on board ship. She also attempted to harvest salt using both ridiculous and practical methods, to experience for herself what it is like to harvest salt. Engaging with the ecology of this and other sites, she collected samples of salt and plants that survive on the saline edges of the pans. The title of the work, *Sal Sapit Omnia*, translates as ‘salt seasons everything’ and comes from a chapter in *Salt and Other Condiments*, a book published in 1884 as part of the International Health Exhibition.<sup>81</sup> In this artwork, salt seems indexical to survival, both in the meaning of preservation and in relation to the delicate balance of ecology.

<sup>80</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, Exhibition text, *Origination*, University of Stellenbosch Gallery, 2010.

<sup>81</sup> J.J. Manly, *Salt and Other Condiments: A Handbook* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1884).



Image 1.14: Malmesbury: *Dinner Party*

### **South Africa: *Dinner Party* (2010)**

We had first enacted the *Khlebosolny* ritual on board ship at the crossing of the equator. Subsequently, we had enacted it at our arrival in Cape Town, and the ritual was then included in the *Dinner Party* performance event we held as part of our exhibitions at Greatmore Studios and the University of Stellenbosch. After visiting the synagogue/museum in Malmesbury, we thought it would be an ideal place to hold the *Dinner Party*, as it was there our family had worshipped when they lived in Malmesbury.

Rebecca and I had started to use the dinner party as a format for a participatory performance artwork in 2008.<sup>82</sup> In the first iteration of the *Dinner Party*, we had served guests a meal of adapted traditional Jewish dishes from our family recipe books, while projecting on the wall a triptych of the making of the meal. The courses were interspersed with readings and rituals. The intention of using this format was not only to share specifics of family history, but also to acknowledge the absences in many people's family histories. The dinner provided a space to intimately share knowledge of the participants' pasts through the exchange of food and conversation.

We reused this format for the performance in the Malmesbury synagogue in 2010. Inviting guests from Cape Town and the local town to join us, we served them traditional Eastern European Jewish recipes, including borscht and black bread, cucumber and dill salad, and cinnamon balls. The final course was a toast to ancestors, with either grape juice or vodka, and we asked each guest to tell us a story about one of their ancestors. The dinner guests were a mixture of members of our family, local residents, and Cape Town artists and art audiences. Stories of race and relation in South Africa were foregrounded. Our table was positioned where the Torah Ark once sat, underlining the difference between a straightforward 'roots journey' and the journey we were on as artists: our family history and the sites connected to it became material for artworks that could be at times unsettling and provocative.

<sup>82</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Dinner Party* (2008), OVADA gallery, Oxford.

## Section 2: Brixton Market (*retour*)

Before we left South Africa, we collected salt from the salt pans and packed it into our suitcases, without knowing precisely how it would be used. Returning to England in 2010, I sought a way to use my personal family history as a mode of exchange with others from similarly complex migrant genealogies. I had met with curator Barby Asante in 2009, before my journey to South Africa, and she had mentioned the possibility of having an exhibition at the 198 Gallery in Brixton, with a linked residency in Brixton Market. When Rebecca and I arrived back in the UK, I moved to London and began visiting Brixton Market with the idea of a residency and exhibition in the area. Over the duration of the next three projects, my locus in London shifted closer to the homeplace of Brixton. The first place I moved to was in fact Bethnal Green, where my grandfather Michael Schreiber had grown up with his mother Zlata, father Moishe, and seven brothers and sisters, including his eldest brother Dave (my great-uncle; see Image 1.1: Family tree). Moishe Schreiber and Zlata Gitovitch had migrated from Belarus to London in the early 1900s, where they met and married in the East End.

I was also drawn to Brixton Market as another site of family history: Dave Schreiber, Moishe's son and my great-uncle, had his first market stall in Brixton, and later a gift shop in the arcades (Image 1:15). Using the market emphasized the auto-ethnographic role I was playing as a re-enactor of my family history. Dave's son Michael, now in his 70s, remembers:

My dad was a market trader. He started off working as a cabinet-maker, but in the 1930s the work dried up and he was looking for another job. He started selling in markets outside London, he would get up at five in morning, load stuff onto the van, be gone all day. Later on, he got a shop here in Brixton Market, he sold bags and jewellery too. I remember coming here when I was little [in the 1950s], I remember seeing the stalls selling yams and other Caribbean food and it was the first time I'd seen those things.<sup>83</sup>

Arriving in Brixton, I became interested in unpicking the complex inheritances and multiple narratives of the place, and how these related to questions of regeneration, gentrification, ownership, and diversity. I considered using performative and participatory arts practices, which could offer alternatives to the regeneration and heritage practices currently being proposed in the area. In May 2011, after a successful Arts Council funding bid, Rebecca and I began a residency in Brixton Market, with a stall on Pope's Road, which was followed by an exhibition at the 198 Gallery in summer 2011.<sup>84</sup> We titled both the residency and the exhibition *Origination*.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with participant (10. Michael Shade), *Origination* Market Stall residency, May 2011.

<sup>84</sup> Market stall residency, 12–27 May 2011; exhibition, 16 June–5 August 2011.





Image 1:15: Dave on his market stall. Source: Michael Shade.

### **Brixton: *Memory Preservation Salts* (2011)**

Market stalls, such as those in Brixton, cater for migrants from a diverse range of backgrounds. Their material culture, in the shape of the goods they offer, is even more eclectic. Salt has a strong presence in many forms, from the salt cod and other kinds of salt fish in the Caribbean, Portuguese and English fish shops and delis, to products such as cosmetics, medicines and preserves which remind us of salt's long associations with trade and migration.

I was also fascinated by stalls selling 'magic salts' that offered the prospective customer a range of solutions; these contemporary incarnations of magical rites and Vodou spells also played on the associations of salt with both the language and substance of diasporic superstitions. In the Caribbean vernacular, 'sucking salt' is a description for hardship and migration, with links to the history of slavery.<sup>85</sup> Today salt is still used in rituals to rid new homes of bad spirits.<sup>86</sup> From the salt used in the market as a consumable and preservative for other foods, to its packaging as a ritual or spell ingredient, I identified different functions of the salt on sale in Brixton Market. The ritual salts suggested a magical, and protective function.

Rebecca and I packaged our South African salt, gathered from the salt pans which our ancestor once farmed, as *Memory Preservation Salts*. We sought to offer a product with multiple associations and which could be used both practically and metaphorically. The *Memory Preservation Salts* were offered for a variety of uses: sprinkling at sites of memory, protection on a journey, or the sealing of promises. At our stall on Pope's Road, the salts became the basis of exchange and gathering information. We were, in a sense, salt traders. The salt from South Africa linked revived elements in our ancestral background to multiple diasporic links in Brixton. The materiality of salt was used in this context as a 'performative object': an object that has a mediating role in an interaction.<sup>87</sup> Using the salt as an object that appeared usual, but on second take was out of the ordinary, enabled the object to 'perform' as an opener for us to engage with others, linking personal stories of migration and material culture, and creating forms of exchange such as dialogue. Jones's categorization of salt highlights salt's value and its connection to money, commodity and transaction. Our salt had a particular exchange value and transactional quality.

<sup>85</sup> Meredith Gadsby, *Sucking Salt* (Minneapolis: University of Missouri Press, 2006).

<sup>86</sup> James Haskins, *Voodoo and Hoodoo* (Chelsea, MI: Scarborough House, 1990).

<sup>87</sup> Karen Niedderer, 'Designing mindful interaction: The category of performative object', *Design Issues*, 23 (2007), pp. 3-17.



Image 1.16: *Memory Preservation Salts*

### **Brixton: *The Darling Salt Pans and Produce Co. Market Stall* (2011)**

Our stall in the street market was based on a typical market stall (which we hired, having signed up with the council as official market traders). We illustrated our products with hand-painted signage depicting the company as The Darling Salt Pans and Produce Co. Our signs advertised services including ‘memory collection’, ‘relic recording’ and ‘document duplication’, playing on a role which could be regarded as ethnographic (Image 1.17). On the stall, we had a weighing scales for measuring out the salt into jars with the *Memory Preservation Salts* label. We stood behind the stall and invited market shoppers and passers by to trade a story about their family history and family migrations for a jar of salt. We also invited them to contribute an object related to their family history, which we would ‘record’ by drawing on carbon copy paper (and giving them a duplicate copy). A ledger held contracts which participants had to sign to state that they agreed to their story being used in our work, as well as our confirmation that they now owned an original artwork, the *Memory Preservation Salts*. We set up stools behind the stall, with a reel-to-reel tape player, where we recorded conversations with participants (see Image 1.18). Objects were copied and placed in hanging frames.

The choice of technology was deliberate, as it echoed the material culture of an earlier period of history, drawing the attention of some customers back to their own past experiences. As one man said: ‘Thank you for having me on there, I like your tape recorder because when I came to this country we used to put Asian music on that one and we used to listen.’<sup>88</sup> When we sat down to have a conversation, we did not ask specific questions. Rather, we began by explaining our *détour* to South Africa and what we had found, and then asked people to describe any knowledge they had of their family origin or journeys, or any understanding of roots and belonging. The conversations often produced unexpected answers.

The format of the market stall made it a space which provided opportunities for liminal encounters – an approachable space. There were no walls and no clear boundaries, and the space of the stall was easy to enter or leave, demarcated only by a white line on the floor. People soon understood that it was constructed as a place for exchange of stories and many chose to participate. It was a space of otherness and difference, outside of the norm, and therefore a space where stories of otherness and difference could be told.

We also had on display the *Aurophone* (2011)<sup>89</sup> (Image 1.19), a machine we had invented to translate the stories we collected, which was another starting point for conversation. Our idea was to convert the stories into patterns, using the aurophone, which was a converted braille typewriter combined with the drum from a miniature music box. The patterns would then produce an abstracted tune for each story. One of our intentions with this artwork was to see

<sup>88</sup> Comment from participant (32), *Origination Market Stall* residency, June 2011.

<sup>89</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Aurophone*, 2011.



Images 1.17 and 1.18: *The Darling Salt Pans and Produce Co. Market Stall*

how the stories might hold difference in ways other than the actual content. Before we began a conversation, we explained to the participant that we were planning to use extracts of the dialogue in another artwork, using the aurophone to translate the words. The conversation was not just a straightforward interview or ethnographic encounter, but rather was framed through an artist's vision of the outcome. There was a productive value in how engagement took place, but it also brought challenges (which are often inherent to socially engaged artworks).

Art critic Hal Foster questions the role of artists taking on an 'ethnographic' approach in working with communities, which he says can promote a presumption of authority, leading the artist to remake the 'other' in a neo-primitivist guise.<sup>90</sup> But by overtly promoting our subjective role in the process of gathering information, we challenged this stance, inserting the artist as subject as well as observer, which also meant opening ourselves up to potential criticism. This mode of '*complicit* engagement' recognizes the nature of fieldwork as a relational process, which implicates an *elsewhere* as well as a *being there*.<sup>91</sup> This kind of engagement with others is not so much finding out about the local as it is understanding local knowledge about difference between the local and the elsewhere. According to Marcus, complicity offers a kind of affinity, recognizing equivalence between the anthropologist and the informant through the positioning against a third, the 'outside', world.<sup>92</sup> Connecting this to Glissant's poetics of relation, our role was to continually acknowledge difference in our engagements, while connecting with others through a shared understanding of diasporic links.

At the market stall, we turned around the 'participant observer' role, as we were both offering something to and taking something from our 'participants'; equally, we were being watched as much as watching. Occupying the public space of the market, we built relationships with other traders and with our 'customers'. These relationships were not always easy ones, bringing up questions about our role as artists, about gender and race, and about acts of colonialism and postcolonialism. While the artworks had a set of intentions in revealing commonalities and differences in people's historical experiences of place and migration, we also recognized that the *process* of negotiating and collecting these narratives revealed as much about Brixton as the *content* of what we collected did.

We were asked why we felt we could bring our ancestral business – which was perceived as exploiting a colonial situation – into an artwork which took place in an area famed for its diversity and for inhabitants who had come from ethnic groups who had been persecuted by that colonial system. Secondly, we were challenged with the argument that our skin colour

<sup>90</sup> Hal Foster, 'The artist as ethnographer', in Claire Doherty (ed.), *Situation* (Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel Gallery/MIT Press, 2009), pp. 74-77, at p.77.

<sup>91</sup> My italics. George Marcus, 'The uses of complicity in the changing *mise en scène* of anthropological fieldwork', in Doherty (ed.), *Situation*, pp. 79-84.

<sup>92</sup> Marcus, 'Uses of complicity', p. 84.



Image 1.19: *Aurophone* (bottom right)

invalidated our right to encounter, collect and share the stories of those with other skin colours and histories. Thirdly, as women in the market, we were open to attitudes that enforced stereotypes of our ability to successfully negotiate these difficult questions. Therefore, it was not only the location of the market we had chosen to work in, but also our means of collecting information, and in fact our very presence, that was provocative for some people. These questions were not raised by a majority of those who visited the stall, but they did highlight issues around the right to collect, interact and represent the history of particular places, sites and communities. Perhaps this also highlights what Jones has termed the ambiguities inherent in salt. In the contract of a conversation, salt's transactional value connects back to a history of trade, which is intricately linked to colonialism and exploitation. While the salt as a product offered a familiar use value and nostalgia for particular food and ritual links, it may have brought up uncomfortable associations linked to its historical connections.

In Part 1, I explained debates on the role of the artist in socially engaged projects, which, according to Kwon, can end up with the co-option of the artist's work to provide a 'service' in representing a unified place-identity of places.<sup>93</sup> I also discussed Kester's view that an artist can take a paternalistic position which assumes a lack of criticality in the viewer or participant.<sup>94</sup> Instead, I suggest there may be a possibility of using Glissant's concept of opacity to allow difference and relation to remain opaque.<sup>95</sup> By allowing for opacity, a more incoherent version of community might be created, one which is less open to co-option. And through the *détour*, a time and space for deliberation over changes (for example, through regeneration schemes) can be created for communities. How does this shift the role of the artist, if the artist is not acting as the creator of a shared vision of community? Could the artist create the space for *détournement*, thereby allowing a rerouting of familiar narratives? Could the artist create a space of multiple opacities where otherness and difference are recognized and held together in a space of relation? The artist could take this place as a potentially provocative presence, subverting expected values of place, which those commissioning and directing regeneration work may find challenging.

Many of those we spoke with in Brixton came from mixed ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Sometimes their cultural background informed their identity, and at other times they found a different, separate identity and community in their locality. For example, a young man who had converted to Islam, despite being from a mixed Indian, Irish and Caribbean background, told us:

<sup>93</sup> Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), p. 151.

<sup>94</sup> Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), p.161.

<sup>95</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Philosophie de la Relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009), pp. 61-62; Heidi Bojsen, 'Taking Glissant's philosophy into social sciences? A discussion of the place of aesthetics in critical development discourse', *Callaloo*, 36 (2013), pp. 995-1013, at pp. 1001, 1004.





My father's half Indian, half Irish and my mum's Jamaican. They both come from a Christian background. I didn't really get to know my father, he died when I was very young... I was brought up West Indian, with West Indian food and culture. But it was just a culture, it wasn't anything that was going to change my life dramatically. It was just that maybe I was a bit cool at school, y'know, because I was half Jamaican. I know of it (the culture) – it's a bit like smoking, you either do it or you don't. It's of no benefit. What I believe in is one God and being a Muslim. It doesn't matter if you're Jamaican, Irish or Indian. It doesn't matter where you're from, Islam is for everyone.<sup>96</sup>

While our perceived lack of affinity with the cultural background and ethnic identities of those in the market may have been a source of provocation, it also invited curiosity and generated exchange. We found that once we engaged in debate and explained not only our personal interest and history but also our acceptance of the subjective difficulties of coming from a background where our families could be seen as both victims (Jewish migrants escaping Eastern European pogroms) and persecutors (whites in South Africa), people wanted to open up with their own stories of migration and of belonging or not-belonging.

In several conversations, what emerged was a searching through dialogue for the veracity of identity, and the difficulty of taking a position for many whose cultural and geographical background encompassed both rights and wrongs, victims and persecutors, exploiters and the exploited.

What I've realized for myself is that it's important to have a sense of one's roots. As an adult, I've made an effort to contact family in Iraq – sadly without any success. Now I've got a daughter who's just turned seven and she'll often ask me about her grandmother and grandfather who are both dead. Where did they meet? Where are they from? ... The history of Iraq and Britain – in 1990 I would never have imagined to find British planes bombing Baghdad, it was almost surreal. And then to find in the next fifteen years that there were two full-scale wars and then an underlying conflict going on. It's quite a challenge to find a comfortable space in that. And then September 11th. That's been extremely challenging.<sup>97</sup>

These conversations both demonstrated the delicate ground of collecting family history and the possibility for us as artists to offer up a different approach to conversation, one which, by highlighting the outcome of the conversation as artwork, invited a more fluid, poetic

<sup>96</sup> Interview with participant (33), *Origination Market Stall* residency, June 2011.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with participant (30), *Origination Market Stall* residency, June 2011.



dialogue. This dialogue allowed *détours* and *retours* to come into our encounters, which then became part of the artwork. They highlighted the implicit importance of ‘relation-identity’, or ‘rhizome-identity’, for many people who had chosen to live in Brixton and who saw Brixton as representative of relation.

Several participants felt that difference and mobility were accepted and welcomed in Brixton. One participant recalled:

I was born in Canada – my dad was a geologist. We were moving around a lot, predominantly in the States and in Spain. I deliberately came to live in South London because everywhere else I lived I didn’t like the way societies segregated themselves, this is the best mixed cultural place I’ve come across.<sup>98</sup>

I grew up a bit all over the place. I was born in New York, then we lived in Cuba, in Burkina Faso, in Benin, in Mexico, and in Kenya. I came to Britain for university. I have very strong memories of the places of my childhood. I have fond memories, I really enjoyed moving around. You can find some of these exotic foods here in Brixton, that’s why I love living here. I find it very exciting and vibrant. I enjoy the multiculturalism, and I met my husband here.<sup>99</sup>

### **Brixton: *Aurophone and Confabulation* (2011)**

In thinking how to translate the stories given to us into a series of artworks to show at a gallery, we wanted to find ways to embody and materialize the spoken word, giving it an aesthetic which might be seen more widely as representative of a collective biography. Working with other people’s memories, what does the process of transformation of the stories or objects produce? To begin with, we typed up extracts of each story we had collected using the aurophone. Rather than using paper, we wanted a material into which the machine would ‘punch’ holes, creating a ‘ream’ which would then play on the music box (Image 1.20). I realized that camera film would work well, so I photographed the object each person had donated, then punched holes into the processed film on the aurophone. There were then two poetic retranslations of each person’s narrative: one was a short piece of music played on the music box, the other a visual animation of the roll of film.

We combined the soundtrack of the music with the animation to produce a new work,

<sup>98</sup> Interview with participant (43), *Origination Market Stall* residency, June 2011.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with participant (31), *Origination Market Stall* residency, June 2011.

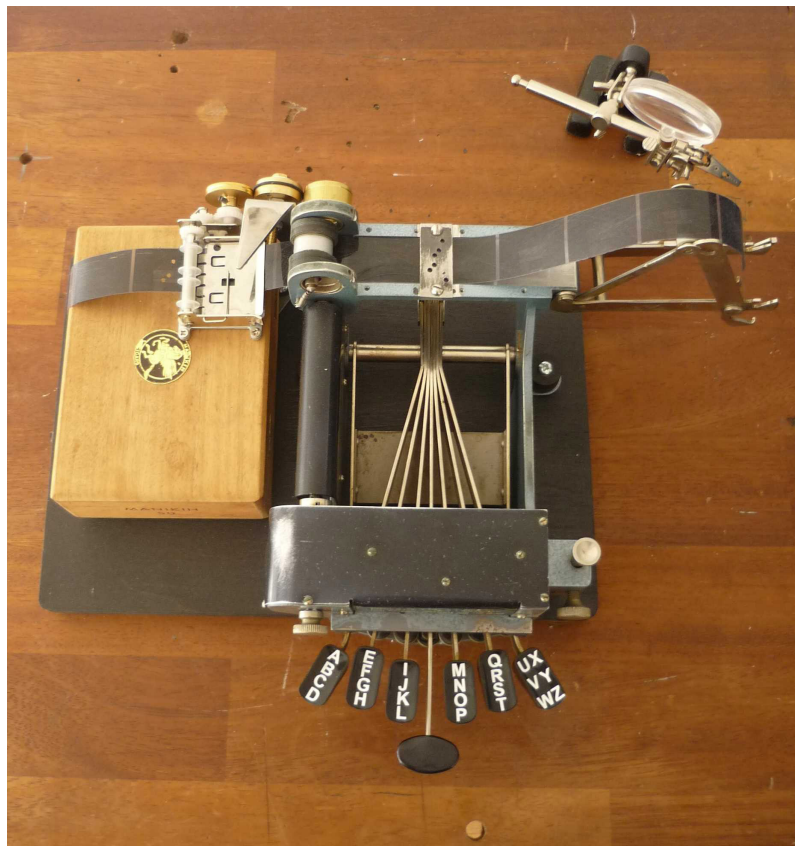


Image 1.20: *Aurophone* (detail)

*Confabulation*, which was shown as an installation at 198 Gallery in Brixton in 2011 (Image 1.21). The film was screened on a television monitor, which sat on a lab table, alongside which an oscilloscope, which was connected to the monitor, measured the changes in sound, another visual reinterpretation of the abstracted narrative. Also on the table was the aurophone, and hanging beside the table were the 52 reels of films with holes punched in them. In the gallery windows, we displayed the collection of objects we had photographed on a series of green baize boards (Image 1.22). Each object or relic represents a place or a journey from a story exchanged on the market stall. In most cases, as people did not have actual objects, it became necessary to find an object that 'represented' the story. To 'confabulate' in the psychiatric context means 'to fabricate imaginary experiences as compensation for loss of memory'.<sup>100</sup> In the artwork *Confabulation*, some objects are 'real', donated by participants, and others are found by us to represent the stories we collected. The whole piece reflects the difficulty of defining and pinning down memory; displayed on the window boards, it acted as another type of inventory of the stories.

Through the exchanges of salt and story, memories of migration are made material, becoming a mnemonic or register of a geography of genealogy, which recognizes how the multiple geographical links of one person's past can connect to another's in a place. In some instances, this meeting is with the material object that reveals the story or memory; for example, a woman who brought a photograph to show me said:

This (photograph) is my great-grandmother on my mother's side. It's taken in South Africa, I think they were near the Cape. Shortly after that they moved to Kenya, just after the Boer war I think. And after she was a prisoner of war. I don't know much about my great-grandmother, but I used to have dreams about being in a prisoner of war camp – that's when I found out she was there. I told my mother, and a long time after that my mother told me that she'd been in a prisoner of war camp.<sup>101</sup>

In many cases people did not bring material objects, creating gaps or absences. Paul Basu has suggested that with the migrant's archive as place of absence, the creation of an archive or a journey towards one's roots becomes an act of fantasy.<sup>102</sup> The artwork *Confabulation* could be seen as a fantasy archive combining different possible roots and relations. It does this through the adoption of material culture which is not necessarily 'authentic', but nevertheless can act as representative of a story. Again, the objects in *Confabulation* are a kind of performative object as they can adapt and engage with different people's stories. In this case, the objects became part of a poetics of relation: they related to each other as well as to individual stories. Similarly,

<sup>100</sup> 'confabulate, v.' Oxford English Dictionary online, <oed.com>.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with participant (24), Origination Market Stall residency, June 2011.

<sup>102</sup> Basu and Coleman, 'Migrant worlds, material cultures'.



Images 1.21–1.22: *Confabulation*

in Glissant's concept of relation-identity (as opposed to root-identity), identity is rhizomatic, interconnected and entangled.<sup>103</sup>

One contributor said of the photographs she brought in:

I found them really interesting because they're all taken in the 60s when my mum and dad came to the UK from Ghana and they're all group portraits taken in front of world maps. I always found that really interesting – I don't know whether they orchestrated it or whether they didn't really think about it. But they seem very symbolic to me about the journey that they made from West Africa to the UK, and what they were trying to say about themselves at that time – about being worldly people, about being modern, and being aspirational.<sup>104</sup>

In the exhibition text for *Origination*, Kathryn Smith suggests that *Confabulation* is a potential starting point for a creation of shared meaning and 'act[s] as a touchstone for the memories they evoke, not for the teller this time, but for the listener'. Her text proposes that perhaps the productive imbrication of memory and imagination can have a more powerful emotional impact than 'the dry recording of events', and that it better 'reflects the impossible nature of defining and pinning down memory'.<sup>105</sup>

The use of the *Memory Preservation Salts* as an object of exchange could be seen as a performative object, as well as a trace, one which offers a continual remembering embedded in the everyday. A couple of the participants responded a year after the market stall:

When I am travelling to new places I'd like to return to or at least remember, I put a bit of salt in a pocket and drop grains on the land as I walk through it.<sup>106</sup>

Made biltong for the first time! Since then have made several drying cabinets, taught about 8 people (inc. family) how easy it is and dried a lot of meat with far far inferior salt.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 11.

<sup>104</sup> Interview with participant (38), *Origination* Market Stall residency, June 2011.

<sup>105</sup> Kathryn Smith, exhibition text for *Origination*, an exhibition by Katy and Rebecca Beinart at 198 Contemporary Arts and Learning, 16 June–5 August 2011.

<sup>106</sup> Participant (34) response to questions, email exchange, 28 November 2012.

<sup>107</sup> Participant (25) response to questions, email exchange, 1 December 2012.





The objects of the stall and of the salt were effective in re-shaping interaction and creating dialogue in direct relation to the site of the experience, because they created a cross-cultural poetics in the contested territory of Brixton Market. As one participant said:

I felt physically grounded in the space, as if I had iterated a trace or line of family history and migration – however ephemeral – through the physical terrain of Brixton.<sup>108</sup>

Therefore, the context and the location of the performative object are vital. Reflecting on this practice, I am aware that in the less public, less accessible space of the gallery, the objects quickly ossified and were no longer ‘performing’. Despite this, the space of the gallery created a biography of place which enabled those who visited to draw their own meaning from the experience:

What I really liked was the fact that the main pieces contained traces of stories, and everybody who had contributed had been connected through the artworks. Like with the piece with the music box, it evoked the sense of individual notes being part of a whole, or with the green house and the plants representing the places and how they were placed together in this space. It made me think about Brixton the place where the stories were collected and how people live together or try to live together in a place.<sup>109</sup>

This response begins to offer an understanding of the complex inheritances of place and how these can relate to current regeneration. In this chapter, I have explored how, through our personal *détour*, we developed artworks that used salt to both preserve and erase, and how we explored the poetics of salt as revealing of spectral traces and the trauma inherent in the trace. Bringing these practices back to Brixton on the *retour*, I understood that the poetics of salt contributed to a poetics of relation in Brixton Market which started to uncover relational identities and networks of entanglement that linked to others’ past traces. I asked how *détour*, opacity and difference might contribute to dialogue around regeneration. In Project 2, I set out on another personal *détour* in search of absences and the development of rituals of remembrance.

<sup>108</sup> Participant (34) response to questions, email exchange, 28 November 2012.

<sup>109</sup> Participant (38) response to questions, email exchange, 5 December 2012.





**Project 2: Journey to Eastern Europe (and back): *Khlebosolny*/Bread and Salt (2012)**



Image 2.1: Medal and portrait of Anne

## Introduction

From discussions with my family, I understood that, through stages of assimilation, aspects of our connection to our past had become less visible. While personal records of family history were kept, religious and cultural practices were not. And languages and voices had been lost too: no one spoke Yiddish or Russian anymore, although my father knew a few words in Hebrew. The fate of distant family members who had not left Eastern Europe was not something with which our immediate family seemed to feel a direct connection. I felt that there had been a deliberate attempt in our family to leave aspects of Jewish culture behind, and that they preferred the comfort of assimilation. That they escaped the fate of those who stayed behind was not something openly spoken about. In this chapter, the *détour* is a journey my sister Rebecca and I made in 2012 to Eastern Europe, as part of which we developed ritual practices with salt; and the *retour* is a collaborative project in Brixton that developed communal artworks. Through these practices, I ask how individual subjectivities are identified and how dialogue between self and 'Other' is revealed and concealed. I develop the idea of a link between the poetics of salt and Glissant's entanglement, through Relation.

We knew that Woolf Beinart, our great-grandfather on my grandfather Ben's side, had grown up in or near to a small town in north-eastern Lithuania called Rokiskis, and that further back some family had lived in the capital Vilnius. We also knew that Anne, our great-great-grandmother on my grandmother Gladys's side, was born in St Petersburg in 1865. She had travelled with her father Nicolas Filaratoff from St Petersburg to Hamburg around 1873 and the family then settled in Hull ten years later. Anne married Leopold Pearlman in Hull and my great-grandmother, Edith Pearlman, was born in Hull in 1891. Edith and her daughter Gladys (my father's mother) had kept quite good records of the family's period in, and later connection with, Hull. But little survived from the period before. We had a few pieces of evidence: studio photographs of Anne in Hamburg, family reminiscences, and a war medal from Russia (Image 2.1). In summer 2012, Rebecca and I travelled to Lithuania and St Petersburg to do further research into our family history, and make artwork together, as a mobile, unstructured residency. We hoped that this journey might enable us to fill some of the gaps and absences in our family's story.

In a conversation between Eva Hoffman, Sadiya Hartmann and Daniel Mendelsohn, all of whom have taken roots journeys, Hoffman said:

I do think there is a need to sort of locate, locate something, locate the past which you have known about, but which you don't know. I'm actually thinking about Freud's formulation of melancholia, a sort of depressive melancholia. He says that mourning in which you know the object of your mourning can come to an end, but mourning in which you don't know the object you have lost cannot come to an end. And in that sense, the second

From: Katy Beinart [<mailto:katy@katybeinart.co.uk>]  
Sent: Thursday, September 17, 2009 5:09 PM  
Subject: Proposal..

Hello xxxx,

Have you recovered from your Palanga experience? It just got crazier so you were wise to get out when you did. I came home with a flu (probably too much late night swimming and vodka) but I had a brilliant time. Thanks for the vodka and smoked fish.

I think I mentioned to you that I am looking for a space in Vilnius to show work made during a residency in South Africa next year (proposal attached).

The residency idea started from the story of emigration from Lithuania to South Africa so the idea would be to bring the work back to the place of origination. Myself and my sister are exploring performance, film-making, writing and installation in our current practice, you can see more on:

[www.katybeinart.co.uk](http://www.katybeinart.co.uk) [www.fieldkitchen.net](http://www.fieldkitchen.net) (Rebecca Beinart)

Do you think you might be able to help us - if not with CAC then another organisation that might be able to 'host' our work?

Thanks, Katy

Hey, nice to get your letter.

Actually this topic now is not so rare in Lithuania. An artist Ruth Sacks (ex Ruta Zakaite) also has the same roots and she is planning to apply for Lithuanian citizenship. Regarding the residency in Lithuania I have to say that only Scandinavian countries had their own residency in Vilnius. A financial crisis is promising a hard life for the artists as their discussions that there will be no money for the cultural endowments next year. I would advise you to look for the residency and sponsorship in the Jewish endowments of culture. As you may imagine the emigration is a very overused and active topic in Lithuania as we always have crowds of people leaving Lithuania for other countries. Also your project reminded me this very fresh Turkish project for Vilnius: <http://www.breadway.blogspot.com/>

I will try to forward your letter to some other Vilnius professionals; maybe they will have some advices. Actually I was also ill after coming back from Palanga. We spend some strange evenings with xxxxxx who was ill too. xxxxxx went to Riga but will return to Vilnius soon.

Below is the exhibition curated by my friend xxxxxxxx. Will you be in Frieze London? We could meet and discuss things there.

Best, xxxx



generation was placed in a melancholic position, a kind of placelessness, a kind of nameless, placeless loss. So you know, I think that locating something does matter a lot.<sup>1</sup>

In locating the past, emotions are often brought forth. Hartmann describes how her act of journeying along the slave route required her ‘to be the receptacle for foreclosed and prohibited emotions – rage and grief and disappointment’.<sup>2</sup> Disappointment echoed with us too, as we struggled to find a concrete link to our family’s past. We had also met with disappointment in the process of undertaking this journey, as our original plans had to be reshaped. Discomfort was another emotion that emerged on the trip, both in the physical sense of ongoing travelling, and in the awkwardness of not knowing languages or the right words to try to explain what we wanted to find out.

We had first proposed this trip in 2008, before our South Africa journey and residency, but we ran up against discouragement: ‘as you may imagine the emigration is a very overused and active topic in Lithuania’ (see Image 2.2). It is old news, travelling back to find one’s Jewish roots in Eastern Europe. We were just two more pilgrims on a well-worn trail. The context of others travelling on roots journeys has been mentioned with respect to *Détour/Retour* 1, but here I will specifically refer to the work of the South Africa-born writer Dan Jacobson, whose book *Heshel’s Kingdom* is about a journey he undertook in search of his grandfather Heshel Melamed and which was similar to the journey we took in this *détour*.<sup>3</sup> The other key texts I draw on in this chapter also hold memories of the life of the Jewish communities prior to World War Two and are known as *Yizkor* books, which, according to the JewishGen website:

were written after the Holocaust as memorials to Jewish communities destroyed in the Holocaust. They were usually put together by survivors from those communities and contain descriptions and histories of the community, biographies of prominent people, lists of people who perished, etc.<sup>4</sup>

This search for roots felt more obscure and unknown than the trip to South Africa described in *détour* 1. Our connection to Eastern Europe was tenuous, based only on the handed-down fragments of family stories. But it also felt necessary and obsessive, a calling we were drawn to carry out. Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller write of the ‘seduction of the quest for a direct link to deep roots and family bloodlines’, and they ask ‘how in particular does a feminist subject

<sup>1</sup> Sadiya Hartman, Eva Hoffman and Daniel Mendelsohn, ‘Memoirs of return’, in Marianne Hirsch and Nancy K. Miller (eds), *Rites of Return: Diaspora Poetics and the Politics of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 107-23, at pp. 116-17.

<sup>2</sup> Hartman, Hoffman and Mendelsohn, ‘Memoirs of return’, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> Dan Jacobson, *Heshel’s Kingdom* (London: Penguin, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> ‘Yizkor Book Project: Frequently Asked Questions’, JewishGen website: <<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/>> [accessed 10 August 2017].



negotiate the intensities and contradictory impulses of diasporic return?<sup>5</sup> Inherent within this impulse to journey back to places of origin is, Hirsch and Miller argue, a contradiction, which they present as, on the one hand, a performative cultural self-construction that would seem to allow for the self-construction of a roots story, and, on the other hand, 'the elaboration of new identities secured by the evidence of science and genetics' that would seem to suggest a roots journey as directed by orthodoxies of race and specific locations of origin.<sup>6</sup> This dilemma links to what Glissant described as relation-identity and root-identity, the former constructed through ongoing Relation in the present and the latter through looking backwards to an idea of origin.<sup>7</sup>

Departing on this trip, I was aware of certain contradictions between my present situation and those of my ancestors in the past, between our (my own and my sister's) known identities, and the uncertain identities we hoped to connect with. In the context of this journey, Rebecca and I were travelling as independent, unmarried, working artists and academics. Although ostensibly a roots journey, the implicit difference was our interest in uncertainty and in the contradiction described above between genetic roots and self-constructed roots. We both felt that finding out where we came from would not necessarily give us answers to our current identities, and that the present state of the places we were travelling to may hold little connection to their pasts.

On my father's side, our family story had dual origins. On Woolf's side, the family's origins were in Eastern European Jewish shtetl life, a life unknown to me; for example, I knew little about how a woman of my age would have lived and the roles and identities which she would have assumed. That shtetl life was long gone, and the Jewish community had been devastated by the Holocaust in the 1940s, so that the reality of these places held an uncertain image for us. On Edith's side was a relatively successful St Petersburg-based Jewish business family, which later managed to sustain a middle-class lifestyle, first in Hull, England, and then in Pretoria, South Africa.<sup>8</sup>

Hirsch and Miller use two key terms to develop a critical dialogue within these contradictions between a cultural self-construction and a genetically evidenced, historically based identity. Hirsch's idea of 'postmemory', introduced in Part 1, understands the legacies of the past, as 'always already inflected by broader public and generational stories, images, artefacts, and understandings that together shape identity and identification', while Miller discusses how the 'transpersonal' recognizes that the personal is necessarily political, and emphasizes links that go not just backwards but also sideways in the present, as 'a zone of relation that is social, affective, material, and inevitably public'.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Hirsch and Miller, 'Introduction', in *Rites of Return*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>6</sup> Hirsch and Miller, 'Introduction', p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Glissant, *PR*, pp. 143-44.

<sup>8</sup> See Image 1.1: Family tree, Project 1.

<sup>9</sup> Hirsch and Miller, *Rites of Return*, pp. 4-5.

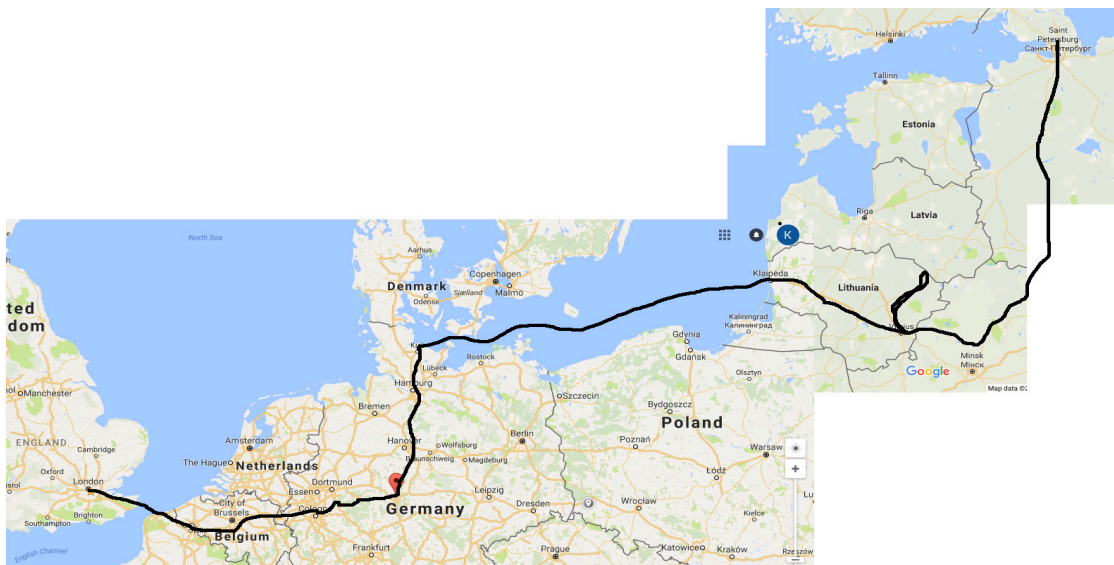


Image 2.3: Route map

Hirsch and Miller also refer to the poet Adrienne Rich, who wrote in the mid-1980s: 'I've been thinking a lot about the obsession with origins, it seems a way of stopping time in its tracks. Don't we have to start here, where we are?'<sup>10</sup> Rich's comment suggests that, in thinking about journeys of return, we need to start from where we are and understand how our own identities and social relations in the present relate to, and shape, our ideas of origin – in other words, what Glissant terms 'relation-identity'.

Subsequently, I want to ask: how do our auto-ethnographic explorations into familial, private realms relate back to the wider society and culture we exist in?

Therefore, an important aspect for Rebecca's and my journey was to develop our work with visibility and to make specific acts or rituals that would allow us to mark the past while acknowledging the choices of our family to leave that past behind. The difficult relationship that can exist between past and present when certain aspects of the past do not want to be acknowledged is something I seek to explore in this chapter, both through our artwork and that of other artists working in a similar context. Performing rituals in sites of our family history gives voice to the past in the present, allowing spectral traces to resurface and past generations to be heard in the here and now.

The *détour* to Eastern Europe describes our trip in search of the personal absences within our family story. On the trip, rituals and practices are developed which become a means to remember, and to embody absence; the materials of bread and salt become a means to fill absences, and to embody different kinds of meaning. In the *retour*, I bring these ritual practices back to Brixton, where I develop *Anchor & Magnet*, a collaboration with Brixton-based artists from other cultural backgrounds, which uses shared rituals and practices to widen the conversation about place, belonging and identity in the Brixton context. Absences and presences of voice and language become spaces to develop new artworks that collect and share the stories of others.

<sup>10</sup> Adrienne Rich, 'Notes towards a politics of location', in *Blood, Bread and Poetry* (London: Virago, 1987), pp. 210-32.



Image 2.4-2.6: Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Finding Anne*

## Section 1: Journey to Eastern Europe (*détour*)

In order to trail our family's migrations, we planned to travel as much as possible over land and by sea, but not to stick exactly to our family's routes. This was for several reasons: we did not know their exact routes; we were re-enacting multiple journeys by family members; it was not always possible to access the same routes they had taken (for example, sea travel from Hamburg to Hull no longer operated); and because we wanted to make an extra *détour* to visit *Documenta*, an arts festival held every five years in Kassel, Germany. We therefore planned to travel overland to Kassel and then onwards to Hamburg (where the studio photographs of our great-great-grandmother Anne were taken), before taking a ferry from nearby Kiel to Klaipeda in Lithuania. We would then travel over land by bus to the capital Vilnius where we would meet our father William, who would be accompanying us by car to Rokiskis. Finally, we would catch a sleeper train from Vilnius to St Petersburg, returning to the UK by air (see map, Image 2.3). In our luggage, we took our starter culture mix for bread-making, and the salt we had collected in the salt pans in South Africa, with plans to re-enact the *kblebosolny* threshold ritual at points on our journey.

### **Hamburg: *Finding Anne* (2012-17)**

We spent Saturday roaming the streets of Hamburg, following the very faint trail of our great-great-grandmother Anne Filaratoff, and her father Nicholas. We believe they came to Hamburg from St Petersburg in the 1870s and stayed for up to a decade before leaving for Hull (and Anne eventually for South Africa). Katy had scanned two portrait photographs of Anne, with the address of 19th-century photography studios on the back. So we began our day searching for these addresses, negotiating a large triathlon that blocked many of the city centre streets. Opposite the Rathaus, we found the first address, which had a serendipitous advert for a photo service in the window. The second address was now a shiny clothes shop, and we took photographs at each location posed as Anne had, 120 years ago.<sup>11</sup>

Later, looking at these photographs alongside the originals, there seemed so many incongruities: the informality of the clothes we were wearing compared to Anne's formality, the differences between her tightly held-in waist, hourglass-shaped body, and our unbound bodies, the formality of the studio compared to the shiny shop window full of advertisements for photographic services where we photographed ourselves (Image 2.4). And yet I could see traces of gestures, in the shape of the lips, the eyes, a disobedient fringe (Image 2.5). In one photograph, Rebecca

<sup>11</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, 'Hamburg-Veddel', *Origination* (blog), 26 July 2012.





wears a photograph of Edith, Anne's daughter, around her neck in a direct echo of Anne's necklace. In gazing off somewhere else, my expression is not unlike Anne's, and my folded hands and arms are positioned exactly as hers were, leaning casually on an ornate stand (Image 2.6). The elaborately detailed architectural elements of the studio lend gravitas to Anne's pose, even though she is very young in the photographs, while next to me the rucksacks and the woman smiling with a card suggest a more slapdash, less serious self-presentation.

In our guise as tourists, recreating a family photograph from another time, the intentional act of reconstruction highlights the mixture of excitement and disappointment at finding the location one has been searching for, but where nothing actually remains of what one had been looking for. We could not find any remnants of the studios Anne had had her picture taken in, but the act of taking the photographs made us look more closely at the original photographs and begin to imagine the intentions behind them. The photographs probably date from the late 1870s or early 1880s. Anne looks about 17 or 18 years old, which would make the date 1883, when she departed for England. We know she was staying there with her father, and he may have taken her to have the photographs done for an occasion. Perhaps they marked her arrival into womanhood?

In his account of a journey to Lithuania in search of his grandfather Heshel Melamed, whom he never met, Dan Jacobson carries a studio photo of Heshel taken just before he was due to depart for America:

There is just one photograph of Heshel Melamed in my possession. It is in front of me now. It is not large – about six inches by four inches – and is printed in the sepia tints of the time ... Looking at them [his eyes] I can still see today, reflected in his eyes, the light that once shone in some photographic studio in Kaunas (Kovno to him) or Siauliai (Shavel to him). The reflections bear indisputable witness to the consciousness that was then his. Obedient to the photographer's command, he had self-consciously stiffened his gaze and directed it into the back lens of the camera.<sup>12</sup>

Jacobson is aware that the photograph refers to a precise moment in time, a moment that Heshel Melamed had recorded as a marker of a change in his life, a record of departure.

Roland Barthes writes of the photograph as a 'certificate of presence'.<sup>13</sup> Although he strains at first to 'find' his mother in the collection of photographs he has of her after her death, Barthes finally discovers her presence in one particular photograph, of her as a little girl aged five in the 'Winter Garden' of the house in which she was born:

<sup>12</sup> Jacobson, *Heshel's Kingdom*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>13</sup> Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981) p. 87.



These same photographs, which phenomenology would call 'ordinary' objects, were merely analogical, provoking only her identity, not her truth; but the Winter Garden Photograph was indeed essential, it achieved for me, utopically, the impossible science of the unique being.<sup>14</sup>

Barthes terms this photograph a *punctum*, or a wounding.<sup>15</sup> He felt that this wounding hit him directly with his mother's presence as he gazed at this particular photograph.

Barthes discusses how photographs are direct referents to the real, unlike other systems of representation.<sup>16</sup> This is made certain in part through the pose (the photograph as evidence of a moment when the pose took place, 'something has posed in front of the tiny hole and has remained there forever'<sup>17</sup>) but in larger part through the recording of light and the chemistry of the photograph:

The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here, the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star. A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed.<sup>18</sup>

Hirsch, writing about Barthes in the context of family photography, argues that he 'intensifies the indexical relationship when he speaks of the photograph as a physical, material emanation of a past reality; its speech act is constative: it authenticates the reality of the past and provides a material connection to it'.<sup>19</sup> If, as she says, reference for Barthes is not content but presence, what is indexed through the photograph is the presence of a moment in time.

The photo Rebecca and I have of Anne contains a recording of light at a precise moment in time: the light in a studio in Hamburg, at a moment in her life on the cusp of adulthood, emigration and change. The image of Anne acts as a referent not just to her own departure for a new life, for it also holds within it a point in our family story, a decision to leave for England (we

<sup>14</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 71.

<sup>15</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 76.

<sup>17</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>19</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 6.



Image 2.7: Photograph of Nicholas Filaratoff. Source: Bryan Levy

Image 2.8-2.9: Photograph of Anne as a girl; reverse of photograph. Source: Bryan Levy

don't know why), which becomes crucial to her identity and much later to our own. We also do not know who the photographs were taken *for*.

At the time we made this trip, we had no photographic image of her father, Nicholas, but had heard that an image of him in furs, probably taken in Russia, existed (see Image 2.7). Several years after our trip, Brian, a cousin of my father and the eldest son of Edith's son Magnus, sent me a digital image of this photograph which he had in his house in Sydney, Australia. Brian was planning his own trip to St Petersburg on the family history trail and had found a few photographs that he received from his father. He also sent us a picture of a young girl, taken in a studio in St Petersburg (Images 2.8 and 2.9). I could see the resemblance to the photographs of Anne and deduced that it was likely to be her as a young girl. But in all these pictures, there is the absence of a mother – Anne's mother. This is an incomplete family unit in an incomplete family tree (see the family tree, Image 1.1).

Incompletion can be a driver for artists working in this context of linking family narrative and personal archives, through photography, to wider questions of belonging, identity and self. In the work of Lindsay Seers, Shimon Attie and Lorie Novak, reconstructed and re-projected images, which are often sourced from personal archives, become the basis of artworks that shift across time.<sup>20</sup> However, these artworks also acknowledge the problematic of the photograph as an authentic record.

In her novella (written under the pseudonym M. Anthony Penwill) *It Has to Be This Way*,<sup>21</sup> which was available for free as part of the exhibition of the same name at Matts Gallery in 2010, artist Lindsay Seers creates a complex autobiographical story. The book (and other artworks by Seers) presented the extended family narrative in the form of the artist's autobiography. The story of her half-sister Christina's gradual descent into amnesia is told in the book, but the story is also used as a device to explore the relationship between self and other, identity, the power of the photographic image in recording memory, and its relation to the archive. At one point in the story, the character S describes Christina looking through a box of old photographs:

she would slowly turn the photo in her hands, leaning forward into the light and peering at the image for some time. She would turn each one over to study the back, before returning to the face of the photograph with renewed fascination.<sup>22</sup>

S says that the photographs had taken on a perverse significance for her: 'they could not be

<sup>20</sup> See Lindsay Seers, *It Has to Be This Way* (2010); Shimon Attie, *The Writing on the Wall* (1992-93); Lorie Novak, *Self Portrait (Ellis Island)* (1988) and *Past Lives* (1987).

<sup>21</sup> M. Anthony Penwill, *It Has to Be This Way* (London: Matts Gallery, 2010).

<sup>22</sup> Penwill, *It Has to Be This Way*, p. 24.



Image 2.10: Shimon Attie, *Almstadtstrosse 5 (formerly Grenadierstrasse 24)*: Slide projection of former Jewish resident and hat shop, ca. 1930, Berlin, 1993, 33”X40” chromogenic photograph and on-location installation, from the series *The Writing on The Wall*. Source: Shimon Attie, *The Writing on The Wall* (series), courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Image reproduced with the permission of Shimon Attie.

indicative of memory; they were uncoupled from the past. Instead the photographs could only be memory in the making.<sup>23</sup>

In this narrative, as Louise Wolthers argues in an essay on Seers's work, Barthes's relationship between image, referent and moment is broken. The person viewing the photograph cannot connect to the referent: 'whereas photographic indexicality normally claims a referential link to the original event, referentiality is disturbed and the past event is constantly dislocated.' Seers highlights the failure of the photograph as index and archival record. Instead, Wolthers describes how the characters in Seers's work perform as 'embodied archives', commenting that this repetitive struggle to *do* memory is *how* memory works.<sup>24</sup>

American artist and photographer Shimon Attie's photographic series, *The Writing on the Wall*,<sup>25</sup> re-projects historical photographic images of Berlin's Scheunenviertel district (its Jewish quarter during the 1920s) back onto the original sites of the photographs (Image 2.10).<sup>26</sup> Attie then photographs the projections, creating layered images that become memorials to loss, both the loss of the Jewish population and a record of contemporary loss to gentrification:

Within the course of only a few years, block after block of houses and buildings in the Scheunenviertel has become completely transformed. Most have been entirely renovated, from the inside out. As a result, the Scheunenviertel has become almost unrecognizable even in the few years since the Writing on the Wall project was realized in 1992-93. The 'remaking' of the Scheunenviertel affects both Jewish as well as postwar East German collective memory and identity, as the last physical evidence of these histories is now disappearing as well.<sup>27</sup>

While Attie's photographs document this vanishing history, linking image and referent in one site, he acknowledges them primarily as artworks, and in some cases site, building or linked image are not historically accurate. In five of the 70 installations, he used images from other Jewish quarters and ghettos. In her book on artists whose work uses family photography, Hirsch quotes Attie as saying: 'When it was necessary to choose between being a good historian and – hopefully – being a good artist, I always choose the latter.'<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Penwill, *It Has to Be This Way*<sup>2</sup>, p. 25.

<sup>24</sup> Louise Wolthers, 'Escaping the fortress of memory: Archive pathology in Lindsay Seers' art', in Gunthild Borggreen and Rune Gade (eds), *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2013), pp. 432-47, at p. 445.

<sup>25</sup> Shimon Attie, 'The Writing on the Wall, Berlin, 1992-93: Projections in Berlin's Jewish Quarter', *Art Journal*, 62 (2003), pp. 74-83.

<sup>26</sup> Hirsch, *Family Frames*, p. 264.

<sup>27</sup> Attie, 'The Writing on the Wall', p. 75.

<sup>28</sup> Hirsch, *Family Frames*, p. 265.



Image 2.11: Lorie Novak, *Self-Portrait (Ellis Island)*, 1988. Source: Lorie Novak artist's website: <<https://www.lorienovak.com/projects/self-portraits/#ms-414>> [accessed 15 January 2019]  
Image reproduced with the permission of Lorie Novak.



Hirsch has also written about American artist Lorie Novak who uses images of her family in her photographic works and installations, juxtaposing them with multiple collected snapshots and historical images of other families.<sup>29</sup> Like Attie, Novak re-projects images directly into sites of memory, such as in *Self-Portrait (Ellis Island)* (1988)<sup>30</sup> which projects a photograph of herself into a room on Ellis Island, where her family first arrived in the US (Image 2.11). In other pieces, such as *Past Lives* (1987),<sup>31</sup> she layers a family snapshot of her mother and herself with two images: one, of the children of Izieu, those Jewish children hidden in a French orphanage in Izieu who were eventually found and deported to a death camp by Klaus Barbie; and the other, of Ethel Rosenberg, an American Jewish mother of two young sons, who, together with her husband Julius, was convicted of atomic espionage and executed in the electric chair. This creates what Hirsch calls 'an expanded autobiography' that connects her personal family memories to wider cultural histories and brings into question the relationship between personal and public traumas.<sup>32</sup>

I would argue that as in Seers's work, Attie's photographic referentiality is disturbed. And I would argue that, like both Seers and Attie, Novak, while retaining a direct link between photograph and referent, complicates the referent and the attendant emotion, calling into question where the *punctum* lies.

Returning to *Finding Anne*, Rebecca's and my re-enactment of Anne's photographs in Hamburg, and my layering of these images, the question of the referent is also complicated. Looking at our images, there is the referent of ourselves in the moment of taking our photograph, but there is also the referent of Anne's image in the past. An image that, to me, is consciously unauthentic – a deliberate recreation that is impossible to make accurate or authentic – becomes a new moment and a new relationship between viewer and referent, so that in a sense we are making memories for the future. We can tell stories and put on record our search for a place in which Anne was only fleetingly present, and on which multiple memories and identities have since been layered.

The studio portraits of Anne, perhaps on the point of her departure to England, have other links to the present and to Brixton. They are evocative of the more recent studio portraits of migrants, recently arrived in Brixton, dressed in their work uniforms. Jewish photographer Harry Jacobs

<sup>29</sup> Marianne Hirsch, 'Collected memories: Lorie Novak's virtual family album', in Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (eds), *Inter/Faces: Women's Visual and Performance Art* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2003), pp. 240–60

<sup>30</sup> *Self-Portrait (Ellis Island)* (1988), Lorie Novak artist's website, <<https://www.lorienovak.com/projects/self-portraits/#ms-414>> [accessed 15 January 2019].

<sup>31</sup> *Past Lives* (1987), Lorie Novak artist's website, <<http://lorienovak.com/photos/interiors/interiors11.html>> [accessed 15 January 2019].

<sup>32</sup> Hirsch, 'Collected memories', p. 3.



Image 2.12: Ghetto map, Vilnius

took many such photographs from the 1950s onwards in his studio in Acre Lane.<sup>33</sup> He pinned the photos on his studio wall and later, when the entire archive was rescued and exhibited at the Photographers' Gallery in London in 2002, archivist Jon Newman noted that the semi-public nature of the photographs, repeated in the gallery context, was a reminder that Jacobs's work had always occupied an 'extended, communal domain'.<sup>34</sup> As Newman comments, the photographs would have been sent home to extended families as 'a record of the achievements of the post-war diaspora'.<sup>35</sup> Like the photographs of Anne, they mark a particular moment in time in the subjects' lives: a moment of shifting identities.

### **Jatkowa Street, Vilnius, Lithuania: *Ar pamenate j Meisels?* (2012)**

Arriving in Vilnius, where we were staying with an artist friend Saulius Levonicus, we explored the old city, which was also the location of the former Jewish Ghetto. A memorial plaque showed the location of the 'small' and 'big' ghettos (Image 2.12), but few other physical remnants of the heritage of the Jewish community remained in these sites. Historically, Vilnius had been the centre of a large Jewish community and a focus of Judaic religious culture in Europe; it was known as 'the Jerusalem of the north'.<sup>36</sup> According to the 1897 census, Jews constituted 38.8 per cent of the city's population, amounting to 64,000 individuals.<sup>37</sup> By the early twentieth century, half of the city's population of 120,000 were Jews, most of whom spoke Yiddish. The city was also a focus for the Yiddish language, and it was home to the famed Yiddish Institute of Higher Learning (YIVO), which was relocated to New York in 1940,<sup>38</sup> as well as the Strashum Library, which housed the world's largest collection of Yiddish language books.<sup>39</sup> Under the Nazis, Jews were corralled first into the 'small' ghetto and later into the 'big' ghetto, from where they were subsequently taken to be liquidated.<sup>40</sup>

We had been in touch with a distant relative on a family tree website who had told us that we had ancestors, the Meisels, who had lived in the old city in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Rabbi Moishe Meisels, Rebecca's and my fifth great-grandfather, was born in the city in 1759 and was a renowned rabbi, leading the Chassidic community in Vilnius

<sup>33</sup> Jon Newman, 'Harry Jacobs: The studio photographer and the visual archive', in Paul Ashton and Hilda Kean (eds), *People and their Pasts: Public History Today* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 260-78.

<sup>34</sup> Newman, 'Harry Jacobs', p. 271.

<sup>35</sup> Newman, 'Harry Jacobs', p. 272.

<sup>36</sup> Carmelo Lisciotto, 'The Vilnius ghetto: Jewish life in Vilnius/Vilna' (Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team, 2007), Holocaust Research Project website: <<http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ghettos/vilnius.html>> [accessed 10 July 2017].

<sup>37</sup> Lisciotto, 'The Vilnius Ghetto'.

<sup>38</sup> YIVO website: <<https://www.yivo.org/History-of-YIVO>> [accessed 10 July 2017].

<sup>39</sup> Lisciotto, 'The Vilnius Ghetto'.

<sup>40</sup> Lisciotto, 'The Vilnius Ghetto'.



Image 2.13 -14: Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Ar pamenate i meisels?*

until 1816 when he emigrated to what was then Palestine.<sup>41</sup> According to Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, Meisels also acted as a spy for the Russian army during the Napoleonic wars, and was fluent in German, Russian, Polish and French.<sup>42</sup> In the local archives we found records of the Meisels's addresses in Vilnius, on Jatkowa Street in the 'small' ghetto area. For the first time in our journey, a site of our family story intersected with a site of the Holocaust. The first attempt to locate their home on the street drew a blank – one side of the street was no longer there. Many buildings had changed. The Jewish quarter then was not the Jewish quarter now.

Our experience of locating our ancestors was frustrating and disappointing. The archive records were often held only in Russian, a text we could not read.

As we attempt to locate and decipher traces of our ancestors, we hit many problems. We have to negotiate multiple languages and translations, from Lithuanian to Russian to Yiddish to Hebrew, moving round and around in a never-ending circle of confusion. Names have been recorded in one language, translated to another, then another, through several scripts. We hit on using Google translate in a playful advertising campaign around Vilnius old town, pretty sure that the mistranslations offered by a cybernetic interpreter reflect the truth of our search.<sup>43</sup>

We decided to make a performative and intuitive response to Jatkowa Street, in a two-part artwork we titled *Ar pamenate i Meisels?*<sup>44</sup> ('Do you remember the Meisels?' in Lithuanian). For the first part, I dowsed with a crystal I had brought with me on the journey, stopping at each doorway on Jatkowa Street, asking it to indicate the threshold of our ancestors' home (Image 2.13). When we had found what we thought was their doorway, I sprinkled salt we had carried with us from South Africa onto the grass (Image 2.14). This salting of the earth was both a ritual act and a form of memorial. It was the first act of marking the absences, which became increasingly familiar on our journey.

At the thresholds along Jatkowa Street, archways lead off to courtyards. Under the arches, we had seen noticeboards layered with advertisements, which we couldn't read. For the second part of the artwork, we created an advertisement asking:

<sup>41</sup> See 'Bonaparte-and-the-Chassid', Chabad website: <[http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/1155/jewish/Bonaparte-and-the-Chassid.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1155/jewish/Bonaparte-and-the-Chassid.htm)> [accessed 10 July 2017]; originally published in Yanki Tauber, *Once Upon a Chassid: The Wisdom and the Whimsy, the Fire and the Joy: Stories, Anecdotes and Sayings* (Brooklyn, NY: Kehot Publication Society, 1994).

<sup>42</sup> 'Bonaparte-and-the-Chassid'.

<sup>43</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, 'De-Ciphering', *Origination* (blog), 3 August 2012.

<sup>44</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Ar pamenate i Meisels?*, performance, photographic documentation, 27 July 2012.



### **Do you remember the Meisels?**

**If you have any information you can share with us, please contact us at:**

**Beinart\_beinart@hotmail.com**

The text of the advertisement was translated into Lithuanian, Russian and Hebrew, and it featured an email account we had set up temporarily (Image 2.15). We pinned the advertisement to the board, not with any real hope that we would get a response, but rather as a temporary memorial and marker of our ancestors' former home. The inevitability that the salt would absorb into the grass and that the advertisements would get overlaid by other advertisements was an intentional part of the artwork and action.

Anke Bangma has written about remembering as 'an act in the present' that does not just 'reflect past reality "as it was" but acts upon reality by organizing it and attaching specific meaning to it.'<sup>45</sup> This ongoing process of mediation in the present attaches specific meaning to memory through enacting it, and this could be where a link between memory, heritage and regeneration lies, and where the trace is enacted. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett suggests an understanding of heritage as something produced in the present but with recourse to the past. In her writings on the cultural production of heritage, she looks at heritage as something that is not 'lost or found, stolen or reclaimed' but that is rather 'a mode of cultural production in the present', producing something new, at the same time as offering a 'second life' to an existing place or object.<sup>46</sup> James Clifford comments that Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's concept of the second life of heritage 'allows us to focus on the specific processes of transformation: how elements from the past are being made and re-made in specific relational contexts'.<sup>47</sup> So, as cities, streets and buildings are regenerated, either in a deliberate process of renewal or through gradual change over time as new owners take possession, heritage and memory must be reproduced in order to continue to be made present. There is an intrinsic poetics of Relation, therefore, to the process of regeneration. But whether this poetics is acknowledged, and whether the pasts are brought back to the present in a process of *retour*, impacts on the type of heritage and memory being produced.

In the act of salting the earth at the place we think may be the threshold of the Meisels' home, the salt is a marker for an absence: it temporarily demarcates a space, rapidly vanishes, but subtly affects the ground into which it mixes. Leaving our adverts on the noticeboards, we returned later that week to find they had already been covered over by other notices. But were we remaking memory, performing heritage, or doing something slightly different when we performed these ritual actions in Jatkowa Street? There was no direct link between our actions in Jatkowa Street and those of our ancestors, as we did not know what kind of actions they had

<sup>45</sup> Anke Bangma and Steve Ruston (eds), *Experience, Memory, Re-enactment* (Rotterdam: Piet Zwart Institute; Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2005), p. 14.

<sup>46</sup> Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'Theorizing heritage', *Ethnomusicology*, 39 (1995), pp. 367-80, at p. 370.

<sup>47</sup> James Clifford, *Returns: Becoming Indigenous in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 277.

Blatt 2.

	-übertrag:	3 834
29.7.41 Krasiniai	254 Juden, 3 lit. Kommunisten	267
30.7.41 Agriogala	27 " , 11 " "	38
31.7.41 Utena	235 " , 16 Jüdinnen, 4 lit. Komm. 1 zweifacher Raubmörder	256
11/31.7.41 Wendziogala	13 Juden, 2 Mörder	15
<u>Monat August:</u>		
1.8.41 Ukmerge	254 Juden, 42 Jüdinnen, 1 pol. Komm. 2 lit. NKWD-Agenten, 1 Bürgermeister von Jonava, der den Befehl zum An- sünden der Stadt Jonava gab	300
2.8.41 Kauon-Port I/	170 Juden, 1 USA-Jude, 1 USA-Jüdin, 33 Jüdinnen, 4 lit. Kommunisten	209
4.8.41 Panevėžys	362 Juden, 41 Jüdinnen, 5 russ. Komm. 14 lit. Kommunisten	422
5.8.41 Krasiniai	213 Juden, 66 Jüdinnen	279
7.8.41 Utena	483 " , 87 " , 1 Litauer, war Leichenfledderer an deutschen Soldaten	571
8.8.41 Ukmerge	620 Juden, 82 Jüdinnen	702
9.8.41 Kauon-Port IV	484 " , 50 "	534
11.8.41 Panevėžys	450 " , 48 " , 1 lit. 1 russ. E.	500
13.8.41 Alytus	617 " , 100 " , 1 Verbrecher	719
14.8.41 Jonava	497 " , 55 "	552
15. und 16.8.41 Rokiskis	3200 Juden, Jüdinnen und J-Kinder, 5 lit. Komm., 1 Pole, 1 Partisane	3 207
9. bis 16.8.41 Krasiniai	294 Jüdinnen, 4 Judenkinder	298
27.6. bis 14.8.41 Rokiskis	493 Juden, 432 Russen, 56 Litauer (alles aktive Kommunisten)	981
18.8.41 Kauon-Port IV	698 Juden, 402 Jüdinnen, 1 Polin, 711 Intell.-Juden aus dem Ghetto als Repräsentation für eine Sabotage- Handlung	1 812
19.8.41 Ukmerge	298 Juden, 255 Jüdinnen, 1 Politr. 88 Judenkinder, 1 russ. Kommunist	645
22.8.41 Dünaburg	3 russ. Komm., 5 Letten, dabei war 1 Mörder, 1 russ. Cardist, 3 Polen, 3 Zigeuner, 1 Zigeunerin, 1 Zigeu- nerkind, 1 Jude, 1 Jüdin, 1 Arme- nier, 2 Politrucks (Gefängnis-über- prüfung in Dünaburg)	21
	-übertrag:	16 152

Image 2.16: Jaeger Report, excerpt. Source: The Holocaust History Project: 1-9. The document is available at: <<http://phdn.org/archives/holocaust-history.org/works/jaeger-report/html/img002.htm.en.html>> [accessed 13 July 2017]



performed. Rather, our actions could be seen as seeking to establish a direct connection to the past through the body, a sort of presencing of the past in a similar sense to the way Steve Pile has written about the body in cities engaging ghost-like presences or phantasmagoria.<sup>48</sup> This also connects to Karen Till's work on 'spectral traces', and Glissant's trace, introduced in Part 1.

In relation to the issue of regeneration, and the presence or absence of heritage and memory, our artwork would be seen as a form of re-making, rather than a direct re-enactment of a known heritage. In linking this practice to *détour* and *retour*, there is a possibility of spectral traces as a kind of return of the repressed, a return which tries to deal with lives that have been lived in a place but are no longer living. So, if spectral traces are integral to the poetics of our salt practices, they imply a need to think through the past and its relation to the present. They suggest a need for reworking the past so that it can be accessed through a process of *détour* and *retour* rather than through a direct approach. Perhaps salt practices offer a *détournement* that can approach and surface the spectral.

Having made a personal connection to a place that had since become a public site of Holocaust memory in Vilnius, we then found more specific details of the Holocaust in Rokiskis, a town in north-eastern Lithuania that was our destination in search of our family. Our father William had just arrived in Vilnius. We decided to visit the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum and its adjunct display on the Holocaust in a separate building, housed in an old green house on Pamėnkalnio Street. These museums had been set up in the 1990s, reinstating a post-war Jewish Museum as well as pre-World War Two Jewish museums and cultural collections which had previously been plundered and destroyed.<sup>49</sup> Visiting the green house, the home of the Holocaust museum, we were following in the footsteps of Dan Jacobson in *Heshel's Kingdom*, who wrote of visiting this museum and becoming suddenly aware that 'the worst of the pictures had been taken by the killers themselves. Or if not by the men who were actually firing the rifles and machine guns at any one moment, then certainly by their companions and accomplices.'<sup>50</sup>

In the first room of the museum, Jacobson describes 'an enlarged photocopy of an official summary by Karl Jaeger (the SS Standardführer, and head of Einsatzkommando 3) of his activities in Lithuania over one particular period'.<sup>51</sup> The document, known as the Jaeger Report, has the official title *Complete tabulation of executions carried out in the Einsatzkommando 3 zone up to December 1, 1941* (Image 2.16).<sup>52</sup> The document lists towns in Lithuania in one column,

<sup>48</sup> Steve Pile, *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life* (London: Sage, 2005), p. 165.

<sup>49</sup> For further details of the history of the Jewish Museums in Vilnius, see <<http://www.jmuseum.lt/en/about-the-museum/>> [accessed 13 July 2017].

<sup>50</sup> Jacobson, *Heshel's Kingdom*, p. 129.

<sup>51</sup> Jacobson, *Heshel's Kingdom*, p. 126.

<sup>52</sup> Karl Jäger, Commander of the Security Police and the SD, Einsatzkommando 3, *Complete tabulation of executions carried out in the Einsatzkommando 3 zone up to December 1, 1941* (1 December 1941); 'The



followed by dates in a second, number of Jews in a third and numbers of women, children and others in a fourth. The horror of reading this ordered, comprehensive list of murders carried out over a short period of time in 1941 was overwhelming. Without wanting or intending to, we found out while reading the list that Rokiskis featured as one of the sites. Over the course of two days, 15–16 August 1941, ‘3,200 Jews, Jewesses, and Jewish Children’ were murdered (in addition to more than 1,000 who had been killed in the preceding two months).<sup>53</sup> And in other sources we found out that over 1,000 Jewish people were also killed at nearby Obeliai, where Beinarts also lived.

The actual sites of the murders were woods outside the town, and later I was able to find on a website called the ‘Holocaust Atlas of Lithuania’ the precise sites where the murders took place. The report in the museum notes that the victims ‘were taken 4.5 km from the town to woods outside the village of Bajorai’.<sup>54</sup> There is a short comment in Jaeger’s notes on how difficult it had been to locate the precise site of the murders and that it was only possible with the assistance of local Lithuanians. The note also highlighted the complicity of Lithuanians in the killings.

In the next room, I saw a photograph of one of these shootings, an image like the one described by Jacobson. A row of naked women carrying their babies, also naked, are lined up in a wood. The women are holding the babies in a protective way, as if trying to shield them from what is about to happen. They are about to be shot. Their nakedness makes them extremely vulnerable, and the onlooker must have been aware of the terrible truth of this when taking the photograph, as the women would have been facing a line of men with guns. Jacobson discusses how the photographs could not have been taken in an officially sanctioned way by any correspondent, neutral or otherwise: the German authorities wanted to keep these *Einsatz* actions secret, since they were afraid of the reactions from abroad, the possibility of Jews being forewarned, and the need to preserve the ‘decency and discipline’ of their troops.<sup>55</sup> Jacobson posits that it was ‘sadistic prurience’ that animated the photographer – the photograph was a trophy for future examination.<sup>56</sup>

That the light from the bodies of the women and their babies in that moment was made permanent in the photographic image, which then acts as a referent to the event, seems an act

Jaeger Report: A chronicle of Nazi mass murder’ (English translation of the report along with scanned images of the original), *Kauen: The Holocaust History Project*, 1–9. The document is available at: <<http://phdn.org/archives/holocaust-history.org/works/jaeger-report/htm/img002.htm.en.html>> [accessed 13 July 2017].

<sup>53</sup> ‘Documentation of the Mass Murder of Lithuanian Jewry by the SS Einsatzgruppen (Action Groups)’, from a Secret Reich Letter dated 1 December 1941, from the Remember website, <<http://remember.org/docss.html>> [accessed 13 July 2017].

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Jacobson, *Heshel’s Kingdom*, p. 129.

<sup>56</sup> Jacobson, *Heshel’s Kingdom*, p. 130.



of scarring. It is a trace that wounds and that retains its power to hurt. In wounding in this manner, this photograph is one of Barthes's *punctums*. Barthes maintained that the *punctum* has an often-metonymic power of expansion. He describes how, on seeing a photograph by Andre Kerterz (1921) of a blind gypsy violinist being led by a boy along a dirt road, he recognized 'the straggling villages I passed through on my long ago travels in Hungary and Rumania'.<sup>57</sup>

The photograph of the women and their babies in the museum seemed in a horrible way to connect to the family photographs in my archive. In a family archive, a scene of a woman holding a baby might be a photograph that marks a happy point in their lives and the start of a new generation; but instead this photograph is a point of final departure, from which there is no return. More than the list, or the places I have visited on the trip, this image stays with me as knowledge of what our family avoided by leaving.

Later, I found a reference in 'Out of the Depths',<sup>58</sup> a document that lists members of the Lithuanian *Yeshiva* (religious schools) who were killed during the Holocaust, to a Shimon Leib Beinart who died, aged 20, in Panevezys, one of the sites listed in Jaeger's report, in August or September 1941. He was born around the same time as my grandfather and his brothers. That my grandfather grew up in South Africa, and went on to become an anglophone Professor of Law in Cape Town, now seems to be an amazing feat of escape, one dependent on his father Woolf's decision to migrate.

As we continued our journey, it became clear that the ownership of the tragedy of the Holocaust was a complex issue in Lithuania. The culpability of the Lithuanians who had aided the Nazi Einsatzgruppen in mass murder was often sidelined in favour of a narrative that tells of the genocide of Lithuanian people carried out by the Nazis during the war. The narrative continues with how the oppression carried out by the Soviets during the Russian occupation of Lithuania was felt by Lithuanians, rather than by the Jewish community specifically. Many Lithuanians were deported and, it is claimed, thousands were killed under the Soviet occupation.<sup>59</sup> This is now much emphasized in national history, and, especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, it feeds into a narrative of Lithuanian nationalism and identity.<sup>60</sup> But perhaps because

<sup>57</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 45.

<sup>58</sup> Rabbi Ephraim Oshry, 'Out of the Depths (translation from *Mima'amakim*, published in New York, 1959)', trans. Yocheved Klausner, p. 282; available from the JewishGen website, <<http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/lithuania7/Lithuania7.html#TOC>> [accessed 13 July 2017].

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Dalia Kuodyte, a Member of the Lithuanian Parliament and former Director General of the Centre of Genocide and Resistance (LGGRTC), 'The tragic story of one third of Lithuania's population became victims of Soviet terror', Vilnews website, <<http://vilnews.com/2010-12-the-tragic-story-of-how-one-third-of-lithuania's-population-became-victims-of-soviet-terror>> [accessed 20 December 2017].

<sup>60</sup> Daniel Brook, 'Double genocide', *Slate*, 26 July 2015, <[http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/history/2015/07/lithuania\\_and\\_nazis\\_the\\_country\\_wants\\_to\\_forget\\_its\\_collaborationist\\_past.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history/2015/07/lithuania_and_nazis_the_country_wants_to_forget_its_collaborationist_past.html)> [accessed 13 July 2017]; Timothy Snyder, 'Neglecting the Lithuanian Holocaust', *New York Review of*

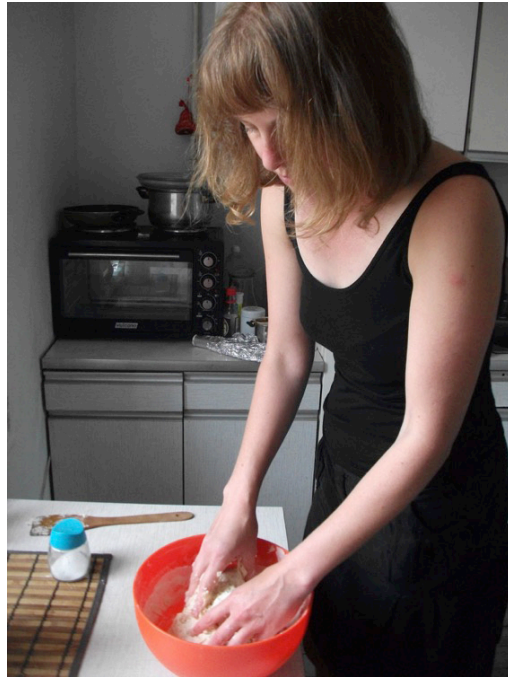


Image 2.17: Baking bread in Vilnius. Photograph: Rebecca Beinart

of Lithuanian collaboration, and the lack of a Jewish presence after the war, the voice of the Jewish community has been silenced.

Rokiskis Museum is a regional museum, housed in a former country manor and estate at the edge of the town. The museum emphasizes the oppression of Lithuanians by the Russians and the uprisings of Lithuanian nationalists.<sup>61</sup> There is little information provided about the Jewish families who constituted over half the population of the town before the Second World War and who had lived there since the eighteenth century.<sup>62</sup> However, one of the historians at the museum told us that her husband knew the locations of the old Jewish cemeteries in the area, and he offered to take us to visit them. We had also been in contact with a genealogist in the United States, Philip Shapiro, who had given us a basic mapping of the town and the location of the Jewish community who once lived there.<sup>63</sup>

### **Vilnius: *Starter Culture and Khlebosolny* (2012)**

Before we left Vilnius to travel to Rokiskis, we had made bread with our *Starter Culture* mix, using our South African salt and Lithuanian flour and water (Image 2.17). The local flour added a new ingredient to the culture, which so far had been made in South Africa, in the UK, and on board ship. We made two loaves to take on our journey to Rokiskis and Obeliai, the town and nearby village from which our research showed that the Beinarts came, and to carry out the *Khlebosolny* threshold ritual we first performed at sea, en route to South Africa.

Bread culture is a live organism that needs continual feeding and refreshing with flour and water.<sup>64</sup> When the bread is baked, salt is added not only for flavour but also to tighten the gluten structure, since it strengthens the dough. It also helps the loaf to hold on to the carbon dioxide gas that is formed during fermentation, thereby supporting good volume. A baking website further notes: ‘Salt also slows down fermentation and enzyme activity in dough. The salt crystals draw water away from their environment (salt is “hygroscopic”). When salt and yeast compete for water, salt wins and the yeast is slowed down.’<sup>65</sup> The balance of flour, water and salt is crucial, therefore, to the bread-making process and to the maintenance of the culture.

*Books*, 25 July 2011, <<http://www.nybooks.com/daily/2011/07/25/neglecting-lithuanian-holocaust>> [accessed 13 July 2017].

<sup>61</sup> Museum text, Rokiskis Museum.

<sup>62</sup> Raphael Julius, ‘Rokishok’ (translation of ‘Rokishok’, a chapter from *Pinkas Hakehillot Lita*) in *Encyclopedia of Jewish Communities in Lithuania* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996), available from <[http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas\\_lita/lit\\_00646.html](http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_lita/lit_00646.html)> [accessed 13 July 2017].

<sup>63</sup> Conversation with Philip Shapiro via Skype, 27 July 2012.

<sup>64</sup> Andrew Whitley, *DO Sourdough: Slow Bread for Busy Lives* (London: The Do Book Co., 2014).

<sup>65</sup> Weekend Bakery website: <<https://www.weekendbakery.com/posts/salt-in-bread-baking-how-much-and-why/>> [accessed 2 August 2017].





As well as referring to bread and salt, *khlebosalny* or *khleb da sol* means a ceremony of welcome, using bread and salt (as discussed in Project 1).<sup>66</sup> In *War and Peace*, Tolstoy refers to ‘the bread and salt of hospitality’,<sup>67</sup> which writer Joanna Trew explains in relation to Slavic culture:

Across the Slavic world, bread and salt is offered as part of a traditional welcome ceremony. A round loaf of bread is placed on a tray, with a salt-cellar placed on top, or in a hole cut into the bread. Both the tray and the loaf would be highly decorated. The tradition persists to this day, especially at weddings, and during state visits from foreign leaders, where local people dress up in national costume to present the bread and salt.<sup>68</sup>

Later on our journey, visiting the Bread Museum in St Petersburg, we read that when a Russian person made a new settlement, they ploughed a field and sowed ‘bread’,<sup>69</sup> or ‘sat down on the ground’.<sup>70</sup> In Russian homes, the bread was stored in a special *khlebnya*: ‘a round or oval box with densely closed cover, placed in a forward corner on a bench under icons. Only the owner of the house could take bread out from it.’<sup>71</sup> Bread enshrined both farming and gathering, and it also had certain almost magical properties.<sup>72</sup>

When I mixed the ingredients by hand in Saulius’s kitchen, I thought about the experience of touch. What kind of knowledge is generated through touch? How does touch bring about a different encounter with place, often with something that is visually less present? Making bread in a kitchen in Vilnius, as well as laying salt onto the grass, allowed me to imagine that I was making an intimate and direct connection with our ancestors. Through the action of making, I experienced the touching of substances and surfaces that they may also have touched, and I could understand this as a more direct encounter with the past, which as I referred to in Part 1, has been termed *praesentia* by Kevin Hetherington.<sup>73</sup> According to Hetherington’s idea of *praesentia*, place becomes, through touch, an encounter rather than a representation. Via the

<sup>66</sup> R.E.F. Smith and David Christian, *Bread and Salt: A Social and Economic History of Food and Drink in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 5.

<sup>67</sup> Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, trans. Amy Mandelker, revised edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 405.

<sup>68</sup> Joanna Trew, ‘Review of Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*’, Bookdrum website, <<http://www.bookdrum.com/books/war-and-peace/9780199232765/bookmarks-401-425.html?bookId=730>> [accessed 2 August 2017].

<sup>69</sup> Meaning various grain crops, including rye, barley, wheat, oats and buckwheat. Museum text, St Petersburg Bread Museum.

<sup>70</sup> Museum text, St Petersburg Bread Museum.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Smith and Christian, *Bread and Salt*, p. 65.

<sup>73</sup> Kevin Hetherington, ‘Spatial textures: Place, touch, and praesentia’, *Environment and Planning A*, 35 (2003), pp. 1933-44, at p. 1937.

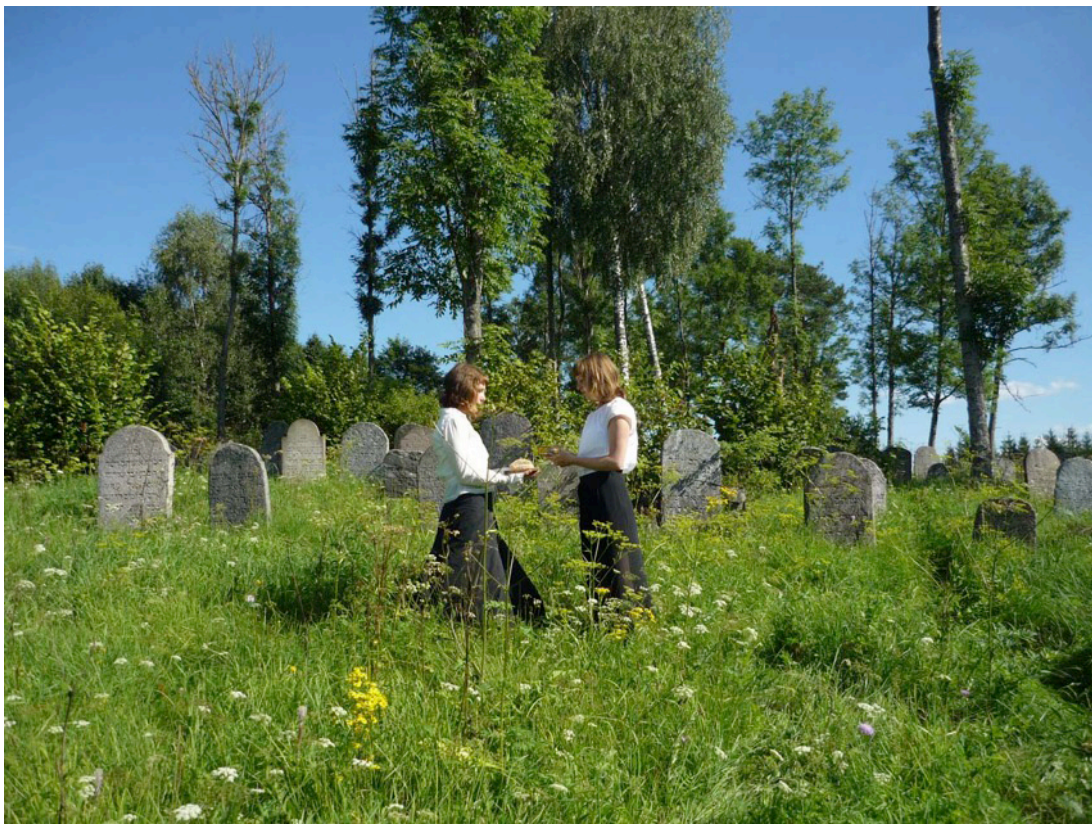


Image 2.18: Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Offere 2*. Photograph: William Beinart

material poetics of an artwork, the encounter acts as a reference to place, forming a physical index to the process of *détour* and *retour*. In the next stage of the journey, we took our bread and salt to the village our ancestors had left in the early 1900s, uncertain as to what we would encounter.

### **Rokiskis and Obeliai: *Offere II* (2012)**

In the area beyond Synagogue Gatve, where old wooden houses are laid out along dusty un-tarmacked roads, we find Rokiskis Jewish cemetery. It is overgrown and neglected, mature silver birch trees grow out of some of the graves, the most recent of which date from 1940. The Jewish population ceased to exist here after that. The graves are hard to decipher, Dad traces the fragile letters with his finger, trying to make them out and trying to remember his Hebrew alphabet. Behind us is a hill, overgrown with very tall grasses and wild plants. Our guide Zigmás explains that this is also part of the burial ground. We pick our way gingerly between old graves, buried in vegetation, and half expect to see protruding bones.

We reach the windmill on the main road, and follow a small track into what seems to be someone's allotment. Behind the vegetable patch is the Obeliai Jewish cemetery, marked by a wonky picket fence. It looks like a wildflower meadow.<sup>74</sup>

We returned to the Obeliai cemetery the next day and combed through headstones in the long grass. We could not find any with our family name. We made a performance, *Offere II*, walking towards each other through the headstones and flowers, and meeting in front of the gravestones to perform the *Kblebosolny* ritual, sharing bread and salt, in an echo of the film we made at the salt pans in South Africa (Image 2.18). We did not know for certain if this was where Woolf Beinart was born, but he had lived there at one time and we had brought an offering of salt from the place to which he had emigrated.

After we shared the bread and salt, we sprinkled the rest of the salt from South Africa onto the ground by the gravestones (Image 2.19).

The traditional bread and salt ceremony marks the crossing of a threshold, often to a new home. But perhaps we are re-enacting this tradition in reverse: bringing with us the histories of lives that

<sup>74</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, 'Offere II', *Origination* (blog), 6 August 2012.



Image 2.19: Sprinkling salt on graves. Photograph: William Beinart

stemmed from this place but were lived out in an unimaginable future. A threshold between different time zones, different possible fates, diverging paths.<sup>75</sup>

Through the *Khlebosalny* ritual, we experienced space and time through touch and taste, an experience of *praesentia* that, as Hetherington says, mingles distance and proximity; presence and absence; secular and divine; human and nonhuman; subject and object; time and space; vision and touch.<sup>76</sup>

The mingling of past and present, and of our own identities with others (our ancestors, and others' ancestors), connects to Glissant's Relation, where an encounter with an Other is realized as part of the 'entanglements of world-wide relation'.<sup>77</sup> Through this entanglement, an understanding of how connected we are to one another develops. In this encounter, the salt (and bread) are indexical to a knowledge or experience of mingling, or entanglement, and of crossing a threshold of some kind. The taste of salt and bread in the ritual, in this site, offers a poetics of salt as entanglement, and provides a direct way (through the material) of encountering the Other, in this case our ancestors. Tasting this bread and salt in the cemetery site was also a bringing back of a lost culture, which might be seen as a rebalancing act. Through this act, we then hold in our memories the connection to this specific site whenever we repeat the ritual in the future. This is a *praesentia* of memory: an encounter with touch (and taste) that is then sealed as a memory.

Before we made the performance, I had set up a camera on a tripod, and William (our father) took photographs from this point. I had wanted to document our action in a replica of the film, *Offere I*, which we had made in South Africa.<sup>78</sup> My idea had been to take a series of images that could form an animated sequence of our performance. Later, looking at the photographs, I am struck by the *fact* of our father's presence, as photographer, with his gaze on us, the subjects. What strikes me is the absence in a photographic image of the person who takes it, which leaves the viewer to imagine whose gaze it is. In a very different context, the photograph I saw in the Holocaust Museum in Vilnius begs the same question.

In the cemetery we were unable to discover the presence of our ancestors, and in the photograph the viewer is not offered a clue about the identity of the photographer. This lack of visibility of the viewer – his or her obscurity – is concomitant with the search for roots, which is ultimately full of dead ends and disappointments. Do the photographs my father took act as a referent? And if so, to what? They might act as a referent to the site of the cemetery, which stands in for

<sup>75</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, 'Offere II', *Origination* (blog), 6 August 2012.

<sup>76</sup> Hetherington, 'Spatial textures', p. 1940.

<sup>77</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 31.

<sup>78</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Offere I* (2010).

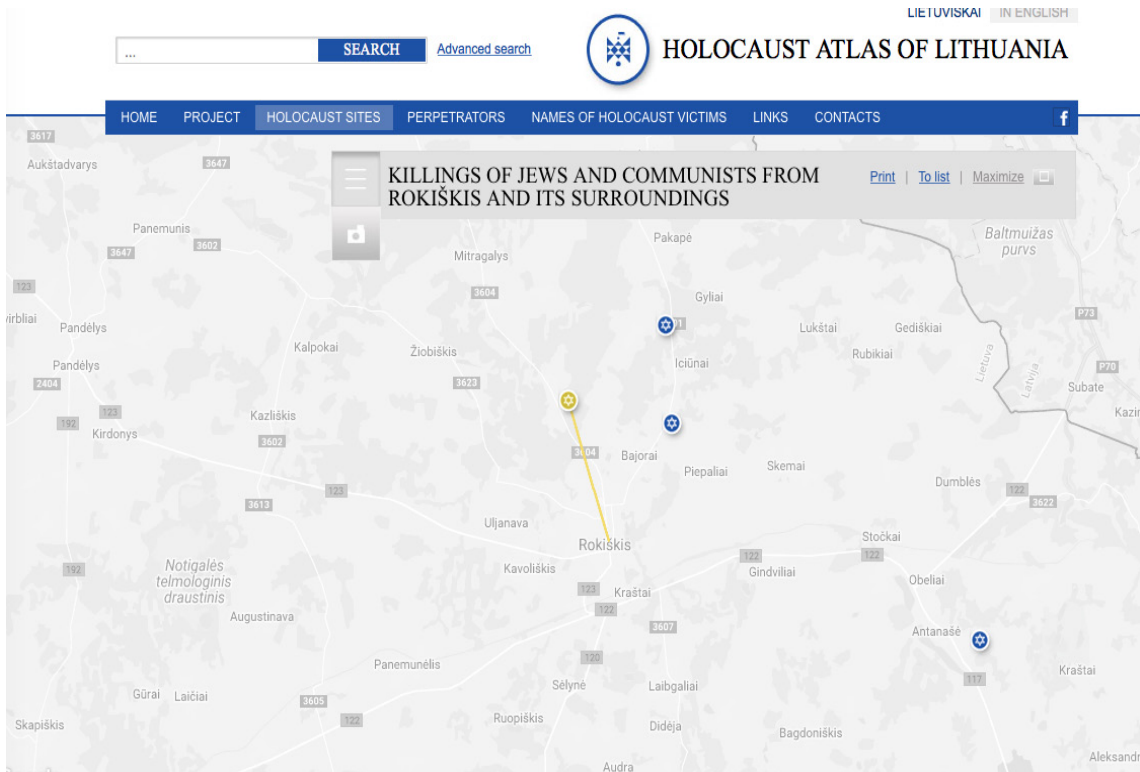


Image 2.20: Killing of Jews and Communists from Rokiskis and surrounding area, The Holocaust Atlas of Lithuania (screen shot). Source: The Holocaust Atlas of Lithuania Website. <[http://www.holocaustatlas.lt/EN/#a\\_atlas/search//page/1/item/74/](http://www.holocaustatlas.lt/EN/#a_atlas/search//page/1/item/74/)> [accessed 9 August 2017]

the disappeared who lie in mass graves. They might act as a referent to the spectral traces of these ancestors whose history has been left behind.

Before leaving Rokiskis, we tried to find the memorial site we had been told about by Zigmas, at Steponi forest, one of the sites where the Jews of Rokiskis and Obeliai were murdered and had been buried. The *Yizkor* book ('memorial' book) for Rokiskis described the locations of the sites:

In the vicinity of Rokishok there are four communal graves (seven by another account); in Antanosa 5 Km. from Abel (Obeliai), about 200 metres from the left side of the road are buried 1,160 who were murdered on 25.8.1941; in the village of Rozonai about 200 metres to the left, on the road leading to the settlement of Juodupe, are buried 67, murdered in July 1941; in the town of Steponi 5 Km. from Rokishok about 150 metres to the right of the road in the direction of Swedishetz are 981 graves of those also murdered in July /August of 1941; in the forest of Valindova 5 Km. from Rokishok not far from the village of Baiorai, 400 metres to the right of the road which leads to the road to Juodupe, are buried 3207 men, women and children, who were killed on 25-26 August 1941. According to these facts the number of those murdered was between 4,700 to 4,800. After the war, those remaining from the surrounding villages erected monuments over the communal graves. In the Steponi forest the following is inscribed: 'At this spot are buried 981 citizens who were murdered by the fascist German occupiers and nationalist bourgeoisie between 27/6/1941 and 14/8/1941.'<sup>79</sup>

Zigmas had given us directions, yet we were still unable to locate the site at Steponi. There seemed to be a silence about these sites, and a lack of signage.

On the 'Holocaust Atlas of Lithuania' website, which details locations and information about each site (Image 2.20), I found directions:

Go from Rokiškis towards Čedasai. After about 3 km from the city you'll reach the village of Steponys. **There are no signs.** Pass the first homestead and turn right. The road will take you into the forest. In the forest stay on the main road. After you turn left, go about 300 meters and turn left again. At the turn there's a sign prohibiting the burning of grass. The monument is 20 meters away.

Latitude: 56.003617 Longitude: 25.560800<sup>80</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Meilech Bakalczuk-Felin (ed.), *Yizkor Book of Rakishok and Environs*, translation of *Yisker-bukh fun Rakishok un umgegnit* (Johannesburg: Yizkor Book Pub. Council, 1952).

<sup>80</sup> (My emphasis in bold.) The Holocaust Atlas of Lithuania Website, <<http://www.holocaustatlas.lt/>>





This confirmation of the lack of signs reinforced the view I had developed of a wish to forget the Holocaust by contemporary Lithuanian society.

The main holders of the memory of the Jewish communities of Rokiskis and Obeliai remained the *Yizkor* books, which became the memorials, while the physical sites of Jewish homes and the places of their deaths lacked a visible presence of their lives as lived and ending. The *Yizkor* books on the internet are more accessible to a global network of interested people, reflecting the far-flung dispersal of Jewish people, who do not constitute a diaspora from Lithuania because they are not connected with it. The local sites are hidden, possibly suppressed memorials that few encounter, but they are significant partly because they are now known about and publicized online.

Our actions became a form of postmemory that wove imagined and real histories together. They answered a felt obligation to continue the process both of uncovering the traces of the past and of viewing the past through the eyes of, and in relation to, the present. And they offered us possibilities of expanding the research through the transpersonal zone of relations that, according to Miller, is social, affective, material, and inevitably public. But this obligation and possibility needed to take place in a politics of the present day through an act of *retour*.

## Section 2: The Arch (*retour*)

Returning to Brixton in Autumn 2012, I began to work with curator and artist Barby Asante, who had curated the *Origination* exhibition at 198 Gallery in 2011, and with Kate Theophilus, a locally based creative producer. Throughout 2012 we had been meeting to discuss a collaborative project to develop an artistic response to the changes taking place in Brixton and to act as a research project with the aim of developing new artworks. This formed a part of my PhD in which I wanted to engage with research through collaboration and social engagement.

We had identified joint interests in themes of migration, identity, belonging and place, in relation to Brixton and its global links, and decided to name the collaboration Anchor & Magnet in reference to this. Anchor & Magnet alluded to Brixton as a magnet for migrants and as an anchor for incoming communities. Individuals have established an often-powerful sense of rootedness in relation to their locality, and they have evolved identities informed by their new home. Prior to my trip to Lithuania and Russia, we had co-written an Arts Council funding application, and we were successful in raising £10,000 for a short residency in Brixton and a series of linked events.<sup>81</sup>

As outlined in Part 1, the changes taking place in Brixton over 2012–13 included Council-led and architect-developed plans for the regeneration of several sites in central Brixton. Consultation work had been carried out in 2012 by architects Allies and Morrison, but there was increasing discontent at proposed changes.<sup>82</sup> In this context, we recognized that the word ‘regeneration’ was being used in a particular way by the Council, and that a delicate balance of interests, stakeholders, actors and communities in the area was in danger of reaching a tipping point. To emphasize our neutrality and to set out our aims for the project, we each wrote a ‘Statement of Intent’; these were then combined into a joint statement (Image 2.21).<sup>83</sup>

Our residency took place from October 2012 to January 2013 at a railway arch in Valentia Place, a goods yard behind the market shops and arches (hereafter, the residency space is referred to as ‘the Arch’).<sup>84</sup> Our first action was to decorate the Arch with fabric and to paste up our Statement of Intent. Anyone who visited was invited to read and edit or critique the statement. We also set up a ‘Reading Room’ and added books on Brixton, community art, and relevant themes. Visitors to the Arch were encouraged to use and borrow from the library. We had a ‘dialogue notebook’, which volunteers and members of Anchor & Magnet used to note down conversations, both

<sup>81</sup> See Appendix for details of this and also UCL funding.

<sup>82</sup> Allies and Morrison, ‘Brixton SPD’, December 2012, Future Brixton website: <[http://futurebrixton.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/brixton\\_spd\\_cabinet\\_approved\\_10\\_june.pdf](http://futurebrixton.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/brixton_spd_cabinet_approved_10_june.pdf)> [accessed 23 August 2017].

<sup>83</sup> See Appendix, Joint Statement of Intent (2012).

<sup>84</sup> Anchor & Magnet website: <<http://www.anchorandmagnet.org>>. The website has an archive of all projects and artworks.



Image 2.21: Anchor & Magnet *Statement of Intent*, The Arch, 2012

informal chats and more formal events, that took place in the Arch.

A number of events and dialogues took place in and around the Arch. Firstly, we had daily, informal conversations between the three of us, developing the ideas and themes for the residency. Secondly, we invited members of a local African Caribbean elders group, Stockwell Good Neighbours,<sup>85</sup> to play dominoes in the Arch, offering them hospitality in return for them teaching us the game and talking about local food culture. Thirdly, a series of more deliberately orchestrated conversations took place through four main events: a Peer Evaluation lunch, a Market *Dinner Party*, a Market Stall Day, and the *Brixton Exchange*. Each of these involved different levels of collaboration and participation.

Building on my outline of discussions around relational practice in Part 1 Section 3, I want to return to the debates over the intentions and outcomes of this practice. Bishop and Kester discuss whether relational artwork should primarily be able to provoke, or have an ethical or social value, with Bishop promoting the value of provocation and Kester voicing the importance of an ethical social intention. Lind has noted that an agonistic public sphere (based on Mouffe's concept of agonism) would allow artists to move beyond simple dichotomies and to produce subjectivity differently.<sup>86</sup> In the Brixton context, we felt that it was vital to acknowledge the different subjectivities involved in each setting. This meant that Barby, Kate and I emphasized valuing the contributions of participants, after having set up an initial frame for dialogue, but this also brought challenges. In her essay on the Fluxus event scores, Anna Dezeuze writes of how the renunciation of total control on the part of the author/artist was not without its problems, requiring 'a new type of tacit contract ... based on trust and good will.'<sup>87</sup>

To further analyse the residency in Brixton and how these ideas around dialogic and relational practices connect to salt, I will focus on one particular event we produced: the *Dinner Party*. The idea behind this event was to bring together various 'actors' in the market and local area, including traders, shop owners, local politicians and activists, for a conversation about the changes taking place in Brixton. This idea had emerged from previous practice and was developed over the first month of the residency.

Through hosting the Stockwell Good Neighbours, we played dominoes with the elders, and asked them, in an informal conversation, about cooking and recipes. We approached market

<sup>85</sup> 'Stockwell Good Neighbours', Lambeth Council Website: <<https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/places/stockwell-good-neighbours>> [accessed 23 August 2017].

<sup>86</sup> Maria Lind, 'The collaborative turn', in Joanna Billing and Lars Nilsson (eds), *Taking the Matter into Common Hands: On Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices* (London: Black Dog, 2007) pp. 15-31, at pp. 22, 25; Chantal Mouffe, 'Artistic activism and agonistic spaces', *ART&RESEARCH: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, 1 (2007), available at: <<http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/mouffe.html>> [accessed 23 August 2017].

<sup>87</sup> Anna Dezeuze, 'Origins of the Fluxus score', *Performance Research*, 7 (2002), pp. 78-94, at p. 90.



traders and asked them if we could buy their products, and then asking them if they could tell us more about the history of the product. We ran a second iteration of the market stall Rebecca and I had set up in Project 1, exchanging heritage products for a more general conversation with people about their sense of belonging and connection to Brixton, and their feelings about the changes taking place. All these dialogues were recorded on a zoom hand-held voice recorder, and in all scenarios we asked participants to sign a consent form.

Hosting a dinner party as part of an arts practice has become a widely used trope within social arts practice in the last 10-20 years.<sup>88</sup> For example, in John Newling's project *The Knowledge Meal* (2007), people who had submitted stories of mystery were invited to join him in Preston's covered market for a three-course meal.<sup>89</sup> *Feast*, a 2012 exhibition in Chicago,<sup>90</sup> surveyed artists using food and drink in hospitality and exchange. The curator of *Feast*, Stephanie Smith, traced the history of artists' meals to Marinetti's 'Manifesto of Futurist cooking' and the *Futurist Cookbook* (1932).<sup>91</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, as well as a flurry of artist-run restaurants and salons, such as Gordon Matta-Clark's FOOD in New York, conceptual artists working with food included Fluxus member Alison Knowles, whose 'event scores' were templates for actions.<sup>92</sup> In *The Identical Lunch* (1969),<sup>93</sup> Knowles wrote a simple instruction for the assemblage of a lunch. This was to be repeated in any setting at any time. For the *Feast* exhibition, Knowles produced a new version of the work entitled *The Identical Lunch Symphony* (2012): sandwich ingredients were put into blenders, and Knowles conducted a group of students, artists and friends in pulsing the blenders, pouring the contents into cups to serve to the audience. Other artists in *Feast* included Theaster Gates and Suzanne Lacy. Gates had started a series of 'Ritual evenings' with food, interspersed with sermons and rituals, at his Dorchester Projects space, a group of once-vacant homes in the Grand Crossing neighbourhood on Chicago's South Side. For *Feast*, Gates produced *Soul Food Dinners* (2012), a series of ritualized dinners at the Dorchester Projects.<sup>94</sup> Lacy's work *International Dinner Party* (1979) was recreated for *Feast* on 14 March 2012, the anniversary of the original event, which had invited participants around the world to

<sup>88</sup> Stephanie Smith, *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art* (Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, 2013), p. 15.

<sup>89</sup> John Newling website: <<http://www.john-newling.com/blog/2009/05/the-knowledge-meal-2007-preston-market>> [accessed 23 August 2017]

<sup>90</sup> *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art*, exhibition at the Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago, USA, 16 February–10 June 2012.

<sup>91</sup> Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, 'Manifesto of Futurist cooking', *Gazetto del Popolo*, 28 December 1930; Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *Cucina Futurista / The Futurist Cookbook* (London: Trefoil 1989), trans. Suzanne Brill, ed. Lesley Chamberlain, cited in Smith, *Feast*, p. 32

<sup>92</sup> Smith, *Feast*, p. 14; Ken Friedman, Owen Smith and Lauren Sawchyn (eds), *The Fluxus Performance Workbook* (performance research e-publication, 2002), Monoskop website: <[https://monoskop.org/File:Friedman\\_Smith\\_Sawchyn\\_eds\\_The\\_Fluxus\\_Performance\\_Workbook.pdf](https://monoskop.org/File:Friedman_Smith_Sawchyn_eds_The_Fluxus_Performance_Workbook.pdf)> [accessed 23 August 2017].

<sup>93</sup> Smith, *Feast*, p. 66.

<sup>94</sup> 'Join the Feast: Participatory feast projects', <<http://smartmuseum.uchicago.edu/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/join-the-feast/>> [accessed 23 August 2017].



send Lacy telegrams, letters, ephemera, and photographs to document their dinners and share their stories.<sup>95</sup>

Rebecca and I had hosted our first *Dinner Party* event in 2008.<sup>96</sup> We repeated the *Dinner Party* in South Africa in 2010 and in Brixton in 2011 (see Project 1). The history of artists using food and hospitality as a radical social practice, and our previous dinner party artworks helped develop the Anchor & Magnet *Dinner Party*, and a radical aim was to invite participants to engage in a debate where their individual subjectivities could be exposed and their differences brought to the table (while we maintained an ethical imperative of taking care of the participants). Creating a space where difference was welcomed would provide a way of imagining the *Dinner Party* as a site of Relation where difference and otherness could mix, as in Glissant's theorization of entanglement, while at the same time allowing identities to remain distinct.

### **Brixton: Dominoes group sessions**

When we invited the Stockwell Good Neighbours group to the Arch to play dominoes, we had the intention of creating a hospitable, informal social space where dialogue could take place. We bought the group's favourite beer, Red Stripe, and made a bean soup. There was no set agenda or timetable; we just served food and drinks, played games, and chatted. Members of the group had self-selected to come to the Arch and there was a regular group of around five to eight members, mainly men with one or two women, who came on three to four occasions. Most of the group were from Jamaica and had come to Brixton in the 1950s or 1960s, with one or two from other Caribbean islands. We asked them to teach us to play dominoes (Image 2.22), and, because of this and the food, conversation often focused on eating and the remembering of social events involving food.<sup>97</sup> Through the conversations, we came up with the idea of doing a Brixton *Dinner Party*, as well as ideas for the menu, which included sorrel wine, a salt cod dish, callaloo and ackee.

Mitzi, who was originally from the Dominican Republic, mentioned salt as being important to her in flavouring her food. As she was telling us this, she partly spoke in Creole. When I asked about why and when she spoke Creole, she said sometimes she spoke it deliberately to confuse people. Her use of language can be seen as a strategy of *détour*, making meaning opaque, as Glissant proposed in *Poetics of Relation*. Her mention of the taste of salt also connects to Gadsby's discussion of the idea of 'sucking salt', where salt represents the hardships of migration

<sup>95</sup> Suzanne Lacy and Linda Pruess, *International Dinner Party* (1979), <<http://www.suzannelacy.com/early-works/#/international-dinner-party/>> [accessed 23 August 2017].

<sup>96</sup> *Dinner Party* (2008), 'Gift' exhibition, OVADA gallery, Oxford.

<sup>97</sup> Notes and transcription from recording, dominoes group at the Arch, 2012.





Image 2.22: Dominoes group at Anchor & Magnet Space. Photograph: Kate Theophilus

in Caribbean literature; so salt becomes both language and taste.<sup>98</sup> Both the taste of Caribbean food, and the languages and accents of the Caribbean region, have powerfully contributed to Brixton's culture, and in this case salt's action could be seen not only as 'flavouring', but also as 'enhancing' and possibly as 'masking'. Linking back to Jones's salt symbolism in Part 1, the actions of salt in taste are transposed to language, so that language takes on 'salty' qualities.

### **Brixton: Market conversations**

Shopping for the *Dinner Party*, we asked traders about the ingredients we were buying, and about their experience and history as traders in the market. Conversations were recorded on a portable zoom hand-held recorder, and were carried out in the shop or stall, as customers came and went.

José Cardoso, the first market trader we talked with, ran the A&C Continental Delicatessen in one of the railway arches in Atlantic Road, where we went to buy salt cod (Image 2.23). The action of salt in 'preservation' came up in the conversation. José described how preservation enabled the colonial adventurers, and later the slavers or growers, to undertake long sea voyages and to feed their slaves. Therefore, saltfish (and salt) was a key part of the history of the populations who live in Brixton, giving the area its unique 'flavour'. Salt's action here could be seen as 'preserving', through food, cultural activities that retain historical links to the trade and forced migration routes, the basis of the later connections between Caribbean migrants and the UK.

John, the second trader we talked with, ran a newer shop in Brixton Village called Breads Etc. In this conversation, John described the process he used for making sourdough bread, which linked to my own bread-making with a sourdough culture. He said the tradition came from his family background in Malta and that the action of the salt is essential for the bread to rise. John described the bread-making process he learnt using a sourdough culture called Biga, explaining: 'the salt reacts with yeasts. With the bacterial mix in the Biga, the salt actually helps with the rising process. And it's a flavour enhancer as well.'<sup>99</sup> As discussed earlier in the chapter, salt has an important role in bread-making, because it tightens the gluten structure and controls the pace of fermentation.<sup>100</sup> The culture (yeast) enables the rising, and the salt acts as a control, balancing the pace of the transformation. In this sense, salt could be seen to act ambivalently, both as a 'generative' ingredient, which enters into combination with another substance to create

<sup>98</sup> Meredith Gadsby, *Sucking Salt: Caribbean Women Writers, Migration and Survival* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006).

<sup>99</sup> Conversation with John, Breads Etc., Brixton Market, 23 October 2012. (Name has been changed).

<sup>100</sup> 'For Professionals/Baker's Reference/Salt', <<https://www.kingarthurfLOUR.com/professional/salt.html>> [accessed 23 August 2017].



Image 2.23: Buying salt cod at A&C Continental Delicatessen

something, and as a balance that controls growth. As a comparison with regeneration, there are connotations with the pace of new businesses taking over the market area and Brixton generally. In our conversation, John said:

No matter where I've worked, no matter where I ran, no matter where I owned. In other areas, in other countries, I've never seen a growth like I have in Brixton, and a demographic change so much.<sup>101</sup>

In the process of bread-making, salt acts as a control, but in the process of Brixton's regeneration, it seems that there is a lack of balance.

### ***Heritage Products stall (2012)***

The idea for a market stall trading heritage products emerged from the market stall Rebecca and I had produced in Project 1. In the context of Anchor & Magnet, we decided to each produce a product relating to our individual heritage. Barby created a spice mix used in her home, and a CD titled *Legacy tunes*: '1960s Hi Life that was played in my home when I was growing up.'<sup>102</sup> Kate made a special Trail of Crumbs incense mix: 'The (mix) represents the efforts we make to stay connected to home, and also how vulnerable those connections can be. Burn your incense on a charcoal disc, or put a little on the lightbulb of a table lamp like my mum used to do.' She also created a birdseed mix to represent bird migration, which linked to her complex migration story: 'migrating birds are emblematic of those multiple homes, the epic journey, of time spent in-between, and of movement between spaces that is as instinctive and intelligent as it is risky and heroic.'<sup>103</sup> I re-used the *Memory Preservation Salts* I had made in 2011. When passers-by approached the stall, we asked them to choose a product, and whoever's product they chose would then conduct a conversation with them. (see Image 2.24). We asked them to sign a simple contract (if they were willing) agreeing to the exchange of a conversation for a product.

The range of products brought into view our individual subjectivities and personal heritages, and how they connected to the heritage of others in the community. The contract of the conversation, and the mechanism and practice of exchange, took place within a defined context and set of expectations. The engagement was clearly one of artist and participant, with the artist not offering the participant an authorial role, but acknowledging their contribution through the exchange of a gift.

<sup>101</sup> Conversation with John, Breads Etc., Brixton Market, 23 October 2012.

<sup>102</sup> Barby Asante, 'Trading Heritages Market Stall, 2012', Anchor & Magnet website, <<http://www.anchorandmagnet.org/blank-oejsz>>.

<sup>103</sup> Kate Theophilus, 'Trading Heritages Market Stall, 2012', Anchor & Magnet website.



Image 2.24: Barby Asante, Katy Beinart and Kate Theophilus, Anchor & Magnet market stall

### **Brixton: The *Dinner Party* (2012)**

In preparing and hosting the *Dinner Party*, which we held in the Arch on 19 November 2012, the roles became more fluid. Kate, Barby and I had planned and curated the event, but we also had volunteers who helped prepare food, and I was taught how to prepare bacalau (a salt cod dish) by our volunteer chef Kate de Syllas. Working in her tiny kitchen, we soaked and prepared the fish, then cooked it in milk and mixed it with the other ingredients. In the bacalau recipe, some of the salt is soaked out of the fish but there remains a strong flavour.

Each course of the *Dinner Party* was introduced by one of us reading aloud from cards on which were quotes collected on the street during our Market Stall event, and which we then transcribed and attached to postcards. We also asked the dinner guests to read aloud from one of the cards at these points. Some of the cards contained specific questions, and time was allowed for answers to develop and conversation to flow from the answers. Notes could be written on napkins by each plate, so an ongoing record of both ideas and relics of food was collected (Image 2.25).

I introduced the event with an offering of bread I had made and salt from my South Africa trip, in a re-enactment of *Khlebosolny*. The combination of the salt with a conversation about regeneration and belonging brought the actions of tasting and speaking together. Both the sensory qualities – taste and touch – and the verbal language combined in a space of relation and difference, which brought together people who worked and lived in the same area but had different backgrounds and opinions about the current changes taking place: it became an agonistic space. The salt's action was both in flavouring – enhancing the conversation – and in preservation – remembering the different pasts those around the table brought with them.

The invited guests included José Cardoso, Stuart and John from the street market, Mike who runs the Urban 75 blog, Binky, and who had a shop in Brixton Village, Roger whose organization BOSI hosted us in the Arch, Ben Tunstall from the Save Brixton Market campaign, and Gloria, from the Stockwell Good Neighbours (Image 2.26). Guests were given the chance to speak, and to mix up or play with the format we had designed. As each course was consumed, different conversations, themed around past, present and future, emerged. The cards with transcribed voices formed an 'event score' performed by everyone present. We were both authors of and participants in the event, as were the invited guests through their acts of reading the cards and adding their questions and answers. I became interested in the idea of how a participant performed the original speaker's words, as the spoken accent of the reader superseded the accent of the original speaker. The words were spoken in one tongue, transcribed, and respoken in another. Performing another's words confused and complicated ideas of authorship and meaning.



Image 2.25: Barby Asante, Katy Beinart and Kate Theophilus, Anchor & Magnet *Dinner Party*, detail of napkins. Photograph: Barby Asante

Image 2.26: Barby Asante, Katy Beinart and Kate Theophilus, Anchor & Magnet *Dinner Party*. Photograph: Barby Asante

In his essay 'De mudder tongue', artist Michael McMillan writes about how the Caribbean migrants he was working with opted to use the 'Queen's English' rather than Creole in some of the recordings he made, and how this linguistic tension throws up wider questions about the interview as performative event and how language is used.<sup>104</sup> So, in the reading aloud of one voice by another, the question arises of whose voice is being heard. One of the other questions raised by the *Dinner Party* for me was what trace a conversation leaves behind. In the *détour* of this chapter, the absence of visible traces of Rebecca's and my ancestors led us to make ephemeral rituals using salt, which highlighted places of absence. But in Brixton, the space is already full of voice and presence – it is already 'salty'.

I noticed how different conversational forms produced different kinds of voice and use of language. In the dominoes conversations, the informality of playing a game meant that words were thrown out alongside the slamming of dominoes, without a particular conversational structure. The site of the trader conversations in the shop, amid a constant shifting of people and goods, made the conversation a rapid exchange. Our market stall conversations took place outside, in a busy setting, and were open ended, so people often spoke without much intervention from us. And the *Dinner Party* setting was much more structured, which led to a more curated set of conversations, but also made it a group setting that allowed disruption and cross-conversation. The poetics of Relation in these various types of conversation functioned as differing levels of engagement with difference and opacity. In the *détour* section of this chapter, I described how language was a barrier for us to understand the past, but in Brixton the opacity of the conversation might also hold clues as to people's engagement with place. Language can be used, as Glissant theorized, in a *détour* and *retour* that allows people to subvert a dominant voice or to divert from a dominant view. It can be a tool of *détournement* in a deliberate strategy to maintain difference. And it can be a tool of opacity that allows continued engagement with difference.

## **Brixton Exchange**

The culmination of the Anchor & Magnet residency was a one-day event, the Brixton Exchange, to which we invited local people, artists and academics to debate regeneration policy, the role of public art, contested sites, and the future of Brixton.<sup>105</sup> The day was organized as follows: participants registered on a market stall, and then were sent off on one of a series of walking tours, led by local residents, before arriving at the Exchange venue, Brixton East.<sup>106</sup> The event was a day-long series of open roundtable discussions, and exchanges, with presenters including

<sup>104</sup> Michael McMillan, 'De mudder tongue: Oral history work as an arts practice', in Linda Sandino and Matthew Partington (eds), *Oral History in the Visual Arts* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 25-33, at p. 26.

<sup>105</sup> 'The Brixton Exchange, 2013', Anchor & Magnet website.

<sup>106</sup> A former furniture warehouse in Gresham Road, Brixton. See list of names at 'Walking Tours', Anchor & Magnet website.





artists, academics and community activists, whom we had asked to describe a case study. We also launched a pull-out in a free newspaper, *The Brixton Bugle*, which was handed out locally.<sup>107</sup>

We had written three sets of key questions for the day:

How does regeneration/redevelopment affect urban areas with a migrant history/migrant communities, and how are communities responding? What sorts of projects are happening to protest/document/archive/resist/discuss?

How do memory/heritage practices offer possible strategies for exploring what is happening in an area, and how might that area be shaped in the future?

Does art have a role to play in exploring and making visible the stories of the various communities and publics who make up that area, and how can participatory, collaborative, socially engaged and public art practices contribute to a dialogue around the contestations of space, and current debates and action around ownership of and belonging to a place?

In the smaller sessions, group size and focus meant there was enough space for everyone to join in the discussion (Image 2.27). At the end of the day, we had a final session with all speakers and participants in a space for discussion. The most interesting aspect of this discussion was a debate around language and the meaning of words. What follows are excerpts from this discussion, from notes taken on the day:

Words such as regeneration but also many abused words such as sustainability, also participation, etc. that have been completely taken over. So it is challenging at least to understand ways in which these words can be reappropriated somehow.

It's about precision of use, taking responsibility and not assuming a common meaning. Being blunt and saying when I say community, I mean X, so almost about building definitions rather than just using a word as a kind of short cut to something that you've assumed.

When these words get used at a more political level, like community and regeneration, it's not just the word that's vague but also what's behind it.

It can be reassuring (to name something). It can also be problematic because it can create self-identities that can be limiting and things can fall on both

<sup>107</sup> *The Brixton Bugle*, 1 February 2013. See also Anchor & Magnet website and Appendix.



Image 2.27: The Brixton Exchange, Exchange session, 2013

sides of that.

We're moving back to the view of the Cambridge Philosopher J.L. Austin who talked about the formative statements and in some way the real world arguably the physical status quo, by simple use of a word was something like say 'I do' when you get married changes an actual status of your life, it's not just simply it's a description it's actually a transition to a time. I guess it simply boils down to don't knock the importance of words.

But actually regeneration is gentrification and those words have a lot of power to name what's going on it's what they achieve rather than what they are that's the important thing.<sup>108</sup>

Through reflecting on the day, I noted that some common questions had arisen, which included:

What power relations are produced through regeneration processes, between artist, participant, developer, and local authority?

What is the relationship between self and other in these processes?

What is 'imaged' through the work and what is made visible? What is the visibility of the artist, and what gets co-opted?

What are the differences between public space and civic space? Can public space work as a space of confrontation, and should it?

These questions all demand an understanding of relation in regeneration processes. Coming back to the different types of conversations and the different poetics of relating they produced, at the Exchange another type of dialogue took place whereby multiple, overlapping conversations offered shared ways of thinking through regeneration. Bringing in external projects offered a form of *détour* and *retour* that could not only be learnt from, but also used critically to understand what was happening in Brixton. The projects we heard from in the Exchange offered radical contextual practices of re-generation, not regeneration. Emerging from the conversations, I saw that salt objects in the market could produce a poetics of Relation, since they had been starting points for conversations, and salt processes had been referenced in conversations. I wanted to find out how the poetics and practices of salt might offer languages of re-generation particular to Brixton. Therefore, in the next two projects I developed two further *détours* from the salt products in the market that had come out of our conversations.

<sup>108</sup> Author's notes from the Brixton Exchange, 1 February 2013.





**Project 3: Journey to Portugal (and back): *Salinas*/Saltfish (2013)**

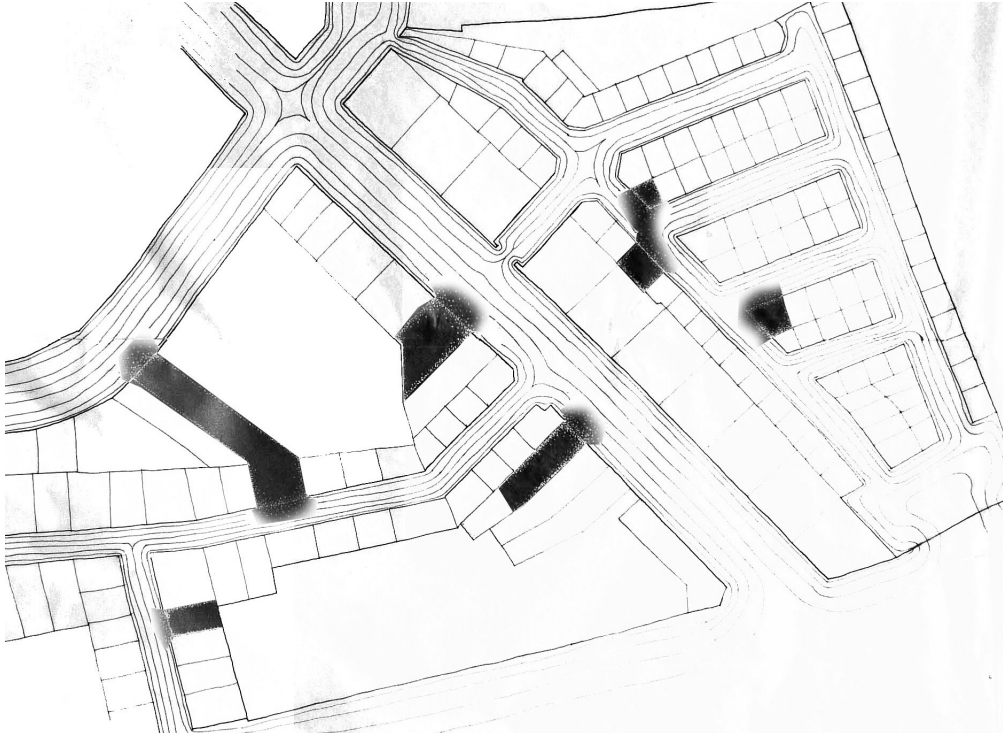


Image 3.1. Katy Beinart, *Map of salt cod in Brixton Market* (2013)

Image 3.2. Katy Beinart, *Photographs of salt cod*



## Introduction

In this chapter, I begin in Brixton Market, describing a conversation I had with a stallholder, José Cardoso, who sold salt cod. From his personal history, and the story of the product he sold, I developed a proposal, *Saltworks*, for a journey to the sites of salt and salt cod production in Portugal. I had mapped the different origins of salted cod sold in Brixton Market using a combination of photographic and written documentation, looking for stalls that sold salt cod, and then documenting the site of production of the salt cod. Combining these with archival maps of the market, I located each stall and drew a map which showed the 'salted' areas of the market (Image 3.1). The photographs were processed as a series of slides which allowed a view of the stall to be shown alongside a close-up view of the salt cod on that stall (Image 3.2). My proposal was to connect sites of salt production and the history of the salt cod trade in Portugal to Brixton Market, exploring the metaphorical and material qualities of salt through a series of artworks which would emerge through the journey or *détour*.

I planned to use the journey to collect and produce material for new artworks, which would exist in a rough form as unedited film, unedited sound recording and notes, unprocessed photographs, and raw materials. I then arranged to spend time in an artist's studio in Lisbon editing, refining and putting these materials and elements together. Subsequently I was also offered an opportunity to show the artwork in a gallery in Lisbon, which allowed me to further refine the work and to consider the relationship of these two sites in Lisbon along with a third, the Mercado de Ribeira (market) near the gallery. My aim was to explore how narratives of migration could connect 'home' and 'away', or the here/elsewhere that Glissant discusses – the place migrated to and the place of origin – through a material element of this narrative (i.e. salt), and to see what forms of representation the journeying might produce. I hoped the salt would contain a material poetics of *détour* and *retour*, and to produce a visual representation of these journeys.

In this *détour*, through 'journeying' or *errance*, I propose that travel becomes a performative practice, one in which possible sensations, experiences, materialities, or images are experienced which can relate directly to another's experience of that journey. In the journey to Portugal's salt sites, salt is the common material which links my previous journeys that followed my family history, to an Other's family history, and to other journeys of trade and migration which form part of Portugal's history and relate to global histories.

As discussed previously, salt can be seen to represent the delicate balance between preservation and adaptation or transformation. This is represented in language, as salt is used in a poetic sense to denote memory, sadness, hardship, and survival in the processes of migration and



travel.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, salt in Portuguese culture is used in poetry by Fernando Pessoa and others to address memory, amnesia, and the difficulties of looking back.<sup>2</sup> Salt is also used by Glissant in his cycle of poems entitled 'Black Salt' which also address salt as both oppression and survival.<sup>3</sup> The poetics of salt offers, therefore, a possible format for representing the relationship and delicate balance between migration and urban change.

In the first section (*détour*) of this chapter, I explore how the key concepts set out in Parts 1 and 2 relate to this specific journey, the nature of the journey, and the practice carried out during and after the journey. I also articulate how this chapter addresses a key problematic of the thesis: how stories are told in a situation of encounter between those from different cultural backgrounds. In Projects 1 and 2, I was both performing and telling aspects of my own family narrative. In this chapter, the idea of performing the journey as a secular pilgrimage to tell the story or find the origin of the salted cod, and of José's family (as well as the families of others), raises questions about my role as both artist and researcher, and the balance between telling my own story and telling another's. I explore how, through experiencing another's journey, I can explore aspects of their story. This connects autobiography, biography and collective biography through the embodied experience of re-enacting or performing a journey.

I recount the journey through four short travel narratives, with accompanying maps. These narratives are voiced in part through the first person, with sections from my travel journals denoted in another font and interwoven with the stories of those I have interviewed. In the practice of journeying, scale becomes important. The scale of journeying in Brixton Market is made up of short walks, but each movement is a transition between cultural symbols, practices and heritages. On this journey to and within Portugal, the movement takes place on different scales: country to country, city to city, street to street, and within individual buildings. I ask how these different scales of journeying affect what is noticed and what other cultural shifts take place, and how the scales could be mapped onto each other. Each journey has a different kind of spatial quality and is enacted through different kinds of movement (for example, moving around a space, walking, and driving). In each kind of movement, different sensory modalities are experienced, from a closer scale, where touch or taste become primary, to a larger scale, where visual experience takes precedence.

In Section 2 (*retour*), I return to Brixton and continue to test the material qualities of salt in the studio. Through another project with Anchor & Magnet, which involved producing an event about Brixton, I develop ideas for turning conversations about heritage and regeneration into a proposal for artworks that attempt to make traces of these conversations visible.

<sup>1</sup> Meredith Gadsby, *Sucking Salt* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Fernando Pessoa, *Message/Mensagem*, trans. by Jonathan Griffin (Exeter: Shearsman Books, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Glissant, *BS*.



## Section 1: Journey to Portugal (*détour*)

In Brixton Market, stallholders from different ethnic backgrounds sell different varieties of fish, dried and preserved through salting. José Cardoso, whose family came from Portugal in the late 1960s, runs A&C Continental Delicatessen under one of the railway arches on Atlantic Road. José had already been involved with the Anchor & Magnet residency, and through this link I had asked to interview him about his family's role in trading in Brixton Market, and how the community he served and the stock he sold had changed in relation to immigration. In his discussion of the salt cod he sells, links between preservation, trade and migration emerge:

Salted cod is a national dish in Portugal, but it is also in places like Italy and Greece as well and we have the whole fish here so we can cut it down for people to take as much or as little as they want. Portuguese tend to buy it throughout the whole year, and we find that for Italian families it tends to be a traditional dish around Christmas and Easter. We even have a lot of ladies coming in and buying it to ship back to the Caribbean.

I assume there's the connection to slavery, to trading and history. Portugal and seafaring nations were going out, and you couldn't always rely on catching fresh fish on the journey so you'd keep salted fish onboard for the journey, for protein. I mean, there are places along the African coast that would have been Portuguese colonies, obviously the tradition of food gets mixed in as well.

My father came in '68 or '69. Portugal was a dictatorship at the time, so very hard times. Like a lot of immigration at that time, it was filling jobs that English people didn't want to do.<sup>4</sup>

José's customers live in Brixton, but their heritage in the Caribbean, Portugal, Greece or Italy is also connected through salt, and the dishes they make with the salted cod he sells are part of the same history, although their flavouring may be different. Salt became a very valuable commodity with European colonial expansion, as it could be used to preserve food for the long journeys of exploration and subsequent colonization of overseas territories. Salted cod was then used to feed slaves working on the sugar plantations in the West Indies, and in West Africa cured cod could be used to purchase slaves.<sup>5</sup>

While Portugal, Spain and France had the most extensive salt production in the mid-eighteenth century (when the Atlantic slave trade was nearing its peak), Britain aimed to increase its

<sup>4</sup>José Cardoso, interview with Katy Beinart, 30 October 2012.

<sup>5</sup>Mark Kurlansky, *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World* (London: Vintage, 1999), pp. 81-2.



production in order that ‘large sums of money might be saved in the nation, which are now annually paid to the French and other foreigners ... and many of its richest colonies would no longer depend upon its enemies for one of those necessities, without which they cannot be supported.’<sup>6</sup>

The current population of Brixton, which includes communities that have their origins in the Caribbean, Africa, Portugal and other European countries, reflects the trade triangle that once existed between Europe, America and the Caribbean, and Africa. Salt cod has become part of people’s cultural tradition and diet through seafaring and the slave trade.<sup>7</sup> In postcolonial England, migrants have arrived from former colonies, bringing with them traditions which often seem to come from abroad but are in fact intrinsically linked to an earlier phase of British history. That today these Caribbean women then take salt cod purchased in the UK back to Jamaica is yet another turn of the triangle.

### **Portugal: Journeying to the *salinas*: technology, tradition and change**

One of the first European documents related to cod-fishing is dated 1353 and refers to a treaty between Portugal and England governing Portuguese fishing in the North Sea.<sup>8</sup> The Newfoundland cod-fishing routes emerged at the beginning of the fifteenth century, as Portuguese explorers opened up the territory for fishing, and by the mid-sixteenth century 60 per cent of all fish eaten in Europe was cod, and would remain so for the next two centuries.<sup>9</sup> From the fifteenth century onwards, Portugal was producing and trading salt cod using salt from the rapidly developing *salinas* (saltworks) up the coast from Lisbon at Aveiro and later at Setubal.<sup>10</sup> This diminished after Spain annexed Portugal, and after long wars with the English over control of fishing territories, but Portuguese salt was still seen as essential to the fishing trade. Around 1830, the trade revived, as ships set off with their salt supplies from Aveiro, Figueira and Lisbon, catching and salting the fish on board, and bringing it back to be dried on

<sup>6</sup> William Brownrigg, *The Art of Making Common Salt: as Now Practised in Most Parts of the World; with Several Improvements Proposed in that Art, for the Use of the British Dominions* (London: C. Davis, 1748).

<sup>7</sup> Kurlansky, *Cod*, pp. 91, 257.

<sup>8</sup> Renato Neves, ‘Portuguese cod fishing: Epic and myth’, in Renato Neves, Theodora Petanidou, Rui Rufino and Sonia Pinto (eds), *Alas: All about Salt – Salt and Salinas in the Mediterranean* (Lisbon: ALAS, 2005), pp. 37-41, at p. 38; Mario Moutinho, *Historia de Pesca do Bacalhau* (Lisbon: Imp. Universitaria Editorial Estampa, 1985), p. 15, referenced in Edite Vieira, ‘Salt cod: A Portuguese obsession’, in Harlan Walker (ed.), *Food on the Move: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, 1996* (Devon: Prospect Books, 1997) pp. 321-24, at p. 322; text of the original treaty, *Tratado de Comercio de 1353*, in Eduardo Brazao (ed.), *Uma Velha Alianca: The Texts of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaties, 1353-1943* (Lisbon, 1955), p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> Kurlansky, *Cod*, p. 51.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History* (London: Vintage, 2003), p. 121.





open air racks – a complete circle.<sup>11</sup> Salt, and salted cod, became a vital factor in exploration and colonization, providing a food supply on long journeys, a commodity to trade with, and a source of protein for the slave labour that populated the new colonies.<sup>12</sup>

In the centre of Lisbon stands the Jeronimos monastery, built from 1501 on the site of a chapel originally constructed in the 1450s to provide assistance to pilgrims, near to the beach of Praia do Restelo, a safe anchoring place for ships. The explorer Vasco de Gama had prayed there the night before setting off with four ships on 8 July 1497 in search of a new trade route with the spice markets of the East.<sup>13</sup>

We visit the Jeronimos monastery with a friend, who tells us that the church used to hold a mass for all the fishermen before they set off to fish in the faraway cold Northern seas; this was the importance of the cod haul to the people of 16th Century Portugal. The emblems of fishing and the sea can still be seen carved into the majestic pillars of the interior of the church.<sup>14</sup>

In the same year that Vasco de Gama set off in search of an Eastern trade route, John Cabot (Giovanni Caboto), an Italian navigator, left Bristol to cross the Atlantic, reputedly landing at Newfoundland, where, according to primary sources, he noted the prevalence of cod in the sea around Newfoundland:<sup>15</sup>

They affirm that the sea is covered with fish which are caught not merely with nets but with baskets, a stone being attached to make the basket sink in the water, and this I heard the said Master Zoanne relate. And said Englishmen, his companions, say that they will fetch so many fish that this kingdom will have no more need of Iceland, from which country there comes a very great store of fish which are called stock-fish.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Neves, 'Portuguese cod fishing', p. 38.

<sup>12</sup> Kurlansky, *Cod*, pp. 82-3, 89.

<sup>13</sup> Bailey W. Diffie and George D. Winius, *Foundations of the Portuguese Empire, 1415-1580* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), pp. 177-8; Centro de eLearning do Instituto Politécnico de Tomar (IPT) e Área, *Guião de visita ao Mosteiro dos Jerónimos* (Lisbon: IGESPAR-Instituto de Gestão do Património Arquitectónico e Arqueológico), pp. 1-9, available from <[www.torrebelem.pt/data/tt34\\_pt\\_anexo1.pdf](http://www.torrebelem.pt/data/tt34_pt_anexo1.pdf)> [accessed 11 January 2014].

<sup>14</sup> Katy Beinart, 'Salted Earth', blog, 3 September 2013. I was accompanied on this trip by my partner, Frank, who acted as driver, carrier and technical support.

<sup>15</sup> Heather Pringle, 'Cabot, cod and the colonists', *Canadian Geographic*, (1997), pp. 30-39, at p. 36.

<sup>16</sup> *The Soncino Letters*, second letter, 18 December 1497, reproduced from H.P. Biggar (ed.), *The Precursors of Jacques Cartier 1497-1534: A Collection of Documents Relating to the Early History of the Dominion of Canada* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1911), pp. 15-21. Original documents housed in the Milan Archives, Milan, <<http://www.heritage.nf.ca/exploration/soncino.html>> [accessed 16 June 2014].



Cabot noted that the natives called the fish *baccallao*; subsequently cod, and later salt cod, became known as *bacalao* or *bacalhau* in Portuguese.<sup>17</sup> *Bacalhau* quickly gained a home market in Portugal, and the Portuguese access to salt supplies meant they could send ships to Newfoundland with the salt, and bring the fish back salted. As the English cod fishery began to expand and the English population grew rapidly from around the 1580s, there was a continuous demand from England. The lightly salted, hard, sun-dried product favoured by the English required sun and wind, and it also demanded a land-based operation. This led to settlements devoted to the curing of cod destined for the English trade. Fishing at first was carried out by migratory fishermen from Spain, Portugal, France and England, who sailed to Newfoundland in spring and returned in autumn with cargoes of salted fish.<sup>18</sup>

Salt was already an important commodity in parts of Africa, where it was shipped inland as slaves were brought to the coast.<sup>19</sup> Salt was a crucial item in the trade for slaves with Europeans who had begun to arrive on the African coast seeking labour for their new colonies. But European colonists soon recognized the potential of the poorer quality salted cod as a cheap source of protein for their slaves.<sup>20</sup> They also realized the potential of the Caribbean islands as a nearer source of salt production for the North American salt cod industry. From this grew a web of trade. Michele Speitz writes of the 'Mary Prince Slave Narrative' as testifying to the importance of salt, 'a central product of slave labor in the British-held West Indies'.<sup>21</sup>

By 2013, when I visited Portugal, salt cod was being supplied by Norwegian and other Scandinavian fisheries, and the once-huge Portuguese 'White Fleet' was barely in operation.<sup>22</sup> In the 1920s, Clarence Birdseye had begun to experiment with freezing fish in the United States, and at the same time filleting machinery was introduced in New England. The market for salt

<sup>17</sup> 'Cod-fish. spec. dried or salted cod-fish', Oxford English Dictionary (online), <[www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)> [accessed 16 June 2014]. See also W.H. Lear, 'History of fisheries in the northwest Atlantic: The 500-year perspective', *Journal of Northwest Atlantic Fishery Science*, 23 (1998), pp. 41-73, at p. 44.

<sup>18</sup> Lear, 'History', p. 44.

<sup>19</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 102-3.

<sup>20</sup> Kurlansky, *Cod*.

<sup>21</sup> Michele Speitz, 'Blood sugar and salt licks: Corroding bodies and preserving nations in *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself*', in Paul Youngquist (ed.), *Circulations: Romanticism and the Black Atlantic* (Boulder, CO: University of Colorado, 2011), available at <<http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/circulations/HTML/praxis.2011.speitz.html>> [accessed 19 June 2014].

<sup>22</sup> Kurlansky, *Cod*, p. 180; *The White Ships (A Frota Blanca)* (National Film Board of Canada, 1967), downloaded from <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaXl6m85dOY>> [accessed 16 June 2014]; Priscilla Doel, *Port O'Call: Memories of the Portuguese White Fleet in St. John's, Newfoundland* (St. John's Nfld.: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1992), referenced in 'The Portuguese White Fleet', downloaded from <<http://www.whitepinepictures.com/seeds/ii/22/sidebar.html>> [accessed 16 June 2014]; Priscilla Doel, 'The White Fleet and the Iconography of Control', in Victor M.P. Da Rosa and Carlos Teixeira (eds), *The Portuguese in Canada: Diasporic Challenges and Adjustment* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 37-52, at p. 45.



cod in the US was steadily declining. Frozen fish fillets began to be a more popular product as they could be transported easily.<sup>23</sup> From the 1930s onwards, these technologies, which massively reduced the demand for salt cod, together with the appearance of industrialized salt-winning processes that could provide higher salt production at lower cost, led to a crisis in the Portuguese salt industry.<sup>24</sup>

By the 1980s, when Portugal became an EU member, subsidies encouraged people to exchange seasonal salt production activity for an alternative continuous aquacultural or agricultural activity. The roughness of the work itself, not compensated by the revenues obtained and the lack of incentives given to continue this activity, further contributed to *salinas* abandonment. In the last 20 years, Portuguese salt culture suffered a further decline, with a reduction of more than 50 per cent in active (i.e. salt-producing) *salinas*, generally resulting from the transformation or complete abandonment of *salinas*, leaving them exposed to destruction. Researching the still active *salinas*, I found that they were mainly grouped along the southern Portuguese coast (Faro, Olhão, Castro Marim and Tavira) and in the central and southern parts of the Atlantic coast, in the estuaries of the Sado (Setúbal), Tagus (Alcochete), Mondego (Figueira da Foz) and Vouga (Aveiro) rivers, with inland *salinas* in Rio Maior.<sup>25</sup> The ECOSAL Atlantis project, which ran from 2010 to 2013, had the objective of developing integral and sustainable tourism based on the cultural and natural heritage of traditional Atlantic salt-working sites, and the Portuguese *salinas* which were part of this project were those at Rio Maior, Figueira da Foz and Aveiro.<sup>26</sup> I decided to focus on these three sites in this journey, as the ECOSAL website contained detailed information about their history, location and current use.

The *salinas* at Rio Maior, which lie inland in the Santarem district, 70 kilometres from Lisbon and 30 kilometres from the coast, have been in operation since at least 1177. The site is still in operation, although it is also run as an EU-funded heritage tourist attraction. Salt water had to be brought up from an underground source into shallow pans:

In old times the water was taken, day and night, by the means of two buckets, attached to two wooden rods. That was then the most hard work of salt extraction. Nowadays the salt water is taken from the well by means of a motor-pump which takes it to the 'concentrators'. These are eight tanks with a capacity for a million litres through which the water passes and evaporates.

<sup>23</sup> Kurlansky, *Cod*, p. 136.

<sup>24</sup> Lear, 'History', p. 65; Carolina M. Rodrigues, Ana Bio, Francisco Amat and Natividade Vieira, 'Artisanal salt production in Aveiro/Portugal: An ecofriendly process', *Saline Systems*, 7 (2011), p. 2. Available at <<http://www.salinesystems.org/content/7/1/3>> [accessed 17 June 2014]

<sup>25</sup> Rodrigues et al., 'Artisanal salt production'.

<sup>26</sup> See ECOSAL website: <<http://ecosal-atlantis.ua.pt/>> [accessed 16 June 2014].



This is a recent process.<sup>27</sup>

Aveiro and Figueira are *salinas* based on the coast, where river estuaries meet the sea and allow a filtering of saltwater into shallow beds. The *salinas* at Aveiro is at the mouth of the river Vouga, a natural lagoon, and became an important production site from as early as the tenth century; by 1178, it provided enough salt for the whole country and for large exports abroad.<sup>28</sup> The site covers an area of about 2,600 hectares. By 1970, approximately 270 *salinas* were active in the lagoon, covering 1,661 hectares and producing an average of 60,000 tons of salt per year. By 2007, only 3.3 per cent of Aveiro's *salinas* were still used as active or semi-active *salinas*, 5.2 per cent were inactive *salinas*, 16.1 per cent were occupied with aquaculture and 72 per cent were completely abandoned.

The *salinas* at Figueira da Foz, on an estuary at the mouth of the Mondego river, have maintained unique production techniques which have been adapted over time, and, out of 229 active pans in the middle of the twentieth century, 40-50 still remain in use (although this dipped in the mid-1970s and has risen again due to recent initiatives). Though the presence of *salinas* in Figueira da Foz is in fact very old – there is a document from 1116 mentioning the donation of a *salina* at the mouth of the Mondego – it was only after 1712–1714 that the area became a major site of salt production, as demand grew from the salt cod industry. By the end of the eighteenth century, Figueira was already the third most important Portuguese salt-producing region, after the rivers Tagus and Sado.<sup>29</sup>

Both Aveiro and Figueira da Foz operate in a seasonal period from spring to autumn. From autumn onwards, the sluices are opened and the *salina* is flooded. From May, the ponds are emptied and prepared for a new cycle of production; work is done to repair the base of the pools and the walls which separate them, and the pools are cleaned. In June, the ponds are filled with new seawater every fifteen days during spring tides. The water is allowed through a system of pools with gradually increased salinity, until it reaches the 'crystallization' pool where it is allowed to evaporate. This salt is then taken off, broken and washed, piled up on wooden boards next to the crystallizer pond, and left to dry.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> <<http://ecosal-atlantis.ua.pt/index.php?q=content/salinas-de-rio-maior>> [accessed 16 June 2014].

<sup>28</sup> Rodrigues et al., 'Artisanal salt production', p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> ECOSAL website: <<http://ecosal-atlantis.ua.pt/index.php?q=content/salgado-da-figueira-da-foz>> [accessed 17 June 2014]; Renato Neves, 'Figueira da Foz: Organisation and evolution of salinas on the Mondego Estuary', in Neves et al., *Alas: All about Salt*, pp. 45-47, at p. 45; Renato Neves, 'Figueira saltworks: Geography and salt history', in Neves et al., *Alas: All about Salt*, pp. 19-21.

<sup>30</sup> Rodrigues et al., 'Artisanal salt production', p. 5.

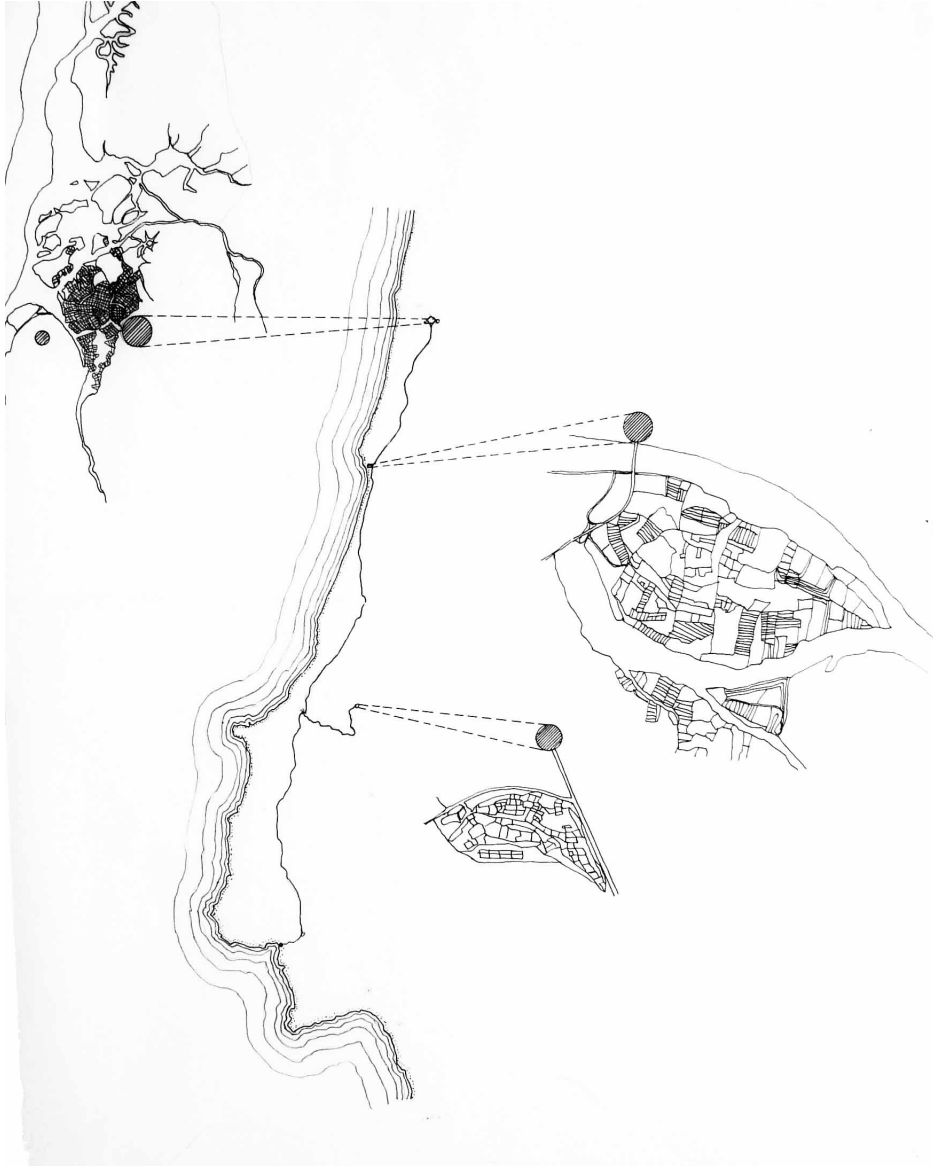


Image 3.3. Katy Beinart, *Map of journey to salinas*.



Before setting off on the journey to visit the three *salinas*, I learnt what I could from information gathered on the ECOSAL website, and from videos elsewhere on the internet.<sup>31</sup> But it is the practice of journeying to the sites that provides a fuller sense of their scale, environment and aesthetics. As I set off on the *détour*, arriving first in Lisbon and then driving north, I was aware of the difference between the experience of seeing these places from afar and actually being there. Aspects of the journey became part of the way I experienced the sites, so that *détournement* was a conscious strategy of the journey. For example, while staying in a family home in Caldas da Rainha before driving to Rio Maior, we had a long conversation with the family about the pros and cons of heritage tourism for the area, which framed my view upon arriving at Rio Maior. When driving from Figueira to Aveiro, we took a wrong turning down a coastal road and ended up on a dirt road, not knowing if we would be able to get through at the other end. We did, but the experience meant that the place we arrived in felt framed by the remoteness of the road we had travelled.

Arriving in Rio Maior, the physicality of being present in the site was fierce, the bright sunlight reflected off the white salt pools, and to walk on the narrow paths between the pools felt like a dangerous game in a harsh environment. Not speaking Portuguese, in each *salinas* I tried to negotiate purchasing a bag of salt. This began forms of Relation in the sites, some conversations of which were extended and led to longer conversations, while on other occasions I was only made more aware of myself as an outsider ‘other’ by trying to engage.

Travelling long distances by car, I was also aware of changing landscapes, from urban, to suburban, to semi-rural, to rural, as sites that were once central had become overlaid by new geographies of suburbanization and infrastructure.

Sometimes we had to travel down smaller and smaller roads to reach a site, and at other times it entailed crossing estuaries, driving through industrial areas to the borderlands, on the edges of cities. Aveiro was a huge expanse of water-fields, once salt pans, stretching out from the edge of town, and almost invisible due to the infrastructure of roads, new buildings and canals.<sup>32</sup>

The *salinas* sites were usually on the edge of a town or village, but travelling into each site was like leaving the present behind, as the landscape became horizontal, simple, more basic in form. Smithson describes the journey to and arrival at Great Salt Lake, Utah:

<sup>31</sup> For video links, see <<http://ecosal-atlantis.ua.pt/index.php?q=content/videos-about-salgado-da-figueira-da-foz>>;

<sup>32</sup> Beinart, ‘Salted Earth’, blog, 3 September 2013.



As we travelled, the valley spread into an uncanny immensity unlike the other landscapes we had seen. The roads on the map became a net of dashes, while in the far distance the Salt Lake existed as an interrupted silver band ... we followed roads that glided away into dead ends. Sandy slopes turned into viscous masses of perception. Slowly, we drew near to the lake, which resembled an impassive faint violet sheet held captive in a stoney matrix, upon which the sun poured down its crushing light.<sup>33</sup>

Smithson's writings give a sense of the changing perception of space in a salt lake, one in which the landscape almost vanishes, becomes faint and at times hard to see.

The absence of salt in the modern landscape seemed to equate with its loss of economic value, and the older technological processes still in use in the *salinas* can be seen in relation to the contemporary social geography of cities and roads. Rio Maior is modern in the sense that it survives as a heritage centre dependent on EU grants and tourism, and it encapsulates the tensions of such places. In Rio Maior, a well is pumped using ancient technology to fill the shallow, geometrically arranged pools of salt. The salt, scraped from the surface of the drying pools and piled onto raised pallets, made something akin to a primitive shelter in form as it dried slowly in the sun. The simplicity of this process seems almost alien to the modern world, and while the sites have been regenerated by EU funding, their role as a 'heritage' centre seemed at odds with the continuing production of salt. The aesthetic and vernacular of the *salinas* is being used to promote heritage tourism:

In the inland *salinas* of Rio Maior (in the center of Portugal) most of the old typical salt warehouses, built with wood to avoid salt corrosion, were recovered and are now working as shops. Artisanal *salinas*, once on a path towards extinction, are now mandatory destinations for those seeking new places of great natural beauty. They offer the possibility of observing something genuinely traditional and culturally authentic.<sup>34</sup>

However, while the architectural heritage is being preserved as 'culturally authentic', the actual culture of using the pans is not. The number of operating salt pans has greatly dwindled, and faster industrial processes are now dominant.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Robert Smithson, 'The spiral jetty' [1972], in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. by Jack Flam (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 143-53, at p. 145.

<sup>34</sup> Mathew Landau, 'Tourism in salinas as a source of development and sustainability', Biomedcentral (blog), 4 March 2013, <<http://blogs.biomedcentral.com/ss/2013/03/04/tourism-in-salinas-as-a-source-of-development-and-sustainability/>> [accessed 17 June 2014].

<sup>35</sup> Neves et al., *Alas: All about Salt*.



At the Figueira Ecomuseum, the guide described the differences between the processes. The industrial process, where water is forced through rocks, takes only five hours and uses the material only once; the salt must then be cleaned, and chemicals added to it. The *salinas'* traditional production uses a natural filtration system in which the saltwater is let into beds slowly, increasing in salinity as it gets shallower and more concentrated, and then evaporating naturally to leave 'pure' salt which also contains other minerals. The salt water is re-used four or more times, and the evaporation process takes five to six days.<sup>36</sup>

This aspect of duration was made evident by visiting the sites. The crystallization of the salt was a visible process, and each stage of the process could be seen, but the change of state was so slow as to be invisible. I wanted to reflect this slow change of state in the work I made, and so I began by filming the slow movement and formation of salt crystals on the surface of the salt pans. I was met with the immediate challenges of the physical environment of the sites: the sun reflecting off the white salt created glare, the heat and dust affected the equipment, and the salt itself could cause corrosion.

I wanted to work with Smithson's site/non-site dialectic, and in particular his idea of the non-site as an abstract, three-dimensional picture that represents an actual site. As Smithson said, 'it is by this three dimensional metaphor that one site can represent another site which does not resemble it', and I began to attempt to find a visual language or metaphor to represent the physical experience of being in the salt pans and the chemical qualities of the salt as an unpredictable, changing force. I wanted to recreate the process of crystallization in a studio or gallery space, with a scaled-down version of the *salinas*.<sup>37</sup> This experiment, I realized, echoed elements of the exhibition in Stellenbosch, South Africa, but in a different context.

Observing the three sites, I made a series of readings of them: first, as a technology that has altered little over centuries, and still works in synergy with the environment and ecology; second, as a set of processes of harvesting, storing and preserving which become almost a physical archive that can represent memory and cultural preservation; third, as architectural and landscape interventions which have a specific aesthetic and vernacular relating to their use (one being their re-use in concepts of heritage for tourism); and fourth, as un-knowing relatives of the 1970s American land art movement, in particular of Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*.

The forms of Relation that took place on the journey, and their poetic resonances, changed according to site, situation and type of encounter. During the journey, we stayed at people's houses, leading to conversations with our hosts about the journey and why we were making it.

<sup>36</sup> Voice recording, Figueira da Foz Ecomuseu, Beinart, 'Salted Earth', blog, 3 September 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Smithson, 'A provisional theory of non-sites' [1968], in *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, Flam (ed), p. 364; Smithson, 'The spiral jetty', fn. 1, pp. 152-3.



Searching for salt sites, we had other kinds of encounters. Visiting the sites, there were unofficial and official forms of relation, according to whether an encounter was one with clearly defined and expected roles (tourist and guide) or one of chance. In some sites, a guide performed a talk which allowed me to ask questions, but in other sites I approached *salinas* workers to ask questions. The conversation usually started with the actual processes of making salt, but often touched on personal stories of migration, cultural heritage, preservation and change. I felt that in these encounters there was a sense of understanding through what Glissant called *donner-avec* (giving-with), that is, a giving in the relating.<sup>38</sup>

At the Aveiro *salinas*, I spoke to a couple who were showing us the equipment they used in the salt harvesting process.

Luis and Luisa are friends of Joao who works on the salinas, and they come down to help him as his wife is in hospital. Luisa speaks English with a Canadian accent and it turns out she was a returnee, having emigrated aged 9 but returning aged 23 to marry Luis as his family-owned hardware store in Aveiro needed him. She said she always felt a pull between Canada and Portugal, and felt there was something different about her. People emigrate to better themselves, she said, and if they haven't succeeded, they don't come back.

There have been salt pans here for 900 years, Luisa tells me, and the fishermen used to take the salt, catch fish, salt it on board, and bring it back. So salt cod became essential to the Portuguese culture and traditions. Today, fish is imported, frozen. It's then defrosted, salted and repackaged as a local and global export. But the salting is not necessary for its preservation, so why continue to produce it? Luisa says, 'We like the taste. We'd rather have that for our cooking.'<sup>39</sup>

Luisa's story related directly to José's story: although she had returned to Portugal after migrating away, and José lived in England, both spoke of salt cod as a container for historical custom and migrations. Luisa told me that her sons did not used to like eating *bacalhau* as children, but now that they had grown up and had their own homes they wanted to cook and eat it themselves. The salt cod operated in her story as an important sign of identity and memory. In her story, it was the going away from and coming back to Portugal that differentiated her from others, making her more aware of both her foreign and national identities, and underscoring her nostalgia in one place for the other place. In her 'away' experience, she had gone outside the familiar, not only in the landscape but also through her education and encounter with arts and

<sup>38</sup> Betsy Wing, 'Introduction', in Glissant, *PR*, p. xiv; Seanna Sumalee Oakley, *Common Places: The Poetics of African Atlantic Postromantics* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), p. 55.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Luisa and Luis, Aveiro *salinas*; Beinart, 'Salted Earth', blog, 3 September 2013. (Names have been changed).





culture in Canada. In coming 'home', she said she did not feel she belonged, because her love of art galleries and other cultural activities made her 'other' to the community to which she had returned. Luisa's story seems one of *détour* and *retour*, involving a *détour* that fundamentally changed her relationship to place, so that in her *retour* she was continuously aware of herself as both self and 'Other' to the place she returned to.

Nostalgia for another place or time is epitomized in the Portuguese word *saudade*, which is not directly translatable, and not exactly the same as nostalgia, but according to a Portuguese dictionary is:

a somewhat melancholic feeling of incompleteness ... related to thinking back on situations of privation due to the absence of someone or something, to move away from a place or thing, or to the absence of a set of particular and desirable experiences and pleasures once lived.<sup>40</sup>

Alternatively, it can mean:

intimate feelings and moods caused by the longing for something absent that is being missed. This can take different aspects, from concrete realities (a loved one, a friend, the motherland, the homeland...) to the mysterious and transcendent. It is quite prevalent and characteristic of the Galician-Portuguese world, but it can also be found in other cultures.<sup>41</sup>

According to Claudio Basto, the word originated in the thirteenth century.<sup>42</sup> What seems to be key to the origin of *saudade* is a specific reference to absence:

In its archaic form, *soidade*, the word is found in the *cantigas d'amigo* sung by the thirteenth-century troubadours, which are the first texts in Portuguese literature. These are complaints, initially by women, deploring the absence of the beloved who has left to go to war or on crusades or on voyages of discovery and conquest beyond the seas.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Antônio Houaiss, Mauro de Salles Villar and Francisco Manoel de Mello Franco, *Dicionário Houaiss da Língua Portuguesa*, 1st edn (Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 2001).

<sup>41</sup> Constantino García and Manuel González González, *Dicionario da Real Academia Galega* (Vigo: Real Academia Galega, 1997).

<sup>42</sup> Cláudio Basto, 'Saudade em português e galego', *Revista Lusitana*, 17 (1914), p. 275.

<sup>43</sup> Fernando Santoro, 'Saudade', in Barbara Cassin (ed.), *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), pp. 929-931, at p. 930.



Writing about the genealogy of the related term 'nostalgia', Svetlana Bohm describes modern nostalgia as the secular expression of a spiritual longing, and a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return.<sup>44</sup> *Saudade's* use today could be related to the Portuguese diaspora where migrations and return migrations have created a constant feeling of missing something.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps, as Fernando Santoro suggests, the word's untranslatability 'indicates an existential approach to the human condition; it gives rise to a phenomenological analysis and thereby becomes capable of universality. *Saudade*, like anxiety, brings out human beings' relationships to the world.'<sup>46</sup> Like Glissant's turn away from an identity based on rootedness to one based on relation, *saudade* epitomizes a universality, or, as Glissant called it, *mondialité* (worldliness) where identity is connected to a wider sense of Relation.<sup>47</sup>

At the Figueira da Foz *salinas*, a chance encounter led to a different kind of conversation, as a lack of shared language prevented clear communication:

On a long hot walk around the salt pans at Figueira de Foz, a man out working in a pan gestured to us to stop. Uncertain as to what to do, we went towards the shelter he pointed to. Under a green tarpaulin suspended on a rough wooden frame, a group of men were cooking fish. They pointed to the fish and to us and to the table. We took it as an invitation and sat down. Then they piled plates with bread, grilled fish and tomatoes and poured red wine into plastic cups. The entire conversation took place through gesture and facial expression. We sat down and ate, grateful but also embarrassed, uncertain of the protocol in this situation of unexpected generosity. I tried in very broken Portuguese to ask them about their work. I could just understand one man saying, very hard work. I asked if I could take a photo by pointing at the camera, and he nodded. Before we left, I asked for their address. Later, I printed the image and sent it to the men, along with an invitation to the opening of my exhibition at Plataforma in Lisbon.<sup>48</sup>

Jane Rendell describes a similar cross-cultural encounter with a Guatemalan woman: speaking broken Spanish resulted in a misunderstanding between them that led her to a dead-end street. Taking psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche's definition of translation as the passage from a message to

<sup>44</sup> Svetlana Bohm, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

<sup>45</sup> Bela Feldman-Bianco, 'Empire, postcoloniality and diasporas: The Portuguese case', *Papers*, 85 (2007), pp. 43-56, at p. 44.

<sup>46</sup> Santoro, 'Saudade'.

<sup>47</sup> Glissant, *Introduction à une poétique du divers*, p. 105; for translation, see Sam Coombes, 'Black postcolonial communities in a globalised world as articulated in the work of Paul Gilroy and Edouard Glissant: A comparative analysis', *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 36 (2014), pp. 11-18, at p.16.

<sup>48</sup> Beinart, 'Salted Earth', blog, 3 September 2013, and author's personal journal.



its understanding – an act that is not necessarily only interlingual, operating between languages, but *intersemiotic*, working between sign systems – Rendell explores misunderstanding in relation to textual, material and spatial interactions.<sup>49</sup> In my own encounter, the exchange of the meal and the photograph allowed another kind of interaction to occur, one which could be described as intersemiotic. This exchange of a material object that marks the encounter highlighted the difference of language and of profession, but it also overcame the fragmented nature of our broken spoken communication: the meal and the image could ‘speak’ volumes more than the words we could say. Perhaps the fragmented nature of the broken language creates gaps for other kinds of communication to take place.

Travelling back from Aveiro to Lisbon, I tried to find the supplier who exported the salt cod I had bought in Brixton. I had the address off the back of the packet. In an industrial zone near Aveiro, I found the warehouse. At the reception desk I asked about the salting process. I was told that the fish arrives frozen from the trawler and is then put through an industrial process of salting before it is repackaged and sent out for export. I asked to see inside the factory but was told it was not possible for health and safety reasons.

### **Lisbon: *Salted Paper Prints* (2013)**

The journey to the *salinas* had offered me a starting point for making work in the studio that would explore the chemical processes of transformation and crystallization. As I began to develop ideas and collect source materials, I had several conversations with Fabrice Zeigler, the artistic director at Fabrica, who directed me to the Lisbon Photographic Archives and suggested places I could source materials for printing my images of the *salinas*. We were communicating through a mixture of English and French (Fabrice was French but lived in Portugal), and our initial conversations started me off in the wrong direction: I arrived at a digital printer who couldn’t understand my asking for darkroom chemicals. From there, I went on a series of journeys around the city, in search of information and materials, in which one destination often proved not to supply me with what I needed, and in fact just led to another suggested place. My more localized journeying around the city became intrinsic to making the work, so that the work itself contained a trace of the journeys – the locations visited, people encountered, and conversations attempted.

The earliest type of photographic printing was made using paper soaked in salt, which was then painted with silver nitrate and exposed to the sun (with a negative, making a contact print). While I was in Lisbon, I wanted to try making salted paper prints using images I had taken of *salinas* in Figueira, Aveiro and Rio Maior. My photographs of the *salinas* seemed out of time,

<sup>49</sup> Jane Rendell, *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism* (London: IB Tauris, 2010), pp. 69-74.



Image 3.4: Katy Beinart, *Map of sites and journeys in Lisbon* (2013)

and I felt that using this process to remake the images would reflect that sense of the past and the present layered within them. In fact, the process of making the images became about many things, not just past and present, but also obsolescence, communication, language, regulation, and migrations.<sup>50</sup>

Sigmar Polke was one of several artists in the 1980s who became associated with a type of practice known as 'black alchemy', in which 'the decaying fabric of the political order became the *prima materia* of discourse'.<sup>51</sup> Polke understood photography as a magical process and used laboratory photographic techniques so that his chemicals provided the subject matter of the artworks, with the decaying fabric of the image becoming a metaphor of the social and political fabric of society. Polke reworked his images, leaving prints unfixed, mixing chemicals and folding prints so the images were stained with chemicals. According to Maria Morris Hambourg, the stains then 'inscribe an image of the instability of this world, its decaying impermanence'.<sup>52</sup>

Polke's work has synergies with his fellow German artist, Anselm Kiefer, whose art practice has also been associated with black alchemy.<sup>53</sup> In *Birth of the Sun* (1987), Kiefer overlaid photographs with other materials, including clay and wire, so that images were distorted and disappeared. In *Salt of the Earth* (2012), he suspended photographs of landscapes that were mounted on lead panels and submitted to a process of electrolysis that covered them with a green patina.<sup>54</sup> Kiefer makes use of symbolic materials and processes like lead and electrolysis, gold and salt, which in ancient tradition were used for a metaphorical transformation of self. In doing so, he has drawn upon the work of his tutor, Joseph Beuys, who had a strong interest in material qualities and with whom Kiefer studied informally in the 1970s.<sup>55</sup>

The process of salted paper printing was invented by Fox Talbot in 1834, at the very birth of photography as he vied with Louis Daguerre to be the first to patent his 'art of photogenic drawing'.<sup>56</sup> By the 1860s, photography had become more widespread, and *The Silver Sunbeam*, published in New York in 1864, set out chemical photographic processes in detail.<sup>57</sup> In summary,

<sup>50</sup> Beinart, 'Salted Earth', blog, 3 September 2013.

<sup>51</sup> Urszula Szulakowska, *Alchemy in Contemporary Art* (London: Ashgate, 2011), p. 79.

<sup>52</sup> Maria Morris Hambourg, 'Polke's recipes for arousing the soul', in *Sigmar Polke, Photoworks: When Pictures Vanish*, exhibition catalogue (Los Angeles: MoCA, 1996), pp. 37-72, at p. 37, cited in Szulakowska, *Alchemy*, p. 79.

<sup>53</sup> Szulakowska, *Alchemy*, p. 76.

<sup>54</sup> See <<http://www.fondazionevedova.org/en/mostra/anselm-kiefer-salt-earth>> [accessed 27 November 2013].

<sup>55</sup> Anselm Kiefer, Gagosian Gallery: <<http://www.gagosian.com/artists/anselm-kiefer/>> [accessed 20 June 2014].

<sup>56</sup> See Metmuseum (website), <[http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tlbt/hd\\_tlbt.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tlbt/hd_tlbt.htm)> [accessed 27 November 2013].

<sup>57</sup> J. Towler, *The Silver Sunbeam* (New York: JH Ladd, 1864).



Images 3.5 and 3.6: Katy Beinart, Photographic Archives and Chemical company



the paper is 'salted' by soaking it in a solution of sodium chloride (salt) and water, and it is then painted with a silver nitrate solution (in a darkroom), which reacts with the sodium chloride to form light-sensitive silver chloride (silver salt).

To experiment with creating salted paper prints, I had to source silver nitrate, which was not readily available in Lisbon. This search took me on a series of journeys around the city, which involved both planned and chance encounters. I was directed to Luis Pavao, who ran the city's photographic archives, and he then directed me to a chemical company hidden in an apartment block near the Cais do Sodre.

Other journeys led to laboratories, archives, paper shops and shopping malls. Searching for material with which to make the work started to give me a sense of place. The artworks became in part a vehicle for my wider research, as I interacted with people in the city and gradually gained knowledge through these interactions. These interactions were challenging, although, like the salt print experiments, some of them clarified what I was seeking, while others shed no light on my search, or what they apparently revealed remained obscure.

Trying to source things, I am in the shoes of my great-grandparents again, arriving in strange places, not understanding the language, or the way things work – like the times of day, when places are open or closed, the procedures, the rules, the expected behaviours. Going into the Nigerian photocopy shop, they give me directions in French purely by landmarks – which I don't know. I am constantly getting lost, negotiating public transport, using paper maps, as my location services uses up the battery on my phone. This obsolete process I am trying to recreate makes me more aware of the technologies of travel, of journeying, of translation, that we take for granted when we are familiar with the terrain; how quickly we become helpless without them.<sup>58</sup>

In recreating the obsolete process of making salted paper prints, I got lost. I moved back and forth in time, locating places in the city which seemed to belong to other times, to an analogue era, such as the chemical supply company with its paper bureaucracy, or to a time which had moved so far into future that it had become totally digital, and where the staff did not believe me when I said I wanted to make an analogue piece of work. While these two times existed in the same city spatially and contemporaneously, moving between them made me aware of a disjuncture, one in which the two seemed unable to coexist.

<sup>58</sup> Beinart, 'Salted Earth', blog, 17 October 2013.



Image 3.7: Katy Beinart, Exposing the prints

Image 3.8: *Salted paper print* (2013)

Eventually, I made the prints, in a darkroom off a small square in the Mouraria area of Lisbon.

I expose the paper in the sunny square outside the darkroom with kids playing and a man washing in the fountain. Images appear, faded brown, indistinct, an index of memory. I repeat the process with large sheets and huge, ghostly salt-piles take shape. There are splashes and discolourations.<sup>59</sup>

The imperfections tell one story in the making of the work, and one which seems appropriate to the salt-making processes typical of the *salinas*. Although we experience salt through taste, these images offer another more visual perspective, with salt located as both an image and the constructor of the image. The imperfections in the materiality of analogue photographic processes offer a different way of reflecting on the meaning of the production and reproduction of images. Images are documents in terms of their material qualities as well as their visual appearance.

At the opening of my exhibition in Lisbon, a woman I am chatting to tells me she liked the work, and it reminded her that the poet Fernando Pessoa was initially pro-Salazar (the long-time dictator of Portugal) as he thought the man was 'salty' by name and therefore 'salty' by nature – which is a good thing. However, later he realised that the regime was indeed the other meaning contained in Salazar's name, that of 'azar' meaning bad luck.<sup>60</sup>

The *Salted paper prints* evoke the powerful connections to memory and preservation contained in salt's history.<sup>61</sup> Exhibiting the photographs at the Plataforma Revolver gallery in central Lisbon, alongside other works I'd made, connected the materiality of the salt with its historical importance to Portugal, an importance evident in language, as with the meaning read into Salazar's name. However, I was still left wondering whether these traces of salt in language are a trace of the past in the present, as the photographs are an obscure analogue technology, unnecessary to use today, no longer important. But it seemed that the imperfections of the analogue, or the disjuncture of these images in a smooth digital present, is like the disjuncture of words whose meaning is rooted in the past but whose use continues in our present conversation: they act as ghosts. Salt is a ghostly substance, and its molecules contain the past.

<sup>59</sup> Beinart, 'Salted Earth', blog, 17 October 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Beinart, 'Salted Earth', blog, 22 November 2013.

<sup>61</sup> Katy Beinart, exhibition text, *Saltworks* (2013), Plataforma Revolver, Lisbon, Portugal.



Image 3.9: Katy Beinart, Mercado de Ribiera market

## **Lisbon: The Mercado de Ribeira**

I had taken a roll of colour positive slides of locations of salted fish in Brixton Market, which I brought to Lisbon with the intention of making a comparative mapping. The Mercado de Ribeira, a nineteenth-century covered market building by Lisbon's Cais de Sodre station and quay, has a few shops facing the street, one of which sells products for the Brazilian and African migrants who live and work in the city. I began to visit the market at different times of day and night to photograph what traces I could find of the (salt) fish trade, and to observe the changing nature of the market. At this scale – the scale of one building – travelling became more intimate.

I go to the Mercado de Ribeira, Lisbon's oldest indoor market, around midday on Friday. Some of the stalls are packing up, but even full the cavernous space would have been half-empty. A couple of stalls sell bacalhau alongside products imported from Brazil and West Africa familiar to me from Brixton Market stalls. Many of the fresh fish stalls are closed, and the piles of polystyrene crates nearby the open stalls have labels from Norway and the other Scandinavian countries. I read on an information panel at the entrance that the oldest reference to a market at this site dates back to the thirteenth century, and that once upon a time fish was unloaded directly from the fishing boats at the dockside next to this market. Today, lorries arrive to pick up and drop off the polystyrene crates of frozen fish.<sup>62</sup>

The location of the market by the port was a result of the needs of trade and exploration, and for several hundred years salt cod produced locally was sold there. The structure, space and layout of the Mercado de Ribeira act as a relic of the historical past, of a particular moment of supply, demand and trade both local to Lisbon and global. So, if the architecture is a memory of the past, and contains narratives of past trading structures, how legible is it? What can we read from this structure in terms of former attitudes to trade and migration? And how has the architectural form been adapted to the present? Although the building is still in use as a market, there were signs of attempts to diversify its use and users: heritage signage in English seemed to be aimed at tourists; advertisements offered hire of spaces, and there were weekend events such as vintage fairs and dances. When I went upstairs, to the open arcades that look over the market floor, I found a glass door which led to a cleaned up and sanitized space that no longer felt sensually of the market. A woman told me I was not allowed into the space because it had been hired out. This was the opposite of the main market floor, which, as far as I could observe, was open access with little security.

<sup>62</sup> Beinart, 'Salted Earth', blog, 8 September 2013.



Image 3.10: Katy Beinart, Mercado da Ribeira

Like Brixton Market, the Mercado de Ribeira was apparently being reinvented, and there was a gradual loss of the use and users that the structure had been intended for. Brixton Market was listed by English Heritage because of its 'cultural heritage':

the well-known Brixton Market complex formed the commercial and social heart of the extensive Afro-Caribbean community that settled in Brixton after WWII. The successful adoption of the markets is the clearest architectural manifestation of the major wave of immigration that had such an important impact on the cultural and social landscape of post-war Britain, and is thus a site with considerable historical resonance.<sup>63</sup>

The question is, how can that historical resonance be preserved? And should it be?

I visited the Mercado at different times, observing who used it, and how it filled up and emptied. There seemed to be, like Brixton, different clientele visiting the old market and the new market. It was clear that, during the morning, elderly shoppers of many origins came to buy fish, meat and vegetables. The produce market shut at lunchtime, and during the afternoon the market transformed into an evening venue, the area around it busying with young people in bars and restaurants. Signage outside the market building advertised a proposed redevelopment of the market area as a 'vibrant urban experience'.

While visitors to the market poured out of Cais do Sodre, the nearby dock and station and a busy transport hub, goods arrived for the market by car and van. The connection with the river and the dock had been severed. Ships passed by, stopping at the container ports further up the river.

I took surreptitious shots of the movement in and out and around the market. They were installed in a carousel slide projector in the gallery, and the timed projections, with their analogue clunk, marked the intervals in time of the journey around the market. The reel began with photographs taken in Brixton Market, shots of salt fish and the stalls, then segued into images of Portuguese cafes serving saltfish dishes in the Brixton area, and then into Lisbon and the Mercado de Ribeira. It was a deliberate obscuring and mixing of narratives.

Using analogue technology, though now effectively obsolescent, to capture a certain quality of image reflected the shifting usage and visual character of the market. The outdated technology mirrored the outmoded use of the market space, one whose days are numbered. Choosing analogue technology also posed problems: it proved impossible to locate a carousel slide

<sup>63</sup> English Heritage, list entry: <<http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=139388>> [accessed 20 June 2014].



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Estaleiros Navais de Alba  
Hipermercado Sá

Cliente: timeOut  
Fase: Projeto de execução realizado em 2012  
Arquiteto: Francisco Aires Mateus

Image 3.11: Mercado da Ribeira proposed redevelopment. Source: <http://ovoodocorvo.blogspot.co.uk/2014/01/time-out-inicia-projecto-do-mercado-da.html>



projector in Lisbon, and I had to return to London, buy one on eBay, and hire a timer from a warehouse in east London, which I took back to Portugal for the exhibition at Plataforma Revolver. The problems involved in showing colour positive slides interested me, as a technology that is becoming ever rarer, but one still just possible to locate in the present.

On researching the Mercado da Ribeira further, I learnt that it was to be a *Time Out Lisboa* redevelopment project, designed by architects Aires Mateus.<sup>64</sup> According to the architects, it would be transformed into a food court featuring top Portuguese chefs and food products.<sup>65</sup> By May 2014, images of the new marketplace online were unrecognizable as the marketplace of my photographs, although apparently the old market was still operational between 5 a.m. and 9 a.m.

It is the first publishing project in the world in three dimensions. The new Ribeira Market, revitalized by *Time Out Lisboa*, has around 30 dining outlets served for 500 seats in a covered area and over 250 in a terrace, situated in the west wing. Here are represented the best spaces, chefs and domestic products. Our main mission is to transform the market into a place of worship for the people of Lisbon and a must for the thousands of tourists who visit us daily, uniting the traditional market with a more gastronomic, cultural and leisure concept.<sup>66</sup>

The gallery installation of slides of Brixton Market and the Mercado bring together two spaces which are undergoing similar transformations, ones in which an older use of space is becoming marginal, where traces of the past are tolerated as if they are a form of entertainment, and where the heritage of the past is consumable. The slides speak of a nostalgia, and the work intends to address this nostalgia, to question whether, and why, we need to hold onto this element of the past that is still just visible in the present.

The Mercado da Ribeira and Brixton Market could both be seen as memorials to a more direct experience of processing, selling and consuming food. In both markets, the food is on display, to be visually consumed before it is literally consumed. The purchaser can touch, smell, even feel the produce. In a supermarket, the direct sensory experience is removed and replaced with olfactory illusion.<sup>67</sup> Produce – deboned and deskinning – is wrapped in plastic, removed from its original

<sup>64</sup> <<http://www.lisbonlux.com/lisbon-news/2013/09/28/lisbons-time-out-magazine-reinvents-the-citys-central-market-in-2014/>> [accessed 21 June 2014].

<sup>65</sup> <<http://www.publico.pt/local/noticia/time-out-lisboa-inaugura-espaco-gastronomico-unico-no-mercado-da-ribeira-1636272>> [accessed 21 June 2014].

<sup>66</sup> See <<https://www.facebook.com/TimeOutMercadodaRibeira/info>> [accessed 20 June 2014].

<sup>67</sup> Cheuk Fan Ng, 'Satisfying shoppers' psychological needs: From public market to cyber-mall', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 23 (2003), pp. 439-455, at p. 443; Paco Underhill, *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), p. 164.



condition and presented ready for consumption. The growing popularity of farmers' markets and artisanal, locally produced food is testament to the rejection of industrial food processes by some consumers, who are seeking different sensory and social interactions in their shopping and food.<sup>68</sup> Notions of authenticity, tradition, naturalness and quality are seen as lacking in food produced industrially, as Mara Miele and Jonathan Murdoch have written: 'the reassertion of quality foods in the industrial era often seems to imply a turning away from industrial technologies and a rediscovery of more typical or authentic production processes.'<sup>69</sup> Salting cod in particular, and salting food in general, belongs to a pre-refrigeration (and pre-industrial) age of preservation, and connects to cycles of freshness and decay, and to durations of production and consumption.

The physical space of the markets and the physical space of the *salinas* seem to be remnants or residues. Residues exist also in language. The root of the word 'salt', the Greek word *alas*, was initially *als* (also meaning 'sea', in the female gender). The Latin *sal* is an anagram of *als*, changed to ease pronunciation.<sup>70</sup> Words which originate from *alas/sal* include 'salary'/*salario*, from the Latin *salarium*; *saldo* (Portuguese, Italian and Spanish) meaning 'balance', 'bargain'; 'sales'; *insalata* or 'salad'; 'sausage' (*salami*, *salciccia*, *salsicha*); 'sauce' (*salsa*, *saltsa*); and many more.<sup>71</sup> The Latin *sal* became the French 'solde', meaning 'pay', which is the origin of the word soldier.<sup>72</sup> Many of these words and meanings relate strongly to markets, from labour markets to food markets, illustrating the value of salt as a currency of exchange and payment, and as a preservative. While salt is no longer necessary to preserve food, the taste of salt is essential to many cultures, and older processes which use salt have continued, a leftover from the past.

<sup>68</sup> Jonathon Murdoch and Mara Miele, 'A new aesthetic of food? Relational reflexivity in the "alternative" food movement', in Mark Harvey, Andrew McMeekin and Alan Warde (eds), *Qualities of Food* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 156-173.

<sup>69</sup> Mara Miele and Jonathan Murdoch, 'The aestheticisation of food: Taste, time and typicality', draft paper for workshop on 'Rethinking food production-consumption: Integrative perspectives on agrarian restructuring, agro-food networks, and food politics', held at University of California, Santa Cruz, 30 November–1 December 2001, p. 3, available from <<http://www2.ucsc.edu/globalinterns/cpapers/MurdochMiele.pdf>> [accessed 21 June 2014].

<sup>70</sup> Theodora Petanidou, 'Salty remnants in the Mediterranean language', in Neves et al., *Alas: All about Salt*, p. 35.

<sup>71</sup> Petanidou, 'Salty remnants'.

<sup>72</sup> Kurlansky, *Salt*, p. 63.

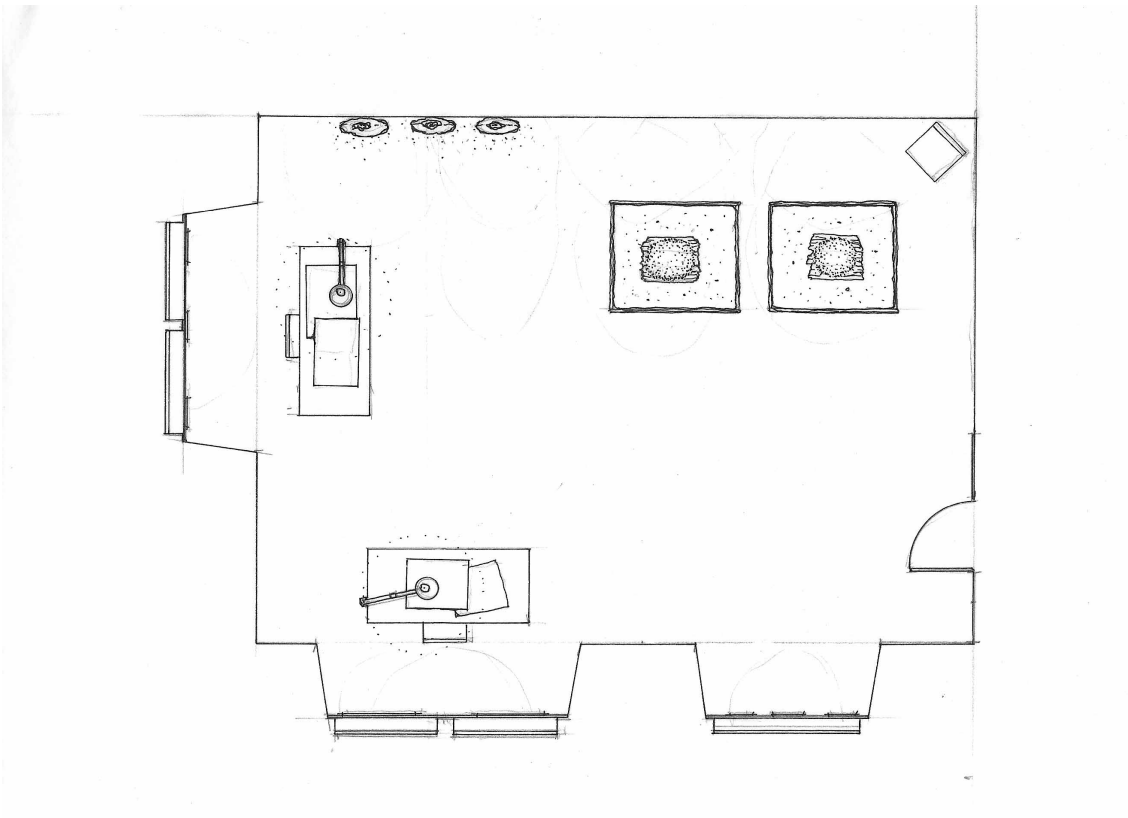


Image 3.12: Katy Beinart, *Map of the studio space* at Fabrica Braco de Prata (2013)

### Lisbon: *Saltworks* (2013)

In the space of the open studio at Fabrica Braco de Prata, I tried out configurations of artwork and image, wall text and map. Taking the experience of the *salinas* and scaling it down into the space of the studio or gallery means trying to represent those places in poetic forms that convey the phenomenological qualities of the *détour* and the *salinas* sites. In doing so, the artworks are indexical symbols of the sites.<sup>73</sup> In this section, I explore the meanings of this indexical relationship, within the framework of poetics set out in the introduction and in Glissant's poetics of relation. The poetics also connect to the language of salt poetry by authors including Glissant.

The studio becomes cartographic, a map of the journeys I have made and older journeys others have made. I draw a world map in chalk, and chart journeys made for collecting salt, journeys that connect to the slave triangle and to the early explorations of the Portuguese to the new world. I put up maps I found in the Feria da Ladra market, in Lisbon: these are nineteenth-century maps of the edges of Portugal, and they include the *salinas* which at the time would have still been valuable resources. I also put up the map of salt in Brixton Market, which seems incongruous in this location, but relates the story back to me, to where I come from. On the walls I also pin photographs I have taken of the *salinas*, images of old salt-making technologies and poems about salt.<sup>74</sup>

Below are the poems that were pinned on the studio wall. The words of 'Ode to Salt', a poem by Pablo Neruda, convey the cartographic nature of the salt trade travelling around the world. The words of Pessoa's 'Mensagem' link the poetics of salt directly to the Portuguese *saudade*, the nostalgia for the sea. And the words of Alberti's 'Marinero en Tierra' describe the processes of the *salinas* and the role of the salter.

O mar salgado, quanto do teu sal sao lagrimas de Portugal!

[Oh salted sea, how much of your salt may come from the tears of Portugal!]<sup>75</sup>

(Fernando Pessoa, 'Message'/'Mensagem')

<sup>73</sup> Smithson, 'Provisional theory of non-sites', p. 364.

<sup>74</sup> Author's personal journal, September 2013.

<sup>75</sup> Pessoa, *Message/Mensagem*.



Image 3.13: Katy Beinart, Studio installation.

This salt in the salt cellar  
I once saw in the salt mines. I know  
you won't believe me but it sings  
salt sings, the skin of the salt mines  
sings with a mouth smothered by the earth.<sup>76</sup>

(Pablo Neruda, 'Ode to Salt')

...And the pans will already be  
Seeping the blue from the sea.  
Let me be, salters  
A little grain from the salina!  
How nice at dawn  
To run the wagons,  
Full of salty snow  
Toward the white houses!  
I quit being seaman, mother,  
To become salter.<sup>77</sup>

(Rafael Alberti, 'Marinero en Tierra')

These poems seem to speak of the relationships between here and elsewhere, home and away, and belonging and longing, epitomized by salt. Salt's poetics in this sense represent what Glissant calls the *ici-là*, the 'here-there', where place is always in relation to an elsewhere.<sup>78</sup>

Pessoa's plea to the 'Mar Atlantico' is one of sadness, where salt water is the intimate link between journeying to sea and the tears of those left behind. In Neruda's poem, salt is the link between the domestic dinner table and the distant salt seas and salt mines; its taste carries the 'ocean essence'. Alberti's poem describes an ambiguous relationship with the sea, which the narrator has left behind to be closer to a domestic, familiar setting, but contact with salt allows him to retain his link to the distant sea: 'and the pans will already be seeping the blue from the sea'. This role that salt plays in relating the domestic or interior sphere and the outside world, while not explicitly political, links to Glissant's volume of poetry *Black Salt* and his cycle of poems that use salt as a metaphor for the history of the slave trade and other histories of

<sup>76</sup> Pablo Neruda, 'Ode to Salt', in *Selected Odes of Pablo Neruda* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000); originally published in Pablo Neruda, *Tercer libro de las odas* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1957).

<sup>77</sup> Rafael Alberti, 'Salinero', trans by Katia Hueso, at: <<http://spanishpoems.blogspot.co.uk/search?label=Rafael+Alberti>> [accessed 29 April 2014]; from Rafael Alberti, *Marinero en Tierra* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1925).

<sup>78</sup> Glissant, *PR*, pp. 28, 37, 153.

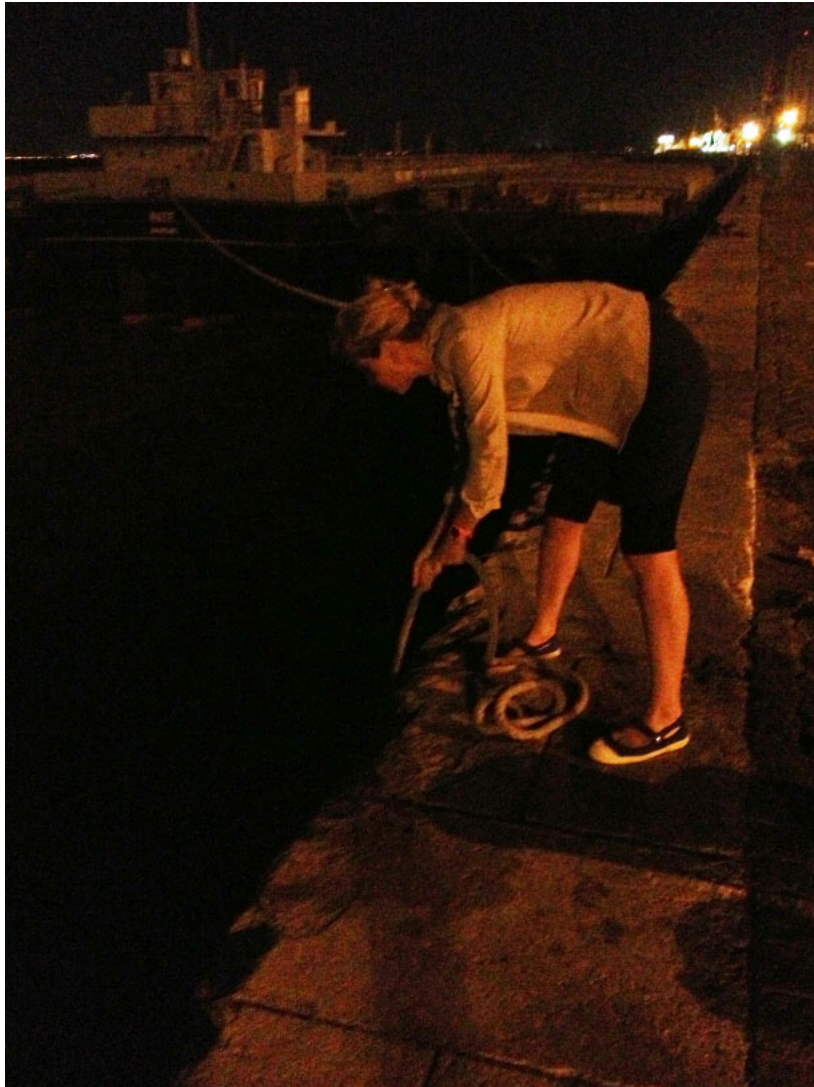


Image 3.14: Collecting water from the river Tejo.



war, punishment and oppression. His poems 'Carthage' and 'Africa' link histories of salt and oppression in Europe and Africa, 'Carthage' referring to the Roman salting of the earth after battle.<sup>79</sup> In Glissant's and Pessoa's salt poetry, salt is indexical to suffering.

Initially my studio space contains words, maps, and photographs, along with the salt I bought in the three salinas. But gradually I transform these raw materials into other forms.

Looking for a material to represent the architecture of the salt pans, I find old discarded pallets, which connect to the trade and mobility in the salt stories. The pallets provide me a scale to work with, one that becomes suggestive of the particularities of goods in transit. The pallets offer a precision in shape and size, which start to direct everything else I do. Gradually I build three walled pools out of the pallets each with a small table for the salt I collected from the salinas to sit on. This is hard physical labour, using old, rough, stained wood, some of it from the building itself, so that I am also building material history into the artworks. Once they are complete, I fill the pools with water collected from the river Tejo.<sup>80</sup>

At Lisbon, the Tejo meets the sea, and is a tidal estuary still containing salt 50 kilometres upstream.<sup>81</sup> I hoped the salt in the river water would slowly crystallize on the surface of the pools, while drops of salt from the platforms fall and dissolve back into it. Mixing the salt from the *salinas* with the salty river water dissolved the two back together, as they both originate from the sea. The water evaporated away, and the crystallizing salt on its surface was then a distilled combination of salt collected at different points on the journey.

The poetic function of the salt as index in the gallery is to interiorize the sea and the *salinas*, to enable viewers to 'see' the process taking place on the *salinas*, and to understand this dissolution and crystallization in relation to themselves. Indexically, salt has a physical relationship to what it signifies, the sea or *salinas*.<sup>82</sup>

The open studio became a space that is indexical to the sites I visited, and to the process of *détour* and *retour*. It contained maps of the journeys and the materials collected from the sites, and it was a space of transformation where these materials are combined from symbols into indexical symbols. Kwon and Doherty have theorized a shift from site-specific art to a

<sup>79</sup> Glissant, *BS*; Gadsby, *Sucking Salt*, p. 38.

<sup>80</sup> Author's personal journal, September 2013.

<sup>81</sup> See <<http://www.deltanet-project.eu/tagus>> [accessed 23 June 2014].

<sup>82</sup> Rosalind Krauss, 'Notes on the index: Seventies art in America, Part 1', *October*, 3 (1977), pp. 68-81, at p. 70.



Image 3.15: Katy Beinart, *Saltworks* (2013) at Plataforma Revolver

Image 3.16: Katy Beinart, still from *Saltworks* film, showing crystallization.

deterritorialized, 'situation-specific' range of practices.<sup>83</sup> In the studio, artworks were related to the sites of the *détours* but became situational, based on the context of the work and the materials I was able to find.

From the studio at Fabrica, the Saltworks are transported to the Plataforma Revolver gallery in the centre of Lisbon. The gallery space on the third floor has windows which look out onto a narrow street, a glimpse of the river Tejo framed by walls and houses. Joao and Ana help me to collect water from the river at Cais do Sodre, the port by the Mercado da Ribeira. The river is high and the water soaks our shoes as we collect it and then carry it up three flights of stairs.<sup>84</sup>

The process of bringing the salt and the river into the gallery echoed an earlier work I made in South Africa in 2010, *Don't Look Back*.<sup>85</sup> In this installation, described in Project 1, salt covered the floor of a former church (now a gallery), and large prints of the salt pan were hung on the walls. Visitors to the gallery could walk across the salt in bare feet, experiencing the physicality and materiality of the salt pan. However, in *Saltworks* the viewer cannot feel the salt, but can be in close proximity, watching the movement of the water and salt. Both works play with scale, relating an exterior site of large dimensions to a specific scale; with the former, the scale is that of the gallery floor, with the latter it is that of the pallet, a mode of transport. The scale of these artworks relates them to the site, to the space of the gallery, and to the body.

Scaling down crystallizes.

Smithson writes about the actual salt crystals in his work *Spiral Jetty* as echoes of the molecular structure of the salt crystal, which is also the basis for the structure of the overall piece, its spiral form replicating the growth of a crystal like a screw around a point.<sup>86</sup> Like the *salinas* process, where salt becomes an index of the sea, the *Saltworks* become a scaled-down version of the journeying, a poetics of the journey or *détour*. The crystallization of salt on water is indexical to the journey as a process of discovery, of understanding underlying structures, which is itself indexical to the process of research and attaining knowledge. The *Saltworks* are a means of representing one state in another, as the process of crystallization allows salt to move from liquid to solid while retaining its essential chemical form.

<sup>83</sup> Claire Doherty (ed.), *Situations* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2009), p. 13.

<sup>84</sup> Author's personal journal, September 2013.

<sup>85</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Don't Look Back*, shown in *Origination* exhibition at the University of Stellenbosch Gallery, South Africa, 2010.

<sup>86</sup> Smithson, 'The spiral jetty', p. 147.

## Section 2: Heritage conversations (*retour*)

Returning from Portugal, I began working with the salt I had brought back on some new pieces in a studio in London. These experiments continued the work I had begun in Portugal to understand the material qualities of the salt in relation to other materials, particularly with the poetics of preservation as a theme. At the same time, Anchor & Magnet were in conversation with Lambeth Council about organizing an event on behalf of them and the Academy of Urbanism called 'Learning from Neighbourhoods'.<sup>87</sup> This would engage with news that was emerging from the Townscape Heritage Initiative, a part of the Future Brixton regeneration plan.

### **Brixton: Learning from Neighbourhoods**

In 2012, Brixton had been awarded a 'great neighbourhood' award by the Academy of Urbanism (AoU), 'a politically independent, not-for-profit organisation that brings together both the current and next generation of urban leaders, thinkers and practitioners'. The AoU describe their mission as: 'to recognise, encourage and celebrate great places across the UK, Europe and beyond, and the people and organisations that create and sustain them.'<sup>88</sup>

Anchor & Magnet were invited by Lambeth Council to curate an event for the AoU to celebrate Brixton's new status as a 'great neighbourhood'. The event was intended for 'their members and key local stakeholders to discuss Brixton, regeneration, change etc.'<sup>89</sup> We used a similar format to the Brixton Exchange, organizing a series of walking tours and hosting a discussion in a space the Council had given us in the Town Hall.<sup>90</sup> At the event, Barby introduced our contribution by talking about our intention of creating dialogue, and documenting and archiving changes and responses through creativity. She raised questions including: How is uniqueness retained? What does growth mean? Regeneration and change – what do these terms mean? Who do they enable? She quoted Darcus Howe: 'Brixton has a future because Brixton has a past.' But the past needs listening to, nurturing, and honouring. This was prescient given the later debate.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Learning from Neighbourhoods event page, Academy of Urbanism website, <<https://www.academyofurbanism.org.uk/learning-from-neighbourhoods-brixton>>.

<sup>88</sup> 'About the Academy', Academy of Urbanism website, <<https://www.academyofurbanism.org.uk/about-the-academy/>>.

<sup>89</sup> Email correspondence with Neil Vokes, 19 June 2013.

<sup>90</sup> 'Learning from Neighbourhoods' event page, Academy of Urbanism website, <<https://www.academyofurbanism.org.uk/learning-from-neighbourhoods-brixton>>.

<sup>91</sup> 'Learning from Neighbourhoods', Anchor & Magnet blog, 22 October 2013, <<http://www.anchorandmagnet.org/blank-md97r>>.



We then split into groups and followed our brilliant tour guides, Stuart Horwood and John Gordon, Victor Forrest, Mike Slocombe, Helen McDonald, Kelly Foster, Alan Piper, and Eddie Otchere. It was fascinating for Academy members to see a different view of the area, one which included many of the less obvious ‘sights’, touched on the multiple histories and the communities and memories at risk of loss through overdevelopment. One participant said of Helen’s tour: ‘ultimately (it) was more about her experience of the neighbourhood, her life and emotional world intertwined with the shape of the neighbourhood. We walked so far – it felt like we were beating the boundaries of Brixton as Helen knew it.’ My experience of visiting housing co-ops whilst talking to a developer currently engaged in re-planning Victoria was bizarre. I felt the mis-match of scales of people’s everyday lives, and the way cities are changed, re-planned, rebuilt, at massive scales with few people making the decisions.<sup>92</sup>

The rest of the day was an open debate, which was heated and conflictual. Voices from Brixton residents and traders strongly asserted the lack of responsibility taken in Council decisions to allow development, arguing that it was creating a kind of economic apartheid. A local resident said:

I came here today because I’m interested in this great neighbourhood award. I hate what has happened in Brixton, it hasn’t been developed with us in mind, those that have historically been here. People I know have been forced out and evicted; the indoor market is predominantly white people and the outdoor market working class whites and blacks – it’s ‘economic apartheid’ – polarised between the haves and have nots – people who can afford to go out in the evening and the people who work and shop in the daytime.<sup>93</sup>

What was most interesting about the format of the event was that it acted as a kind of crucible to bring together diverse voices, including those of decision-makers, in a space that was in itself contested (the Town Hall). The walking tours, whose leaders were all long-time local residents, enabled non-local participants to speak to local residents in the intimate atmosphere of a small group, while also seeing the reality of life in Brixton and perhaps a more nuanced view of the ‘great neighbourhood’.

The Academy of Urbanism award page for Brixton notes:

Brixton has always had a unique character largely created by the strong African-Caribbean community and influence. Currently this community and

<sup>92</sup> ‘Learning from Neighbourhoods’, Anchor & Magnet blog, 22 October 2013.

<sup>93</sup> ‘Learning from Neighbourhoods’, Anchor & Magnet blog, 22 October 2013.



the new initiatives appear to be in balance, but assessors felt that there is a risk that over-gentrification may create new divisions between the different communities seeking to live, work in and enjoy the character and diversity of the area.<sup>94</sup>

After the event, we were invited to meet Ellie Cook, who was working for Lambeth Council on a contractor basis as the lead on the 'complementary projects' part of the Townscape Heritage Initiative. Ellie emailed us:

Turning to our discussion on how to ensure that we are actually having the right conversation with local people about the THI and engaging them effectively when designing/commissioning any complementary projects. I think that your input into any briefs we develop would be invaluable as you said, to ensure we use the right language and that projects consider all the relevant implications of the work they propose ... In regard to commissioning Anchor & Magnet to do a piece of work around what 'heritage' means to the Brixton community, I think that will be really useful in informing the design of the THI work and complementary projects.<sup>95</sup>

From this ongoing conversation, we were commissioned to write up a report of the findings of our work in Brixton, with a focus on what kind of 'heritage' would best reflect the different communities we had spoken with. As part of the process, we came up with a map of potential sites in Brixton for heritage projects, and a series of project ideas which were specifically in response to our research:

Anchor & Magnet's experience working in Brixton has continually thrown up the importance of specificity. Any complementary project work developed through the Townscape Heritage Bid must work hard to avoid generic heritage approaches and to create projects that are genuinely relevant to Brixton and its specific histories, including spatial, architectural, cultural, political, social, and personal.<sup>96</sup>

Having written this Social Heritage Report, I had begun to work on new ideas for a project which would fit the brief of our discussion. In part, this had evolved from the work I made in Portugal and the new work I was developing in the studio.

<sup>94</sup> Brixton, London, The Great Neighbourhood Award 2013, Assessor: Tim Challans (22/11/2012), Academy of Urbanism website, <<https://www.academyofurbanism.org.uk/brixton/>>.

<sup>95</sup> Email correspondence with Ellie Cook, 26 November 2011.

<sup>96</sup> Anchor & Magnet, Social Heritage Record and Complementary Projects Development outline for Future Brixton: Townscape Heritage Initiative, 12 March 2014, <<http://www.anchorandmagnet.org/blank-k2lup>>.





### **London: *Salinas maps* (2013-14)**

While involved in the Anchor & Magnet projects in Brixton, I began to draw the series of maps at different scales that are included in the first half of the chapter. I also used map rollers and ink to play with overlaying map lines with salt. The salt acted as a hygroscopic agent, drawing the ink away from the paper to create discolouration and staining, like the salt prints I had made in Portugal.

The salt distorted and obscured the maps, blurring the boundaries and lines. Poetically, the salt was acting as an agent of obscuration, making national boundaries and colonial routes less clear. It also stuck to the paper and the ink, making the paper wrinkle and bunch up. The paper developed a relief surface, so that the maps were no longer smooth renderings of an unsmooth territory but instead began to take on a more rugged representation of the world.

I began experimenting with salt and dye in 2011 when I made a series of simple cloth squares dyed with beetroot. Beetroot was chosen as a dye because of its use in our first *Origination Dinner Party* in Oxford in 2008, as part of the *Gift* exhibition.<sup>97</sup> In the first *Dinner Party* (as well as subsequent ones), we had made and served a version of borscht (a Russian Jewish beetroot-based soup), using a recipe that was handed down to us by our maternal grandfather Michael, whose family had come from Belarus. In these earlier experiments, I had noted how the amount of salt used both bleached away the beetroot dye but also in some way fixed the dye. In these experiments, I was interested in the power of salt both to alter an image and to act as an agent of preservation.

### **London: *Salt casts* (2013-14)**

Returning to Brixton Market, I bought a piece of salt cod and some vegetables and set up a casting studio in my kitchen at home. First, I poured plaster into moulds and set the objects into them. When these had dried and the objects removed, I recast the plaster moulds with wax mixed with salt. I was interested to see how the addition of salt would affect the heating and cooling of the wax and the way it set into the moulds.

The salt and wax solidified together into the moulds and the resulting cast piece had a rough salty surface. Salt and wax was an inert combination; the salt did not penetrate the wax and the wax did not dissolve the salt. The addition of salt was an indexical reminder of the materiality of the cast object. It referred back to the salt cod which was now a ghostly wax version in its new form.

<sup>97</sup> Katy and Rebecca Beinart, *Dinner Party*, 6 May 2008, as part of *Gift*, OVADA, Oxford (5 April–24 May 2008).



Image 3.17: Katy Beinart, *Salinas maps*



Image 3.18: Katy Beinart, Salt dying

## Drysalter

From these experiments in the studio, and conversations with my Anchor & Magnet collaborators, I began to develop a proposal which would respond to the Townscape Heritage Initiative with a project on archiving the changes taking place in Brixton. The working title of this project was the Brixton Museum, with a sub-project called Drysalter.<sup>98</sup>

We had written a list of project aims for the Brixton Museum, which included:

- to preserve the culture of Brixton centre, in particular the market, so that it continues to form a vibrant part of the community in the future, and reflects the reasons Brixton Market was listed as a space of cultural heritage
- to tell the stories of Brixton residents and workers in relation to the buildings and physical spaces of the Townscape Heritage Initiative area, and in a way that offers a process of exchange
- to collect artefacts and objects from the buildings that are being regenerated and preserved, and from the people who use them
- to relate objects and stories, particularly around migration
- to collect and document regeneration processes and compare these with past processes to highlight change over time
- to offer a space for visible ongoing research into particular groups in Brixton who may no longer be so visible – for example, people of Jewish origin
- to offer a space for visible ongoing research into events in Brixton which may no longer be visible – for example, the riots/uprisings.

The idea behind Drysalter was a series of encounters between old and new residents of Brixton: those who had been there a long time, or had even left, and those who are arriving. The proposal stated: ‘The encounters will be recorded, and the Drysalter will preserve the stories by making objects or images as residues of these conversations. These would be kept in the Museum, a public exchange space where stories can be seen.’<sup>99</sup> The project related to the history of the area as a space for trade and exchange, both locally and globally, and its connections to migration. Over the following year, I continued to develop these ideas while other life changes took place which delayed the possibility of realizing the project.

<sup>98</sup> ‘Dry-salter (noun): a dealer in dyes, gums, and drugs, and sometimes also in pickles and other preserved foodstuffs’, Oxford English Dictionary (online), <[www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)>; see also Michael Symonds Roberts, *Drysalter* (London: Jonathon Cape, 2013)

<sup>99</sup> Katy Beinart, project proposal, 2014.



3.19–3.20: Katy Beinart, Casting objects in wax and salt.

### **London: *Saltworks* (2014) at *Cities Methodologies***

Meanwhile, I was invited to recreate the *Saltworks* exhibition I had made in Portugal for the Urban Lab *Cities Methodologies* Exhibition, which took place at the Slade Research Centre in 2014.<sup>100</sup> I remade the *Saltworks* piece in my studio, transporting it to the exhibition space and adding the salt and water *in situ*. The salt prints and salt film were displayed alongside the salt casts and map works.

The re-creation enabled me to think further about preservation, scale and materiality. In the scaling down of the *salinas* to make *Saltworks*, the crystallization of the salt became an index of the journey to the *salinas*. Relocating the *Saltworks* to London, I had to buy salt from a website in order to get the installation set up in time. As I was pregnant, and physically not able to shift heavy objects, I got water from the gallery space. However, this meant that the indexicality of the work shifted. The water no longer referenced a specific body of water, from which it had been drawn, and the salt no longer referenced a site where I had collected salt. The ideal would have been to get water from the River Thames and salt from another journey. The mixing that occurred in the gallery this time was anonymous – and therefore not indexical of particular sites and journeys.

Over the four days of the exhibition, I noticed how the salt mixed with the water in the installation and began to stain the legs of the salt table. The patterns were delicate but acted as registers of passing time. This ability of salt to act as an index of change reflected the work I had done in Portugal. The salt also left a residue on the table, one which acts as a permanent trace of the momentary re-creation.

The ability of these salt artworks to ‘contain’ the sea and *salinas* echoes the poetics of salt that Glissant explores in his ‘Black Salt’ poems. The artworks are also references to *détours* and *retours*, as they contain aspects of journey and movement. The *Saltworks* become representative of the *ici-là*, both here and elsewhere.

<sup>100</sup> UrbanLab, *Cities Methodologies* Exhibition, Slade Research Centre, UCL, London, 28–31 October 2014.

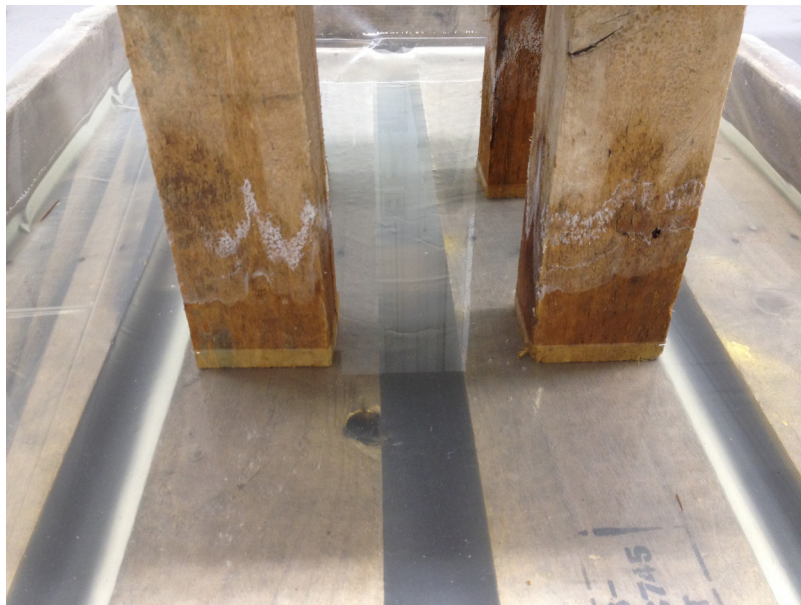


Image 3.21: Max Colson, Installation view of *Saltworks* at *Cities Methodologies*. Source: Max Colson.

Image 3.22: Katy Beinart, detail of *Saltworks* at *Cities Methodologies*.





**Project 4: Journey to Haiti (and back): *Goute Sel/A Taste of Salt* (2013)**



## Introduction

In this chapter, I make a *détour* to Haiti, initiated by a salt product I had bought in a shop in Brixton Market which sold religious and ritual products. Through this journey, I explore links between salt and slavery, and salt and liberation. Then, through the process of making a performance artwork in Haiti, I explore questions of visibility, ritual, and opacity, making links between performance theory and Glissant's poetics of opacity and transparency.

I set the context for the *détour* by beginning with a background to Haiti's colonial history and connections to salt, before turning to the development of a poetics of salt in postcolonial Caribbean literature, including Glissant's 'Black Salt' poems.<sup>1</sup> A discussion of the Ghetto Biennale and the theory around the artist as nomad (or tourist) expands into the wider literatures of the art biennale and the art residency. I then set out an introduction to Haitian Vodou and discuss some of those who have made ethnographic studies of it, such as Melville Herkovits, André Métraux, Maya Deren and Katherine Dunham, some of whom developed artistic responses. Building on discussions in Part 1 around links between heritage tourism, *errance* and identity, I connect these to Haiti and Vodou. Through other readings of authenticity in Vodou performances, I develop an argument about the relative authenticity of the collaborative performance I go on to make, and how this relates to relational identities.<sup>2</sup>

Vodou tourism is still restricted to the brief encounter of the staged show or the intensive initiation residency offered by mysterious groups such as the Roots without End Society, on their website: 'Initiations range from \$2000US to \$4000US. Two weeks in Haiti and one can become a full-fledged Houngan or Mambo, with no prior knowledge of *vodou*, Haitian culture or *Kreyol*.'<sup>3</sup> There is a lack of literature on contemporary religious tourism in Haiti, which

<sup>1</sup> Édouard Glissant, 'Black Salt', in *The Collected Poems of Edouard Glissant*, ed. and trans. by Jeff Humphries and Melissa Manolas (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Note on the spelling of the word 'Vodou': In 2012, a group of scholar-practitioners signed a letter requesting that the US Library of Congress change its primary subject heading for the religion from 'Voodooism' to 'Vodou'. Subsequently, they requested that the Associated Press and *The New York Times* revise their stylebook entries to 'Vodou'. Leslie Desmangles highlighted the history of stigmatization attached to the usage 'voodoo'. Therefore, throughout this chapter I use the spelling 'Vodou'. Exceptions are when referring to work by Alan Goldberg on the 'voodoo show'; when describing West African *vodun*, to highlight the distinction between this and Haitian Vodou; and in book titles. I have capitalised Vodou in recognition that it should be treated like any other religion. Other terms relating to the Vodou religion, and terms in *Kreyol* (the Haitian language), are italicized and described when they first occur, and are subsequently used with italics. See Kate Ramsey, 'From "Voodooism" to "Vodou": Changing a US Library of Congress subject heading', *Journal of Haitian Studies*, 18.2 (2012; special issue on Vodou and Créolité), pp. 14-25; Leslie G. Desmangles, 'Replacing the term "Voodoo" with "Vodou": A proposal', *Journal of Haitian Studies*, 18.2 (2012; special issue on Vodou and Créolité), pp. 26-33; Alan Goldberg, 'Identity and experience in Voodoo shows', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 10 (1983), pp. 479-95, at p. 485; Suzanne Preston Blier, *African Vodun: Art Psychology and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 48-54.

<sup>3</sup> Camille Hernandez-Ramdwar, 'African traditional religions in the Caribbean and Brazil: Models of



Image 4.1: Katy Beinart, 'Original Products' shop

reflects the current low levels of overall tourism to Haiti, and region-specific scholarship could address crucial questions related to subjectivity and power relations.<sup>4</sup> Through exploring my own encounter with Vodou, I ask questions about the subjectivities of the artist, audience and other performers, and how these might connect to Glissant's concepts of opacity and Relation.

My salt route to Haiti started out from a shop named 'Original Products' in Market Row (see Image 4.1), which advertises itself as selling religious artefacts and herbs from Haiti and the US, and has a production facility in Port-au-Prince, the capital of Haiti. Taking the ritual salts sold here as a starting point, I began to explore the uses of salt in Haiti and the wider Caribbean region, as well as the connections between Port-au-Prince and Brixton. I wrote a proposal to investigate the role of salt in Vodou and Haitian history and politics, as part of the Ghetto Biennale, an arts festival that takes place in Port-au-Prince every two years.<sup>5</sup> Three key themes of investigation emerged, which I develop in this chapter: first, salt's relationship to the history of colonization and slavery in the Caribbean region; second, salt as a metaphor for migration in postcolonial Caribbean literature; and third, salt as an active agent in the Vodou religion and the links between this and Haitian politics. My proposal was accepted, and in December 2013 I travelled via New York to Haiti, to participate in the 2013 Ghetto Biennale, *Decentering the Market and other Tales of Progress*.

On my *retour* in Brixton, I developed the idea of the 'trace' in new artworks which find ways of collecting residues of heritage objects and conversations about regeneration. These works link to further reflections on visibility, the gaze and opacity that ask questions about the role of the artist and audience. Overall in this chapter, I develop an argument for the spatialization of relational practices.

religious tourism and impacts of commodification', *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 8 (2013), pp. 81-88, at pp. 84-85.

<sup>4</sup> Hernandez-Ramdwar, 'African traditional religions', p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> Third Ghetto Biennale 2013, Ghetto Biennale website, <<http://www.ghettobiennale.org/archive/3rd-ghetto-biennale-2013/>> [accessed 20 August 2017].



## Section 1: Journey to Haiti (*détour*)

### Haiti and the poetics of salt and slavery

Haiti occupies one third of the island of Hispaniola; the other two thirds are occupied by the Dominican Republic. The island is situated in the Greater Antilles (also known as the West Indies), a grouping of the larger islands in the Caribbean Sea which includes Cuba, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and the Cayman Islands. The name Antilles comes from the Portuguese words *ante* (or *anti*), which means ‘before’, and *ilha*, which is an archaic form of the Portuguese word for ‘island’.<sup>6</sup> Haiti has the lowest per capita income in Latin America (its GDP per capita in 2015 was \$793.70) and comes 163rd out of 188 countries in the World Human Development Index.<sup>7</sup> Haiti’s language and culture still reflect its French colonial history, while Spanish is the dominant language in the Dominican Republic. At one time, Haiti had huge wealth as a sugar-producing French colony. Initially ‘discovered’ by Columbus in 1492 and made a Spanish colony, after repeated French raids on the western end of the island a treaty was agreed in 1697 which divided the island in two, renaming the colonies Saint-Domingue (French) and Santo Domingo (Spanish).<sup>8</sup>

Salt was already a valuable commodity as part of European colonial expansion, as described in Project 3, since it enabled the preservation of food for the long journeys of exploration and for feeding slaves both on the ships and in the plantations. The French had established *salines* (saltworks) at home, but with expansion and trade they saw an opportunity in the salty marshes at the mouth of the Artibonite river, in the place they called the ‘cul-de-sac’ due to its location in the bay of Goniaves, between two promontories.<sup>9</sup> They named this location Grande-Saline, or ‘great saltworks’. They also used the salt produced here to barter with the English for other goods.<sup>10</sup> At Grande-Saline, throughout the eighteenth century, the French colonizers maintained a community of salt processors ‘recruited haphazardly and living without any contact with the society of planters’.<sup>11</sup> Grande-Saline still has a working saltworks and is now one of fifteen communes in the Artibonite *département*, one of the largest of Haiti’s ten *départements*.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Hugh Hisholm, ‘Antilles’, in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), p. 126; referenced at <<https://msu.edu/~williss2/carpentier/part2/antilles.html>> [accessed 2 September 2017].

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Statistics Division, ‘World statistics pocketbook: Haiti’; ‘Human Development Index trends’, UN Data website, <<http://data.un.org/>> [accessed 22 March 2017].

<sup>8</sup> J. Michael Dash, *Customs and Cultures of Haiti* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 1-3; Peter Hallward, *Damming the Flood: Haiti, Aristide and the Politics of Containment* (London: Verso, 2007), p. xi.

<sup>9</sup> Eugene Aubin, *En Haïti: planteurs d'autrefois, nègres d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: A Colin, 1910), pp. 206-7.

<sup>10</sup> Steeve Coupeau, *History of Haiti*

<sup>11</sup> Aubin, *En Haïti*, pp. 206-7.

<sup>12</sup> Michael R. Hall, *Historical Dictionary of Haiti* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), p. 25.





Salt could be seen as intrinsic, therefore, to the early beginnings of cultural and class relations in Haiti, as it allowed initial trade and expansion. As the French colonizers began to develop large sugar plantations on the island, slaves were brought from the west and central African countries in large numbers (mainly from the West African kingdom of Dahomey, present-day Benin, but also from the Kongo, and other central and southern areas of Africa).<sup>13</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, the slave population numbered around 500,000 and the white population around 36,000, and there were also around 28,000 freed slaves or mixed-race children of the white planters and black slave women, who were known as *Gens de couleur*.<sup>14</sup> Race and class quickly became central to the stratification of Haitian society, and by the late eighteenth century, French writer Moreau de St Mery, in his classic account of late-colonial Saint-Domingue, listed no less than 128 combinations of white and black blood.<sup>15</sup>

By 1794, Haiti was exporting up to 86,000 tons of sugar per year.<sup>16</sup> Under the French, the millions of slaves brought to the island to provide labour for the sugar plantations were placed under a brutal regime.<sup>17</sup> Punishment and torture were severe and extreme. Salt was part of this regime:<sup>18</sup>

salt circulated throughout the Caribbean, but much went to the eastern seaboard colonies/states in the United States and Canada where it was used to salt fish. That salted fish, in turn, returned to the West Indies where it became the staple diet of slaves on many sugar plantations.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>13</sup> 'African Origins of Haiti', Haiti 360 website, archived at: <[https://web.archive.org/web/20141115000658/http://haiti360.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=30%3AAfrican-origins-of-haitians&catid=4%3Aour-blogs&Itemid=6](https://web.archive.org/web/20141115000658/http://haiti360.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=30%3AAfrican-origins-of-haitians&catid=4%3Aour-blogs&Itemid=6)> [accessed 22 March 2018].

<sup>14</sup> Dash, *Customs and Cultures*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Moreau de Saint-Mery, *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'isle Saint-Domingue*, vol. 1 (Paris: Societe de l'Histoire des Colonies Francaises, 1958; originally published 1797-98), pp. 86-100; see also John D. Garrigus, 'Colour, class and identity on the eve of the Haitian Revolution: Saint-Domingue's free coloured elite as Colons Americains', *Slavery & Abolition*, 17 (1996), pp. 19-43; John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti: Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), p. 22; Pierre H. Boule, *Race et Esclavage dans la France de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Perrin, 2007), pp. 69-80.

<sup>16</sup> Kwame Nimako and Glenn Willemsen, 'Chattel slavery, sugar and salt', in *The Dutch Atlantic: Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), pp. 52-86, at p. 63.

<sup>17</sup> Hallward, *Damming the Flood*, p. 9, Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 58-59, 64.

<sup>18</sup> Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History* (London: Vintage, 2003); Cynthia M. Kennedy, 'The other white gold: Salt, slaves, the Turks and Caicos Islands, and British colonialism', *The Historian*, 69 (2007), pp. 215-30; Nimako and Willemsen, 'Chattel slavery'.

<sup>19</sup> Kennedy, 'The other white gold', p. 217.



But salt did not only provide slaves with sustenance; it was also used in punishment, for it would be rubbed into the wounds after a whipping.<sup>20</sup>

Although sugar was Haiti's primary export in the eighteenth century, salt was an intrinsic commodity and part of the colonial slave and commodity trade between Europe, the Caribbean and North America. An early nineteenth-century book on the history of the British West Indies by Bryan Edwards, a plantation owner and historian, details the provisions given to slaves (two or three pounds of salt per week on Antiguan estates, three pounds of salt fish per week in St Vincent) as well as the imports of goods from France to the French part of St Domingo – in 1788, for example, this was 1,308 quintals of salt fish.<sup>21</sup> Salt was an important product in the European–Caribbean slave and colonial trade triangle, as the Dutch went to great efforts to establish 'salt plantations' in islands off Venezuela.<sup>22</sup> In 1831, a slave narrative by Mary Prince, an ex-slave, was published in London.<sup>23</sup> Prince described working in salt plantations on the British-owned Turks and Caicos Islands in gruelling conditions. Historian Cynthia Kennedy has used Prince's slave narrative as a starting point for trying to establish the beginnings of a history that connects slavery and salt, one which she says is a missing link in the history of slavery: 'documenting the parasitic links between European- and American-born slave owners, African and Creole slaves on the West Indian salt islands, and business interests in Britain and North America remains to be done.'<sup>24</sup>

Literary historian Michele Speitz also writes about Prince's slave narrative, noting that as a narrative its authorship has been brought into question and therefore its authenticity as a record has been doubted. However, Speitz turns to the material and metaphoric significance of salt in Prince's autobiography to recover a lost history of the Caribbean slave economy, and to recognize types of rhetorical and artistic nuance overlooked in critical discussions about slave narratives.<sup>25</sup>

Speitz describes how Prince often linked the effects of salt on her body with her slave labour:

Prince's narrative attests to the importance of salt, a central product of slave labor in the British-held West Indies. Although its overall value is largely

<sup>20</sup> Dayan, *Haiti*, p. 265.

<sup>21</sup> Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British West Indies*, Volume 3 (London: G. and W.B. Whittaker, 1819)

<sup>22</sup> Nimako and Willemsen, 'Chattel slavery'.

<sup>23</sup> Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian slave. Related by herself*, 3rd edn, ed. by Moira Ferguson (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997; originally published in London, 1831).

<sup>24</sup> Kennedy, 'The other white gold', p. 217, referring to Prince, *History*.

<sup>25</sup> Michele Speitz, 'Blood sugar and salt licks: Corroding bodies and preserving nations in *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself*', in Paul Youngquist (ed.), *Circulations: Romanticism and the Black Atlantic* (Boulder, CO: University of Colorado, 2011), p. 1, available at <<http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/circulations/HTML/praxis.2011.speitz.html>>.



ignored in literary scholarship, harvesting salt proved harmful enough to inspire Prince's rendition of a horrific contortion of being. Her repeated detrimental exposure to salt transforms Prince's body, consciousness, and ultimately, of course, her narrative – making it tantamount to a material history and psychological case study of a forced merger of landscape, labor, body, and mind. Prince's text records how lethal amounts of salt seep through the skin, forging a visceral, literal, and grotesque union between salt, the commodified substance, and the slave, the commodified worker.<sup>26</sup>

The suggestion here is of a material poetics of salt as slavery, or enslaving, taking over Prince's body and mind. Charlotte Sussman has also made the link, in relation to Prince, between 'salt water' as emotion (as in tears), the physical labour involved in producing salt, and the pain of drinking salt water which implies a close tie between 'sentimental affect and the material conditions of Caribbean slave women'.<sup>27</sup>

In postcolonial Caribbean writing (and that of the Caribbean diaspora), salt has been a central image, which could be seen as a legacy of Prince's narrative and the poetic meanings Speitz and Sussman apply to her work. Meredith Gadsby uses 'sucking salt' as a sign of adversity and survival in the context of African–Caribbean diasporic literature and culture, and links this back to the hardship of migration.<sup>28</sup> Gadsby refers to a definition of 'sucking salt' as 'to suffer much hardship; to have a rough time of it'; she suggests that 'sucking salt' can be seen as a 'doubled linguistic sign of adversity and survival'.<sup>29</sup> Prince's narrated experience is, according to Gadsby, 'beyond metaphor' in its literal personification of this hardship: 'Salt in this context is much more than diaspora metaphor; it is a brutal reality that preyed on the bodies and lives of the slaves forced to harvest it.'<sup>30</sup>

So, salt is used as a metaphor for hardship, and a narrative of transcendence out of that hardship, in the work of writers such as the Haitian–American novelist Edwidge Danticat, locates its historical and cultural significance in the Caribbean as central to forced migration and slavery. Novelistic examples are Earl Lovelace's *Salt* (1996), Toni Cade Bambara's *The Salt Eaters* (1980) and Nalo Hopkinson's *The Salt Roads* (2003); poetic examples are Glissant's *Black Salt* (1998) and Fred D'Aguiar's *Feeding the Ghosts* (1999). Danticat has used salt as a metaphor in books such as *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) and *Claire of the Sea Light* (2014), and has commented:

<sup>26</sup> Speitz, 'Blood sugar and salt licks', p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Charlotte Sussman, *Consuming Anxieties: Consumer Protest, Gender, and British Slavery 1713–1833* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> Meredith Gadsby, *Sucking Salt: Caribbean Women Writers, Migration and Survival* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2006), p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Gadsby, *Sucking Salt*, p. 3, citing Richard Allsopp, *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 485.

<sup>30</sup> Gadsby, *Sucking Salt*, p. 79.



Salt is a powerful symbol in Haiti, as it is elsewhere. ... In the life of the fishermen, there were so many little things about salt that I wanted to incorporate. The salt in the air. The cracking of the salt in the fire. There's all this damage, the peeling of the fishing boats from the sea salt. But there's also healing from it, sea baths that are supposed to heal all kinds of aches and wounds.<sup>31</sup>

Moving from salt as 'enslaving' in Prince's narrative, to salt as both emblematic of hardship and survival (and even healing) in contemporary literature from the Caribbean and its diaspora, salt's poetics are not specific to one cultural or historical moment; instead, they have the flexibility to adapt as cultural and historical changes bring new meanings to salt. For example, Prince's experience of salt is direct and brutal, but in contemporary writing salt's other qualities are added. In this sense, salt could be seen to encapsulate Relation, and what Glissant called 'totality'.<sup>32</sup>

Salt operates as an index by pointing directly to a place, whether that is a saltworks or a wider geographical site of the sea, and in Caribbean literature this is usually the Atlantic. In this context, salt indexes the middle passage, the journey undertaken by slaves crossing from Africa.<sup>33</sup> For example, in Glissant, in his poem 'Africa' (part of 'Black Salt'), writes:

...to weigh  
With sea to measure with black salt  
Sown with the blood of peoples who have all perished<sup>34</sup>

Using salt in literature, the index performs differently to the physical use of salt as a material poetics in artworks. Although literature can use salt to point to and describe a place or experience, writing does not have the sensory qualities of touching, tasting, smelling or seeing salt that are experienced through an artwork's material poetics.

## **The Ghetto Biennale**

In 2009, English artist-writer Leah Gordon and Haitian artists André Eugène and Jean Celuer launched the first Ghetto Biennale in Port-au-Prince, bringing together a group of Haitian

<sup>31</sup> Maxine Lavon Montgomery (ed.), *Conversations with Edwidge Danticat* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2017), p. 159.

<sup>32</sup> Glissant, *PR*, p. 171.

<sup>33</sup> Gadsby, *Sucking Salt*, p. 40.

<sup>34</sup> Glissant, 'Black Salt', p. 121.

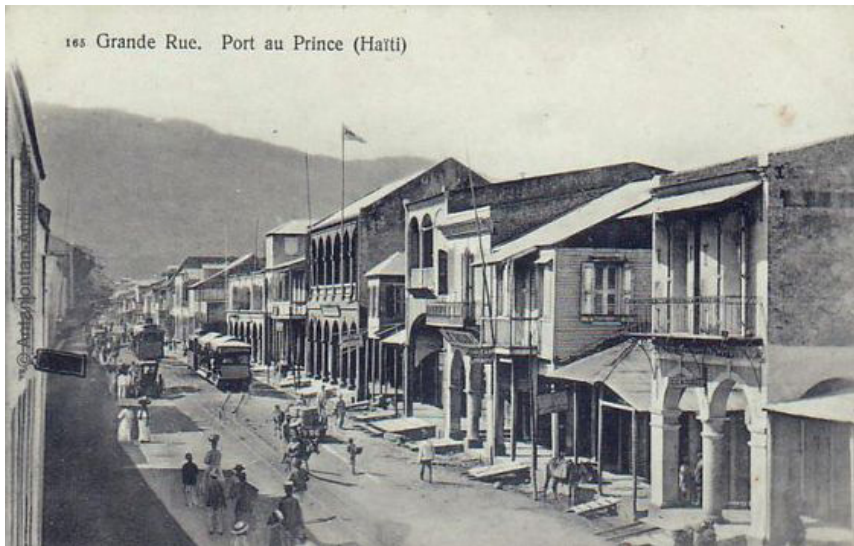


Image 4.2: Grand Rue old postcard. Source: <<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/33425222203941253/>>

Image 4.3: Grand Rue today with buses



artists with selected international artists.<sup>35</sup> Writing about the first Ghetto Biennale, art critic Polly Savage describes how the terms 'ghetto' and 'biennale' share strangely intertwined histories. Both begin in Venice and entail the demarcation of identity and zones of exclusion. 'Ghetto' is traceable to the sixteenth-century gated Jewish district of Venice, which is today echoed in the UN's designation of 'red zones' in Port-au-Prince which their staff (and post-disaster aid administrators) are strongly advised to avoid. Today, 'ghetto' has come to mean any segregated community, an area where a particular ethnic group live, or a poorer or richer part of the city. For example, there can be a 'rich' ghetto, where the paranoid wealthy live behind barricades.<sup>36</sup> Port-au-Prince could be said to have both types of ghettos. The city is surrounded by hills, and encircled by slums, on the seafront and climbing the side of the hills.<sup>37</sup> There are the remains of formerly grand buildings and the district of Petionville, on top of a hill overlooking the city, has many of the one per cent of the richest residents, who own the same wealth as 45 per cent of the poorest population.<sup>38</sup>

The location of the Ghetto Biennale is in an area known as 'Grand Rue', the nickname of the Boulevard Jean-Jacques Dessalines or Route National No. 1.<sup>39</sup> This is part of downtown Port-au-Prince near to the Cité Soleil slums, where around 400,000 people live in shacks without any access to water, electricity or sanitation.<sup>40</sup> While the Grand Rue is not a ghetto in the sense of being walled in, people's lives there are restricted by other means; it is more of an invisible wall, of lack of economic power, political power, access to services, access to education, access to travel.<sup>41</sup>

After the second Ghetto Biennale in 2011, the curators noted that:

The 2nd Ghetto Biennale seemed in a contradiction to its aims to reveal contextual internal and institutional vulnerabilities to the inequalities that run across race, class and gender, provoking further questioning of the way these dynamics play out in an increasingly globalized art world. While the Ghetto Biennale was conceived to expose social, racial, class and geographical immobility, it seemed to have upheld these class inertias within its structural core.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>35</sup> '1st Ghetto Biennale 2009', Ghetto Biennale website, <<http://ghettobiennale.org/project/1st-ghetto-biennale-2009/>>.

<sup>36</sup> Polly Savage 'The germ of the future? Ghetto Biennale: Port-au-Prince', *Third Text*, 24 (2010), pp. 491-95.

<sup>37</sup> Dash, *Customs and Cultures*, p. 41.

<sup>38</sup> Hall, *Historical Dictionary*, p. 211.

<sup>39</sup> Ghetto Biennale website.

<sup>40</sup> Dash, *Customs and Cultures*, p. 41.

<sup>41</sup> Marielle Barrow, 'Interview with Katy Beinart', December 2013.

<sup>42</sup> 'Ghetto Biennale 2013 Call Out', 3rd Ghetto Biennale 2013, Ghetto Biennale website, <<http://www.ghettobiennale.org/>>.



Therefore, in the call-out for artists to join the third edition, the curators wrote:

The Ghetto Biennale is looking for balance amongst the multifarious and often contradictory agendas underpinning the event. Are we institutional critique or a season ticket to the institution? Are we art tourism or an exit strategy from the ghetto? What was the effect of the earthquake and the ensuing NGO culture on cross-cultural relations in Haiti? The straplines for the previous Ghetto Biennales were: 'what happens when first world art rubs up against third world art? Does it bleed?'... Did the Ghetto Biennale bleed, and if so where?<sup>43</sup>

Setting this agenda, proposals had to meet more rigorous criteria than for the first two Ghetto Biennales, and to follow the 'lens-free' principle set by the curators.<sup>44</sup> Responding to an open call, successful artists would come to Haiti for a minimum of two weeks (and preferably longer) and would have to self-fund their trip and their costs, such as materials, translation and other help (as the Ghetto Biennale had very little funding). Work needed to be made during the two-week period of the residency leading up to the Biennale and could not be brought 'ready-made'. In this way, the curators ensured that artists came fully committed to engaging with the context of the Ghetto Biennale. This included an acknowledgement of potential conflicts around race, class, localness/non-localness, sexuality and gender; artists had to come prepared to examine their own subjectivity.

Writing about the 2013 Ghetto Biennale, curator David Frohnapfel has commented:

While many visiting artists are coming from 'neo-Marxist' perspectives and try to escape the commercialized gallery world of the Centre, many Haitian artists are keen to plug themselves into the commercial networks for global art consumption and try to sell their own sculptures to the visiting artists. By bringing artists from extremely different socio-economic strata together, this is surely not the only contradiction which is provoked by this exhibition project. The conflicts of the 'Ghetto Biennale' revolve around the discursive fields of gender, race, class and sexuality.<sup>45</sup>

While the specific context of the Ghetto Biennale is a space where, as Frohnapfel writes, artists

[ghettobiennale.org/archive/3rd-ghetto-biennale-2013/](http://ghettobiennale.org/archive/3rd-ghetto-biennale-2013/) [accessed 20 August 2017].

<sup>43</sup> 'Ghetto Biennale 2013 Call Out'.

<sup>44</sup> 'Ghetto Biennale 2013 Call Out'.

<sup>45</sup> David Frohnapfel, 'The 3rd Ghetto Biennale 2013: Decentering the market and other tales of Progress', *Artlink*, 34 (2014), available at <<https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/4089/the-3rd-ghetto-biennale-2013-decentering-the-marke/>> [accessed 20 August 2017].



find themselves embodying structural positions of marginality and centrality as they reconfigure difference, sameness and inequality in their interactions, he also argues that it runs the risk of becoming contemporary 'slum tourism'. Artists coming to the Biennale could be those who see the poverty and insecurity as a 'consumable adventure' which allows them to 'escape the boredom of a toothless and institutionalized art world of the centers for a week or two'.<sup>46</sup> Although a contentious statement, given the commitment of the visiting artists (many of whom return to the Biennale, some visiting Haiti in between, and maintaining contact with Haitian artists), it is hardly surprising given the level of mobility in today's contemporary art world.

The global trend both for biennales (usually large, city-scale exhibitions taking place over several months, organized by institutions with state or other sponsorship) and for artists' residencies (usually self-organized or hosted by small or large arts organizations or independent hosts, without attached funding, for varying amounts of time) has been extensively written about, with some arguing that there is a process of *biennialization*.<sup>47</sup> This can either be a productive space for cross-fertilization and reflection, or part of a culture industry 'intensified by neoliberal globalization'.<sup>48</sup> Although biennales frequently claim to represent global cultures and offer the possibility of intercultural dialogue, they often do not represent the world equally.<sup>49</sup> Chin-Tao Wu writes that 'the biennial has, despite its decolonizing and democratic claims, proved still to embody the traditional power structures of the contemporary Western art world'.<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile, this trend has led to Miwon Kwon's observation of site-specific practice as becoming intertextual and itinerary based; and leading to some artists (and curators) being tagged as 'nomadic' – Paula Bialski writes of these artists as 'privileged nomads'.<sup>51</sup> In a recently published collection, Heather Felty argues that the essays 'consider the formation of identity in what has become the norm of a nomadic, migrating lifestyle'.<sup>52</sup> The book is a response to the residency programme of apexart, a New York arts organization, which aims to create experiences of

<sup>46</sup> Frohnapfel, 'The 3rd Ghetto Biennale 2013'.

<sup>47</sup> Oliver Marchart, 'Hegemonic shifts and the politics of Biennialization: The case of Documenta', reprinted in Elena Filipovic, Marieke Van Hal and Solveig Øvstebø (eds), *The Biennial Reader* (Bergen: Bergen Kunsthall, 2010), pp. 466-90.

<sup>48</sup> Monica Sassatelli, 'Symbolic production in the art biennale: Making worlds', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 34 (2017), pp. 89-113; Julian Stallabrass, *Art Incorporate: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 37.

<sup>49</sup> Nicos Papastergiadis and Meredith Martin, 'Art biennales and cities as platforms for global dialogue', in Liana Giorgi, Monica Sassatelli and Gerard Delanty (eds), *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 45-62.

<sup>50</sup> Chin-Tao Wu, 'Biennials without borders?', *New Left Review*, 57 (2009), pp. 107-15, at p. 115, cited in Sassatelli, 'Symbolic production'.

<sup>51</sup> Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), pp. 29, 51; Paula Bialski, in Marina Sorbello and Antje Weitzel (eds), *Transient Spaces: The Tourist Syndrome* (Berlin, 2010), p. 120.

<sup>52</sup> Heather Felty and Steven Rand, *Life Between Borders: The Nomadic Life of Curators and Artists* (New York: Apexart, 2013), p. 12.



'cultural immersion' by placing participants in situations that take them outside normal art-world sensibilities, but sociologist Pascal Gielen critiques the concept of the artist as nomad, arguing that the figure of the nomad tends to suggest a 'positive (romanticised) view of travel, mobility and unattachment', a view which Kwon has also argued in her writing on 'the wrong place'.<sup>53</sup> The problem raised by these writers is that the artist seems to retain an essential self, not a self that is fluid and changing according to shifting boundaries. Therefore, Frohnäpfel's depiction of the artist as tourist would seem to hold some sway. An alternative view might be to use Glissant's concept of *errance*, or wandering with intention, to frame the work of artists who travel and to highlight the aspect of Relation in their practice.

Laura Keninš, writing about a 2013 symposium addressing the artist as tourist, suggests that:

As artists or arts professionals, we rarely reflect on our roles as tourists: for self-employed people, there's no such thing as a holiday, and so we are researching or photographing, sketching or meeting as we tour unfamiliar cities and lands, even if we follow similar paths to the tour buses and families in sensible hiking shoes. It's a common thing to think of oneself as invisible as a tourist, but artists often go beyond that: thinking of themselves as untourists.<sup>54</sup>

In a subsequent article, Keninš comments that if artists thought of themselves as tourists, it would open up new possibilities for considering the proliferation of residencies and travel-based projects.<sup>55</sup> As Federica Martini asks, 'what is the limit separating artistic research and tourism in these working contexts?'. Through her encounter with some artists working with cultural and tourist clichés, she 'realized that cultural actors and tourists are often dealing with the same images and narratives, although employing different strategies'.<sup>56</sup> The visiting artist may bring a particular understanding and expectation to an experience aimed at a tourist market; for example, their reading of performance might allow for an understanding of it both as an emotional and spiritual experience and as a theatrical display. And by setting out the intentions they bring, artists could enter into situations knowing that the Relation they encounter may shift and change their practice and identity. I now turn to the specific context of Vodou.

<sup>53</sup> Felty and Rand, *Life Between Borders*, p. 19; Kwon, *One Place after Another*, pp. 160-64; Miwon Kwon, 'The wrong place', *Art Journal*, 59 (2000), pp. 33-43.

<sup>54</sup> Laura Keninš, 'How to be a critical artist-tourist: Observations on art, tourism and the 2013 Nida Interformat Symposium', Artterritory website, 2 June 2013, <[http://artterritory.com/en/texts/reviews/2353-how\\_to\\_be\\_a\\_critical\\_artist-tourist/](http://artterritory.com/en/texts/reviews/2353-how_to_be_a_critical_artist-tourist/)> [accessed 20 August 2017].

<sup>55</sup> Laura Keninš, 'Escapists and jet-setters: Residencies and sustainability', *C Magazine*, 2013, <<http://cmagazine.com/issues/119/escapists-and-jet-setters-residencies-and-sustainability>> [accessed 23 March 2018].

<sup>56</sup> Federica Martini and Vytautas Michelkevičius (eds), *Tourists Like Us: Critical Tourism and Contemporary Art* (Sierre and Vilnius: Ecole cantonale d'art du Valais and Vilnius Academy of Arts Press, 2013), p. 12.





## The ethnography and politics of Vodou

Haitian Vodou has its roots in West African *vodun* and retains many connections. Art historian Suzanne Preston Blier has made a detailed analysis of West African *vodun*, a term first appearing in Europe in a 1658 document from the ambassador of the King of Allada to the court of Philip IV of Spain.<sup>57</sup> Blier traces linkages to Haitian Vodou through ritual objects, linguistic terms and the types of Vodou: ‘cool’ (*Rada vodou*), associated with peace and reconciliation, and deriving from southern Benin, and ‘hot’ (*Petro vodou*), associated with spiritual fire and attacking evil, and deriving from Kongolese elements.<sup>58</sup> Maya Deren suggests that Haitian *Petro vodou* also has political parallels with the African *Petro vodun*: ‘it is the rage against the evil fate which the African suffered. The brutality of his displacement and his enslavement.’<sup>59</sup> Haitian Vodou also recalls West African *vodun* in the important psychological roles it fulfils, which, according to Ari Kiev, provides ‘not only religious and spiritual guidance’, but also ‘a reasonable theory and treatment method for the psychiatrically ill’.<sup>60</sup> Blier proposes that (African) *vodun* played an important historical role in Haiti in unifying and empowering men and women of African descent in their fight for freedom. According to Blier, a number of historians and anthropologists, including Maya Deren, Alfred Métraux, C.L.R. James and Joan Dayan identify *vodun* with the beginnings of the Haitian revolution, which is believed to have started with a Vodou ceremony.<sup>61</sup> According to Dante Bellegarde, by the 1950s ‘in Haiti *vodou* had become less a religion than a political association’.<sup>62</sup> Métraux, on the other hand, also underlines the spiritual importance of Vodou.

Under French colonial rule, Haitian Vodou was suppressed.<sup>63</sup> After repeated uprisings, a slave conspiracy in 1791 ‘was led by Boukman, a priest of *vodou*, a new syncretic cult that not only brought together slaves from diverse cultures of Africa, but included Western cultural symbols as well’. Although slave rebellions had occurred in Saint-Domingue with great regularity, Boukman’s uprising, within the context of the radicalization of the French Revolution, changed

<sup>57</sup> *Doctrina Christiana* (1658), published in Labouret and Rivet, *Le Royaume d’Arda et son évangélisation au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Institut d’Ethnologie, 1929), cited in Blier, *African Vodun*, pp. 37–38.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1983), p. 164, cited in Blier, *African Vodun*, p. 52.

<sup>59</sup> Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (New York and London: Thames and Hudson, 1953), p. 62.

<sup>60</sup> Ari Kiev, ‘Folk psychiatry in Haiti’, *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 132 (1961), pp. 260–65, at p. 264, cited in Blier, *African Vodun*, p. 53.

<sup>61</sup> Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, p. 62; Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, pp. 3–5; Alfred Métraux, *Voodoo in Haiti* (New York: Schocken Books, 1952), p. 41; C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint l’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1938), pp. 69, 87.

<sup>62</sup> Dante Bellegarde, *Histoire du Peuple Haïtien (1492–1952)* (Port-au Prince, 1953), p. 59, cited in Métraux, *Voodoo*, p. 41.

<sup>63</sup> Philippe Girard, ‘Rebelle with a cause: Women in the Haitian War of Independence, 1802–04’, *Gender and History*, 21 (2009), pp. 60–85.



Europeans' perception of slave revolts – no longer one of a long series of slave rebellions, it was viewed as an extension of the European Revolution.<sup>64</sup> The rebellion became a war of independence led by former slave Toussaint L'Ouverture. In 1802, the French, under Napoleon, sent General Leclerc with 20,000 troops to attempt to retake Haiti.<sup>65</sup> What followed was a bloody war and the eventual defeat of the French. The Haitian military leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines declared Haitian independence in 1804.

As a free country, there was a troubled relationship between the Haitian state and Vodou, with Vodou practice forbidden at various points. In 1915, the US occupied Haiti, with troops remaining in occupation until 1934.<sup>66</sup> During this period, practising Vodou was illegal.<sup>67</sup> From 1934, a series of army coups was succeeded by the winning of a rigged presidential election by the amateur anthropologist and doctor Francois (Papa Doc) Duvalier.<sup>68</sup> Duvalier, embracing Vodou nationalism, helped elevate the status of Vodou back into a national doctrine,<sup>69</sup> while also giving the US free rein to put in place both economic structural adjustment plans and US corporations. Duvalier used Vodou as part of a regime of persecution and terror that left many Haitians dead.<sup>70</sup>

Perhaps as a result of occupying the country, US attention focused interest on Haiti through a series of pseudo-ethnographic travel accounts that 'served to malign Haiti for American audiences and further justify the Occupation'.<sup>71</sup> In 1929, American explorer and occultist William Seabrook's *The Magic Island* gave a macabre and sensational view of the Vodou religion, detailing supposed cannibalism and introducing the concept of the *zombi* to American audiences.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, anthropologists and writers inside and outside Haiti were seeking more accurate portrayals of the role of Vodou in Haitian society and culture, in part because of the repression of Vodou under the occupation.<sup>73</sup> In response to this, anthropologists (and artists and

<sup>64</sup> Susan Buck-Morss, 'Hegel and Haiti', *Critical Inquiry*, 26 (2000), pp. 821-65, at p. 833, fn. 38.

<sup>65</sup> James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 223.

<sup>66</sup> Hallward, *Damming the Flood*, p. 14.

<sup>67</sup> Kate Ramsey, 'Prohibition, persecution, performance: Anthropology and the penalization of vodou in mid-20th century', *Gradhiva 1: Haïti et l'anthropologie* (2005), pp. 165-79, at pp. 165-66.

<sup>68</sup> Hallward, *Damming the Flood*, p. 14.

<sup>69</sup> 'The death and legacy of Papa Doc Duvalier', *Time Magazine*, 17 January 2011, <<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,876967-1,00.html>> [accessed 20 August 2017]; Andrew Apter, 'On African origins: Creolization and connaissance in Haitian vodou', *American Ethnologist*, 29 (2002), pp. 233-60.

<sup>70</sup> Hallward, *Damming the Flood*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>71</sup> Steven Gregory, 'Voodoo, ethnography, and the American occupation of Haiti: William B. Seabrook's *The Magic Island*', in Christine Ward Gailey (ed.), *Dialectical Anthropology. Essays in Honor of Stanley Diamond. II. The Politics of Culture and Creativity: A Critique of Civilization* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1992), pp. 169-207, cited in Gérarde Magloire and Kevin A. Yelvington, 'Haiti and the anthropological imagination', *Gradhiva 1: Haïti et l'anthropologie* (2005), pp. 127-52, p. 131.

<sup>72</sup> William Seabrook, *The Magic Island* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1929).

<sup>73</sup> Ramsey, 'Prohibition, persecution, performance', pp. 165-66.



writers) began to visit the country and document Vodou practices. Haitian diplomat, ethnologist, and physician Jean Price-Mars sought to depict Vodou as a legitimate, authentically Haitian religion. Writing on folklore and culture was intrinsic to his project of recognizing the African heritage of Haiti in order to understand its cultural identity as distinct from a European or Western one. In 1927, Price-Mars announced the *indigéniste* literary and artistic movement that took inspiration from and had connections with the Harlem Renaissance.<sup>74</sup>

Price-Mars aided Melville Herskovits, a young American Jewish anthropologist who came to do fieldwork in Haiti in the summer of 1934. Herskovits, who was interested in theories of acculturation, spent three months in Haiti and, in *Life in a Haitian Valley* (1937), theorized a normalized version of Vodou as part of daily life.<sup>75</sup> He never returned to Haiti, but exercised a profound influence on subsequent anthropological impressions of Haiti. He oversaw the Haitian fieldwork of others, including Zora Neale Hurston, who wrote a travelogue entitled *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (1938), and Katherine Dunham.<sup>76</sup> Herskovits also introduced Swiss anthropologist Alfred Métraux and his wife, American anthropologist Rhoda Bubendey Métraux, to Price-Mars. Métraux later wrote *Vodou in Haiti* (1952), which he introduced by explaining his work as a project of anthropological salvage, thinking at the time that Vodou was on the verge of disappearance.<sup>77</sup> Dunham, who studied anthropology and Haitian dance, and went on to become a world famous dancer, later wrote about her Haitian experiences in *Island Possessed* (1969).<sup>78</sup> Dunham's personal assistant on her Haitian trips, Maya Deren, a Jewish Russian-American writer, photographer, and filmmaker, made an extensive film document of Vodou practices, as well as a book based on this, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*.<sup>79</sup> Contemporary writers have written on the cultural relativism of this period of anthropology in Haiti, but it is interesting to read how Hurston and Deren felt an affinity to Vodou that led them to become initiates and to participate in ceremonies.<sup>80</sup> Deren describes how being an artist enabled her to understand Vodou: 'Haitians believed I had gone through varying degrees of initiation.'<sup>81</sup> Arguably, skin colour was less of a drawback in studying Vodou than was the ability to imaginatively enter into the rituals.

<sup>74</sup> Magloire and Yelvington, 'Haiti and the anthropological imagination', p. 130.

<sup>75</sup> Melville Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1937).

<sup>76</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1938).

<sup>77</sup> Ramsey, 'Prohibition, persecution, performance', p. 170.

<sup>78</sup> Katherine Dunham, *Island Possessed* (New York: Doubleday, 1969).

<sup>79</sup> Deren, *Divine Horsemen*.

<sup>80</sup> Magloire and Yelvington, 'Haiti and the anthropological imagination'; Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken, 'On "being Jewish", on "studying Haiti" ... Herskovits, Métraux, race and human rights', in Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken, Jhon Picard Byron, Kaiama L. Glover, Mark Schuller and Mark Schuller (eds), *The Haiti Exception: Anthropology and the Predicaments of Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 52-73.

<sup>81</sup> Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, pp. 6-8.



Recent writers on Vodou have continued to expand understandings of Vodou's role in Haitian history and culture and its links with its diaspora; examples are Joan Dayan's *Haiti, History and the Gods* (1998), which links anthropological and literary analysis; Karen McCarthy Brown's study of Haitian Vodou in the diasporic context, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*; and Brown's earlier studies of the *veve*, which I discuss later in this chapter.<sup>82</sup> Vodou's role in art has been studied by Donald Consentino, Leah Gordon, curator of the Ghetto Biennale, and John Cussans, an artist who has tracked Haitian identity and pop culture in depictions of the *zombi*.<sup>83</sup>

### **Vodou space, tourism, and looking**

The *hougan* is the Vodou equivalent of a priest and has the authority to carry out ceremonies. The *hounfor* is the Vodou term for temple, but the yard is specifically a *peristyle*, a demarcated area of ritual space. Within the *hounfor* there may be one or more *peristyles*, or ceremonial spaces. At the centre of a *peristyle* is the *poto-mitan* (usually a post, sometimes structural), which acts as a focal point for the ceremony and gathers people around it. The *poto-mitan* also acts as a vertical axis, representing the axis of the metaphysical cosmos (between the physical world and the world of the gods or *loas*).<sup>84</sup> There are also usually one or more small altar chambers around the edges of the building or space. These altars are to individual *loas*.<sup>85</sup> According to Maya Deren:

The physical aspect of a *hounfor* varies enormously from city to country, and from district to district. In the city there may be virtually no courtyard at all, but simply a small structure divided into one, two or three altar chambers, and adjoining it, a peristyle for ceremonial action and dance.<sup>86</sup>

Papada Bon Hougan was the Ghetto Biennale *hougan*, and his yard, or *hounfor*, acted as a focal space for any Vodou-related activity, but it was also used for non-religious gatherings. Papada's *hounfor* was a small yard or peristyle with a *poto-mitan* in the centre, holding up a corrugated iron roof. Two opposite sides of the yard were open and the other two were part walled, with one wall having two openings, one leading to an altar and one to Papada's consultation room. A few days after we had arrived in Haiti, visiting artists were invited to Papada's *hounfor* to witness a Vodou ceremony. After a long introduction in which Papada and others played drums and chanted, a man came into the centre of the space and became increasingly 'possessed' by

<sup>82</sup> Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991).

<sup>83</sup> John Cussans, *Undead Uprising: Haiti, Horror and the Zombie Complex* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017).

<sup>84</sup> Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, pp. 36, 47, 182.

<sup>85</sup> Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, p. 178.

<sup>86</sup> Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, p. 179.





spirits. He grabbed a baby from a woman in the audience and started to fling it around in a circle. The baby was screaming and the woman looked distraught, but no one tried to stop him. Eventually he stopped, the baby was returned to his mother, and the man came out of the trance. Afterwards it was explained to us that he had been possessed by spirits who wanted him to take the baby.

In his analysis of 'voodoo shows', Alan Goldberg describes how the experience is socially constructed through the identities of the performers and the audience, the ways they define their participation in these events, and the influence of social and spatial structures on identity formation.<sup>87</sup> Goldberg identifies key differences between paid-for, 'tourist-orientated shows', and rituals carried out in what he terms 'cult centre' or 'family settings'. For instance, in tourist shows audience and performers are separated, and in cult centres audience and performers are mixed. In the tourist show, performers and audiences do not know each other and do not share a cultural background, whereas in cult centre settings, neighbours, family and friends make up the audience, and often also participate in ceremonies. And tourist shows tend to be sequential in time, lasting about 90 minutes, whereas cult centre events often have breaks and lack a clear beginning and end.<sup>88</sup>

Drawing on Goldberg's analysis, I understood the ceremony at Papada's yard as one constructed at least in part for tourists. The audience was made up of a mix of foreign tourists (including visiting artists), local artists and community members. The duration of the ceremony was fixed (approximately 90 minutes) and had a continuity and clear sequence of events. The spatial arrangement was clearly demarcated, with the spectators sitting in a semi-circle around the yard edges and the performers taking the centre. However, the role and identities of the audience in this situation were more complex than the categorizations suggested by Goldberg. Eric Cohen has categorized tourists according to the experience they seek, and Goldberg adapts these typologies to suggest tourists experiencing 'voodoo shows' have different degrees of expectation as to the authenticity of the show.<sup>89</sup> For instance, those defining themselves as atypical tourists may question the authenticity of the shows and seek other experiences elsewhere.<sup>90</sup> This raises the question as to what visiting artists at the Ghetto Biennale may have expected in terms of an authentic experience, and relates to my earlier discussion of the artist as tourist, where I suggested that artists may bring different intentions in relating to others, and different readings of performance.

<sup>87</sup> Goldberg, 'Identity and experience', p. 480.

<sup>88</sup> Goldberg, 'Identity and experience', p. 483.

<sup>89</sup> Erik Cohen, 'A phenomenology of tourist experience', *Sociology*, 13 (1979), pp. 179-220, at p.184; Goldberg, 'Identity and experience', p. 485.

<sup>90</sup> Goldberg, 'Identity and experience', pp. 480-81, 486.



The Vodou ceremony or show contains both theatre and the spirituality of the Vodou religion, and questions Western theatrical conventions, which tend to separate theatre and religion.<sup>91</sup> In Goldberg's analysis, the situation is one of 'staged authenticity', as the audience begins to question whether what is happening is an illusion or 'real', referring to Dean MacCannell's notion of 'staged authenticity', whereby 'hosts deliberately create social spaces that purport to give the tourist a sense of penetrating backstage, i.e., into the inner workings of some social establishment or practice.'<sup>92</sup> Cohen questioned the concept of 'staged authenticity' by suggesting that a cultural product 'judged as contrived or inauthentic may, in the course of time, become generally recognized as authentic'. He called this socially constructed, negotiable version of authenticity, 'emergent authenticity'.<sup>93</sup>

Cohen has also argued that, while rituals may be adapted for an outside audience, this does not necessarily remove their cultural or religious meaning, but could instead add new layers of meaning.<sup>94</sup> Ning Wang has suggested that in some cases the tourist is in search of 'an authentic self' and is therefore not concerned with the objective authenticity of experience; he called this 'existential authenticity'.<sup>95</sup> Tourists seek this more authentic self through the freer space of being a tourist, away from dominant institutions, and are not concerned about the relative authenticity of the places they visit.<sup>96</sup> 'Emergent' or 'existential' authenticity might better reflect the interests of artists who travel to Haiti to engage with Vodou. Hugues Seraphin and Emma Nolan maintain that Vodou (which was developed as a means to survive difficult conditions) is flexible and able to adapt in order to survive, and that Vodou events can adapt into tourism products without necessarily losing authenticity.<sup>97</sup> Vodou could, therefore, be seen as a form of *détour*, through which both performers and audience build new understandings and identities.

### **Zombis and salt**

The figure of the *zombi* features in Haitian Vodou and can be seen as a metaphor for the enslaved person: 'insofar as the *zombi* represents the slave, or the worker, there is always

<sup>91</sup> Goldberg 'Identity and experience', pp. 491-2.

<sup>92</sup> Goldberg 'Identity and experience', p. 492; Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist* (New York: Schocken, 1976).

<sup>93</sup> Erik Cohen, 'Authenticity and commoditization in tourism', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15 (1988), pp. 371-86, at p. 379.

<sup>94</sup> Cohen, 'Authenticity and commoditization', p. 382.

<sup>95</sup> Ning Wang, 'Rethinking authenticity in tourism experience', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26 (1999), pp. 349-70.

<sup>96</sup> Wang, 'Rethinking authenticity', pp. 360-61.

<sup>97</sup> Hugues Seraphin and Emma Nolan, 'Voodoo in Haiti: A religious ceremony at the service of the 'houngan' called 'tourism', in Warwick Frost and Jennifer Laing (eds), *Rituals and Traditional Events in the Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 221-31.



the possibility that the *zombi* will wake up, shake off the oppressor and start a revolution.<sup>98</sup> According to René Depestre, a Haitian poet and former communist activist, ‘the history of colonisation is the process of man’s general zombification. It is also the quest for a revitalizing salt capable of restoring to man the use of his imagination and culture.’ Depestre comments that the awakening ‘trigger will be the metaphoric taste of salt, or spark of political consciousness’.<sup>99</sup> An example of this link between the spiritual and the political is the use of salt in Vodou to ‘reawaken’ *zombis*.<sup>100</sup> The *Kreyol* phrase *goute sel* means a ‘taste of salt’, which is said to reawaken the *zombis*, according to many writers on Haiti including Seabrook, Métraux, Sarah Lauro and Amy Wilentz.<sup>101</sup> Lauro, tracing the use of salt to awaken a *zombi* through various literary and film references, suggests that the *zombi* myth is part of a direct connection between zombification as ‘an allusion to slavery’, and that the *zombi* is ‘an embedded critique of social conditions’ and the exploitation of slave labour.<sup>102</sup>

Lauro identifies a seventeenth-century text by Olfert Dapper, in which Dapper ridicules the belief in a lack of natural death and describes a spell cast from which one can be re-awoken by eating salt, as the first reference to the *zombi* myth.<sup>103</sup> Built into this myth is the potential for rebellion, provided the slave comes into contact with the right material: salt.<sup>104</sup> Lauro further suggests that, as one of the first traded commodities, salt was linked to the development of global exchange, and was one of the first examples of commodity fetishism. According to Lauro, salt is used in specifically Congolese rituals of burial and baptism to ward off witches and as a preservative to embalm the dead. Unsurprisingly, therefore, salt is the material that can remind the *zombi* that it is no longer living.<sup>105</sup> Through tasting salt, the figure of the *zombi* is released from the spell of being a living dead.

The use of salt as a metaphor for liberation was carried into more recent Haitian politics when *Goute Sel* (taste salt) was used to name a literacy programme and newspaper during the campaign against the Duvalier dictatorship, run by Ti Legliz, the movement of local churches which educated and radicalized the peasant population in Haiti in the 1980s.<sup>106</sup> For John Hogan, writing about the *Goute Sel* programme, the title linked the Catholic church and Vodou religion:

<sup>98</sup> Elizabeth A. McAlister, *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and Its Diaspora*, vol. 1 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 107-8.

<sup>99</sup> René Depestre, ‘Change’, *Violence II*, 9 (1971), p. 20.

<sup>100</sup> Sarah J. Lauro, *The Transatlantic Zombie: Slavery, Rebellion, and Living Death* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015), pp. 26, 46; see also Métraux, *Voodoo*, p. 96.

<sup>101</sup> Lauro, *Transatlantic Zombie*, p. 124; Amy Wilentz, *Farewell Fred Voodoo* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), p. 95.

<sup>102</sup> Lauro, *Transatlantic Zombie*, p. 45.

<sup>103</sup> Olfert Dapper, *Description de l’Afrique* (Amsterdam, 1686).

<sup>104</sup> Lauro, *Transatlantic Zombie*, p. 45.

<sup>105</sup> Lauro, *Transatlantic Zombie*, p. 208, fn. 26.

<sup>106</sup> Wilentz, *Farewell Fred Voodoo*, p. 95.



with obvious reference to the Gospel's injunction to be the salt of the earth, the phrase was also readily recognizable in Haiti's *vodou* context. Salt is given to the comatose, enslaved *zombi*, the walking dead, to help one come alive and return to free human existence.<sup>107</sup>

Liberation theology was a movement that started in Latin America and spread through the region in the 1970s and 1980s, and Ti Legliz started a Haitian version of liberation theology. By 1986, there were more than 3,500 Ti Legliz communities in Haiti. In an informal setting, groups of around 20 to 40 people would meet weekly to pray, read the Bible, reflect on the gospel's meaning in their lives, and discuss personal and community problems.<sup>108</sup> According to Gail Pellett, 'the most important part of the Ti Legliz movement is that it encourages people to think, to ask questions, to calculate and analyze their problems.'<sup>109</sup>

These Ti Legliz communities also acted as the forefront for a church-led literacy drive launched in the mid-1980s. The campaign's name in *Kreyol* was *Goute Sel*, which means 'a taste of salt'. Pellett notes that the Creole term *Goute Sel* implies that illiterate people are also *zombis* and that the 'salt' of reading will offer the Haitian people the potential for a better life. The literacy programme also used the methods of Brazil's educational philosopher, Paulo Freire. Father Jean Hanssens, a Dutch priest who trained Ti Legliz *animateurs* (educators) in central Haiti, explained: 'It's not just a program to read and write, it's a consciousness-raising method of education. It makes people aware of their dignity, their rights as citizens.'<sup>110</sup> The campaign made its way into a children's book by Frances Temple, in which Pierre, a priest working with Father Aristide in Port-au-Prince, teaches street children to read and write, using a text called *Goute Sel (A Taste of Salt)*; the book refers to tasting salt as a metaphor for political action and awakening.<sup>111</sup>

My proposal for the Ghetto Biennale was to use salt to produce performative artworks as street/yard-based installations, based on the Haitian Vodou ritual of making *veves*, an act of marking patterns on the ground with cornmeal or similar substances, and sometimes salt.<sup>112</sup> The role of salt in *veves* connected to the other spatial rituals and artworks in which I had used salt to mark

<sup>107</sup> John P. Hogan, 'The salt has lost its savour: Haiti's brief hour of hope', *Commonweal*, 22 (1989), pp. 505-8, at p. 505.

<sup>108</sup> Gail Pellett, 'Ti Legliz: Liberation theology in Haiti', *New Age Magazine*, July/August 1986, available at Gail Pellett website, <<http://gailpellettproductions.com/ti-legliz-liberation-theology-in-haiti/>> [accessed 18 August 2017].

<sup>109</sup> Father Albert Gouin, a 48-year-old priest, quoted in Pellett, 'Ti Legliz'.

<sup>110</sup> Quoted in Pellett, 'Ti Legliz'.

<sup>111</sup> Frances Temple, *A Taste of Salt* (New York: Harper, 1994; first edition, 1992), pp. 60, 75.

<sup>112</sup> Karen McCarthy Brown, 'The Veve of Haitian Vodou: A Structural Analysis of Visual Imagery', PhD thesis, Temple University, 1976, p. xi; McAlister, *Rara!*, p. 95; Brad Steiger, *Real Zombies, the Living Dead, and Creatures of the Apocalypse* (Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 2010), p. 114.



Image 4.4 Grande Salines.



and cleanse spaces and thresholds. I was particularly interested in the spatial role of the *veve*. McCarthy Brown describes how in its original form in Dahomey, West Africa, the *veve* was used to define a space as sacred, and that it continues to have a spatial role in Haitian Vodou as demarcating the *peristyle* space as sacred prior to a ceremony.<sup>113</sup> Salt is also used in other African American Vodou rituals, spatial practices for marking or cleansing spaces and thresholds.<sup>114</sup>

### **Grande-Saline: Searching for salt in Haiti**

When I arrived in Haiti, I asked where I could buy salt. I was told to try the Mache Solomon, a sprawling general market in the centre of Port-au-Prince. I found a woman there who sold salt, decanting it from a basket with a tin can into small bags. Through a translator, I asked the woman where it came from. I was told that the salt came from Grande-Saline. While I was still developing the performance, I knew that I wanted to use salt from the Grande-Saline, if possible collecting it from the site myself. The act of getting salt from the source would have an indexical quality of the journey and a connection to the place, and a particular poetics. But getting to Grande-Saline was complicated. It was 30 kilometres away from the main Route National, along an unfinished road. It was also expensive to hire a car. I proposed the idea of a trip to other artists in the Biennale group and several people expressed an interest. I asked one of the translators about hiring a minibus and, after some negotiation, one was found. We took a long and bumpy drive, arriving eventually at the end of a track at Grande-Saline.

The site of the saltworks (Image 4.4) was right next to the sea, but the edges of the saltworks were muddy banks, unlike the *salinas* in Portugal. The salty water lay in pools and was not crystallized. A man offered me a tour and explained (via our translator) that in the current season they were not able to produce much salt because the rain kept coming. He said that the saltworks had been dormant for some time and the current efforts to get them working again were still in progress. Part of the problem, he explained, was the lack of access – they were hoping for a proper road link to the Route National, but in the meantime could only export the salt by sea (Image 4.5). In a 2013 article in Haiti's national newspaper, *La Nouvelliste*, Grande-Saline is described as *une commune abandonnée* due to the road being unpassable during hurricane season, despite repeated government promises to improve the road access.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>113</sup> McCarthy Brown, 'The Veve of Haitian Vodou', p. x.

<sup>114</sup> James Haskins, *Voodoo and Hoodoo* (Lanham, MD: Scarborough House, 1978; reprinted 1990), pp. 129, 136, 145, 165.

<sup>115</sup> 'Grande-Saline, une commune abandonnée', *Le Nouvelliste*, 5 November 2013, <<http://lenouvelliste.com/lenouvelliste/article/123499/Grande-Saline-une-commune-abandonnee>> [accessed 18 August 2017].



Image 4.5 Grande Salines aerial view. Source: <[378](https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Grande-Saline,+Haiti/@19.2451954,-72.772952,6053m/data=!3>>1!1e3!4m13!1m7!3m6!1s0x8eb7a6ee7ae7bfe5:0x70d431b694e84ffd!2sGrande-Saline,+Haiti!3b1!8m2!3d19.2637565!4d-72.7629126!3m4!1s0x8eb7a6ee7ae7bfe5:0x70d431b694e84ffd!8m2!3d19.2637565!4d-72.7629126></a>></p></div><div data-bbox=)

When the French began exploiting salt here in the seventeenth century, salt was a highly prized commodity. The problem for today's saltworks, as discussed in Project 3, is the lower value of salt on the global market, due to easier production and to refrigeration rendering salt unnecessary for food preservation. However, NGOs and development agencies have been encouraging salt production, seeing it as a potential catalyst for development, with post-earthquake NGO work focused on rebuilding damaged salt pans and helping salt farmers to establish businesses.<sup>116</sup> While I was in Grande-Saline, I asked to buy a sack of salt. I was led to a wooden shack between two pans and my guide filled a sack with unprocessed coarse salt, which we carried back to the minibus.

Although difficult, it was possible to find the physical site of the saltworks, whereas finding any archival trace of the *Goute Sel* text proved impossible. The 2010 earthquake in Haiti had caused destruction and heavy damage to the National Archives. According to the director of Haiti's archives, Jean-Wilfrid Bertrand: 'More than 60 years of archives were badly stored, damaged or lost, and after the earthquake, the situation got worse'; and Hervé Lemoine, vice-president of the International Association of Francophone Archives, has commented: 'There is a double danger to the Haitian archives – there was no systematic storage of archives and the conditions of preservation were catastrophic.'<sup>117</sup> In the end, I decided to re-make a page of *Goute Sel*, with an invented page of translation that linked salt in Vodou with the liberating power of education. This negotiation of authenticity became a central part of the work I developed for the Ghetto Biennale. Although I had gone to Haiti with the idea of making *veves* and creating a performance as an outcome of what I learnt, my initial experience of how Vodou rituals and spaces were accessed and performed to us (as a group of visiting and mainly Western artists) strongly influenced how I approached making the work.

### **Learning the *veve***

Early in the residency, the visiting artists were invited to visit a Vodou temple in another area of Port-au-Prince. Upon arrival, the *hougan* invited us to see the temple space and visit the altar. It was made clear that we must leave a donation of money at the altar. I then asked about the possibility of learning to make *veves*. The *hougan* said that I would need to arrange to return another time and to pay \$100 for an introduction to *veve*-making. Upon asking one of the Haitian artists, they said this was usual as a fee to a non-Haitian and that the process may last several sessions, all requiring donations. I felt under pressure in the short time I had to produce the performance, so I returned to the Grand Rue where I asked if anyone was willing to show

<sup>116</sup> LOCAL-Haiti website, <<http://localhaiti.org/LOCAL/CONTEXT.html>> [accessed 18 August 2017].

<sup>117</sup> 'Haiti earthquake destroyed or damaged 60 years of archives', Repeating Islands website, 13 December 2013, <<https://repeatingislands.com/2013/12/13/haiti-earthquake-destroyed-or-damaged-60-years-of-archives/>> [accessed 18 August 2017].



me *veve*-making. One man offered to teach me (for free) and I learnt one design by imitating him. Then some of the younger members of the Ghetto Biennale offered to draw *veves* and a book was produced, with many patterns for the different *veves*. The difference, I began to understand, was the spatial context of creating the *veve*. If the *veve* was made in a non-sacred space, it was not officially a *veve*. The *veve* has a role in focusing or centring ritual activity, but it can also be a ritual in itself, if carried out in a space that has been designated as sacred by a *hougan*, *mambo* (priestess) or other initiated person.<sup>118</sup>

Acknowledging my role as both artist and tourist, and the spatial and bodily aspects of the *veve* ritual, the *Goute Sel* performance combined concepts of authenticity and identity. I had asked Mabelle Williams, one of the Haitian women artist participants in the Ghetto Biennale, to work with me, as she had been involved with the *veve* research and the salt journey. I explained that I wanted to perform a *veve* with salt, and after discussion we decided to try to make the *veves* in a sort of mirror formation. Initially this enabled us to watch one another, copying the other if we got stuck or forgot the next stage of the *veve*. But as we continued to practise, it was interesting to see how the mirroring became more deliberate.

Discussing the idea of the performance with Mabelle, and the Ghetto curators, everyone suggested the best location for the performance would be in Papada's *hounfor*. First, however, we had to negotiate the use of the *hounfor* for the performance. Papada said I needed to be aware of the requirements: he would need to introduce and bless each *veve*, and I could not use salt, because specific materials were used for *veve*-making, usually cornmeal. When I explained my personal ancestral links to salt, he said in that case he would make an exception and would explain it to the spirits at the beginning of the ceremony. At this point I realized that I, Mabelle and Papada were complicit in creating a kind of emergent authenticity of an invented performance that was also a traditional Vodou ritual. My reading of the situation was that there was a tacit acknowledgement that this was about the creation of a spectacle, something I found interesting considering my role as outsider Western artist. Perhaps because both Papada and Mabelle were also artists, and because of the context of the Ghetto Biennale, and perhaps also due to the nature of Vodou, rules could be *détourn*-ed. The planning of the performance then became about a negotiation of authenticity, such as wearing the *mambo karabela* dresses,<sup>119</sup> wearing or not wearing shoes, silence, control, and the perfection of the *veve* symbol.<sup>120</sup>

My inability to find any reference to *Goute Sel* texts in Port-au-Prince led me to create an imagined version of the text to hand out as part of the ceremony. The text drew together fragments from literature, facts about the literacy programme, a quote from Paolo Freire,

<sup>118</sup> McCarthy Brown, 'The Veve of Haitian Vodou', pp. 43-44.

<sup>119</sup> Mario Jacques LaMothe, *On Dedouble: Haiti, Contemporary Dance, and Performances of Vodou and Voodoo* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2015), p. 59.

<sup>120</sup> Beinart, 'Salted Earth', blog, 5 January 2014.

Goute Sel - a performance by Katy Beinart  
and Mabelle Williams

Zombies don't taste salt. (Salt wakes up a zombie)

Salt and sugar saves lives (a solution of salt and  
sugar can be used to treat cholera patients)

"I might lose my will"

"lose the taste of salt?" Jeri says. I was thinking  
that. "But you just not the zombi type, Djo."

"I think no person be the zombie type, Jeremie.  
Nobody born fit to be a slave."

A Taste of Salt by Frances Temple

"When I was carrying you, you were brave" she  
said. "You wanted to live, you wanted to taste salt,  
as my mother would say."

Breath, Eyes, Memory by Edwidge Danticat

"Goute Sel" was the title of a literacy program ran  
by Ti Legliz (Mission Alpha) in the 1980s during  
the Duvalier regime. It was based on the work of  
Paolo Friere, 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed'. The  
text was banned for being too radical and the priest  
who initiated it was cast off from the church.

"Liberating education consists in acts of cognition,  
not transfers of information."

Paulo Freire

Knowing how to read and write is one step towards  
knowledge:

- Goute Sel, 1986.



Image 4.6: Katy Beinart and Mabelle Williams, *Goute Sel* text (section) circulated as part of the performance, *Goute Sel* (13 December 2013)

and references from Frances Temple's *A Taste of Salt* concerning the value of salt as a tool for reawakening *zombis*, and from Edwidge Danticat's *Breath Eyes Memory* on salt as meaning life and on the medical value of salt and sugar solution in saving lives. I asked translators in the Ghetto Biennale team to translate it into French and *Kreyol*, and Mabelle found a printer in the Grand Rue who printed it off for us.

Mediated negotiation was an important aspect of planning the performance. Money was also involved at every stage, from paying for the dresses, to paying Papada to use the yard. And when we practised the performance in the yard, cash offerings needed to be made. The offer of money acted as an important mediator, recognizing the value of both the practical help I was getting but also the responsibility in using a spiritual space. Various writers have noted the important role of money in Vodou, including Métraux, Dayan, and McCarthy Brown, who says that Vodou 'cannot tolerate money being neutral, and therefore the religious setting works to make all exchanges "responsible"'.<sup>121</sup>

In Brixton, I had made the *Memory Preservation Salts* as an exchange for people's stories at the market stall (see Project 1). The Ritual Salts had brought me to Haiti. I wanted to offer a token of exchange for those participating in the performance by their presence in the audience. The idea of the *Goute Sel* performance was in part an invocation to 'taste salt', with its Haitian connotation of a political awakening. I decided to make small bags of salt to hand out at the end of the performance, each bearing the *Goute Sel* title and the text I had printed. This was both to acknowledge the audience's gift of their presence and to redistribute the salt of Grande-Saline with its colonial memory. Some of the young people at the Ghetto Biennale yard got involved, painting stencils on to the fabric, and their mothers then came and, seeing me stitching the bags, offered to help. There was an informal economy between the visiting artists, local artists and local residents of the Grand Rue, and we had been asked to bring arts materials with us to donate to local residents, so in return for their help I gave the children paper and pencils I had brought with me. Therefore, while some forms of exchange involved monetary payments, others involved gifting.

### **Port au Prince: *Goute Sel* (2013)**

On the day of the performance, also the opening day of the Ghetto Biennale, Mabelle and I put on our dresses in the shack next to Papada's *hounfor* and waited while the audience assembled. It was very busy, and the remaining space for the performance was smaller than we had expected. The audience was a mixture of local residents, Haitian artists, international artists, art tourists who had come for the Biennale, and a few visiting journalists.

<sup>121</sup> McCarthy Brown, 'The Veve of Haitian Vodou', p. 203.



Images 4.7–4.8: Katy Beinart and Mabelle Williams, *Goute Sel*, Port-au-Prince (13 December 2013). Photograph: Jason Metcalf



After practising several times and trying on our Mambo dresses, Mabelle and I created a twin veve in Papada's yard, on the opening day of the Biennale, 13th December 2013. The yard was packed with people and we had to swing our skirts carefully to avoid wiping out the careful work.

We had to wait while Papada blessed the yard, and I felt the slowness of making the pattern as our audience watched and the drummers played and Papada sang.

Since Haiti is a country at a crossroads, and has been for centuries a crossroads of trade, migration, journeying, it felt right that the veve we made was to 'Kalfou', the spirit of the crossroads. Haiti has a troubled and difficult history, but it is also a history of finding identity, an identity which mixes cultures and keeps adapting. Haiti is a place which gets under your skin, and asks you to think about the skin you are in.<sup>122</sup>

In her structural analysis of the *veve*, McCarthy Brown decodes the spatial nature of the ritual. She describes how the *veve* operates along an axis and represents a series of oppositions. In her view, creating a *veve* serves to delineate a space as sacred, and often acts as the beginning of a ritual activity. The oppositions present in the *veve* design reflect aspects of the Vodou religion and of Haitian society. The left–right axis creates exclusive categories on either side that allow no mediation between them, while the up–down axis allows mediation of the categories it divides and thus enables transformation. On the left is the realm of the gods, on the right the realm of the living community/family. The left position designates the category as an outside and therefore foreign. Communication between the two realms of left and right requires highly trained ambassadors (the *hougan*). Each direction in the *veve* design also refers to natural forces and their meaning in Vodou. The direction of 'up' has the quality of fire, which denotes power, while 'down' has the quality of water, which signifies knowledge. The water also refers to *Gine*, the realm of the *loas*, or ancestors.<sup>123</sup>

Another opposition in the design occurs between the centre and the edges of the *veve*. The pattern begins from the centre and moves outwards to the edges, and finally details (*Pwe*) are added to the edges, which represent the powers of *loa*, or the spirit who is being called. The contrast indicated in this part of the design is between the individual and the collective, with the centre of the *veve* representing the collective and the *Pwe* or edges representing the individual

<sup>122</sup> Beinart, 'Salted Earth', blog, 5 January 2014.

<sup>123</sup> McCarthy Brown, 'The Veve of Haitian Vodou', pp. 158-60, 241.



Images 4.9–4.10: Katy Beinart and Mabelle Williams, *Goute Sel*, Port-au-Prince (13 December 2013). Photograph: Jason Metcalf

gods.<sup>124</sup> This opposition is represented spatially and architecturally in the layout of the *hounfor*, with the *poto-mitan* at the centre of the peristyle representing the collective and the altars at the sides representing the individual *loas*.<sup>125</sup>

*Kalfou* is a *Kreyol* word, which translates into the French as *carrefour*, literally meaning crossroads. Metaphorically, this has a poetic sense of a crossroads. The axes of this crossroads represent the past and present, and a location on site and off site. These are two axes of Relation, that is a meeting point of ourselves in the present with our and others' ancestors in the past, and a meeting point between the place we are currently in and the other places we have been and will be in, which we bring with us. Deren describes how, in Vodou cosmology, the crossroads are a 'metaphor for the mirror's depth', an intersection of the horizontal plane (the mortal world) and the vertical plane (the metaphysical place), and the point of access to the world of '*Les Invisibles*', making the crossroads the most important of all ritual figures.<sup>126</sup>

It is interesting to think about how making the *veve* with salt functioned in the performance with Mabelle, where she was an insider, already a believer in Vodou, and I an outsider, not an initiate. In contacting *loas*, it seems more likely that Mabelle could make a genuine connection through the act of making the *veve*. But in using salt, perhaps the meaning of the *veve* is altered, as I made my own call to the spirits of my ancestors through using the material associated with them. As McCarthy Brown suggests, 'ritual is a metalanguage'.<sup>127</sup> By altering the material used in the ritual, the language of the ritual shifts.

Before we began the *veve*, we opened a bag of the *Goute Sel* salt and poured this into bowls which we used during the performance. After we created the *veve*, Mabelle and I handed around the bowls of salt we had used and asked the audience to 'taste salt'. The act of tasting drew the audience directly into the ritual and connected them to the awakening and regenerative qualities of salt to which I wanted to draw attention. By tasting the salt, the audience were asked to enter into the ritual in a bodily sense. Grande-Saline, the site from where the salt had come, referenced Haiti's colonial history, and, in linking this to the literary text and the meaning of *Goute Sel*, the audience were being asked to literally encounter the taste of salt as a connection to that history.

Throughout the performance, Mabelle and I mirrored each other's gestures, in part to make sure we had the correct design, and in part reflecting the *veve*'s mirror symmetry.<sup>128</sup> We had discussed the need to keep pace with each other, wanting the appearance of the performance

<sup>124</sup> McCarthy Brown, 'The Veve of Haitian Vodou', pp. 241, 271.

<sup>125</sup> Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, pp. 36, 47, 182.

<sup>126</sup> Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, p. 35.

<sup>127</sup> McCarthy Brown, 'The Veve of Haitian Vodou', p. xix.

<sup>128</sup> Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, p. 34.



to be simultaneous. I was acutely aware of her movements. The heat, the long dresses – which dragged on the ground and so had to be held up throughout the ritual – and the precision of the *veve* design made the process slow. The *karabela* dresses, used by *mambos* performing Vodou ceremonies, had been hired from a local woman. The *karabela* is similar in style to the Jamaican quadrille dress, which is made of a type of plain fabric known as *madras*, imported by the British from the Indian colonies. Beginning in the seventeenth century, each slave received a specific allotment of the fabric.<sup>129</sup> The gradual adaptation of the fabric and dress style from a Western European dance dress to a Jamaican or Haitian dress was a form of creolization. The women had a few colours and sizes, which Mabelle and I tried on by candlelight in her shack at night. The dresses were too big for us, so we had to secure them with safety pins.

Wearing a *karabela*, painstakingly laying salt in tiny lines on the ground, at some points during the ritual, I felt a loss of self and of my identity. Initially, I felt conscious of myself as a non-Haitian, performing a sacred ritual in a sacred space, surrounded by an audience. But as the performance went on, I felt totally caught up in the making of the *veve*, to the point where I forgot about the presence of the audience. Afterwards, someone told me that one of the Haitians thought I was a real *mambo* and that they saw the performance as a Vodou ritual rather than an artwork.

Although I had begun the performance with an idea that I was making a spectacle for an audience, I accidentally became authentic. I went from being an artist observing a ritual to being an ethnographic subject, one of the performers of the ritual. This distorted my subjectivity. I was both the tourist gazing and the subject of the tourist gaze. I had also opened up a set of questions around the self and Other, which, framed by Glissant's concept of opacity in connection with visibility and the gaze, asked what was being made visible and what was being concealed. In Frohnäpfel's description, artists who were anti-establishment would usually come to the Ghetto Biennale with a bias towards wanting to believe wholeheartedly in the 'authentic' other. Therefore, the observation of ritual by a visiting artist might be overly conformist, wanting to relate to the 'Other' as authentic. So where did I stand in this? Had I become 'Othered'? Had my identity become more opaque?

The role of the audience and the relationship between the audience and performer in this specific context became complicated by the number of different relationships, gazes and expectations: a gendered gaze observing two women mirroring gestures; a postcolonial gaze observing a white woman observing a black woman and a black woman observing a white woman; and a tourist gaze observing the remaking of a ritual through a hybridized form of performance. The performance enabled a *détour* from expected ideas of identity and behaviour, even as artists; identities were subverted and swapped. Dressed in identical costume, Mabelle

<sup>129</sup> Elizabeth Gackstetter Nichols and Timothy R. Robbins (eds), *Pop Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean* (



and I were of a similar height and body shape, and we performed identical movements. We were both similar and different, not attempting to become one another or to clearly identify where our similarity or difference began or ended. Like Glissant's concept of opacity – which resists and contests understanding, a false identification with the other, or an attempt to become the other – our performance resisted easy understanding.<sup>130</sup>

My identity as a white female artist in a Vodou ritual was not at all unprecedented in the Haitian Vodou context. For example, Deren engaged with Vodou as an artist-filmmaker and ethnographer, in her film project that became *Divine Horsemen*.<sup>131</sup> Vron Ware argues that being a white woman is 'a social category that is inescapably racialized as well as gendered. It is not about *being* a white woman, it is about *being thought of* as a white woman.' Ware sees white femininity as a historically constructed concept which acknowledges the passive role of white women in colonial histories.<sup>132</sup> The role of white women in Haitian colonial history is an uncomfortable one. Joan Dayan explores portrayals of plantation owners' wives who were often extremely cruel. Dayan highlights the importance of skin colour in Haitian society, and skin as a place of torture and thereafter magic in Vodou religion. She also suggests a connection between the rubbing of salt in a slave's wounds and salt's role in releasing the spirit from the body.<sup>133</sup> However, Phillipe Girard maintains that the role of white women in Haitian society was more complex, particularly in the context of war, where 'race, class and nationality frequently trumped gender'.<sup>134</sup> Colonial-era Haiti was:

An Atlantic society at the crossroads of European, African and American influences and fragmented along racial, social, political, national and gender lines. Race was an important dividing line, as blacks and whites battled each other and the *mulatres* (mulattoes) while internecine warfare pitted Creole blacks against their African-born brethren. But one's class affiliations also mattered; Saint-Domingue's planters (or *grands blancs*) were a world apart from the colonial rabble derisively known as *petits blancs*.<sup>135</sup>

During the Haitian revolution, white women were massacred along with the white men, as 'for the black population, white women were as much a part of the colonial order as the men were, because they owned slaves, benefited from their labour and were stridently racist.'<sup>136</sup> Until the

<sup>130</sup> Celia Britton, 'Opacity and transparency: Conceptions of history and cultural difference in the work of Michael Butor and Edouard Glissant', *French Studies*, 49 (1995), pp. 308-20.

<sup>131</sup> Maya Deren and Teji Ito, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (filmed 1947-1954) USA, 1985, 16mm, black and white, 54 mins.

<sup>132</sup> Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale* (London: Verso, 1992), p. xii. Her emphasis.

<sup>133</sup> Dayan, *Haiti, History and Gods*, p. 265.

<sup>134</sup> Girard, 'Rebelles', p. 63.

<sup>135</sup> Girard, 'Rebelles', p. 61.

<sup>136</sup> Girard, 'Rebelles', p. 72.





twentieth century, when white American and European women came to Haiti to study and share knowledge of its society and culture, there were no white women in Haiti.

Over the two weeks I stayed in Haiti, I was aware of how gender and race were spatialized for all the artists. Most of the visiting artists were staying at the Hotel Olofsson, and, while we were encouraged to invite the Haitian artists to join us on the terrace of the hotel, I knew they would have to make a long walk home. I felt the awkwardness of leaving the 'Ghetto' site each day to return to the relative luxury and safety of our hotel site, and we were warned not to travel alone and to be careful when leaving the hotel site. At the Ghetto Biennale site, I was conscious of trying to follow the social rules of its space, but sometimes I found the dense social contact too much. At times, I retreated to the hotel, but I felt guilty that I had the choice to do so. Those who lived in the ghetto had nowhere to retreat to. So, while the performance space might enable me to become 'Othered' in that moment, I was acutely aware that I held a privilege that did not leave at the end of the performance.

Turner's analysis of the ritual process shows how the ritual creates an affirmation of social order by inverting that order. The beginning and end of a ritual are liminal moments when there is a shift away from social structures to the disorder of the ritual. Turner also calls attention to the dynamic qualities of symbols.<sup>137</sup> Salt can be seen, therefore, as indexical to liminality, and as creating a space where oppositions can move between boundaries. This would fit in with salt's ambiguity, both harmful and healing, which Jones noted in his symbolism of salt and which Glissant's salt poetry also alludes to. Through the use of salt, and our mirroring movements, I suggest that a liminal space was created that overlapped art performance and ritual, momentarily transforming or overlapping identities. The salt poetically overlapped past and present. The mirror overlapped one present and another present, confusing identities.

Salt as a reference to the sea also links to the *Gine*, the Vodou spirit under water underworld, and to the passage of slaves across the Atlantic. This also connects to the 'unacknowledged history' of the Caribbean salt economy.<sup>138</sup> And it links to the poetics of salt in Haitian and Caribbean literature, such as Glissant's *Black Salt*. The site the salt had been brought from, Grande-Saline, referenced Haiti's colonial history, and the *Goute Sel* text referenced recent political history. In addition, my own ancestral story of my salt-trading great-grandfather offered a crossroads, producing a transcultural ritual which brought together a personal story of ancestral migration, with the meaning of the *Kalfou veve* as a crossroads and a point of Relation, between ourselves in the present and our ancestors and others' ancestors in the past, and a meeting point between the current location and the other locations we have come from. This is what Glissant calls a 'point of entanglement': through being brought into Relation, participants become aware

<sup>137</sup> Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967); Turner, *The Ritual Process*.

<sup>138</sup> Speitz, 'Blood sugar and salt licks', section 2.



of boundaries and permeabilities between self and Other.

The material poetics of salt in the performance can, therefore, be understood in the context of a material culture which refers symbolically to remembrance, both through its indexical connections to a particular site, and through its wider connections to the Atlantic and slavery. The taste of salt embodies memory and refers to the liberation from being a *zombi*, or political awakening. Salting practices are indexical to memory and to a specific heritage of place. The activation of salt in a spatialized performative encounter brings alive hidden memories. This quality of salt, to form the poetic ground of Relation, and through taste or touch to offer both memory and transference, was offered in the temporary space of the *veve*. In the ritual, the spatial qualities of Relation were foregrounded. In the context of Rendell's work on spatializing the relational encounter, and Glissant's concept of opacity and Laplanche's 'enigmatic other', I suggest that this particular salt practice allowed opacity and difference between visiting and host artists at the Ghetto Biennale.

## Section 2: The *Brixton Museum (Retour)*

After the Ghetto Biennale, there was a hiatus in my research while I went on a personal *détour*. I moved city and had a baby. During this period, some changes had taken place in the individual directions of those in the Anchor & Magnet collaboration. We had developed the Heritage project outlined at the end of Project 3, been offered some funding through the Lambeth Council Heritage Projects fund, and put in a funding bid to the Arts Council. In the meantime, regeneration in Brixton was growing apace and there was increased contestation over the changes. Groups formed to resist the Council's plans, and there was an angry *furor* over the Network Rail plan to regenerate the railway arches along Atlantic Road, which included the A&C Continental Delicatessen shop I had bought salt cod from, and whose owner José had participated in our *Dinner Party* in Project 2. These contestations made the intention behind our project work even more critical, brought to the fore feelings over how our work was seen by others in the community, and as we continued with the next phase of the project, the nature of our collaboration and roles shifted.

We had planned a three-part project: a film, *Brixton Conversations*; a public artwork, *The Brixton Museum*; and a second version of the Brixton Exchange.<sup>139</sup> The film aimed to pair Brixton residents – a long-term resident and a recent arrival in each pairing – and ask them to discuss their connection to Brixton and thoughts on the changes. The funding from the Arts Council came through in summer 2015, a few weeks after I had given birth, and due to funding requirements of Lambeth Council we had to produce the film and the Museum artwork by their deadline of October 2015.

### *Brixton Conversations (2015)*

Recruiting participants for the film proved to be more challenging than we had anticipated, as some people we approached felt that the changes the Council had instigated were too contentious, while others had a sense of fatigue about talking about Brixton. Finding recent arrivals who were willing to speak on camera was even harder. We were also logistically restricted: setting one day for filming, due to the cost of hiring a location, equipment and a technical team, we had to pin everyone down to that day. I involved family as on-the-spot childcare while I switched between the roles of breastfeeding mother and director, and Kate had to organize childcare for her two children so her partner could help with the sound. These challenges brought to the fore a feminist subjectivity to the work we were doing.

The filming took place at Brixton East, the venue for the first Exchange, on 19 August 2015. Each pair was set up in a different conversation setting, with the two participants mirroring each

<sup>139</sup>The title *Drysalter* wasn't used in the final project.



Image 4.11: Katy Beinart and Kate Theophilus, *Brixton Conversations*, film still

other (Image 4.11). Two cameras were set up so there was a split screen in the final film. The intention behind this was to emphasize the ‘mirroring’ in the conversation. Connecting to *Goute Sel*, as well as to artworks made in the previous projects, I recognized a returning theme of a mirroring between two people. In *Offere*, *Offere 2* and the *Goute Sel* performance, this mirroring created an awareness of the self and Other as always in Relation. For *Brixton Conversations*, I wanted to emphasize the aspects of both opacity and Relation, by framing each person separately while they were in conversation in the same setting.

We asked each person taking part in the film to bring an object that represented their connection to Brixton, and we had their objects in shot. The objects (which included a shopping trolley, a Vodou statue, a bottle of hair oil, a shirt, a box of toothpicks, a porkpie hat, a tea set, a pestle and mortar, and a framed photograph) became part of the dialogue as well. I photographed the objects during the shoot, recording them for the *Museum* artwork.

The edit of the film was a painstaking process of reducing many fascinating conversations down to a 30-minute version. When the film was screened on 7 November 2015 at The Ritzy, over 80 people packed into the upstairs of the cinema. Strong feelings were expressed in the discussion afterwards, but it was also a space that was very open to *détour*: one of the participants in the film, Bushman, declaimed his poetry. In the film screening, as in the *Goute Sel* performance, the spatial Relation between artists/participants in the work, and the audience, became foregrounded. The film highlights Relation by placing two people who do not know each other into conversation, and it implicates the viewer through their identification with one or both of the people in the conversation.

### ***The Brixton Museum (2015–16)***

The intention of the *Brixton Museum* artwork was to showcase some of the physical objects people had brought to the film shoot, as well as other relics and stories collected through the Anchor & Magnet projects. My self-written brief combined both conceptual approaches and practical aspects that the *Museum* needed to take into account. The plan was for the *Museum* to be mobile, so it needed to be of a certain scale to fit through doors of buildings. It also needed to be lightweight but strong enough to carry objects and be moved around. It had to be possible to dismantle and store it. I asked questions about how the *Museum* would process objects and conversations, and how it would preserve and retain traces of these. I also considered how the *Museum* would allow participation and forms of Relation.

My ideas for the design had come from some earlier research I had done into reliquaries – religious containers for relics, often of saints’ bones. This had been inspired in part by the Haitian shrines I had seen, where objects were placed with particular significance around the display. I had also researched the original drawings for the market arcades that had formerly stood on

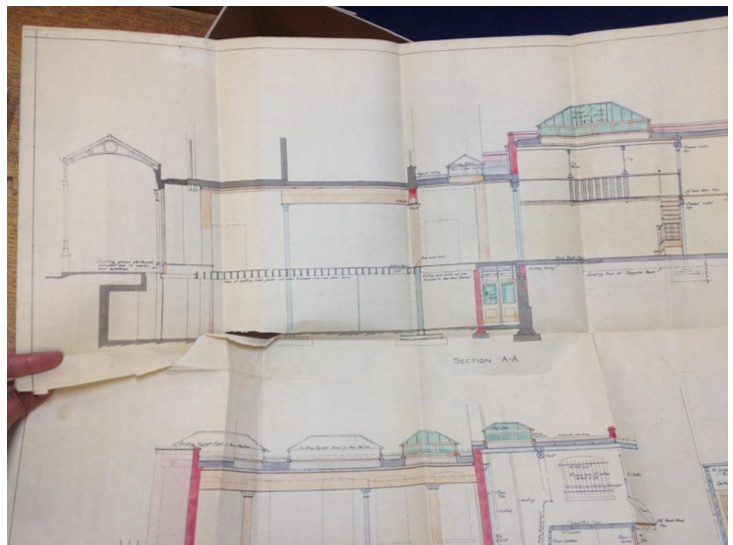
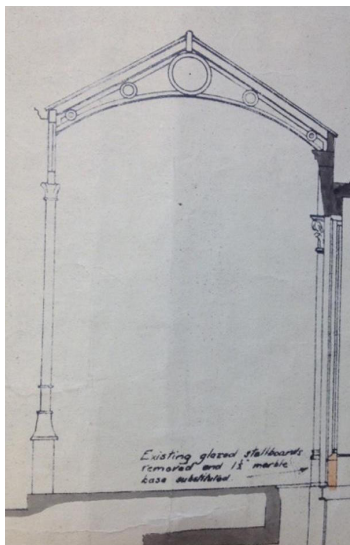


Image 4.12- 4.13: Reliquary Shrine, Attributed to Jean de Touyl. Source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/62.96/>

Image 4.14: Market arcades. Source: Lambeth Council Archives (detail shown enlarged)

Electric Avenue in Brixton, and I had looked at the steel cages used by traders to wheel goods around.

For the *Museum* design, the area provided by the metal grid and roof offered a sense of protection and enclosure, similar to outdoor market stalls, where the structures of the stalls were not physical buildings but demarcated spaces of shelter and trade, although the edges were permeable by both people and weather. My design sketches were developed in collaboration with a fabricator and built as a steel-frame structure on wheels.

Meanwhile, I was developing ways of making object-traces for the objects from the film shoot, as traces of conversation and of the objects themselves (which had to be returned to their owners). I wanted my reproductions to provide indexical traces of the objects and therefore of the conversations. Exploring ways to do this with salt, I had previously attempted to make wax and salt casts from the objects (see Project 3). The challenge at this stage was time and distance, as I had access to some, but not all, of the objects. My first attempt was to model porcelain reliefs based on the photos I had taken. Then I tried to make physical traces or casts of the objects, also in porcelain (see Images 4.16–4.17). I had been researching the salt-glazing process, in which salt is thrown into a kiln in the firing process, but I was unable to locate a kiln for this. I considered casting the objects in salt, but I was torn between a permanent object that could remain in the collection of the *Museum* and an ephemeral object that remained only for a short time.

The *Museum* went on display in the Brixton Library and in Brixton Archives in autumn 2015 and was shown again in April 2016 at the Brixton Exchange 2.<sup>140</sup> The salting practices I tested in the *Museum* attempted to record traces of conversations, and through this to record Relation. I wondered if it was possible to make a permanent indexical trace of Relation, but, considering the *Goute Sel* performance, perhaps Relation is most effectively represented in work that is living, active and present. The *Museum* was a form of postindexical work, where the referent is no longer clear, but the trace allows a connection to the signified in another way, representing its absence. This connects to Glissant's idea of the trace as something enigmatic and handed down through the loss of the original experience.

<sup>140</sup> Oliver Carter, review of Brixton Exchange 2, 23 April 2016, A-N website, <<https://www.a-n.co.uk/reviews/the-brixton-exchange-2>> [accessed 30 August 2017].



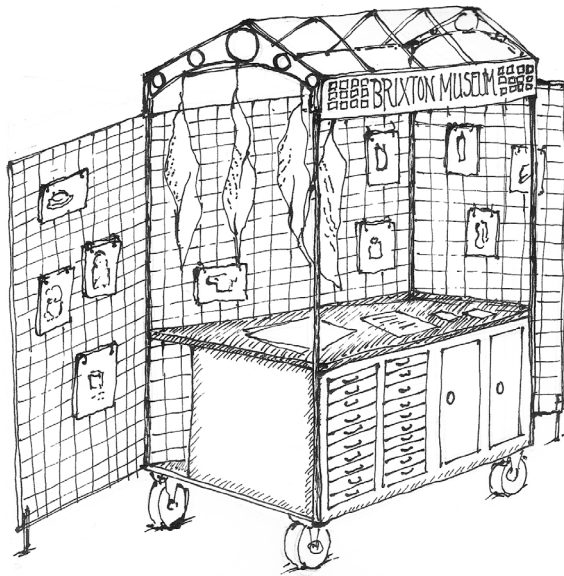


Image 4.15: Sketches for Brixton Museum  
Image 4.16-4.17 Object reproductions





Image 4.18: *Brixton Museum* at Brixton Library



## **Conclusion**



The aim of this thesis was initially to explore a problematic that arose around the conjunction of migration, memory and regeneration as part of my previous work. I aimed to do this through working artistically with a salting practice that explores the material poetics of salt in relation to places and their diasporas, with a focus on migration and regeneration in Brixton.

I proposed in the introduction that framing regeneration through migration could offer a different approach, one that sees place as related to the relational movement of people, and material culture, through a place. I suggested that this might then offer a 'poetics of re-generation', and, through this, understandings of how heritage is negotiated and produced in regeneration contexts, particularly in places where the heritage is contested.

I therefore used a series of *détours* and *retours* as a way of understanding a place, by going outside of the place itself. I used salt as a vehicle to explore the possibilities of place, given its historical significance for migration and its possibilities as an indexical trace of the journey, in the process discovering how the material poetics of salt relates to heritage and regeneration and offers understandings of place. Salt exists as a conduit between different cultures and places, mapping a network of entanglements. And it acts as an index of cultural tradition and spatial distribution, and as a material object in its own right that is manufactured and consumed within the communities and places I passed through and to.

I also asked in the thesis whether there is a potential for the poetics of place, and place-specific art, to play a role in heritage and regeneration in contested sites, starting from readings of the existing poetics of performance in place (for example of Brixton Market) and generating responsive new artworks. I suggested that salt's role as an index might be one that challenges conventional understandings of the meanings of regeneration, and that it offers instead a redefining of the meaning of regeneration in particular sites and places – as re-generation. Re-generation acknowledges and allows for a more ethical engagement with the past, through understanding the 'spectral traces' of a place and their relation to new life.

Through the *détour* and *retour*, the poetics that my salting practice offers makes connections between the 'homeplace' of Brixton, and the diasporas, and it underlines the networks of entanglement and relation which enable better understanding of the contestations of the place itself. Salt highlights the relevance and significance of daily practices, rituals and engagement with material culture to how places are made and continue to be remade or maintained.

Through my practice emerged the questions of how an artist represents another's story, and of how individual authorship and collective participation in a piece of artwork might contribute to our knowledge of a place. The practice demands, therefore, an understanding and critique of relation. I use Glissant's work on Relation to develop an ethical understanding of difference between self and Other. In Glissant's reading of Relation, and his understanding of the point of entanglement, maintaining and acknowledging difference is important, as is understanding and

respecting opacity. I argue that using these understandings in re-generation processes could offer productive and ethical approaches to roles and relationships.

Basing the artistic practice on a reading of regeneration through Glissant, and on the idea of salt as a material poetics, I aimed to:

- create a poetics of salt in relation to migration and regeneration.
- understand how the poetics of salt 'speak' and what the 'message' might be.
- understand how, through salt practices, relations between self and other, individual and communal are materialized.

I therefore propose that the contributions to knowledge made by this thesis include the development of my specific salting practice, which has also enabled me to define a material poetics of salt. And alongside this, a reframing of Glissant's ideas of *détour* and *retour*, and also his work on Relation and concepts of entanglement, *errance*, opacity and trace, to offer a potential means of reframing regeneration discourse in Brixton. In the following pages I set out how each project's *détour* and *retour* produced specific knowledge and understandings of the material poetics of salt, relation and regeneration. At the end, I summarize the key contributions this thesis makes. As a key to the conclusion and the overall findings of the thesis, I have made a revised version of the Methodology diagram in Part 1, Section 3. (Image 5.1<sup>1</sup>)

In Project 1, through re-enacting (in reverse) a journey from Eastern Europe to South Africa made by my ancestors, I discovered a personal connection to salt by *extracting* salt from the salt pans once harvested by my great-grandfather. Through this journey, I understood how heritage might be disentangled from narratives of orthodoxy and acknowledge complexity, as in Glissant's 'relation-identity', in particular with the artwork *Don't Look Back* (2010). In the film *Offère* (2010), objects and artefacts lost their distinction as authentic heirloom or borrowed object, and salt became a *carrier* between past and present. The salt erased our trace, suggesting the power of salt to both *preserve and erase* (or *corrode*). In another work, *Sal sapit omnia* (2010), salt offered both *preservation* (and therefore survival) and the delicate *balance* of ecology.

On my *retour* to Brixton, I suggested that, through trading it for stories on a market stall, salt became a *transformational*, performative object, linking personal stories of migration and material culture. The *Memory Preservation Salts* (2010) worked in a form of relational *exchange*, operating poetically to represent *protection and preservation* of memory within different diasporic cultures. The *détour* enabled a questioning of lines between self and Other on the *retour*, and the artworks highlighted entanglements between narratives.

<sup>1</sup> Also available at [www.katybeinart.co.uk/saltedearth.html](http://www.katybeinart.co.uk/saltedearth.html)





In this practice, using performative and participatory arts practices offered possible routes to unpicking the complex inheritances and multiple narratives of place, and how these relate to questions of regeneration. Therefore, the practice, and in particular the salt, *destabilized* fixed meanings, opening them up to operate as stimuli for creative acts of individual and collective memory. In this situation, salt is *alive* – it changes state and reacts to surroundings.

In Project 2, I made a journey from the UK to Eastern Europe to try to find family history which had left little trace. In this chapter I discussed how memory work can, as Glissant suggests in his use of ‘trace’, be both a physical retracing and a form of memory handed down. I referred to Karen Till’s term ‘spectral traces’ to describe the resurfacing of absent pasts through ritual acts of remembrance.

I connected to rituals of memory by making bread and using bread and salt in a threshold ritual, *Khlebosolny* (2012) in which the materiality of bread and salt became *tools to fill absences*, and to embody different kinds of meaning. The mingling of past and present, and mingling our own identities with others, connects to Glissant’s Relation, where an encounter with an Other is realized as a part of the entanglements of world-wide Relation. In this encounter, the salt (and bread) were indexical to an experience of entanglement and of *crossing a threshold*. The *taste* of salt and bread in the ritual, in this site, offered a poetics of salt as *entanglement*, a direct way (through the material) of encountering the other, in this case our ancestors.

Through ephemeral memorials using salt, we left *residual* traces. The work we made in Vilnius and the Lithuanian villages is remembrance as an act made present, and I suggested that this ongoing process of mediation in the present can be seen as attaching specific meaning to memory by enacting it. Therefore, a choice is continually being made about how this memory and heritage is reproduced.

In the *retour*, I discussed the *Anchor & Magnet* residency and *Dinner Party* (2012), and through this, what is important in relational artwork and whether an ethical or aesthetic value is primary. I looked at the process of collaborative practice, where self gives way to Other and individual practice opens up to collaborative practice. Through the production of the artwork, salt’s role in *flavouring* food was highlighted. In making *Bacalau*, there was a removal of salt from cod but a *retention of flavour*. I uncovered salt’s role in trade as a *preserver* of food and as a *balancing* element in making bread. I explored how through tasting and speaking – the haptic and the verbal – re-generation is named/produced.

In Project 3, I used the idea of performing the journey as a secular pilgrimage or *errance* (to use Glissant’s term) on behalf of another, in a *détour* to find the origin of the salted cod from Brixton Market. This journey raised questions around my role as both artist and researcher, and the balance between telling my own story and performing another’s. I articulated a key problematic: how stories are told in a situation of encounter between those of different cultural backgrounds,

and how this relation constructs both myself as the artist and the Other. Glissant's concept of opacity became relevant in thinking about subjectivities and understanding.

In the *salinas*, the aspect of duration was made evident and the *crystallization* of the salt was a visible process. Making work for a gallery installation, I recreated the process of *crystallization* with a scaled-down version of the *salinas*. The *Saltworks* (2013) installation represented the physical experience of being in the salt pans and the chemical qualities of salt as an *unpredictable, changing force*. The poetic function of the salt as index in the gallery was to interiorize the sea and the *salinas*, to enable viewers to 'see' the process taking place on the *salinas*, and to understand this *dissolution* and *crystallization* in relation to themselves.

Although we experience salt through taste, the salt prints offered another kind of index, with salt located as both an image and the *constructor* of the image. While salt is no longer necessary to preserve food, the *taste* of salt is still essential to many cultures, and older processes that use salt have continued – spectral traces of past histories. In the Mercado da Ribeira, I asked if the architecture could be seen as a memorial to a more direct experience of processing, selling and consuming food. The material culture of salt cod and the architecture of the markets are remnants of previous cultural meaning which still hold currency; they are, therefore, a material poetics linking to ecologies and histories of trade and migration (and colonialism). But this can be traded on by an ersatz nostalgia.

In the *retour*, I discussed conversations around heritage in Brixton that led to the development of a new proposal titled *drysalter* to address a need to bring relation into regeneration processes. Then in the recreation of *Saltworks* in London, I described how the indexicality of the work shifted. The mixing that occurred in the gallery this time was anonymous – and therefore not indexical of particular sites and journeys. As the salt mixed with the water in the installation, it *stained* the legs of the salt table. The patterns were delicate, but they acted as registers of passing time. Salt's ability to act as an *index of change* reflected the work I had done with salt photography in Portugal.

Finally, in Project 4, I explored the context of salt as intrinsic to the history of Haiti (and the Caribbean) as a part of the colonial slave and commodity trade between Europe, the Caribbean and North America. Here I considered a material poetics of salt as slavery, or *enslaving*. But through literatures of salt as containing *emotion* (as in tears), and as a sign of *survival*, I expanded the poetics of this context to include a range of understandings right up to salt as liberation in the *zombi* myth of Haitian Vodou. I also engaged with Glissant's *Black Salt* poems and their references to slavery and survival. In Glissant's poetics of salt, salt points directly to a place, the Atlantic. In this context, salt is indexical to the middle passage, the journey undertaken by slaves crossing from Africa.

Through the performance artwork *Goute sel* (2013), I examined myths of the *zombi*, and structures and rituals of Haitian Vodou, including the *veve*. In using salt in the *veve*, I suggested that the meaning of the *veve* is altered, as I made my own call to the spirits of my ancestors by using a material associated with them. The act of tasting drew the audience directly into the ritual and connected them to the *awakening* or *liberating and regenerative* qualities of salt. By *tasting* the salt, the audience were asked to enter into the ritual in a bodily sense. Grande-Saline, the site the salt had been brought from, referenced Haiti's colonial history, and, in linking this site to the meaning of *Goute sel*, the audience were being asked to literally encounter the taste of salt as a connection to that history.

Working in collaboration with Haitian artist Mabelle, and mutually mirroring our movements, I suggested that a liminal space was created that overlapped art performance and ritual, momentarily transforming or overlapping identities. I discussed how the performance relations between each other and the audience highlighted opacity and the gaze, bringing out what was hidden/complicit and what was revealed/explicit. In producing a transcultural ritual, we brought together a personal story of ancestral migration, with the meaning of the *Kalfou veve* as a crossroads and a point of Relation, between ourselves in the present with our ancestors and others' ancestors in the past; and it was a meeting point between locations, and a point of entanglement. I suggested that a quality of salt is to form the ground of Relation, and through taste or touch to offer both memory traces and *transference* between places and times, which was offered through the temporary space of the *veve*.

In the *retour*, I made the film *Brixton Conversations* (2015), which highlighted aspects of Relation between the participants, and asked the viewer to consider how they are implicated. Through the relation between self and Other, in the film and the viewer of the film, relational questions in current regeneration plans are raised. I then created the artwork *Brixton Museum* (2015-16) as a receptacle to hold objects collected and remade through the projects I had carried out in Brixton. I asked a series of questions about how I could *preserve* objects and conversations, and how salt processes might enable this to happen as a permanent indexical trace of Relation.

To summarize, the relationship between theory and practice in the thesis was developed through the projects, which, taken together, were responses to Brixton and its diaspora, and to the practices already in place in the site, such as performances of exchange in the market. Through my personal family connection to salt, I noticed the connection to salt and the salt trade in Brixton Market, which led to my interest in the area (coupled with its current regeneration plans). My development of the network of sites and my performances of the *détour* and *retour* journeys were informed by combining Brixton's diasporas with my own. Drawing on Glissant's writing, which I found through his salt poetry, I framed my journeys by using his concepts of *détour* and *retour*, and through his work I was able to reflect on my practice and on the theoretical issues already embedded and performed in my artworks.

Therefore, the work I have produced in this thesis develops a poetics of salting practice, as a place-specific response to Brixton, while connecting to personal and wider diasporas. This work builds on practice by Iain Biggs and others connected to the PLaCE consortium, as well as research by the Mapping Spectral Traces network, that bridges art practice and academic research in relation to particular places. My adaption of *détour* and *retour* into a series of journeys offers a model of practice-based research that moves between art, architecture, geography, literary theory and urbanism. Therefore, it makes contributions into, across, and in-between these fields.

I conclude by offering the overarching contributions I think this thesis makes.

Firstly, by adapting Glissant's concepts of *détour* and *retour*, and using Relation, entanglement, *errance*, opacity and trace, in the particular context of regeneration in Brixton, I have contributed to knowledge and understanding of Glissant's work, and expanded its applicable use and the possible future development of his poetics. My practice of journeys of *détour* and *retour* made visible the diasporic connections that are vital to maintain in Brixton's narrative. Through these journeys I also identified complex ethics and politics of undertaking heritage-based roots journeys. My relational practice and creation of artistic works as traces of Relation highlighted the complex and entangled relationships in Brixton and its diasporas. And my role as an artist encountering an Other offered an opportunity to understand opacity and difference. This work contributes to Glissant scholarship in the field of literary studies, but also to wider discussions of his work including artistic curatorial projects by Hans Ulrich Obrist<sup>2</sup> and thinking through how Glissant's work could be applied to architecture and urbanism, where more work needs to be developed. I also identified links between Glissant's opacity and Laplanche's enigmatic other, which offer a future direction to be developed further in relating psychoanalytical thinking to other disciplines and across cultures, to understand the position and relation of self and Other, and ask questions about the ethics of opacity.

Specifically, through a reinterpretation and testing of Glissant's poetics of Relation in practice, I have offered regeneration studies the possibility of a 'poetics of re-generation' that asks us to understand how Relation is important in regeneration processes. The practice of this poetics asks for an ethical and creative engagement with places and their communities, that understand the poetics of a place, and develop a way of manifesting this poetics so that it is made tangible. This poetics then speaks back to the politics of regeneration by asking it not to just consider how change will affect the physical fabric of place but also how it will affect the relational and social fabric, and the memories contained within it and beyond it. In my practice, I set out to do this by understanding relational practice as spatial, which connects it back to architecture and urbanism. Whilst the specific quality of salting practice offered particular understandings of

<sup>2</sup> Hans Ulrich Obrist and Asad Razā eds. *Mondialité: or The Archipelagos of Édouard Glissant* (Paris: Editions Skira, 2017)

Brixton's poetics, I recognise that there were limitations to what I could achieve in developing a wider poetics of re-generation. Therefore I would be interested to see whether it would be possible to make similar studies in advance of proposed regeneration projects, which map the relational connections and create a similar poetics of place. However this would take a shift of power in the way regeneration models currently work, and ask them to work more ethically in policy and practice. Returning to my idea of healing place, re-generation can be seen as an alternative to regeneration in that it promotes the healing of a place through relational means, rather than solely economic means.

As I made the *détours* and *retours*, what was unexpected was the stories told along the way. Everyone I met in the course of the work would have a story, anecdote, or meaning related to salt to pass on. In this way, the salting practices expanded as I travelled. The stories told in Brixton, about a sense of home and belonging, were less surprising to me, but at the same time the more entangled I became with these multiple lines of belonging, the more I saw that as a single practitioner it would be a life's work to document these stories. Instead I felt that my practice could represent poetic versions of these stories, ones which were indexical to the individual stories. Representing others stories ethically or otherwise is vital to discussions of art practice and how it contributes to or resists scenarios of rapid regeneration and change like that in Brixton.

Through my relational art practices and my work on subjectivities in art practice and criticism, I have developed critical thought that could contribute to current debates on framing participatory and relational practices, including links between Glissant's *détour* and Relation, on the one hand, and artistic theories of relational aesthetics and *détournement* on the other. In particular, this speaks back to debates in contemporary art about the value of socially engaged art practice, asking for a consideration of the subjective voice of the art historian/art critic. Building on current artists networks and debates, I propose that further work could explore the spaces of social and relational practice, and how these frame practice and criticism.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the salting practice I have developed in the thesis makes an original contribution in a number of ways. Firstly in terms of artistic practice it builds on other work with salt, ritual, performance and making to generate a material and poetic practice that references both natural and cultural processes and has particular links to migration. Secondly in terms of material poetics, my use of salt as an indexical practice that can cross cultures indicates its ability to act in terms of a poetics of Relation, carrying multiple meanings. Salt's sensory qualities in my acts of ritual, performance and installation artworks offer a non-verbal material poetics which I argue enable these artworks to directly generate meaning, through memory. These artworks may, for the viewer, therefore be less directly indexical but more post-indexical, representing an

<sup>3</sup> In November 2018, the first Social Art Summit was held in Sheffield. See: <https://www.socialartsummit.com>. A Social Art Biennale is proposed for 2020.

absence. They also link to forms of postmemory, as through their sensory qualities they provide connections to unknown pasts. The work offers a contribution to theoretical understandings of homeplace and renewal, as we know places through our memories, and sensory associations, for example through the threshold rituals we enacted. This connection between sensory qualities of taste and smell, and memory is a rich area for further theorization. Salting practices allow the continual process of dissolution, crystallization and preservation in the way we make and change place, and the stories and memories we associate with place, to be made tangible.







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## Appendix A: Invitation and list of ideas for ship voyage

**From:** Katy Beinart [<mailto:katy@katybeinart.co.uk>] **Sent:** 29 November 2009 22:15 **To:** [info@katybeinart.co.uk](mailto:info@katybeinart.co.uk) **Subject:** Invitation for Ideas

Hello, As you may or may not be aware, I am imminently due to depart on a long sea voyage, from Europe to South Africa, where I will doing a 3 month residency, with my sister, artist Rebecca Beinart, at Greatmore Studios in Cape Town and the University of Stellenbosch. The journey takes 19 days, and I would like you to send me any ideas you have for activities we could use to while away the hours at sea. This could be a practical activity, a pertinent book or text, a question, or even a thoroughly impractical activity. You can email me the idea or post it to me at XXXXXXXX, but it needs to arrive by Monday 14th December please. We will endeavour to carry out *all* ideas sent in, and document this process. We have a blog which we will use to chart our journey and residency, it's at: [http://www.a-n.co.uk/artists\\_talking/projects\\_preview/520058](http://www.a-n.co.uk/artists_talking/projects_preview/520058) Thank you, Katy

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### Ideas for actions

1. Great idea. On board a ship constantly moving, feeling the elements around you, hearing the sounds of water, people and air...I wonder how it would be to restrict or emphasise your senses, how it would alter your experience. Perhaps spend a day (or few hours!) with a blindfold on and/or ear plugs in relying on just one or two senses to guide you (taste and touch alone would be challenging!). Or spend an hour trying to block out everything but your 5 senses - empty your mind of thoughts, free your body of your own movements and do not speak - just be one with the ship and the environment you're in.

2. When my husband was 5 and his siblings 3yrs and 1 yr his parents decided to sail across the Atlantic in a small boat and live in the Caribbean for for a few months. A big adventure. Jet was going to miss his 1st year at school so his parents taught him to read and write on the boat. He kept a log book everyday of the voyage and when they arrived in the Carribean too. They are really charming little books that record something of excitement from each day with a picture and a few words. His parents often look at them to remember what happened when in the trip... So my suggestion is keep a logbook... I am sure you were planning to do something similar...

3. On the subject of activities on the ship, how about some posed photos of you and Becca on board (or on stop offs, if you have them)? Something like the ones of Ben and Gladys (and possibly Helen as a little girl) on their travels to Europe and the US - there's one on St Helena (Helen with a giant tortoise?) and some on the ships - have you seen them? You can probably imagine the kind of photo if not. Possible way of showing a reversed sea journey -Beinart's travelling the other way (UK to SA) across the seas.

4.Maybe each day you could re-stage one of the most important events in your life of the first 19 years. Day 1 would be year 1 and so on - not sure how many important things happen to children of that age, it could be good for you and sister to each write a timeline in secret from each other and then see what comes from it..? No doubt the suspense of what comes next will keep you both on the edge of your seats from one day to the next.

5. Doctoral proposal

How about finding a few shipboard journals from 19<sup>th</sup> c and writing a commentary on them

Do a great work of art

6. Here are some Ideas. Hope one or two may be of interest, but I know you'll have far too many to fit into a mere 19 days ... Persuade officers to show you the **ship's charts** (all online these days or will they still have paper ones?), explaining that you do cartography. Which should give you ample Ideas for the next fortnight ... Make **crew profiles**: draw a portrait of each crew member or (if too busy with other challenging Ideas to draw real pictures) take photo portraits - then get them to talk a bit about themselves, what it's like working at sea etc, so you have a few paras. to go with the picture - and (??) somehow give them a copy as well as keeping one.

7. Sounds like a fantastic trip. I had an idea the other day: imaginary fish spotting. It involves you and your sister pretending to spot average or fantastical marine life from the side of the ship. Maybe you could document them with simple sketches. For example: day one, no fish spotted; day two, school of minnows; day three, giant squid attacking blue whale port side. What do you think? Might help while away a few hours if you get bored.

8. As for ideas on the boat, I wonder whether you know how to play chess? I don't, and it's something I really wish I could do, so that's my contribution, for better or worse!

9. Why knot? Learn about sailors' knots and invent one of your own. (If you have a copy of 'Shipping News' by Annie Proulx, you'll find pictures of them at the start of chapters.)

On a similar theme you could use a piece of lace or crochet from home as the basis of work. See Vera Tamari's work based on her grandmother's lace curtains (I'll attach a photo). This was part of an exhibition on family traces in the gallery of Bir Zeit university, near Ramallah, strangely similar in some ways to the one I told you about at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

My third idea: Scrimshaw. This used to be done by sailors etching on whale or walrus ivory (in higher latitudes presumably) then rubbing ink or whatever into the grooves - you might have seen some examples in the Pitt Rivers. I thought you could try doing it on bits of white plastic bottles or whatever you can find onboard. You'd need a scratchy thing and some inky stuff, but could improvise.

10. I just had an idea; how about meditation in front the sea? and maybe to hear the sound from it?

11. My idea goes something like this. If you would like to use it, adapted it, or need more info, give me a shout. I would like to know about the crew (or say 4 members of the crew) on board the container ship. By that I mean getting a photograph, a recipe for a dish and any stories that surrounds that dish. I would like the recipe to have been passed down to them by a family member or a member of their community. By getting this recipe I would like to learn something about the cultural heritage of this person. I would then host four evening meals, while you are away, cooking the recipe and telling the guests about this crew member. It would be fun and informal.

12. 19 days on sea sounds like 19 different seascapes. I am fascinated by water and envy you your chance to observe it and be in so close proximity to it for such long time. Enjoy it.

If you are up for it I would like you to notice the sea in a truly George Perec's way - exhaust the subject, see it to the point when nothing is left. You can write down observations, you can photograph observations, you can draw observations, you can sing observations, record observations. Maybe every day you can find different medium to describe what you experience?

13. my other suggestion would be to to create a collage out of 1 piece of scrap you find each day...

14. if you sometime don't have anything to do during long evenings on the sea, just watch the sky and stars, imagine what pictures they form, see what you find in them - I believe that on the sea will be beautiful view.



## Appendix B: The Anchor & Magnet Statement of Intent.

Anchor & Magnet is a project based in Brixton Market and the immediate surrounding area. Our name reflects our shared interest in place, identity, migration and community. Brixton is a place with a long-established and still evolving tradition of attracting migrant and peripheral communities of all sorts: it is a magnet. It is also a place where incoming communities and individuals have established an often powerful sense of rootedness and ownership in relationship to their locality and have evolved identities, informed by their new home: it has been an anchor.

We will explore these ideas through a 6 week artists residency based in central Brixton and a market stall based in Brixton Street Market. The residency space will function as an open studio and a space of sharing and exchange. The market stall will act as a space of exchange and a signpost for the project and residency space. We plan to use these spaces of interaction to generate a number of artworks in collaboration with people from the area.

### *THE SPACE*

We want to make a physical project space in the area which can have a presence and we can invite people into, with as much of an open door policy as we can. We want this space to be warm, welcoming, inclusive, inspiring, creative but also contained and focused. We also want to potentially intervene into other public spaces- led by our collaborations and engagements.

We are interested in making a space where tensions and 'the unresolved' can also find expression: a space of "durational risk" - that doesn't pre-inscribe, that can respond to changes in situation, continually break things open over duration, re-relating and shifting positions.

a space for dialogue, experiment with ways of creating constructive/ active dialogue.

### *ENGAGEMENT - WHO ITS FOR*

We want to work with local people, individuals and local groups, providing an opportunity for active, creative participation by local residents in an artistic response to their own area and to evolving debates about how their area's histories are articulated amidst future developments. However to be clear, we want to work *with not for* local people. Art as social, not social work. We want to be clear where the work is a social and collaborative practice and where it is making, and how it can contain both. How it can respond to the context and community but also contain the autobiographical voice of the practitioner.

Therefore Its essential for us to broker relationships, create forums for discussion and expression, and work in partnership with people within the parameters of our project; to have relationships with local councilors, activists, community leaders, elders, young people, residents and business people.

### *What do we want find out?*

Some key things we are interested in are:

The largely unheard public conversation about Brixton's evolution/regenerations

Migrant histories and their connection to a specific place, and how that place might have become 'Salted earth' ie. Memory and emotion have given it a particular and contested history and identity.

How oral histories and social/cultural forms of memory can escape the visual, and how we could make these physical

How extracting and re-presenting these histories might be productive in understanding current tensions and contributing to current debates about ownership of space

exploring issues of the local through artistic projects, but also consider other issues such as theoretical issues around the local and things like the localism bill.

To explore what community is

Art and Politics

Art and Social Change

Art and Agency

Art and Empowerment

Participation in the arts, community, locality as a (p)olitical act.

Regeneration and people's role in shaping their place, locality, homes, shopping space, public spaces, streets.

Reflection on the historical and how that informs the present and possible futures

The way that environmental and sustainability issues inform our project in relation to the market, future of cities, issues of locality, local products, shopping locally, and what do the issues of environment and sustainability mean to a diverse and often migrant community, in particular to economic migrants.

Exploring the role of the market as a central space within a locality

## HOW WE WORK – THE METHODS

We work in a way that is embedded and engaged in locality. We plan to carry out our work through:

Researching and sharing, playing together, contributing and exchanging (collaborating with participants, local people, activist, community leaders etc)

Active documentation: note-taking, photography, film, sound recordings, diagrams and mapping we will collect this data for the newspaper, for our records and to use as reflective material.

We want to encourage and facilitate dialogue and exchange - across ages, walks of life, different sides of the experience

We want to listen, learn, absorb - more of local people, history, stories etc. To make new friends (better understand the enemies!)

We want to value and encourage humour and irreverence as well as rigour, seriousness, depth.

Likewise tension / harmony

We want the conversations to be a combination of the organic and spontaneous with the guided and facilitated

We intend to be aware of our processes and to evaluate these as we go along, looking at other models of participation and engagement and collaboration.

We intend to be aware and understand the agency of the participants in the work.

**We intend To be OPEN, RECEPTIVE & RESPONSIVE:**

to the context, the people we work with, the places we work in, the current social and political climate;  
to changes in my ideas and perception of what projects should be.  
to the ideas of others and the possibility of art to be a possible tool for social change.

We intend to have space within the project to be led by what people want to do/ explore/ highlight rather than dictating to them.

Plurality: having a plural rather than a singular vision

Bottom up (as in listening to and responding to the place and the people) and level playing field working (making people feel that their opinions and input is valued, collaboration, is a tricky thing sometimes as far as getting paid is concerned)

Intergenerational working

Using creativity and dialogue as a means to consider what a sense of place is and to find ways for people to express this through collaborative artistic projects.

**OUTCOMES**

to translate our experience of space, dialogue, listening, into artworks that connect directly to the market/Brixton and its people, myth, past, present.

Where possible to have this work exist within that space (the market) - newspapers read, dominoes played.. and become part of the story, and to engage new audiences, prompt new journeys, encounters, thoughts.

To make work that works in context, that is interesting/beautiful/provocative. That asks questions, but not directly. That is richly ambiguous.

To have our physical outputs be of the highest possible standards in design, craftsmanship etc and beautiful objects in their own right - to escape preconceptions about art and community and regular assumptions that it is substandard

To emerge with some physical records - oral history tapes, Library reading list etc.

To make great products, limited editions keepsakes, desirable things as well as making strong performative process based work with no product so to speak (i.e. the performance dinner, domino tournament, dialogues etc)

## LONG-TERM POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

To develop a future, larger-scale community-led public arts programme for Brixton market and environs. **That we work towards a long term and sustainable project and potentially to stay in the space**

**To build our group as a collaboration and our individual skills**

## NETWORKS

To connect with other local organisations

To work with a broad, relevant selection of partner organisations from arts, archiving and academia alongside our local and community partners\*. To develop these relationships to feed our future practice and networks.

To produce work in dialogue with national arts practice and have an evolving partnership with Gasworks and others that will facilitate mutually beneficial dialogue about this work and more broadly about participatory work of this kind. **To make national / international connections and references where we can and take the connect the conversation to the universal as well as the local**

**To partner when necessary to extend reach and our own learning (UCL, Gasworks etc.)**

**To have a strong relationship to academia so we can have research interest and input into the project so it can have weight and kudos. I'm also thinking about strong relationships with our local councilors to see if we can influence bills, planning and policy**

**To have a relationship to other socially engaged- participatory collaborative projects, artists, programmers, producers, regionally and internationally, that explore ideas of community, locality, place, migration etc**

**Cross art form and interdisciplinary working (this also relates to the above point)**

**Make the project visible and relevant beyond the locality, relates to our connections with academia, other artists and projects, but I also want to think how particular things that we might explore would be relevant internationally, things we can share, where our model might be relevant to other places, how we as artists doing this project fit in an international creative world**

**Have a strong relationship to academia so we can have research interest and input into the project so it can have weight and kudos. I'm also thinking about strong relationships with our local councillors to see if we can influence bills, planning and policy**

**A relationship to other socially engaged- participatory collaborative projects, artists, programmers, producers, regionally and internationally, that explore ideas of community, locality, place, migration etc**

**Exploring the role of the market as a central space within a locality .**

## Appendix C: Market contract/Consent form

Anchor & Magnet is an artists project exploring Brixton Market and the immediate surrounding area. Encompassing the skills and ideas of artist and curator Barby Asante, artist and academic, Katy Beinart and artist and producer Kate Theophilus, Anchor & Magnet reflects our shared interest in place, identity, migration and community.

The recordings we are making here will be used as part of our research and production and will inspire future *Anchor and Magnet* projects.

We would like your permission to do the following:

- To use the stories, history/memories, and conversation you have taken part in as part of our project
- To keep your contact details so we can keep you informed of the development of the project and any events or exhibitions related to the project (your details will be kept strictly private)
- To use the images, recordings and texts we have made when needed for displays, publications, the internet and other digital formats, or other non-commercial, educational or research initiatives related to promoting the project. We will also be donating a copy of all recordings to the Lambeth Archives.

NB We are unable to offer payment for this use but we will offer you one of the *Anchor and Magnet Heritage Products*, which are certified and authentic artworks, provided this contract is signed and dated below by one of the artists.

### Safeguards

Names will not be published, unless you specify that you wish this to be so.

Please indicate that you have read, understood and accepted our terms as outlined by signing below.

I agree to my contribution being used in this way.

Full name: .....

Address: .....

Phone and/or email: .....

Signature: .....Date: .....

Signature of artist to guarantee authentic gift of *Anchor & Magnet Heritage Products*

(Barby Asante)      (Katy Beinart)      (Kate Theophilus)      Date:

Thank you for contributing to *Anchor & Magnet*

## Appendix D: Quote cards for Brixton Dinner Party (selection)

*We always used to come shopping in the market. My mother would come every Friday to buy the food, so we'd trail along with her. It was a food market, and cut-price household goods, it wasn't fashion. Just down there, at the end here used to be, probably, an original type of flea market. People would just go with whatever they wanted to and just put it on the floor and sell it. Just walking through today I smile, I look at how busy inside, and all these restaurants and I think this is just so amusing to me to see Brixton with this sort of affluent... I mean this little bit here is how Brixton used to be (Brixton Station Road). The first market as you came in from the main road, that used to be all full and now its half empty. That was the main market and then you moved through into the food market and out on the street was.. I got a feeling that café was always there, the really big one in the middle, on the T-junction. You didn't come to Brixton to eat, you came to buy your food to take home, so the idea of all those (shops) I find really amusing.*

*...When we first got the shop [in Granville Arcade] in September 2010, we were one of 5 restaurants in the market, [it] still had a lot of the pound shops and other people around. It was a ghost town in here. We always knew that we were going to stay here, we signed a 3 year lease, we knew we were going to be here for 3 years but we didn't know how much the market was actually going to grow within the 2 years we've been here. So it's been an experience. I've never seen a market clientele change and grow [this much] within the space of 2 years in my life. No matter where I've worked, no matter where I ran, no matter where I owned. In other areas, in other countries, I've never seen a growth like I have in Brixton, and a demographic change so much.*

*"I was born and bred, in Brixton all my life... As a child I'd be safer then than now, much safer, I used to walk the streets of Brixton, go to bars and clubs and restaurants, in the middle of the night. I think because we knew everybody in the local community then, everyone knew each other"*

*"Most of the people I knew have passed away or been shot. There's still people here but then again there is people that have moved away. It did get to a stage when it was quite bad and the trouble got quite bad but now I find it's mellowed again, settled down, maybe an age thing. I don't know, maybe the population is changing and I do feel safe though there are stages where you do feel nervous. But as a person that has grown up here, I've seen it go from smooth, rough, smooth."*

## Appendix E: Transcription of Anchor & Magnet *Dinner Party*

- That story of kids being alienated is a story that's being told across London, that's why the riots happened. What's interesting is you get situations in Brixton where two worlds are living in each other's space, without seeing each other at all, and so on my road, there's kids up there on Brixton hill who if you speak to them will say, life's a struggle man, its do or die out there, kill or be killed, right. And they are living next door to the accountant or doctor or lawyer who thinks this is a wonderful little village. And their literally living next door to each other and their saying do or die, kill or be killed, versus. In the same space, they walk the same streets every day and they don't even notice each other. Why? Because they are blind to each other.
- Who teaches them to be blind?
- You're right.
- That's an essential question.
- So the motivation you have to have is to sort of do things that force everybody to see the people that at the moment are invisible to them. To force them to have to recognise that there are these other people living in the same space as them.
- Why are children so frightened of people? Who tells them that in the first place?
- What makes people frightened of children?
- I see people on my estate swearing at me and they're not 3 feet high. Why where does it come from? Who taught them to say that? Who's cruel to them to make them like that? I guarantee everyone round this table knows someone who is cruel to kids, not in a direct way. You've gotta respect children.
- I think we have a lot of parents who are children themselves...a huge group of children who aren't in care but are being looked after by child like adults. They are antisocial; end up in criminal justice system. Family provides all the structures.
- But its a collective failure not the failure of the parents
- it takes 7 people to raise a child, it takes a village to raise a child.
- Making it specific to Brixton, in a way what you can say maybe one of the positive things you can say is that it has a history of allowing communities to claim spaces, to feel ownership of spaces in a way that in other parts of London it s a bit harder – Brixton has this history and this heritage about it. Part of the mission you should have living in Brixton is to find ways to have – whether its children or whoever – on both levels – find a way to get the children who are isolated to buy into their community, and the other way round, the person who is coming into the community and has no sensitivity to it, no understanding of it, is hostile to it, getting them to understand if you wanna come and live here you are coming to place that has a history and a heritage, getting both people to buy into an idea of the history of Brixton.
- One woman described Brixton as being almost not part of the city in terms of that village identity. If it is a village there should be some form of this village raising the children. Giving the children power. Lots of different communities feel a sense of ownership over Brixton(...) it means its kind of plural..I would go back to that point of these kinds of tensions...something about the people who choose to stay here, what is that something that makes people choose to stay
- Lots of people just like the way it feels, they actively choose that, maybe its as simple as that, what goes on on the streets of Brixton because I think its located on the streets (for me) the physical act of walking from my front door to the tube, or the market and its what happens as I go down Brixton station road, its knowing that I pass my Iranian friend, my other friend...loving you music to the guy, I get something from that motion.
- Its a village

- But the thing is you don't get that from a village, its an urban experience.
- It's about familiarity.
- Yeah it's not just that its the diversity, the sounds, the clashes.
- But that's personalisation because you know it as your community. Not because its consciously diverse, but because its what you know.
- Responds with its her personal preference, to be in a diverse area.
- Someone else describes arriving from Cardiff, so many languages spoken in his block, its great, they still manage to communicate, I like the fact that I'm not comfortable
- All I'm trying to say is, you've created something you feel familiar with, the notion that its diverse as being the important thing, for me its about knowing lots of people. Not going wow it's so diverse.
- I like the fact that people come from different backgrounds, because when we start chatting, its more than just 2 people.
- Its almost about a landscape...its not an amazing bond but just the presence, I like it
- I get the diversity point, but I love the African Caribbean aspect, that particular aspect of Brixton. My mum immediately felt at home, there's a kind of homeliness. Its a wonderful specialness about Brixton that you don't have to be African Caribbean to enjoy, you can enjoy the fact that you live in this area that has this special flavour to it.
- That was the magnet for me, I tried living in lots of different places and I came back.
- At this years Brixton splash, Jamaican flags, everybody whatever colour was wearing Jamaican flags.
- Not saying it should be valued above anything else, I'm saying its a special personality that Brixton has that's attractive.
- I left home when I was 19, and I'd grown up in the country, it was- I needed to be around black people. So I moved to London, and ended up in Brixton.
- Maybe we're not best placed to answer that, maybe people who aren't black would say I enjoy that side of Brixton.
- Yeah but I feel its a thing for white people as well, I mean you can go out into a village in the middle of nowhere and feel like I'm gonna be killed.
- Yeah but that's how we grew up, feeling like why do I feel like I'm gonna be killed.
- Yeah I felt safer in London.
- Brixton's changing though, I work nightclubs, so I work late and I walk along Coldharbour Lane 3 or 4 in the morning and see sights you would have never have seen 5 years ago. Drunk lads walking down shouting, they feel they own the town, it's theirs.
- We think there's this sense of feral hoorays, basically they think they think they are now in this urban frontier zone, where its all exotic, their just getting their cool card stamped and then they are gonna fuck off to live in Twickenham or wherever.
- The level of class resentment – we're all thoroughly middle class- but they have these parties playing Duran Duran all night, and standing outside in the street talking about the derivatives market really loudly at 3 in the morning.
- Came to Brixton when I was 18, just dropped in, felt completely at home, having grown up in north, I came back when I was 23 and I've never left. Part of familiarity is its a place where one can feel very separate and quite alienated but actually quite supported. People are able to feel quite different, to the degree of feeling asocial but to feel included and almost left alone in the middle of that noise.
- Tolerance of eccentricity is part of Brixton
- Major fear is that that will evaporate, because there will be no need for it.
- Suffered that in the pub, tells story about meeting man in pub who tells him he reminds him of something, being interrupted, most bizarre conversation.
- Whatever happened to this person, conversations about various different people, beggar outside station, someone who was in my life? We all know these people and I feel protective



of these people.

- I have to say that is the point of the night. It isn't about familiarity, it isn't about groups, it's about the acceptance of eccentricity and the acceptance of anomaly that makes Brixton so different. You can be who you are, whoever you are. That's my experience of coming to Brixton and not being clear about who I was, to come here and find who I was without any pressure to join a group.
- Yeah over and above all these different heritages what makes it really special is that tolerance to be who you want to be...people understand it and they get and allow people to have their own space and be what they wanna be in their own space.
- I wonder – what (name) was saying about the physical structure of Brixton, the railway bridges going across the High St, I think of Brixton like a knot, very long threads all pulling, in the middle the market, and the arches are like the tightest bit. If the railway wasn't there you'd just have Brixton road and you'd feel yourself pulled up to. A sense of this little knot, even though you know it's a big sprawl. Allows people to be at ease.
- Yeah it can become a cosy little area. Station road, you can have no concept of what happens over to the left.
- Its a got a density to be density, to accept and throw out. It's got to change, we've got to keep the history but you can't keep it the way you want it to be.

Katy introduces next section...the future. It's a melting pot!

Pudding – pineapples with rum and cream.

People read out quotes.

- I feel like I'm part of Brixton, I was living here for 5 years, last time I was living in one of the squats in Rushcroft Road and we were evicted, and I moved to another place in east London, I used to work at the Ritzy as well. One of the things I was thinking was if there could be housing that was secured that would enable people to stay here even if they can't afford to pay a lot. I know a lot of people they can't afford a place here, if I got to Brixton village its not so diverse, seeing people who are having dinner, its expensive, I'm thinking what can stop this gentrification.
- Social housing, planning for those empty buildings, where people could go,
- Squattable property
- Brixton lost a chunk of its character when those squats got evicted because their people who lived here for 20 years, who contributed so, I think that was quite a big blow. I know people who found some accommodation, but the rents have gone up and now they're leaving after being here for 20 years.
- Isn't squatting another form of gentrification?
- It can play a part in it yeah, but Brixton as left alone for some time, but its the pressure on housing, people wanna live here and then the rents go up.
- I think these things are large scale political questions, its important to persuade people of their rights to live in an area but that has to translate through into boring policy level stuff with new political visions... a project like this is great as far as it goes but its those things... we need some sort of larger scale force not a smokescreen (cooperative council). Lambeth are selling off social housing, short life housing, etc. etc. how is it that at a large scale you get people to go these things are not working.
- Gap between government and people is very very far.
- I would say, Brixton does actually...have people who have agency. They pick up their sticks, cupcakes, set up a market stall, do something for themselves. My contention is that in a retro sense there is someone else that should be doing something for you.
- No that's not my contention, we have politics and we have agency, just bootstrapping is not

enough to solve the problems

- Going back to the idea of village – we should be passing batons on to young people. But we're not. The understanding of politics of young people.
- Investing children with agency is what makes them political beings.
- Those weren't the ways people were being political in 1981.
- We're talking about something nostalgic, we have to be realistic about what the opportunities are now, we can't make a culture around the past.
- This village...there's a sense of responsibility that we all have around being political, sharing and enabling other people. There are a lot of people who are under the radar, they need to have some form of agency but they don't necessarily know how to do it
- Do you think there are opportunities that are there to be grabbed?
- The council is trying to restructure, they are contacting me.
- Looking forward - I live on the same road as (name), and (agree with) what he said about 2 different communities. Living right next door to each other, having no idea what their lives are like and not even caring. That exists, and I know it. How do you try and break down those barriers? Someone came up with something interesting about global perspectives, and you have all this going on in Brixton, but that cooperative council whatever you think of it in their own small ways are quite ground-breaking.
- I come in as someone whose come in 2 years ago and I'm middle class but I love Brixton but that's the truth, its not contrived. I feel just as part of this community.

## Appendix F: Programme of Brixton Exchange 1 and Walking Tour

**The Brixton Exchange**  
**Friday February 1<sup>st</sup> 2013**  
**Programme**

Street Market, Brixton Station Road  
 Brixton East, 100 Barrington Road  
 Agile Rabbit, Brixton Village Market



**9.30 – 10.00:** Registration – at Market stall, in the Street market, Brixton Station Road. Sign up for the morning and afternoon sessions.

**10.00 – 10.40:** Walking Tours.

**Alan Piper – Brixton Society**  
**Steve Martin – Black Cultural Archives**  
**Mike Slocombe - Urban 75**  
**Tim Dickens – Brixton Bugle / Brixton Blog**  
**Roger Hartley – Bureau of Silly Ideas**

**Henry Grundy-White - Artist**  
**Kate Theophilus (A&M) with Tony, Bertram & Joseph**  
**– Stockwell Good Neighbours**  
**Stuart Horwood – Brixton Market Traders Federation**  
**Ashvin De Vos – Erect Architecture**

Please feel free to take pictures – we would love to get a copy too so let us know and we can arrange this)

**10.40 - 10.55:** Arrival at venue, coffee & tea at Brixton East, 100 Barrington Road.

**10.55 – 11.10:** Welcome, housekeeping and event introduction from Anchor & Magnet (Barby Asante, Katy Beinart & Kate Theophilus)

**11.15 - 1.15 Morning Session** (full presenter synopses are attached)

Note: you can choose to join *one* of the four sessions in morning and afternoon. Presenters will speak for around 20 minutes each and this will be followed by an open discussion, chaired by the speakers.

Session A	Session B	Session C	Session D
Rebecca Beinart Suzanne Hall	Bobby Lloyd and Sally Labern Nabeel Hamdi	Sarah Mossop Katie Orr and Albert Potrony -	Alan Piper Ben Campkin

**1.15 - 2.00 pm** Lunch

**2.00 - 4.00 pm:** Session Two

Session A	Session B	Session C	Session D
Ollie Sumner Francesco Ponzio and Geraldine Takundwa	Eva Sajovic and Sarah Butler Jeanne Van Heeswijk	Claire Dwyer Damien Le Bas	Sarah Tuck Ben Tunstall

**4.00 - 4.20pm:** Tea break

**4.20 - 5.30 pm:** Plenary

**6.00- onwards-** Agile Rabbit (in Brixton Village Market, no. 24-25 Granville Arcade) for drinks and pizza

Twitter feed: we have a hashtag #BrixtonExchange if you want to tweet about the event on the day.

Contact email: [anchorandmagnet@gmail.com](mailto:anchorandmagnet@gmail.com)

Please be aware that we will be recording the day with photographs and sound recording, and tell us if you are not happy with your image/voice being used as part of our documentation and future displays.

The event is supported by the Environment Institute, University College London <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/environment-institute> and the Migration Research Unit, University College London. (<http://www.geog.ucl.ac.uk/mru/>)

The Anchor and Magnet project has been supported by funding from the Arts Council England, and Step Out – UCL's public engagement fund.

## Presenters Outlines

### **Becky Beinart**

Will present material from the Orchard Project in Sneinton Market, Nottingham: <http://www.orchardsneinton.co.uk/> I will give some general background to the project, a commission by Neville Gabie, curated by Jennie Syson. Becky will discuss the project she produced as part of the project (the Sneinton Market meals) and the legacy of the project a year on. Becky will also talk briefly about current regeneration plans around Sneinton in Nottingham and the research she is undertaking as part of the Wasteland Twinning <http://wasteland-twinning.net/> network and the 'Cultural Quarter' gentrification plan.

### **Eva Sajovic and Sarah Butler**

Looking at their *Home From Home*, *Studio at the Elephant* and *Collecting Home* projects, Eva and Sarah will consider their long-term engagement in Elephant&Castle, an area undergoing a massive regeneration. They will explore the potential of these projects to act as spaces of resistance, through which individual's voices can be heard, seen and contribute towards a collective history (ownership) of a place. Key questions that have come up in the work are:

- subjectivity created through discussion;
- power relations involved where an artist creates work with communities;
- truth in such forms of representation.

### **Francesco Ponzo and Geraldine Takundwa - The Silent University**

The Silent University is a knowledge exchange platform by and for asylum seekers and refugees who although having a professional background, are unable to practice their profession due to the limitations of the asylum process. They have become lecturers, academic consultants and research fellows of the Silent University. The Silent University started with the goal to address and reactivate the knowledge that is lost during the years that many asylum seekers wait to gain residency. The University also challenges the idea of silence as a passive state. [www.thesilentuniversity.org](http://www.thesilentuniversity.org)

### **Oliver Sumner - Delta Arts**

Delta Arts works internationally, creating situations for artist exchange and exploring social art practice through mobility. Oliver will present Delta Arts work in the context of the Somerstown Estate in Portsmouth currently undergoing regeneration, and their current move away from working with a local community. Oliver will also talk about the Golden Threads programme of fellowships about the artist in society in Beirut, Copenhagen and London, and discuss the position and function of the artist in society, international exchange, and how varying social and economic conditions shape the visual arts and artists.

### **Sarah Tuck**

Is interested in current contestations over space, and political debates around ownership and belonging of/to place – in particular how socially engaged/public art practices that develop 'provisional communities/ collectivities' are part of a cultural retrieval of a documentary aesthetic that has been discredited and neglected.

### **Sally Labern and Bobby Lloyd - the drawing shed**

The drawing shed artists Sally Labern and Bobby Lloyd would like to explore with others a socially engaged practice in which the aesthetic is content-driven, experimental and critical, and in which the 'dialogue' of participation is not the only intended product of the artists' work. They will frame this by introducing key projects in their current practice in East London through which they explore ideas in relation to territory, migration, identity and the imaginative transmission of difference.

### **Albert Potrony and Katie Orr**

Will facilitate a session around the inter-generational peer group a Gasworks project that began in July 2010. They will probe and interrogate ideas around art practices that engage with (and are informed by) notions of 'community' and question how this is done through art practices that seek to be multi-authored. Albert and Katie will explore ideas of how a sense of place can be understood primarily through it's people, and rather than through specific sites or locations.

### **Dr Ben Campkin**

Will explore "Regeneration as Abjection." Based on over ten years of research on the histories of various large-scale and long-term regeneration sites in London, this talk will set out to define 'regeneration' and explore how official and unofficial historical narratives are woven into the discourses that accompany it. Ben will propose that with the shift towards neoliberal urban management, propelled by images of material and social decline, we can think of the regeneration of London's most diverse areas as a kind of abjection which enacts the exclusion of unwanted others.

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/citycentre/people/bencampkin>

### **Dr Suzanne Hall**

Will concentrate on the idea of 'ordinary streets' as space of common urban currency that transmits direct forms of exchange and expression. Suzanne turns to the commonplace logic of street to explore everyday transformations and the updating of the city through immigration, adaptation and urban multicultural. She will focus on Peckhams Rye Lane, and explore the intersections and divergences between independent shops, local interest groups, and local government organisations. For further details, please see: <http://lsecities.net/objects/research-projects/ordinary-streets>

**Prof. Nabeel Hamdi**

Nabeel will introduce his book *Small Change: About the Art of Practice and the Limits of Planning in Cities*, which explores participatory models of urban development.

**Ben Tunstall**

Will talk about *The Right to the City* which aims to become a UK-wide campaigning organisation that redefines how we understand our cities and believe that the city is made by and belongs to everyone who lives in it. Just as we collectively shape the city, we all have a Right to the City, but we do not all have the power to exercise this right. Right to the City's aim is to help redress this balance, protecting minority, low income and working class communities from being forced out, rejecting policies that encourage social paranoia, promoting economies that work for all, and places that enable people to live differently, to assemble and protest.

**Jeanne Van Heeswijk**

Will talk about her *Freehouse*: radicalizing the local project with architect Dennis Kaspori with a focus on Tomorrow's Market and its act of civil disobedience as a way of urban acupuncture. <http://www.jeannetworks.net/>

**Damian James Le Bas**

What light might the Gypsy experience shed on the perception of urban space and the future of its maintenance and regeneration? Can it ever be ethical, or even rational, to argue from history to present need? Is it utterly fatuous, for example, to imagine a Romany family arguing along Zionist lines for the right to retake Gipsy Hill and Rommany Road, SE19? What roles can traditional documentation strategies play in preserving the heritage of people whose artefacts are often assumed to be confined to the ephemeral realms of memory and spoken language? What possibilities of progress and social solidarity can emerge from folk histories in which friction, the perception of separateness, mistrust and genocide play such a large part? Finally, what moral onus is there on those outside such communities to care about these questions?

**Sarah Mossop**

Will talk about Modern Art Oxford's Art in Rose Hill's programme - methodologies of engagement and the public art projects, which varied in practice from socially engaged, participatory and performative.

**Alan Piper**

Will talk about his long-standing interest in conservation issues, which began nearly 40 years ago, when a final-year student thesis provided the opportunity for in-depth exploration of the redevelopment options for a substantial area around Railton Road, Brixton. This work helped the local community to persuade Lambeth Council to adopt area improvement policies rather than widespread demolition and rebuilding. He will also discuss *The Brixton Society*, which originated with residents' groups in similar areas around Brixton combining their energies to champion its neglected Town Centre. Gradually this has led to a growing network of conservation areas, buttressed by various improvement initiatives. Alan has written a number of publications, mainly for the Brixton Society, but the most significant is *The History of Brixton*, originally published in 1996 and the first profile of the area since 1825.

**Dr Claire Dwyer**

Will reflect on a photographic *Faith in Suburbia*: a shared photographic journey project undertaken with six senior citizens from different faith communities in West London. Working with award winning photographer Liz Hingley (*Under gods: stories from Soho Road*) the participants visited each others places of worship to take photographs. They then worked together to select photographs for an exhibition held at UCL in January 2013 and which will then go to Gunnersbury Park Museum in Ealing and to the participating places of workshop. The project explored ideas about continuity and change in the making a suburban landscapes and the role of faith and migration in shaping local places. She will also reflect on the process of undertaking collaborative work with different faith groups.

## Presenter Bio's

**Albert Potrony** works with installation, sound and video. Participation is a key element in his projects. He recently developed *Tate Other*, a collaborative video and performance that took place at Tate Modern in September 2012 as part of the *Worlds Together Conference*. His latest project *Faith*, a multi-channel video installation, is currently being shown at Whitstable Museum and Gallery until March 2013. [www.albertpotrony.co.uk](http://www.albertpotrony.co.uk) [www.gasworks.org.uk/international/detail.php?id=599](http://www.gasworks.org.uk/international/detail.php?id=599)

**Dr Ben Campkin** (BAHons MSc PhD) is Co-Director of the UCL Urban Laboratory and Lecturer in Architectural History and Theory at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. Ben is co-editor of *Dirt: New Geographies of Cleanliness and Contamination* (IB Tauris, 2007), an anthology exploring how knowledge about hygiene, and beliefs about dirt, have influenced the production of domestic, urban and rural environments. Other recent publications include 'Ornament from grime: the architectural "aesthetic of recycling" and the Gritty Brits', *The Journal of Architecture* 12(4) (2007); 'Bugs, bats, and animal estates', in *Architectural Design: Territory, 2010*, guest edited by David Gissen; and 'Down and Out in London? Photography and the Politics of Representing "Life in the Elephant"' in Mark Swenarton et al, (eds.), *The Politics of Making* (Routledge, 2007).

**Ben Tunstall** has a fine art degree and an MSc in Modernity Space and Place. He has worked on 'social inclusion' and cultural projects, and oral history mapping projects in Liverpool and nationally. He currently works as a sweet packaging designer and trainee psychotherapist. He was a member of the Friends of Brixton Market from 2008-2011 and is a governor at a Brixton primary school. He is a member of the steering committee working to establish a national Right to the City campaign.

**Dr Claire Dwyer** is Senior Lecturer in Geography and Co-Director of the Migration Research Unit at UCL. Claire currently serves on the editorial boards of *Gender, Place and Culture* and *South Asian Diaspora*. She has previously served on the editorial boards of *Social and Cultural Geography* (2002-8) and the *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* (2001-2006). Claire is treasurer of the Women and Geography Study Group of the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers. In 2009 she was appointed to the International Geographical Union (IGU) Commission on Gender and Geography Steering Committee.

**Damian James Le Bas**, born in 1985 to a large Sussex-based Romany family. He read Theology at St John's College, Oxford, graduating with the highest First in his year in 2006. Damian editor of *Travellers' Times*, and is a widely published writer, dramatist and poet. He has produced several short films and is passionate about using and promoting the Romani language (Romanès). He is also a regular provider of comment on Romani and Traveller issues to the BBC. <http://www.Picklescott.blogspot.com>, <http://www.TravellersTimes.org.uk>

**the drawing shed** is led by visual artist directors **Sally Labern** and **Bobby Lloyd** who practice both collaboratively and autonomously, using diverse media and engaging with ideas led work around creating 'communities of the imagination' and issues of resilience, resistance, commonality, class, and displacement. Based on two housing estates in Walthamstow, East London, the work is inter-generational and inter-cultural and involves diverse partners and communities which include teenage girls, boys, women, mixed gender adult groups and older people. <http://www.thedrawingshed.org/>

**Eva Sajovic** is a Slovene born artist photographer, living and working in London. She has been working with people in Elephant & Castle since 2007 and she is currently working on a UK wide, participatory project with young people of Roma, English Gypsy and Traveller backgrounds called the DreamMakers. <http://www.evasajovic.co.uk>

**Francesco Ponzio** is a Tour Guide and Art Critic of the organization "Londra Culturale"; London. He is also a Consultant for the Silent University an autonomous knowledge exchange platform by and for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. The foundation of The Silent University is initiated by artist Ahmet Ögüt. <http://thesilentuniversity.org/>

**Jeanne van Heeswijk** is a visual artist who creates contexts for interaction in public spaces. Her projects distinguish themselves through a strong social involvement. With her work Van Heeswijk stimulates and develops cultural production and creates new public (meeting) spaces or remodels existing ones. To achieve this she often works closely with artists, designers, architects, software developers, governments and citizens. She regularly lectures on topics such as urban renewal, participation and cultural production. <http://www.jeanneworks.net/>

**Katie Orr** is the Participation Programme Coordinator at Gasworks where she has worked since 2009. During this time she has coordinated *Even Better Together*, steering the programme as it has developed working with artists from the UK, Spain, Chile, Colombia, Turkey, French Guiana and Portugal. She has a MA Politics from Sheffield University and BA (Hons) Fine Art from Falmouth College of Arts. She has also spent time working for Southwark Libraries and as a freelance artist educator.

**Professor Nabeel Hamdi** is Emeritus Professor of Housing and Urban Development at Oxford Brookes University. A qualified architect he worked for the Greater London Council between 1969 and 1978, where his award-winning housing projects established his reputation in participatory design and planning. He is the author of *Small Change* (Earthscan, 2004), *Housing Without Houses* (IT Publications, 1995), co-author of *Making Micro Plans* (IT Publications 1988) and *Action Planning for Cities*

(John Wiley and Sons, 1997), and editor of the collected volumes *Educating for Real* (IT Publications 1996) and *Urban Futures* (IT Publications 2005).

**Oliver Sumner** is a curator, a learning consultant in the visual arts sector, and co-founder of the collective Delta Arts. Delta Arts works internationally, creating situations for artist exchange and exploring social art practice through mobility. <http://www.deltaarts.wordpress.com>

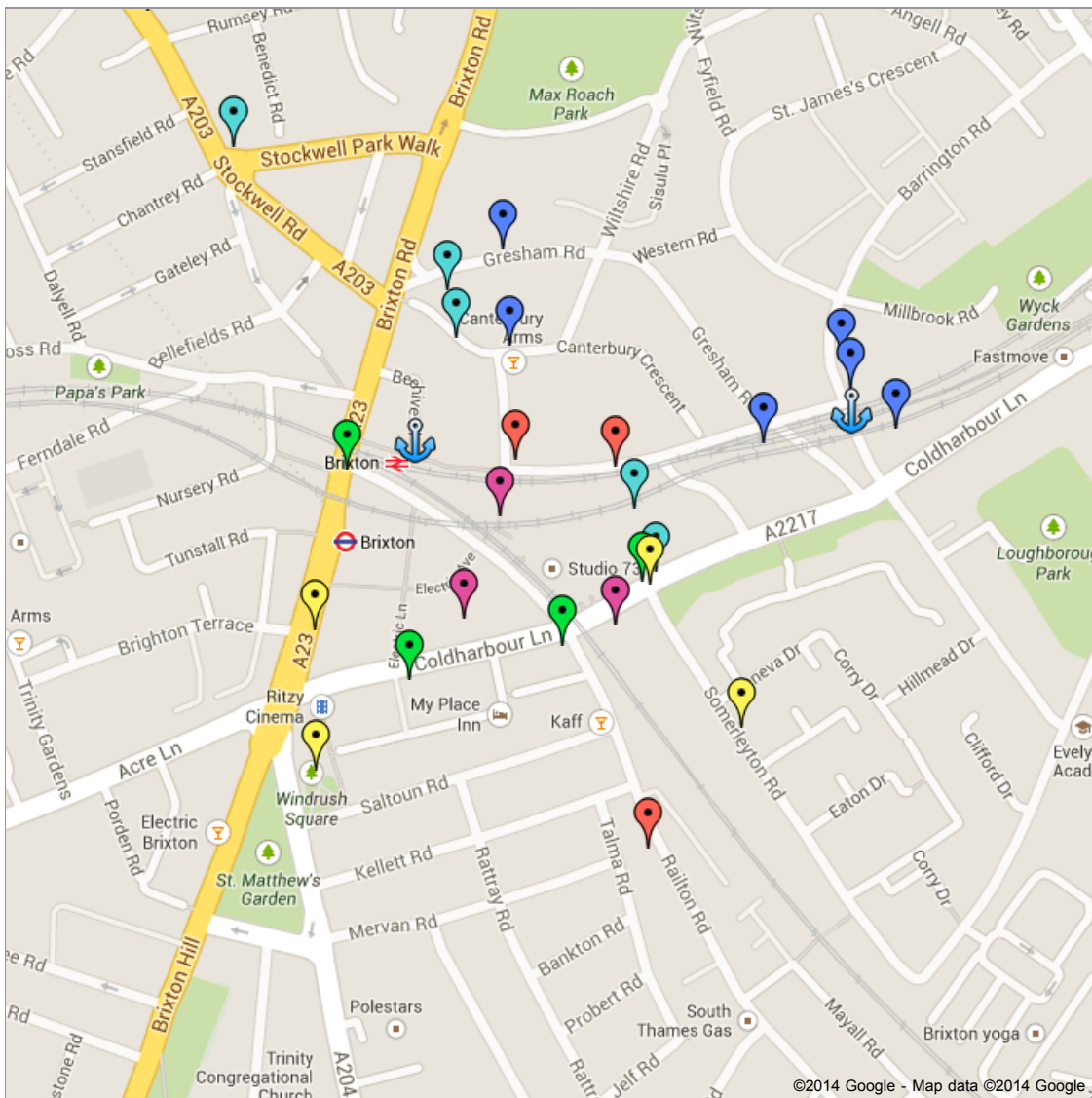
**Rebecca Beinart's** projects explore the territories between art, ecology and politics and take the form of live events, installations and interventions in public places. Through repeated experiments and actions in specific places, I seek to interrupt my assumptions and understand perspectives I could not see alone. My projects both respond to and create new situations. <http://wasteland-twinning.net/explorers/rebecca-beinart/>

**Sarah Butler** and has a particular interest in the relationship between writing and place. She has been writer-in-residence on the Central line and at Great Ormond Street Hospital, and her novel, *Ten Things I've Learnt About Love*, will be published by Picador in January 2013. [www.sarahbutler.org.uk](http://www.sarahbutler.org.uk) [www.urbanwords.org.uk](http://www.urbanwords.org.uk)

**Sarah Mossop** is a Freelance Visual Arts Consultant specialising in Learning and Engagement. Sarah was Head of Learning & Partnerships at Modern Art Oxford from 2002 – 2012. She has extensive experience of developing and delivering all aspects of learning programmes around exhibitions of international contemporary art and craft, and of working with artists on projects in schools, hospitals, prisons, as well as the public realm, such as the Art in Rose Hill programme in Oxford that ran from 2007 – 2011.

**Sarah Tuck** is a curator based in Belfast, currently researching contemporary photography after the Agreement for a PhD supported by Belfast Exposed Gallery and the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design. Prior to this she was the Director of Create, the national development agency for collaborative arts, based in Dublin, for six years. Sarah is the Chair of Dublin City Council Public Art Advisory Group and a Board member of the Void Gallery in Derry.

**Dr Suzanne Hall** is an urban ethnographer, Lecturer in Sociology and Research Fellow, LSE Cities and has practised as an architect in South Africa from 1997 to 2003 she established a practice that focused on the role of design in rapidly urbanising, poor and racially segregated areas in Cape Town. Her research and teaching interests are foregrounded in local expressions of global urbanisation, particularly social and spatial forms of inclusion and exclusion, urban multiculturalism, urban migration, the design of the city, and ethnography and visual methods. She is currently leading the 'Ordinary Streets' research project, a visual and ethnographic exploration of the economies and cultures of street in the context of urban migrations She is a recipient of the Rome Scholarship in Architecture (1998 - 1999) and the LSE's Robert McKenzie Prize for outstanding Ph.D. research (2010). <http://lsecities.net/objects/research-projects/ordinary-streets>



**THE BRIXTON EXCHANGE walking tour map**

Anchor & Magnet was an artists residency (Sept 2012 - Feb 2013) based in Brixton exploring ideas around place, community, regeneration, identity.

On February 1st 2013 we convened The Brixton Exchange, a conference - walks, talks and conversation that gathered artists, academics, historians, local people and others working in socially engaged, participatory and collaborative ways.

Participants started the day with local people leading personal walking tours of area. Our walk leaders were:

- Alan Piper – Brixton Society
- Steve Martin – Black Cultural Archives
- Mike Slocombe – Urban 75 blog
- Tim Dickens – Brixton Blog / Brixton Bugle
- Roger Hartley – Bureau of Silly Ideas, with Henry Grundy-White - Artist















Stuart Horwood - Brixton Market Traders Federation  
Kate Theophilus - Anchor & Magnet, with Tony Thomas, Bertram Dixon & Joseph Folkes of  
Stockwell Good Neighbours dominoes group  
Ashvin de Vos – Erect Architecture

Public · 4 Collaborators · 211 views  
Created on Feb 12, 2013 · By · Updated Apr 23, 2013

-  **Anchor & Magnet Market Stall**  
The Brixton Exchange walking tours set off from here. It is also where we had our Market Stall in October 2012 - exchanging Heritage Products we produced that spoke of our own stories and journeys, for people's stories of their life in and connection to Brixton.
-  **Brixton East - The Brixton Exchange Venue**  
End point of our walking tours and venue for The Brixton Exchange.
-  **Brixton Station Road (Stuart's walk)**  
Featured on the walk led by Stuart of Brixton Markets Traders' Federation. The railway arches along this road are used by market traders for storage, and some trade out of the arches themselves.
-  **Corner of Atlantic Road & Brixton Road (Kate & Dominoes group walk)**  
The walk led by Tony, Bertram and Mr. Folkes stopped here to point out the sites where various Tailors used to be - along the main road and down Atlantic Road. These were places they would get suits made in the '50s when they first came to England.
-  **The Atlantic Pub (Kate & Dominoes group walk)**  
Now the Dog Star, this pub was once called the Atlantic Pub and run by Lloyd Leon, the first Black Mayor of Lambeth and a publican
-  **Coach and Horses (Kate & Dominoes group walk)**  
443 Coldharbour Lane used to be the Coach and Horses, now a bar called Market House. It is said to be have had the first black landlord in London, possibly the UK
-  **Barratt Homes development (Kate & Dominoes group walk)**  
From this spot you can look up Somerleyton Road, which used to be lined with large Victorian houses, most split into flats and boarding houses and one of the main areas West Indian immigrants lived locally. It was also the site of a black church. Now you can see Southwyck House, the large 80's block of flats known also as the Barrier Block, and the edge of Moorlands Estate. This spot is at the heart of the regeneration conversation with plans for a large redevelopment on Somerleyton Road, a new Barratt Homes development almost complete (on the site of the old Labour Exchange) and the newly hip Brixton Village covered market in spitting distance.
-  **Valentia Place (Roger & Henry's walk)**  
These old railway arches along Valentia Place are home to the Bureau of Silly ideas, various local artists and are also used by one or two Brixton Market traders for storage
-  **Ice Rink / former Car Park (Stuart's walk)**  
Temporary home for Streatham's Ice Rink, this site used to be a car park that served the shoppers in the market.
-  **Former St.John's School (Alan's walk)**  
These buildings opened c.1853 as a church school linked to St.John's Church in the new Angell Town suburban development. Moved to new premises in mid-1970s, and eventually converted to residential units.
-  **Karibu Centre, Gresham Road (Alan's walk)**  
In the 1870s this was the Angell Town Institution, a public hall. It later became Brixton's first telephone exchange and in the 1970s opened as the Abeng Centre, offering a youth club and educational activities for young people.
-  **Barrington Road (Alan's walk)**
-  **Former Brixton Orphanage (Alan's walk)**  
Three of the original houses were unified c.1880 as an orphanage, with another block added at the rear. The Brixton Orphanage for Fatherless Girls provided accommodation for 300 girls.
-  **Railway lines (Alan's walk)**  
More than anything else, Brixton has been shaped by the intersecting railway lines which cut through the area c.150 years ago, and set in motion 75 years of energetic commercial and civic development.
-  **Former East Brixton Station (Alan's walk)**  
This originally gave access to the South London Line service linking Victoria and London Bridge, but closed in 1976. You can still see station brickwork from Barrington Road.
-  **Cooltan (Roger & Henry's walk)**  
From the early 90s the old Labour Exchange building was squatted by the CoolTan coop collective and

became an important local arts and community hub during its 4 years there.

-  Windrush Square (Steve's walk)  
The name is a reference to the 493 passengers from Jamaica who arrived on the Empire Windrush at Tilbury docks on 22 June 1948. This was the first large group of West Indian immigrants to the UK after the Second World War.
-  The site of Brixton Labour Exchange (Steve's walk)  
This spot on Coldharbour Lane, where the new Barratt Homes development, 'Brixton Square', is fast rising, is the site of the old Labour Exchange (job centre). It's here that the first groups of West Indian immigrants arriving in South London post war came to find work.
-  Home of Henry Sylvester Williams, Pan Africanist (Steve's walk)  
Sommerleyton Road – no. 25 was the home of Henry Sylvester Williams, the Pan Africanist in 1899. The whole road was a centre for Black settlement in the post-war period. It is now being slated for 'renewal' according to some plans.
-  the Black woman at Brixton Causeway (Steve's walk)  
Between November 1722 and February 1723, an individual described only as 'the Black woman at Brixton Causeway' appeared to have received money from the parish of St. Mary's Lambeth for herself and her 'bastard child'. (Brixton Causeway was a track running roughly along what is now Brixton Road, to Streatham Common pastures). Two other black people, John Duke and Henry Mundox are also mentioned during the same period. These are amongst the earliest records of black people living in Lambeth.
-  Stockwell Skate Park  
Built in the '70s and still regularly busy with BMXers and skaters. Roger and Henry's walk also pointed out the self governed housing along this road.
-  site of The Old Queens Head pub (Roger and Henry's walk)  
One of Brixton's popular old pubs, no longer there. The walk held a minute's silence in memory of the dead pub.
-  Brixton Police Station (Roger & Henry's Walk)
-  Where sex was first studied for science (Roger & Henry's walk)  
Marked with a Blue Plaque, Henry Havelock Ellis (1859-1939), pioneer in the scientific study of sex, lived here at 14 Dover Mansions, Canterbury Crescent.
-  Pop's Road (Tim's walk)  
Pope's Road street market joins the two main street markets along Electric Avenue and Brixton Station Road
-  Market Row (Tim's walk)  
Market Row is one of Brixton's covered markets - a mix of traditional foods, fabrics, an old school greasy spoon caf, plus a new wave of eateries, delis and vintage
-  Nuclear Dawn mural (Tim's walk)  
An iconic part of Brixton's visual street landscape, painted in '81 by Brian Barnes and Dale McCrea this depicts a giant skeleton standing over London as a nuclear bomb destroys the city
-  Dexter's Playground (Ashvin's walk)  
The site of Dexter Road Adventure Playground was one of the hotspots of the Brixton Riots. The houses lining the road were demolished during and after the riots. Their scale, position and typology inspired the design of the play structures.

## Appendix G: Brixton exchange 1 plenary (transcription)

- There is something that has been in my head for a while; there is the use of the words. Words such as regeneration but also many abused words such as sustainability, also participation, etc they have been completely taking over. So it is challenging at least to understand ways in which these words can be reappropriated somehow. Its not a matter of inventing new words, because as many new words as you can invent they can be appropriated, as well as images, as soon as you produce an image is something that has its own life, its autonomous, it can be easily re appropriated, so what is that thing that has the potential to take the power of the images and the words back.
- Precision of use, taking responsibility and not assuming a common meaning. Being blunt and saying when I say community, I mean X, so almost about building definitions rather than just using a word as a kind of short cut to something that you've assumed.
- Bill was speaking earlier today about the different layers and places we find ourselves in and as artists we're brokering a lot of different conversations and of course people speak different languages, and how people say something as they migrate and travel, so we've got to understand that people do interpret things differently, so when people are talking about regeneration they are talking about different things, and maybe we need to think about the potential meaning of that word.
- But when this language of community, regeneration etc is used by government, or by the press, or agencies or art institutions, funders, when its used in situations of power then it also needs to be questioned.
- You can use it where there is a sort of blank meaning and you can use it where its completely ideological and used to force through a particular political agenda and these words have been used in an ideological agenda to do with neoliberalism. So community is now something which can be bought and sold. It has now acquired value. Therefore if you insist on using the word community there is an ideological and political argument about the economics of community, which can't be distanced from it.
- So is the problem that your version of regeneration is not to change things too much. What I've heard from most people is that the enemy is gentrification or Tesco's or whatever, the big blocks of flats going up next to market. So regeneration may not be a good word at all except if it means something rather specific about the maintenance of diversity and mobility of a kind. And things that were talked about earlier which is this extraordinary cross-class and multigenerational culture but one which also has its edge, and that seems to me a critical thing; what everybody likes about Brixton is that there are lots of things on the edge, its not actually been regenerated.
- I'm a local councillor and I represent this area and have for the last 8 or so years and I came here by mistake and it blew me away and I felt at home. I'm proud of doing what I'm doing; I went into politics because I couldn't fight things. I was involved in getting the markets listed. I do come out of the town hall and I find myself speaking the language and feel horrified. There's much about Brixton that needs to be protected, nurtured, but Brixton has always been about change, its never been about stasis, new communities arriving and making their mark on the built environment and on the languages you over hear and the conversation, all of those things. Some things do need to change as well, this ward I represent is the third most deprived in the UK, and I've been at the funeral of a 15year old boy today, sitting in the church earlier surrounded by his friends, there is something we've got to do about Brixton that will transform their opportunities because at the moment their facing an impossible future. I hate the flats next to the market, that's the wrong thing, but there is need for change stopping using the words but to try and capture what it is that's important and valuable that planners don't see or which other people don't. There are

amazing people here and it's the best place in the world.

- The main point I want to make is that this is happening at a very propitious time, its a good time to be talking about these issues simply because the council is moving forward with the next phase of its review of the plans for Brixton, there's a document out for consultation now. We hope that we can tweak those plans, adjust them hopefully just a small amount, so that we've got something which does steer Brixton in the direction we hope which it does keep that diversity and not just turn it into a developers playground. All of this discussion is very helpful. (...) Always better is if 99 people ask for a particular thing rather than 99 different things, in terms of the impact. A few things already changed, so I think we're pushing at an open door.
- Just picking up from what we've heard, the thing is when these words get used at a more political level, like community and regeneration, its not just the word that's vague but also what's behind it. What is the community, who makes up that community, and then you say community space which becomes a non space. And its all of those things have a certain meaning at a political level but the content of what that thing is about doesn't exist or they don't know it. So its like lets give it to the developer who will tell us what its about. That shouldn't be defended at the political level, but should be addressed – how do we procure these things, or how do we do these things so we can become clearer about things. So not just the word but also what it practically is. ...
- The planning system is key and I'm delighted that you have a councillor here today, something I have been grappling with are the changes to the national planning system and a there's a term now that is within the national planning system called cultural well being, there's a real opportunity here, it's a completely new term that is not defined within the framework and I think it's about trying to define what cultural wellbeing on a local level is within projects like this that space and as soon as you start to build that evidence base there is going to be new language but it's through community levies or section 106 that money goes to cultural projects so I think it's an opportunity to engage with the planning system because we can't ignore it
- I suspect that culture is defined far more wider than just the arts
- I think it's about defining it locally what it means for each borough, cultural wellbeing in Brixton will be very different than cultural wellbeing in Redbridge, there isn't within that document a definition so I think it's up for grabs
- I just want to make a bridge onto that this notion of wellbeing has actually become a normative discourse the moment, Cameron got in, he declared it's not about the GDP but the GWB. Academic research for the ARHC said there used to be a theme and one of those themes was post colonialism something that researchers are really investigating that theme is gone and the thematic is now wellbeing so it's already gone there within governmental departments there is s kind of normative discourse around well being in terms of
- The Arts Council also use it, artists are supposed to secure through their practice a supposed cultural wellbeing in socially engaged practice it goes along with the lists of definitions of community, this has already become a governmental language and already is loaded in particular ways of what is fundable what is not fundable and what constitutes wellbeing, I don't think it provides a solution but is an additional term that we have to add into the pot we have to be aware of how we're utilising it and if we're subverting it
- Happiness not GDP in Cameron's hands that's justifying the austerity regime via we're all meant to be in the Big Society and we're all meant to be volunteering, because that makes us feel better and we're all going to become happy poor people it's already subverted
- (A&M) I think another intention of our project which we talk a lot about is about history actually I don't know if that has come through very strongly. One of the things that is happening in Brixton, that there is an attempt to tell the history in a different way and to represent the history of different people that have come through here and lived here. One

of the things that we were interested in as well is how things might get lost or fall by the wayside because it doesn't have a strong physical presence or physical trace.

- (A&M) Well they do name a square Windrush Square and lots of new comers call it Brixton Square and some may have gone to the square on their walk
- (A&M) and seen the giant windrushes
- (A&M) as interpreted by the landscape architects
- But of course those are bull rushes and the Windrush is the name of a boat the wind rushes the boat to land
- (A&M) and of course it's the way that places get named
- (A&M) Apparently it's a river
- (A&M) Perhaps we should have a river running through Brixton. In fact we do have a river and Boris want to open it up. But places are named Marcus Garvey Way and Bob Marley way and there was a rumour going around that the houses in the new Brixton Square that they are naming the buildings
- One is called Windrush and Brady's Alan will know more
- (A&M) Which bits of history get kept and how do they get represented. There's a lot of very different specific histories in Brixton
- On that point on the tour that I did with Mike who spoke about the Brixton Faeries when I first lived in Brixton there was much more of a visible tangible gay community and that this is an increasingly forgotten history of Brixton and the West Indian Jamaican history is actively celebrated the fridge used to host amazing gay and bisexual nights that is largely lost
- And the south London Women's Centre
- It was part of the essential vibrancy of the place
- Also there was interaction between it wasn't just there's gay and there's black. Ajamu who leads the black LGBT archive cataloguing black LGBT history who is based in the Brixton Housing Coop in which I am also based which is a Lesbian and Gay legacy coop based in this community which is still very vibrant. So these histories are being documented but it's about bringing out archives
- They are not as apparent in public space
- I just want to add on that about naming places, opportunities do arise from time to time and the council have now set up an arrangement where it will notify major society like ours if a developer is about to name a new development a new street a new block of flats or something like that, because the names have to be approved in terms of what works for the emergency services as you can't have too many blocks with a similar name and we do get the opportunity to feed into that and suggest things. We try to put forward things that have a local connection, and the one thing what we are always anxious not to do is to muddy the waters by suggesting somebody that was associated more towards the other side of Brixton to where the place might be so we try and get something that is spot on
- (A&M) So did you have a say in the Brixton Square
- We did have a go at that but what you have to remember that part of it was already named Windrush Square about 10 years earlier, so we thought we ought to be perpetuating that making a fresh start. Since it was a spot that the Black Cultural Archives were in the process of setting up their place it seemed very good to continue that
- (A&M) Alan I think Barby is talking about Brixton Square meaning the housing
- We haven't been asked about that one yet, that's the Barratts development so quite what they propose we don't know
- (A&M) I think that people have already bought their houses in there in Windrush House
- (A&M) Any other comments on the day
- It seems to me that this is all about nomenclature so far. We've talked about different interpretations on community, different interpretations of naming places, and apart from it being abstract, it doesn't produce does it?

- (A&M) You mean in terms of artwork
- It's a monolithic it's a sort of mausoleum type of structure, when you start naming things in that you take away it's vibrancy. Once you name something culture stops
- (A&M) Is that true?
- I don't quite agree. I think it's always there for continuous evolution it can't be frozen there. It can be re-appropriated and then exchanged
- Yes
- It evolves
- I suppose what I was trying to say why is it that it is about semantics and names. Is that a problem that is peculiar to Brixton? In this whole idea of urban planning and regeneration
- Culture definitely doesn't stop. Language definitely plays an important part in that whether that's signs and words everywhere
- (A&M) This place, this space of England the UK has been changed and the language has to change because this is a multicultural society, not everywhere in the UK but it is certain things do have to change and certain ways in which we use language do need to change. I mean when we were talking with Silent University upstairs, we always hear a lot of language about Britain and it's tolerance of migrants for example, British people love to go abroad and say we are very welcoming and yesterday in the newspaper...it had a headline Cameron said we don't want Romanians .
- (A&M) The poster campaign "Don't Come Here"
- (A&M) Yes "Don't Come Here"
- (A&M) "It's raining and there are no jobs!"
- (A&M): and when Sarah mentions that that the ARHC say the postcolonialism has gone. There was a conversation on Radio 4 that the same strategy was used in Leicester to stop the Ugandan Indians from going there to live in Leicester and now has a large Asian community with loads of Ugandan Indians in that community. I think things get erased if we do not start talking through the ways we understand each other when we go to different places and we try to speak to different people in our own language and expect them to understand. So when I was talking before about how we as artists broker our relationships with various different people with in our community, we have spoken to lots of different people, people on the market, an elders group, we've spoken to Rachel who's here, Brixton Society, and different people have different ways of speaking. I think there is something really important here; we do need to talk about how we speak. We do need to speak about language; I've spoken to Damian before about the Romany language and how people are using this. So that is also part of the action so having a conversation practice is about how we can have dialogue so we can get to an understanding. We've put together the Brixton Exchange and a whole bunch of other things as well and we will continue to as Nabil put it, thinking with action. We will continue to develop the way that we are working.
- (A&M) I want to add something to what you said, I think it's really important that artists can act as brokers and that we have a potential to get in there where other people can't necessarily and do things that maybe are a bit out of the ordinary. I don't know maybe we're more willing to take risks more than people who are in a council regeneration office team, but by doing that we can actually connect up these different languages and move in between they to some degree.
- Interesting within this debate on language between the semantic and the dialogue the first thing that Frank was questioning was when things become static. Even if they are important memorialisations about a place, it's a very different part of language we're talking about from the practice of dialogue, which is what you're trying to do. It also made me think about the discussion we were having this afternoon about the Silent University and the place of silence and how silence can be some thing that is very powerful, it can be something that is oppressive, but if it's used properly it can be a really significant way of obtaining action. I

- guess there's different ways we use language and it has different power and resonances.
- (A&M) We have also said that we're very interested in migration and immigration and people come here and they have to lose their language or redefine their language and I think we should look at languages in many different ways. It's even about the way you express yourself, for example my family came here in the 60's and the way that they lost parts of their culture was because they were young people and now they are trying to find ways into rituals that are part of the culture that they brought with them and they're grappling with what that is. It's the way they assimilate and perform their language in space.
  - Can I propose an analogy. It might not work. Often when people receive a diagnosis often in the case of mental health, disability, depression, dyslexia, dyspraxia or whatever. Often that can be very helpful a name has been given to something, it can be very helpful, it can be very relieving it can be reassuring. It can also be problematic because it can create self identities that can be limiting and things can fall on both sides of that, people are away of these diagnosis they are also aware of placing a name on things.
  - We're moving back to the view of the Cambridge Philosopher J.L. Austin who talked about the formative statements and in some way the real world arguably the physical status quo, by simple use of a word was something like say "I do" when you get married changes an actual status of your life, it's not just simply it's a description it's actually a transition to a time. There are other examples for example at the gambling table, and things that can get you arrested. I guess it simply boils down to don't knock the importance of words
  - It comes down to power and who has the power to name is the name a deadening thing is it a foundation or a thing. And I suppose I was thinking as well particularly with the mention of mental illness, if you know your Lacan, the Lacanian idea of the symbolic order which is our names, the imaginary order which is the artists and you have the real which in the wrong way of reading Lacan you could sort of see as being the reality of the city, and when you talk about things like community and so on when do you know that you are in a state of community, when do you know that a place is being regenerated. All of these things are about creating imaginary situations for us, we walk around with fantasies in our heads, is this the city as my city? The interaction then between these totemic words and the imaginations that then what we then form around them because no word has any meaning, because are we wrong to be just looking at these word and then saying I need to know what this word is you can't just look at the word you have to look at the context and the degree to which we are able to dictate the context. We have to look at word and what we do with them and then they're put away and we find new words and try to match them to the reality that we want to have.
  - (A&M) Which going back to context I think is really key because context is always changing it is never something that is static it never stays the same so the interpretation of the words, talking about regeneration if we go back to root words then the meaning is probably different to what we know them to mean now. Teenagers walking around say that something is "sick" adults think why are they doing that but "sick" has been reinterpreted as something that is good. Language is going to change and we should allow language to.
  - That's true but I would say that is it true but I wouldn't take it so far as to say that everything is in flux. There are things that will change, whilst there are contexts that will change, contexts are nested and the same way scales of everything are nested but there will be other contexts that are actually taking a very long time to change. The number of times the neo liberal order has been mentioned today that is a context that didn't used to be in existence.
  - (A&M) Anyone who hasn't spoke yet?
  - I find it difficult talking about language like this because in the work that I do with all different kinds of communities and to try and build relationships. I find that I understand that each define regeneration or community in lots of different ways but actually on the ground in communities trying to do stuff is about relationships and actually words are tools

at the end of the day, to worry about their meaning all the time is tripping yourself up, and actually getting in the way of actually trying to act. You might say community and someone will say will say what do you mean by that and then you will have to talk and discuss with them what that means in it's own right is a way of building relationships.

- And you move your hand and you go community! Your hands do it for you which is your context.
- I don't think we need to get caught up in the meaning of these terms community or regeneration at all. It's about paying attention to what people are doing and what they are achieving all around us. Like when you said the Councillor said the dirty word of gentrification it's become a taboo word, but actually regeneration is gentrification and those words have a lot of power to name what's going on it's what they achieve rather than what they are that's the important thing.
- And the motivation behind when you are using them.
- I've got a question. I'm a local resident. In practical terms this is fantastic and but how are you going to take it forward, when you report back to the Arts Council how are you going to take it forward practically in Brixton from what is happening here?
- (A&M) This is something that is going to be very exciting for us, unfortunately Katy wasn't around because Katy was teaching but when Kate and I went for a meeting with Rachel and we were trying to call Katy all day to say we have actually got a meeting with Rachel and we are starting to talk about the possibility of doing something the council and it was a really good meeting, because she actually acted to get the regen team to be here. I mean they didn't stay the long but they did come. One of the things we did when we were looking for a venue was to go to the Town Hall as the Town Hall was supposed to have a quite radical plan of the idea of opening the town hall up to the community, which has got a lot to do with the buildings, they are trying to move all the council into one building so they have all these buildings that they have to use in various places. So we went along to this meeting and we were like how much would it be if we actually use this space
- (A&M) That will be £1000
- (A&M) Could we use the kitchen, well no we'd need special contracts to do the kitchen and that would be a further £1000. It seems it's going to be continually about us doing our work around as we have spent Christmas and our time since organising this then we need to get back to our ground, because we need to get back to continuing to have those conversations, hoping that those conversations turn into proper actions so they don't just say what you're doing is really wonderful, we want them to put their money where their mouth is and if they really value that sense of place and that sense of belonging within Brixton, as there is lots of development that is still to be done in Brixton, still being proposed we need to sort of make sure that we're in there.
- (A&M) I think another thing that we need to come back to, we need to come back to the fact that this is an artists project and we're in the research phase and one of the things we talked about from the very beginning which is on our statement of intent is that this is going towards a longer term public art project, which is in the shaping, we're shaping it as we go, whether that materialises as different pieces of work that we all produce in different ways with our own expertises or as a collaboration. Something that hasn't really come up a lot today but it's about collaboration and collective working we've come together as a group of three but we have our own individual voices as well. So I'm quite excited to see how we might use some of this material for different kinds of art works, music, sound work there are lots of possibilities that could come out of it, work that will have different kinds of presences as well as collaboration and conversation type of work
- (A&M) We do want to continue to have conversations with people on lots of different levels we will continue to create situations in which we can have dialogue. Aside from that what we've realised in our three months, well a bit more than three months we've been doing this



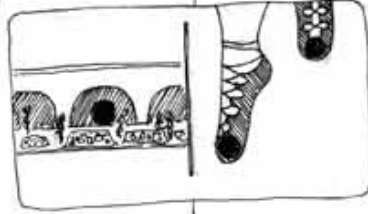
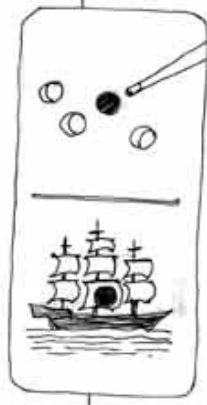
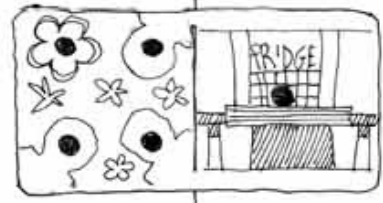
the residency time which is say 4 months is intense and this comes down to how our project is funded, we've had a small pot of money from the arts council, a small pot of money from UCL and we have actually done so much with that and a lot of stuff. We have been giving loads and loads of time and working looking after kids doing the whole everything stuff of life to make this work. Of course we'd love to continue to have dialogues, we have our twitter feed and we can do something through that and maybe we will convene another exchange but it might be in a years time. One of the things we did do is put together an email sheet, which we could distribute. We do have opportunities to set up forums it may take a little while maybe we can set up something like that so maybe if people want to continue discussions. To go back to Jeanne's point what is happening in Brixton is happening in Walthamstow, it is happening in Woolwich, it's happening in Birmingham it's happening everywhere and it's happening in cities across the world, it would be good to have that but obviously how we do it. We will try.

- (A&M) just to mention that we've been supported by funding from UCL and for me it's really important to have that dialogue between the academic community; I'm using that word community a lot again! With people who live in an area and artists who work in an area so enabling that mixture of people to continue to meet and talk is really important.

Appendix H: Anchor & Magnet pull-out in *The Brixton Bugle*, February 2013

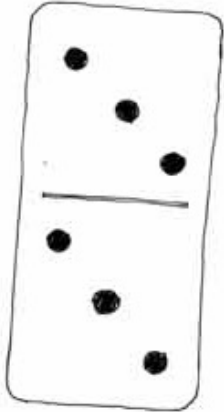
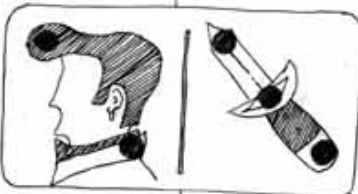
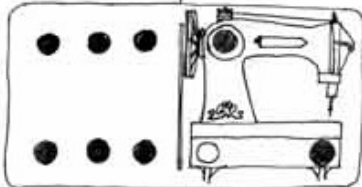
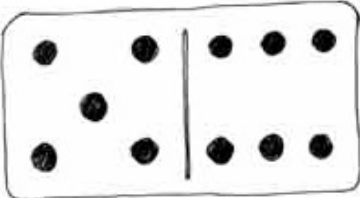
I was from a London family. But my parents moved us out to Crawley when my dad's job took him there. We moved because they came from extreme poverty and dirt. In the 50's London was so poor and so dirty. Hideous. That move was a really massive thing for my parents. There was a very big contrast between us living there, in Crawley, a weird construct of a place - and coming back to visit all our family in Lambeth. We'd see all my mums brothers and cousins all round pubs or who used to work on the market. Back in London we'd go into shops and into catts and everyone would want to feed my Dad up. It was like two worlds. My Dad would have a voice for Crawley and a voice for London. He'd go 'Alright chief! Alright' with everyone - South London. And then he'd go 'Oh hello', all softly, well-spoken - Crawley. As a kid I would think what was that about? I moved back when I was 16. ...Ah, my dancing days. My first real times of coming to Brixton were about '87 to about '90 when I used to come regularly, dancing with my friends. I had friends who used to work at the Fridge so I always used to get in there free. I used to dance a lot. Soul II Soul was a big thing. 3 feet high and rising. De La Soul was a big summer tune. I've been in Brixton 13 years now. And whenever you go on holiday you're glad to be back. You think, ah, lovely to be away, but great to be back.

We always used to come shopping in the market. My mother came every Friday to buy the food, so we'd trail along with her. It was a place you came to buy your food and then you'd take it home and cook it, it wasn't a place you came to eat. All these new places I see now, I find it really amusing. It was a food market, and cut-price household goods, it wasn't fashion. And just down around Popes Road and Station Road there used to be an original type of flea market. People would just go down with whatever they wanted to and just put it on the floor and sell it. There was a strong Irish community then, especially going up Acre Lane, that end of Brixton, towards Clapham. We used to go to Church at St Mary's at Clapham Common, and they had Irish dancing. I remember on St Patrick's Day we all used to have to troop down to Brixton along the main roads and that, in our green kilts and satin shirts and shiny shoes.



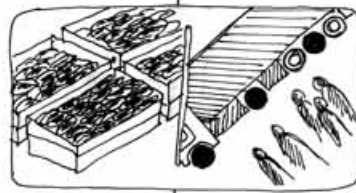
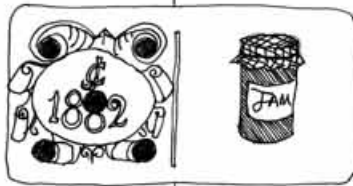
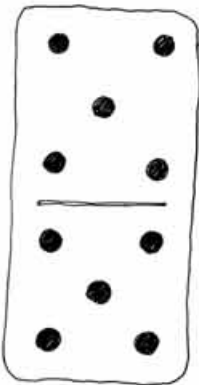
Back in the day there were lots of characters. Like this guy, I can't remember his name but he was a friend of the Mayor Lloyd Leon, first Black Mayor of Brixton. It was just the way some of these men dressed, they were so dapper, old school West Indian. I remember I was about 9 or 10 when this was all going on, getting taken to all these places, to the pub, watching the older guys. I hadn't really thought about it that much and then years later I was with a girlfriend in Brixton and we went to this party upstairs at the Dog Star and I was like, I've been here before, I don't know why, but I've been to this place before. My mind started to go and we went outside and I saw the corner again and I was like - this is the place! This is the pub! We used to stay at The Atlantic when Lloyd was working there. You had music playing upstairs, you had the smell of curry goat, it was smoky and it was just full of old West Indian boys playing pool. Me and my sister used to pinch a little Snowball and have our little Egg Nosh and think we were older.

You know the Teddy boys didn't come to Brixton. No sir. They never came. They were in other areas, yes, Notting Hill and all, they had problems. But they never came to Brixton. They knew not to come. As a matter of fact, during the Teddy Boy years, I spen' a bit of time in Kensal Green. And I see my Dad shed tears. I'm out and about, I wasn't afraid of anybody. But he was sure somebody would hurt me, he would say son, you can't do this, you can't do... But I had something on me. Yes, in those early days I used to carry a knife. But no more, no more. Everybody, more or less, used to carry something to protect themselves because you were prone to attack. That was the norm at the time. It has changed now, but what bothering me is this: why are we killing one another now? I'm sure someone somewhere is having a field day about us killing each other now.



For me the best thing about being in Brixton is all the fabric shops and the craziness of the market and the different soundclashes you get just walking around. I'm into dubstep and electronic music and it's not like you hear much of that in the streets, it's mostly African gospel or bashment or crazy people walking around with radios listening to god knows what. My two favourites are the guy who plays reggae out of a shopping trolley, and the guy playing Afrobeat and selling CDs out of the tiniest crack of an arch. He's always dancing and singing in his little two foot by two foot spot. Me and my friend go into Brixton after school and buy fabric. My mum makes clothes and has this old sewing machine that's really old, beautiful, black with really ornate gold detail and set in a wooden tray with an old wooden box that's battered now. It's one of the mechanical ones, you have to turn the handle. You can still make out that it says 'Brixton' on it. And 'Bon Marche'. Where TX Maxx is, was a very posh store back in the day she says. I keep saying I want to learn but I haven't managed it yet - She's making me a shorts jumpsuit at the moment, I'm going over later to try it on and finish it up for the weekend. Can't wait. I like to stand out. It's a crazy time and blue patterned fabric - its a bit mad but I love it.

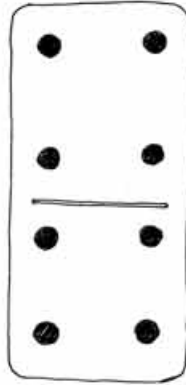
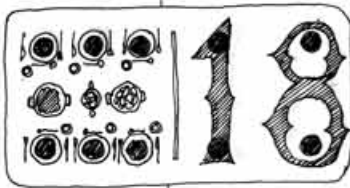
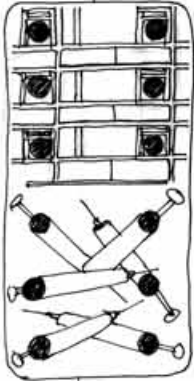
I've had this business in the market over 11 years. Originally we are from Iraq, but we were chucked out for no reason. I've been away from my country since 1980, and I wish to go there to visit. Just to visit, you know. It's not safe though to be honest with you. 1980 is 32 years ago you know. It's a lifetime. We have family and friends down there still though. It's sad, very sad. We had lived there for 100 years, my family. My dad, my granddad. And overnight, that's it. Saddam chucked us away. Over 1 million people, put in trucks, put in lorries, without money, without documents, without anything. Before Iraq, my grandfather was in Iran. But wherever you live you become that place. Like when we came here - after 4 or 5 years you become British. But I still want to go back one day to the place I was born. To Baghdad. It's not safe for me. But I would like to go one day, just for a visit. I wish.



I was born at number 14 Mayall Road in 1966. The last time England won the world cup. Later we moved to Ferndale Court. Growing up in Brixton in Ferndale Court, it was amazing, it was a sense of community. Everybody: black, pink, white, yellow, Chinese - everybody, you know, everybody lived together. There was no racism that was overt, although we were called coloured and at the time it was quite comforting ... Haha! No!! It was never comforting! As a child you always knew there was something wrong, but you were like, errr, OK? The first time I tasted jam was in 1978, I'll never forget. I went to Ferndale School Centre and they used to do toast over there and I'd never had toast, because it was hardough bread in our house and that was usually slobbered on your plate and you ate it.

I remember the very first time I had my hair done in a salon and not in my mother's kitchen. It was my 21st birthday, it was 1956 and I was newly wed. My husband gave me some money to treat myself. He said I should go to Winifred Atwell's down the road. It had just opened you see, and we had never had a salon just for us before. Oh, it was beautiful. So clean and bright and so pretty, I remember the little black and white check tiles and feeling like a real lady. Luxurious and special and just a little bit guilty. Imagine that. The first black women's hair salon in London, owned by the famous pianist Winifred Atwell, at 82A Raiton Road. That building was burned down in the riots. It was a welders by then, and across the road from a racist pub, the George. I think someone threw a petrol bomb through the window of that pub. There was lots on fire that night.

I live on Loughborough Estate. Le Corbusier wasn't the architect but it was based on his ideas. The first one was called Kemble House & it's still working today as well as it ever did. The whole property was about air circulation and having clean air in a polluted London. So the blocks are built so there is a fluid flow of air all the time. The problem is, the first one was built to a high spec and then they cut and cut and cut corners for the other blocks. Then maintenance wasn't done. That's when the problems started. When I moved here 24 years ago in the 80's, it was completely falling to pieces. It was a complete wreck. You could put your hands through the walls there were hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of syringes everywhere. But we took it and did it up, and now it's my home.



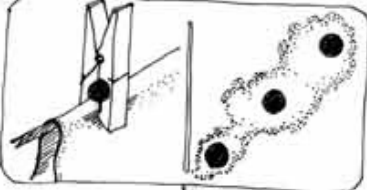
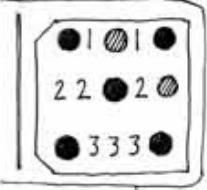
When we first saw the railway arch that would become Anchor & Magnet's residency space, it was filled to head height with film-making paraphernalia, power tools and old bits of circus. Still it felt like home. And placed between Station Road trader arches in front, Barratt homes development behind, peep holes into the back of Walton Lodge Laundry to the right and within sniffing distance of a Brixton Village fishmongers, it was in the heart of the space we were interested in. Within days created a space we could invite people into and make them feel welcome. Our first visitors were from Stockwell Good Neighbours, a local elders group. They came to play dominoes and teach us the game. We made a pot of red pea soup in the cupboard-sized kitchen, and were schooled by some grand masters (and mistresses). We've since made more pots of soup, countless cups of tea and even hosted a dinner, with a menu all about Brixton.

The last riot was a retro pretend one. What was interesting about the one before, the second riots, you got to remember nobody had mobile phones then. We're living on Coldharbour Lane, we go out, we're going to our local pub, which was The Warrior. We're walking down the road and some lad came along and they said "Oh no, you go first Miss" and then they turn a car over behind us and set it alight! They were so polite. We go to the pub and then in and out of the pub there is a constant parade of young youth during the evening. In and out of the pub. And they're all going to use the payphone and they're all ringing their mums and saying I'm ever so sorry mum but there's a riot and we can't get home! Cos we're rioting! We don't want to go. And the landlord was outside going "Watch me windows boys, watch me windows!" Local behavior was bad but nobody was attacking local people. We did not feel a threat or anything like that.

I remember coming in here to the old labour exchange, the site they are building flats on now. When we got in there I remember these two doors you used to have to queue up by, A-J and K-Z and I can remember finding all this old office stuff just left there, these piles of punch cards and stuff. We squatted it and CoolTan collective turned it into an arts centre and cafe and community space. It was known as the old dole house locally. Sadly though after many battles we were eventually evicted and the site got sold to developers. I don't know who Brixton Square is for yet, or what it will offer to the community..



I'm 92 and I've been living here at least 50 years. I moved down from a village outside Leicester with my husband. Our families weren't very happy about us getting married and we wanted a new start. My cousin was already in London working at at Walton's the laundry, and said she could get me a job. So we left and I've never been back. It was a shock at first, I must say, but Brixton became my home. I worked at Walton's for 30 years and they were very good to me. Turned out I'd had an Aunt who'd worked there in the very early days. We only met once and we weren't there at the same time, but she worked there right through two wars and a recession, on the steam iron mostly, I think. The girls I met at Walton's became my best friends for life. It was hard work but we did have a laugh together. There'd always be someone to talk to, share your problems. On break, we would go out the back, by the railway arches, pinch a cigarette off one of the men and have a gossip. Some of the arches were kept by market families and there was joiners down there, mechanics, all sorts went on back there and the men were terrible flirts.

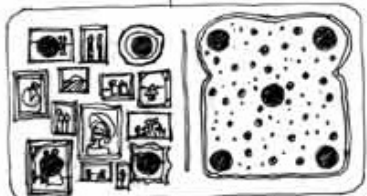
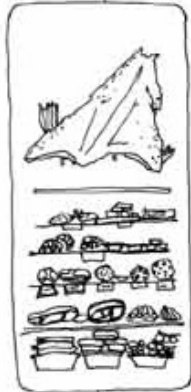
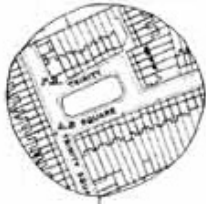


My family have been in this area for a few generations. My grandfather was the best storyteller, full of tall tales and you never could quite tell where the memory ended and the embellishment – or pure fantasy for that matter – started. He lived on Kellett Road and we'd go round often on a Sunday. One of our favourite stories was how as a boy, he liked to stop for a chat with a Zebra of a Saturday in the market. We thought he was pulling our leg. He said it was known to be terribly grumpy and none of his friends could get anywhere with it. They were scared he said. But he and the Zebra got along, and the gentleman driving the trap could see so, and showed him how to feed him an apple. That was it then. He'd buy two apples on the market every Saturday and keep one in his pocket, in case he saw the Zebra. It was only after I was grown and he was long dead that I read about the Brixton Zebra and realized it was probably true.

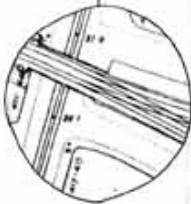
We'd all walked up and down Brixton Station Road what must be many thousands of times over the years, but it feels a little different when you're standing behind your own market stall. Opposite the tiny Bush Man Kitchen and in front of CD Leroy's even tinier space, it was a good combination of smells and sounds that we added our own to on a grey morning last October. We spoke to over 200 people that day on the stall, exchanging our Anchor & Magnet Heritage Products - things we'd made that spoke of our own stories and heritages - for stories from local people. It took some a while to get that we weren't selling, we were trading. You couldn't buy the Kelewele Spice Mix, or the Memory Salts or the Trail of Crumbs Incense that was burning on the stall. But you could sit, chat and record your story.

Salted cod is a national dish in Portugal, but it is also in places like Italy and Greece as well and we have the whole fish here so we can cut it down for people to take as much or as little as they want. Portuguese tend to buy it throughout the whole year, and we find that for Italian families it tends to be a traditional dish around Christmas and Easter. We even have lots of ladies coming in and buying it to ship back to the Caribbean. I assume there's the connection to slavery, to trading and history; Portugal and seafaring nations were going out, and you couldn't always rely on catching fresh fish on the journey so you'd keep salted fish onboard for the protein. Obviously there are places along the African coast that would have been Portuguese colonies, and I guess the tradition of food gets mixed in as well. My father came here in '68 or '69. Portugal was a dictatorship at the time, so very hard times.

We like to keep things really traditional and quite basic in the way of ingredients, so we don't put any sugars in our bread, there's no preservatives, no e-numbers. It's just a straight flour, water and 1% salt mix for all our breads. It's in the rising times where we get our flavours from. The salt reacts with yeasts. And with the bacterial mix in the biga, the salt helps with the rising process. It's a flavour enhancer as well. We knew we were going to be here for 3 years - we signed a three year lease - but we didn't know how much the market was actually going to grow in the 2 years we've been here. It's been an experience. I've never seen a market clientele change and grow so much within the space of 2 years in my life. No matter where I've worked, no matter where I ran, no matter where I owned. In other areas, in other countries, I've never seen a growth like I have in Brixton, and a demographic change so much.



I'm 70 years old and I've been in Brixton for 49 years. I came from Germany at 21 as an au Pair girl - for one year - but I met my English boyfriend and got stuck instead. I first came by train and boat. First to Ireland; then after a year to London. I was 21, footloose and fancy free! I only had a little suitcase and one change of clothes because I thought I was a hippy! There was no common market then and so after 3 or 4 months I became Alien, and I didn't know how to get a job, or how to become British and that was really tough. But in the end I found a friend, a graphic designer, and he employed me, and... I can't tell you everything. It's a bit naughty. Anyway, through this guy I got my passport. British national. So then I could look for work. I was a life drawing model.



When I was 40 I fell madly in love with somebody who lives in Brixton, so what a lovely reason to come to Brixton and to get to know the place. And you know I just love the interaction of people on the street; it's a real place where people will give you the time of day. Falling in love is the most precious thing. I was so totally in love and living in Birmingham and coming down for work in London, and I would somehow be able to make an excuse to call in on Brixton to see this guy and meet him in the Trinity. It felt like a really individual kind of place, that old pub. It's not quite the same any more, some of the character has gone, but I can still just picture us sitting in one corner being a bit shy with each other. Brixton's become a really special place to me, with so much to discover all the time. Actually I've found it an incredibly safe place to live and that's because people look out for each other and that's so much better than other places I've lived in, really.



## Appendix I: Anchor & Magnet, Brixton Exchange 2 outline

**The Brixton Exchange 2 will be a day of workshops and exchanges, using creative approaches to discuss Brixton's community heritage – what it is, how do we hold on to it, and what can we learn from others. The aim is to give voice to a wide spectrum of Brixton's community both past and present.**

This event follows on from Anchor & Magnet's first Brixton Exchange in 2013, which brought together over 100 local residents, community activists, artists, academics and others to discuss questions of urban regeneration and community ownership in Brixton and elsewhere.

The past 3 years have seen incredibly rapid change in Brixton and the beginning of major initiatives which will bring further changes. Community activism has also been on the rise. As a 5-year council heritage project begins, we want to ask: what (and who) is being lost, what to hold on to and how, what is the experience of other community/activist groups past and present, and how these stories should be represented and shared more widely? How does heritage become the inheritance of future generations and how can it serve present and future communities?

Taking heritage as the starting point, The day sets out to explore different kinds of memory and memorializing; sharing of stories, the meeting of 'old' and 'new' Brixton; contested notions of heritage starting from the context of central Brixton; the commodification of ideas of heritage' as a tool to brand Brixton, while parts of the community are edged out; the politics of preservation and impermanence, objects and the idea of the community museum.

Speakers and facilitators will include artists, historians, architects, activists and academics, who will create spaces for dialogue. Workshops and exchanges include mapping contested spaces in Brixton, decolonising heritage, using objects to tell and record personal memories, a food treasure hunt & cooking, and more.

Come prepared to speak up, and contribute your voice and your hands.

### **Who is it for?**

Local residents of Brixton past and present; community activists, local workers and business owners, archivists, those with an interest in heritage and community history,



planners, architects, artists and those with personal perspectives to bring to the dialogue.

**Speakers & Facilitators:**

Nick Beech, Architectural historian, Queen Mary University, on Stuart Halls thoughts on metropolitan heritage

Michael McMillan, Artist & Curator, creator of The West Indian Front Room project  
Nabeel Hamdi, Emeritus Professor of Housing and Urban Development, Oxford  
Brookes University

Barby Asante, on thinking about internal colonialism and the possibility of decolonising heritage

Ashvin de Vos and Daniel Fitzpatrick, Variant Office architects, on mapping tales of contested spaces

Fan Sissoko, food treasure hunt

Katy Beinart, making traces of objects for the Brixton Museum

Bureau of Silly Ideas

Critical Practice

More TBC - check our website [www.anchorandmagnet.org](http://www.anchorandmagnet.org)

and twitter feed @anchorandmagnet for updates

**Tickets:** please book through eventbrite.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-brixton-exchange-2-tickets-22655146152>

If you have any questions please email us at [anchorandmagnet@gmail.com](mailto:anchorandmagnet@gmail.com)

Tickets are free but spaces are limited so please make sure you book. You will be asked to contribute towards the cost of lunch/refreshments (approx £5.00 - flexible if on low income)

## Appendix I: Brixton Exchange 2 review

Source: A-N website: <<https://www.a-n.co.uk/reviews/draft/52450487>>

23 May 16

The Brixton Exchange 2: Review by Oliver Carter.

Brixton's pull has continually attracted migrants who have established communities alongside many counter cultural groups; those who have flocked to the area for its low house prices and vibrant culture. Rising property prices and the appeal of living in a cultural hub is dismantling its individual identity and displacing the migrant communities. Anchor and Magnet invited members of the community to meet and discuss how Brixton is evolving around them along with activists and academics, facilitating the conversation through a series of interventions and exchanges. As an outsider I am keen to hear how local residents are responding to regeneration as I hope such an activated population will set a precedent for other communities. Anchor and Magnet originated as conversations in café's between Barby Asante and Kate Theophilus about the changes they were experiencing in Brixton, and the final co-founder Katy Beinart explains that this, the 2nd Brixton Exchange, has been triggered by Lambeth council launch of a 5 year heritage project. Anchor and Magnet have seen this as an opportunity to reflect on how and what of Brixton's heritage should be retained.

Our first talking point is Stuart Hall's keynote speech to the Arts Council in 1999 in which he proposed the preservation of a cultural heritage. With migration and colonialism our shared heritage has expanded beyond the narrow view of national past that is often presented by the heritage industry. This view should be expanded by incorporating spaces of current social importance and the activities that take place within, them as well as those of historical significance. Artist and Curator Michael McMillan and Professor of Architecture Nabeel Hamdi instigated the conversation on how Brixton's heritage should be approached. In the three years since Anchor and Magnets last Exchange development has continued to undermine Brixton's communities. McMillan explains that even the teenagers have felt the shift as businesses, local amenities and social housing are redeveloped to cater for the ever growing demand for London real estate. Migrant communities are disproportionately affected by the process of gentrification and they are forced out of the area. McMillan, the son of African-Caribbean migrants, has experienced this process in Hackney. He suggests that whilst gentrification is inevitable we can influence the outcome and ensure that all areas of history are recorded and their significance acknowledged.

We discuss the tendency for mistrust between neighbours; many of the rooted locals see the influx of new residents as part of the problem. He worries that the new residents are not engaging with the existing community and if there is any interaction between the groups at all. In London it is increasingly normal to have little or no contact with your neighbours and development in Brixton is not encouraging integration. If heritage is to be preserved, development must be sensitive when merging the communities. Part of Brixton's heritage is what Hamdi describes as the invisible structure of space made up from the social networks and the way the population interact within the space. Projects should be sensitive to these aspects of society, developing rather than replacing them. It is inherent to Hall's proposal of cultural heritage to protect this invisible structure and cultivate relationships between the existing and the new. Hamdi draws our attention to practical innovation in design in order to achieve new ways of integration where one group does not replace the other and trust is developed. Development so far has failed to embrace these ideas preferring to focus on the more tangible notion of economical expansion.

There are many activists working in London fighting the effects of gentrification, but these

groups are often disparate and focused on a singular purpose. Property development companies paving the way for gentrification are organised and well versed in the process. Uniting people and sharing tactics across London's community to form an informed and organised opposition will enable a greater chance of intervention. Unification was the aim of my first workshop *Laundering Change: Creating Solidarity*, run by the Critical Practice Research Cluster (Chelsea, UAL) and public works. To open conversation we share ideas and experiences of gentrification then condense our conversation into a slogan to adorn a banner. My group's discussion is focused on the preservation and expansion of public space and its innovative use by activists. Commons are neutral areas in communities and are important in merging cultures as people cross paths with those they may not otherwise have contact with. We paint the words 'Grow the Commons' on our banner and surround it with depictions of common spaces which can have cross cultural significance creating a village around the slogan. Each group's banner is displayed outside the venue announcing our presence and declaring our message.

There is anticipation as we move into lunch. Several large trays have been brought into the foyer and the lids are lifted to reveal a delicious selection of Caribbean curries. We gather around tables with plates full of food – an integral element of Brixton's identity. Our meal also gives us a chance to discuss the outcomes of our workshops. Those who had chosen *What does Brixton taste Like?* (run by Fan Sissoko) had shared their experience of food in the area. Each member of the group had brought their own ingredient which conjured memories of places in Brixton which they had then mapped out. They used their ingredients to create a menu of combined experience. Brixton plays host to cuisines from around the world but as a neighbourhood changes invariably food culture does to. The eateries and famous markets are reflective of the population and they will disappear together to be replaced by a homogeneous culture of chain brands.

In the Post war housing memories workshop, run by Gian Givanni, participants had responded to documents and clippings depicting different eras of social housing, sharing their memories which were collected and archived. As the city develops the history of these places is lost, their value discredited by a rhetoric promoting financial progress. What remains of this social heritage is memories and the physical items that capture them. Katy Beinart has begun documenting memories and objects as part of an on going archival project, *The Brixton Museum*. Submissions are recorded via photographs alongside the story behind each object. At the back of the exchange sits the mobile archiving structure designed to resemble the Victorian canopies which had covered the market until the 1980s when they were deemed too costly to maintain, dismantled and removed.

In the recent decades, Brixton faced losing many community artefacts, like the market canopies, as a result of under investment in the area; today they are disappearing to make room for new investment and development. In my final workshop *Tales of Contested Spaces* run by Variant Office, we were encouraged to share our experiences of places where the change in use has caused conflict. We gathered around a map with bright felt tip pens and marked the position of the community hubs that had once played host to the Brixton scene. The group reeled off names of long gone pubs and clubs, the popular figures that drank and what bands had played there. Squats and co-ops were high on the agenda as Brixton has been home to some of the most prominent civil rights movements.

We considered more recent losses; NHS services, the conversion of public libraries into private gyms and lost social housing. We discuss existing contested spaces and the institutions that would decide their fate. By this point the map is filled with patches of colour so that it is barely legible and each mark has its own collection of memories. We split into groups and are each

assigned spaces to discuss and create an alternative map. The arches are owned by Network Rail and are currently home to various independent shops many of which have been there for decades. Network Rail is proposing to evict many of them to implement a face lift which will be followed by a tripling of the rent; pricing the current tenants out of the area. To protect the businesses the traders have used graffiti, social media and events to unite the whole community around the shops. They have gained support from all over Brixton and a petition has attracted 22,000 signatures. But despite this the works are still going ahead. We share our maps. They are fluid visual diagrams of space reflective of shared memories. They have begun to document the invisible structure of space where the emotional and social connections prevail physical distance. One group has drawn a diagrammatic list of closed venues resembling a time-transcending pub crawl.

In our final meeting we gather to review the outcomes of the afternoons workshops. In Barby Asante's session Internal colonialism and the possibility of decolonializing heritage the group had examined archival material collected by Asante. Through responding to it they had joined the conversation she was developing with participants own stories and opinions. The material demonstrated that migrant communities in London acted like magnets attracting those who can identify here more than in the dominant society. With ever-rising demand for housing in London these areas are becoming more popular and are often perceived as as 'exotic' or 'edgy' options. The established communities that have enriched the area are being priced out as the dominant society moves back in. Asante compares the economic and political intervention to that of colonialism which is often justified as improving an uncivilised area for the better.

There is a consensus amongst the group that anger has returned to Brixton, not seen since the 80's when it was at the forefront of civil rights movements. Back then there was a sense of unity, but now there is no united force to hold the private development companies to account. Despite the opportunities online social networking presents and has demonstrated in other movements Brixton has not rallied around it. The population has responded to grass roots projects, like the Exchange, that acknowledge the value of their heritage. The day was successful in uniting the mixed attendance exemplifying the process which, we concluded, needs to happen more across Brixton. Through critical thought on heritage along with the sharing of memories we have learnt of many different points of perspective across Brixton. We all take away from this Exchange new knowledge which we now have an opportunity to spread further afield to expand the conversation of Brixton's heritage and future.

For further info: [www.anchorandmagnet.org](http://www.anchorandmagnet.org) (<http://www.anchorandmagnet.org>)

## Appendix J: Anchor & Magnet, Extract from THI Social Heritage report

### 7. Summary

Anchor & Magnet's experience working in Brixton has continually thrown up the importance of specificity. Any complimentary project work developed through the Townscape Heritage Bid must work hard to avoid generic heritage approaches and to create projects that are genuinely relevant to Brixton and its specific histories, including spatial, architectural, cultural, political, social, and personal.

Brixton is a place with not only a rich and layered heritage but also a powerful mythology and reputation, and this combination can mean the same old stories are often retold, the same images trotted out. The reality is more complex - and more interesting - and work in the area will be much the stronger for engaging this complexity. The dialogues we've had, stories we've recorded, and meals we've shared all offer up ideas and questions that will help root new work in what is actually of importance to local people.

#### Recurring themes and areas of interest and importance:

Eccentricity, unconventionality and difference as something historically uniquely accepted in Brixton. Particular historical and current communities include squatters, political activists, LGBT, African Caribbean, Jews, Irish, creative/arts, music hall etc. Some of these groups have moved on, and others have been erased. How can the space for eccentricity, unconventionality and difference that Brixton offers, which these groups have contributed to and benefitted from, be retained?

Hidden histories / digging deeper: Brixton has been a space that affords people invisibility, privacy and safety to be who they are. How do we ensure the stories of those who are less visible are also represented in heritage work? Uncovering and representing certain hidden histories is by definition more difficult. For example, exploring the support organisations and individuals behind the local mental health statistics.

Black and African Caribbean communities in particular need a visible and unclashed presence. There can be a fear that words and naming alone, for example 'Windrush Square', will not be enough to ensure the particular heritage of these communities is not forgotten.

Style, fashion, music: the historic centrality of niche cultures to Brixton as a place in which identity is often articulated and performed. Tribes, individuality, street culture, youth culture. Also pubs, clubs, music halls and music venues as significant strand of cultural history.

Childhood and youth experiences of the past must be part of the story.

Changing social spaces and the communities who use them – for example there were more pubs which were black and mixed and these are now vanishing. There are fewer communal spaces available for people to mix in, and even the social space of the market has been described by traders as somewhere where policies have led to a 'demographic shift'. Heritage projects could promote the need for communal spaces to explore shared and different heritages. Also being aware of the physical structures of Brixton Central: how do the railways, arches etc. shape the place and experience of Brixton?

Market, shopping and trade. How can we celebrate the past traders of Brixton market, and balance the changes that are happening in the market now? A need has been identified to explore the cultural listing of the Indoor Market, and how this could be used to more actively protect the long-term traders who cater to the traditional shoppers using the market.

Inheritance: A desire to 'pass on' certain knowledge, skills, understandings. Both within families and cultures - what is important to be handed down from generation to generation? And also from community to new community; long time residents are keen that incomers 'know' Brixton and understand its uniqueness. What makes it special? How can it be shared / articulated? This raises questions about how and what to share and who does the sharing.

Myths, and debunking them: the image of Brixton past as being violent, confrontational, drug riddled and dangerous. This doesn't deal with the complex realities of Brixton's history.

Global links and significance: Brixton resonates beyond the area both nationally and internationally.

How to subvert tried and tested ideas of heritage – e.g. a tourist booth could be manned by local people with stories to tell.

## Heritage Lottery Fund parameters

In developing projects, its important to bear in mind the Heritage Lottery Fund parameters of the types of work to be funded, which Lambeth have defined as:

1. Helping people to learn about their own and other people's heritage
2. Helping more people, and a wider range of people, to take an active part in and make decisions about heritage
3. Safeguard the character of the conservation area through increasing community participation

Projects also need to bear in mind the location and scope of potential projects.; see the map of sites in this document for a defined area that projects should relate to, and potential sites.

## 8. Other Research Resources:

Local organisations such as the Lambeth Archives, The Brixton Society and the Black Cultural Archives hold collections of easily accessible archive and heritage material specific to Brixton. See Appendix for images of the following examples from these archives:

- 1968 redevelopment exhibition and plans from Lambeth Archives
- 1981 Grassroots Newspaper post riots coverage from Black Cultural Archives
- Landmark: Lambeth Archives photographs of vanished Brixton Streets

Other resources include:

- Commemorative plaques: English Heritage and other local plaques.  
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/discover/blue-plaques/about/>
- Urban 75 website has a wide range of local history information including other local memorials eg. The Brixton bombing: <http://www.urban75.org/brixton/photos/238.html>
- Brixton Stories on the Brixton Society website: <http://www.brixtonsociety.org.uk/>
- The Reading Resource list in the Appendix for Brixton-related books, films and articles.
- The list of organisations in the Appendix.



Image: Brixton plans c.1968, copyright Lambeth Archives/ London Borough of Lambeth.

## Appendix K: Grants, Exhibitions, Conference Papers and Publications of PhD research and artworks.

### Awards & Grants towards thesis work

- 2015: Arts Council England Grant and Heritage Lottery Fund grant for the Brixton Museum project
- 2014: Train & Engage bursary (UCL Public Engagement Unit)
- 2013: Artists International Development Fund, Arts Council England
- 2013: Architectural Research Fund grant from Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL
- 2013: UCL Environment Institute Grant for The Brixton Exchange, Anchor & Magnet project
- 2012: Arts Council grant for Anchor & Magnet project
- 2012: Step Out (UCL Public Engagement Unit) grant for Anchor & Magnet project
- 2011: Beacon Bursary (UCL Public Engagement Unit) grant for Origination residency
- 2011: Arts Council grant for Origination residency and exhibition, 198 CAL
- 2009: Arts Council grant for Origination project and residency, Greatmore Studios, South Africa

### Exhibitions, Performances & Screenings of thesis work

- 2016: Brixton Museum, Rebel Space Pavilion, Brixton Design Trail/London Design Festival
- 2015: Brixton Museum, Brixton Library/Lambeth Archives, London
- 2015: Brixton Conversations (screening), Ritzy Cinema, London
- 2015: Reimagining Rurality, University of Westminster, London
- 2014: Cities Methodologies, Slade Research Centre, UCL, London
- 2014: Navigations, Red Gallery, London
- 2014: Old Skool Breaks (with Rebecca Beinart), Primary, Nottingham
- 2013: Goute Sel, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ghetto Biennale, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
- 2013: Saltworks, Plataforma Revolver, Lisbon
- 2013: Lambeth Treasures, Royal Festival Hall, London (curated by Building Exploratory)
- 2013: Cities Methodologies, UCL Slade Research Centre, London
- 2013: A Game of Dominoes, Art & Geography Conference, University of Lyon Lumiere, Lyon, France
- 2011: Origination (Katy & Rebecca Beinart), 198 Contemporary Arts & Learning, London
- 2010: Offere (screening) Firestation arts, Windsor
- 2010: SALON 10 Group Show, Four Corners, London
- 2010: Though I Have Missed You So Very Much (performance), Hull Literature Festival
- 2010: Found Treasures (live event/installation), Barracks Lane Community Garden
- 2010: Origination (Katy & Rebecca Beinart), Artlink Gallery, Hull
- 2010: Origination (Katy & Rebecca Beinart), University of Stellenbosch Gallery, South Africa
- 2010: To Find Your Home Visit Ours, Greatmore Studios, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2009: Art Take-Out, Tsangs Kitchen, Oxford

## Residencies

- 2013: 3<sup>rd</sup> Ghetto Biennale, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
- 2013: Fabrica Braco de Prata, Lisbon, Portugal (Associated Project, Lisbon Architecture Triennial)
- 2012-3: Anchor and Magnet Residency, London
- 2011: Origination Residency in Brixton Market, London
- 2010: Visiting Artist, Greatmore Studios, Cape Town and University of Stellenbosch, South Africa

## Artists Talks & Conference Papers

- 2016: The Brixton Exchange 2, London (co-organised conference)
- 2015: Paper for International Conference for Historical Geographers, London (with Sam Barton)
- 2015: Paper for Reimagining Rurality, University of Westminster
- 2014: Paper for The Story of Memory conference, Roehampton University
- 2014: Paper for London Conference for Critical Thought, Goldsmiths, London
- 2014: 'Plural Cities' talk for MArch Urban Studies, University of Brighton
- 2014: UCL Public Engagement Unit training, London
- 2014: AHRC Curating Community Workshop, Centre for Creative Collaboration/ Goldsmiths, London
- 2014: Stadtkolloquium, UCL, London
- 2013: Creative Time Summit discussion, for Create London, Space Studios, London
- 2013: All That Glitters: Arts and regeneration, UP Projects, London
- 2013: Learning from Neighbourhoods, co-organised event with Academy of Urbanism, London.
- 2013: Questions of Home, Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth
- 2013: Installation & paper, Re-Contested Sites/Sights, TRAIN research centre, UAL, London
- 2013: The Brixton Exchange, London (co-organised conference)
- 2012: Conference Paper for Migration, Memory and Place, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
- 2012: Conference Paper for Practice Makes Perfect, Swansea Metropolitan University, Wales
- 2012: Lunchtime lecture, Bishopsgate Institute, London
- 2012: Conference Paper for Unofficial Histories, Bishopsgate Institute, London
- 2012: Conference installation and paper for Contested Sites/Sights, TRAIN research centre, Chelsea, UAL, London (with Rebecca Beinart)
- 2011: UCL Public Engagement Unit Arts & Humanities Symposium, UCL, London
- 2011: Conference paper at Royal Geographical Society Annual International Conference
- 2011: Artists Talk for Photoforum, Create Festival, Four Corners, London
- 2011: Conference paper at The Archive and Jewish Migration, UCT, South Africa
- 2011: Creative Collaborations: Artists and the Public, Modern Art Oxford
- 2010: Artists Talk, Artlink, Hull
- 2010: Artists Talk, OVADA Gallery, Oxford



Publications:

- 2018: 'Salted earth: salt-making as a poetics of mobility and place.' In Ben Stringer ed., *Rurality Reimagined* (Applied Research + Design, 2018)
- 2015: 'Origination: Journeying In The Footsteps Of Our Ancestors.' In *Sacred Mobilities: Journeys of Belief and Belonging*, (eds) Avril Maddrell, Alan Terry and Tim Gale (Ashgate, 2015)
- 2014: 'Saltfish: A Conversation.' With Sam Barton. *Alter Magazine*, Issue 1, 2014
- 2014: 'Reading between the lines: artistic approaches to the family archive'. The Archive and Jewish Migration, Special Issue of *Jewish Culture and History* 15 (2014)
- 2014: 'Becoming and Disappearing: Between Art, Architecture and Research', *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 13 (2014)

## Appendix L: Summary of all artworks

For a portfolio of artworks including films, see:

<http://www.katybeinart.co.uk/saltedearth.html>

and: <https://www.axisweb.org/p/katybeinart/>

(N.B. some works are not included in the Project chapters due to limitations of space; details of work are given where relevant to explain their contribution to the process of my research)

**Artworks made on board ship, December 2009-January 2010** (Katy and Rebecca Beinart, unless stated otherwise)

*Victorian Lady*

2009

Performance, documented in photograph

*A Family Recipe*

2009

Postcard, stamp kit, written text

*Family Photograph*

2009

Performance, documented in photograph

*1 KM walk*

2009

Performance, documented through film and photographs

*Dangerous Cargo*

2009

Performance, documented in photograph

*Green Cape*

2009

Printed fabric, Performance, documented in photograph

*Breadmaking Suitcase, Starter Culture and Khlebosolny*

2009-10 (and ongoing)

Mobile Installation: Suitcase, bread-making equipment, culture

**South Africa, 2010** (Katy and Rebecca Beinart, unless otherwise stated)

*Don't Look Back*

2010

Installation: Photographic prints on paper, salt, projection

*Sal Sapit Omnia* (Rebecca Beinart)

2010

Sculpture and Installation: found wood, bicycle wheels, glass jars, salt pan plant samples, digital photographs, photograms and salt samples from cargo ship and salt pans

*Offere I*  
2010  
Film  
Digital video projection, stills photographs

*Cigarette Cards* (Katy Beinart)  
2010  
Printed cards

*Transfere*  
2010  
Installation  
Collection of family ephemera, drawings, photographs and objects presented in two display cases

*Dinner Party* (Malmesbury)  
2010  
Installation and performance at Malmesbury museum, a former synagogue.

**Brixton residency and 198 Gallery exhibition, 2011** (Katy and Rebecca Beinart, unless otherwise stated)

*Darling Salt Pans and Produce Co Market stall*  
2011  
Performance/Action/Public  
Market stall, painted boards, fittings, plastic pots, scales, ledger, tablecloth, salt, postcards

*Memory Preservation Salts*  
2011  
Sculpture/Object  
Salt, plastic jar, printed label

*Confabulation*  
2011  
Installation: Collected images and objects, pinboards, pins, typed text

*Aurophone*  
2011  
Sculpture/Object  
Adapted braille typewriter and music box mechanism, Analogue TV, DVD player, Oscilloscope, desk, 35mm film reels, digital video, digital sound

*Adaptation*  
2011  
Sculpture/Object  
Wooden case, plants, actuators

*Dinner Party and Confabulation card set*  
2011  
Performance/Action  
Table, food, cloth, cards

**Research works 2010-11** (Katy Beinart, not exhibited)

Super 8 Laundry site film

2010

Film

Super 8 film hand edited and transferred to digital

This short film documents my observations of the area mainly around the site of the former dole office on Coldharbour Lane, the Steam Laundry, Somerleyton road and Brixton market entrance. Intercutting overbleached shots with fully saturated colour, the hand edited film uses structural techniques of filmmaking to evoke the ghosts of Brixton past, confusing what is contemporary and what is no longer part of the urban fabric.

Site photographs

2010

Photography

Hand printed black and white photographs

Images made on an analogue camera recording sites and sights around the market with a particular focus on the religious artefacts stall in Reliance Arcade and the site of the former dole house. Black and white film was used to capture glowing lights of the stalls in the low light of reliance arcade, so that the images trace remnants, or revenants, ghostly traces. The site of the old dole house which is now being built on and becoming a Barratts home development was at that moment an abandoned derelict lot, with no clear signifier of its past or future use.

Brixton sounds

2010

Film

Digital video and sound recording

A recording of music heard at different stalls around the street market at Popes road, Atlantic road and Electric Avenue. The evocative sounds of reggae, gospel, and rocksteady which take over the street combined with the image captured as the sound is recorded creates a sense of the place which is hard to evoke with only one of the senses.

Steam Laundry

Film/Photography

2011

Digital video and photographs

Documentation of a tour around the steam laundry. I asked permission to see inside the laundry and was lead around by the head of the laundry. I was interested to see the equipment and machinery which sat inside an unmodernised Victorian steam laundry building. The laundry has now closed building is now being redeveloped.

Washing line experiments

Film

2011

Digital video recordings

After my site research and visiting the laundry, I experimented with dying and bleaching fabric with pink magical salts I had bought in the market, and regular white salt, and hung these onto a washing line, filming and photographing the fabric squares. This was an experiment which I thought could potentially form part of an installation.

Collage of empty site

Drawing

2011

Drawing and photography on paper

This collage was an attempt to combine my observations of the environmental conditions of the site with initial experiments, to propose a possible artwork. The collage proposes the taking over of the derelict site of the old dole house, and hanging the laundry sheets over it, then projecting images onto the sheets and steam from the laundry. Salt spills from containers or semi-walls on either side covering the ground and 'salting' the earth.

*Market Map 1*

2011

Drawing/Map

*Ink on paper*

A large-scale map of the market and area around it containing small hand drawn details of objects and sites noticed in initial walks and work in the market.

*Porcelain tiles*

2012

Sculpture/Object

*Porcelain*

These tiles model details from the market from drawings in the Market Map described above. I was exploring possible forms of memorialisation of the everyday.

### **Journey to Lithuania and Russia, 2012** (Katy and Rebecca Beinart, unless otherwise stated)

*Starter Culture and Khlebosolny*

2009-12

Action/Performance: Bread culture, Lithuanian flour, water, and salt

*Offere II*

2012

Performance, documentation

*'Ar pamenate į Meisels?'*

2012

Performance

*Salt, dowsing necklace, Analogue and Digital photographs*

*Monuments* (St. Petersburg) (Katy Beinart)

2012

Photographic images

Images taken of old slides of tourist attractions, relocated in location of image on slide, overlaying the old and new.

*'φ'*

2012

Action

*Salt*

In our search for any traces of our great-great-grandfather Nicholaus Filaratoff in St Petersburg,

we drew a blank. So before we left the city we marked the pavement outside the building we were staying in with a cyrillic 'F' or 'ф' in salt. A small memorial, the symbol also links to the alchemical symbol for salt, and the symbol for the golden ratio.

**Anchor and Magnet projects 2012-13 (all works by Barby Asante, Kate Theophilus and Katy Beinart, unless stated otherwise)**

Anchor & Magnet residency: *Heritage Products* market stall  
2012  
Performance/Action/Public  
Market stall, heritage products, archival material

Anchor & Magnet residency: *Dinner Party*  
2012  
Performance/Action

Anchor & Magnet residency: *Dominoes games*  
2012  
Performance/Action/Public

Anchor & Magnet residency: *Domino drawings/stories in Brixton Bugle*  
2012  
Drawings, printed paper  
The drawings were developed from the stories collected in the interviews and all related to specific sites in Brixton. The drawings, stories and maps were laid out in a special supplement of *Brixton Bugle* which went out to over 9500 people.

Anchor & Magnet residency: *Domino set design* (Katy Beinart)  
2012  
Drawings/Sculpture/Object  
Found dominoes, etching tool, printing ink  
Using the drawings as a basis, I carved these into an old set of dominoes, as a prototype for an actual set.

Anchor & Magnet residency: *Domino card game* (Katy Beinart)  
2013  
Performance/Action: cards, cloth, table, dominoes  
Using the stories and designs for the dominoes, I created a set of cards which could be used in conjunction with the domino tiles to play the game and get participants to read the 'voices' of those we'd worked with. I used this in several different contexts and recorded the answers to the questions which I also included. What was interesting was how the game sparked new conversations and thoughts which related to the questions but moved away from Brixton specifically, although often in reference to it.

**Research works 2013** (Katy Beinart, not exhibited)

*Salt Map*

2013

Drawing/Map

Detail Paper, world map, pins, beads.

A wall map charting sites of salt production/extraction globally, places of origin of interviewees, and of my own family.

*Market Map 2*

2013

Drawing/Map

**Journey to Portugal and exhibitions 2013** (Katy Beinart)

*Saltworks*

2013

Sculpture/installation

Found wood, fixings, polythene sheet, salt, seawater (& additional material – found maps, chalked map on wall)

*Salted paper prints*

2013

Hand printed Photographs

Paper, salt, silver nitrate, gelatin

*Saltworks*

2013

Film

*Brixton Market/Mercado da Ribeira*

2013-14

Installation: slides, projector

*Map of journey to salinas*

2013-14

Hand-drawn map on paper

**Research works 2013-14** (Katy Beinart, not exhibited)

*Map of sites and journeys in Lisbon*

2013-14

Hand-drawn map on paper.

*Map of the studio space at Fabrica Braco de Prata.*

2013-14

Hand-drawn map on paper

*Salinas maps*  
2014  
Print, salt, on paper

*Saltfish* (cast)  
2014  
wax, salt

### **Journey to Haiti, 2013**

*Goute Sel* (Katy Beinart and Mabelle Williams)  
2013  
performance, salt, photographic documentation, leaflet

### **Anchor and Magnet projects 2015-16**

*Brixton Conversations* (Katy Beinart and Kate Theophilus)  
2015  
film

*Brixton Museum* (Katy Beinart and Kate Theophilus)  
2015-16  
Mobile installation: Mobile case on wheels, objects, texts, drawers, porcelain tiles

*Object reproductions* (Katy Beinart)  
2015-16  
Porcelain tiles



