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The Parameters of Participatory Play: Nostalgic Situationism for the 21st Century.

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THE PARAMETERS OF PARTICIPATORY PLAY

NOSTALGIC SITUATIONISM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY.

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PRIFYSGOL
BANGOR
UNIVERSITY

1884

A thesis submitted as part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Film Studies

' Yr wyf drwy hyn yn datgan mai canlyniad fy ymchwil fy hun yw'r thesis hwn, ac eithrio lle nodir yn wahanol. Caiff ffynoonellau eraill eu cydadnabod gan droednodiadau yn rhoi cyfeiriadau eglur. Nid yw sylwedd y gwaith hwn wedi cael eo dderbyn o'r blaen ar gyfer unrhyw radd, ac nid yw'n cael ei gyflwyno ar yr un pryd mewn ymgeisiaeth am unrhyw radd oni bai ei fod, fel y cytunwyd gan u Brifysgol, am gymwysterau deuol cymeradwy'

Rwy'n cadarnhau fy mod yn cyflwyno'r gwaith gyda chytundeb fy Ngrichwyliwr (Goruwchwylwyr)'

'I hereby declare that this thesis is the results of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. All other sources are acknowledged by bibliographical references. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree unless, as agreed by the University, for approved dual awards.'

I confirm that I am submitting the work with the agreement of my Supervisor(s)'

ABSTRACT.

This practice based PhD thesis sets out to examine the connection between what I see are the two distinctive and separate spaces or 'zones' we experience during our lifetime, and the part nostalgia and memory plays in linking both of these zones together. This thesis examines the way both advertisers, and the mainstream media and in particular large budget Hollywood films deliberately serve up, what I call 'nostalgic triggers', which are intended to pierce into our 'collective childhood memories' in order to create an affiliation or bond between us and the filmic piece, effectively 'playing with our emotions' by showing us what we have already experienced in the past.

I have defined these spaces as firstly the childhood zone; a place for play, creative exploration, a world where the rules are fluid, no one keeps score, and the possibilities in this space are only limited to ones imagination. And the second space, that of the workingman, where rules are rigid, life is serious, the pursuit of money and accumulation of wealth takes over, and the clock is now an instrument of burden. I shall use the theories of D W Winnecott (1951/1975) and Melanie Klein (1975), to put forward theories of play and attachment, and how these shape our outlook on later life, and I shall use the Dadaists, Fluxus, Surrealists, and Situationist art movements as an inspiration and barometer of my practical work.

This thesis is split into two distinct parts, firstly my practice work in the form of a website www.swaptothetop.com, and two accompanying DVDs (titled 1 and 2), and secondly a written thesis to support the practice work. The first DVD contains four experimental short pieces, namely *Artefact, The Moon and The Trees, Frondescence,* and *Bark.* These four short pieces, which are incorporated into the main film, could be seen both as stand-alone experimental films in their own right,

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and practice pieces for the main film *The Memory Shed*. The second DVD contains the main forty-minute experimental poetic film titles *The Memory Shed* and an accompanying 15-minute gallery exhibition piece titled *Consumed.*

In many ways this thesis also documents my own frustrating journey as an artist in a highly constrained commodified world. My work is self funded and errs on being playfully simplistic, while also anti-establishment/anti-capitalist, very much in the same vein as the Dada and The Situationists movements of the past.

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<u>Introduction.</u>

This thesis is to be submitted alongside the following practical pieces of work: four short experimental filmic pieces namely *Artefact, The Moon and The Trees, Frondescence,* and *Bark* to be found on the accompanying DVD titled DVD 1. A forty-minute poetic film *The Memory Shed* and a fifteen minute gallery installation titled *Consumed* to be found on the second DVD titled DVD 2; and finally the website I created titled www.swaptothetop.com, these works alongside this thesis are the total submission for the practice based PhD project *The Parameters of Participatory play-nostalgic Situationism for the 21st Century.*

I see this thesis as the practice-led sequel to my Masters study titled, *"Finding Oz: Dream Narratives in Contemporary Hollywood Cinema"* (2012) in which I highlight how certain Hollywood films could be interpreted as dreams, and that *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) could be viewed as the original dream film. In that study I also show how these very same films can also be interpreted as a critique of the capitalist system, and I singled out David Fincher's *Fight Club* (1999) as a prime example of a modern day Situationist inspired film. I position the 40 minute experimental film, *The Memory Shed,* as my own modern day Situationist offering.

My practical work alongside the filmic pieces I submit with this thesis rely heavily upon nostalgia and my ability as both a filmmaker and an artist to tap into other people's personal nostalgia in order for me to elicit an affect in order to get them to respond in a certain way. According to Hepper, nostalgia is 'mostly a positive experience with elements of loss, as well as a revisiting of fond personally significant memories" (Hepper, et al., 2012, 2014). I argue how nostalgia is both a kind of mourning and a celebration of a time in the past, and a deep yearning to create the conditions to revisit and relive these past moments.

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Nostalgic reminiscence typically involves people revisiting their most cherished social memories (Wildschut et al., 2006; Abeyta et al., 2015), in the first instance my practice work with childhood toys, specifically teddy bears as described thoroughly in Chapter Four, and seeks to test how nostalgia can be triggered by representations of a transitional item (as described by D.W.Winnicott covered in Chapter One),

My film *The Memory Shed,* (on DVD 2, and covered fully in Chapter Four), is an attempt through experimental 'Avant Garde' film practice to explore both my own personal nostalgia through family stories, history, and photographs, and an attempt to create a nostalgic film using similar tropes found in major Hollywood and mainstream productions (as discussed in Chapter Two); in order to elicit a mood or the emotion of nostalgia, or as philosopher Brian Massumi (2002) states an effect which is a "visceral sensibilities immediately register excitations gathered by the five 'exteroceptive', senses even before they are fully processed by the brain" (Massumi, 2002: 60). The term 'Avant Garde' is often associated with art, but can also be used to describe people, or groups of people that are unorthodox, radical, experimental, non followers of the mainstream, and a critique between 'the producer and the consumer' (Picchione, 2004: 64), and I position both myself and my work in this category.

The film adheres to Situationist art theories, and is carefully constructed to be both a critique on consumerism and capitalism, while simultaneously creating what Barrett theorises a "nostalgic experience, which are a combination of autobiographical and affective experiences" (Barrett et al., 2010).The Situationist art movement, Situationist International, or SI for short, are all terms for a significant, but short lived, art movement that will be mentioned and referred to throughout this thesis, so for the benefit of the uninitiated reader I will offer a brief background explanation.

Stewart Home, describes the 'Situationist project' (as he calls it), as one of 'a desire in the building of a new world - a world with which we will be permanently in love', he goes on to explain their philosophy as 'in exactly the same position of children, for the underlying philosophy was one of experiment and *play*' (Home, 1996:6). This brief but exciting art movement was born from previous art movements that came before it, namely the Dada, Fluxus, and Surrealist movements.

Dadaism was not formally proclaimed as a movement until Hugo Ball, Tristan Tzara and Richard Huelsenbeck read their respective manifestos at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich in the summer of 1916 (Smith: 2007, 4). However once a movement, Dada attempted to destroy the very foundations art was based upon, it was an anti-art movement, the Dada aesthetic was marked by its mockery of materialistic and nationalistic attitudes, it's very being was opposed to all forms of authoritarianism, anti-war, and anti-bourgeois, in short Dada wanted to tear down the current world and rebuilt it anew, similar to a child knocking down a sandcastle and rebuilding.

Dada can be broken down into three categories, spontaneity, negation and absurdity, the Dadaists believed that even the best literature created so far is an imitation, that everything that is created today has influences in past creations. Dada was an attitude of mind, the ability to view the world through the eyes of a child, or in other words the ability to both blur and discard the boundaries between child and adult, as Hugo Ball said 'It was in fact from art - from the zone where it had survived longest - that the urge to play broke through the strata of prohibitions, which had come to overlay it: this eruption was called Dada. The Dadaist event awoke the primitive-irrational play instinct which had been held down in its audience', (Nicholson, 2008: 259).

The surrealist movement was founded in Paris in 1924 by a small group of artists, poets and writers in the wake of the collapse of the Dada movement. 'The surrealists believed that art could utter truths about preconscious potential in the cause of rendering daily life, dreamy (Bretton 1998; woollen 1989). Again the child like collage aesthetic was significant to the Surrealists as they believed it tapped directly into the subconscious by creating unlikely juxtapositions using imagery garnered from popular culture, the surrealists employed collage in every medium including film.

As with the Dadaist before it, Fluxus was firmly opposed to conventional art, which again saw it as elitist, remote, and something to be mocked. Instead it sought to bring life and art closer, destroying any boundaries between the two.

A key element of the Fluxus movement were 'happenings', happenings were events or gatherings which demanded more than the detached observation of the viewer, the artist engaged with happenings and required the viewer to actively participate in each piece. There was not a definite or consistent style for these happenings, as they greatly varied in size and intricacy, and as these happenings involved the active participation of the viewer, no two happenings were ever alike with a high element of chance, happenstance, and serendipity guiding the outcome of each performance. Fluxus events were designed as simple actions that could be realised by anyone, whereas Dada performances were much closer to theatre performance than performance art.

The Fluxus movement tended to have anarchist sympathies, and viewed the 1968 street riots in Europe and America (which the Situationists also took partial credit for) as one big 'Happening'.

With the basis of the (SI) being an experimental, playful anti-capitalist movement, they labelled the huge money machine that was consumer capitalism simply as '*the Society of the Spectacle*', (also the title of Guy Debords 1967 book) with 'the spectacle' being a kind of circus show, exhibition, or entertainment for the masses, which was a 'one-way transmission of experience', a form of "communication" to which one side, the audience can never reply' (home 1996:12). The (SI), thought that 'the Spectacle', was a deliberate device or mechanism with its sole purpose to confuse, entertain, and encourage the masses to constantly consume and strive for products, services, or make lifestyle choices that weren't necessarily in the best interests of the user. They also viewed the pretentious galleries of the art world as an excuse to attract buyers to pay over inflated prices for pieces of art, simply because of prestige and ego rather than what the art represented, or as Home again puts it 'any work of art, however radical, could be digested by modern capitalism and turned into the opposite of all it had meant to those who had originally created it' (Home, 1996 12).

The written thesis is comprised of four chapters with an introduction and conclusion totalling some 40,000 words. The first chapter is concerned primarily with the attachment theories of D. W. Winnicott and how he thought babies relied upon a transitional item to bridge the gap between themselves and their mother, I expand upon these theories later on in the thesis. I argue that in order for us to become creative to our fullest potential, we must in the first instance cultivate a child like manner and enter into a 'transitional space' in which we relax the rules and constraints of what we know, to enable us to fully immerse ourselves in the euphoric moment of creative play. The first chapter concludes with an in depth view of

nostalgia and the vital part it plays in our lives. The purpose of this chapter is an attempt to contextualise my practical work covered fully in Chapter Three.

The second chapter looks closely at a sample of mainstream Hollywood films, as I explain certain ways in which they tap into our personal nostalgia in order to 'sell' us an enjoyable experience we can relate to. I explain certain shots and effects that are common within these big budget films, in order to draw your attention to the same methods I use in my film *The Memory Shed*, only using a miniscule amount of the budget. As the Dadaists and the Situationists that came after them, I approach all my work in a simplistic child-like manner that harks back to these radical movements.

The third and fourth chapters focus on my practice work and the decisions and reasoning behind each piece. All the individual pieces of work, be it swapping items, or teddy bear projects, all filter through into my final film *The Memory Shed* where I have made a forty minute experimental poetical film in order to create an effect on the viewer.

The thesis, *The Parameters of Participatory Play-Nostalgic Situationism for the 21st Century,* seeks to answer the two main questions: -

1. Is it possible to engage with people nostalgically worldwide through art in random acts of play?
2. Is it possible to make a low budget nostalgic film to create a nostalgic affect in a viewer?

Through this thesis and series of filmic and experimental art based works, I am seeking to discover whether the SI approach to life, one of experiment and play, of

absurd childish discovery and seeped in anti-capitalist tendencies, would work in the 21st century digital age. To also see if it is possible to engage with people, to make connections, to get people to look up from their phones, to make people stop, think, and ultimately smile through interacting with my art.

     I am also attempting to answer if money is really a barrier to creativity, to see if a series of no and low budget games, and a short film made on very little money could in fact engage an audience nostalgically both domestically and on a worldwide stage.

     Ultimately this thesis is also a written document of my own frustrating journey as an artist in a highly constrained and commoditised world. All my work is self-funded and errs on being playful, simplistic while also being very anti-establishment/ anti-capitalist. These self-imposed rules are on the one hand prove very restrictive, but on the other are extremely satisfying and bordering on euphoric when a connection or response is made between the piece and the viewer.

     It is my hope that one day a struggling artist would stumble upon this thesis, and use my years of work and experimental experience as a blueprint or a 'How to' guide, to inspire and be a springboard for them going on from a person 'dabbling creatively' as I have been, to a bona fide artist. Then build upon and hopefully to surpass anything I could ever achieve in my lifetime.

Chapter 1

The Importance of Play in Shaping the Adult.

'On the seashore of endless worlds children meet. Tempest roams in the pathless sky, ships are wrecked in the trackless water, death is abroad and children play. On the seashore of endless worlds is the great meeting of children' (Tagore, 1913)

Introduction.

In order for me to begin to answer my practice based PhD question: *The Parameters of Participatory play-nostalgic Situationism for the 21st century*'. I must first take the reader on a journey, this journey examines some of the reasons why we engage in play, and the importance of nostalgia and how we think we remember events from our childhood. I also explore how family photographs are revered as a truthful document of a moment in time, however, as I shall investigate, this might not necessarily be the case. The practice work I submit towards this PhD is designed to be experienced as a collection of artistic pieces, and I fully acknowledge the practical work I produce is playful, childish and often childlike, very much in the same vein as the Dada movement which created work with the ability to view the world through the eyes of a child, or in other words, both blur and discard the boundaries between child and adulthood, as Dada founder Hugo Ball stated, 'The Dada event awoke the primitive irrational play instinct which had been held down in its audience', (Nicholson, 2008: 259).

Hopefully on another deeper level the work is also challenging, thought provoking, engaging, and its end goal is to elicit a nostalgic response through engagement.

Every epic journey of discovery has a beginning, and every good children's book starts with 'Once upon a time'…My journey starts with the theorist D.W.

Winnicott (1896-1971), who put forward the idea that babies' in the absence of their mothers, use what he called a 'transitional item' and such as a blanket or a teddy bear, to bridge the divide between the babies internal self, and the external mother (Winnicott, 1971: 1). This 'transitional item', claimed Winnicott, is the baby's first indication of a world existing outside that of the mother/baby bond. In stark opposition to Winnicott, Carl Gustav Jung argued that when we are born, we don't enter the world as blank canvases as once thought, but we arrive in the world 'pre-programmed' with 'a storehouse of ancestral experiences dating to the dawn of human kind and common in all humans' (Jung, online, accessed 17th January, 2017). This controversial theory suggests that we aren't simply born, live for roughly eighty or so years gathering experiences before dying, but we are constantly building on some unconscious pre recorded store of knowledge before passing this on to our children and this store of base knowledge is built upon as each future generation is born. This could be one possible theory as to déjà vu (the feeling we've been somewhere before), when we visit such places, it might be that an ancestor of ours had visited the same place as we are standing in, and that a trace memory from the depths of our unconscious is triggered causing us to 'remember'.

If what Jung suggests is correct, that we all do in fact start off with an unconscious preloaded memory bank full of our ancestral knowledge, than during the course of our own lifetime, when we go through life experiencing the feelings of fear, love, desire, hate, pain etc, we are not only consciously feeling these emotions ourselves, but also unconsciously we are remembering and adding to the bank of emotions previously stored.

In the following chapter I shall introduce and implement the less controversial Winnicott theoretical model of the 'transitional item' as a starting point of my study, I

will then demonstrate how this theory can be expanded and developed to incorporate the 'transitional item' and 'transitional phenomena' as catalysts and bridging mechanisms for both memory and nostalgia. I will also expand upon this to incorporate Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory (1954) in order to demonstrate how advertisers, mainstream Hollywood filmmakers, and society in general take advantage of such needs in order to 'sell' us a product or service to fulfil these basic desires.

1.1 Transitional item and Transitional Phenomena.

A child is born into the world totally dependent on its mother as its prime caregiver, in the initial first few days and weeks of its life it has no concept whatsoever of its surroundings, its relationship to other family members, where it lives or how many rooms the house it lives has, the social class and income bracket they fall under, or what in fact lies beyond the confines of the family home. The baby is totally and completely reliant on its mother, and is unable to differentiate where 'she ends and the mother begins, nor what is inside and outside of herself, or between herself and others' (Elliott, 2002). And in the times when the mother is absent D. W. Winnicott theorised that the baby turned to the sucking of a finger, the clinging to a special blanket, cuddling of a dolly or teddy bear, which were all mannerisms seen by Winnicott of the 'transitional phenomena', and were part of an important personal ritual by the infant. In his book, *Playing and Reality* (1990), Winnicott expands upon theories first presented in his 1951 paper on Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena:

> It is well known that infants as soon as they are born tend to use first, fingers, thumbs in stimulation of the oral erotogenic zone, in satisfaction of the instincts at that zone, and also in quiet union. It is also well known that after a few months infants of either sex become fond of playing with dolls, and that most mothers allow their infants some special object and expect them to become, as it were, addicted to such objects (1990:1).

It would seem that the child in absence of its mother, latches on to an object and forms a unique bond with this item, be it a finger, blanket, teddy bear, or a doll, and it is through this object and the unique bond they form with it, that the child first comes to terms with a world other than the mother and itself. Winnicott argues that 'transitional objects, are the infants first "not-me" possession (s), and are universal and of an infinite variety, and that they are symbolic of a third reality, a resting place

that exists "in between" subject and object- between that which is merged with the mother, and that which is also outside and separate (Praglin, 2006: 3). Elliot on the other hand, theorises that the transitional or "not-me" objects such as a blanket or favourite toy then serve as a bridge 'between the inner world of fantasy and the outer world of objects and persons' (Elliott, 1994: 69).

Winnicott also noted that the blanket, teddy bear or the action of sticking fingers in the mouth is a stand in comforter for the mothers absence, and that parents quickly got to know the value of this 'transitional item' and made sure it was carried by the infant at all times, letting it get dirty and smelly, 'knowing that by washing it she introduces a break in continuity in the infant's experience, a break that by washing may destroy the meaning and value of the object to the infant' (Winnicott, 1990: 4).
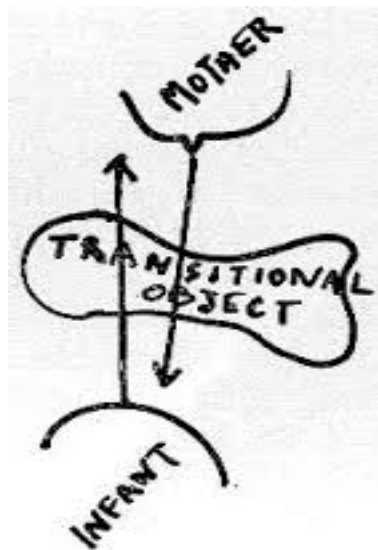
Fig. 1 From *Playing and Reality.* Donald Winnicott, 2005.

Where Winnicott was convinced that his transitional object theory was a common phenomena, a natural result of child's exploration and discovery through

touch and play, Sylvia Brody on the other hand, cited in Michael Jacobs book about Winnecott, questioned whether in fact this attachment to the transitional object is as universal as Winnicott initially thought:

> There is a lack of agreement about their universality, since they are more prevalent in families of the upper and upper-middle socio-economic status. The degree of attachment to them seems inversely related to maternal nurturing. The mother's approval or disapproval of such an object also seems a key factor-it is therefore questionable how much the infant creates this experience (Jacobs, 1995:106).

Theorist Annie Kuhn agrees with Winnicotts' general theory but also points out, that 'The Winnicottian approach is concerned with the way in which we develop a relationship, comfortable or otherwise between the inner world of the psyche and the external world of objects' (Bolton, 2013: 412). When we explore the concept of both transitional items and transitional space or phenomena, we not only talking about a tangible physical object, but also an idealised space we create within our minds created by the interaction of that object. It could be argued that the same importance placed upon a doll, thumb, or teddy bear described as first transitional item, could also be placed upon the childhood home as a transitional item. The significance placed on the childhood home in its formative years might be one reason for medical nostalgia, as Gaston Bachelard suggests 'our house is our corner of the world….our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word' (1994: 4), and this is a very common theme in popular culture, with books, music, and of course films such as *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), *Planes, Trains & Automobiles* (1987), *Home Alone* (1990), and more recently *Coming Home* (2014), all depicting themes of the burning need or desire to return to one's home.

**ABRAHAM MASLOW
HIERARCHY OF NEEDS**

Maslow, A. Motivation and
Personality (2nd ed.)
Harper & Row, 1970.

SELF-
ACTUALIZATION
Pursue Inner Talent
Creativity Fulfillment

SELF-ESTEEM
Achievement Mastery
Recognition Respect

BELONGING - LOVE
Friends Family Spouse Lover

SAFETY
Security Stability Freedom from Fear

PHYSIOLOGICAL
Food Water Shelter Warmth
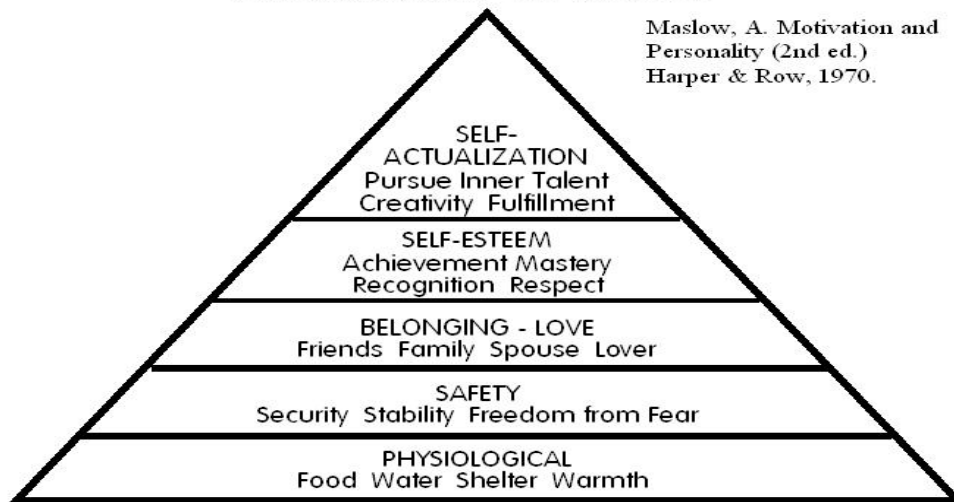
Fig. 2 From *Motivation and Personality*. A. Maslow, 1970.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow proposed that all human beings have a similar

needs in life, and in turn these needs have subsequently been adapted in the form of a

pyramid in order of importance, as a 'Hierarchy of Needs' model which shows the

physiological needs of oxygen, food, and water as the very base of the pyramid, the

need for sustenance takes priority over every other need. Maslow goes on to place

safety on the second level, which includes the need for protection from both

psychological and physical harm, with social belonging or the need to feel love and

accepted in the third tier of the pyramid. On the next tier, Maslow places esteem

needs, and divides these into two separate categories; the first self-esteem which

results in the mastery or competence of a learning tasks, and secondly the attention

and recognition and admiration bestowed upon the individual by others. Maslow's top

tier is the need for self-actualisation or the desire to become better than he or she is at

the moment, or to maximise ones inner potential. It could be argued that the home is

the vehicle where our personal journey through Maslow's' hierarchic pyramid is first

experienced and achieved, the home provides us with water and food, is our shelter,

we should feel loved and a sense of belonging, the home should be a safe haven to

come back to, and a happy place where positive memories are created. Around the home is where we first master skills and techniques we can apply outside in the wider world, and once we have outgrown the comforts of the home (and reach the top tier of the pyramid), we then go off into the world to pursue our inner ambitions and fulfilment.

Therefore, the home is vitally important in moulding and shaping the individual in preparation for the wider world, however Andrew Arnzen suggests that the "home is always a relatively abstract term for any space that is personally invested with a sense of origin, familiarity and (usually) comfort. It is the site of Nostalgia: always a space for memory and fantasy" (2003: 331). Once we have outgrown and left the familiarity of the family home to pursue our own interests and make our own way in life and make our own home, the 'home' we once knew as a child suddenly takes on a mythical status, even though in some cases we can still return, it will never be the same as how we once remembered it to be; and although the physical home may still there to be visited, the 'home' we knew and once loved now only lives on in memory, nostalgically remembered in Winnecott's "third reality" through other transitional items that connected to that place.

Tania Zittoun writes: 'In adult life, playing and transitional phenomena assume new forms and include three key, and mutually dependent, aspects of life: firstly, the basic capacity to enjoy life creatively-marriage, desires and wishes, even daily routine; secondly, the more specialised creativity of the scientist or artist, which calls for mastery of the tradition alongside creativity, talent, technical capability, and contact with the inner world. This, thirdly, encompasses all 'cultural experience', the specific experience of listening to music, of watching a film or of reading a novel' (Zittoun: 137).

1.2 The Transitional Object/Phenomena in Play.

Winnicott places great importance on the act of play, and in his paper goes on to say; 'I have claimed that when we witness an infant's employment of a transitional object, the first not-me possession, we are witnessing both the child's first use of symbol and the first experience of play' (1971:96). In his essay, *The concept of the healthy Individual*, Winnicott expands upon his initial theory by suggesting that people live in three worlds: the inner, the outer, and the transitional-"the area of cultural experience". Cultural experience, Winnicott writes, begins as play, and subsequently "leads on to the whole area of man's inheritance, including the arts, the myths of history, the slow march of philosophical thought and the mysteries of mathematics, and of group management and of religion" (Winnicott, 1986: 35). Winnicott for the first time talks about the transitional space as being an "area of cultural experience" suggesting this playful area in the mind somewhere in between fiction and reality directly accessed by a transitional object bridging the expanse, leading to cultural development. Serge Tisseron also seems to acknowledge this space and the importance of play; 'in playing, every child chooses to let himself be invaded by intense feelings arising from situations that he knows full well are fictional' (Kuhn: 130).

I would argue that the concept of play in a child's formative years teaches it two important concepts; firstly that in certain games there are strict rules to abide by, (play also teaches us that the rules can also be malleable and circumnavigated) and secondly that immersive play allows that child not only to think creatively, but the toy itself becomes a key to unlocking a 'safe space' where the mind is allowed to transcend in order to think freely without the restrictions of any of the rules of the normal world. In *Theatres of the Mind*, Joyce McDougall suggests that 'addictive

play' as she calls it, is linked to pathological transitional objects to which she names as 'transitory objects' (1986: 66), and Adam Phillips likens Winnicott's interpretation of a transitional object to a 'passport', which enables the child to travel in and across the space between the subject and the object (1998:118).

Although Winnicott suggested an infant's interest in his or her transitional objects gradually becomes decathlete over time (Winnicott, 1971), patterns set in infancy can be traced from infancy and expanded through the child's early years and beyond to adult life. In his 2010 article on *'Transitional Phenomena'*, Robert Young suggests that transitional objects can also function as security blankets in the adult world, noting that:

> The Filofax or comparable notebook - gives the illusion that one has one's life under some sort of control. In my case it literally acts as a container, a portable file for all sorts of bits of paper, reminders, addresses, phone numbers, tickets - all of which would be routinely mislaid of it were not for this lovely leather portmanteau.' (Young, 2010)

Using Young's analogy, we can see how a mobile phone could also be viewed as a transitional item, over the last twenty years they have gone from a functional luxury business item, to an everyday normality, a mobile phone is both a tool to connect us with our loved ones, and paradoxically an anti-social distraction that disconnects us from the real world around us. We treat our phones as both our primary documenting device enabling us to instantly photograph an event, instantly enabling us film and to share intimate moments with friends and family, the phone has also become a substitute memory for dates and important business fixtures in our ever increasing hectic lives.

1.3 Memories and Nostalgia.

Put in simple terms, memory is the brains ability to encode, store, and then retrieve specific pieces of information and experiences, in order for us to recall, compare and then use that information at a later date. Memory in humans is the sum total of everything we remember to date, as we go through life experiencing new situations we build up a store of memories so we can both build upon previous knowledge, and make sense of the world in a wider context in order to grow as people, form relationships, careers, and learn to avoid situations which may be harmful to our safety in any way. Although early Philosophers realised the importance of memory, they didn't necessarily equate the brain as being the central storehouse of memories. In 1777 German philosopher Johann Nicholas Tetens wrote about memory as: *Each idea does not only leave a trace or a consequence of that trace somewhere in the body, but each of them can be stimulated-even if it is not possible to demonstrate this in a given situation* (1777: 751).

Despite not initially knowing that memory was a core function of the brain, Tetens went on to theorise that certain ideas that might initially seem to be forgotten, were in fact wrapped up within other ideas, but that the general memories were 'always with us' (1777: 733). During the twentieth century it was widely acknowledged amongst both Philosophers and doctors alike that memory was in fact a function of the brain, and during tests on autistic patients in the 1940's Dr. Wilder Penfield discovered that it was actually possible to stimulate the face of a patient's brain using a mild electric current in order for that patient to recall vividly memories they had long since forgotten (Kendler, 1968: 185), supporting Tetens' earlier theory. Bernstein & Ogloff argue that childhood memory is a mixture of both experience and fantasy, the formation of which is influenced by many factors such as, "others

reminding us of what happened, trauma, media, fairy tales, religion and personality"
(Bernstein & Ogloff, 2007). In a further study, Dr. Donna Bridge a Postdoctoral
Fellow in the Laboratory for Human Neuroscience at North-western University
Feinberg School of Medicine, and co author Joel Voss conducted extensive research
into memory and concluded in a paper in The Journal of Neuroscience that our
memory is not only a faulty mechanism, but it also has the ability to insert things from
the present and place them into memories of the past when those memories are
retrieved. Bridge concludes that our memories have the ability to adapt to an ever
changing environment to help us deal with the important in the here and now, to help
us survive. Bridge elaborates 'Our memory is not like a video camera, memory
reframes and edits events to create a story to fit into your current world' (Bridge &
Voss, 2014). This has enormous implications, and casts doubt on everything we think
we remember from our past. Voss senior author of the paper and an assistant
professor of medical social sciences and of neurology at Feinberg claims that 'The
notion of a perfect memory is a myth', and goes on to say that 'memory is designed to
help us make good decisions in the moment and, therefore, memory has to stay up-to-
date. The information that is relevant right now can overwrite what was there to begin
with' (Bridge & Voss, 2014).

In essence Bridge and Voss argue that our memory isn't as cast iron as we
would have liked to have thought and that the memories we have and once held to be
true, are in effect an amalgam of the essence of a memory and a portion of history
rewritten by our own imagining. This is particularly troublesome as it seems to cast
doubts on highly emotional events which we recall, that may not have actually
happened in the way we initially thought they did.

Running congruently with our somewhat flawed personal memories are a separate but intertwined store of memories known as 'cultural memory'. Astrid Erll writes "Cultural memory is constituted by a host of different media, operating within various symbolic systems: Religious texts, historical painting, historiography, television documentaries, monuments, and commemorative rituals" (2008: 389). Cultural memory according to as Jan Assmann, allows us to live in groups, and larger communities, and in turn it is the living and coexisting in these larger groups and communities, that feed back and allow us to expand upon memory (2008:109).

In a study on cultural memory in America written five years prior to the terror attacks of 9/11, Marita Sturken asks, "what does it mean for a *culture* to remember?" (1997:1), she goes on to dissect and discuss many cultural incidents within the American psyche including the Vietnam war and the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and the importance of the media in documenting such events:

> It can also be said that the camera image constitutes a significant technology of memory in contemporary American culture. Camera images, whether photographs, films, or television footage, whether documentary, docudrama, or fiction, are central to the interpretation of the past. Photographs are often perceived to embody memory, and cinematic representations of the past have the capacity to entangle with personal and cultural memory. Just as memory is often thought of as an image, it is also produced by and through images. (1997:11)

Sturken (1997), argues that both the still and moving image can be deemed as being conduits for collective memory on a cultural scale, this said however on a personal level one may pick up an old photograph of a long deceased relative or loved one and recall certain aspects about that person, but the photograph alone cannot, or never will, tell the full story; how he or she was feeling at the time, the circumstances behind the photograph, that persons personal struggles or the conditions the photograph were taken in, are all lost; the image is merely a split second of the

subjects life captured on film for that moment, we can never know for certain what the person in that image is feeling. It could therefore be argued that cultural memory exists but it's fragmented, it's a memory, but it's not the whole picture merely a flavour of what once was, and that memory is perpetuated on a mass scale through photographs, films and media, as Sturken elaborates:

> Memory is crucial to the understanding of a culture precisely because it indicates collective desires, needs, and self-definitions. We need to ask not whether a memory is true but rather what its telling reveals about how past effects present. (Sturken, 1997: 2).

I have already talked about nostalgia in the introduction to this thesis, and its role in society and its negative connotations. Nostalgia is a well explored and discussed topic amongst scholars, many academics have described nostalgia as a fatal disease, which everyone experiences at one time or another (Hofer, 1934: 376-391), others have sub categorised nostalgia into two distinct types, 'personal nostalgia' and 'historical nostalgia'; Stern argues that 'personal nostalgia are responses generated from a personally remembered past' (Stern, 1992), Baker and Kennedy also agree that personal nostalgia is 'a longing for the lived past (Baker& Kennedy 1994), while Havlena and Holak argue that 'historical nostalgia are responses generated from a time in history that the respondent did not experience directly, even a time before they were born' (1991), Historical nostalgia has also been categorised as 'vicarious nostalgia', by some scholars but its effects are also described in the same way as historical nostalgia in that 'it deals with nostalgia for a period outside of the individuals living memory (Goulding, 2002: 542).

Davis (1979), Havlena and Holak (1991), Holbrook (1993) and Batcho (1995), all conclude that nostalgia is experienced differently from one individual to another,

based on our unique life experiences, however Turner (1987), succinctly pointed out that nostalgia commonly involves four major dimensions:

1. A sense of decline and loss: lost space and time;

2. A melancholic vision of the contemporary world based on a perceived crisis in our civilization resulting in lost references and values;

3. A sense of loss of the individual freedom and autonomy; and

4. The idea of a loss of simplicity, authenticity and emotional spontaneity in a mass consumption of culture.

Where Jeanette Leardi claims that people engage in nostalgic thoughts about once a week, and that these nostalgic moods are set off by such things as 'a familiar scent, piece of music or old photo' (Leardi: 2013). In other studies Wildschut et al. (2006) claim that people actually experience nostalgia on average several times a week, and furthermore, instead of nostalgia being solely the crippling mental disease it once was deemed to be, they view it as generally a pleasant reflection on progressive trends in their life story. Interestingly Leardi goes on to claim that nostalgia is:

Most common in young adults in their teens and 20s who are coping with important life transitions, such a leaving home and beginning college or new jobs, and in adults older than 50 who are looking back and re-evaluating their lives. (Leardi: 2013).

Leardi points out that the nostalgic mood is brought on by an uncertain 'transitionary' time of great change in a person's life, this uncertainty for the future brings on nostalgic memories of a past time, and Winnicott describes nostalgia as the 'precarious hold that a person may have on the inner representation of a lost object' (1990:23); Each nostalgic memory, rewriting and replacing the older one, and each incarnation becoming ever more detached from the original experienced memory. The

phenomenon of the process of memories becoming more positive over time is described as the Pollyanna principle, it is said that pleasant experiences are being processed more efficiently and accurately in memory than less pleasant experiences (Matlin, & Stang, 1979).

I would argue that the notion of 'positive' nostalgia that Sturken talks about, is a direct product of the media saturated world that we are all accustomed to today, which has a masking effect over any melancholic nostalgia we might experience had we the time to reflect. In our grandparents and certainly in our great grandparents' time, the pattern of life was very different in comparison with now, getting up with the sun and going to bed as the sun went down, though the toil was physically harder than that of the mechanically aided work of today, they also had time for reflection, for looking back at what has been and what was lost, and took time to both budget and prepare for the future. Today we live a faster paced life, our eating, sleeping, and socialising patterns have changed, the world now seems a smaller place than in years gone by because we can communicate with friends and family half way across the world cheaply through mobile phones and computers. We experience nostalgia differently because today we simply physically don't have the time to reflect as we once did, and because we now have the technology to contact anyone or visit anywhere on the planet, people are always within our grasp. Winnicott links memory of the objects absence to the concept of nostalgia or as he puts it the 'precarious hold that a person may have on the inner representation of a lost object' (1990:23), I would argue that the world today is psychologically smaller and that there simply isn't the time and space in between people to cultivate the sense of longing or melancholic nostalgic mood that once was.

That isn't to say that nostalgia is a thing of the past, on the contrary, we are constantly presented with nostalgic images, ideas, and symbolism in the form of carefully pitched advertisements', all vying for our attention, and all tugging on our heart, and purse strings in their bid to strike some internal chord in order for us to part with our money and purchase. It would seem over time our genuine memories become blurred as Serge Tisseron argues; 'For every event, real or fictional, everyone produces their own set of personal representations at the intersection of what they see, hear and experience. These feel no less 'true' than reality itself. What we call 'reality' possesses not one, not two, but three in-dissociable aspects: firstly the object world; secondly, the ever-increasing numbers of images produced via various technologies, all of which obey their own rules, and thirdly, personal representations fashioned from the first two' (Kuhn: 125). Screen memories Freud argues:

> It may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all from our childhood: memories relating to our childhood may be all that we possess. Our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appear at the later periods when the memories were aroused, in these early periods of arousal, the childhood memories did not, as people are accustomed to say, emerge; they were formed at the time. And a number of motives, with no concern for historical accuracy, had a part in forming them, as well as in the selection of the memories themselves (1996:224).

Winnicott invited theorists to use his theories as a base for further study and deeper understanding with the statement 'What I called transitional phenomena are universal and it was simply a matter of drawing attention to them and to their potential for use in the building of theory' (Winnicott, 1990:40), with this in mind, it is possible to construct an expanded model of Winnicott's initial illustration of transitional object (fig 1 page 30), to incorporate memory, nostalgia, and the transitional space the mind occupies during play.

Envisioned Future Self

Nostalgic Transitional Space

Transitional item:
Cars, Bikes, Planes, Computer Games

Envisioned Future Self as an Adult

Adult

Young Adult (<17)

Nostalgic version of young adult

Transitional Space

Transitional item:
Games, TV, Films & Music

Nostalgic version of older child

Older Child (12>)

Young Child (<12)

Envisioned Future Older Child

Nostalgic version of young child

Transitional item:
Teddy, Bikes, Cars, TV

Nostalgic toddler

Toddler 3>

Winnicotts Original theoretical Model

Mother

Transitional item:
Blanket, Teddy Doll, Thumb

Idealised memory of baby

Baby

Fig. 3 Original graph Lester Hughes, 2017

The theoretical model above uses Winnicott's original diagram (Fig. 1) as a starting point for the mother, baby, and transitional item theory, or as I have labelled it the 1st phase. As the child grows up to a toddler, and begins to develop language, a sense of space and understanding of its surroundings, he enters what I have labelled the second phase, in which the toys he uses are used as transitional items in three ways. In the first instance a toy he owns now, can produce what I call a direct memory to the past. By direct memory I mean the toy they are playing with is either the exact one or a replica of one they actually owned and played with as babies, forming a direct memory to the actual past. Similarly other toys, such as trains, bikes, or cars for instance, can be the vehicles to propel the child forward into a transitional space which sees them sometime in the future as an older child or as a fully grown adult. For instance a toy tricycle could propel the child into the transitional space that sees them thinking of them as an older child with a 'big boys' two wheeled version of what they are playing with now, or to a time further in the future where they are an adult riding a motorcycle (both scenarios are transitional spaces). The second phase lasts from the ages of two until roughly twelve, where play and the way we envisage play takes on a different form, I have labelled this the third phase, which spans from the ages of twelve to eighteen.

During this third phase, play changes as the individual physically and mentally prepares himself for adulthood, toys or items from our childhood still give us direct memory links to both the child and the baby we once were. The toys we play with during this third phase again propel us into the void that is the transitional space of our future adult selves, as we envisage the career paths we will take, and the places we would like to visit in order for us to get the most that life has to offer. Similarly the toys of this third phase can make us nostalgic for the young child and the baby we

once were, and as such they take us to a nostalgic transitional space, to a magical time within our minds we thought we once occupied but never actually did, a false reality.

The Fourth phase is from early adulthood to later years, roughly from the age of eighteen upwards, again like previous phases we may buy or still own toys from our past which provide us with a direct memory linkage to the past. During this fourth phase our imaginative play slows down dramatically, we may no longer feel the world is a special or magical place, we may have become disillusioned with the world and because we no longer play as much, no longer visit the transitional space of the future, as society pressures us into viewing play as 'childlike' while pushing forward the capitalist rules of competition and pursuit of monetary gain. As Leardi argued we start to feel more nostalgic during this phase because we may be re-evaluating our lives, and the realisation that we may never have and never will accomplish the hopes and dreams we once had envisaged in our future transitional space, this in turn fuels a nostalgia for the past, which is then perpetuated by the fact that as adults we may be trying to purchase toys or items from our childhood we either once had, or in fact always wanted but couldn't have, in order to make us feel better about the people we actually are.

1.4 Nostalgia and its role in Advertising

In simple terms, advertising in "a paid mass-mediated attempt to persuade" (O'Guinn et al., 2003: 9), and according to psychologist Clay Routledge, of North Dakota State University, businesses and advertisers have known for many years that the power of nostalgia sells, and that popular products used and experienced during a person's youth will influence and shape their buying habits throughout the course of their lifetime (Robb: 2010). In the competitive world of attracting paying customers, products, store interiors and architectural design are all used and manipulated in a bid to evoke a 'yearning for yesterday' (Reisenwitz et al, 2004).

The main job of advertising agencies is to create a highly persuasive advert, be it in the form of print for a newspaper or magazine, or a short moving image advert, with the sole intention of capturing the viewers attention and triggering some internal desire to go out and purchase that brand or product not only once, but time and time again creating a lifelong customer. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981), have described this brand attachment as a psychic investment, while Feldwick (1996), Helibrunn (2001), and Lacoeuilhe (1997) have described brand attachment as a long-term emotional predisposition manifested by the consumer to the brand (Ratier: 2003).

More recent research into advertising suggests that nostalgia is a major factor in persuading customers to buy, because nostalgia is "intensely personal and that its greatest influence may be for current brand users who have an enduring personal attachment with the brand they used during childhood" (Sultan, et.al, 2010:1), this study backs up earlier research by Holak and Havlena 1998, and Muehling and Sprott 2004, who provided empirical support to the claim that an advertisement with a nostalgic theme may be capable of prompting nostalgic thoughts and pleasant

memories in consumers and resulting in more favourable brand attitudes and purchase intentions. (2014: 73).

Friedrich Nietzsche said 'if something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory' (1967: 61). Advertisers attempt to 'burn into' our brains their unique message of why we must buy their items over others, with their catchy slogans and repetitive jingles, and once the earworm has taken hold we are more likely to purchase that product.

Rindfleisch and Sprott stated, 'Consumers cannot return to the past, but they can try to preserve it through nostalgic consumption activities' (Rindfleisch and Sprott, 2000). This is quite a revealing statement, and supports the theoretical model I put forward in Fig. 3, that also states that both consumers, and non consumers alike cannot directly return to the past, nor, as we have explored, can we accurately remember every aspect of the past in minute detail due to our memories re-recording and updating events from the past; similarly we have also seen how photographs and other mechanical devices such as film can never fully capture the complete essence of a past moment-they merely 'preserve' certain aspects of these moments.

One way of covertly triggering a nostalgic response in a subject is through the use of signs by way of semiotics. Semiotics is the study of signs and their effects on the psyche, which was first proposed in the early 1900's by two separate theorists, Swiss linguist Ferdinand De Saussure and the American Pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce. Saussure argued that there was no inerrant or necessary relationship between that which carried the meaning or 'signifier' and the 'signified', so for instance the word 'DOG' has no special significance to an actual dog, it just so happens that the three letters D, O, and G go to make up a word that is culturally recognised as a dog.

Peirce's ideas about semiotics distinguished between three types of signs, the Icon, Index, and Symbol.

According to Peirce, whether a sign belongs in one category or another depends upon the relationship of the sign itself that he called the 'Referent' and the actual meaning; an 'Icon' is a sign that stands for an object by resembling it, pictures, photographs maps and diagrams are included in this category, the essential aspect of the relationship between the 'Icon' to its object is one of similarity; and the 'Index' refers to their object by a causal link between the sign and its object, for example smoke is an index of fire.

We learn about ourselves and the world around us through our five main senses or representational systems; our entire experience of life, how we remember experiences and how we process this information is mediated through the sensory modes of visual or sight, auditory or hearing, kinaesthetic or touching, olfactory or smelling, and gustatory or tasting, and it is only when we master the art of communicating through a system of language that we can open a dialogue of how we interpret the world with another human being. Stuart Hall argues that language constructs meanings which in turn sustains a dialogue between participants in which 'enables them to build up a culture of shared understandings and so represent the world in the same way'. Hall explains this is because it operates as a '*representational system*', and in language, we use signs and symbols - whether they are sounds, written words, electronically produced images, musical notes, even objects - to stand for or represent to other people our concepts, ideas and feelings' (Hall, Evans, Nixon, 2013: xvii). Hall goes on to explain that meaning of the arbitrary arrangement of letters we use to make up words in the English language in order for us all to uniformly recognise for instance a tree from a cat, is derived by the system of representation,

and that it 'is constructed and fixed by a code, which sets up the correlation between our conceptual system and our language system'…and that it is 'the codes [that] fix the relationships between concepts and signs' (Hall, Evans, Nixon, 2013: 7).

According to Eco, a general semiotic theory should include not only a theory of how codes may establish rules for systems of signification but also a theory of how signs may be produced and interpreted. A theory of codes may clarify aspects of 'signification,' while a theory of sign-production may clarify aspects of 'communication.' (Eco, 1976: 4). Eco defines 'signification' as the semiotic event whereby a sign 'stands for' something and he defines 'communication' as the transmission of information from a source to a destination. Communication is made possible by the existence of a code, or by a system of signification. Without a code or a system of signification, there is no set of rules to determine how the expression of signs is to be correlated with their content. The use of a code or a system of signification in order to correlate the expression and content of signs may be necessary in order to establish any form of communication.

In Chapter Two, I expand on the visual semiotic links by presenting an in depth analysis of several films which contain such signs, such as cultural and religious signs as well as the heavy use of clocks as a symbol, 'time in English is structured in terms of the TIME IS A MOVING OBJECT, metaphor, with the future moving toward us' (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003: 42).

1.5 Film as Transitional Object.

In this Chapter I have covered Winnicott's theory of both the transitional object and the transitional space, I have also demonstrated how this theory links into play, memory, and nostalgia, and how in a wider context we are conditioned to do certain things in accordance to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. I have also examined how advertisers can, and do manipulate this information in order to position products and services desirable to our perceived needs into our consciousness. Finally using these principles I shall now turn my focus on to the medium of film and explore in a wider context how filmmakers operate within the transitional space in order to ignite our innermost hopes and desires, as Tania Zittoun writes:

> In adult life, playing and transitional phenomena assume new forms and include three key, and mutually dependent, aspects of life: firstly, the basic capacity to enjoy life creatively-marriage, desires and wishes, even daily routine; secondly, the more specialised creativity of the scientist or artist, which calls for mastery of the tradition alongside creativity, talent, technical capability, and contact with the inner world. This, thirdly, encompasses all 'cultural experience', the specific experience of listening to music, of watching a film or of reading a novel (Zittoun: 137).

It is to this third category the 'cultural experience' that we now turn our focus and examine how they can be applied to the spectacle of cinema, the joy of watching films, and sense of play filmmaking brings in general. It was Roland Barthes in his 1975 book *'En sortant du cinema'*, that first made the connection between 'the act of cinema going (as transitional phenomena) and the film itself (as transitional object), and in doing so, he situates the viewer in a space that fetishes the nature of the experience itself' (Hockley, 2014: 43). We have already seen how toys and the act of playing have the ability to put us into a transitional space, and similarly in film, Serge Tisseron argues that, 'humans have invented fiction as a space where we can freely and safely put the sense of reality on hold' (Kuhn, 2013: 121). The 'space' Tisseron

describes bears all the hallmarks of Winnicott's theory of transitional space, and Jennifer Barker further echoes this as he describes that when we watch a film, 'We are certainly not in the film, but we are not entirely outside it, either' (Kuhn, 2013:12), for Barker a film puts our minds into some kind of middle ground, a state of limbo, neither here nor there.

When we go to the cinema, and take our seat we know exactly where we are, we are sitting in a cinema, in the exact location of our choosing at the precise time of the screening. As geographically grounded to this time and space as it is possible to be, comfortable in our climate controlled environment in a state of both relaxation and anticipation, we still expect the film we're watching to move us in some way, we expect to be taken on a journey both in our minds, and emotionally as we watch the images projected in front of us. A film differs from viewing a piece of art or a photograph hanging in a gallery, because we expect a more immersive experience from the cinema, which in turn stimulates different senses and yields different results, as Hockley describes 'The difference between watching a film and experiencing a film is that to experience suggests that an awareness is brought to the whole of the cinematic process, as the act of being-in-the cinema is related via all the senses' (Hockley, 2014: 31). As both Barthes and Hockley saw it, pleasure not only comes from watching the image but also by experiencing the phenomenon of being in the transitional space created by the film, which is a unique combination of sounds and moving images, the setting to which we view the film, and the individual personal life experience which we bring into the cinema in the first place.

The beauty of film is that we do not have to have a working knowledge of the mechanics of cinema, or how the film was actually produced in order to enjoy it, film as Metz explains 'is difficult to explain because it is easy to understand' (Moncao,

2004:178), the concept of moving cinematic images is quite simple, but their effect on the human psyche more difficult to analyse. Bela Balazs suggested that film was the 'first international language', and one in which was communicated as a 'language of gestures' Balazs, 2007: 98), and echoing this sentiment Ellis added that 'meaning in cinema is obvious: the average cinema film appears straight forward it can be understood by virtually everyone on the planet' (Ellis, 1981: 14). While Ellis is correct in assuming that today 'film appears straight forward', because for the past one hundred years we have learnt the tropes of this 'international language' as Balazs puts it, however this was not always the case. In the early days of cinema, viewers would be left bemused when watching international films as Paul Willemen points out that:

> In Ernst Lubitsch's film *The Mountain cat* (1921). Lt. Alexis (Paul Heidemann) declares his love to Grischka (Pola Negri) by taking a cardboard heart from under his coat and offering it to her. She accepts it and demonstrates her passion by consuming (i.e. eating) the heart. (1974: 64).

Willemen goes on to explain that Grischka's first action is 'readily understandable as most European languages have an expression of the type 'to give your heart away'', however her second action, to actually eat the heart 'presents a number of problems which can only be solved by people with a good knowledge of German' (1974:64), clearly the 'international language' of film as Balazs describes it, we recognise today took a great deal of time for both filmmaker to perfect and audiences to master.

If a film has the power to transport us as viewers into a transitional play space, it is worth noting that the effect we are experiencing is a result of others, both thinking and playing in a transitional space at some point in time in the past for that film to come into being in the first place. Therefore in effect the film itself is the

combined experience of many different people all thinking and playing in their own transitional spaces or 'third realities'. In order for a filmmaker to make a film, they must have a script, and that script is the end result of many months of work, where a writer or a series or writers have sat down envisioned a fictitious world and a series of events within this world and then written them down on paper. The script itself in the first instance is therefore born from a transitional space it's a document envisioned by one or more writers in an imaginary play area, and brought into the real world when it is set to paper. The filmmaker then takes the script and uses the printed words within that document to imagine and play out the story in their own transitional space.

Secondly we have the film viewer who using the cinema and film as a kind of springboard to launch themselves into their own transitional space, Phyllis Crème describes this kind of person as a 'playing spectator' on which a spectator sits back and watches the film unfold, a 'playing spectator…begins to play as she makes that shift into her own potential space and starts to participate in the action that she now both watches and enacts, apparently passive but at the same time active' (Kuhn, 2013: 41).

The final film viewed by an audience may be significantly different from the initial script due to many different factors, firstly time and budgetary constraints may force a filmmaker to deviate substantially from the original script, but also differences in vision may occur due to the scriptwriter and the filmmaker interpreting the same story differently in their individual transitional spaces. This is also true of an audience's interpretation of the film.

The language of film is a visionary one as Arijon states, as it was 'born when filmmakers became aware of the difference between the loose joining together of small images in various states of motion, and the idea that these series of images

could be related to one another' (Arijon, 1976: 2). As such, this suturing together of images to create a coherent film, also inevitably throws up alternative readings through symbols, metaphors or 'gestures' as Balazs describes, which lay dormant within the frames of the film awaiting interpretation, and as Jung said, 'as the mind explores the symbol, it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason' (Jung, 1964: 35). The brain is a complex tool and as it processes information from the film we are watching, as it seeks coherence structure and order, and on a subconscious level it is looking for associations and patterns, and interprets that information based upon that viewer's life experience. Ackerman states that:

> Pattern pleases us, rewards a mind seduced and yet exhausted by complexity. We crave pattern, and find it all around us, in petals, sand dunes, pine cones, contrails Our buildings, our societies- all declare patterns. Even our actions: Habits, rules, codes of honour, sports, traditions- we have many names for patterns of conduct. They reassure us that life is orderly (Time Magazine, 2004).

Audiences seem to be comforted by familiarity and patterns, and this is reflected in similar scripts emerging from Hollywood sometimes within months of each other, for example *Rio Bravo* (1959) and *El Dorado* (1966) have strikingly similar plotlines, as do *Doc Hollywood* (1991) and *Cars* (2006), *Jumanji* (1995) and *Zathura: A Space Adventure* (2005). *Antz* (1998) and *A Bugs Life* (1998) not only came out in the same year, they are both animations with near enough the exact same plotline, and finally in 2011 both *No Strings Attached* (2011) and *Friends with Benefits* (2011), were released with very little differences between their storylines. This is by no means an exhaustive list of films, but merely a snapshot of what could well amount to hundreds of Hollywood film releases, which mirror each other in terms of plot. In the same vein we have the Hollywood franchise, a seemingly endless supply of sequels that offer the viewer the same world in progressive parts, as of 2017

we now have 7 installations of the '*Transformers'*, franchise, 8 installations of *'The Fast and the Furious'*, and since 1977 no less than 10 different '*Star Wars'* movies along with a number of spin offs. Despite all these films bearing remarkable similarities in both plot and tone and in some instances being released within a few short months apart, they all achieved huge box office success, so it would seem paying audiences either crave or were comforted by familiarity or reassured by the repetitiveness, served up within the film world.

Winkler argues that we are now so familiar with movies, that this now effects the way we remember: 'We are a civilization accustomed to thinking in images…it is the visual work (cinema, videotape, mural, comic strip, photograph) that is now part of our memory (Winkler, 2001: 6), in the next chapter I shall expand this theory further explaining in detail giving examples of how Hollywood movie directors regularly serve us up themes from our 'childhood zone' by depicting transitional object familiar to us such as teddy bears, bikes, and balloons, in order to create a bond between the film and the viewer.

<u>Chapter conclusion.</u>

In this chapter I have introduced D W Winnecott's transitional item theory, the power and importance we place upon childhood items, which I have also concluded the very house we were born into. In my expanded diagram of Winnecott's theory (Fig. 3), I have explained how during the course of one's lifetime, childhood toys, teddy bears and other objects we hold dear to us have the power to act as a transitional item, transporting our thoughts into the 'third reality' between the subject and the object. This 'third reality', or 'idealised space we create in our minds' as Kuhn puts it; can transcend both space and time, in the fact that in an instant we can be transported forward in time to an 'envisioned future self', or backwards in time to a 'nostalgic transitional space'. Neither of these spaces can ever be real, they are simply envisioned spaces, a place where we are transported to outside of the object and outside of ourselves-an invisible plain where we can imagine ourselves far into the future (which will never fully be achieved), or many years back into our childhood (which due to what Matlin & Stang described as the 'Pollyanna principle', can never be accurately remembered). I introduced the concept of a faster paced industrialised capitalist driven world coupled with ever advancing technology and our interconnectivity, being able to virtually connect up with anyone at any time on the planet being counterproductive to the feeling of longing or nostalgic mood experienced for people and places in generations past.

In past generations, it was essential that people helped each other for the benefit of everyone, however today we are now competing against each other in every aspect of our lives, we live in a world under constant bombardment of advertisements and messages designed to penetrate and resonate within our deepest thoughts. We are encouraged to buy more, sell more, work harder in order to be able to afford the latest

gadget, in a profit driven world everything seems to have become a tradable commodity, and this message is hammered home in the books and magazines that we read, the programmes and films we watch on TV, and even more so the advertising spaces in between those programmes. In the next chapter, I shall show examples of mainstream Hollywood movies and the techniques used to tap into our 'nostalgic transitional space' in order to gain our confidence, and get us to create an affiliation with the film. And in chapter four, whilst focussing on my own film *The Memory Shed,* I shall build upon this by demonstrating how experimental filmmaker's like myself on the opposite end of the spectrum make an independent short film while also tapping into this nostalgic transitionary space.

Chapter 2

Cinema as Spectacle.

Introduction.

In Chapter One, I introduced both D.W. Winnecott's theory of 'transitional items', and Abraham Maslow's 'Hierarchy of needs', as a starting point towards understanding how from birth we link certain objects with experiences, how nostalgia is cultivated within the home, and how a sense of belonging and self esteem is essential to our path for creative fulfilment.

The following chapter will highlight how a visit to the cinema, a pastime which is meant to both entertain and enhance our cultural experience as Zittoun put it (Kuhn, 2013: 137), could also be construed as what the Situationist art movement described as spectacle, designed not simply to give us respite from work, but a carefully crafted method of subliminal control that reinforces the conventional norms in which the viewer gladly pays for the privilege.

With the Situationist International movement (SI), being an experimental, playful anti-capitalist movement, they labelled the huge money making machine we are born into simply as *'the Society of the Spectacle'*, (also the title of founder member Guy Debord's 1967 book), describing 'the Spectacle' as a kind of circus show, exhibition, or entertainment for the masses, which was a 'one way-transmission or experience of a form of "communication' to which one side, the audience can never reply" (Home, 1996: 12). This perfectly describes mainstream cinema, television, and all news media.

In order for me to demonstrate the visual metaphors that I have found within several mainstream films, in which I argue are specifically designed to conjure up a

feeling of nostalgia within the viewer by evoking as Turner puts it, the four major

dimensions conducive to nostalgia which are sense of loss and decline, melancholic

vision, loss of freedom, and loss of authenticity-consumption of culture (Turner,

1987: 146); I will first use the first section of this chapter to explain what a non-

mainstream, experimental, Avant-garde film actually is, and introduce a few key

players that influenced, and continue to influence filmmakers today.

I shall then introduce the three common traits that I have found in mainstream

films, which I argue are visual triggers used to conjure up a nostalgic atmosphere in

the viewer during the course of the film. The aim of this chapter is firstly to briefly

introduce to the reader the Avant-garde style of filmmaking, then to contrast this by

visually highlight instances of nostalgic triggers that I have found in several big

budget Hollywood films, including many World Cinema films too. Once I have fully

explained the symbolism within these films, it will make my process of thinking

easier to understand when I analyse and explain the production choices behind my

film *The Memory Shed*, in Chapter Four.

2.1 <u>Film, Cinema, Nostalgia, and the Avant-Garde.</u>

The term Avant-garde film is often used to describe an experimental film deliberately made in direct opposition to anything the populist mainstream tends to be serving up. These films often display a non-linear narrative, are more arty or poetic in their construct, and tend to be made on a fraction of the budget of a mainstream Hollywood movie. Avant-garde films tend to challenge the mainstream in offering shocking and disturbing images, abstract or surreal themes, and viewers tend to view these films as an experience rather than entertainment, *"Avant-garde films necessitate a different kind of viewing experience, one that requires discipline, patience, and enthusiasm for alternative forms of representation and presentation"* (Verrone, 2011). When one thinks of experimental film, directors such as Andy Warhol (1928-1987), Derek Jarman (1942-1994), Kenneth Anger (1937-), Peter Greenaway (1942-), and David Lynch (1946-) may spring to mind, but the truth is filmmakers experimented with film from its inception, Dziga Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929) is part documentary and part art film, displaying a variety of advanced cinematic techniques such as split screen, jump cuts, fast and slow motion shots, and Dutch angles.

Ukrainian born filmmaker Maya Deren (born Elenora Derenkowska) 1917-1961, is synonymous with the experimental film genre, and is credited as being an inspirational driving force behind the Avant-garde film movement, with such films as *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943), *At Land* (1944), *A Study in Choreography for Camera* (1945), and *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (1946), *Meshes of the Afternoon* (her most famous film)*,* paints a nightmarish narrative of two lovers caught up in a surreal dream like drama. Deren creates tension and unease using simultaneous overlapping realities, and to suggest "the defiance of normal time…normal space," Deren uses a

striking editing style that would influence many filmmakers: multiple shifts of geographic location in a single sequence (Deren, 1945: 149)

In retrospect the films of Maya Deren were truly ground breaking and influenced and inspired generations of filmmakers, Brain Frye writes, "If Maya Deren invented the American Avant-garde cinema, Stan Brakhage (1933-2003), realized its potential" (Frye, 2007: 1). Brakhage was a prolific filmmaker, where Deren was the main protagonist in many of her films, Brakhage would use his art to air out many of his life's experiences, in *Window Water Baby Moving* (1959); Brakhage uses the birth of his first child as the catalyst for the film. In *Sirius Remembered* (1959) he uses the death of his beloved dog to create an experimental homage to it, and in *Mothlight* (1963) he demonstrated that you don't even need a camera to create a short experimental film by making images directly on the film in the form of scratching painting and pinning things onto the celluloid.

Lithuanian born Jonas Mekas (1922-2019) was another giant in the Avant-garde films movement, he started his career like so many others filmmakers fuelled by his passion of photography, once he moved to New York he discovered film and started keeping a 16mm film diary which eventually became the film *Diaries, Notes & Sketches, a.k.a. Walden* (1964-9), he would also use other parts of this original footage to create *Lost, Lost, Lost* (1976), an autobiographical documentary about both himself and his brother Adolfas, integrating into the New York community. Mekas went on to found the New American Cinema Group (NACG) in 1961, a filmmakers' cooperative as a distribution centre for experimental and alternative films.

British filmmakers were also experimenting with alternative filmmaking techniques, Kenneth MacPherson's *Borderline* (1930) shows the Soviet Montage style of editing and the plot centre around an inter-racial love triangle concluding in a

murder. Malcolm Le Grice (1940-) constructed a short *Little Dog for Roger* (1967) out of snippets of 9.5mm home movie footage his father had filmed of the family, when he was a child, (this self-reflective form of filmmaking is a common theme among experimental film-makers - one which I explore myself in *The Memory Shed*).

The London Film-Makers Co-op (LFMC) was founded in 1966, and was inspired by the fore mentioned New York model (NACG), and Le Grice was at the forefront of the group alongside Chris Welsby (1948-), and William Raban (1948-). Welsby and Raban went on to make the short *River Yar* (1972), where he filmed the river a frame a minute every day continuously for two three week periods, this falls into what I define as a 'time based media' piece, in which time or the passage of time, is essential to the overall results of the film. Another British experimental time based film worth noting is *So that You Can Live* (1982), made by the 'Cinema Activists Group', who followed the life of the Butts family over a period of five years in order to document their lives.

William Raban continued his landscape theme with *Thames Film* (1986) narrated by John Hurt, which again is a 'journey film' of sorts, or as the Situationist describe a Derive. London being a cosmopolitan melting pot of talent, is the ideal backdrop and subject matter for experimental artists, Patrick Kellier (1950 -) released *London* (1994) an experimental hybrid, with is neither a documentary nor a fiction film, which is a trip around London set to the voice of an unseen narrator (Paul Schofield). Kellier released two sequels, *Robinson in Space* (1994), and *Robinson in Ruins* (2010) that are fascinating journey films in their own right, but collectively can also be read as a critique of the Conservative government of the day.

As I touched upon in Chapter One, nostalgia is vitally important in our lives, our memory serves to remind us of the past, of the places we once visited or lived in,

the people we once knew, deceased relatives, nostalgia can help us come to terms with what we have lost and makes us appreciate what we have at the moment. Nostalgia can be a powerful motivator in our lives, indeed, Pollock (2007) asserts that nostalgia in today's society is "culturally helpful" as it helps maintain cultural identity when the "present is in crisis" (2007:121).

We visit the cinema for a number of different reasons, either entertainment, to socialise, or just for escapement from our everyday lives; a visit to the cinema can prove a beneficial uplifting mood enhancer during difficult periods in our lives. We all have movies that are personally nostalgic to us when we watch them, and the very act of going to the cinema itself can evoke in some people nostalgic personal memories of previous childhood visits with a parent or loved one to the cinema, often many years previously. The cinema can provide a warm dark solace, a place to experience terror safely without any real risk of physical attack, a place for singletons to experience love without the rejection, it can also be a place to experience wonderful far away destinations, possibly unobtainable within ones financial budget, a cinema can also be a place to nostalgically relive lost loves through the on screen characters, and a place to safely shed unseen tears under the cover of darkness.

I will now lay down my key argument of how the Hollywood Movie industry, with their huge production and promotional budgets, can both conjure up, depict and tap into this state of historical or vicarious nostalgia, in much the same way as the advertising industry does in order to it sell us a new product or service by linking it to a pleasurable past memory. I will also demonstrate how film has the power to evoke both types of nostalgia within the viewer, as Lutz argued that 'imagery is a sensory representation of a memory that enables people to relive past experiences' (1978: 611-620), and I shall further demonstrate how directors of mainstream narrative films

actively, (whether consciously or unconsciously), cultivate a nostalgic atmosphere in order to captivate, suspend, and entertain the viewer during the course of the film in a bid to perpetuate and further fuel what the Situationist called 'the spectacle'.

2.2 Narrative Film and Nostalgia.

Roberto Donati argues that the entire Western film genre is closely associated with the concept of nostalgia on screen, and maintains that the films of Sergio Leone capture the pain and of melancholy of nostalgia in the themes of 'distance, suffering, physical and emotional separation, memory and loss' (2008: 35). Donati not only argues that the Western encapsulates the idea of nostalgia in the concept of the American Frontier in that the first pioneers sacrificed their entire previous lives in the name of the American dream, and in the process invaded other peoples territories, and upon reflection realised and regret their actions and what they left behind, he also argues that:

> The nostalgia and crepuscular melancholy of Col. Douglas Mortimer (Lee Van Cleef) in *For a Few Dollars More* (1965), or, later, of Harmonica (Charles Bronson) and Cheyenne (Jason Robards) in *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), and, above all, the protagonist of *A Fistful of Dynamite* (1971) and of Noodles (Robert De Niro) in *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984) are nothing more than a reflection of Leone's own nostalgic feelings towards an America which he imagined and discovered as a child, an America perhaps idealised, and definitely desired and naively longed for.

In effect Donati is arguing that Sergio Leone is not only making films to entertain a hungry audience eager for such films, but he is also using the creative process of filmmaking as a tool to explore or relive his own past experiences or imagined nostalgic notions of childhood (as discussed in Chapter One).

On any given month cinemas are awash with films that could be deemed nostalgic, films which when dissected and analysed carry within them a message or leave you with a feeling of having been transported back to a happier time or place, that said, 2012 seemed a particularly good year for the producers and directors to tap into this nostalgic past for inspiration. The 84th Academy awards in 2012, saw three distinctly different 'nostalgic films' honoured with an 'Oscar', they were Martin Scorsese's *Hugo* (2011) set in Paris in 1931, and focused on Georges Melies (who

today is regarded as the father of special effects) (Francesco, online, accessed 27th October 2020), French director Michael Hazanavicius's *The Artist* (2011), a silent black and white film, depicting the Hollywood film industry in the 1920's, and Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris* (2011), which is set in modern day Paris but carries nostalgic undertones to a bygone Paris of the 1920's.

French born Hazanavicius sets his film in Hollywood the heart of the American movie industry, and both American born Allen, and Scorsese, set their films in the French capital of Paris. In effect all three directors are foreigners making films based in countries non-native to them, and by doing so, it could be argued that each of those directors entered their own personal transitional play space in order to recreate on film a time, place, look, and feel, that no matter how authentic will always be a representation of the real through a foreigners eyes; as Hodgkin argues 'In recreating a vision of the past, films often differ-among those who have no recollection of the past that is being performed before them. Nostalgia, then, may describe a regretful yearning for something one never had, for something that did not exist in the first place' (Hodgkin, 2011: 8).

It could be argued that Hazanavicius, Scorsese, and Allen, are contemporary directors, all using modern apparatus and modern cutting edge filming techniques (especially Scorsese's decision to use 3D in *Hugo*), to create a highly polished finished film that its main intention is that of transporting the viewer convincingly from their seat back in time to a point where film was still a relatively new technology. In his book *Eye of the Century*, Francesco Casetti, quotes Italian journalist Fausto Martini, who wrote the following in 1912:

> Cinema...appeases a certain sense of nostalgia that lies dormant in our hearts, nostalgia for countries never seen that will perhaps never be seen, but where it seems that we have already lived in a preceding life (2008: 4).

Despite the fact that Paris was not only the location of the 'June Rebellion' of 1832, (which is the basis for the Victor Hugo novel *Les Miserables*, and was made into film on three separate occasions 1935, 1978, and 2012, alongside the long running stage show and film of same name), and both the French Revolution of 1848, and the uprising of 1944 began in the French capital of Paris; Paris, despite all its turbulence and bloodshed, is still regarded not as the 'city of revolution', but as the 'City of love'.

Paris is highly romanticised in such a way partly due to the Great Exhibition of 1889 where it became one of the earliest cities to get streetlights, the illuminated quaint streets took on a romantic feeling, and it then became a favourite place for couples to visit on their honeymoon (Philip, online, accessed 14th January 2021). During the 1920's Paris became the centre of literary modernism with writers such as Ernest Hemmingway, James Joyce, and Gertrude Stein, all living, working and flourishing in this vibrant city, and in her 1940 book *Paris France* Stein wrote:

> The reason why all of us naturally began to live in France is because France has scientific methods, machines and electricity, but does not really believe that these things have anything to do with the real business of living. Life is tradition and human nature (1996: 67).

American writer Janet Flanner also commented on the reasons why so many American artists and writers flocked to Paris during this unique time, 'We were the Americans who for one reason or another, chose to dwell in Paris…for work, for career, for the amenities of French living, which was cheaper and more agreeable than life in the United States' (2003: 54). In the world of film, *Casablanca* (1942) directed by Michael Curtiz, which in a Guardian poll in is considered to be one of the most romantic movies of all time (Thompson: 2010), also uses Paris as the city where Rick (Humphrey Bogart) and Ilsa (Ingrid Bergman) first met and fell in love.

As an audience it's unimportant whether we have visited Paris or not to know about its reputation, its essence is coded into every film, book, and advert we see or read about Paris. Fausto Martini suggests that we all carry around with us a kind of pre conceived store of memories and emotions for places we may or may not have already visited, and that the effect watching the film has on our brain, directly unlocks and unleashes those emotional ideas. In 1972 Vamik Volkan coined the terms 'linking object' and 'linking phenomenon' to describe the 'a song, smell, a gesture, or an effect that functions as a linking object' in triggering memories (Volkan 1999: 169-179), this reinforces Winnecott's theories of 'transitional object' and 'transitional item' covered in Chapter One.

Scorsese uses a series of these 'links' to create several nostalgic layers in the film, each one reinforcing the other to create a look or feel in the film *Hugo*, that taps into our existing memories on a sub conscious level. In one instance the protagonist Hugo Cabret (Asa Butterfield), has a night terror in which a choice he makes, (jumping on the train tracks to investigate a key), directly leads to the disastrous consequences of the oncoming train detailing and ending up crashing through the terminal wall, into the street below (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4 Screen grab from *Hugo*. Directed by Martin Scorsese, 2011.

Although this is only a terrifying dream for Hugo Cabret in the film, this event did actually happen in Montparnasse station on October 22nd 1895, where locomotive 721 overran the stop and ploughed through the wall (Fig. 5). The locomotive in Hugo's dream is engine is also numbered as number 721 (Fig. 6), which is a direct reference to the engine number of the actual real life train accident,
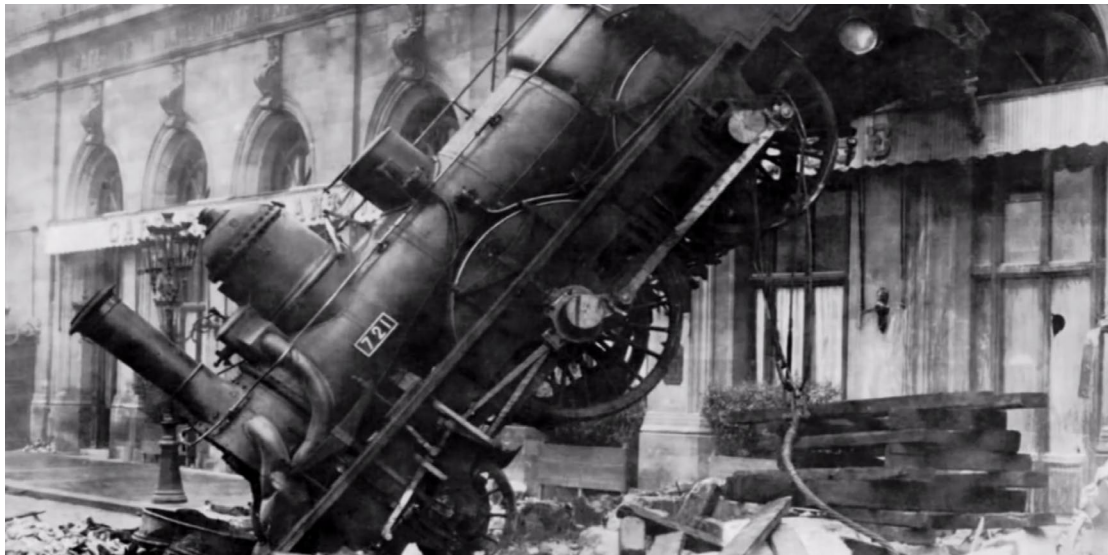
Fig. 5 Montparnasse derailment, 1895, Wikipedia.

Thus adding both a historical and a nostalgic layer to the film. The film world of *Hugo* is set in the early 1930's where Hugo Cabret is twelve, and the real life train crash of Montparnasse happened in 1895, some twenty-three years before his birth suggests that Hugo was experiencing what Stern describes as a bout of 'historical nostalgia' (1992: 13), in which he dreams about a historical event he had no (nor could have) any have any direct experience of.

Fig. 6 Screen grab from *Hugo*. Directed by Martin Scorsese, 2011.

The dream metaphor is further verbalised in a line of dialogue where Hugo recalls an account of his father's first visit to the movies, "he said it was like seeing his dreams in the middle of the day"; Scorsese goes on to subtly 'link' classic movies within the film in numerous ways, the most obvious intertextual visual reference being Hugo's automaton with the machine-robot (Machine Mensch) played by Brigitte Helm in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927).
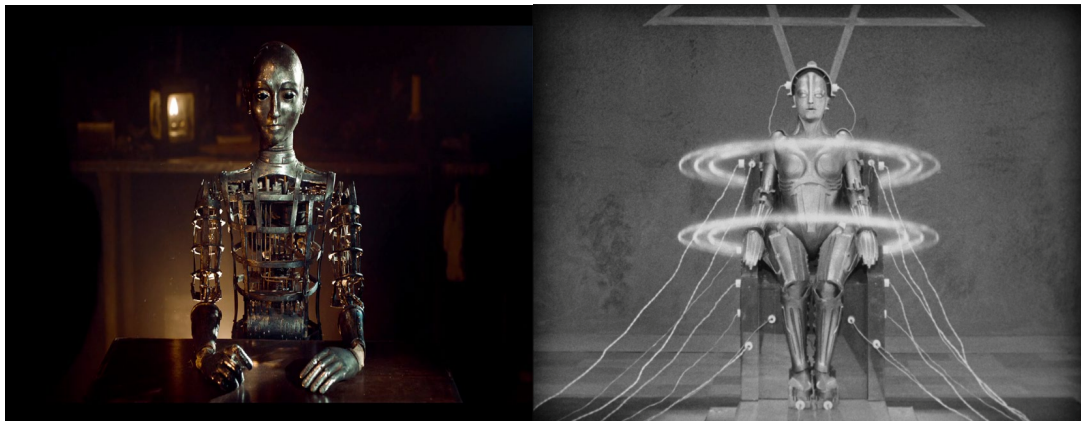
Fig. 7 Screen grab from *Hugo*. Directed by Martin Scorsese, 2011.

Fig. 8 Screen Grab from *Metropolis*. Direcied by Fritz Lang, 1927.

While most cinemagoers would enjoy *Hugo* for its heart warming story, there are other deeper layers of nostalgic references embedded within the film, that can

only be understood and appreciated by a more cultured sophisticated viewer, Mittell describes how 'high cultured' viewers may comprise of a 'boutique audience', who typically do not watch television (2006: 31), this group of people will recognise subtle references to older films, plays theatre and the arts, Jameson argues that 'movies are a physical experience, and are remembered as such, stored up in bodily synapses that evade the thinking mind' (1992:1), so in effect whatever we watch, experience, and feel on a deep level in the cinema, trigger the same neurological attributes within our brains as having physically experienced the same situation in real life, the brain finds it hard to distinguish between both situations.

As previously mentioned, Paris is yet again used as the backdrop by Woody Allen in his nostalgic love story *Midnight in Paris,* which sees successful Hollywood screenwriter Gil Pender (Owen Wilson) on an extended holiday in Paris with fiancée Inez (Rachel McAdams), Gil falls in love with the city and longs to have been there in what he considers to be 'the golden age', the 1920's. Struggling to write his novel set in a nostalgia shop, Gil wanders lost around the streets of Paris soaking in the atmosphere and sights before coming to a rest on a set of stone steps, here an unseen clock strikes twelve and a mysterious vintage car drives up to transport him back into the 1920's where he meets Zelda (Alison Pill) and F. Scott Fitzgerald (Tom Hiddleston). Gil quickly realises that being at that exact place at that exact time in present day Paris conjures up the magical carriage that transports him back into the 1920's and subsequently goes back on several occasions to meet the elite of Paris including Gertrud Stein (Kathy Bates), Ernest Hemmingway (Corey Stoll), T.S. Elliot (David Lowe) and Salvador Dali (Adrien Brody), amongst other prominent artists and musicians of that time.

Early on in the film Gil is accused of 'Golden Age Thinking', by his arrogant arch nemesis Paul (Michael Sheen), Paul defines this as "the erroneous notion that a different time period is better than the one one's living in". And goes on to explain, "It is a flaw in the romantic imagination of those people who find it difficult to cope with the present", and goes on to belittle Gil by saying that "nostalgia is denial, denial of the painful present".

In an article titled 'Golden Age Thinking' Steve Honig makes the argument that this nostalgic yearning for the past is in fact a good trait to display in today's society because 'the most noticeable changes have occurred in how we treat each other as human beings, and the respect we have for ourselves. Words like "please" and "thank you" have disappeared in the abyss of self-entitlement that has been growing exponentially with each new generation' (Honig, 2012). Honig also points out that not only have we changed the way we interact with each other in the vocabulary we use, but we have also changed the way we dress as a society, in the 1940s, for example, gentlemen would wear a smart suit, tie and hat on a night out to the movies, however today's cinemagoers think nothing of turning up in shorts, t-shirt and flip flops. Honig alludes to the fact that the rapid advancement in technology, combined with the subtle erosion of interpersonal skills, in the way we both communicate and treat each other as a society, is too much of a change too soon for some people, and that filmmakers and writers are a good barometer of this mood and use nostalgia as an antidote.

In *Midnight in Paris,* Woody Allen uses the sound of a chiming town clock striking twelve (a clock in which we hear but never actually see) as a symbol, catalyst or Volkanian 'linking phenomenon' for his journey back into the 1920's, although Gil goes back to the 1920's on several occasions, as an audience we only see him

standing on the steps hearing the clock chime and actually being transported three times. The clock striking twelve is associated on one level with fairy tales, and in particularly with Cinderella. Allen's use of the clock firstly signifies 'time', which can link our thinking either backwards nostalgically to a happy period in the past, or melancholically get us thinking about our own mortality and the limited time we have on the earth. By linking both the clock and the fact that the clock strikes exactly twelve before Gil Penders' nostalgic time travel adventure, Allen is influencing our thinking towards the realms of a fairy tale journey, this is reminiscent of films we may have watched in the past with a similar 'link' such as Walt Disney's *Cinderella* (1950), or the original silent film *Cinderella* (1914) directed by James Kirkwood Sr. The story of Cinderella itself is said to be hundreds of years old and although impossible to pinpoint its origins, French author Charles Perrault is credited with a modern day interpretation as early as 1697, and the warning of "if you don't go out of the gate before the clock finishes striking 12 o'clock" comes from the Brothers Grimm's fairy tale *The Water of Life* (Fairytalez, online, accessed, 24th April 2021), each of these individual layers or 'links' strengthen and then build upon the foundation and credibility for the next piece of work we may encounter with that particular link in.

Representations of the clock in its physical or audial form are one of three important symbols I shall argue that filmmakers often use as triggers to codify and evoke the feeling of nostalgia through film (all of which will be explored in depth later). On the whole clocks and watches are largely unrepresented in *Midnight in Paris*, with the key exception of Allen choosing to use the sound of a large town clock as a direct gateway to nostalgia, however in Martin Scorsese's film *Hugo*, the clock

its sounds and internal workings are rarely out of shot, and all play an integral part to the overall story of the film.

Although *Hugo*,(an adaptation from Brian Selznick's graphic novel *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (2007)), isn't strictly a love story as such, it is certainly a loving tribute from Scorsese to both the filmmaker Melies, and filmmaking in general, and is set in a train station in Montparnasse in Paris at the turn of the 1930's. As an audience we may not have visited the city of Paris ourselves but have enough 'learned experience' of Paris, or to put it another way, we have a 'pre conceived store of memories' as Martini puts it, and our brain has the ability to 'link' objects, phenomenon, and places as Volkan describes, to conjure up within us our own unique versions of what Paris should look like according to the history we have read, or the music, books, and films and photographs we have seen.

Fig. 9& Fig. 10 Screen grabs from *Hugo*. Directed by Martin Scorsese, 2011.

The symbolic clock, as previously mentioned, is ever present in the film *Hugo*; this is also the case in Selznick's book, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, which was adapted into the screenplay for the film. However the clock metaphor is used to further extent within the book, in the form of a dream sequence when Papa George falls ill after discovering the kids with the box of drawings. Hugo has a surreal dream

in which he sees floating clocks along with parts of people's faces; this is reminiscent of Salvador Dali's' famous painting *The Persistence of Memory* (1931), which Leonard Shlain interprets as:

> One of his most famous paintings, The Persistence of Memory…[where] Dali Juxtaposes two ordinary symbols of time: clocks and sand; but in Dali's arresting vision the clocks are melting over a vast and lonely beach that resembles the sands of time. To emphasise the paintings temporal images, he also incorporates a swarm of crawling ants, whose uniquely shaped bodies resemble hourglasses. Sand, hourglasses, and watches all connect below the threshold of awareness till the viewer's mind swings around to focus on the very nature and meaning of time. (1991: 228).

Fig. 11 From *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*. Brian Selznick, 2007.

Fig. 12 *The Persistence of memory*. Salvador Dali 1931.

Ingmar Bergman uses this same Daliesque style of dream sequence to maximum effect in *Wild Strawberries* (1957), where we see our protagonist Professor Borg (Victor Sjostrom) recall a "peculiar and highly unpleasant dream", in the dream world we see Borg in a surreal setting confronting a clock without hands, he reaches into his pocket to check his pocket watch, also to find it has no hands. The clock in this instance signals that time is running out for Borg, which sets him off on a nostalgic journey of confrontation with his past.

Fig. 14 & Fig. 14 Screen Grabs from *Wild Strawberries*. Directed by Ingmar Bergman, 1957.

The clocks and watches are constantly feature in *Wild Strawberries*, as in Dali's painting, they dominate the scene by the way they are spatially framed within it.
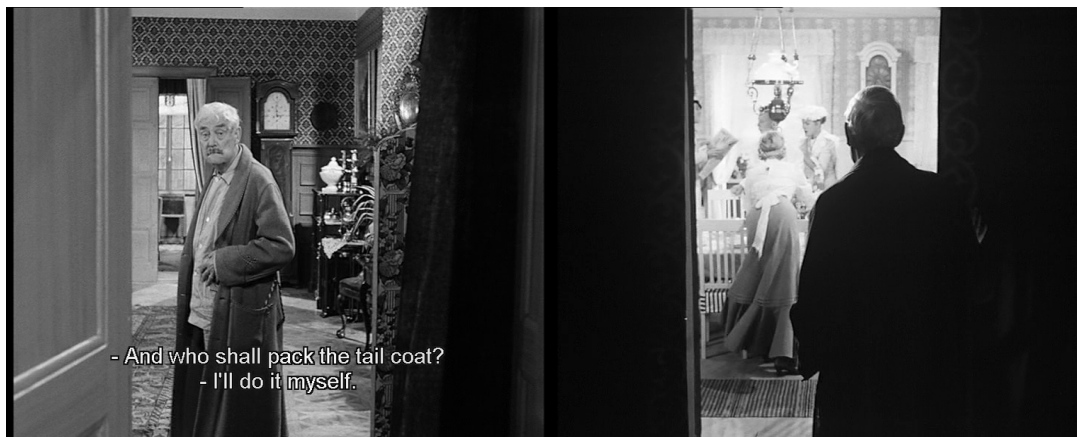
Fig. 15 & Fig. 16 Screen Grabs from *Wild Strawberries*. Directed by Ingmar Bergman, 1957.

Fig. 17 & Fig.18 Screen Grabs from *Wild Strawberries*. Directed by Ingmar Bergman, 1957.

Dawn Ades comments on Dali's painting, and the fact that he depicts his watches as malleable, "The soft watches are an unconscious symbol of the relativity of space and time, a Surrealist meditation on the collapse of our notions of fixed cosmic order" (1983: 145). By highlighting clocks throughout *Wild Strawberries*, Bergman draws our attention to the finite number of years each of us has on the earth, and by constantly framing a clock or watch central to the action further symbolises Borg's mortality and heightens the nostalgic journey of rediscovery he embarks upon.

Roberta Smith wrote 'film was the first visual art form to capture and package time' (Smith, online, accessed 24th April 2018), and although one cannot see 'time' itself, one can see its effects on screen, as well as the passing of units of time measured by the chronometric instruments of various shapes and sizes within a given film. Susan Sontag goes on to describe the magical way in which time is constantly changing our perspective, 'the passing of time provides the necessary detachment and therefore allows for acquiring a different perspective, which slips into the romanticised world' (2001: 285).

The humble timepiece will turn up in one form or another in nearly every film, as if to reemphasise this concept of an unseen force controlling our destiny. Experimental filmmaker Chris Marclay found that the numbers of clocks featured in films over the past seventy or so years runs into the thousands. Chris employed six assistants to sift through movies for time related footage and edited the whole 24 hour finished film aptly named *The Clock* (2010), which combines footage into a real time twenty four hour epic which incorporates carefully edited sequences of clocks and timepieces from all over the world to chronologically tell the time on screen over a continuous twenty four hour period.

While some of the clocks in film will be merely decorative, part of the mise en scene, others however are clearly part of the narrative; some plots are dependent on time, and feature clocks heavily to drive the narrative along. Other clocks and timepieces seen in 'mainstream' films, are placed within that film as metaphoric instruments, a clock for instance could be a signifier for 'time running out' or an indication that a certain characters time is literally coming to an end.

Fig. 19 & Fig. 20 Screen grabs from *Hugo*. Directed by Martin Scorsese, 2011.

Scorsese references the classic clock scene in Harold Lloyds film *Safety Last* (1923), as a signpost of a forthcoming scene in *Hugo,* by initially showing the audience the movie poster outside the cinema, and almost duplicating the exact same scene with the clock hands in exactly the same position, putting Hugo Cabret in the exact same dangerous predicament Harold Lloyd found himself (Fig. 19 & Fig. 20).

Similarly, Wong Kar-wai uses the clock in its various shapes and sizes two-fold in his romantic melodrama *In the Mood for Love* (2000), in the first instance the clock dominates the screen in many of the films scenes, this signifies the fact that as every moment passes, the protagonists Mrs. Chan (Maggie Cheung) and Mr. Chow (Tony Leung) grow further away from their respective adulterous spouses and closer to each other, and the presence of clocks and the dream like palate of colours used adds to a dream like nostalgic feel, drawing attention to the fact that the film is set in a

different time, a Hong Kong of the past where the culture and attitudes to adulterous

affairs were different. David Boardwell argues:

> Central to Wong Kar-Wai's work, critics agree, is the theme of time. It appears in many guises-he mysteries of change, the ephemerality of the present, the secret affinities among simultaneous incidents, the longings created by memory and nostalgia. (Boardwell, online, accessed March 4th 2018)

Fig. 21 Screen grab from *In The Mood For Love.* Directed by Wong Kar-wai, 2000.

Fig. 22 Screen grab from *In The Mood For Love.* Directed by Wong Kar-wai, 2000.

Fig. 23 Screen grab from *In The Mood For Love.* Directed by Wong Kar-wai, 2000.

The clocks as depicted in, *In the Mood for Love* are frequent, domineering, and often framed larger than the characters themselves, a constant reminder of the autonomous way Mrs. Chan and Mr. Chow have to carry on with their lives, despite each other's partners having an affair.

Time within the context of a film has to be carefully manipulated in order to either condense a certain amount of time into the recognised confines of a 90-minute feature film, or similarly expand it to explain a single event, which might have taken less than a minute in real time to occur (such as the Oliver Stone movie *The Assassination of JFK* (1992)). Our comprehension of film language (whether we are consciously aware of it or not), allows us to recognise on screen methods such as montage editing, cuts, dissolves, the slowing down or speeding up of the image, to manipulate the passage of time in order to tell a coherent story within the confines of a defined amount of screen time.

A few directors have attempted to tell a continuous story over a set amount of real screen time, for example Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948), and Alejandro Inarritu's *Birdman: or The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance* (2014) use hidden edits in order to give the viewer the impression that the story they are watching on screen was acted out in one continuous take, and that the cameras are merely following the action

to correspond to its narrative span, this is not the case. However this seemingly impossible task was actually achieved in both Mike Figgis's *Time Code* (2000), and Alexander Sukurov's *Russian Ark* (2002). Figgis filmed the same continuous scene fifteen times over a two-week period in order to realise his multi camera one take vision, and Sukurov filmed continuously for eighty-seven minutes through thirty-three rooms in the Winter Palace at Saint Petersburg, and included a cast of over two thousand people in order to tell a three hundred year span of Russian history.

The standardisation of products and services has also sadly affected the film industry, where Independent and Avant-garde filmmakers can experiment with length of films, and where to screen them. Swedish born filmmaker Anders Weberg film titled *Ambiance,* scheduled to be screened only once on the 31st December 2020, which will last a continuous seven hundred and twenty hours, which equates to thirty days of continuous film screening, and film watching in one go with no breaks. Weberg describes *Ambiance* a 'biographical film filled with all the memories I have so far in life. The places I've been, people I met, my dreams, hope and so on. Everything in the film is linked not chronologic but more emotionally'. (Philip, online, accessed 14th January 2021)

Hollywood feature length offerings on the other hand, tend to conform to the formulistic ninety or so minutes; this is partly due to economics such as a ceiling on ticket prices, perceived value for money, and amount of screenings per day etc. From a projectionists point of view ninety minutes of actual film (as opposed to digital) equates to a certain number of trays or platters, (a film is distributed to the cinema in small reels, these are in turn would on to a platter and a certain amount of platters depending on length of film are cued up). However today, cinemas projecting film are

a scarcity, as digital projection has made the job both easier and cheaper, and in theory a film of any length could easily be screened.

2.3 The Apparatus of Nostalgia.

I have laid down an argument that film itself, and the very act of film viewing, is conducive in inducing a viewer into a nostalgic state. I have also established that both the concept, and the representation of time through the metaphoric use of either images of clocks and the sound of timepieces, as being vitally important in both *Hugo* and *Midnight in Paris*, and this representation of time in film is the first of the three symbols I have noticed that filmmakers use in constructing a nostalgic film.

Self-reflexivity is a method the director uses to draw attention to itself or to highlighting the fact or remind us that we are actually watching a film. The director can achieve this in a number of ways, we may be watching a film about a filmmaker at work highlighting the fact that we are actually watching a carefully constructed set of images, or we can be watching a character watching himself on screen, or another example might be that the protagonist of the film may be seen watching a film himself, making us an audience watching a film, in which the protagonist is also watching a film, making it a strange kind of world within a world.

Equally important as what is seen on screen, are the audible sounds, and I shall also focus on what I have named as 'the flicker' (this also comes under the heading of film apparatus as I deem it to be an audial representation of a film being projected). The flicker on screen is the combination of both the flickering of the projector light, and the audial mechanical ratchet sound of cogs turning as a film is being projected. I shall argue that 'the flicker', is an important device used within a film to stir up within us memories about a time in our past, where we enjoyed watching a movie either at home or at the cinema. In some cases the flicker, (in which we see the projected light and hear the mechanical projector sound), is then combined with a breaking of 'the fourth wall' where as an audience we in effect become a

participatory audience member within the film world, and see the actual film being shown on screen.

Fig. 24 & Fig. 25 Screen grabs from *Hugo*. Directed by Martin Scorsese, 2011.

The methods I have described can be seen in many different films throughout history, I began this chapter by singling out *'Hugo'* for study, and I shall carry on using this example to highlight my next points. The central theme running through *Hugo* is the career of Georges Méliès, and an integral part of the telling of that story is the apparatus of both filmmaking and film projection to create the nostalgic feeling of looking back on what was to be the beginning of the film industry. Cinematic apparatus is revered in the film, with scenes of the projector being held up on a pedestal and looked upon as almost a religious iconography (Fig. 24), and the sheer ecstasy of using the old hand driver projector (Fig. 25).
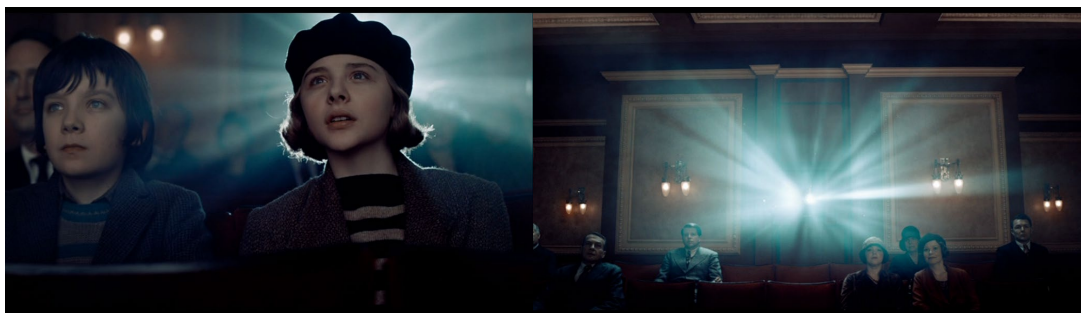
Fig. 26 & Fig. 27 Screen grabs from *Hugo*. Directed by Martin Scorsese, 2011.

The flicker (as I have deemed previously), is visible in *Hugo* on several occasions, most prominently in the cinema scene where the characters are bathed almost angelically in the light of the film as its projected on the screen, signifying both the children's innocence and the religious like experience of their cinematic encounter with film (Fig. 26 & Fig 27).

Fig. 28 & Fig. 29 Screen grabs from *Hugo*. Directed by Martin Scorsese, 2011.

The fourth wall is deliberately broken in *Hugo* asGeorges Méliès laments the returning soldiers from the Great War had experienced sights and sounds so horrifcly gruesome that they were no longer interested in his whimsical movies. The Dada art movement (which was a precursor to the Situationist movement), two key art movements that have directly inspired my work, was also born from the horror of war, with Hugo Ball thoroughly disgusted by the nationalism which had sold the courage to war (arthistoryarchive, online, accessed 16th January 2018).

As Méliès's recounts his story, as an audience we see stock footage of both fighting soldiers and the battle weary on the march (Figs. 28 & 29), we quickly realise that we are no longer watching a fictional film, but our screens are filled with actual historical images of soldiers, and very few of which, if any, are still alive today. By confronting the audience and forcing us to watch these poignant historical images

head on, adds another deeper level of realism to the film. By introducing this documentary footage of historical events we all have knowledge of through either reading historical texts about, or having family directly involved in them, adds another deeply nostalgic layer to the film. Tiziana Ferrero-Regis calls this 'cinema on cinema'- films that are using cinema images of the past (Ferrero-Regis, online, accessed 20th August 2018) and Shirley Law describes this technique as 'A film about a film', and coined the term "metafilm" to describe this very practice (2003).

Fig. 30 & Fig. 31 Screen grabs from *Hugo*. Directed by Martin Scorsese, 2011.

In *Hugo* Scorsese codifies a flashback in tones of sepia as we see Georges Méliès carefully and painstakingly examine and edit down single frames of footage (Fig.30). Sepia is used on purpose to evoke the feeling of an old photograph, and this scene highlights the complex process of filmmaking and the meticulous attention to detail and patience needed to construct a film with the materials and technology available at the dawn of this new revolutionary art form.

This same care and attention to detail and meticulous handling of film is also depicted in Giuseppe Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso* (1988), only this time we see the process from film projectionist, Alfredo (Philippe Noiret). Again as with *Hugo*, *Cinema Paradiso* is an ode to film in the fact that the majority of scenes within the

film contain a reference to a film, either in the form of a movie poster, or actual film projected on screen, or one of the characters is either handling film or standing next to some kind of film apparatus in the way of a projector or splicer.

Fig. 32 & Fig. 33 Screen grab from *Cinema Paradiso.* Directed by Giuseppe Tornatore, 1999.

Cinema Paradiso is also a deeply nostalgic and thoughtful film on many different levels as its main themes are loss and change on both a personal and on a wider level; on a micro level the film deals with the young Toto (Salvatore Cascio) coming to terms with the loss of his father, and on the Macro level the film deals with the decline of the film industry and the destruction of local cinemas due to changing viewing habits.

This type of 'Filmed Nostalgia', argues Pierre Sorlin, 'was a dominant trend of Italian films in the 1980's, he goes on to argue that 'when *The Tree of Wooden Clogs* (1978) won a series of awards, critics who acknowledged its formal qualities protested because, far from accurately documenting traditional rural life, the film glorified a mythical, idyllic community which had never existed.' (2002:160).

Although *Cinema Paradiso* does portray an idyllic Italian community, Tiziana Ferrero-Regis also makes the point that during the 1980's, the Italian film industry had not only lost its domestic and international audiences, but as a community Italy

had also lost its collective rituals. (Ferrero-Regis, online, accessed 20th August 2018).

So the film world created by Tornatore though idealistic and nostalgic in tone, does in

fact depict an accurate portrayal of the economic climate in Italy at the time in which

Ferrero-Regis goes on to blame the exponential growth in television with the decline

of cinema audiences in audience figures from 513 million in 1975 to 123 million in

1985 (Screenville, online, accessed 2nd June 2019).
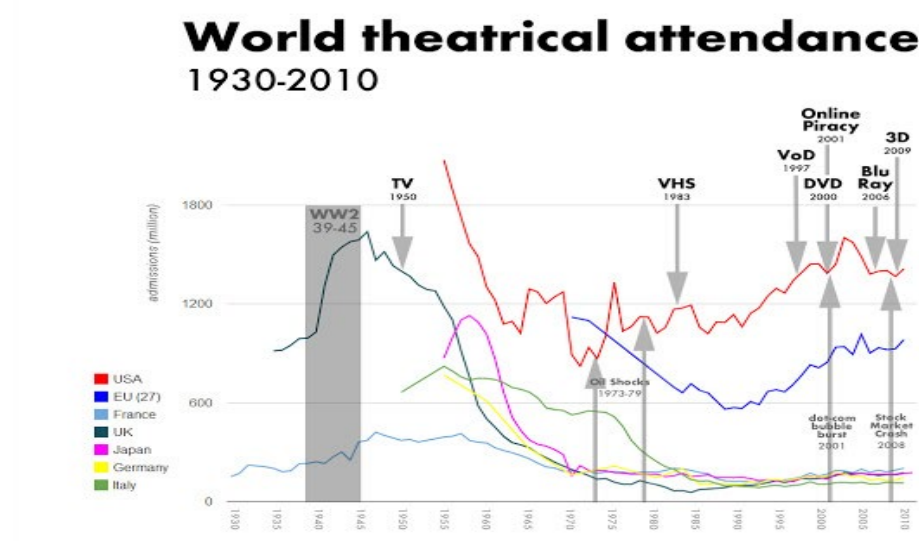
Fig. 34 Graph by Harry Tuttle, Screenville published 2nd September 2011.

As previously demonstrated in *Hugo*, what I have named as the 'flicker' is

also present in *Cinema Paradiso,* where as an audience we can clearly see the

projectors light and hear the mechanical workings of the projector in the background,

which all add to the nostalgic feel of both visiting a traditional old fashioned cinema,

the nostalgic feeling we get from watching old home movies on domestic 8mm and

super 8mm projectors.

Fig. 35 & Fig. 36 Screen grabs from *Cinema Paradiso.* Directed by Giuseppe Tornatore, 1999.

As with other 'films about films', we see the audience in *Cinema Paradiso* on many occasions, in some instances they are in awe of the spectacle, and in other scenes in the throes of joyous laughter. We can relate to and interpret the emotions experienced by the audience in a number of different ways, firstly through our personal experience of being in a cinema and experiencing the full spectrum of emotions depending on the type of film we are watching; and secondly as human beings we can convey feelings, moods and emotions through nonverbal communication, in what anthropologist Ray Birdwhistell (1918-1994) coined in 1952 as Kinesics (1983:354).

Fig. 37 & Fig. 38 Screen grabs from *Cinema Paradiso.* Directed by Giuseppe Tornatore, 1999.

The word Kinesics is derived from the Greek word *Kinsis,* meaning motion, the study of Kinesics covers a wide variety of nonverbal communicatory actions such as posture, and facial expressions and Birdwhistell argues that these 'gestures' have been generally accepted as learned behaviours of 'shifts in behaviour which are derived from experience' (1979:7), therefore, by showing us close ups of Toto and his friends watching the film, and allowing us to see their facial expressions at such close quarters, Tornatore is allowing us to connect with the characters on a nonverbal level, and in doing so we not only derive what type of film they are watching, but we can also relate to the specific feeling of such a cinematic experience through nostalgic remembrances of previous visits.

Fig. 39 & Fig. 40 Screen grabs from *Cinema Paradiso.* Directed by Giuseppe Tornatore, 1999.

As with *Hugo*, *Cinema Paradiso* goes on to break the fourth wall by allowing us as an audience to see not only parts of the films being screened, but we are also put in a privileged position of actually being immersed in the film screened on more than one occasion. We have already established that *Hugo* is a passionate film depicting Martin Scorsese's love, respect, and admiration for both filmmaking and the early pioneers that went before him, which in turn directly influenced him as a filmmaker. Similarly *Cinema Paradiso* is also deeply meaningful and significant to Giuseppe

Tornatore, and contains themes and events based on his own life, and Jerry Vermilye

points out:

> Tornatore's own Sicilian boyhood had been spent in admiration of the movies. And although there was apparently no 'Alfredo' in Tornatore's youth, he too left his town for Rome to study film when he reached adulthood. (1994: 250).

Where *Hugo* focuses on one of the early pioneers of filmmaking, Torntore's

film focuses around the art, apparatus, and process of the projection of the completed

film to an audience, and in the films, *Son of Rambow* (2007), and *Super 8* (2011),

directors Garth Jennings and J. J. Abrams turned their directorial gaze on the actual

making of low budget movies. Financially both their films are poles apart (British

made *Son of Rambow* with its micro-budget of £4,000,000 compared to the estimated

big budget $50,000,000 of Hollywood made *Super 8*), however their storylines bare

striking similarities. Both films are centred on friends struggling to make a no budget

film using borrowed home movie cameras in order to enter them into competitions.

Son of Rambow is a reference to *First Blood* (1982) starring Sylvester Stallone, the

film that influences Lee Carter (Will Poulter) and Will Proudfoot (Bill Milner) to go

out to make a movie (this story was taken directly from Garth Jennings and executive

producer Nick Goldsmith's own childhood experience); and *Super 8* is a homage to

the work of Steven Spielberg, emulating and directly referencing many of the films he

directed such as *Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977), E.T.* (1982), *Jurassic

Park* (1993), and *War of the Worlds* (2005). *Super 8* is set in 1979, where the

protagonists of the film use the technology available at the time, (a super 8-film

camera with all its limitations of three-minute film reels and having to wait several

days for processing) to create a home movie. *Son of Rambow* however based in the

1980's, depicts our protagonists, Lee and Will using a state of the art video tape

recorder for the time, which allowed its users instant playback when transferring the filmed tape to a VHS player coupled to a standard television set.

Fig. 41 & Fig. 42 Screen grabs from *Super 8.* Directed by J.J.Abrams, 2011.

The apparatus of filmmaking is celebrated in both films; cameras are central to the plot in that they are essential tools that allow both sets of friends the means to achieve their end goals of making a low budget home movie.

As previously mentioned Donati suggested during the course of his filmmaking Sergei Leone was not only making a films, but also exploring his nostalgic notions, and the same can be argued for both Garth Jennings and J. J. Abrams, who both made a film about the process of filmmaking, while also revisiting and capturing the essence of their own childhood on film in the process. During the opening sequence of *Son of Rambow* we see a shot of a cinema screening *First Blood*, the audience is filled with teenagers and all of them smoking (something alien to modern audiences since the smoking ban of July 1st 2007 was implemented), as the camera pans left the audience meets Lee carter for the first time, who is videotaping the film on his camcorder to pirate at a later date. This scene encapsulates both the excitement and freedom of self-expression felt by the owners of such cameras, and on the flipside the knock on effect piracy had on the industry.

The 1980's saw a technological battle between two different modes of videotaping system, both vying for dominance in the home with Sony investing heavily in its Betamax system, and the VHS (Video home system) championed by Japan Victor Company (JVC). The battle between Betamax and VHS fuelled a boom in Videocassette recorder (VCR) sales seeing annual unit sales rise steeply from 402,000 units in 1978, to 3,354,000 in 1983 (Levy, 1998: 24), as more realised the convenience and time saving benefits of home recording, combined with the liberating feeling one got from choosing what to watch and when to watch it.

The videocassette would eventually lead to the development of the camcorder, a device which would allow the user to record directly onto tape and play it back on one's home VCR, and by 1998, the Electronics Industries Association reported that sales of camcorders represented 16 per cent of all VCR unit sales, up from 4 per cent in 1985 (Levy, 1989: 26). Camcorder unit sales increased from 517000 in 1985 to over 2000,000 in 1988, and eventually in a bid to miniaturise the size of the videocassette to create a more manageable camcorder for home use, smaller formats were invented such as VHS-C, Video8 and Hi8, all taking its toll on the older Super 8 format. Along with any new technology that actively promoted home recording and viewing, a large pirate industry quickly followed, which would eventually threaten both sales of VHS cassettes and cinema attendance figures. It is at the dawn of this exciting era that *Son of Rambow* is set in.

The cinema of *Cinema Paradiso* shows audience attendances take a downward spiral following the Second World War, whereas the cinema depicted in the *Son of Rambow* shows a packed bloodthirsty audience, with protesters outside campaigning against the popularity of such a violent screening on moral and religious grounds. Another key theme in *Cinema Paradiso* is the enjoyment of movies

projected in a traditional full capacity movie theatre, and the range of emotions from contagious laughter to private teary moments one experiences in the intimacy of a darkened cinema, where both *Son of Rambow*, and *Super 8* concentrate on the obstacles, pleasures and camaraderie experienced on the set of a low budget home movie.

The nostalgic feeling we get from watching these movies, is partly created by the predicament we find the lead characters in, both *Son of Rambow* and *Super 8* hark back to a different age of play, one where children spent a great deal of time outdoors making their own entertainment out of what was freely available, and team games were more commonplace than today's indoor individual video game related pastimes. The visual palette of *Super 8* is laden full of the toys, games, and pastimes of the past, referencing everything from Airfix kits to the Rubik's Cube, each object a 'transitional item' carefully placed by in the mise en scene, by the director in order to cultivate a feeling of nostalgic familiarity; and similarly in *Son of Rambow* we are presented with the hair styles, clothes, make up and music of the day albeit in much more of a comical manner. We warm to the nostalgic charms of *Cinema Paradiso* in the first instance because on one level it deals with first love and loss, a universal feeling that we can all relate to, secondly Alfredo is a warm caring 'grandfather' archetype, solid and dependable, a substitute father of sorts to Toto, again as an audience many people can relate to a grandparent often having more time in their retirement for the child in his or her formative years due to the parents work commitments etc. *Cinema Paradiso* is also deeply nostalgic in the fact that it deals with big life changes, in a highly globalised world *Cinema Paradiso* portrays a world before the standardisation of products and services, a time before the big chain cinema's and clinical commercial multiplexes took over.

Both *Super 8* and *Son of Rambow* again display self-reflexivity I described previously, in the fact that we actually see the completed films that both sets of friends worked so hard in making. In *Super 8* the film is screened as part of the end credits, and in *Son of Rambow* we see Lee Carter editing his film on an old style television via his video recorder, and in the very last scene we see their finished film screened as a short before the main feature.

Fig. 43 & Fig. 44 Screen grabs from *Super 8.* Directed by J.J.Abrams, 2011.

In this instance we not only see the audience enjoying the film, we also get an audiences perspective of the film.

Fig. 45 & Fig. 46 Screen grabs from *Son Of Rambow.* Directed by Garth Jennings, 2007.

As I have highlighted both *Son of Rambow* and *Super 8* display aspects of 'self reflexivity' by allowing us to see the characters within the films they are making, again the fourth wall is broken when we are placed in the cinema watching what they characters are watching, thus becoming part of the film narrative. Not only does *Son of Rambow* display aspects of 'the flicker' in the form of the cinematic apparatus of film in both the filming and later the projecting in the cinema; As with *Hugo*, *In the Mood For Love*, and *Wild Strawberries*, it also shows us what I deemed to be another important nostalgic trait, in the visual representation of 'time' in the form of Will's dead father's watch being a central plot device to the film.

Fig. 47 & Fig 48 Screen grabs from *Son Of Rambow*. Directed by Garth Jennings, 2007.

Fig. 49 Screen grab from *Son Of Rambow*. Directed by Garth Jennings, 2007.

2.4 The Photographic Image Within the Film World.

A photograph could be described as a split second of time, captured and suspended on film for future generations to reminisce and marvel over. A photograph can be a powerful catalyst for memory in the sense that when we view a series of photographs they instantly transport us back to the time and place when we took the initial pictures, or when we view a series of photographs taken by someone other than ourselves, these too may instantly take us back on a nostalgic journey of the mind, to a place that we may never have directly visited as it is in the photograph, but we remember it in a totally different way. Historical photographs of buildings or landscapes familiar to us are fascinating because they contain within them a snapshot of how things were. We may have heard stories in the past about 'the good old days', when times were different, we imagine life in the past to have been simpler and better and the familiar photograph triggers these nostalgic feelings within us. Similar to inherited memory, Marianne Hirsch defies this kind of remembering as post memory, or 'the relationship of the second generation to powerful experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to constitute memories in their own right' (2008: 103).

Although every photograph could be described as a little moment of life suspended in time and represented on paper, the photographs only really come to life when we view them and they register acknowledgement within our own memories, as John Berger describes:

> Between the moment recorded and the present moment of looking at the photograph, there is an abyss. We are so used to photography that we no longer consciously register the second of these twin images-except in special circumstances: when, for example, the person photographed was familiar to us and is now far away or dead (Dyer, 2013: 63).

The invention of the first ever moving image camera is credited to the Frenchman Louis Le Prince, who patented his design in 1888, roughly sixty years previously another Frenchman Joseph Nicephore Niepce (1765-1833) first fixed a photographic image to paper, with his 'View from a Window at Gras' in 1826, which at best was a crude and grainy image (Allen, online, accessed 3rd November 2018). It took sixty years of trial and refining before George Eastman brought out his first Kodak camera in 1888, revolutionising how we capture precious moments.

The act of collecting and archiving family photographs in albums, and the careful placing and displaying images of loved ones around the family house is now a deep-rooted cultural ritual, as Gillian Rose explains:

> Family photographs show family groups bound together, since signs of this are universal to all family photographs, it is claimed that 'all family albums are alike,' that their subject matter is 'astonishingly narrow' and that they have the 'overwhelming sense of similarity and redundancy.'(Rose, 2010: 23).

Therefore the act of placing images of our loved ones on a wall not only allows us to teach our children who our ancestors once were, it also allows us to recognise the historical importance and cultural significance of photographs hanging up in friend's houses that we may be visiting, while strengthening the nostalgic notion of home as a transitional space (as discussed in Chapter One). Artist Tracey Emin recalls with vivid detail the family album of her childhood photographs:

> There was only one album. It had a romantic cover of two lovers walking into a palm tree sunset. The album didn't just have straightforward photos. She [her mother] had cut some figures so they would be floating or just suspended on the page. The album went from the late 1950s with her husband Frank Cashin, my elder brother Alan and their life in West Africa, life with my father travelling by road through Turkey in the 1960s, and finally our dysfunctional life in Margate in the 1970s. (2013: 152).

Emin placed great importance on photographs and recalls an incident where her purse was stolen in school which contained roughly fifty strips of photo booth

photos, she eventually found both the purse and the photographs, however someone

had tore up all the photographs into tiny pieces, this left her feeling devastated

because 'They were my identity, the memory of my own existence. And someone had

destroyed them' (2013: 153).

For Tracey Emin, the devastating destruction of her photographs proved to be

the catalyst to kick-start her artistic career, while for Hungarian born photographer

Andre Kertesz the death of his beloved lifelong companion Elizabeth sent him into a

spiral grief ridden depression in which he all but gave up on photography:

> For Andre, the heartbreak of the end of their lives together was exacerbated by
> the fact that his long awaited success coincided with her passing. He grieved
> that. After years of having Elizabeth support them while artistic and
> commercial acceptance eluded him, his growing fame and fortune was both
> too little too late' (Gurbo & Wolf eds., 2007: 13).

Kertesz's saviour was a programme designed by Polaroid inventor Edwin

Land, who devised a scheme to enlist artists, both young and old to help develop and

improve his camera equipment, Ansel Adams and Marie Cosindas were two early

participants, and in 1979 Andre Kertesz joined the program. A Polaroid camera gifted

from Graham Nash (from the group Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young) combined with the

help of film and guidance from the Polaroid Artists Support Program, reenergised

Kertesz's enthusiasm not only for photography, but also for life itself (Gurbo &

Wollf, 2007: 25).

The way we view photographs in general is important, but vitally so when

they appear within a film, Victor Burgin explains:

> The intelligibility of the photograph is no simple thing; photographs are texts
> inscribed in terms of what we may call 'photographic discourse', but this
> discourse, like other engages discourses beyond itself, the 'photographic text',
> like any other, is the site of complex intertextuality, an overlapping series of
> previous texts 'taken for granted' at a particular cultural and historical
> conjuncture. (1982: 144).

I have already covered Donati's argument of the Western being a genre closely associated with the concept of nostalgia on screen, and the fact that he specifically highlighted the films of Sergei Leone as being particularly laden with these particular themes. In a separate medical study aimed at assessing the effect of a given film on the viewers' brain activity, Hasson, Landesman, Knappmeyer, Vallines, Rubin, and Heeger, used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), to demonstrate that some films can in fact 'exert considerable control over brain activity and eye movements' (2008: 1).

Coincidentally the first film used for the purpose of this study was Sergei Leones' third and final instalment in what is popularly known as the dollars trilogy, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966), where five volunteers were asked to sit through the opening 30 minutes of the film, while 'their brains were scanned' to monitor both brain responses and eye movement (2008: 3). The findings concluded that a carefully structured film such as *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly,* have the 'potency to "control" viewers' neutral responses [which] is the same as controlling their mental states including their precepts [sic], emotions, thoughts, attitudes, etc.' (2008: 2-3).

For the first eleven minutes of *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* no one actually speaks, and meaning is derived by the audience through a combination of long static shots of the landscape to determine a sense of place, combined with close up shots of the main characters. The Good (Clint Eastwood), the Bad, Angel Eyes (Lee Van Cleef), and the Ugly, Tuco (Eli Wallach), are introduced to the audience in reverse order with the visual aid of an inter-title.

As I have previously highlighted the significance of the visual representation of clocks in *Hugo, In The Mood for Love*, and *Wild Strawberries*, to create a nostalgic

undertone to the film, I shall also argue the same is also true for photographs and that a photographic representation carries within in a meaning that we can relate to on a deeper nostalgic level.

In *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, we see sociopathic mercenary Angel Eyes enter the house of Stevens (Antonio Casas 1911-1975) and his wife (Chelo Alonso), on sensing danger Steven's wife ushers their son away from the table (Fig. 50) during this scene a single photograph is clearly visible, and is perfectly aligned with both the mother and son when they both get up (Fig. 51).

Fig. 50 & Fig. 51 Screen grabs from *The God, The Bad, and the Ugly*. Directed by Sergio Leone, 1968.

As Stevens tentatively eats at the table while subtly being quizzed for information by Angel Eyes, he draws attention to the photograph by asking, "is that your family?" (Fig. 53).

Fig. 52 & Fig. 53 Screen grab from *The God, The Bad, and the Ugly*. Directed by Sergio Leone, 1968.

Stevens slowly looks up and nods to confirm the obvious, this accentuates the tension as now the safety of his family has been brought into contention, as an audience we can all relate to the importance and value of family, this single photograph carefully placed high on the shelf encapsulates everything Stevens holds dear to him (Fig. 55). Stevens tries to bargain for his life with a counter offer of $1,000 (double the fee paid to Angel Eyes for hunting him down).

Fig. 54 & Fig.55 Screen grab from *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*. Directed by Sergio Leone, 1968.

The very last time Stevens gets to see his entire family together is via this mechanically produced image as Angel Eyes kills him mercilessly moments later.

Fig. 56 & Fig. 57 Screen grab from *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly.* Directed by Sergio Leone, 1968.

The importance of the image is reemphasised again in the next scene, where bounty hunters corner Tuco and confirm his identity against a reward poster for the princely sum of $2,000 (which equates to four times the initial amount Angel Eyes was paid to kill Stevens and destroy his family). The image is vital to the bounty hunters as we presume they are like many cowboys of the day, illiterate and their only means of realising their bounty is by facial recognition. The identity of Tuco is again confirmed by the sheriff as Blondie (The Good) hands him over for the reward, only this time Tuco's head is slightly tilted on this 'wanted' poster compared with the last, meaning Tuco must have had a series of photographs taken.

Photographs within the narrative of a film serve to highlight a person or a place in the past, and heighten the nostalgic aura of the film. Again in *Hugo* photographs serve as Rene Tabards' (Michael Stuhlbarg) shrine to Georges Melies, his entire office is full of photographs of the man he briefly met once as a child.

Fig. 58 & Fig. 59 Screen grabs from *Hugo*. Directed by Martin Scorsese, 2011.

Ingmar Bergman sets up the disjointed family relationship through a voiceover against images of lovingly framed family photographs in *Wild Strawberries,*
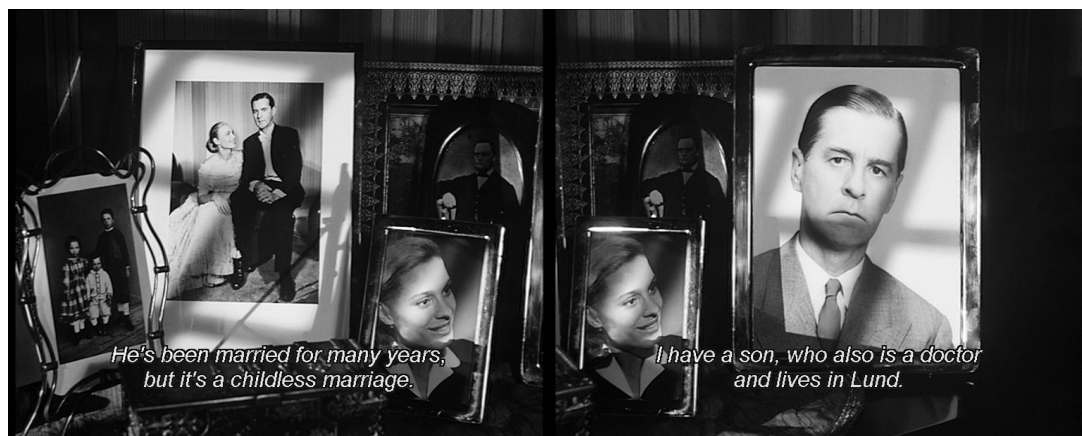
Fig. 60 & Fig. 61 Screen grabs from *Wild Strawberries*. Directed by Ingmar Bergman, 1957.

Within five minutes of the film we know Borg's entire family relationship through the photographs placed around his office. This scene is juxtaposed with the scene when Borg visits his mother briefly, her walls are filled with art, and the family photographs are hidden away in a keepsake box.

Fig. 62 & Fig. 63 Screen grabs from *Wild Strawberries.* Directed by Ingmar Bergman, 1957.

As Borg rummages through the box he comes across an oval photograph of some of his deceased siblings as children, he asks his mother if he could have it, to which she replies "of course, it's just rubbish".

Fig. 64 & Fig. 65 Screen grabs from *Wild Strawberries.* Directed by Ingmar Bergman, 1957.

In *Super 8*, photographs and family mementos are surprisingly scarce within this film world, the absence of which makes the family documents on display in the form of both the home movie showing a happy Elizabeth Lamb (Caitriona Belfe) and her son Joe (Joel Courtney), and two photographs, one depicting the family trio (Fig. 66 & Fig. 67) on the sideboard, and the other of Elizabeth and baby Joe, which he carries around with him within his late mothers pendant, all the more precious. The

pendant and its contents are significant in the final moments of the film where the alien creatures magnetised water tower, pulls all metal objects toward it as it morphs them into a spaceship for the creature's escape. The pendant floats up and nearly out of Joe's hand revealing the concealed photo within it to the audience for the first time, as Joe struggles against the magnetic pull, and his internal desire to keep the photo. When he finally decides to 'let go' of the image of his late mother, the metal locket proves to be the last piece needed for the creature to complete the spaceship, symbolising the aliens release from his earthly confines, and reconciliation and between father and son.

Fig. 66 & Fig. 67 Screen grabs from *Super 8.* Directed by J.J.Abrams, 2011.

As in *Super 8, Cinema Paradisso* uses photographs to highlight the loss of a parent. While rummaging through old sepia toned photographs, Toto asks his mother a gut-wrenching question that must have been asked by many war torn children, "if the war's over, then why doesn't Dad come back?" (Fig. 68 & Fig. 69).
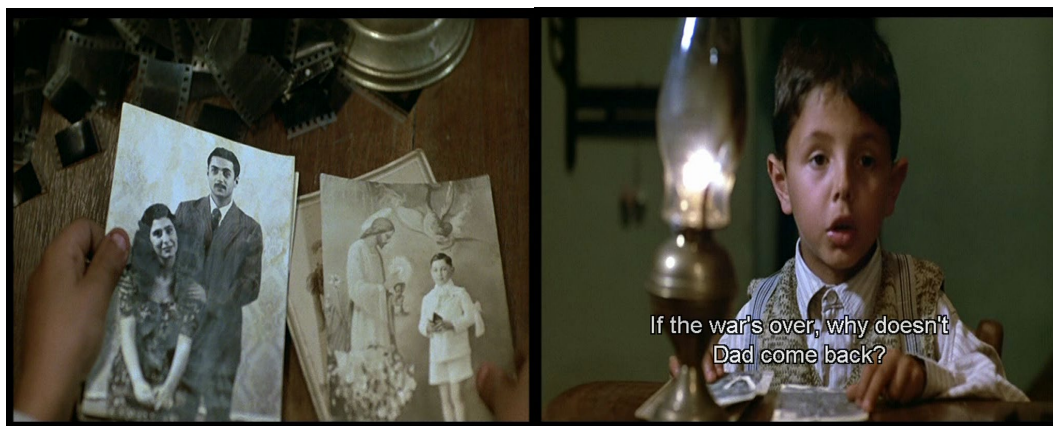
Fig. 68 & Fig. 69 Screen grabs from *Cinema Paradiso.* Directed by Giuseppe Tornatore, 1999.

<u>Chapter conclusion.</u>

Mainstream cinema, along with television programming, news, and newspapers all fall under the umbrella of what the Situationist art movement would call 'the spectacle', a mass entertainment machine built to consume all aspects of culture, repackage it and resell it back to a ticket paying audience. One of the ways film casts its spell over us, is through nostalgia, as I have covered in Chapter One, nostalgia is extremely important in our lives in order to develop a sense of who we are, and where we have come from; however the cinema has the power to manipulate our senses by using tricks, such as the 'flicker', or flares and filters, that give us the impression that we are watching old family movies, thus hotwiring the on screen image with images we have seen projected at home as children.

Cinema has the ability to comfort us by serving us up the familiar, by reworking scenes from history as I have described in *Hugo*, and by the retelling of fairy tales as I have explained in *Cinderella* (1914). In certain films such as *Hugo*, and *Cinema Paradiso* we are also shown the magic behind the curtain in the form of the apparatus used to project the film, and in *Super 8* and *Son of Rambow,* we are shown the apparatus used to capture film, both vital elements of the creative process, again linking the movie we are watching to a time in the past where we or close relatives dabbled with home movie cameras, to capture important family events.

The third symbol of nostalgia I have highlighted in this Chapter is the photograph, a single moment in time captured on paper, which is revered long after its subjects have long gone. We relate to old photographs and when they are carefully placed within the narrative of the film, take on a personal importance as we also relate to our own personal family documents.

This Chapter lays the groundwork for my film *The Memory shed*, which is covered fully in the last chapter of this thesis (Chapter Four). In the making of 'The Memory shed' I take the viewer on a personal journey of derive through my life, exploring the people I have met, key events in my life, and places I have lived. During the film I use all three techniques I have highlighted in mainstream cinema, representations of the clock, the flicker, and representations of the photograph, in a bid to connect on a personal level nostalgically with the viewer. In this Chapter I have also introduced both the Avant-garde and experimental film, and I want to make it perfectly clear that I'm not demonizing nor berating mainstream cinema over its experimental counterpart; I recognise the industry for its talent both in front and behind the scenes, and its ability to touch lives and inspire viewers worldwide. What I am saying is that although I do watch selected Hollywood offerings, I favour and relate to and have greater affinity, towards experimental filmmakers.

In the next chapter, I shall describe the practice based games and art based projects I have undertaken over the past five years, in a bid to test if I could interact with people of all economical backgrounds, of all ages, through 'transitional items' and 'transitional objects', while also working with as little money as physically possible.

Chapter 3

The Creative Work and My Journey.

Introduction.

I started my research towards this PhD straight after completing my Masters degree, I had a clear goal in mind and a realistic plan, what I hadn't banked upon however, was the fact the strange twists and turns life throws at you, and I quickly realised that life doesn't always go as smoothly in reality as you plan it out on paper!

In one sense this practice based PhD is about me trying to make connections with strangers, about nurturing those connections enough for those strangers to gain the confidence to interact with me in a sort of game. On a deeper lever it's also about me making a connection with myself, trying to find out who I am, where I'm from, and using film and photographs to piece together why I think and feel 'different', in some way from the vast majority of people, and to try and find out why I constantly live my life as if I am in a giant game.

Over the past few years I have created and documented many interactive games that has seen the general public 'play' with me in some kind of way, but for the purposes of this PhD I will only be focussing on a select few of these projects.

As the years progressed with my PhD I couldn't differentiate between my personal life or my projects, and inevitably a lot of my personal life experiences, such as the breakup of my marriage, changing careers, almost losing my house, and the death of my father seeped into my work, however I thoroughly believe each experience no matter how hard played a positive role in shaping me as a human being, and these experiences in turn filtered through my research and enriched me not only as a person but also changed the way I both viewed and approached my work. My

film *The Memory Shed* pretty much wrote itself, and in some way it is my catharsis working through trauma by simultaneously creating and destructing.

One of the biggest hurdles I encountered during this PhD was a moral issue, I thoroughly believe in a more 'just' world than we actually live in, one where we are focussed on life experiences rather than the endless pursuit of money. I believe in a fairer more equal society, one that encourages the swapping, recycling, and barter of things we no longer need rather than buying new products to satisfy our addiction to consumerism. I believe the SI art movement had part of the solution they touched upon, one of the many existing alternatives to the 'normal' life. But in my own world at that particular moment, I was facing an expensive divorce that would eventually leave me on the very brink of financial ruin, and the solution required nothing but cold hard cash. Ironically the divorce was partly down to the fact I wasn't earning enough money for a man of my age in the first place, I had previously owned my own businesses and was leading a comfortable life; However I settled down took a huge pay cut, and didn't have the purchasing power or status of my former career. This left me in an extremely strange position of suddenly being single, living in a static caravan, while struggling to earn enough money to buy the house back that I had initially bought 20 years ago! I was facing a very real and depressing moral quandary, on the one hand I acknowledge the evils of the money trap, while simultaneously I also needed the stuff myself to simply survive in a world I had no real control over.

I felt like a complete hypocrite, and very nearly gave up my thesis on several occasions. It took me weeks of soul searching for the penny to finally drop, it was all a huge game - not dissimilar to the games I was creating myself, the only difference being I didn't make the rules to the game I was living by, the rules were already in place long before I was born and it was up to me to play this game as best as I could

by circumnavigating the game of life to the best of my abilities in order to move forward.

This chapter carefully and honestly documents my thought process during my research, it focuses on my methodology, the diary I kept documenting my feelings and the pieces of art that I made during this time which I am submitting as research, it provides links to films web pages, social media links in which the reader can view the creative work for themselves. This chapter charts how the PhD evolved during this time, how each piece of work naturally led on to the next piece, and how each piece of work was a vital stepping stone on the path to me making my film *The Memory Shed*, and more to the point this chapter documents how my work as an artist has changed as my confidence grew as a direct result of this PhD.

3.1 Are you sitting comfortably? Then we shall begin….

Like all good stories told to us as children we need a beginning, and the beginning of my story started with the realisation that my children's bedrooms were overrun with teddy bears! Moreover they had these bears since babies, but both Evie, and Indie had their chosen favourite (a mouse and a fox respectively), and all others were mere ornaments on top of wardrobes gathering dust. I cast my mind back to when I was a child and as far as I could remember I didn't have a special teddy bear, I then researched old family photos of me as a child (which there weren't many compared to today's digital age), and to my surprise I saw I had a doll! (Fig. 70).

Fig. 70 Private family photograph. Freda Hughes, 1971.

At the time I was the first born, so I can only presume the doll came directly from my mother, and I certainly can't remember it or whatever became of it. I became fascinated with attachment, teddy bears, and play and this in turn led me to Winnicott and his work. The Children's Society commissioned a survey as part of their

'hundreds and thousands of Childhood memories' campaign, to identify common and key themes within memories (Children's Society, online, accessed 16th November 2017). Using the written data out of the 25,000 memories, participants submitted, a keyword analysis that was undertaken to detect the 100 most frequent words within the memories. The word 'Play' was by far the most frequent word with an occurrence rate of 29%, (joint second were 'Father' and 'Friend" on 15%, with 'Mother' being a close third with 14%).

It is also interesting to note that the teddy bear, made famous by the story of president Theodore Roosevelt freeing a baby bear on a hunting trip in November 1902 (Varga, 2009: 72), which then inspired the famous German felt manufacturers makers Steiff, to make 'teddy bears'. These bears were not initially made as toys or items of play but as an item 'thought capable of safeguarding children against adult vagary, As such, the teddy is singular in its function of maintaining the innocence of the child' (Varga, 2009: 77). Nevertheless it took a few years for these bears to be considered as toys, with the children realising the therapeutic and psychological benefits from cutting and stroking their soft fur, as psychologist Corrine Sweet describes the bears "evoke a sense of peace, security and comfort. It's human nature to crave these feelings from childhood to adult life" (Jarrett, 2011)

I decided that I was going to test these theories by making several artworks with teddy bears, and swapping everyday objects, whilst incorporating an element of play in all my work to hopefully coax people into that childlike state we once knew and loved as children, in order to create as Jesper Juul describes a 'metaphoric magic circle where special rules apply" (Gunzel, Liebe, & Mersch, 2008), in short I was attempting to get random strangers play with me, as Winnicott himself said "playing is an experience, always a creative experience and it is an experience in the space-

time continuum, a basic form of living" (Winnicott, 1971: 54). Little did I know at the time how long these works would actually take, how many people I would actually play with across the world, or how play would take over my life!

With all my projects, I had strict self-imposed rules. I wanted my projects to stick to the essence of the SI art movement as much as I could, after all '*the spectacle*' was a deliberate device or mechanism with its sole purpose to confuse, entertain, and encourage the masses to constantly consume and strive for products, services, or make lifestyle choices that weren't necessarily the best interest for the user (Home, 1996:12), and my projects were the polar opposite of this. The main rule was all my projects would cost as little money as possible, so all my materials would have to be free, things I had lying around or if bought be extremely cheap. I wanted to interact with as many people as possible, so I had to use the power of social media and get people to willingly take part of their own accord, with no promise of payment or financial gain either way.

Before I go on to explain what I created both with the teddy bears and in my other projects, why I actually did it, and the results I found, it's important to define this PhD in an academic framework, describing the methodologies underpinning the entire research. A PhD is defined as an original piece of investigation making significant contributions to knowledge, it must be shared (this physical thesis plus accompanying practice material can be accessed by anyone), and the results can be challenged and verified by others. As my PhD is practice based, involving art, film, performance, and interactive games, this deviates somewhat from the traditional PhD model, however Voeglin writes:

> 'Art presents the possibility for a different knowledge, and new questions, innovative technologies, methods, and products, that can engage artistic issues as well as the great challenges of the day' (Voeglin 2020).

Linda Candy's definition of practice-based research is a comprehensive one she goes on to explain it as:

> 'An original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. Claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes, which may include artefacts such as images, music, designs, models, digital media, or other outcomes such as performances, and exhibition. Whilst the significance and the context of the claims are described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the outcomes. A practice based PhD is distinguishable from a conventional PhD because creative research outcomes from the research process may be included in the submission for examination and the claim for an original contribution to the field are held to be demonstrated through the original work' (Candy, 2006: 3).

I was certain before, during, and upon completion of this PhD that I was creating something highly 'original', that my projects, if so, could be replicated, tested, and be classed as 'new knowledge', but in order to document, test, and track my thoughts and ideas, I had to have a framework. I found "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing" model, by Linda Flower, and John R. Hayes (1981), very helpful, which covered organising, composing and goal setting, alongside the process planning, translating results, and reviewing; however I found Dr Lyle Skain's adapted version for practitioners more helpful "Practitioner Model of Creative Cognition Version 2" (Skains, 2016). Dr Skains, suggests keeping a 'research log' or journal, for every aspect of the creative process, and factors in 'serendipity' which is as Marki and Blandford describe as the:

> 'Convergence of your knowledge and experience to make the mental connection and to recognise the significance of that connection with the skills necessary to exploit the connection and produce a worthwhile outcome' (2012: 684).

The variety of projects I undertook during this PhD did yield serendipitous results and instances, and by taking a reflexive approach to the results I was able to

learn more about myself in the process, as Winter describes 'by comparing the research to the detective story in which by solving the crime the detective comes to understand something about him or herself' (1989).

I also use both phenomenology, and hermeneutics extensively throughout this thesis, phenomenology is basically 'the study of an individual's lived experience of the world' (Manen: 1997), or as Manen later expanded the 'sober reflection of the lived experience of human existence' (2007:1), and hermeneutics which is the study of meaning of actions.

The very first practice based goal I set myself on the road toward this PhD was to get a supply of free teddy bears, so I put a status on social media asking for old unloved teddy bears for interactive social media projects. The response to my plea for old teddy bears was astounding, and over the next few weeks I had literally hundreds of teddy bears of all shapes and sizes, in all conditions being offered for my project. Some of these bears were brand new and never played with, while others were on their last legs. I assured everybody that had donated their bears, that I would treat them with utmost respect in every art piece I made, and I made a note of all this in my practice based journal.

Having graded them into three basic categories, some were new with tags, others nearly new, and the rest were well played with to say the least. I decided on using the brand new ones in some sort of charitable act by donating them to a needy cause, and the others I would use in whatever way I saw fit.

I will now list each art project I undertook towards this PhD starting with all the teddy bear projects, and provide photographs, links to work, and quotes of responses as evidence of their impact on the public.

3.2 The Teddy bear Tree.

From the outset I must define exactly what I was attempting to achieve with these projects, the aim was for me to engage and interact with the general public using little games or situations I had personally made or set up using as little money as possible. So in effect I was attempting to make what is commonly known as 'Socially Engaged Art'. And by using teddy bears in the first instance or representations of the home (as in the Welsh cottage project to be discussed later), I was aiming to make a personal connection with the participants, by directly tapping in to their subconscious memories as per Winnicott's theories.

I introduced the term 'Socially Engaged Art' in the introduction to this chapter, and now I as I attempt to describe my work as best as possible, I also feel I must attempt to define the term 'Socially Engaged Art' or SEA as it is also referred to by some artists in order to terms to avoid confusion. However this task itself is more difficult than it would first seem, Helguera argues while any art 'as it is created to be communicated to or experienced by others is social' (2011:1), he also acknowledges that 'Socially engaged art, as a category of practice, is still a working construct' and that 'there is no complete agreement as to what constitutes a meaningful interaction or social agreement' (2011: 2).

In *Mapping the Terrain*, Suzanne Lacy has narrowed down the definition by identifying the four key terms common in SEA as, Nominal participation, where the visitor or viewer contemplates the work in a reflective manner, Directed Participation, where the visitor completes a simple task to contribute to the creation of the work, Creative Participation, where the visitor provides content for a component of the work within a structure established by the artist, and Collaborative Participation where the

visitor shares responsibility for developing the structure and content of the work in collaboration and direct dialogue with the artist (Lacy, 1994: 4)

It could be argued that the public have already 'directly participated' in a bigger game by donating hundreds of teddy bears blindly with no real knowledge of what I was going to do with them in the first instance. 'Directly participating' in the bigger game, but that's not all, the boundaries of art and play are often blurred, in his discussions of play in *Truth and Method,* Hans-Georg Gadamer argued that art is born from its performance or presentation, in what he calls a 'transformation into structure', (1975: 91), and this in turn incorporates the spectator as an aspect of its mode or being, so in effect Gadmer is arguing that the audience of a performance or piece of art, completes that performance or piece of art, and that the witnessing or experiencing of that piece actually completes the magic circle. It could then be argued that the hundreds of photos I have of both children playing and adults interacting with their teddy bears and the very fact that as a reader you are now observing them, this in effect completes the magic circle of play I set into being years previously when I conceived of the game, or in Gadmer's words the transformation into structure is complete.

I was genuinely surprised at how many brand new teddy bears were donated to my project, however the story from the parents was a familiar one, the child over the years had received several teddy bears off aunties, uncles, friends of the family etc. etc. each Birthday, and Christmas the number kept growing, but the child had already 'chosen' their favourite bear from a very early age, so the rest had been stored away, un-played with and basically unloved, the child had now grown up, and the teddy bears needed re-housing. By far the largest volume of teddy bears I received fell into the 'heavily used', 'well worn' or 'damaged' categories and I decided to use these in a

large time based piece of art. I had a friend with access to woodland, and I was granted permission to use a single tree on this land for my project that I proceeded to decorate with exactly one hundred teddy bears of all shapes and sizes and film the results. The purpose of which was to film it over the course of a year in order to see them decline, and capture this on both film and photograph (Fig. 71)

Fig. 71 Authors Private photograph. Lester Hughes, 2017.

I visited the site once a month for twelve consecutive months, each time spending between one and three hours at the site immersing myself in nature and documenting the decline of these teddy bears, as the elements and nature took hold of them. This was a completely surreal experience, I didn't set out with a plan and I didn't really know what the outcome of the experiment was, or where it would lead, I just immersed myself in the game and trusted that the material would guide me. As

David Hockney observes "I ask such questions and make the theories only afterwards, not before-only after I have done something" (1993: 130). On reflection I was playing in nature, I was making land art that no one would physically get to see, as it was set in a secluded forest no one would ever go into. This was the complete antithesis of the *'Society of the Spectacle'*, I was juxtaposing the tree natural within its own landscape and cladding it with soft toys simply because I got enjoyment out of seeing the results, and it felt the right thing for me to do at that moment in my life.

The year spent filming in the woods eventually resulted in hundreds of photographs and hours of footage and in effect I had created my own private game in my own space within my own special world, as Salen and Zimmerman explain 'in a very basic sense, the magic circle of a game is where the game takes place. To play a game means entering into a magic circle, or perhaps creating one as a game begins'. (2004: 95-96).

The 'Teddy Bear Tree' play space which I created and interacted with for a whole year could have been interpreted in a thousand different ways by a thousand different people, for example, a different artist may have focussed on close up shots of each teddy bear in the tree, or another artist might have focussed on each teddy bear that blew off in each storm. I chose to film with various experimental cameras, and take photographs, which in turn were boiled down to 4 short experimental pieces of work. Each of these four short films made to be stand-alone pieces to be projected on a wall in a gallery for maximum effect. However like everything I have made over the past few years, snippets of these works would eventually seep into my final film *The Memory Shed*, like little pieces in a jigsaw to create a larger film. I had no real reasoning behind doing this; it was a natural organic process in the edit. However experimental filmmaker Derek Jarman also used to recycle and reshoot many of his

existing films to create another work for example *Fire Island*(1970) started life as a

black and white film, but was then reshot using prisms (Jarman, online, accessed 14th

March 2017)

Artefact (4 mins 59 seconds).

Artefact is a split screen mirrored work; it shows the teddy tree on a bleak autumn day. The footage is slowed down and set to a multi layered slowed down sound bed of the famous song *Teddy Bears Picnic* (1932). I made this to resemble the famous Rorschach inkblot test, in which the Swiss Psychiatrist Hermann Rorschach used to measure thought disorder (Cherry: 2020). The piece is mirrored in the middle, giving symmetry, while also taking what is seen and known and creating new patterns and links for the brain to interpret. The piece is meant to evoke being alone in the woods as a child and seeing imaginary monsters in the trees, the teddy bears are obvious childhood references, and are there to invoke a place where lost teddy bears meet up. The *Teddy Bears Picnic* instrumental tune comes directly from my own childhood, it was the tune of the chimes of the ice cream van which came into our street in the 1970s, but due to our extreme poverty of the time I never got an ice cream, and bitter disappointment is something that has stayed with me all my life.

This can be viewed on DVD 1

The Moon and the Trees (5 mins 2 seconds).

Shot using a broken camera given to me, I fixed it and adapted it so it filmed on the ultra-violet spectrum by removing a sensor. This piece is the result of visiting the teddy bear tree after a particularly bad storm to find dozens of teddy bears ripped from the trees and laying all over the ground. This resembled a massacre, and I avoided the obvious war cliché references and opted to juxtapose the purple, layered visuals with the sound track of various space missions, to create a barren lifeless landscape similar to that of the surface of the moon.

This can be viewed on DVD 1

Frondescence (4 mins 40 seconds).

Again this piece was filmed with the same camera I was given, this time I chose to film on the opposite ends of the ultra violet spectrum. This is a twin screen piece meant for a gallery installation, it shows the duality of the same tree, the micro and the macro, on the one screen we see an extreme close up of the tree, and in the next we see the bigger picture symbolising the Yin and the Yang, the ebb and flow of life. The title *Frondescence* suggests lush greenery, but the piece has no green whatsoever in it. Both individual shots, at the opposite ends of the spectrum come together at the end with the teddy bear, thus completing the magic circle of play.

This can be viewed on DVD 1

Bark (5 minutes 28 seconds).

The last piece in this collection of works is titled *Bark*, for obvious visual reasons, it focuses on the bark of the *Teddy Bear Tree*, but set to the ever increasing and intense barking of dogs. In my mind there is nothing worse than the constant and persistent barking of a dog, it grinds on ones nerves, gets under your skin. This piece is 5 minutes of constant dog barking, it's meant to be both annoying and taxing to sit through, the end shot is a single pair of legs hanging from a tree. While I was filming this, I was very aware of a childhood news story of a boy going missing in the 1970s; apparently a search was made for him, only to find his dead body hanging in the woods. This has stayed with me all my life, and although I didn't know the boy, nor can I find the exact reference to the story (which I overheard my father telling my mother in the kitchen). The barking of the dogs, symbolizes the police dogs during that search, and the hanging teddy bear at the end of the film is the conclusion to their grim search.

This can be viewed on DVD 1

3.3 Bear Elements.

I wanted to test Winnicott's theory of attachment, I theorised that a teddy bear held a special place in one's life, because it was one of the very first toys to be given to a child as a baby, and if Winnicott was right, a high proportion of those babies went on to form a special bond with that teddy bear because it was its first 'not me' association. The child literally uses the teddy bear as a substitute for its mother. Later on in life these people grow up and have more of an affinity towards teddy bears. I wanted to create an art piece in which 5 random people were given a teddy bears with instructions sewn into them, the instructions were simple, to take the bear on a journey - to take a photo of it, send the photo along to me via text, then pass the teddy on to someone else to do the same.

This was the first of my interactive games, inviting the participants to play, Roberts, Arth, and Bush, set out the criteria for the category of a game as 'a recreational activity characterised by: (1) organized play, (2) competition, (3) two or more sides, (4) criteria determining the winner, and (5) agreed upon rules. (1959: 597). Though my games were organized play, involved two or more sides, and had agreed upon rules, they didn't rely on strategy, they required no special skill, they weren't a form of gambling, and they didn't favour any particular sex or set of physical abilities to gain a competitive edge, all of the games I set up were an invitation to play, where the participant had the choice to decide to play or not, they had the choice to swap and item of their own choice or not, they also had the choice to take a 'selfie' and send that on to me or not. The games or situations I set up simply required one to take part, to remove oneself from their everyday life for a brief moment and participate, interact with an object, and basically think. The act of taking a photograph or 'selfie' with each piece of art is a connection between the player and

the creator of the game, and the photograph represents a moment of played time captured within that particular game.

Fig. 72 Authors Private photograph. Lester Hughes, 2017.

One morning sometime in 2014, I filled the floor with some of what I classed as 'second grade teddy bears', or new with no tags. Both my daughters feature heavily in my work, so I told them to play with the teddy bears for a while and select between them their favourite ones. After a morning of playing with these bears, they chose their five clear favourites (Fig. 72), I then had instructions made into labels which basically told the recipient to take a photo of the bear somewhere, send the photo on to a specific phone number, and pass the bear on to someone else to carry the journey on.

Fig. 73&Fig. 74 Authors Private photographs. Lester Hughes, 2017.

Fig. 75&Fig. 76 Authors Private photographs. Lester Hughes, 2017.

Fig. 77 Authors Private photograph. Lester Hughes, 2017.

I chose five trusted friends who I knew were going to be travelling in the future, I explained the concept to them that they had to take the bear to a location of their choice, take a photo of the bear in that location, then choose another person to pass that bear on to, the idea being the bear would be handed around to random people and generate pictures from far and wide. This was an experiment in connection and communication, so see if the original people I chose could explain the concept to the next person. Although full instructions were sewn into each bear, it was all left to serendipitous chance as to whether or not any photos would be received. I encouraged the initial recipients of the five bears to take ownership, to name them and make whatever cosmetic changes they thought were needed to each bear.

In *'The Creative PhD Challenges, Opportunities, Reflections',* Tara Brabazon describes responses to practice based PhDs she had seen over the years involving musical and filmic pieces, she goes on to explain that:

> The sonic and visual artefacts were ways of thinking, the student(s), had produced the films and written the exegesis concurrently so they dialogued tightly and effectively. The artefacts informed framed and developed practice and iteratively created knowledge, as demonstrated through the exegesis (2020: viii).

I theorise that in this case the teddy bear itself was a visual artefact, it held within it an idea, a call to action, and the success of the project relied upon several factors, mainly the initial strength of clarity the project was communicated between person to person, and the nostalgic bond each recipient felt towards the artefact (teddy bear). The knowledge part of this project would come from any photographs or video directly received from the project, and that alone would determine if the dialogue between recipients and the bond between teddy bear and each recipient was effective enough.

On Sunday 8th June 2014 each of the five bears (Fig. 73, Fig. 74, Fig.75, Fig. 76, & Fig. 77) were handed out and their journeys had begun, and over the following months and years I got the odd update, all of which were documented both on a dedicated blog (bearelements-blog.tumblr.com) and on my Facebook account (salt poolfilms). I didn't get a single photo back from one of the bears, and another go to Costa Rica only to be stolen before they had the chance to take a photo of it! However it turned out that the other three bears named Hamish, Very Francis Jones, and Sebastian had travelled all over the world!

Fig. 78&Fig. 79 Private Photographs. Ceri Louise Bostock, (Bear Elements Project) 2017.

Hamish was seen to be having fun at a party (Fig. 78), he went up to the

Edinburg Fringe Festival (Fig. 79), he also went rock climbing (Fig. 80), the last I got

to hear from him was a photo with him being cuddled by two little girls (Fig. 81)

Fig. 80 Private Photograph. Ceri Louise Bostock, (Bear Elements Project) 2017.

Fig. 81 Private Photograph. Ceri Louise Bostock, (Bear Elements Project) 2017.

Fig. 82&Fig. 83 Private photographs. Authors unknown, (World Teddy Project) 2017.

Fig. 84 Private photograph. Author unknown, (World Teddy Project) 2017.

Fig. 85 Private photograph. Author unknown, (World Teddy Project) 2017.

Fig. 86 Private photograph. Author unknown, (World Teddy Project) 2017.

Fig. 87 Private photograph. Author unknown, (World Teddy Project) 2017.

Fig. 88 Private photograph. Author unknown, (World Teddy Project) 2017.

Fig. 89 Private photograph. Author unknown, (World Teddy Project) 2017.

Sebastian the monkey also turned up in Scotland (Fig. 82), before landing in

California on 27th July 2017 (Fig. 83), two days later he was in Queensland (Fig. 84),

and turned on again on 2nd of August at the races (Fig. 85). The bear named Very

Francis Jones turned up in a bar in Argentina! (Fig.86). I was to receive three more photos from Sebastian, one in Alaska (Fig. 87), one from Sao Paulo Brazil (Fig. 88), and the final one on 26th October 2014 in Normandy in France (Fig. 89)

I had no idea who was sending the photos, but they kept coming and then as quickly as they came, they suddenly stopped. Again this proved that a simple idea conceived in a small town in North Wales with a bunch of donated bears can touch peoples' lives and excite people from all walks of life all over the world.

www.bearelements-blog.tumblr.com

3.4 7 Sea Teddies.

Directly following the death of my father, I took a week off to spend time with my family. I was in the practice of constantly keeping an ideas journal and a project progress journal to keep track on projects and ideas (as per Dr Lyle Skains' article). I was eager to participate in a small project that I could do simply, which enabled me to use materials I had and more importantly to get me out of the house in order for me to refocus my mind.

I turned my attention again to the bags of teddy bears I had been given, I selected seven small clean bears and decided to fit them into seven empty coffee jars that were hanging around my mother's house. My intention was to make messages in bottles, and to place instructions in these bottles for whoever found them to take a 'selfie' photograph with the teddy bear, then to return it back into the sea. Again this was going to be another SEA work, which required both an element of serendipity, and the will of the public to take part in order for me to see any results of my efforts.

Fig. 90 Authors Private photograph. Lester Hughes, (Sea Teddy Project) 2017.

Fig. 91 Private Photograph. Gordon Hughes, (Sea Teddy Project), 2017.

Part of the inspiration for this came from the excitement of trawling the beaches as a child to find washes up items after storms. I vividly recall on one occasion I found a message in a bottle from a little girl in South Wales, and in turn contacted them, we were pen pals briefly, but sadly this didn't last long as we quickly got bored and lost contact, but I will never forget the excitement I got of initially finding that bottle.

The dilemma I was suffering at this particular time was, I knew I was making participatory art, I knew this alongside other projects were pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that combined to make a whole picture, I was documenting everything but still found it difficult to justify in my mind that this was a piece of academic work. Thankfully I stumbled upon Ambrozic and Vettesse's book, *Art as a Thinking Process* (2013),which was a revelation to me, it described my little projects as 'visual thinking'. It was also refreshing to read other practice-based researchers that came before me also struggled with the positioning of their work within an academic framework, Dr. Agata Lulkowska, states:

> I truly believe that creative practice research can bring real-life impact on communities, inspire young people, and without sounding excessively grandiose and naïve-genuinely make the world a better, somehow nicer place. (IJCMR October 2022).

On the 19th of February 2017, my brothers David, and Gordon, and I drove to the tip of the Llyn Peninsula and launched what would be known as *'7 Sea Teddies'* into the sea (Fig. 90). To my sheer amazement on the 21st of February 2017, I had a text on the dedicated phone I had bought especially for these projects, Teddy 2 had been found in a place called Porth Ceiriad a few miles down the coast (Fig.92). They followed the instructions to the letter and re-launched the teddy back into the sea.

Fig. 92&Fig. 93 Private Photographs. Author unknown, (Sea Teddy Project), 2017.

The very next day (22nd of February) I get another text; the same teddy had been washed back into the same beach, but had been found by another family (Fig. 93). Six days later teddy number 3 was washed up at Abererch sands on the 28th of February (Fig. 94). On The 19th of March, sea teddy 4 washes up at Cricieth beach (Fig. 95). The most surprising e-mail came in on April 13th 2017, from Brian and Fiona; the elephant teddy had washed up on Blackpool beach! (Fig. 96, Fig. 97, Fig 98, & Fig. 99) lovely message was left as follows: -

"We found the message about 12 o'clock on the 13th of April.
We had taken our daughter and our friends 2 children and met another friend and her niece there.
It was all very exciting and the kids and my husband got very wet catching it.
Our daughter was upset having to put the toy back in the bottle. Lol
We sealed it back up with black duct tape as we found it and threw it back in about 5PM on the same day as the tide was going out.
Hope to hear of its further travels my husband has never found a message before.
We are Brian and Fiona Myles with our baby daughter Georgie, our friend's children are called Kevin and Charlotte and our friend Sarah and her niece Louise. All are happy to have the pictures used in the messages journey."

Fig. 94 Private Photograph. Author unknown, (Sea Teddy Project), 2017.

Fig. 95 Private Photograph. Author unknown, (Sea Teddy Project), 2017.

Fig. 96 Private Photograph. Author unknown, (Sea Teddy Project), 2017.

Fig. 97&Fig. 98 Private Photographs. Author unknown, (Sea Teddy Project), 2017.

Fig. 99 Private Photograph. Author unknown, (Sea Teddy Project), 2017.

As it turned out, that was the very last time I was contacted about any of the sea teddies, three years on and I can only presume that they are lost or there is a remote chance that they are still at sea. As a barometer of its success, the project did work albeit briefly, the teddy bears served as a welcome distraction from my own loss, but more importantly they also touched the lives of four different families from North Wales to Blackpool. In hindsight if I were to attempt this again, I would use tough plastic jars instead of glass bottles, however the project proved that people would randomly interact with the washed up teddy bears, and follow the simple instructions of sending a 'selfie' and re-launching the teddy back into the sea.

www.zeemaps.com7seateddies

3.5 Win a Jar of Fat…!

I had noticed a significant number of competitions on social media, such as "like and share this post to win a holiday", or "like and share this for your chance to win a car", I had suspected that 90% of these were blatant fake, however people still liked and shared these posts in the vague hope they would win something, but not a single person I knew in my friends list of over one thousand people ever won anything, at any given time! This sparked up my childish nature, so I decided to find the most random object around my house and as an experiment, offer it up as a swap, just to see if people would take part.

I have already mentioned the Situationists on several occasions, the radical art movement who viewed the world as a kind of game, they were heavily influenced by Johan Huizinga's 1938 book, 'Homo Ludens', 'in which he argued that life without play sacrificed the wellbeing of humanity', Huizinga argued that play 'for all its posturing to frivolity and light-heartedness, is an intensely serious pursuit.' (Bryant 2006: 1) And this is where the jar of fat came into play!

I kept a jar by the side of my cooker, so that every time I cooked sausages or bacon, I would tip the excess fat into the jar and then I'd throw the full jar into the bin. I decided to put a bow around this jar and offer it up as a prize! In his 2012 article 'In defence of a Magic Circle', Stenros argues that rules play a key part to differentiate between magic circle and play for example: -

> Before starting any card or board game it is necessary that the players come to an agreement on the rules with which they will play…..it is part of the game design, to have moments (usually early on in the game) for learning the rules…..this is equivalent to the arrangement of the social contract to start the game (2012: 32).

I held the competition on a Monday, and explained the rules to the people as 'all they had to do to be in the draw was like and share, and the draw would take place

seven days later'. The liking and sharing was their call to action, their way of entering into the game, they didn't have to invest any money or physical effort, all they had to do was a simple task and they had a chance of winning this jar of fat!

Signe Juhl Moller points out how Russian Psychologist Vygotsky describes play as essential to development during childhood, and he discusses how in imaginary situations, children derive the utmost pleasure from subordinating themselves to the rules. In other words, we can understand the essential attribute of play in such a way that play rules become the motive for action (Moller: 2015, 323).

To my surprise and delight, the competition was received in the spirit of playfulness it was intended, I actually had people begging me for the jar of fat! At the end of the week I had a list of names and my daughter Evie picked out one at random out of a hat, and we had a lucky winner (Fig. 100).

Fig. 100 Authors Private photograph. Lester Hughes, (Swap my Fat Project) 2018.

At this point one could be very cynical and argue that swapping a jar of fat is neither artistic nor academic, however it is a definite act of Situationism, the absurdity of the project fits exactly into the SI's modus operandi and as Tara Brabazon argues "Whether or not it is art, let alone quality art, is irrelevant" (Brabazon, 2020:78).

Little did I know at the time, but this small nonsensical game paved the way for a much larger one, one which would see me swapping a second jar of fat and that project would result in me making connections all over the country and appearing in National Newspapers and on BBC Radio!

3.6 Swop My Fat!

With the success of the previous jar of fat, I decided to create a more elaborate game, on in which anyone could take part in. I decided to make another jar of fat, put it in a better quality jar than the last one and put a ribbon on top, and offer it as a swap I would then have to swap that item on, or make something out of the item swapped, to in turn swap on. The whole point again was to make connections with people outside of the scope and parameters of money, to swap a random object, and to have fun with people along the way.

I have already covered Huizinga's definition of play, Caillios expanded upon this by defining play as having the following six elements, play is free and non-obligatory, separate, uncertain - in the sense that the results are not known beforehand, unproductive - it does not create wealth or goods, rule bound and finally fictive, meaning it is "accompanied by a special awareness of a second reality or of a free unreality, as against life" (2001: 9-10).

This definition is closer to the type of game I was creating, by swapping a jar of fat I was asking people to join in of their own free will, no one including myself had any idea how the project or game would pan out - so results were unpredictable. My projects were about barter or trading and not profit, and it was more about bringing people together to have a good time rather than to make any money off the back of them, and the world or game space I was attempting to create was certainly a 'free reality', and against the grain and ethos of the consumerist life as we know it.

Again, taking inspiration from founding SI member Guy Debord, who was born on Paris in 1931, in *Panegyric,* his autobiographical account from 1989, Debord states that 'he was born virtually ruined', explaining that an economic downturn that first appeared in America ruined his families fortunes, so 'I was not strictly speaking

unaware of the fact that I should not expect any inheritance and in the end did not receive one' (Debord, 2004, 11). Vincent Kaufmann interprets this statement as: with no inheritance to look forward to at a later date was not a hindrance to Debord, but a blessing because 'to be born "virtually ruined" is to be free of any debt,' (Kaufmann, 2006: 32). I interpret this as, with no money and with no money guaranteed in the future, Debord had to rely on his own intuition to make his way in the world or he had to change the rules of the world he lived in.

On 6th January 2017 I launched 'swop my fat' on Facebook, (I actually misspelt swap wrong on the page, and couldn't figure out how to edit it so it stuck). I decided I would hold a 'competition' for exactly 7 days, I would then sift through all the offers and pick not necessarily the most valuable swap offer, but I would swap the jar of fat for either the funniest, or most practical swap that would drive the project forward on to the next swap. As with all my projects I kept a thought journal as well as a progress journal, every step was carefully monitored and would later be transcribed into a website. Again in the back of my mind I was very aware of the fine line I was straddling between art and academia, and how at times I felt I was in both and neither camps. However it comforted me to read Jen Webbs' article that describes such practice as 'becoming a new kind of academic who is simultaneously a new kind of artist, making a new kind of object in a reconceptualised field' (Webb 2012, 14).

After seven days of crazy offers, I decided to swap the jar of far with local barber Luke Williams (Fig. 101) for a bag of hair. Luke really got into the spirit of the project and the jar of fat was placed upon a shelf in his shop as a talking point.

I was fascinated by the bag of hair I had swapped, and my friend Luke made a living from cutting peoples hair, he was an exceptionally good barber and was constantly busy, they gladly paid good hard earned money for Luke to cut bits of

them off! All the excess hair was gathered up and thrown away every week, in a week Luke could see hundreds of clients, therefore the bag I swapped contained hundreds of different people's hair including my own.

I decided I needed to make something from all this hair; I took inspiration from Joseph Beuys' work, and a quote from Paul Rae who said "time to rethink intellectual work. Start by doing it in Public, its riskier, it's more fun, it promises to be more meaningful" (Kershaw, Piccini, Allegue, & Jones: 2009: 221), I decided I was going to make 'hair bricks', and to push the boundaries even further I was to make them in public.

Fig. 101 Authors Private photograph. Lester Hughes, (Swap my Fat Project) 2018.

I had been given some sand and cement from my builder friend Huw Lloyd, and bought a cheap bread tin for fifty-pence from a charity shop that looked roughly the size of a brick. Friends at a local sign makers, made me a vinyl banner for free,

and I then advertised again on Facebook, that I was to hold six 'performances' over six consecutive Sundays on the High Street in Pwllheli (Fig. 102). Those performances were of me making a brick a week out of the hair in public, I titled those performances 'six hair bricks'.

Fig. 102 Authors Private photograph. Lester Hughes, (Swap my Fat Project) 2018.

I interacted with people as I made my bricks over those six weeks, although these performances were meant to mimic Fluxus happenings, in the respect that they were meant to be experienced in the person, like each brick, no two performances would be the same because it was the interaction between the audience that made each performance unique. Passers by did take photographs with me, which does go against a true happening performance, however time and technology have moved on, and it would be ney on impossible for me to stop people taking photographs (Fig. 103,

& Fig. 104). I encouraged people to take photos, come up and ask about the bricks, I even had policemen stop and take photographs with me!

Fig.103&Fig.104 Authors Private photographs. Lester Hughes, (Swap my Fat Project) 2018.

I kept the atmosphere of each performance all jovial, I filled the bricks with the hair I had swapped with Luke, plus each brick contained strands of my hair I had saved from my last haircut. Once the first brick had hardened and come out of the mould, I sprayed it up with layers of gold paint, and this gave the bricks a weighty gold bar feel. Once the first brick was made it went on display on the table for the second weeks performance, so the passing public could see the finished product as I was making the next brick. Having a finished product made it easier for people to visualise the grand idea of the project. The final performance had the five previous bricks stacked up on the table, which drew crowds, smiles, and sparked conversation. I think the 'performances' worked extremely well as people could see the bricks being made and could ask me questions about the project, it also caught people's attention and put smiles on people's faces as they drove past each Sunday. The purpose of

these games or performances, were not for anyone to win anything, but merely interaction with the general public. As Chris Crawford describes 'a game is interactive…that interaction must have a purpose….what makes a thing a game is the need to make decisions' (Costikyan, 2012: 11), the spectacle of my performances made people decide to take time out of their normal lazy Sundays to interact with me. On another level, these performances also built my confidence not only in myself, but in my ideas, I had made a statement that I was to do six consecutive 'performances' and I had to commit by forcing myself out every Sunday for six weeks no matter how ridiculous it sounded. I felt I was not only testing, but breaking the boundaries of my own comfort zone, because there was no doubt that some people thought I had genuinely lost my mind! However the very fact that I had thought up of these performances in the first place, meant that I had to act upon them, my brain had taken all its years of experience, analysed the bag of hair, thought it over for a while, and had given me the idea of making bricks out of it.

www.facebook.com/fatswop

3-7 Six Hair Bricks.

With all six bricks of hair made, the project grew exponentially, and with six individual bricks to swap I could involve far more people into the project. Over the course of six months, I swapped each brick and each individual brick had a certificate of authenticity made up of used pages of my PhD. I created a short film that explained how I made each brick, each certificate was signed by myself, and contained a piece of my hair- so both the brick and the certificate had my hair in, and I felt as if I was putting a bit of my body and soul into the project.

www.vimeo.com/220468527

As with the teddy bear projects I was again relying on the public and social media to get my message out, therefore offers for each brick varied greatly. I had six bricks therefore people had six chances of getting their hands on one, but adversely without people actually sharing the project outside my circle of friends I had the real problem of pitching to the same people six times and boring people! In the end after roughly six months of trading, Hair brick 1 was swapped for a vending machine, hair brick 2 was swapped for two mantle clocks and two box brownie cameras, hair brick 3 was swapped for a large box of car boot items; two bags of guinea pig poo and a pinhole camera lesson, hair brick 4 was swapped for a 1950s first aid box, hair brick 5 was swapped for some chickens and a coop, and finally hair brick six was swapped for a pool filter, soda stream and a sky box (Fig. 105)

Fig. 105 Authors Private photograph. Lester Hughes, (Six Hair Bricks Project) 2018.

At the time of me writing this chapter 23rd October 2020 at the beginning of our second official lock down here in Wales, this particular project is still ongoing. I have items that I have swapped, still in my possession ready to offer to the public to swap again, and I still have a motorbike frame to pick up in France.

It is extremely difficult in hindsight to describe the actual series of events that led to each individual swap, every trade was logged manually into my journal then was logged on the Facebook page 'six hair bricks', the page gives the reader a blow by blow account of exactly how it panned out. Looking back at the entire project,

everything now seems a bit of a blur, personally I got great excitement out of the swapping, for me it was the thrill of the game, the interaction with people of all ages and backgrounds, the pulling together of resources without a penny changing hands, the smiling and the laughter. What I was building was my own version of Mark Boyle's moneyless community, where money would be a clean deal where both parties walked away having exchanged goods for cash, my project sought to put a smile on the 'swappers' face, people had fun taking part and actively sought to help further. For instance Geraint winner of hair brick 5 gave me the unlimited use of a chicken coop on his land, I took control of 20 or so chickens, which produced so many eggs I then gave these eggs away in exchange for a photograph. When I swapped the vending machine for a Kefalonian cruise off Elaine Nicolaou, Geraint offered one of his holiday cottages free for the weekend as they came up to collect it!

The project took me down many unforeseen routes, I made it my goal to use whatever I had swapped constructively, so using the guinea pig poo (part of the package in exchange for hair brick 3), I became an urban gardener! I used the poo as fertilizer and planted all kinds of flowers in random places around Pen Llyn by the cover of darkness. The chicken package had the unforeseen advantage of me having dozens of eggs, in which I gave away, providing hundreds of free meals for people around Pwllheli. I used two chairs I also had from the hair brick 3 package, and covered then with the remaining hair I swapped the jar of fat with to make the "two hairy chairs' sculpture (Fig. 106, & Fig. 107).

Fig. 106&Fig. 107 Authors Private photograph. Lester Hughes, (Two Hairy Chairs) 2018.

When I traded up to a van, and then traded the van for a car, the media got involved. And I then had to do interviews for national newspapers and radio (Fig. 110, & Fig. 111). Another of the trades got me a cruise around Kefalonia, which I swapped on for a first edition children's book, and again this drew media attention.

Fig. 108& Fig. 109 Authors Private photographs. Lester Hughes, (Swap to the Top Project) 2018.

This project alone has cemented part of my original theory, that the general public have a deep yearning for play, and that once you give a person the opportunity, explain the rules, and provide the means to play, that some curious people will gladly take part.

This project bares all the hallmarks of a Situationist game, it requires the participant to enter into a transitional space in order to play, to suspend the rules of everyday life in order to enter into a new world. Academically such projects also

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cross boundaries between arts and academia in what's often described as a "third space", as artists 'undertaking the "transformational journey" as they "struggle to adapt to the unfamiliar terrain of research, and integrate it with their creative practice' (Allen Collinson 2005, 725).

Part of the parameters to this project were that I couldn't keep any swapped item or service for myself, I was merely the facilitator, the conduit between likeminded people, I was the games master, therefore in theory there is no actual end, it can carry on and on until I stop. Out of all the projects I have devised for this PhD thesis, this in my mind has the biggest potential to be turned into a novel, in the same comedic vein as Danny Wallace's *Join Me* (2003), *Yes Man* (2005), and Tony Hawks' *Round Ireland With a Fridge* (1999).

Fig. 110&Fig. 111 Authors Private photographs. Lester Hughes, (Swap to the Top Project) 2018.

www.swaptothetop.com

3.8 The Welsh Cottage project.

In the early stages of my research into this PhD one of my supervisors at the time (Dr. Jamie Sherry), referred to me as an 'artist' a label which left me feeling very uncomfortable and somewhat like a fraud at the time. In my mind I felt an artist was someone who painted classical masterpieces or carved beautiful sculptures out of marble for a living. I preferred to describe what I was doing as 'play', and I was 'playing' at making things, playing at being an academic, and playing at the game of life. I was well aware of the predicament I was in, a supposed academic playing at research, after all I wasn't researching a cure for cancer, or combating climate change, or spending my time saving the rainforests. I was very aware that 'many specialists see play as a primarily juvenile activity with little relevance to adulthood' (Liberman 1977: 9), and 'serious scholars typically ignore the subject, while those who do not are themselves ignored (Burghardt 2006: 13), and was perfectly happy to sit on the peripheries, on the fringes of society.

It is only within the past twelve months, and following a lengthy conversation with my current supervisor Dr. Steffan Thomas who actually had a chance to view my entire body of work, and the fact that he reiterated Jamie's sentiment that what I was making 'art', that I felt a little more comfortable and justified with the label. I had come to realise that every project I had undertaken was in a way informing the next project, I was creating work documenting my thoughts and ideas in both my journals and on my website as a form of reflecting on the process and outcome as a pathway to understanding. Donald Schon (1983) describes this exact process as 'reflection-in-action', which is very similar to Kurt Lewins' 'field theory', in which he describes as "a series of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action" (Lewin, 1946).

With this in mind and my confidence at an all time high, I decided to partake in one last game, one final test, I wanted to physically make something with my own hands, from my own imagination, and using the same formula and rules as in previous projects, trade the item I had made with another artist and carry that on, this project was strictly for artists and makers of art. The ultimate test of my 'art', would be if I could get another 'artist' to play in my game of swapping, which would then hopefully set the ball rolling for an art based version of 'swap to the top'. In my mind if I could swap a piece of my art for a piece of a recognised artists work, it would legitimise my creative output and elevate my work from the trivial act of play to art.

Again I had imposed strict rules upon myself, the art I was to make had to cost me nothing to produce, and as I was on lock down in Nant Gwrtheyrn all alone I was severely restricted to my materials. After a few days of thinking and meditating over the problem, my mind went back to Pen Bwlch, the house I had grown up in next door to my grandfather (Fig. 112, & Fig. 113).

Fig. 112&Fig. 113, Private family photographs. Freda Hughes, c. 1970s.

It is a traditional white Welsh cottage, originally two small cottages (now converted into one, which is still a small dwelling compared to today's standards), and some of my earliest and happiest memories are of that house, and in particular spending time in my grandfather's shed watching him fix things (Fig.114). I used this as a catalyst and decided that I would carve a Welsh cottage out of wood to resemble my childhood home.

Fig.114, Private family photograph. Freda Hughes, c. 1970s.

As chance would have it, builders were constructing a traditional shed at Nant Gwrtheyrn and there were off cuts of wood lying around which I took for my project,

I then decided that once I had made my cottage, I would mount it on a piece of sea smoothed granite from the beach at Nant Gwrtheyrn.

Once I had carved out the wood, I painted the cottage in white, used grey for the rood, red for the front door and black gloss for the back door and windows, again all the paint came from my workshop at Nant Gwrtheyrn, so the finished product was conceived and made with materials found in this valley. I had made my first piece, and I felt so proud that I decided to push the boundaries and make a further 19, so in total I had 20 pieces, which meant I had to find 20 artists or makers of art to swap their work for mine. The end goal was to have 20 random pieces of work on display in a gallery with the only thing in common was my Welsh Cottages (Fig. 115)

Fig.115 Authors Private photograph. Lester Hughes, (Welsh Cottage Project) 2021.

This time I used Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to get my message out, and within a month I had swapped every piece of work to every corner of the UK and one even went to America! To date (28th October 2020) I am currently waiting for three pieces of work from other artists to come through the post, but every one of my cottages has been swapped, and I have had verbal confirmation from Nant Gwrtheyrn

that I can hold an exhibition of all my work at the site, including the short films, my main film, and the items swapped for the cottages. (Fig. 116)

Fig. 116 Authors Private photograph. Lester Hughes, (Welsh Cottage Project) 2021.

Once all 20 swapped pieces of art are physically in my possession, I shall then arrange a date for exhibition at Nant Gwrtheyrn (providing existing Covid 19 restrictions are lifted), then I shall offer the entire art collection up for swap for either a series of art pieces or one large piece, as this too is an on-going project I envisage this to be something I work on for the rest of my life, and again there is a possibility for this project to be turned into a book form given enough time for it to evolve into its fullest potential.

Chapter conclusion.

In this chapter I have covered all the Socially Engaged Art and situations I created in order to illicit a direct response from the public. Links to the short films: - *Artefact, The Moon and the Trees, Frondescence, Bark,* and, *Making the Brick Certificates,* can be found at the end of each description, and each of these films are also included on DVD 1 accompanied with this thesis.

The impact and direct effect of each individual art project is extremely difficult to fully monitor, for instance it is impossible for me as a 'games master' dreaming up these situations, sitting in the comfort of my flat in North Wales to ever comprehend the feeling of someone finding a teddy bear in a washed up bottle on the beach, or the feeling of walking down the street one Sunday afternoon to find a fully grown man making a brick out of hair! The only real tangible evidence I have is in the form of photographs, snippets of film, my journals and the firsthand accounts from people that have experienced the projects.

Joseph Beuys once claimed, "Every human being is an artist" (Harlan, 2010: 2), and art is about connecting in some way, on some level with a person. When we introduce money into any scenario, what we are actually doing is creating barriers, creating conditions in excluding certain people from doing certain things based solely on their ability to pay. My projects deliberately go against the system of money, inspired by the Dada, Fluxus, and especially the Situationist International (SI) art movements that are made with little or no money at all, from materials donated or items readily available to me. My swapping projects encouraged people to bring out their unwanted items they may have had hidden away in attics and cellars, and in turn offer them up in exchange for whatever I had to offer at the time.

Each one of these projects took time to realise any tangible results, they are time dependant, and for example, both the 7 sea Teddies project and the Bear Elements projects were still producing photographs a year after their initial launch. Similarly 'Swap to the Top' and 'the Welsh cottage' projects are still on-going, and will carry on evolving and hopefully see me swap objects with new people for many years to come.

It could be argued that each of these little projects are stand alone art pieces, however in my mind each project piggy backs upon the next, so one informs the other, there is a clear logical progression, and in turn all these little art projects have influenced and shaped my life which in turn has inevitably bled into my final film *The Memory Shed*, which will be fully covered in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

The Memory Shed-a film production guide: or how to make a Poetic Experimental Documentary on the Cheap!

Introduction.

As I have mentioned in previous chapters, part of this practice based PhD was to be both an artistic critique into the way we have adopted the system of money and taken it for granted from birth, and a study on how memory, play, and the childhood home we grew up in leave a lasting impression and shape us as adults. I had envisaged a gallery style exhibition of all my artistic work, but the various projects evolved over the course of the PhD, into the form of several short films, a feature experimental film and a website.

As a stubborn statement against the consumerist system, and in true Situationist style, I was dead against spending huge amounts of money on any of my artistic projects, I very much subscribe to the views of Mark Boyle who states 'the monetized life, is a life that separates people from the community and from nature channelling our interdependency through an anonymous medium' (Boyle, 2012: xviii). As described in previous chapters my work also has strong elements of the childish performances of the Dada movement, (the Dadaists believed that even the best literature created so far is an imitation (Kristiansen, 1968: 458)).

Ironically while I was adhering to the anti-capitalist and anarchic rules of the SI, the shed was inevitably and unavoidably my biggest expense in this entire study. I bought the shed locally and set about erecting it in my empty shop so I could carry out the cladding renovation works upon it, and make sure the electronics and wiring worked for the films and projectors I intended to use inside it (Fig. 117).

Fig. 117 Authors Private photograph. Lester Hughes, (The Memory Shed) 2021.

My first task was to age the shed to make it look more authentic, and I managed to pick up some free old metal sheeting a friend was getting rid of. My intention was to give it the appearance of an old rusty shed, which was roughly based on the shed my grandfather used to work in outside my family home. The second phase was to cut openings in the shed walls to allow people to look through to see films playing on the inside. The idea then was for this to be placed within the centre of a gallery then during the show the audience would then be able to peep inside the shed while putting headphones on to view the various short experimental films I had made. The shed would have been the central part of my exhibition, and all the exhibits would have a direct link to this shed. The inspiration for this came directly from Jimmy Cauty (one half of The KLF as previously mentioned), Cauty made an artwork within a container and toured the country with it, this was called 'The Aftermath Dislocation Principle (ADP)', in which he had miniature dystopian models housed within the container, that were only visible through holes from outside the container (Cauty 2016).

As chance would have it, I wasn't granted access to the exhibition space I wanted, and this is roughly the same time my father died and a few months later my marriage fell apart. The project, the PhD, and as a result, my plans for the shed all had

to be abandoned. Then came a radical change in my career and I had to take a series of menial jobs as I readjusted and recalibrated my life back on a steadier path. The following chapter describes in the best way possible the fate of the shed, how it turned from an intended gallery exhibition piece to the main focal point of a short film. This chapter is by far the hardest to write, for having completed all my practical work I am now faced with describing in academic terms, a process which I find extremely difficult to explain in normal everyday language let alone the language of academia! I attempt to describe through a combination of reflexive practice by analysing my detailed journals kept throughout this PhD and through a phenomenological approach, the organic creative process in which the film came into being, while still adhering to my strict rules and principles of spending very little money and calling in favours, and bartering for products and services in true Situationist style.

4.1 The Shed and its Meaning.

As described previously, the basic premise of *The Memory Shed* was to have people glimpsing through peepholes set at various levels to view short films that touched upon certain themes from my own life. The shed itself was a visual representation of the shed my grandfather used to work in, so in effect I was inviting viewers to experience certain aspects of my own childhood and allowing them to take a peek inside without ever letting anyone physically setting foot inside the shed.

David Galenson (2009), explains how some artists can work without reference to their own lives, where as others will touch upon certain aspects of their experience or way of thinking within their work, while there is also a third group of artists that life and art are inseparable, as life events sustain their own artistic works, He deemed this group as "autobiographic artists", and termed the work itself as "confessional art" which is a "practice of the visual arts, in which painters and sculptors have used motifs drawn largely or exclusively from their own lives'. While I recognise that my work does fall within Galenson's description of "confessional art", I also disagree with this term, as I do not feel I have a need to confess anything to anyone. In my mind the term 'confessional' is problematic because if you have to confess to anything it's an automatic admission of guilt. The work I was making was telling a story based on my unique 'lived' experiences up until that moment in time of my life, and by doing so I am telling a more truthful authentic story, so in effect I would like my work to be deemed "personal art" rather than "confessional". Max van Manen describes this as "phenomenology of practice", which is "the project of sober reflection on the lived experience of human existence' (Manen 2007: 1).

Ironically the shed was my biggest expense in any of the short films I have made, I paid a grand total of £50 for it, it was brand new and probably had a true

market value of around £200, however the man I bought it off wanted the space to park a new car, he wanted it gone within the day I took this as an act of serendipity and I was able to collect it within a couple of hours. The metal sheets I used to clad the shed and give it its aged look came off an old shed a friend was dismantling, again I was able to pick these up free of charge and my brother, Gordon, and I fitted these to the shed firstly within my empty shop space, and then when the divorce was imminent we had to dismantle the whole structure it and re erect it in its final resting place of a secluded field.

I have either the gift or affliction of being very visual, I think in pictures and sequences of pictures, and Conway explains this better in that "the brain takes in experience as words and images" (1999: 34), which I can totally relate to. I personally have to form pictures and sequences within my mind in order for me to make sense of any new situation. It's extremely difficult for me to describe, but in order for me to learn a new task I must fully visualise it on the cinema screen within my head in order for me to fully understand, I could be told instructions multiple times but if I can't relate these instructions into pictures within my head I would still not understand, however if I am shown the same task and I can visualise it, I usually get it straight away.

Once I knew I wasn't going to be able to use the shed as an exhibition space in itself, I instantaneously had a vision and I knew there was only one thing left to do. Gibson (2002: 54) explains that the process of "imagistic cognition" is where we rerun image sequences through our heads while we try to make sense of experience. As I was processing firstly the rejection from the art gallery and the bigger rejection from my wife, my brain went into a kind of overdrive, and I can only describe this as

an experience of sitting in an actual cinema while watching several films being projected on the same screen at once.

For me the shed was a metaphor for my entire life up until now, It's very presence triggered some of my happiest childhood memories of spending time with my grandfather, while it also symbolised years of collecting random items and a failed marriage. The answer came quickly and clearly to me, in order for me to move on with my life I knew I had to tear down and destroy everything I had created of my previous life, and in the process of doing so I would confront the painful experiences I was re running through my brain in a bid to replacing them with a powerful all encompassing moment that would hopefully enable me to put to bed the past and move on.

I had both lived and breathed my thesis for years, I was immersed in the study, and there were times where I wasn't sure if I was leading the research or if the research was guiding me to the next logical step. I was aware I was a very small cog in the huge capitalist machine, and the more I read about ways of bucking the system, the better it sounded. At this time I read work by Joshua Fields Millburn and Ryan Nicodemus, who started the minimalist movement, and wrote, *Minimalism, live a Meaningful life* (2011), *Everything that Remains* (2014), and *Essential* (2015), who argue convincingly (in much the same way as Mark Doyle does), that the things we own end up owning us. I was fast approaching 50, was facing an expensive divorce, financial ruin and I had amounted collections and clutter galore, I came to the realisation that I needed to change, and If I really believed in my research I had to carry it out to the bitter end no matter what.

As Chuck Palahniuk wrote in *Fight Club* "it is only after you lose everything…that you're free to do anything…we have to break everything to make

something better of ourselves" (1997:70-52). I studied *Fight Club* in depth for my Masters degree, and for me the film echoes the Situationist Manifesto in the fact that it also calls for the 'reset' button to be pressed, they both attack the society of spectacle, the destruction of Jack's (played by Edward Norton in the film adaptation), perfect condo, and the destruction of the credit card company towers at the end goes toward his ultimate goal of ending capitalism entirely.

During the course of this study I naturally gravitated to the work of artists that saw the world in the same way I did, I not only read books articles and watched films of all kinds, I also tried to visit as many exhibitions of similar artists that inspired me as I physically could on the minimal income I was earning at the time.

In 2014 I went to Liverpool to see a lecture by filmmaker and artist Andrew Kotting at the Biennial Exhibition, Kotting's short films and early work in particular are highly personal and are extremely visceral in their nature, and I relate to this work closer to any other British film director practicing today. The following year I got to meet him again at HOME cinema in Manchester where he was lecturing before a special screening of his film *By Our Selves* (2015), which was a melancholic poetic film about the nature poet John Clare. Later on that year I visited Banksy's *Dismaland* exhibition in which was billed as a dystopian wonderland (Colossal, online, accessed 22nd August 2018), it is there I also got to see work by James (Jimmy) Cauty first hand, Cauty a founding member of the KLF who are the modern day embodiment of the Situationist movement. Towards the latter part of 2015 I saw the Bill Viola exhibition over at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in, where several of his installations including *Fire Woman* and *The Crossing* where on display. In 2018 I flew over to Amsterdam to see what would be my second Banksy exhibition held at the Moco Museum. These are a small selection of works and art exhibitions and external

lectures I have attended over the course of the past six years, which have undoubtedly filtered through my consciousness and undoubtedly influenced me and my art in some way.

During the course of my studies I also discovered several influential performance artists that also struck a particular chord with me, the first being Michael Landy who in 2001 he held *Breakdown* a performance in which he catalogued every item he owned and destroyed the lot in front of an audience, and again in 2010 he further explored this theme of art and destruction with *Art Bin* which was a giant dust bin set up in a gallery where he threw art of all kinds regardless of their value into the bin. He invited the public to bring along their art too. The point was to turn art regardless of its perceived commercial value into a symbolic bin the whole lot would then get destroyed before going into land fill. The American artist Chris Burden (1946-2015) also captured my imagination with his early performances of *Shoot* (1971) where he filmed himself actually being shot for a performance, and three years later in *Trans-Fixed* 1974), he filmed himself being crucified to a VW Beetle. It was this intense belief and conviction in their work that drew me towards these artists amongst others.

The music of band The KLF was the soundtrack to my youth and their iconic tunes were a breath of fresh air in the charts of the day. They were the antithesis of a traditional pop band were and this intrigued me, not only were Bill Drummond, and Jimmy Cauty musicians, they were also artists in their own right and went against the grain of conventional thought, they were also staunch anti-capitalists and gravitated towards the Situationist mind set.

One of the first acts that caught my attention, was when they climbed on a lighting gantry at Chipping Norton in 1989 and emptied a bin bag containing £1000 in

Scottish pound notes into the crowd at a rave, this was their appearance fee, and they gave it all away. Again in 1991 at the Liverpool Festival of Comedy, Drummond and Cauty made headlines when they used their own money to buy an ice cream van and ended up giving hundreds of Ice creams away for free (Higgs, 2012: 138). These acts were all inadvertently leading up to something bigger, and on 23rd August 1994 they decided to burn one million pounds in cash in the fireplace of a derelict boathouse on the isle of Jura in Scotland (Higgs, 2012: 291).

The act of burning divided public opinion threefold, one section thought it was a despicable act of sheer and utter madness another thought it was a deliberate and perfect act of anti capitalism, where another school of thought claimed the whole thing must have been a hoax to attract publicity. However Drummond and Cauty were savvy enough to bring along a friend named simply as 'Gimpo' to film the event on a camcorder, 'in the months after the burning, as Drummond and Cauty searched for some context or insight to allow them to understand their actions, the idea that they should show people the film arose' (Higgs, 2012: 5).

It would seem that both Drummond and Cauty didn't really know why they were burning one million pounds of their own money, they had no real answers to why they carried out the act, but the fact that they had conceived the idea in the first place meant that they had to carry it out. After all it was their money to do what they liked with, in a capitalist system they had exchanged their time and intellect for money, but instead of using that money to plough back into the economy in order to purchase more things, they simply burnt it. The closest Cauty got to an explanation was his statement "it's to do with controlling the money. Money tends to control you if you've got it, it dictates what you have to do with it, you either send it, give it away invest it…We just wanted to be in control of it" (Higgs, 2012: 237). Having

completed the film, Drummond and Cauty showed it to comic book writer Alan Moore who commented that the actual idea of the burning must have been conceived in what he called 'a shared area of ideaspace', and 'what was more significant…was that the idea of burning the money had found them in their local area of ideaspace in the first place….of course the theory of ideaspace means that there was no reason why they should understand what it means…what was important was that the idea had found them in the first place' (Higgs, 2012: 88-91). What is interesting is that Moore describes "ideaspace", as a kind of place in the ether where ideas are formed, thought out, or plucked from. This is a similar place described earlier in this thesis as a 'transitional space', by Winnicott, where ideas are also formed toyed with and thought out.

Once I knew I had to relocate the shed into a field, I also knew that I had to fill it with as many of my possessions as I could and then burn it. I had no real concept as to why, I had the image in my head and the idea felt natural and this excited me. SI founder Guy Debords words rang in my ear 'the consumer is killed by the things he becomes attached to…whatever you possess possesses you in return' (Nicholson, 2008: 154). My items were hardly as valuable as Drummond and Cauty's one million pounds, however I trusted in the process, and in doing so I had the ending I needed to my film. I now all I had to write a basic script and back engineer a meaning, if I could actually find one!

4.2 The Script: A Vague Roadmap!

The films I tend to make myself are low and no budget productions involving a bare minimum amount of actors and an extremely basic script, which more often than not is more of a loose guide than a formal manual. Once all the footage is filmed, I then mould this in the editing process, and then go back out to film additional scenes as the film takes on a life of its own, this process goes against the grain of everything that is taught in film school, and certainly everything that was taught me at University. My usual writing process for a short film like *The Memory Shed* usually consists of one single draft, which is meant to be a loose blueprint for the film that eventually evolves from this point on.

I normally leave a lot to chance, happenstance, or serendipity but with *The Memory Shed*, I knew for certain what the final sequence of the film was to be, so the whole build up to the epic climax was undecided. I also knew that the film would need to contain all the elements, fire, earth, air and water, and it was going to be experimental and a lot left for the viewer to interpret, I was certainly not making a Hollywood three act structured blockbuster, nor did I want to make a standard episode of Coronation Street! *The Memory Shed* for me would be my personal Situationist derive or drift through certain places in my life to gather deeper meaning, in much the same way as Andrew Kotting drifts through spaces in many of his films, or in the way Dr. Sam Christie journeys from Ramsey Island to Bardsey Island in a bid to make sense of the Welsh Cantre'r Gwaelod myth.

I have copied on page 169 the one and only draft I wrote for 'The Memory Shed', it contains spelling mistakes and grammatical errors, however this is exactly how I wrote it, and it wouldn't be right me polishing and correcting it for the purpose of other people to read. It is an authentic document and anyone taking the time to

watch the film and read this document, will see the natural progression from script to screen.

On the days I went out filming, I handwrote notes on the blank pages of the script, to remind me of fresh ideas or shooting sequences for the day. These pages have been photographed and are included at the end of this chapter in a series of photographs (Fig. 118, Fig. 119, Fig. 120, & Fig. 121) in order for one to chart the progression and development of the story from the initial first draft.
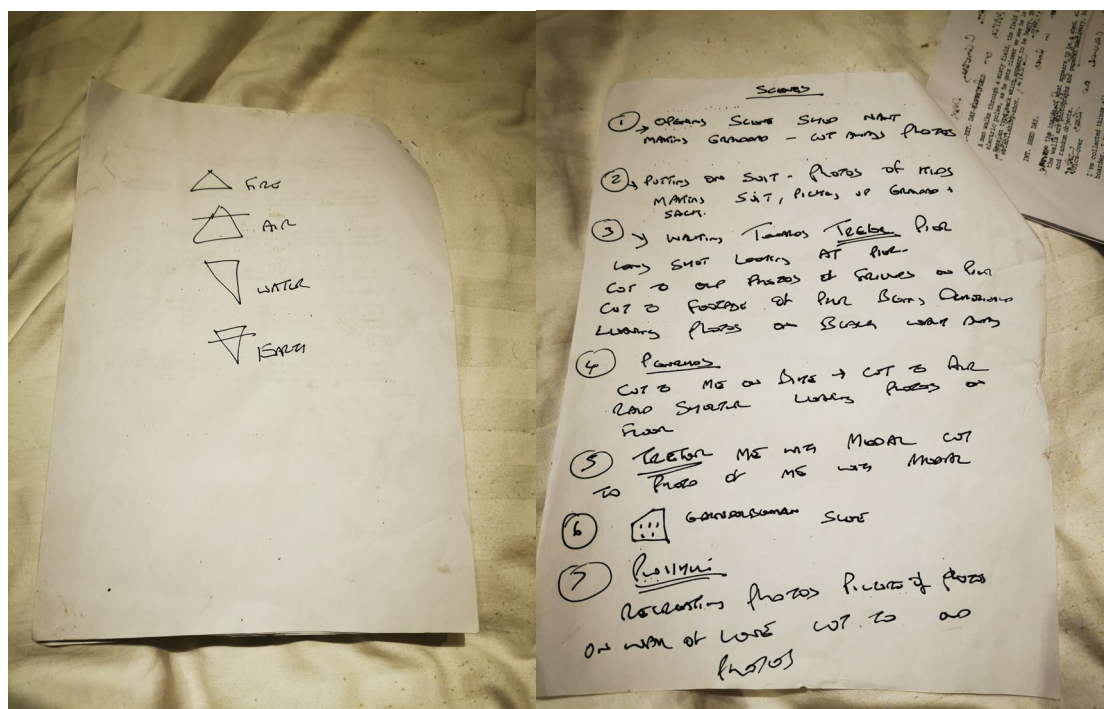

Fig. 118& Fig. 119 Authors Private photographs. Lester Hughes, (The Memory Shed) 2021.

Fig. 120&Fig. 121 Authors Private photographs. Lester Hughes, (The Memory Shed) 2021.

THE MEMORY SHED

1-EXT. DAY-MISTY FIELD

A man walks through a misty field, the field is littered with electric poles, as he gets closer we see he is carrying a Hessian type sack which appears to be heavy. This is a long establishing shot.

INT. SHED DAY.

We see the inside of what appears to be a shed, all around the walls are photographs and general machinery, books, dvds, and random objects.

Voice-over

I've collected things all my life, some people say I'm a hoarder; I just cant bare to throw anything away.

2-EXT DAY-STONE SHED.

The same man with the sack stands looking at an old stone shed.

Voice-over

My grandfather used to have an old stone shed, I'd watch him for hours hammering pieces of metal, carefully shaping them over a hot fire, I remember the sparks flying up the chimney, and the place being really warm as he worked.

Cut to

An old photograph of a little boy outside the stone shed

Cut to

The man with the sack in the same spot posing for the camera.

3-INT SHED DAY.

We see cut aways through the window of various objects and the land beyond the shed.

Voice-over

I bought the shed about a year ago, I had intended it to be the central showpiece of an exhibition I was planning. The idea was to cut little peep holes into the shed and have viewers look inside to various exhibits and short films.

Cut to

Photograph of the shed being built

Voice-over

But despite the gallery never really being fully booked up, they never got back to me. I took this to be a sign that my work didnt really suit their gallery, and decided like the dadaists and situationists before me, that my work shouldn't be on display at a gallery anyway, that my work transcended conventional art galleries. I decided that the memory shed should be used in a different way, and through the medium of film the message could be distributed all over the world, as a spectacle.

Cut to

Photograph of Pontio

Voice-over

So I guess I'll have to put it into some other use.

Cut to

4-Ext. Shoreline day.

Its raining, the man with the Hessian sack is soaking wet, water drips down his face, the sea is rough, and the shoreline is fierce. The man looks tired but determined.

Cut to

internal shed day

More slow cut aways of the shed and its contents.

Voice-over

Those are the cushions my father had in his car before he died. When I fetched him from hospital after his diagnosis, he told me to sell his car to pay for his funeral. No one wanted the car, so I had to scrap it, I kept the cushions.

Cut to

The man is in the middle of a muddy field, he is now covered in mud, he drags the Hessian bag through the mud, it is now a burden.

6-internal shed day

The camera cuts to a stack of vinyl albums, in amongst the KLF can be clearly seen.

Voice-over

These are my vinyl albums, I have some extremely scarce ones that I've collected since childhood here.

7-external field early evening

The man with the Hessian sack walks through the field, in the distance on the horizon we see the shed.

8 internal shed evening

The camera pans across the shed showing, cameras, books, film equipment of all sorts before focussing in on a [piece of colored card.

Voice-over

When I started to date my would be wife, the first present she ever bought me was a lamp, it has a colored paper shade over it-this was the spare shade for that lamp.
(the camera pans across a wedding photo album and a discarded wedding ring)

8 external field evening

The man with the Hessian bag gets close to the shed, he is dishevelled muddy and wet, he drops the bag and fetches a key out and proceeds to unlock the shed.

Voice-over

The shoes I used for my first marathon....the Camera I used to shoot the first film I made...the truck I used to push both my children in as babies...all my DVD collection....all My university books....all The work ive ever written.....two

radiograms....five Parafin lamps.....1543 old photogrphs...two hairy chairs....old Watch parts....my Entire art collection.....all the checked shirts Im now too small to fit in...over 600 books....parts for a VW Beetle....

9 EXTERNAL FIELD EVENING

The man with the sack opens the door to the shed and walks inside....he Looks around for the longest time..

Voiceover

My entire film poster collection....old Vhs tapes...a batman suit.....a guitar amp....five Projectors....two Mantle clocks....the Bath i used to bathe my children in...

10.external Field evening

The man exits the shedtakes off his long muddy coat and carefully folds it before placing it o the floor of the shed.

Voiceover

...153 academic books......253 postcards......159 old bottles.....89 old teddies from an exhibition....hand Signed boxing memorabillia....all My PHD research......353 cds......

10 EXTERNAL FIELD EVENING

The light is fading, the man reaches into his sack to bring out a petrol can, he places it slowly on the ground.... He repeats this three times.

Voiceover

A computer.. A laptop...a printer....20 ties....five Pairs of

shoes....bedsheets......jewellry......watches.....

11 external field evening

The man opens a jar and tips its contents slowly inside the shed, he carries on with the

other two jars until the entire shed inside and out is soaking.

Voiceover

Recepits from my old businesses.......a Teaset....crockery.....a teasmade.....five

radios......two televisions......a cot....a Pram...

12.external Field evening

The mad reaches into the sack to reveal a long torch, he reaches into his pocket to

reveal a lighter and lights it.

Voiceover

Every darts trophy i have ever won.....the bike i used to ride....the Toys of my

childhood....the Memories of my childhood....the Memories of my adult

life......everything ive ever hoarded......everything ive ever owned....it All myst go.

13.external Field evening

The man throws his burning torch into the shed-the shed bursts into flames. The man

stands nonchulent and gazes on as everything he owns burns to the ground.

4.3 The Influences.

As I have previously stated, only one draft of a script was ever written, it was a basic idea which had to contain fire, earth, water, and air in any order. It was meant to be a journey, to start with a shed and end with a shed, with the spirit of my grandfather's shed and the essence of his personality intertwined throughout. The journey was what the Situationists called 'derive', a drifting through places I lived or played in as a child, places I associated with and places that held special memories for me.

I do not feel it important to explain or justify every shot, decision, or detail of the film, as it is hoped the viewer will watch the film and take away a feeling or be moved in some way based on their own experiences of life. An intelligent viewer will make his or her own connections and interpret what they see in whatever way they want to, and in that way the film will hopefully strike different chords with different people depending on what they themselves bring into the movie. I have attempted to use the same methods and techniques Hollywood directors use on their big budget offerings, as described in previous chapters; such as the use of camera clicks, the use of photographs, mixing different textures of film, colour and black and white, and heavy use of what I deemed 'the flicker', it is hoped that all these techniques will result in *The Memory Shed* opening nostalgic doors in the minds of the viewer.

It is only right I acknowledge the directors and works of art and artists that I admire, and credit the auteurs that have inspired my creative spark. During my teenage years we were so poor as a family we never went to the pictures, however for one birthday I did get a portable black and white television, and this coincided with the launch of Channel 4 and the Welsh S4C. In those early days, Channel 4 were showing relatively new films as well as world cinema (which opened my eyes to films

from across the globe). I remember watching Ingmar Bergman's' *Wild Strawberries* (1957), and *The virgin Spring* (1960), David Lynch's *Eraserhead* (1977), Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Alien* (1979), these and a host of other British classics were all devoured all from the comfort of my bed. It was that portable television and S4C's ground breaking scheduling that led me on a lifelong passionate discovery of film, which in turn led me to the Russian Director Andrei Tarkovsky. I remember stumbling upon Andrei Tarkvsky's *Mirror* (1975), and while not really understanding it; I knew I was watching film poetry and something deeply profound unfold before my eyes. I distinctively remember that the film left me with such an indescribable feeling that thoroughly moved me. It was only after I entered the world of academia I realised this feeling had a term 'affect' I was affected by the film; Simon O'Sullivan describes this as 'moments of intensity, a reaction in/on the body at the level of matter.' (2001, online, accessed 19th December 2020).

Werner Herzog's early work has also left a great impression upon me, films like *Even Dwarves Start Small* (1970), and *Aguirre, The Wrath Of God* (1972), are a mix of both the bizarre and beautiful, Herzog like Tarkovsky, strives to make poetry on screen in a bid to find a deeper truth:

> In great poetry, when you listed or read a great poem, it will occur to you very abruptly that there is a deep erroneous truth in this poem and you feel illuminated. And you don't have to analyse and you don't have to read lots of literature about this very poem, you just know instantly. And why do you know it? Because there's an ecstasy of truth that is in this poem, and in cinema you have this as well. (Herzog YouTube interview, online, accessed 19th December 2020).

In more recent times I have been influenced by Ben Rivers' film *Two Years at Sea* (2012), which is a film about Jake Williams, an eccentric man living along in the Cairngorms, Scotland, this film was shot on 16mm black and white footage and developed by hand in Rivers' bathtub. This and Marc Singers *Dark Days* (2000), a

documentary about the homeless living underground in New York, also shot on 16mm black and white film directly inspired me to attend a 16mm film course in London back in 2018 where I shot filmed processed and digitized a short 16mm piece, which ended up as a tree sequence in *The Memory Shed.*

A chance eBay purchase led me to the British experimental filmmaker Andrew Kotting's film *Gallivant* (1996), this was like a light bulb going off in my head, Its extremely difficult to describe the effect a film like this can have on a viewer, however this brings us back to the term affect again, as Silvan Tompkins puts it "directors use nonverbal repertoire including timing staging and perspective to weave a thick knot of affects around their script" (Dukepress, online, accessed 19th December 2020), for me I totally got the concept, the look, the feel, and the language of it, it was experimental, quirky and definitely non mainstream, but it totally resonated with me. *Gallivant* was Kotting's first feature length film, and it was the first of what I shall call his 'journey' films.

Gallivant was a journey of exploration around the coastline of Great Britain with his aging grandmother and disabled daughter. *Swandown* (2012), *By our Selves* (2015), and *Edith Walks* (2016), are three other films of his that also fall into this experimental derive mould, the comedian (and personal friend of Kotting), Stewart Lee describes his method of working as "all Kotting does is, he goes out into the landscape, he likes a journey, and then he reverse engineers meaning into it afterwards" (Jackson, 2015), and on reflection this is exactly the process I undertook having burnt the shed.

It could be argued that *The Memory Shed,* is creatively the end product of every book I have ever read in my life, every piece of music I have ever listened to, and certainly every film I have ever seen, all boiled down into a forty minute piece of

work sprinkled with instances of my own life. I consciously used the metaphor of clocks as I have previously described in films such as *Hugo*, *Wild Strawberries,* and*, In the Mood for Love.* I also deliberately used photographs in an attempt to conjure up Nostalgia within the viewer as in *Cinema Paradiso,* and *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*, and I also used 'real footage' to deliberately highlight to the audience they were watching a film in a cinematic setting, again a technique used in *Hugo.* As I described in Chapter 2, these are all very carefully thought out decisions made by each of the directors in order to elicit a mood or feeling in which I have deliberately mimicked to create a similar mood in my film.

I have always been fascinated with experimental, non-mainstream, Avant-garde offerings, and over the years I have immersed myself in films and filmmakers that push the boundaries of traditional cinema and explore new ways of visual storytelling. I have gravitated toward these types of filmmaker because they are not scared to compromise their vision they are not bound by the constraints of traditional narrative structures, or the commercial viability of their output. For me Peter Greenaway had a profound impact on my young mind, probably best known for *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover'* (1989), it was *A Zed and Two Noughts* (1985), and his short ten years previously *Windows* (1975), that made me take notice. His ability to challenge the traditional narrative structure of a film and his unashamed way of exploration of sexuality, power, and death cemented his work in my lexicon.

I have mentioned Derek Jarman previously in this thesis, however *Jubilee*(1978), and *Blue* (1993), for me are two of his stand out films, *Jubilee* genuinely disturbed me on my first viewing, and *Blue* opened my eyes to the possibility of nonlinear narrative, and the importance of music and voiceover in a film. In recent years I have been fascinated with the work of filmmaker and visual

artist Steve McQueen, (the long take between Michael Fassbender who plays Bobby Sands, and Liam Cunningham playing a priest in *Hunger* (2008) is spellbinding), however it is his previous experimental short works *Bear* (1993), and *Deadpan* (1997) that have stuck a deep chord within me. Alongside the previously mentioned Andrew Kotting and Ben Rivers, who both experiment with both super 8 and 16mm formats, Peter Todd's work has also had an incredible impact upon me, his ability to create a visually stunning and coherent film on a single roll of 100 feet of 16mm film stock in *Room Windows, Sea Sky* (2014) is nothing short of genius, this comes two years after his portrait of the artist Luke Fowler in *For Luke* (2012), again he uses 16mm film stock, and is able to capture a highly emotive piece of work in the space of two minutes.

I have stated that one of the aims of this PhD is an attempt to create Situationist style games in order to interact with as many random people as possible. So it stands to reason I am heavily influenced and guided by the Situationist and the whole art movement, but an example of the modern day Situationist artist can be seen in the work of Banksy. I have previously mentioned the anonymous street artist who gained widespread publicity for his politically charged graffiti and street art. Like the Situationist who came before him, Banksy uses art as a way to challenge the dominant cultural and political norms in our time. His work often opposes capitalism, consumerism and social inequality. Another example of this can be seen in the work of Artist Jenny Holzer, Holzer is known for her text based installations which often address issues such as war, violence, and political power. Like the Situationists Holzer uses art as a means of creating social commentary and as a way to challenge the dominant cultural and political norms, and these are some of the reasons I admire and am influenced by these artists.

4.4 The Filming and editing process: the nitty-gritty of Experimental Documentary Filmmaking.

When Abraham Zapruder set out to test his new 8 mm Bell & Howell Zoomatic Series Model 414 PD Movie camera on Friday, November 22, 1963, little did he know that from his standpoint on a concrete pedestal along Elm Street, Dealey Plaza, Dallas Texas, he would not only witness first-hand the horrific assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States, but he would also capture the entire event in a single burst of film lasting less than half a minute.

A little over thirty years later, Julian Borger reported in The Guardian on 4th August 1999, that the family of Abraham Zapruder had been paid $16million by the national archives of America for the twenty-six second 8mm clip documenting the assassination, making it the world's most expensive piece of amateur film footage to have ever been filmed. Borger went on to explain its exceptionally high price was determined because 'the Zapruder lawyers argued it was a unique artefact like a Vincent Van Gogh painting or an Andy Warhol print, and should be valued accordingly' (Borger, online, accessed 12th June 2019), the Zapruder film was no longer viewed as a piece of celluloid but had now taken on a cultural identity of its own.

As with other keen amateur film makers of the day Abraham Zapruderset out to make a home movie to capture for prosperity the President's visit to Dallas, merely something to show his friends and family in years to come, as John Beck explains in David Holloway's book, *American Visual Cultures:*

> The fact that Abraham Zapruderfelt compelled to make a film about the Kennedy visit is not remarkable in itself; indeed, it is the very banality of his desire to record images that locates the film at the historical point where such practices become commonplace (Holloway, 2005: 184).

Zapruder's twenty-six second home movie went from the benign to a national treasure overnight, thrusting him into the public spotlight and bizarrely immortalising his name forever. The medium of 8mm is now obsolete, and Super 8mm, though still manufactured and available on a small scale, borders on extinction; so it is fairly safe to presume that it is highly unlikely any other film in the 8mm format will ever emerge to rival the financial significance of the Zapruder tape. However, this does not mean that all other 8mm film is any less important or any less compelling than the Zapruder tape. One could argue that a wealth of untapped riches lie dormant in attics, cellars, and second hand shops all over the world. A box of old 8mm films bought on eBay, or at a local car boot sale or house clearance, when played back would reveal priceless moments of the filmmakers life, each contain a wealth of valuable information about who he was, what he saw, and how he used to live. Every piece of discarded film today was once a cherished private moment in the life of the filmmaker and his subjects. Cecilia Morner explains their importance of home movies as:

> Home movies made prior to the video revolution of the 1980s are different from any other film form. Despite their relatively poor technical and aesthetic quality compared to professionally made films, home movies offer a unique way of understanding domestic visual culture from the past (2011: 22-45).

The same could also be argued for photographs and the value placed upon them. A photograph today no longer represents the alchemy of film and chemicals of the past, today's photographs are easily taken digital representations made up of a stream of ones and zeros, and as such are quickly forgotten about, seldom printed for prosperity, and easily deleted from both the camera and our own memories. Flusser points to the paradox of today's photographs that they are 'received as objects without value that anyone and everyone can produce and do what they like with, however we

are also programmed by photographs in order to act in a certain fashion' (Flusser, 2010: 64).

Much of the raw visual material for *The Memory Shed* came to me by chance and the hundreds of photographs seen within the shed came directly to me through many years of house clearances and large book buying deals. It is a sad fact of life that when a loved one dies it is left to family members to discard of their cherished collections, and more often than not that books and photographs are the first casualty of the clearance. Over the years I amassed a catalogue of thousands of such photographs, while ironically I had very little photographic evidence of my own childhood and upbringing, it was only after my father had died that we found family photographs in one of his draws that we had never seen before; many of which are now in the film donated to me by my mother.

A chance visit to a car boot sale led me to buying another load of old super 8 and 8mm film reels, and upon viewing them at home, by projecting them against a wall, I was thrilled to find rare footage of the old Quarrying village of Nant Gwrtheyrn in its previous derelict state. I had visited the place on many occasions, and knew my father had worked on site many years previously, I kept these film reels in storage for many years, and it was only many years later during my divorce, that I found myself working at Nant Gwrtheyrn that I remembered I had this footage. I transferred this footage over to DVD in order for me to edit into the film, and this was my second largest expense of the entire shoot. This rare piece of footage that came to me by pure chance, gives a deeper meaning to *The Memory Shed*, and is used to specifically or subliminally remind the viewer that this was a film about memory, time, loss, and change. As De Jong et al. explains,

> In most instances, the archive footage used for films about the past is actually or documentary footage, thus it is the connection of the footage to the real

which gives it utility or even credibility (De Jong, Knudsen & Rothwell, 2012: 253).

The footage is also a visual bridge to span the story of both me and my father working in the same place at different times, and a way of explaining to a person who has never been to Nant Gwrtheyrn before exactly how much work as gone into the place over a period of decades. With that in mind me finding these discarded home movies were genuinely more valuable to me than the Zapruder tape, as they blend in with the look and feel of the narrative perfectly. Leon Marvell calls the experience of viewing home movies as "the experience of deep time", the journeying back through memory arriving at a mnemonic zone, a mix between the present and the past where emotions locate themselves in transit with the moving image and the self (Wilson, 2011: 1), this is exactly what Martin Scorsese does in *Hugo* by inserting real images of war to ground the film in reality.

Making a film is a collaborative process, and in order to tell my story both truthfully and tactfully I needed to enlist the help of a likeminded person. During my time at Bangor University I have collaborated on many short films and music videos with a number of different people, but to tell this story one person stood out for her tact, mannerism, personality, and professionalism, and that was Lindsay Walker. I had worked with Lindsay on a few music videos, and had the privilege of working with her on what was in effect her 'coming out' film *Bound* (2017), which to date has been viewed over a million times on YouTube.

I approached Lindsay with an idea, I told her I needed a few key scenes filming in order to tie up my photographs and home movie footage and she agreed to help. Lindsay, like myself, works on feel and is very visual, with that I mean raw emotion, the scenes I was describing to her needed to convey to an audience an

intense feeling, and Lindsay was one of the only people in the film industry I know that could work with me on this. I find it very difficult to put on paper, and to convey what I am trying to achieve, (as demonstrated in my script) but Lindsay connected with the idea straight away. I was also fortunate to have a talented composer and musician in the form of David Railton on board who agreed to compose a nostalgic and haunting score for the film.

As I have stated previously it was my intention at the beginning of my research to have an exhibition based on memory with the shed being the central focal point of the exhibition, and all the other exhibits would build upon this experience in order to create an overall nostalgic atmosphere. The exhibition was meant to be an experience that resonated within a participant and I had intended to monitor and document exactly how they felt directly after they came out of the exhibition space. These findings would then be collated and presented as my research findings along with DVDs of the films exhibited. I had intended to treat the artwork as clinical as a science experiment in much the same was as psychologist and renowned philosopher John Dewey recognised the close similarities between arts and science, who thought both art and science shared the same features with respect to the process of inquiry (1934/2009: 38).

With the project changing from an exhibition to a film as a central focal point, I now had to construct a poetic film in order to connect with a viewer in a nostalgic way and in order for me to do this, I felt that I had to open up more about myself than I had initially intended. For me to capture an audience and take them on a journey, and keep them emotionally engaged for a full forty minutes I had to pay a price. That price was an unwritten contract between me and the audience, and that in order for me to gain their trust and nostalgically connect with them I had to give them a brutally

honest experience, and part of that experience was me having to share intimate parts of my life with them.

I was a little concerned that the impact of a film couldn't be monitored in much the same way as interacting with an audience straight after an exhibition. With all my teddy bear projects for instance, a clear tangible result could be seen in the form of interaction with the public or not, however a films impact, especially a poetic experimental film which was meant to tap directly into the viewers own personal memories is much harder to monitor in academic graphs and pie charts. This is always the danger with practice-based research, however as Graeme Sullivan points out 'studio based research is not concerned with generating new information (as conventional research is) but with re-constructing existing information, its goal is to *transform* perception: to change the way we see or interpret things', (Sullivan, 2005).

Sullivan also goes on to point out that 'The role of lived experience, subjectivity and memory are seen as agents in knowledge construction and strategies such as self study, collaborations, and textual critiques are used to reveal important insights unable to be recovered by more traditional research methods.' (2006: 26).

These statements suggest to me that rather than generating new information in the form of interviews figures and statistics on whether a nostalgic art exhibition had an impact on a viewer or not, a carefully constructed piece of filmic work that 're-constructed existing information' in a bid to get the viewer to 'change the way we see or interpret things', is a legitimate and justifiable goal. So in effect If I could use my personal stories, photographs, and home movies, and reconstruct them in such a way that it created a catalyst or as Winnicott put it a transitional space, or as Moore alternatively put it, put the viewer in an *ideaspace*, where they could directly relate to what they saw on screen, then the film was a success.

The very first scene Lindsay and I filmed together was the burning of the shed that would eventually be the climatic ending to the film. As this was a one off that had to be filmed in one take with no second chances, a go-pro camera was placed one side of the shed, then a static wide shot set up on a Canon 5D was set up the opposite end of the shed, and then Lindsay would walk around me with a gimbal and a 4K Sony camera to film me as I watched the shed burn to the ground.

My brother and I had erected the shed in the field a year previously, and it had taken me the best part of a month to fill full of my possessions, I made a list and filmed every item that entered into the shed (in the exact same way as Michael Landy had documented his destruction in *Art Bin*), but I only included certain items in the finished film as a full inventory on screen would be boring even for an experimental film!

Setting up the cameras on the first day of shooting took roughly an hour, and the shed with all its contents took a little under 30 minutes to be reduced from raging inferno to cinders. The go-pro footage was edited down to make a fifteen-minute stand-alone art installation titled *Consumed* (On DVD 2 alongside *The Memory Shed*). I made this as a gallery installation to intend it to be exhibited alongside a hundred clear boxes of ash saved from the burning as a visual metaphor for transformation.

We filmed the scenes at my work place of Nant Gwrtheyrn; the scenes outside my childhood home in Rhiw, and the scene of me in the water on one long day using Lindsay's 4k camera. As I wanted the film to have a patchwork mix of different quality footage from different cameras, I decided to use the 4k camera, along with a Canon 5D for other scenes of me walking through the landscape. This was then cut in the edit to footage filmed on various phones over the past ten years. iPad footage was used alongside mini DV, I also used actual film, with 16mm footage and vintage

super 8 footage of Nant Gwrtheyrn, the 16mm clip of trees and sky in one sequence I filmed and processed myself on a course in London. This staccato approach to film is meant to juxtapose modern day from the past, the viewing experience goes from crystal clear quality to flicker and grainy to represent memory and how our memories fade over time. Gestalt psychologist Rudolf Arnheim theorises that seeing is thinking, visual thinking. Visual thinking is distinct from linguistic thinking because it takes place in mediums such as ink, paint, stone, plaster, and clay, or in video, film, and digital images (Parsons, 1998). It is my hope that the visual images and the way they are represented in the film will trigger off memories and a sense of nostalgia in the viewer, however I also realise that once a viewer watches the film, they can interpret it takes on a life of its own as Evans explains: -

> The successful filmmaker knows the power of the image and judges what information can be used in a scene and how to temper it for effect. Unfortunately, there is no opting out of this. When an audience see your film they will read into the information they are given and attach meaning to it whether you intend it or not. (Evans, 2006: 141).

Photographs play a huge part in the narrative of *The Memory Shed*, I had a small amount of photographs of me as a child but the majority of the photographs in the film were discovered in a draw in my father's room after his death. These are used sporadically first of all to document a family history, and secondly to create a nostalgic link with the past in the style of *Hugo*, *Wild Strawberries*, and *Cinema Paradiso*, as previously discussed in chapter two.

I spent roughly three weeks off and on editing the footage into a forty-minute linear experimental story that guides the viewer on a journey from present day Nant Gwrtheyrn through time from me purchasing the shed, to my divorce, to me ultimately burning the shed. As the editing progressed I noticed gaps in the narrative and ideas would emerge directly from finding these gaps in the edit. I then went out

and filmed additional the scenes and cut away shots needed to fill in these blanks, so the whole process was organic. Lindsay came over for a viewing of a rough cut I had put together, and came up with the idea of taking the linear edit I had made, and putting the pieces in different places as to keep the audience guessing. The film was always meant to be non traditional, experimental and poetic, and I welcomed her suggestions.

In amongst the footage I filmed for this film, I edited in a lot of my private home movies and clips of private moments I enjoyed with the kids as they were growing up, mainly on my days off when I was enjoying alone time with them. Evie and Indie are central to my life, and as there is no film footage of me as a child and only a handful of photographs I decided from the moment they were born to film and document even the mundane moments of bringing them up. These films were never meant to be for anything other than my private pleasure, but I have repurposed them and I have edited them into *The Memory Shed* to show the passage of time, from them being babies to today, and to show them playing, singing, eating, and doing the everyday things.

In 'Traces', *Remembrance and the Moving Image* Emma Crimmings suggests a direct link between memory and film in their relationship that form between the audience and the film itself, and also the re-emergence of an experience from the past brought into the present. It was my hope, by including intimate family moments of my children into *The Memory Shed* that an audience recognized its authenticity, in much the same way Andrew Kotting collaborates with his daughter in many of his films, and by authenticity I mean that these were non-scripted non-acted moments of life. By including real private captured moments into the film it is hoped that this not only showed progression of the children through the years, but also links into the

audience's memories of their own childhood, and their memories of raising children too.

I would argue that with the advent of camera phones certainly over the past twenty years, home movies have changed from being an event, where a family member brought out a camcorder or super 8 camera and you were very aware of the camera, to a more clandestine covert operation where you could pretend to be on your phone while secretly filming a child singing or performing. In the book *Reel Famlies* Patricia Zimmermann observes that home movie technology of the early 20th century was promoted as equipment as a "leisure time commodity", and "often directed amateurs toward creating a narrative spectacle of idealized family life (1995: 45-46).

I decided to include home video footage of Evie (with her permission) in one of her many body casts she had to wear as a child, this shows both her personal struggle and my struggle as a parent, and also the obstacles we have all overcome during the course of her childhood. Alwyn Lindsey, one of the sponsors of the 2010 Focal Awards explains 'skilfully used archive footage can tell stories and convey ideas in an incredibly compelling way' (De Jong, Knudsen & Rothwell, 2012: 253), and it is hoped I have woven these sensitive moments into my film, not to exploit or to court pity, but to provide an interesting, compelling, and cohesive narrative highlighting both the happy and sad moments I have experienced.

In *Technologies of History: Visual Media and Electricity of the Past*, Steve F. Anderson argues that experimental films which reconfigure home movies fall into one of two different kinds of projects either "films that attempt to negotiate individual or social group identity through collective memory" or "films that seek to come to terms with some aspect of personal or collective memory (2011: 90). I think my film definitely falls within the boundaries of the second category, an examination into my

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personal memory-the confronting of memory, and the moving beyond to create new memories.

I have used photographs consistently throughout *The Memory Shed*, and I decided to recreate or re-enact some of the photographs of me as a child, for instance there is one scene where I am sitting on a wall as I am waiting for the school bus, and another of me standing in front of my Grandfather's shed at about 7 years of age. I juxtapose these photographs with video footage of me today in these exact same spots to highlight the passage of time I also do this again when walking through Nant Gwrtheyrn using old photographs cut alongside modern day footage. The experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage employed similar tactics in his 1973 film *Sincerity I,* where he recreated childhood photographs in the same place, and uses old home movies to create a deep sense of nostalgia.

Two consistent elements running through *The Memory Shed* are my childhood home, and the shed that my grandfather worked in, although I only lived there for the first five years of my life (and went back over the course of the next three years to visit my Grandfather before he moved), the place is burned into my memory. I have already discussed memory in Chapter 1 and I wanted to use this film to explore my 'hiraeth' or longing for my childhood home. It was German philosopher Martin Heidegger, which said the main difference between animals and humans is that animals inhabit places, while humans dwell in places, (Heidegger, 2013: 273-291) and this would also go some way to explaining why childhood homes leave an imprint on our consciousness.

I made a conscious decision to film certain scenes especially the set pieces of me looking directly into camera (breaking the fourth wall) in black and white. My reasons for this were twofold, firstly I wanted to try and capture the surreal

atmosphere of David Lynch's *Eraserhead* which portrays a troubled Henry Spencer (Jack Nance), and secondly back and white footage also subconsciously triggers the feeling of nostalgia within a viewer, it signals 'old fashioned' in a sense; Woody Allen argues this point succinctly in *The New York Review of Books* where he comments "If I had Portrayed New York City in color (sic.), rather than black and white in my movie Manhattan, all the nostalgic connotations would have vanished. All the evocations of the city from old photographs and films would have been impossible to achieve in Technicolor" (1987: 13).

In constructing *The Memory Shed* I have attempted to use all the traits of a traditional Hollywood production to create a sense of nostalgia (as discussed in Chapter Two), the flicker of old footage and the use of old photographs being two examples, David Railton composed all the nostalgically haunting music for the film and in the final burning scene I have incorporated rhythm into the scene by combining Richard Strauss's *A Spratch Zarathustra,* made famous in particular by Stanley Kubrick in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, "heralding The Dawn of Man, and widely used in popular culture as a signifier of impending glories" (Cheal, online, accessed 19th December 2020); along with Sergei Eisenstein style montage editing, (1977: 73-75), in order to compress he essence of a forty minute film into seconds of screen time.

<u>Chapter Conclusion.</u>

The Memory Shed is a forty-minute nostalgic Situationist experimental poetic

documentary or as Carl Plantinga describes an "avant-garde nonfiction film"

(1997:175), its aim is to stir up a nostalgic within the viewer, made for £100 with the

cooperation and collaboration of a great deal of people along the way. In my humble

opinion I tell an authentic honest story in a bid to create a nostalgic atmosphere for

the viewer. I am completely aware that questions may and probably will be asked

about the authenticity and legitimacy of the work as Eitzen states, all documentaries,

poetical or otherwise, revolve around the question, "might it be lying?" (Eitzen, 1995:

81), not only do I stand by every shot and its overall intention I also feel the film is a

true snapshot of some of my memories and experiences in life.

Each photograph, and each piece of home movie footage was carefully chosen

to create an overall atmosphere, and the archive photographs and footage of Nant

Gwrtheyrn was also included to juxtapose the old and the new, to both show visually

the passage of time, the constant ebb and flow life, and provide an extra level of

meaning to the film as, DeJong, Knudsen, and Rothwell state:

> Documentary filmmakers have a responsibility to be honest with the viewer
> and treat them with respect. We are also aware of the power of the moving
> image; it is so persuasive a medium that, once an erroneous idea has been
> communicated by film, it is very difficult to make a retraction or to expunge
> that falsehood from the minds of the wider community. If, however, a viewer
> identifies a sequence of archive footage that has been misused or
> misappropriated, the rest of the film loses credibility-even if the filmmaker has
> only made one slight momentary transgression of the 'rules'. (De Jong,
> Knudsen & Rothwell, 2012: 263).

Having watched the finished film alone dozens of times, I realise the paradox

of me looking back at me looking back, the film on one level is me trying to make

sense of my life through the medium of film, however this is a realisation that has

only come to me only after I made the film, as David Hockney observes "I ask such

questions and make the theories only afterwards, not before-only after I have done something" (1993: 130).

Maxine Greene is fond of saying that art cannot change the world, but it can change someone who can (Azquotes, online accessed 2nd March 2020.), *The Memory Shed* may not win great accolades, it might not get shown in all the cinemas across the world, I am not looking to make any money off the back of it, and I fully acknowledge that the minority of people that do watch it might not get its intention or sentiment. However, hopefully it will strike a chord in one person, maybe one of my daughters in the future will look back at it and be inspired to think outside of the box, bend the rules a little and dream bigger. Hopefully it will inspire them to document more intimate private moments when they have children, to play more, to enjoy their surroundings and to acknowledge that money should never be a barrier to achieving ones dreams. As the experimental filmmaker and performance Bruce Lacey said:

> All I am Saying is Follow your instincts, follow all your silly little fantasies, your dreams, your whims, you don't know where they're going to lead…..I've come to the conclusion that playing the silly bugger is what life is really all about, I believe the child in you is what you really are (1996).

Conclusion of Thesis.

Memory is a spiritual concept! For instance, if somebody tells us of his impressions of childhood, we can say with certainty that we shall have enough material on our hands to form a complete picture of that person' (Tarkovsky, 1986:57).

In true Situationist style, I began this study with very little money, and I end this study with very little money! I wanted to explore the notion that we are born into a game of chance, and that when we are born we have no control whatsoever as to what country we are born in, we have no control over who our parents are or how we are treated. For the majority of the world we would be born into the system of capitalism, where eventually when we grow up we agree to trade our time for goods and wares in order for us to live and create better lives for ourselves. I took inspiration from Guy Debord, who as mentioned previously managed to start a whole art movement (SI) with no financial support or backing.

This study falls into two parts, first of all I wanted to explore the notion of play and nostalgia, I believed that play is magical and that anyone of any age can enter a zone of 'transitional space' of one's own making and enjoy playing. These moments are truly magical where one can safely enter a new world with new rules and forget to constraints of everyday life. The second part of this study is a practical one, I take on the role as a games master and create situations or worlds or different transitional spaces, where participants can safely interact if they wish with games I have invented.

Some of my practice work took a few days to realise results, where other games would take many years to fully realise their impact. I imposed upon myself strict monetary rules for this study, I was to recycle and reuse as much material as

possible for all my projects and I had to keep the production costs down to a bare minimum. All the short experimental filmic pieces on DVD 1 have been born as a direct result of my early practice work, which in turn have cost me absolutely nothing to make. Both films on DVD 2, the forty minute experimental *The Memory Shed* and the accompanying gallery installation *Consumed* cost me a total of £100 to produce, therefore the entire cost to produce all the works for this thesis (not counting hosting fees for the website) comes to a grand total of £100.

In Chapter One I presented the theories of D.W. Winnicott, specifically his idea that as babies in the absence of their mothers they turn to a 'transitional item', such as a blanket, thumb or cuddly toy as a bridge between themselves and their mother. I also introduced Gaston Bachelard who said, "Our house is our first universe". These were important starting points for my practice work, as I wanted to test people's responses to works made with teddy bears and representations of the home, in a bid to show how teddy bears and representations of home can act as a bridge into a transitional play space.

In the latter part of Chapter One I argued how nostalgia plays a vital part in our lives, and how advertisers use this to their advantage to sell us things that we probably do not really need as we go through life.

In Chapter Two I explore what I think are deliberate metaphors entwined within, what Guy Debord dubbed 'the Society of the Spectacle', or the narrative of the dominant mainstream cinematic productions. I explain how the clock or representations of the clock, the visual flicker or mechanical projection, sounds, and the use of carefully placed photographs within a film, are three main ingredients in making a film that is designed to carry deep nostalgic undertones.

I also explain how technology has now become so accessible that it has enabled almost anyone to become a filmmaker; however the old technologies of 8mm, super 8, 16mm, and 35mm film contain within it built in age. I compared the quality of a digital film to that of looking out of the window, but watching a film is more like looking at a historical document.

I touched upon play, and how both *Super 8*, and *Son of Rambow,* are deeply nostalgic in the way that they show the characters playing in a simplified world that has long been left behind. I argue that the instinct and desire to play is deeply rooted within us all, and that films that depict the joyous act of play trigger latent emotions within us.

In Chapter Three I described my entire body of work that led up to the making of my final film *The Memory Shed.* In the previous three chapters I touched upon theories of attachment to objects, my research on nostalgia and how nostalgia filters through our everyday lives through films and television. I describe my children's love of their teddy bears, and how this led me on a quest to gather in thousands of unwanted teddy bears in a bid to make art pieces that would touch other people's lives all around the world.

As Ervin Goffman said, "games are a world building activity" (1961: 27), I sought to build my own little worlds in order for people to play in. In effect I was a games master creating transitional spaces in order for people to play, the direct results of this play lie in both my photographic and filmic output describes in this chapter which would have never been created had I not first created the games.

I described how all my work falls into the category of time-based media, which is work that takes months, sometimes years to produce tangible results and I

then used those results (i.e. photographs and films), to create my short experimental films.

As a direct result of this study I have made a teddy bear tree, sent five teddies all around the world, sent seven teddies across the ocean, I swapped a jar of fat. I then made performance art that directly resulted in me making the six hair bricks, which were in turn swapped up to a car and beyond! I also made sculptures of two hairy chairs, and 20 Welsh cottages, and in turn swapped them for art with time served artists who all saw value in my work. The positive tangible results gleaned from my art projects prove my first thesis question. That it is in fact entirely possible, with thought time and effort, to engage nostalgically in play with people from all walks of life, all over the world in random acts of play.

Out of these projects were born four short experimental films, *Artefact, The Moon and the Trees, Bark, Frondescence.* And snippets of these short films were interweaved into my final film *The Memory Shed*, this PhD has born me enough material to hold an exhibition at a later date, two of my swapping projects are still on-going, and I am hoping to write a book, and an upbeat comedic lecture about my swapping experiences in the future.

In the second chapter I also covered how films such as *Wild Strawberries*, *Hugo*, and *Midnight in Paris,* use representations of the clock as a metaphor not only for time; but as a representation for the limited time we have on the earth, and in *The Memory Shed* I fully exploit this device in the fact that both myself, and my late grandfather share a passion for horology, and I deliberately show clocks and the sound of clocks and watches throughout the film to emphasise that the story is set in my lifetime, but it also covers the birth of my daughters and the death of both my father and grandfather.

The Memory Shed is a vehicle for both myself and the audience to nostalgically visit and explore the past, having entered my own transitional play space to write the script, I then attempt to capture the essence of a small part of my childhood on film that may or may not be accurate because as I have previously covered in Chapter One, our brains rewrite and update our memories.

The Memory Shed is as the SI would call a 'derive' through my life which begins and ends with a shed, where I revisit my past and confront all the things that I had been collecting and holding me down, mentally and physically. The film is a piece of what I have called "personal art", and it confronts my own personal memories of the past.

To date *The Memory Shed* has gained success at the Indie Fest film awards, won best experimental film at the 1st Monthly film festival for July 2022, won best experimental short at the Rohip film festival, best short experimental film at the Tamizhagam International Film Festival, and won both best sound design and best experimental film at the Art Film awards. Film Hub Wales have also picked up the film and are promoting it as 'Emerging Welsh Talent', so on this basis I feel I have answered my second question, that it is entirely possible to make a low budget film that has as Simon O'Sullivan states, an 'affect' on a viewer. If you get the combination of images, pacing sound, the photographs, the flicker, and the representations of a clock (all tools used to illicit emotion in Hollywood films), you can strike a nostalgic chord within that viewer.

One may conclude from this thesis that I do advocate strongly a new way of doing things, a fresh approach, a world in which money isn't a barrier where we can come together in a sense of play and wonderment with the view to think up new solutions to old problems. My research has shown it is absolutely possible to engage

in the act of play with people across the world using nothing a simple nostalgic trigger such as a teddy bear and a little bit of ingenuity. My films also prove that the preconceived notion of filmmaking to be outside the scope of the man in the street because it is expensive or difficult is also false.

I truly believe that a new world is possible, one in which we could stop making millions of tonnes of new items for the sake of it, and instead concentrate on making one good thing that lasts longer, or with parts that are easily replaceable. I have shown how barter on a small-scale works, where we take unwanted items we have lying around and swap them on for something we actually do need regardless of their perceived value. I took a jar of fat and traded it up to a car in a very short space of time however I also acknowledge that bartering for all its benefits is only part of the solution, and to make a real change in society would take a radical change in the way we both perceive and interact in the world.

Although the work required for this thesis is now complete, my work with the material gained from this study is far from done. It has taken me many years longer than I had hoped with countless struggles self-imposed and otherwise, to test Winnecott's theories within a Situationist framework, to create simple and complex games of chance, to engage with people all over the world, and to create a short no budget film that would create an effect within a viewer. In one sense I have achieved everything I had set out to achieve, however for this to be truly a Situationist piece of work, for me to fully embrace the Situationist mindset, then I wouldn't have done the changes required of me following the viva!

Guy Debord and all of his followers would have never agreed to make any changes to their thesis, and would have sacrificed the chance for a PhD in order to

retain their sense of authenticity! So in one sense I have proven several of my points, but in another sense I have sold out for a cap gown and certificate.

The Memory Shed is still doing the film festival rounds, where I will then put it up on Vimeo for public access, I have amassed enough material through this study to hold an exhibition at a future date, I also have enough excess footage to make at least two short films, and I intend to push *Consumed* around the festival circuit in the next couple of months. Both the Welsh cottage project and www.swaptothetop are still ongoing projects based on the swapping of items as described, and I am hoping to maximise on these projects in future.

I mentioned previously in this thesis that Stewart Home described the Situationists as having a desire to 'build a new world', and it is only in retrospect I have come to the realisation that this PhD has enabled me to 'build a New World' not for the public in general…..but a New World for myself.

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