

John HUGHES

An Investigation Into The Capture And Public Display Of
The Acton Town Otter

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
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Recordings

An Investigation Into The Capture And Public Display Of The Acton Town Otter consists of the following seven CASES: BULL BRIDGE BOLLO, GOING GREEN, GONE TO EARTH, IN THE NAME OF THE OTTER, OFF THE RAILS, THE LAZY RAILWAY, and THIS IS THE GUNNERSBURY TRIANGLE WAKE plus BONUS TRACKS and DEMOS.

To listen to the Investigation please go to:

<https://thelazyrailway.info>

Password: Otter

CASE NOTES

The physical version of this thesis consists of the following:

Poster

A4 CASE Notes – Document A, An A-Z Investigation..., Document B, Endnotes, Bibliography, Thanks

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PDF versions of these documents can also be accessed via

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Abstract

This PhD explores sonic narrative writing as contemporary art practice. It is situated within my immediate work environment: as a Station Supervisor positioned in London Underground stations during the 'Engineering Hours' night shift. A strange and little-known part of London Transport history is used as a starting point: the capture and public display of wildlife killed at the time of electrification of the underground railway during its expansion into suburbia at the start of the 20th Century.

The PhD consists of 7 sound based narrative compositions, hosted on a dedicated website, and includes a DIY garden on a disused platform at Acton Town underground station. Embracing the materials and territory of my work environment opens up expansive and political possibilities for embedded narrative. Through the performance of a fiction, the research addresses the political realities of a working environment where the loss of jobs and the replacement of the workforce with automation is seen as progress.

I employ a DIY punk approach to sound collage, strengthening connections between art-based narrative and experimental music. Adopting a feminist theoretical framework the narrative satirises masculine sensibilities, telling a mix of fantastical, animalistic and homo-social stories, often with a comic and satirical slant, that cross the boundaries of propriety and prescribed outcomes.

The particular setting of the research – a nocturnal blue-collar work environment, one closely focussed on surveillance – becomes the experiential basis from which to pervert the conventional role of the uniformed male observer on display in city spaces.

Document A > Entry

Set in my place of work

This research explores sonic narrative writing as contemporary art practice. The PhD consists of 7 sound based narrative compositions, hosted on a dedicated website. The PhD is situated within my immediate work environment: as a Station Supervisor positioned in London Underground stations during the 'Engineering Hours' night shift.¹ Embracing materials and territory of my work environment opens up expansive and political possibilities for embedded narrative. My methodology is responding to site and location; telling stories, and combining field recording, sound foley and music. This is how I approach the field of sonic narrative writing as contemporary art practice, shaping my PhD's contribution to knowledge. Being on the inside, as part of the Underground workforce gives the research a unique perspective.

A strange and little-known part of London Transport history is used as a starting point: the capture and public display of wildlife killed at the time of electrification of the underground railway during its expansion into suburbia at the start of the 20th Century. As a narrative device the research uses a photograph of stuffed animals that were displayed in Mansion House underground station in 1912 and Charing Cross underground station in 1929, including a female otter captured at Acton Town station on the 4th April 1911. The narrative satirises masculine sensibilities, telling a mix of fantastical, animalistic and homo-social stories, often with a satirical slant, that cross the boundaries of propriety and prescribed outcomes. The unique setting and perspective of undertaking artistic research in a nocturnal blue-collar work environment, one closely focussed on surveillance, is used to pervert the conventional role of the uniformed male observer on display in city spaces.

¹ I joined London Underground as a Station Assistant at London Bridge underground station in 2006. I had just completed a Fine Art MA at Chelsea College of Art, working in sound installation, writing and storytelling. In 2016 as part of *Fit for Future* (the Company's controversial operational changes (read cuts and severance programme) I was promoted to the role of Station Supervisor on the Acton Town Group. This new role involved regular night shift work and permanent lone working in stations between Acton Town and Hounslow Central. At the same time I started a PhD in Contemporary Art Research at Kingston School of Art.

DIY sound and narrative

A DIY experimental approach to sound and narrative is central to the methodology. The PhD tests different combinations of text and sound, using music, song, sound collage, field recording, sound foley, and voice. It raises the following questions: what happens when text is punctured by sound? How does the use of sound change the narrative? And how might this approach contribute towards a feminist perspective in navigating city spaces? I will now answer these questions in this document by explaining my approach to DIY sound collage and by addressing my contribution to the field of sonic narrative writing as contemporary art practice.

Audio recordings and documents

An Investigation Into The Capture And Public Display Of The Acton Town Otter consists of the following seven CASES: BULL BRIDGE BOLLO, GOING GREEN, GONE TO EARTH, IN THE NAME OF THE OTTER, OFF THE RAILS, THE LAZY RAILWAY, and THIS IS THE GUNNERSBURY TRIANGLE WAKE. The CASES are audio recordings, arranged into tracks (available as full length, downloadable soundscape versions), and can be listened to in any order.

To listen to the Investigation please see the included poster or go to:

<https://thelazyrailway.info> **Password:** Otter

Unbound narrative connects to this PhD's themes of disappearance and identity. We each have different relationships with London Underground station spaces. We each have different entry and exit points. Our journeys on the network can start and end anywhere. There is no shared fixed point. The rhizomatic website design of the PhD reflects this relationship.² The PhD is set up to be played, paused, entered and exited, and 'moved through' at the listeners choice.

The PhD includes a series of bound and unbound textual materials titled CASE NOTES. Presented as printed matter (and also PDF versions located on the website) these documents contextualise the audio, expand on their socio-political themes and explain the methodology behind the research. The physical copies of CASE NOTES reference the materials delivered to underground stations at night. An orange internal mail envelope, an A4 bound document and a poster tube; the type of textual material also found in box files, filing cabinets and over spilling desk drawers in the Station Supervisor's Office. The bound Document is loosely based on the printed Train Timetables I check each night at the close and start of traffic. The orange envelope

² 'A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things.' Deleuze and Guattari, quoted in Laurie Cluitmans (ed.), *On The Necessity Of Gardening* (Amsterdam, Valiz, 2021), p.160

document playfully references the texture (sugar paper) and faded colours of staff bulletins and notices, and replicates the envelopes used for our Internal Mail.³ The cardboard poster tube is a nod to night shift poster duties.

³ In *A Memo For Mr J (CASE: Going Green, Track 1)* a photograph is delivered to the night turn Station Supervisor at Hounslow Central station in an orange envelope.

Night shift narrative

I have developed a set of fictions that capture the experience of working in the stations at night. On the night shift I feel strange, lonely, fearful, anxious, stressed. I also feel relaxed, carefree, radical, subversive, and alive. The stories of this investigation track the conflicting states experienced behind the private locked doors of my Station Supervisor's Office. This is not an exposé of working for Transport for London. It is not a fly on the wall documentary style day in the life of a Station Supervisor. It does however, through the performance of a fiction, address the political realities of a working environment where the loss of jobs and the replacement of the workforce with automation is seen as progress.

The Investigation Into The Capture And Public Display Of The Acton Town Otter is open-ended. There is no set beginning. There is no fixed ending. The investigation is an on-going process, using a loose, interwoven narrative that the listener can enter at any stage. Different narratives cut backwards and forwards, across one another, split off and slice. This includes a public DIY garden, a narrative spin off, *a loop*, set on a disused platform at Acton Town station. Known as *the lazy railway* it is a guerrilla garden, grown from a stray seed that brings the animals from the photographs of Mansion House and Charing Cross underground stations back to West London.

DIY punk sound collage

In each of the 7 audio recordings I explore how combinations of sound collage, narrative, and voice, work differently. The grammar of my sound recordings is rough and raw, possessing a demo like quality. I record on site, at night and I never re-use the same field recording. I am not interested in building a sound archive. The short stories I write to create the narrative are written at work during the night shift. Recording and writing at work, when I should be working, is an important part of my DIY Punk approach to sound collage and the field of listening.

My use of sound foley and musical instruments is off the cuff, quick, one-off and improvised, responding on the spot, often by working with others, as I start combining the sound and text together. I narrate and combine my voice with my recordings using a low-fi cut and paste method. This DIY approach to sound collage is how the use of sound changes the narrative as this combination gives it an edge. The use of sound foley adds a playful satire and a further layer to the fantastical elements in the narrative. The collaging of the three elements together, voice, narrative, and sound, is what punctures the text. When this happens we listen differently.

Each part of the PhD has been publicly tested as radio broadcast and/or live sound event.⁴ The live events share an 'off stage' non-central location: a backroom in a Hackney Caribbean Rum Bar, a disused shop front on Surbiton High Street, a Bowling Green in Bude, Cornwall, a West London Nature Reserve landlocked between railway tracks. I think of narrative in sonic terms; mixing, sampling and dj-ing text and sound together. I use live performances as a way to test my writing. I approach live sound events as opportunities to edit the material, an invitation for the narrative to be handled, re-shaped and

⁴ Versions of the *Acton Town Otter Investigation* have been broadcasts on Resonance Extra (in 2019, 2020 and 2022) as part of Radiophrenia (Mark Vernon and Barry Burns) a temporary art radio station broadcasting intermittently from the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow. <https://radiophrenia.scot/>

worked into, creating new and different versions—an example of how sonic narrative writing can open and change through ‘live’ sound events.

Sonic narrative writing as contemporary art practice

Janet Cardiff's *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* (1999) and Katrina Palmer's *The Loss Adjusters* (2015) are key works in my field of site specific sonic narrative writing and listening. Both artists test combinations of sound collage, narrative, voice, and location, to be listened to on site.⁵ In 'The Urge To Disappear' Ruth Bretherick describes Cardiff's audio walk, set in Whitechapel, London, as 'a disjointed narrative', one that constantly shifts. The listener is on the 'trail of the missing woman.'⁶ Through her hushed voice Cardiff sets the scene of a woman late at night, being pursued yet at the same time doing the pursuing, on the edge of disappearing. The relationship between recorded voiced text and journey opens up a space for the listener. As listeners we are complicit. We follow instructions. Listening out to clipped, confessional, detached and highly mediated voices.⁷ In *The Loss Adjusters* Katrina Palmer uses the territory of Easton, Isle of Portland as 'a vast ready made social sculpture'.⁸ She lived on site. 'Discovering paths' and 'those walks enabled me to invest in that imagined world'.⁹ Palmer uses an embedded approach to narrative. Her aim was to 'create an experience of locations and encounters where the everyday and the fictional intersect'.¹⁰

The Acton Town Otter Investigation has been written and recorded whilst on duty during the night shift. Situated in my immediate work environment the narrative purposely plays on the swing between hallucinatory euphoria and agitated comedown that I experience first hand through nocturnal lone

⁵ *Artangel* has made both works downloadable, allowing the listener to either listen to the works anywhere or to listen on site. *An Investigation Into The Capture and Public Display Of The Acton Town Otter* is also downloadable. Although it is not an audio walk the option to download the soundscapes means they can be listened to on site.

⁶ Ruth Bretherick, 'The Urge To Disappear: Janet Cardiff's Audio Walks in London and New York', *Oxford Art Journal* 43.3, 2020, p.430

⁷ Sarah Gorman (2003) Wandering and Wondering, *Performance Research*, 8:1,83-92, DOI: 10.1080/13528165.2003.10871912

⁸ Gilda Williams (2015) <https://www.artforum.com/print/reviews/201507/katrina-palmer-54558>

⁹ Katrina Palmer in Jamie Sutcliffe, 'Interview With Katrina Palmer', *The White Review*, September 2015 <https://www.thewhitereview.org/feature/interview-with-katrina-palmer/>

¹⁰ Katrina Palmer, *The White Review*, September 2015

working. I record in the Hounslow East Electricity Switch Rooms and inside the Cash Handling Devices at South Ealing, picking up electromagnetic sounds with a bat detector. I record in the Men's Public Toilets at Hounslow Central, the disused World War Two Air Raid shelter at Sudbury Town, the old City and South London Railway Tunnels inside London Bridge. At 4am I record the points switching as the first train leaves Northfields Depot. I use a mix of hand recorders, contact microphones and hydrophones. I also record in territory outside station property: The Great West Road, The Gunnersbury Triangle, The Grand Union Canal, Boston Manor Park, and the M4 Flyover. I record goats at Surrey Docks Farm (a trip inspired by Bedwyr Williams' talking goat in *The Gulch* (2016), Barbican). I use a mix of analogue and digital recording equipment; tape recorders, vinyl, stylophone, and SAMPLR app.

I also introduce cut up literary texts. One or two sentences of literary fiction sampled, twisted and sculpted, broken into the soundscape, to be used as a starting point or to change the rhythm and tempo.¹¹ Edgar Allan Poe's short story *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar* (1845) and *In Bed With Zed*, Katrina Palmer's short story in her novel *The Dark Object* (2010) were my starting points for *I Am Lying On The Westbound Platform With An Omelette On My Face* (CASE: *This Is The Gunnersbury Triangle Wake*, Track 4). Both the short stories feature a lamella style *Thing* and in the *Acton Town Otter Investigation* this translates into a mask-like omelette, used as bait in an attempt to attract and seek out the missing Acton Town otter.

Writing on hauntological music, in particular reference to the UK Ghost Box Label, Simon Reynolds describes 'a musique concrete / radio play element of spoken word and found sounds'.¹² A sense of half erased songs and forms not quite realised. A type of recording that reveals the hiss, revelling,

¹¹ In *The Acton Town Otter Investigation* I have used literary texts as samples in the following tracks. *The Plot* (CASE: *Gone To Earth*, Track 2) samples Franz Kafka's unfinished short story *The Burrow* (1931). *The Owls Of South Harrow* (CASE: *Going Green*, Track 6) uses Piers Connor's Capital Transport publication *Going Green* (1933). *The Bunker Part 2* (CASE: *In The Name Of The Otter*, Track 3) uses Ithell Colquhoun's *The Living Stones* (1957).

¹² Simon Reynolds, *Retromania* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), p.328

yearning, in the referencing.¹³ In *Doing The Weasel Sneak* (CASE: *In The Name Of The Otter*, Track 7) I play a scratched *I Was Dora Suarez* vinyl and press record with my tape recorder. I press fast-forward, rewind and then press the pause button lightly, with an extra light touch so the tape is still recording. I capture distortion mixed with a stutter of Derek Raymond's voice, a particular London voice that is now little heard.

My soundscapes combine field recording and spoken word. As I build the soundscape I also add in recorded sounds from musical instruments (guitars, drums, keyboards, electronic synthesisers) and quick, improvised DIY sound foley. This can add further meaning to the delivery of a phrase and give the narrative its humour and edge. For example, in *A Memo For Mr J* (CASE: *Going Green*, Track 1) I record the sawing of a cardboard tube to create a sense of repetition, as a way to convey the essence of repetition and day-to-day tedium of my job. I then mix this with DIY improvised pig noises.

Combining these sounds with a story recalling a colleague's sexual boasts shows how experimental sound foley and focussed field recording when combined with text can add deeper layers to the narrative scene. A short video in *CASE NOTES / Document A* shows an example of how I make and record sound foley.

Using sound foley helps convey an image for the listener. It is also make believe, a creative invention, an illusion and therefore a form of deception. DIY animal sounds are used as a satirical device throughout the investigation. *CASE: Going Green* (*A Memo For Mr J and The Owls Of South Harrow*), *CASE: Bull Bridge Bollo* (*Horse Power*) and *CASE: In The Name Of The Otter* (*The Bunker Part 1 and 2*, *Hide and Seek*) all involve various sounds of pigs, dogs, horses, and goats. In *CASE: In The Name Of The Otter* (*The Bunker Part 3 and Doing The Weasel Sneak*) a comic book style vocabulary is mixed in a playful way to address the mood and political realities of a night time analogue workplace. For example, voicing the sound of sleep (zzzzz) or gurgling (recording speaking in a snorkel with my head under bathwater).

¹³ Reynolds, p.330.

Testing demo versions of *CASE: This Is The Gunnersbury Triangle Wake* at the ICA Studio (2019) and later in the year on an outdoor bowling green in Bude, Cornwall, I handed out latex animal masks for the group to wear. In *I Am Lying on The Westbound Platform With An Omelette On my Face*, everything the narrator sees and hears is focussed through the omelette. And seen and heard through the omelette everything around the narrator looks cut out and muffled, sampled through two small cartoon holes. Covered up and cut off from each other we start to listen differently.

Working night into day

I convey everyday encounters from the workplace through a surreal storytelling. The realities of my workplace are therefore transformed by inviting-in the gaps. By this I mean I am responding to the narrative space found between being 'on' and 'off-stage'.¹⁴ The night shift pattern in particular leans towards this feeling of being between stages, working night into day, being awake and asleep at the same time in a half public half private space. Even with the best intentions it is very difficult to keep my eyes open past 03.30. I find I start to drift in and out of consciousness and images on the CCTV dissolve into unformed shapes. In *The Plot (CASE: Gone To Earth, Track 2)* Franz Kafka's unfinished short story *The Burrow* (1931) is conveyed through CCTV monitoring as a way to address this feeling of self-disappearance. *The Bunker Part 1, 2 & 3 (CASE: In The Name Of The Otter, Track 2, 3 & 4)* articulates the embedded position I have taken up in my work environment and how these 'between' spaces open up encounters for the 'outside' to speak. By doing this I have created a space for the performance of a fiction.¹⁵

¹⁴ This relates to the idea of fictioning being 'a bit outside' the literary world. Carrie Lambert-Beatty, 'Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility' in *October*, Summer, 2009, Vol.129 (Summer, 2009), pp.51-84

¹⁵ Simon O'Sullivan stresses the transforming powers of fiction. Simon O'Sullivan, *Fiction As Method* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017), p.53

The strange world of circling masculinities

My stories satirise men's behaviour in city spaces. My method is to fiction my on-going experience of working the night shift through light comedy. Set in my work environment the narrative plays on the acceptable boundaries of personal space between men. This is an embedded approach, used as a method to contribute to the field of feminist city space. Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (2001), Lauren Elkin's *Flaneuse: Women Walk The City* (2016) and Leslie Kern's *Feminist City* (2020) provide the theoretical framework for this PhD. Their writing on walking and cities provide a feminist approach to understanding city spaces.¹⁶

'A feminist city must be one where barriers—physical and social—are dismantled, where all bodies are welcome and accommodated. A feminist city must be care centered...'¹⁷

Kern describes how the fear of navigating threatening and controlling male behaviour in public spaces is then displaced into the edges of these spaces. For example, the badly lit end of a station platform, footbridges, subways, and dark passageways.¹⁸

Although I am writing from within a blue-collar working environment I am also very aware that I am writing from a position of privilege. These stories would take on a different edge if told by someone else. And, if they happened in real life to someone without my privilege as a white male, they would have a different meaning and (potentially ugly, traumatic) connotations. Everything changes when something is living. A brick lobbed up in the air at a fellow passenger in a narrated fiction (*They Stood Around On Bollo Lane Junction, CASE: The Lazy Railway, Track 5*) does not have the same near tragic consequences as when this scene occurs in reality. In *CASE NOTES*,

¹⁶ Solnit's *Men Explain Things To Me* (2014) and Nina Power's *What Do Men Want? Masculinity and Its Discontents* (2022) have also informed and educated my research.

¹⁷ Leslie Kern, *Feminist City* (London: Verso, 2020), p.54

¹⁸ Kern, p.149

Document B, I use a text to explain how groups of people always look worse on CCTV. If the cartoon characters Tom and Jerry escaped out of our TV screens and into our front rooms their violent comic acts would take on a terrifying dimension, rather than a humorous one. As David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan state, fictioning is offering alternative worlds to an existing world and can 'take on a critical power when it is set against, or foregrounded within, a given reality.' They propose the term 'mythopoesis' to explain a type of fictioning 'as productive of worlds, people and communities to come, often drawing upon residual and emergent cultures.'¹⁹

The bounded space of fiction combined with sound is how I address our interactions in city spaces. Using comic narrative foregrounds fiction as method. This is because it transforms the re-telling of a real life experience. The comedy changes the re-telling and prevents it from being a fly on the wall style documentary. In my stories everyday encounters and incidents from the workplace embrace elements of surreal magic realism. This is how I approach and address notions of class and sexual politics in our public spaces. *Am I Here Or Am I There (CASE: The Lazy Railway, Track 6)*, is a story set in South Ealing station on a Saturday night involving a hen, a life size plastic sex doll, and a pack of fox clubs. Taken from a line in Virginia Woolf's *Street Haunting* (1927) the track raises notions of identity and gender inequality by highlighting the different relationships men and women have in public spaces, how we connect with each other and the rules that apply. *Street Haunting* is Woolf's call for an ungendered place in the city through a dissolving of identity. A disappearance within the crowd to escape the 'trappings of our lives.'²⁰ It is by fictioning a satirical narrative from inside the locked doors of the underground station, rather than recording, documenting or transcribing the experience, that opens up the feminist political potential of this PhD.²¹

¹⁹ David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan, *Fictioning* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), p.1-2

²⁰ Virginia Woolf, *Street Haunting* (London: Read Books, 2012), p. 21

²¹ The two leading examples of a 'recording, documenting or transcribing' approach to relating the Underground environment are Nina Wakeford's *Our Pink Depot* (2019) and Molly Dineen's *Heart of the Angel* (1989).

The mutual boundaries between the political and the sexual are shifted through the telling of animalistic night shift encounters in the station. For example, *A Bear Walks In Off The Boston Manor Road (CASE: Off The Rails, Track 1)*. There is an edge to this story. A sense that social and political lines, involving race, class, age, and position, are being crossed through the playing of power games.²² ‘Thirsty work eh boy’ has historical racist connotations. The difference in dirty and clean work, and the way it is perceived within British society, is being highlighted in terms of class and race. One character sits in a position of power, upright in an office swivel chair, whilst the other is down on the floor, digging on their hands and knees. There is a vulnerability to the young bear that manifests itself through his clumsy, awkward actions and steamed up glasses. The term bear is gay slang. Used to describe or self identify as a heavy set gay or bisexual man, one who projects an image of desired rugged masculinity. Therefore, a playful erotic absurdity to the narrative exists. Yet it is also loaded with a suggestion of sinister sexual encounter. Portrayed through the imagining of the ‘bear’ propping his leg up on the mess room water cooler, showing off his bruises, exclaiming to an audience of work colleagues, ‘look everyone, look what just happened to me.’ A sense of violence in the narrative is aided by the sound of grinding rock guitar.

This is the strange world of circling masculinities in our station’s engineering hours. The roles played out between supervisors and contractors in the close of traffic. Needing each other to get what we want. Unlocking doors. Going to fix the public toilet together at 2am, somehow finding oneself in tight cupboard spaces at 4am with a total stranger, thinking: how did I get here? The stories acknowledge an under the cover companionship that does exist, compared to the ‘real life’ atmosphere outside during the day shift. Secrets and confidences are confided between strangers at night. (See *Document B*).

²² Roy Claire Potter’s soundwork *Nike Scally Leather Glove Smoke* (2017) engages with themes of class and gender. As part of CHAVSCUMBOSS, the work addresses uneasy notions of power and control through watching the performance of masculinity by the YouTube user of the same name.

Working on the stations at night there is a real sense of being on the inside, welded together behind the locked door.

The other tracks in *CASE: Off The Rails* also embrace depictions of animality as a means to further explore how certain masculinities oppress and antagonise other men. In *Whatever Happened to JG Ballard* (Track 2) and *The Man With The Crow Medallion* (Track 6) this is depicted through a silver haired fox-like character throwing a John Lewis BBQ set off his balcony in Chelsea Creek and the transformation of a red-faced angry man into a pig. In *Mr. Mole's Trousers* (Track 4) it is the absurdity of being followed around the station by a man wearing two pairs of trousers simultaneously. In *A Swan Below* (Track 3) the anxiety of communicating with men in positions of power is represented through the narrator's description of having an army of mice run riot in the pit of their stomach. In *Its 3AM And This Horse Looks Spanish* (Track 5) a Spanish horse wearing a backpack is observed having outdoor nocturnal sex with a fox up against the station poster frame. The use of synthesiser throughout the tracks in *CASE: Off The Rails* is used to add to a sense of out of sync, skewered, end of the Brighton pier cabaret in the stories.

This combined mixture of using animal characters, off beat comedy and out of sync music is how I approach the fictioning of my workplace. Sound foley, music, and the timing of a well-delivered comic line provide satirical edge, as shown by the works of Ivor Cutler, early David Bowie, and Anthony Newley.²³ The combination of sound and comic narratives position the fiction of my workplace, rather than its harsh realities, at the forefront.

²³ This PhD has been influenced by cult British 20th Century Comedy TV Series, in particular, *The Strange World Of Gurney Slade* (1960), *The Singing Detective* (1986) and *Lipstick On Your Collar* (1993). Together with Ivor Cutler they are examples of works that engage audiences with performances of a surreal comic-tragic storytelling, one that playfully combines song and narrative. David Bowie's 1967 studio album (tracks *Uncle Arthur* and the *Little Bomardier*), Half Man Half Biscuit (*The Light At The End Of The Tunnel* (2002) and Kirsty MacColl (*Fifteen Minutes* (1989) and *England 2 Columbia 0* (2000) are good examples of the type of narrative, satire and music combinations that I am interested in.

A white male in uniform

Horrific sexual abuse and acts of violence by men against women, and men against men, regularly occur on the London Underground network. Women still can't walk in the city the way a man can. As a man walking on the street I am conscious of when I walk behind or towards a woman. I am conscious of man-spreading on the seat of a bus or tube. Working in Underground stations I am very aware of the daily harassment and abuse that is directed towards women passengers and staff, day and night. From working extreme shifts I have a long experience of waiting at bus stops in the middle of the night, catching the night bus, walking through the city at 2am and I am very aware as I do this that the freedom of thought and movement I have as a white male in uniform is not the same experience for women. A man in uniform. More so than ever we should be thinking of this. Sarah Everard. Sabina Nessa. Ashling Murphy. As men we have an absolute duty and responsibility to call out male harassment towards women and others. We have an absolute duty to measure and consider our movements and gestures in a city and to continuously think how they can be perceived and interpreted.

Public city spaces are contested spaces and to make positive change there is a need for these spaces to be read from a feminist perspective. My method in contributing to this conversation is by taking my immediate work environment and relaying every day encounters with satire through the space of fiction. I play on the pomposity of being a man in uniform. Idiotic, neurotic, and aggressive masculinity is satirised through stories of complaints, rigmarole, and games of power. Fiction allows this. It enables us to act out scenes of impropriety and by hearing out loud their absurdity we can untether and acknowledge controlling behavior in city spaces.

My Station Supervisors Office sprawls into a DIY garden

My lazy railway garden is temporary, precarious, a Punk DIY garden in Acton Town station. Part private. Part public. It could disappear at any moment. A container garden in a hybrid space, it constantly moves and changes. It is never static. The flowers go off in different directions. Everyday surprises. Contradictions. Ants. Aphids. Bees. Butterflies. Spiders. Flies. Plans unravel. The flowers dry out. Die. Suddenly. Slowly. *Quick SUPA! Keep watering.* This garden is my response to lone working. Disappearing from a Central London position. Spending 7.5 hours in one-person Zone 3 and 4 stations. Looking for a missing stuffed otter. My night shift station supervisor's office sprawls out, opens up into the space.

I build the flower containers from recycled, found and discarded objects, using disused Station Office equipment. Filing Cabinets. Lockers. Metal Drawers. Lids broken off with pliers, holes drilled in their bottoms and painted deep cadmium orange, deep cadmium yellow, green. The insides of car wheels I found, thrown over the wall by the neighbouring mechanics on Bollo Lane. Oil drums and rubber car tyres recycled, re-used as flowerpots, a refurbished railway 'Trolley' from neighbouring Acton Works, rescued and restored by a generous Train Operator. Old silver mop 'cleaner' buckets. Scaffolding planks. Two birdbaths made from upside down dustbin lids, on red bricks (with red water).

Concrete sculptures, scrap metal welds, steel drums, copper, rubber tyres, red engineering bricks, weeds, ants, gravel, stones, butterflies, bees. Italian Clover. Oregano. Giant Sunflowers. Geraniums. Holly Hock. Salvias. Cosmos. Nasturtiums. Lavender. Poppy. Re-seeds and appears in unexpected places. Tomatoes. Up against the Sub-station wall. Rhubarb. Pansies. Wallflowers. Strawberries. (Coming soon.) Roses. Olive trees. Foxglove. Jasmine. Sweet peas. Nuts, bolts, broken scaffolding parts. Copper wire. Red engineering bricks lobbed up in the air. Water butts. Gravel. Stones. Set in Crazy Katz style love triangles. No CCTV. An otter.

The best view of the lazy railway garden is through the window of a passing District S Stock train from Ealing Common, heading eastbound to Barking and Upminster, Cars 6 & 7.

**An A – Z Investigation Into The Capture And Public Display Of The
Acton Town Otter**

Forward

Fictioning seven journeys through a group of West London railway territories that exist on the edges of canals and motorways, the investigation follows the story of a strange and little-known part of London Transport history: the capture and public display of wildlife killed at the time of electrification of the underground railway during its expansion into suburbia at the start of the 20th Century.

The investigation starts with a photograph of an exhibition of stuffed animals that took place in Mansion House underground station from 1912 and Charing Cross underground station, in the upper interchange subway, from 1929 to 1936. Both exhibitions included a female otter captured at Acton Town on the 4th April 1911.²⁴ This exhibition was known by staff as 'The District Railway Zoo' and is referenced in Charles Pears' iconic 1915 Underground Electric publication *An Alphabet of T.O.T. (Train. Omnibus. Tram)*.²⁵

Yet why was there an otter at Acton Town station in the first place? Why was she then stuffed and put on public display? And where is she now?

²⁴ Caroline Warhurst, (London Transport Museum Information Services Manager) wrote a blog for the Museum on July 25th 2016 revealing her discovery that by enlarging the Mansion House exhibition photograph the plaque underneath the otter clearly states 'Female otter caught at Acton Town station 4 April 1911'.

²⁵ Mike Horne (London Transport historian, died 2020) reveals the *T.O.T. Magazine November 1929* reference to the District Railway Zoo in his book *London's District railway: A History of the Metropolitan District Railway Volume Two Twentieth Century* (London: Capital Transport, 2019), p.257.

The death of the Acton Town otter was first reported in The Daily News on Wednesday April 5th 1911 with the following bulletin:

‘At Acton Town station, on the District Railway, yesterday, a large otter was found in a manhole. It died shortly afterwards, possibly on account of an electric shock, as it had been seen running across the metals.’

In *London’s Natural History* (1945) R.S.R Fitter provides a detailed account of the electrification of the railways and the consequences this had on London’s wildlife community. Fitter writes:

‘Badgers are quite often killed by trains, and the London Passenger Transport Board once had a somewhat grisly exhibition at Charing Cross station of the badgers, otters and foxes that had been run over by its trains.’²⁶

A description of the Acton Town otter can also be found in Piers Connor’s *Going Green*, a 1993 Capital Transport publication:

‘So many birds and beasts were killed by District trains on the countrified South Harrow branch that the District set up a natural history collection of stuffed creatures in glass cases, which was displayed at Charing X in the 1920s. These included an otter caught in April 1911, a barn owl caught in November 1912, a nightjar, and two tawny owls, killed in March 1925.’²⁷

Using these clues and drawing on Charles Pears’ *An Alphabet of T.O.T* as inspiration, this A – Z works as an interweaving narrative that runs parallel with the recordings.

²⁶ R.S.R. Fitter, *London’s Natural History* (London: Bloomsbury Books, 1945), p.159

²⁷ Piers Connor, *Going Green* (London: Capital Transport Publication, 1993), p.40

Acton: in old English the word Acton means ‘actun’, a settlement among the oaks. Bollo Lane, which runs to the side of our station, means ‘Bull Hollow’. (On Bollo Lane look for a blue door by the red brick wall of Acton Town sub-station. This ‘no public access’ door leads directly to *the lazy railway garden*). There was once a Bull Hollow bridge (today Bollo Bridge Road marks the spot) and underneath ran one of the 13 lost rivers of London, the Boller Brook (which, when it rains, re-surfaces partially in The Gunnersbury Triangle). You see how it’s all connected. Hmm. Like mud.

Acton Town Gardens: a new housing complex next to the Station, this is the multi-billion-pound development of affordable homes that no one can afford. However, as Acton Town Gardens is *the* destination London experience, everyone, and I mean everyone, wants to live here. This expanding re-development project on Bollo Lane, introducing 2,800 new homes, will transform the dynamics of how we run our station. Crowd control here we come. Uncertainty is thick in the air. TfL land, including Bollo House, where Management and the Piccadilly Train Operators are based, has been sold off in our continuous (and increasingly desperate) bid to improve finances, setting in motion a game of very slow played dominoes. The car mechanic workshops lining Bollo Lane (and whose car tires have been recycled into lazy railway flower containers) have been purchased, a mysterious fire in February 2022 speeding up the process. Our Train Operators shall have a new home! The long-term future of disused platform 5, home of the lazy railway remains far from secure.

Now. Before Acton Town Gardens became the number one destination spot in London it was an industrial area made up of work units and car repair shops and before that it was known as Soap Suds Island. In the early 20th Century, Acton Town was famous for its laundries. At one stage there were over 205 laundries in this tight industrial stretch of west London. Before that it was the countryside but then, wasn’t everywhere?

Acton Town Garden: Acton Town station once had a magnificent station garden and won fourth prize in 1922 in the District Railway station gardens competition. This annual competition is now titled Underground in Bloom. Last year Acton Town station won First Place in the category of John Knight Award (Tubs, Hanging Baskets and Window Boxes) in Underground in Bloom Competition 2021. This year’s award ceremony is in the third week of September 2022.

Acton Town Otter: a female otter captured at Acton Town on the 4th April 1911.

Acton Town Otter, Exhibition Charing Cross Underground: an exhibition of stuffed animals (including the Acton Town otter, a nightjar and two tawny owls) that took place in Charing Cross underground station (now Embankment) from 1929 - 1936. In *Practising Being An Otter At Charing Cross Station (CASE: Going Green, Track 3)* the original identity of the stations results in a mix up, involving a puddle of spilt coca cola.

Acton Town Otter, Exhibition Mansion House Underground: the exhibition first took place at Mansion House underground station, from 1912, and is referenced in Charles Pears' iconic 1915 Underground Electric publication *An Alphabet of T.O.T. (Trains. Omnibus. Tram)*. The exhibition of 'stuffed creatures' at Mansion House and Charing Cross underground stations in the early 1900s show the authority the new electrification had over London wildlife.

Acton Town Station: opened as Mill Hill Park on the 1st July 1879. On the 1st March 1910 the station changed its name to Acton Town. Rebuilt extensively between 1931 and 1932, the Piccadilly line first served the Acton tracks on the 4th July 1932. The re-building of Acton Town was designed by legendary London Transport architect Charles Holden, the result of Holden's grand tour of viewing Northern European modernist architecture that he made with Frank Pick in the summer of 1930. The Soviet Union, under Josef Stalin, awarded Pick an Honorary Badge of Merit in 1932 for his work advising on the Moscow Underground system. Pick accepted even though he was under immense pressure from Churchill to decline.

Acton Works: the character of Acton Town station is defined by the close proximity to what is officially known as the LUL Engineering Training Centre and Skills Academy. This is a station that has always been a neighbour and companion to the engineering side of the railway. Our scientists. The first stage of Acton Works, as the Centre was previously known, began in 1921. Up until the 1980s the entire London Underground fleet was sent to Acton Works to be cleaned, stripped down, rebuilt and repainted. Being close cousins with the Engineering Centre also afforded Acton Town station special status as a site for experimentation, where the functionality of

rolling stock design, including the testing of automatic train operation during the 1960s, was tried out and tested.

Allotments: a word suggesting 'deference and allocation', defining a relationship between the powerful and the powerless.²⁸ And yet, allotments have a sense of resistance. A defiant spirit expressed through self-reliance. No daily trips to ASDA for me! Needless to say, the Acton Town station staff allotments are now a staff car park.

Amar Singh: talking about acts of defiance. In 1964, Amar Singh, Underground Train Guard from Southall, based at Acton Town was sent home from work for wearing a black turban. London Transport Management cited a breach in Uniform Regulations. Where's your cap Amar! They barked. The story went viral and eventually LT came to their senses and backed down. Through the strength of his actions and his insistence to do what he knew was right Amar Singh on the 3rd September 1964 became the first London Transport Worker to officially wear a turban.²⁹

Animals: in a zoo adopt a 'passive waiting.'³⁰ Dependent on their keepers, isolated from other animals, an attitude of indifference is taken up.³¹ John Berger's iconic text *Why Look At Animals* (1977) articulates how this dependence and isolation have conditioned their response to any event as marginal. Living in an artificial habitat they 'bundle towards the edge of it.'³² Nowhere in a zoo can a stranger encounter the look of an animal.

'At the most, the animal's gaze flickers and passes on. They look sideways. They look blindly beyond. They scan mechanically. They have been immunised to encounter because nothing can any more occupy a central place in their attention.'³³

²⁸ George McKay, *Radical Gardening: Politics, Idealism & Rebellion In The Garden* (London: Frances Lincoln Limited, 2011), p.167. McKay is quoting from David Crouch and Colin Ward, *The Allotment: Its Landscape and Culture* (Nottingham: Five Leaves, 1997), p.274

²⁹ Will Noble, 'The Man Who Insisted On Wearing A Turban On The Tube', *Londonist*, 6th March 2018

³⁰ John Berger, 'Why Look at Animals? 1977' in *John Berger: Selected Essays*, Ed. Dyer, Geoff (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), p.272

³¹ Berger, p.272

³² Berger, p.272

³³ Berger, p.273

The *look* between humans and animals has been extinguished. The zoo signifies the disappearance of animals from daily life. As John Berger explains it is by looking at animals that we start to realise how isolated and alone we have made ourselves.³⁴

The 'view is always wrong. Like an image out of focus.'³⁵

This is why Andrea Arnold's film *Cow* (2021), a portrait of Luma, a cow existing in an industrial dairy farm in England, is compelling. The filming took four years, back and forth, revealing an unofficial 'natural history'. Arnold always films Luma's head in the frame and closes in on her eyes.

An Alphabet of T.O.T: the T.O.T. alphabet was organised by the Mutual Aid Fund as a fundraiser, in order to support transport workers and their families during the First World War. Think of all the bus drivers, conductors and train staff being enlisted. Try to understand the difference between being enlisted and choosing to sign up with the chaps for a bit of an adventure half way through a university term. The difference between well-schooled arrogance and fucking dread. Leaving a world-class transport system with no staff to run it. Or. No men to run it. Because London's transport system did continue, run by women. When war was declared in August 1914 approximately 1,000 buses, (a third of London's fleet), were commandeered and the bus drivers and mechanics accompanied their vehicles to the battlefields where the buses acted as troop carriers and ambulances and used to transport supplies. By September 1914 4,000 TOT workers had signed up for war.

Bear: the sense of unease we experience in industrial edgelands (retail parks, dark stores, recycling centres, Little Chef car parks, Zone 4 railways stations) can provoke hallucinogenic visions of wild beasts.³⁶ Remember the Lea Valley bear of 1981?³⁷ Anyone? Anyone? Crocodiles in Hackney, summer 2012. So when a bear walks in off the Boston Manor Road at 3am (*CASE: Off The Rails, Track 1*) we should take it with a pinch of salt.

In Marian Engel's *Bear* (1976), Lou, a librarian / archivist, travels to a remote Canadian Island to complete an inventory of the late Colonel Jocelyn Carey's estate,

³⁴ Berger, p.273

³⁵ Berger, p.271

³⁶ Gareth E Rees, *Unofficial Britain: Journey's Through Unexpected Places* (London: Elliott and Thompson, 2020), pp.149-150

³⁷ Gareth Rees writes of bear and crocodile sightings in Lea Valley. He also adds that 'two skinned and headless bear corpses had been fished out of the Lea', in all likelihood connected to a visiting Circus. p.151

where she forms a connection with a bear. *The bear is a good bear*. Paula Coccozza's *How To Be Human* (2017) and Olga Tokarczuk's *Drive Your Plow Over The Bones Of The Dead* (2009) together with Engel's *Bear*, are narratives that present a blurring of boundaries in our relationship between the domestic and wild. The protagonists in all three novels reach for a sense of place through their relationship with wild animals, and by doing so escape, respond and revenge a world dominated by controlling men.

Berberian Sound Studio: 23.03.19. Donmar Warehouse, London. A one-act stage play based on Peter Strickland's 2012 film. Actors 'perform' off stage, behind the glass of the recording box.³⁸ Cabbages are cut up violently to produce horror sounds. A feminist production exploring voice, props, sound foley, the visual display of analogue recording technologies and an experimental stage set. I love it. Later that night I buy Terence Dwyer's cult *Musique Concrète for beginners manual Composing With Tape Recorders* (1971), off ebay. I think Gilderoy would approve.

Behindlings: (2001) by Nicola Barker. Cult psychogeographic novel set on Canvey Island, Essex, a comic and surreal take on 'following', disappearance and lost love. Features a reindeer. Rachel Lichtenstein's *Estuary* (2016) reads as a haunting contrast.

Bill Griffiths: 'one of the true British poets of the last half-century'.³⁹ Ex-Hell's Angel, ex-prisoner and prison rights activist, Anglo Saxon scholar, social historian and translator of North Eastern dialect, love and hate tattooed in black ink on his knuckles, a poetry archive destroyed in a fire on his tug boat in Cowley. Died in poverty in Seaham, North East England in 2007. 'Tactfully removed from the scene, carrying out his researches.'⁴⁰ Sean Bonney (1969 – 2019) introduced me to the poems of Bill Griffiths. Sean ran a one off Contemporary British Poetics 10 week workshop at Birkbeck in 2014, introducing a group of us to the work of Bill Griffiths, Holly Pester, Caroline Bergvall, Carol Watts, Redell Olsen and Bob Cobbing. Sean told a great story about flatly refusing to quake in Bob Cobbing's Writers Forum Meetings.

³⁸ 'This is a play about the use and abuse of power, and the use and abuse of the power of sound.' Katrina Dixon, *The Wire* 423, May 2019, p.82

³⁹ Iain Sinclair, *London Orbital* (London: Granta Books, 2002), p.182

⁴⁰ Sinclair, p.182

Biodiversity Action Plan 2010 London Underground: accounts for the growth and protection of wildlife on LU property alongside the safe operation of the railway. A list of wildlife sighted (and killed) on Underground territory features in *The Gunnersbury Triangle Mix (CASE: This Is The Gunnersbury Triangle Wake, Track 2)* and in the two Bonus Tracks, *In The Name Of The Otter* and *I See A Dead Fox On The Street*.

Blair Peach: is referenced in *Looking For Bill Griffiths On The Grand Union Canal (CASE: In The Name Of The Otter, Track 5)*. Blair Peach died during a demonstration held to prevent the National Front holding a meeting in Southall, West London on the 23rd April 1979. Struck on the head as the police charged. 14 witnesses came forward, saying they saw Peach struck by a Special Patrol Group officer. No one has ever been charged. The notorious Special Patrol Group (SPG). Replaced in 1987 by the Territorial Support Group. A locker room search of SPG officers found 'illegal truncheons, knives, two crow bars, a whip, a 3ft wooden stave and a lead-weighted leather stick.'⁴¹

Blair Peach was a teacher and member of the Anti-Nazi league. 3,000 police were deployed on the 23rd April 1979. 700 people arrested.⁴² Southall's predominantly Asian Community and activists to this day accuse the MET of instigating the violence, racism and using excessive force. There is a plaque in the Town Hall, dedicated to the memory of Blair Peach and Gurdeep Singh Chagger, a local man who was killed by a racist gang in 1976. This killing led to the formation of the Southall Youth Movement (SYM) and a riot known locally as the 'first uprising'. The SYM protested against the National Front in 1979 and Skinheads in 1981.

Boundaries: In *The Book Of Trespass* Nick Hayes defines boundaries by asking 'What is allowed, what is encouraged. What is forbidden? Boundaries are spaces where access is often prohibited.'⁴³ So what happens when we eliminate boundaries? Dissolve and rub out categories and outlines? In my DIY garden at Acton Town the blue door on Bollo Lane, the brown door from the connecting station passageway, and the red brick sub-station wall are my boundaries. There is a friction in these forbidden territories within my working public space. Boundaries can be

⁴¹ Vivek Chaudhary, *The Observer*, 21.04.19, pp.22-23

⁴² Vivek Chaudhary, 'How London's Southall became 'Little Punjab'', *The Guardian*, 04/04/2018

⁴³ Nick Hayes, *The Book Of Trespass: Crossing The Lines That Divide Us* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p.273

crossed into without realising. In *Street Haunting* (1927) Virginia Woolf walks from Bloomsbury to the Strand on a winter's evening with the premise to buy a lead pencil. She uses the journey to articulate her experience of walking in a crowd. To be accepted and belong yet at the same time, able to declare one's difference. 'We shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers.'⁴⁴ *Am I Here Or Am I There* (CASE: *The Lazy Railway, Track 6*), is a short story set in South Ealing station on a Saturday night involving a hen, a life size plastic sex doll and a pack of fox clubs. Influenced by *Street Haunting*, the title of this track is a line from Woolf's text.

Bradley Garrett: tested and broke off the limits of London's boundaries. Hacked the edges. (He used to sit on top of skyscraper cranes at night!) Bradley Garrett's *Explore Everything* (2014) is an account of breaking into London's secret spaces, including disused underground stations. Mark Lane station, Down Street station, St Mary's station, Brompton Road, York Road, Aldwych. Bradley boy cracked them all. Garrett writes how at the time he hoped TfL workers would respect what he was doing. 'Only TfL workers could truly understand the depths of the Tube and train fetish we developed.'⁴⁵ Oh Bradley, we would have shopped you to Old Bill for trespassing!

Broadway: our iconic Transport for London HQ at 55 Broadway. Sold off for luxury hotel development. Broadway HQ, built (1927 – 1929), by architects Adams, Holden and Pearson. A number of contemporary artists were commissioned to sculpt decorative features to the outside of the building including Jacob Epstein. However, Epstein's sculptures of naked young boys displaying their penises were deemed too primitive and caused great offence. He offered his resignation, which was declined. As a compromise he chipped half an inch from the penis of each of his boys.

Bullstrode: working the night turn at Hounslow Central noises from The Bullstrode leak in through the night. I've been told an ex Station Supervisor (a SUPA!) was murdered in The Bullstrode in the early 2000s. Recently we've been hosting our Xmas parties there, up on the first floor. M cooks everyone a curry. During lockdown

⁴⁴ Virginia Woolf, *Street Haunting* (1927) (London: Read Books, 2012), p.5

⁴⁵ Garrett, Bradley, *Explore Everything: Place-Hacking the City* (London: Verso, 2014), p.151

the landlords extended the territory of their beer garden by erecting new seating and a wooden fence up against the station wall. Touching distance from the staff toilet. The Hounslow Central toilet windows are glazed over but honestly, we're just inches away.

Bunker: at Sudbury Town station there is a bunker on underground territory, a disused World War 2 Air Raid Shelter located halfway along the eastbound platform. (Ealing Common has one too). This station was once a frontier of West London suburbia. Inside the bunker, a cold war vibe. From inside the bunker at Sudbury Town station I record the noise of the scheduled Engineer Train passing at the close and start of traffic. (*The Bunker Part 1 (CASE: In The Name Of The Otter, Track 2)*).

Camouflage: in *Hide and Seek: Camouflage, Photography and the Medium of Reconnaissance*, Hanna Rose Shell states that 'to study camouflage is to investigate how we look at the world and how we conceal ourselves in and among the photographs of that world.'⁴⁶ She explains that the logic of camouflage 'is predicated on the assumption that not showing up is, at times and places, both a strategic necessity and a worthy aspiration.'⁴⁷ What is it that we do when we conceal ourselves? We start an attempt to dissolve into something else. Our acts of camouflage raise questions in 'how to see, how to hide, how to seek, and how not to be seen.'⁴⁸

Canals: West London arteries and once the economic equivalent of our motorway network. However London canals are no longer 'working water'.⁴⁹ The history of London's canals exposes the decline in UK manufacturing whilst mapping the historical spread of urban suburbia. Highlighting the shift of power from water and rail to road.⁵⁰ Parks and main roads attracted the Middle Class (Northfields). The area's near canals, railway sidings, gasworks and the Thames were almost always reserved for the Working Class (Brentford). Sky-high river style accommodation is now built up along the banks of the Grand Union Canal.

⁴⁶ Hanna Rose Shell, *Hide and Seek: Camouflage, Photography and the Medium of Reconnaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2012), pp.9-10

⁴⁷ Rose Shell, p.10

⁴⁸ Rose Shell, p.71

⁴⁹ Iain Sinclair, *London Orbital* (London: Granta Books, 2002), p.150

⁵⁰ Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts, *Edgelands* (London: Vintage, 2012), p.117

Cathi Unsworth: uses location as characters in her London crime novels. *The Not Knowing* (2005): Soho. *The Singer* (2007): Camden Town. *Bad Penny Blues* (2009): Ladboke Grove. *Bad Penny Blues* fictions the Hammersmith Nude Murders. Elizabeth Figg was discovered on 17th June 1959, stripped and strangled. By February 1965 seven more women had been killed and dumped on London streets like rubbish left out for collection. Eight women murdered in Acton, Brentford, Chiswick. Predictably the media referred to these unsolved murders as the Jack the Stripper case. Taking energy from Derek Raymond's *I Was Dora Suarez* (1990), a crime novel that places the victim at the heart of the story, (Derek Raymond was Cathi Unsworth's Soho mentor) it counters David Seabrook's questionable *Jack Of Jumps* (2006).

CCTV: *Trust* (2004) by Jill Magid is about disappearance. As viewers we follow on camera as the artist follows the 'keep walking' instructions of the Liverpool Police.⁵¹ Guided through a crowded city space with closed eyes, a gentle voice of authority carefully instructs Magid to miss obstacles (steps, bollards, people) in her path. The work raises questions about how we listen (in particular our relationship and trust we place with the voice of authority) by presenting real life CCTV footage that zooms in and out and scans a figure walking through a public city space. Wearing a red coat Jill Magid sticks out on screen yet at the same time appears to disappear into the crowd. As a viewer we never hear what she is saying. Guided by the voice of the officer and therefore connected to the institutional 'inside', she also appears openly vulnerable from the 'blindfold'. Her red coat takes on the shape of camouflage, a protective covering in a moment of vulnerability.

Viewing *Trust* in 2022 is a disturbing experience. We watch with the knowledge of Sarah Everard's brutal death in 2021 by a serving MET Police Officer, and with trust in the MET Police by women at an utter low. The gentle, friendly voice (the Liverpool accent) of the male police officer guiding Jill Magid makes the realisation of what has been lost, a disappearing faith in the police as a force of protection for women, particularly powerful.

Chiswick Flyover: on the 26th January 2021 John O'Dwyer from Donegal, Ireland was found dead by the police under the Chiswick Flyover. Known as the 'A4 flyover man' he lived under the Chiswick flyover for over 30 years, directly below the spot

⁵¹ *Trust* (2004) is a 17 min video part of *Evidence Locker* (2004), a collaboration Jill Magid had with the Liverpool police, in which CCTV cameras record the artist drifting through the city in a red coat.

where his wife and daughter had died in a car crash. He made placards to be viewed by passing traffic: *England is a vile and brutal country*. The poet Cecelin Grant-Peters visited O'Dwyer and in response wrote 'The Rage In Albion'. 'The Poet asked his name, and the homeless man said: "I am the Rage in Albion, I have no name. For I am England's burden, and I am England's shame.'⁵² Grant-Peters' poem is used in GCSE assessments.

And. There are also bodies buried inside the Chiswick Flyover. Gangsters. Small time crooks and charlies. Spivs. Tossed into concrete. Thomas 'Ginger' Marks, shot dead in Bethnal Green by a member of the Krays. This first section of the Chiswick Flyover opened in 1959 by Jayne Mansfield, her car crash death in Louisiana in 1967 igniting in JG Ballard the inspiration for his novels *Crash* (1973) and *Concrete Island* (1974).⁵³

Concrete Island: 'a forgotten island of rubble and weeds, out of sight of the surveillance cameras.'⁵⁴ Burrows and O'Sullivan depict *Concrete Island* as an example of 'performance fictioning'. Ballard used *Concrete Island* to explore 'limit states' and 'thresholds' and by doing so show 'the present from an unusual angle'. The landscapes in Ballard's books 'set up the conditions-or operate as a platform-for experimentation.'⁵⁵

Costumes: 'Normal people don't go around wearing tree costumes. At least, they don't round here.'⁵⁶ A story involving someone wearing a tree costume features in Ali Smith's *Autumn*, the first book in her cycle addressing the state of Brexit Britain. A tree costume features in the *Lazy Railway Website* poster and Smith's writing on camouflage and masks influenced the making of *CASE: This Is The Gunnersbury Triangle Wake*. '...the brightly coloured costumes dull and rot and the leaves from all the trees round about fall on them, heap over them, cover them, and grass grows round them then starts growing out of them, through them, through ribs and eyeholes, then flowers appear in the grass....'⁵⁷

⁵² Rachel Magee, 'Man who lived under Chiswick Flyover for over 30 years dies,' The Chiswick Herald, 29th January 2021

⁵³ Gareth E Rees, *Unofficial Britain: Journey's Through Unexpected Places* (London: Elliott and Thompson, 2020), p.133

⁵⁴ JG Ballard, Introduction, *Concrete Island* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974)

⁵⁵ David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan, *Fictioning* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), p.127

⁵⁶ Ali Smith, *Autumn* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2016) p.125

⁵⁷ Ali Smith, *Autumn* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2016) p.124 – 128

Cowley: I took a four-day airbnb barge boat holiday in July 2019, Cowley. Days spent walking up and down this beaten up stretch of the Grand Union Canal in full sun. Avoiding cyclists. Drinking in pubs. Hanging about in bus shelters at Uxbridge. Iain Sinclair understands. 'Cowley, by its secret melancholy, its sprawling mess (backing on to waste mounds and dead water) was a place worth looking at; the knowledge that Bill Griffiths had lived here for a time (before the loss of his boat in a fire) made it special.'⁵⁸

Crossbones Graveyard Vigil: I'm at the Crossbones graveyard with L. Standing by the railings on Redcross Way. This is Transport for London territory. The Eastern part of the graveyard dug up in the 1990s for the Jubilee Extension. In 1996 the Crossbones site is reclaimed from TfL and transformed into a garden, known locally as the invisible garden, and then into a battleground, with TfL and the Mayor's Office for the next 10 years. A man called Andy Hulme plays the role: the invisible gardener, a security guard for the site who flipped and turned and went undercover, started leaving signs at the shrine. Tokens. Small gestures. Bits of ribbons. And cloths. Andy started living on site in a caravan. Became a guerrilla gardener / rogue security guard. Crossed a boundary. Or two. Started scattering seeds. Planting up trees. Used what was already there. Enhanced it. Recycled it. Made contact with a local visionary, a geezer by the name of John Crow, a geezer with white hair who dreamt at night about the Winchester goose. And then one night Andy gave John Crow a key, a key to the plot of Crossbones. Andy had once been Vivienne Westwood's gardener.

Once the vigil starts we face up to the shrine and each take hold of the railings, and touch the ribbons and bits of hanging cloth and shout out: OPEN PATHWAYS whilst a man walks up and down and spits gin at us. There's a story about earthquakes. A man who looks like Boris Johnson sings a song. Another man falls off his motorbike. That was before the gin. We walk together afterwards. Speak optimistically that events like this can still happen, in London, in the shadow of the Shard. (23.02.2020).

Crow: Bob Crow (1961 – 2014). Trade Unionist and supporter of all workers in struggle. Bob Crow was General Secretary of RMT (2002 – 2014), famous for the line 'Spit on your own and you can't do anything but if you all spit together you can drown the bastards.' Which was played on the big screens at Trafalgar Square on the May Day memorial march dedicated to his death and Tony Benn's. Pre-Brexit

⁵⁸ Iain Sinclair, *London Orbital* (London: Granta Books, 2002), p.185

days. Bob Crow's daughter spoke on stage about dreams of leaving the EU. Half the crowd cheered. I remember an earlier march I went on with J, my eyes glued to Bob Crow as he listened to the RMT Brass Band at the corner of Hyde Park, surrounded by supporters. The week Bob Crow died S kept breaking down in tears at work and couldn't stop looking at the black and white A1 posters on display in every station of his face. More than one passenger spoke to me about Bob's baby blue eyes and long eyelashes. In 2017 I was in the empty last car of the Piccadilly Line heading East after finishing my late turn when a man, who claimed he worked on escalators, sat next to me, and started to talk about the secret assassination of Bob Crow.

David Blaine: in 2003 the illusionist David Blaine famously self imprisoned himself within a glass box display suspended above the Thames from the 5th September to the 19th October. For 44 days the Great British public watched and taunted the American magician by cooking up BBQs, getting drunk, having sex, throwing cheese hamburgers and generally having a laugh as close as possible to his window. Thinking about this now perhaps Blaine's trick all along was to put us, the free moving public on display. Nicola Barker uses Blaine's London event as the backdrop for her brilliant 2004 novel *Clear*.

Derek Jarman's Modern Nature: I read *Modern Nature* (1992) as a form of radical London travel writing. Acted out between the contrasting landscapes of Dungeness and London, the writing depicts a constant journeying between two different worlds that Derek Jarman existed in during the last years of his life. This tension, of trying to operate in two different spaces at the same time, whilst keeping each separate, and trying to stay alive, is captured in the energy of the writing. With London and Dungeness as backdrops the narrative runs as a series of flickering road movie style short stories, framing a particular moment in the make up of London history. Never nostalgic they reveal the transformation from 1960s / 1970s London to a sanitised, scrubbed version that started in the late 80s' early 90s', the effects of which we continue to live and encounter on the city's surfaces to this day. *Derek Jarman's Garden (CASE: The Lazy Railway, Track 2)*.

District Electric: on the 23rd June 1903 the District Railway ran experimental electric trains between Acton and Park Royal. In 1905 electric trains replaced steam over the entire District and Inner Circle network. However, this change from steam into electricity did not bring the expected rush in customers. Instead it was the

London United Tramways (LUT) who opened up the suburbs to working class Londoners, connecting ‘the Western suburbs of Southall, Ealing, Acton, Hounslow, Brentford and Kew with Chiswick, Hammersmith and Shepherd’s Bush’.⁵⁹ In particular it was the new tram lines in 1903 of the radical London County Council (LCC) that served as agents of a social policy enabling London’s working class to move out of crowded tenements in central London and into new cottage estates in the suburbs. The difference between the Underground and the LCC is our lines were built for profit, not social purpose. As told in *Horse Power* (CASE: Bull Bridge Bollo, Track 2).

District Electric Railway Zoo: the nickname given by staff to the Mansion House and Charing Cross stuffed animal exhibitions. The following facts were established by Railway Historian and ex LU employee Mike Horne, discovered after researching our collection of Staff TOT Magazines. 1. The exhibition of stuffed animals at Mansion House was installed towards the west end of the Eastbound platform, next to the iron bridge. 2. In 1929 the Railway Zoo relocated to Charing Cross (what we now know as Embankment) and was displayed beneath the District tracks in the station’s upper interchange landing. 3. Behind the cabinets an escalator lead down to the northbound Northern Line. In July 1936 urgent escalator refurbishment commenced at Charing Cross. 4. The last report states: London Transport Zoo: moved to ‘a safe place’.⁶⁰

District S Stock Train Window: take an eastbound District Line train from Ealing Common, car 6 and 7. All destinations Barking. From inside the District S Stock train window you can see my outside garden slip by. Gordon Matta-Clark in ‘Building Dissections’ writes of cutting through from one space to another. His interest is in ‘the thin edge’ and ‘the severed surface’. Dissected spaces, that by looking at and passing by ‘reveals the autobiographical process of its making’.⁶¹ Viewing the garden through this ‘thin edge’ feels melancholic. The way we view the garden through the train window connects to how the stuffed animal exhibitions were viewed through

⁵⁹ Stephen Inwood, *A History Of London* (Oxford: Macmillan, 1998), p.564

⁶⁰ *TOT Magazine*, November 1929 as found by Mike Horne, *London’s District railway: A History of the Metropolitan District Railway Volume Two Twentieth Century* (London: Capital Transport, 2019), p.257. Also Mike Horne blog: <http://www.metadyne.co.uk/Blog-index.htm>

⁶¹ Gordon Matta-Clark in ed. Moure, Gloria, *Gordon Matta – Clark: Works and Collected Writings* (Barcelona: Poligrafa, 2006), pp.132-33

glass cabinets at Charing X and Mansion House stations. We experience the garden through separation. Swiping 'left' through an instagram screen. Faces pressed against the glass panel of a moving train.

Edges: the District Line track is my garden's edge. An edge is sharp. When you fall off an edge everyone knows about it.

Edgelands: a term first used by geographer Marion Shoard as a means to define the un-translated landscapes of England.⁶² What Paul Farey and Michael Symmons refer to as 'the city's dirty secrets.'⁶³ 'The edges of towns and cities that are neither urban nor rural; transitional, undeveloped or developing areas such as the land surrounding power stations, scrublands, wastelands, semi-derelict areas, semi-industrial areas.'⁶⁴ Kieran Evans and Underworld's Karl Hyde film *The Outer Edges* (2013) is the one to watch.

Electric Underground Railway: the first electric underground railway in the world, the City and South London Line, running 3 miles from King William Street via the Elephant and Castle to Stockwell, opened in 1890.⁶⁵ Our four-rail system, used throughout the Underground, with separate positive and negative conductor rails was first introduced in 1904-05.

Now. As the colonial power of the British Empire began to decline so London accelerated its suburban spread through the electric railway. One year to the month after the Acton Town otter was caught in a manhole, electrocuted and killed on the tracks at Acton Town station on the 4th April 1911, the Underground Electric Railways Company of London (The UERL) took over the London General Omnibus Company (The LGOC). By the end of 1912, The UERL added the City and South London Railway and the Central London tube companies under its control. For the next 30 years the managing director of The UERL, Albert Stanley, and its commercial manager Frank Pick, went on to pinch and tuck, pull and stretch London's skin over

⁶² Marion Shoard, 'Edgelands' in ed. Jenkins, Jennifer, *Remaking The Landscape* (London: Profile Books, 2002), pp.117 – 147. Marion Shoard is acknowledged as the key figure in this field, as cited by Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts, *Edgelands* (London: Vintage, 2012), p.5. The authors also cite Richard Mabey's *The Unofficial Countryside* (1973) as a text that helped define the field. This is now Robert Macfarlane territory.

⁶³ Farley and Symmons Roberts, p.10

⁶⁴ Stephen Prince, *A Year In The Country: Wandering Through Spectral Fields* (Manchester: A Year In The Country, 2018), p.146

⁶⁵ Stephen Inwood, *A History Of London* (Oxford: Macmillan, 1998), p.561

the surface of the city and the countryside, and in doing so re-mapped the face of London.

Electricity: The Electrical Supply Act of 1926 established the National Grid, controlled by the Central Electricity Board. To ease supply in Central London and provide extra income for London Underground miles of electricity cables were run through the tube tunnels. London Electricity, the principle supplier for the capital, was acquired by Electricité de France (EDF) in November 1998 and rebranded EDF Energy in 2003. In October 2002, London Underground switched off the turbines at Lots Road Power Station. The National Grid (Greenwich) now supplies our electricity. A power cut and a visit to Lots Road is referenced in *Where's JG Ballard When You Need Him?* (CASE: Off The Rails, Track 2).

Evening Standard: The Evening Standard is a 'London' paper with an agenda. Owned by Evgeny Lebedev (and the Daily Mail) it has been running a campaign of hate towards us for decades. However, in the stations we always had a good relationship with the Evening Standard Vendors. They staked out their territory, the same patch every evening, worked the same space as us. But 'Stan – ard' cries are long gone. Replaced by Metro Delivery drivers. They'll say hello but only if you say hello first. They're on a tight schedule, zero hours, can't hang about to chat. Unload the papers and photograph the stack to prove they've been delivered. And out. Ten minutes later men come in and take 40 – 50 copies at a time, clean out the Boston Manor supply, a local re-cycling style scam apparently, leaving nothing for the old boy who likes to deliver a few copies to the neighbouring Care Home.

Field Recording: In *Deep Listening A Composer's Sound Practice* (2005) Pauline Oliveros depicts both the natural and urban acoustic environments as 'full of pulses and patterns.'⁶⁶ She describes pulses as 'repeating sounds' and may be 'extremely rapid to extremely slow'.⁶⁷ She states that the pulse 'may be natural, mechanical or electrical.'⁶⁸ In her listening exercise 'A Study of Pulses' she encourages the listener to record 'the most interesting pulses or patterns that you can find in your daily environment.'⁶⁹ As Chris Watson explains, it is through playback, in his case through

⁶⁶ Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening A Composer's Sound Practice* (Lincoln: iUniverse, 2005), p.27

⁶⁷ Oliveros, p.27

⁶⁸ Oliveros, p.27

⁶⁹ Oliveros, p.28

tape recorder technology, that ‘previously unheard details and characteristics emerged’, recorded sounds ‘which would fire my imagination and suggest strange, dream – like narratives.’⁷⁰

Chris Watson, a BBC sound recordist (and ex member of Cabaret Voltaire) specialising in the wildlife sounds of animals and habitats, frequently recalls the seemingly magical qualities of ‘a small portable reel to reel machine’, presented to him as a 13th Birthday present in November 1966, as it gave him the power to listen from a distance. By placing the reel to reel player on a bird table in the garden outside, and listening on playback inside, Watson had successfully set up a feedback mechanism where his levels of control were conducted by being out of sight and hidden. He was able to be present yet absent at the same time. This achievement to listen closely by distance had the effect of being ‘transported into a new space of ‘other worlds’.⁷¹ Controlling the audio recorder from distance was the key into Watson’s ‘new space.’⁷² His use of analogue sound reproduction technology acted like a loosening of the wrist, a letting go, enabling the breathing pulse of the acoustic environment to be heard. Watson’s role as director was to set up, stand back and listen as the space opened up to improvisation.

Fit For The Future: in January 2016 every Ticket Office on the network was closed. In their place passengers now rely on self-service machines. This ‘re-structuring’ was instigated by the 2010 – 2015 Conservative / Liberal Democrat coalition government’s decision to implement an 8.8 billion cut to TFL’s budget by 2021. The result was the now infamous *Fit For The Future* programme, a scheme that cut 953 frontline positions saving 50 million but representing only 12.5 per cent of the overall cut. Yet these government led cuts were re-branded by London Underground ‘top-level’ management and most of mainstream media as ‘modernisation’. The question of operating unstaffed stations was also at the heart of the ‘two-year’ long dispute LU management have been in with RMT, TESSA and Unite unions. *Fit For The Future* dissolved the safety critical position of Station Control Room Assistant and the drastic reduction in station staff numbers created a vacuum felt both by passengers and front line members of staff. The severe cuts in staffing levels introduced wide spread lone working and made reality the once

⁷⁰ Chris Watson, ‘Recording’ in *Spectres Compser L’Écoute Composing Listening* (Rennes: Shelter Press, 2019), p.15

⁷¹ Chris Watson, ‘Recording’ in *Spectres Compser L’Écoute Composing Listening* (Rennes: Shelter Press, 2019), p.15

⁷² Watson, p.15

unthinkable experiment of de-staffed stations, run by remote control automation. The whisper of driverless trains refuses to go away.

Flats: heavy leaf fall on rails was the reason given for the infamous Piccadilly Line 'Flats' Winter of 2015 and 2016, where Severe Delays stretched for weeks on end due to 'lack of available trains'. Train after train was taken out of service and withdrawn from the timetable creating huge gaps to the everyday running schedule. Drivers were blamed for breaking too much as a result of slippery rails caused by wet leaves. It was said that persistent light rain had the worst effect. But I found out the real reason and talked about it for months on end! It was Cheap South American steel, purchased in 2015 and destroying the 'wheels' of our Piccadilly trains. A declaration was made, never would cheap foreign material be purchased again. But then the Brexit vote happened and so this time we went shopping in China, and as a result even more trains were destroyed and taken out of service. Again the drivers were blamed for over breaking. The maintenance workers castigated for not repairing the trains quick enough. No one spoke about the shady deals or the rumours of back handers or the stupidity of paying over the odds for cheap steel. No. Or that Heathrow Express, in direct 'competition' with the Piccadilly Line (and also the future Elizabeth Line) is in fact Chinese owned. No. Nothing was said and after a while everything went back to normal. And then. They started appearing at night. Contractors with chain saws and axes, rope and hacks, and as the Engineering hours fell they commenced work, hacking and pulverizing, amputating every tree on the embankment from Northfields to Hounslow, from Acton to Rayners Lane so all that was left was row after row of stumps. Six months later the Leaf season passed with no scandal. Success! But those of us who work on the railway know the truth. The trees will have their revenge. Because what management don't realise or have chosen to ignore is the way the trees were cut was short sighted and temporary. The trees will grow back even more. But by then whoever made the decision will be long gone, so no one really cares.

Flies: Acton Town was once covered in flies. In fact, flies were general, all over London. This was due to horseshit. Causing 'typhoid, diarrhoea and dysentery in the summer months'.⁷³ There are references to flies throughout the *Acton Town Otter Investigation*. Marguerite Duras's story on watching a fly die in *Writing* (1999) an on-going influence. It all comes to ahead in *I Am Lying On The Westbound Platform*

⁷³ Stephen Inwood, *A History Of London* (Oxford: Macmillan, 1998), p.568.

With An Omelette On My Face (CASE: This Is The Gunnersbury Triangle Wake, Track 4) when flies start digging a tunnel through the omelette and beneath the eyelids.

Foxes: in the 1970s the naturalist W.G. Teagle predicted foxes would take over the entire London suburban scene, in much the same way as the blackbird and the grey squirrel. 'Foxes had followed the newly opened up electric railways and roads into built up areas, where they found excellent food supplies and convenient places to build their earths.' Until the 1970s it was Government policy to trap and dump urban foxes back into the countryside. However, like many Government policies it was doomed from the start because, as Hannah Velten explains in *Beastly London: A History of Animals in the City* 'foxes are territorial and when one is removed, another takes its place.'⁷⁴

The history of London's relationship with foxes starts with 'The Bagmen'. Foxes imported from the continent and sold by the bulk at Leadenhall Market, for any huntsmen and landowners running short of a fox or two to hunt. 'As London expands, and the division between the city and the countryside become blurred, foxes are commonplace. They represent the return of repressed nature to a spayed and neutered capital'.⁷⁵ To this day, foxes are still hunted down in London. In *Night Haunts* Sukdev Sandhu arranges to meet an urban fox hunter at the corner of Hayes Road and Southall Lane. Dressed in camouflage the fox hunter ties 'rabbits to the cars rear bumper...crushes rabbit's intestines with his heel' to attract foxes with their scent. 'Most times, he baits the foxes with defrosted chicken drumsticks which he buys in packs of thirty from his local Iceland.'⁷⁶ And predictably, like a caricature of confused masculinity, he confesses his secret love and admiration for foxes. Honest bruv, you know how it is. It's the love that made me do it.

Goats: unable to stop thinking about Bedwyr Williams and his talking goat, and unable to locate my copy of *Gef! The Strange Tale Of An Extra-Special Talking Mongoose* I set off on a field trip to Surrey Docks Farm. I meet Mandy and taken into the barn we wait for the goats to arrive. In the goats come, one by one, into their pens. At first they are eerily quiet as if our presence is silencing them. After 5

⁷⁴ Hannah Velten, *Beastly London: A History of Animals in the City* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), p.223

⁷⁵ Velten, p.223

⁷⁶ Sukhdev Sandhu, *Night Haunts: A Journey Through The London Night* (London: Verso/ Artangel, 2007), p.106

minutes we try out a few experimental sound foley goat sounds. One of the goats leaps out of her pen and into another pen and starts eating their supply of allocated food. Soon all the goats start making noises and mixed in with our impersonations it all starts to kick off. We thank everyone and quickly make our exit. On the way back to the station we stop off for a few shandies at The Moby Dick. 18.09.19⁷⁷

Going Green: *Going Green* by Piers Connor, his 1993 Capital Transport publication delivers an account of brutal animal death instigated by technological progress and cites the Acton Town otter: ‘So many birds and beasts were killed by District trains on the countrified South Harrow branch that the District set up a natural history collection of stuffed creatures in glass cases, which was displayed at Charing X in the 1920s. These included an otter caught in April 1911, a barn owl caught in November 1912, a nightjar, and two tawny owls, killed in March 1925.’⁷⁸

Gone to Earth: ‘It was the death-pack.’ Oh Hazel Woodus, how could they do this to you? The three men in her life, all fighting over her, all wanting to own and control her in their different ways, taking a bite out of her and leaving her with nothing. Father with his coffin-making, bees and music. Jack Reddin, her charismatic sexual pursuer with his house and hounds. And good old Edward Marston, steady Eddy, the minister who marries her so he can hold tight his ‘images of how he will protect her untamed beauty.’⁷⁹ Oh Hazel Woodus, Hazel Woodus. Oh foxy.

Gone to Earth by Mary Webb, written during the devastation of World War One, was published in 1917. The film, directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger was made in 1950 but was controversially blocked by David Selznick, cut and re-written and finally re-issued as *The Wild Heart* in 1952. The original 1950 *Gone to Earth* was restored and digitally re-mastered and released as Powell and Pressburger intended in 2001. It stars Jennifer Jones as Hazel Woods and features David Farrar and Cyril Cusack. Mary Webb (1881 – 1927), author of *Gone to Earth*, was a poet, a novelist and a mystic. Born in Shropshire she moved to London towards the end of her life in 1921 and remained in London until her death. She died in poverty. Her novels were

⁷⁷ The goats of Surrey Docks Farm appear throughout *CASE: In The Name Of The Otter*. Bedwyr Williams *The Gulch* (Barbican, 2016) features a talking goat. *Gef! The Strange Tale Of An Extra-Special Talking Mongoose* is by Christopher Josiffe (London: Strange Attractor Press, 2017).

⁷⁸ Piers Connor, *Going Green* (London: Capital Transport Publication, 1993), p.40

⁷⁹ Erika Duncan, Introduction, *Gone To Earth* (London: Virago Press, 1979). In her Introduction Erika Duncan compares Webb’s writing to the refrains of a folk song.

re-published by Virago Press in the 1970s, including *Precious Bane* (1924), the story of a woman born deformed, seen as a witch by the superstitious locals.

Grand Union Canal: one of the sights of London. 'Cooling towers, steaming engines, chimneys, black corrugated-iron shed: a new industrial excitement every few yards, mellowed and bound together by the water in the foreground and the grass on the banks.'⁸⁰

Great West Road: the edges of a motorway are like railway embankments. Canals. Cemeteries. Spaces that nobody wants to take too much responsibility for.⁸¹ And I always think of railway embankments like allotments. These left over and left behind London territories that 'thrive on the fringes'. Helen Macdonald's 2020 BBC documentary *The Hidden Wilds of the Motorway* is a clockwise loop around the M25. Now. At Osterley there's a local with one leg, drives a motorised mobility chair, always comes in and talks to me. Entertains. Holds court. We stand facing the Great West Road and every time a lorry passes he points and shouts and hollers that's Packard. Hudson. Lincoln. Firestone. Trico. Gillette. Sperry. Currys. We used to own them. Every one of them! I know he's been in prison and I know his ex wife was shot in the back. I'm just uncertain if it was by him.

Green Corridors: my journey to and from work runs alongside some of London Underground's most diverse green corridors. 'The embankments are teeming with protected species-undisturbed by human trespassers.' As David Mole, (yes, really) LU's trackside environment protector said: 'We have a huge amount of rare and endangered plant life growing by our tracks because they are out of the way, where few people have the right to be. So they have prospered.'⁸²

Guerrilla Gardening: railway style. 'The railway acts as a distributive agent for spreading the seeds of plants, which get sucked along by the trains as they rush to and fro.'⁸³

⁸⁰ Ian Nairn, *Nairn's London* (London: Penguin, 1966), p.228. Nairn is describing the Grand Union Canal (Paddington Arm).

⁸¹ Goode, David, *Nature in Towns and Cities* (London: William Collins, 2014), p.71

⁸² LU Biodiversity Action Plan 2010

⁸³ Fitter, R.S.R, *London's Natural History* (London: Bloomsbury Books, 1945), pp.160-161

Handling London's Underground Traffic: by J. P. Thomas. Published in 1928 and written whilst 'many miles of which have been, or are in process of being, converted from steam to electric traction.'⁸⁴ This book is an example of someone who works on the railway, writing about the railway. J. P. Thomas was the Operating Manager of London's Underground and his book was intended for the benefit of the staff employed. It covers all aspects of railway operations from signalling, to rolling stock to relations with employees. (There's an excellent section on Lift Safety Devices, which pin points the start of automation on the Underground).⁸⁵

The Dockers Tragedy (1970) by R. B. Oram tells the story of London Dockers' centuries old fight for decasualisation. Oram's book reveals how their 1967 victory was immediately soured with the announcement that within ten years most of the existing labour force would be redundant due to the mechanisation of cargo handling.

Hauntology: is sonic. Riffing off Jacques Derrida's 1994 *Spectres of Marx* the term was first used in 2005 by Mark Fisher and Simon Reynolds to describe a loose network of UK artists on the Ghost Box Label who were recording the sounds of technology breaking down. By referencing the crackle and hiss of vinyl, youtube tv and tape cassettes the listener is aware that 'we are listening to a time that is out of joint.'⁸⁶ It is music 'suffused with an overwhelming melancholy'. Of hopes evaporated. (I get this. I play music throughout the night shift, prompting many a melancholic conversation amongst ex-ravers from the 90s Dance scene, now existing as middle-aged contractors.) Mark Fisher explains that 'a yearning for this older regime of materiality plays a part in the melancholia that saturates hauntological music.' This is matched by a refusal to give up on dreams of the future. 'This refusal gives the melancholia a political dimension, because it amounts to a failure to accommodate to the closed horizons of capitalist realism.'⁸⁷

⁸⁴ J.P Thomas, *Handling London's Underground Traffic* (London: London Underground, 1928), p.5

⁸⁵ I read out this section on Lift Safety Devices (pp.101 – 106) whilst playing a sample of electromagnetic sounds recorded from Hounslow East Lift Room during the night shift as part of *Notes On A Carpet*, a live stream event with We Are Publication at Five Years, London. 07/04/18.

⁸⁶ Mark Fisher, *Ghosts Of My Life: Writings On Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Hampshire: Zero Books, 2014), p.21. Hari Kunzru's *White Tears* (2017) is an alternative and brilliant biting satire on hauntological white privilege.

⁸⁷ Mark Fisher, p.21

Horniman: the reason the Walrus in the Horniman Museum is so fat is due to over stuffing.⁸⁸ The 19th Century taxidermist on duty had never met a Walrus before. No photograph to work from. No previous personal experience of walruses to fall back on. No props to help. So the taxidermist just kept on 'stuffing'. Poor Walrus. In 1948 the larger animals of the Horniman collection were sold off to dealers in Deptford, who in turn had a deal to sell the collection to a photography studio in Southend. The studio specialised in end of the pier amusements. Entertainment. Roll up. Roll up. Have your photo taken with the stuffed South London animals. There's only one problem. Because the Walrus is so big and over stuffed, *so strange looking*, the Deptford dealers declare 'no room in the truck' and he is left behind.⁸⁹

Taxidermy (done well) has a deceptive power. A form of fictioning, where all traces of death are erased. Only the skin (the envelope of the body) remains of the original animal. It is an indexical link.⁹⁰ What is it about stuffed Walruses? Here's another story. Roland the Walrus lived in Berlin Zoo and died in 1961. The objects found in the stomach of Roland are now on display. The writer Dubrvaka Ugresic, who lived in Berlin, living in exile, was drawn to the objects that once lived happily in Roland's stomach. 'A pink cigarette lighter, a metal brooch, a water pistol, a dummy, a padlock, keys.'⁹¹ To Ugresic they were like a collection of 'scattered immigrant souvenirs', objects read through Roland, creating a link between the appearance of a surface and its status as an object of fiction.⁹²

Horse Power: in 1900 there had been almost a quarter of a million horses living and working in London. Horses working for public transport, pulling trams, omnibuses and hansom cabs. By 1913 only 6% of London's passenger vehicles were horse

⁸⁸ The over stuffing of the Horniman Walrus is recalled by Theo Reeves-Evisson, 'Surface Fictions' in Ed. Gunkel, Henriette, Hameed, Ayesha and O'Sullivan, Simon, *Futures & Fictions* (London: Repeater Books, 2017), p.295. The over stuffing of the Walrus is also noted on the Horniman website.

⁸⁹ This story is told by Jo Hatton, Keeper of Natural History and is also re-told on the Horniman website.

⁹⁰ Theo Reeves-Evisson, 'Surface Fictions' in Ed. Gunkel, Henriette, Hameed, Ayesha and O'Sullivan, Simon, *Futures & Fictions* (London: Repeater Books, 2017), p.296

⁹¹ Svetlana Boym, *The Future Of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p.210

⁹² Boym, p.210. Boym adds: 'Berlin for Ugresic is a city – museum, and she, like her fellow exiles, are museum exhibits. Collecting becomes a substitute for the loss of collective memory.'

drawn.⁹³ The disappearance of working horses from London streets is directly linked to the electrification of trams and the railway. And war.⁹⁴

Hounslow: ‘a slump back to lean times when the railway came, a long glance to the Highway men and hostelries of the neglected roads. The Great West Road, The Golden Mile and then, once more, the slow decline.’⁹⁵ The history of the area of Hounslow is entwined with transport. From Roman times to the 19th Century the area has always been used as a passageway to get elsewhere. From 1784 Hounslow’s High Street was the route used for all Mail Coaches towards the West Country and is one reason for the high number of pubs, dating back to the time of inns, stables and local watering holes for travellers in need of a drink. However, the railways transformed Hounslow and it is the area’s link with the railway that defines it. First by the Hounslow to Waterloo Railway line built in 1849-1850, and then by the emergence of the Metropolitan District Railway of the new Underground in 1883, both projects generating waves of new house building. Trains ran between Hounslow and Mill Hill Park (Acton Town) from 1883. A further connection was established between Mansion House and Hounslow Town, as a means to exploit Hounslow’s link to Bath.⁹⁶ The introduction of the Great Western Railway in the 1840s (plus the start of the Grand Union Canal between Brentford and Birmingham in 1920s) marked the end of Hounslow being seen as thoroughfare and route of escape, rather it became a place to settle and somewhere to belong.

Hounslow (and Heroin): the problem with Hounslow is heroin.⁹⁷ It’s been here for a long time. We’re near the airport and so when the drugs come in to Heathrow they don’t spread too far. At work I come across a lot of young people hanging around the station and using the toilets. However, what’s really happening is they are being

⁹³ Stephen Inwood, *A History Of London* (Oxford: Macmillan, 1998), p.568

⁹⁴ In 1901 the London General Omnibus Company (LGOC) had 16,700 horses. During World War One the Government made ‘a compulsory purchase of tradespeople’s horses’, ‘which saw horses sized for the army and shipped across the channel.’ Hannah Velten in *Beastly London: A History of Animals in the City* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), p.74

⁹⁵ Laura Grace Ford, ‘Issue 9, Heathrow: the psychogeography of paranoia’, Summer 2008 in Ford, Laura Grace, *Savage Messiah* (London: Verso, 2019)

⁹⁶ Edwards, Dennis & Pigram, Ron, *London’s Underground Suburbs* (London: Baton Transport, 1986), p.12

⁹⁷ Lilian Pizzichini’s *Music Night At The Apollo: A Memoir Of Drifting* (2014), is a novel set in Southall, whose protagonist Lilian, living on a barge boat in the Grand Union Canal, embraces the world of heroin, skunk and psychotic boyfriends.

controlled. Taking it in turns to sit outside or work in pairs at the station entrance, and whatever money they manage to collect they then have to hand in to those who control them. There's one 'controller' who I've encountered a few times. He's young, fresh, charismatic. But. If the money he wants is not collected he turns, and starts to put the pressure on. I've asked our Community Police Officers about it. He wears a Hawaiian shirt and parades up and down Kingsley Road like a peacock. Once the money is handed in they get paid with drugs. Heroin. And more recently Spice. On a Sunday they get desperate and as it approaches the peacock's 'cut off time' they creep more and more into the station. First at the ticket barriers, then at the gateline, then up into the platforms. There's Michael. Sam. And two who are very young, who come into the station together, a boy and girl. She had bruises and gashes all over her face. She said she was beaten up during the night. These two I can't work out. He's very charming but I don't know if he's sleeping with her or controlling her. Probably both. Hopefully looking after her. He said during lockdown he went into a hostel and he's been letting her sleep there.

I watch them both, the boy and girl, disintegrate over the space of a year. Their fingers get dirtier. They start to smell. They lose weight. When I make a coffee they always want six or seven sugars in black coffee. Always. I watch and have small interactions with people; I have no idea what they are going through. They have been marginalised. Forgotten. We have an APP to alert the authorities over vulnerable rough sleepers but for the report to go through they need to be in sleeping bags and these two don't do that. But I do share a space with them every day and they get more desperate, more brazen on the Station territory. Crossing boundaries.

Disturbing the status quo. Earlier in the year a man on crutches, who's normally ok, was shouting at her and then kicked her. Hard. I told him to go: leave her alone! He spat into her face and walked off. I gave her a tissue.

An old man in a tweed jacket, white stubble and wearing jeans came into the station. He said he worked for the government and was a housing officer. He said: you Underground lot are creating a microcosm, a system for the homeless to live and feed off. He said: 'you're treating them like tarts. Pulling their knickers down. Every sandwich, every coin and every drink keeps them in this situation for longer. You think you're helping but you're not. By law the council have to house them, he said. But what chance have they got when they go to the Council after all your pampering. Face to face with people who are trained to say no. You need to make them strong, independent. You the underground are the problem, they are feeding off you like parasites.' I didn't like him or agree but it was an interesting conversation and it shed a few minutes off my shift. In total there's about 10 - 15 who I know by face, a few by

name. Here, there and then they disappear. This Government Housing officer (or whatever he was) pointed outside in the direction of Alladin's and said: have you noticed now that there are less of them. (I had). He said: that's because they are picked up and deposited into zone 9, into the suburbs and then gradually over time they make their way back here, into London.

The reality is I haven't got a clue. Recently, we were given boxes of chocolate (Easter eggs) by a Police Officer for the work we did during lockdown. I gave the boy and girl the Easter egg and a bottle of water. Fuck the Tweed Jacket man!

Hounslow Council Enforcement Officers: black polo T-shirts, black combats and black DM boots. Solving all our problems in one scoop with a £80 fag butt fine to a teenage girl, who in the last second when jumping the gates dithered. Fatal. We're just doing our job son. Yeah right. Something rotten.

Hounslow East Pigeons: sadly the Hounslow East pigeons (there are a family of 4 who live by the tail end of the Eastbound Platform) are on a Transport for London Death List. Fellow Supervisors place repeated 'jobs' for the pigeons to be exterminated. I close the jobs when their backs are turned. If a 'job' does get through and Pest Control (who are always so over cheerful) turn up during Engineering Hours, I explain that our pigeons have moved on to new locations. Sorry boss, nothing found.

Bohumil Hrabal, who wrote *Closely Watched Trains* (1965), one of my all time favourite novels, (and made into the equally brilliant 1966 film *Closely Observed Trains*, directed by Jiri Menzel), fell to his death in 1997 from the fifth floor of a Prague hospital trying to feed the pigeons. CAUTION: Brohumil's memoir *All My Cats* (1983) is a truly brutal read.

Ian Rawes: is a London legend. A field recordist who runs the London Sound Survey. He chooses field recording to 'document London' and 'explore its current character,' to gain a sense of belonging.⁹⁸ I met Ian through a sound event we were both part of at Five Years, London (Dust Days, 30th September 2017). Ian asked if I've ever heard a ballast machine on the railways. He once worked 'many years ago for LUL's engineering directorate but it was just a crappy desk job through a temp

⁹⁸ Cathy Lane interview with Ian Rawes in Lane, Cathy and Carlyle, Angus, *In the Field: The Art of Field Recording* (Devon: Uniformbooks, 2013), p.137

agency.’ Check out <https://www.soundsurvey.org.uk>, now part of the London Metropolitan Archives.

Iain Sinclair: I have a love hate relationship with psychogeography. I love reading Iain Sinclair and how he uses the idea of the journey throughout his work, for example, walking the entire route of the London Overground or his project to hunt down a memorial plaque to the Kings X Fire.⁹⁹ He uses the journey as a structural, metaphorical device in order to reach a discovery. It’s a very linear approach even when its findings are eclectic. His approach to research is revealing, and also refreshing.

‘I’m useless at libraries, prejudiced against Google-slurry, but eager to carry home junk from the road: pamphlets, snapshots, conversations with hangers about, dog walkers. The story is accidental.’¹⁰⁰

However, Iain Sinclair is not aging well. *London Orbital* (2002), *Hackney, That Rose-Red Empire: A Confidential Report* (2009), *London Overground: A Day’s Walk around the Ginger Line* (2015) and *The Last London* (2017) are brilliant, insightful reads (Sinclair’s digging up of the Hackney moleman is compelling) but taking on the role of the great explorer, surrounded by a gang of white middle aged men, sometimes with a semi naked young woman in their mists (I’m thinking the film *Swan Down* (2012) directed by Andrew Kotting and Sinclair) is (and never was) a great look.

And really, he does walk too far!

In Defence Of The Underground: ‘I knew a man who spent all day going around the Circle Line. It was like a job, a discipline, from nine till six.’¹⁰¹ *In Defence Of The Underground* is a short story on loss, to be found in Doris Lessing’s *London Observed* (1993). A take on class and dissolving identity in London, told through the lens of an underground train journey. For a further insight into the life of Doris Lessing and the cultural, political and intellectual world of London in the late 1950s and 1960s try *The London Lover* (2018) by Clancy Sigal.

⁹⁹ Iain Sinclair, ‘Museums of Melancholy’, *London Review Of Books*, 18th August 2005, Vol.27 No.16

¹⁰⁰ Iain Sinclair, *Hackney, That Rose-Red Empire: A Confidential Report* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2009), p.51

¹⁰¹ Doris Lessing, *London Observed* (London: Flamingo, 1993), pp.90-91

'Don't try to change me,' Doris warns on our very first night in bed together, the same day that I arrive at 58 Warwick Road. Her Valor paraffin heater with its woozy gasoline scent sends shadows dancing over the ceiling.'¹⁰²

Instagram: *thelazyrailway* feed opens up the space of my garden. It maps the process of the garden being built, and like my garden territory, exists in a temporary, transitory space. Both could be hacked or corrupted, disappeared at any moment.
<https://www.instagram.com/thelazyrailway/>

Irish Navies: built the tube and English railways. Donall MacAmhlaigh (1926 - 1989) lived in digs all around London including Acton, Hammersmith and the Elephant, and *An Irish Navvy: The Diary Of An Exile* (1964) is MacAmhlaigh's diary, written as he worked as an Irish construction worker on the railways in the 1950s. His stories share an experience of working and (just about) surviving in London as an exile. An interesting present day comparison to make with *Diary of an Exile* and MacAmhlaigh's experience of an Irishmen working and living in our hostile environment is Johny Pitts' outstanding book *Afropean: Notes from Black Europe* (2019).

Ithell Colquhoun: in *The Bunker Part 2 (CASE: In The Name Of The Otter, Track 3)* I read out loud from Ithell Colquhoun's *The Living Stones* (1957), written as she travelled around Cornwall in the 1950s looking for an artist's studio whilst seeking sanctuary from the effects of advancing mechanical technology. *The Crying Of The Wind* (1954) is Colquhoun's haunting writing on Ireland.

JG Ballard: JG Ballard's *Crash* (1973), *Concrete Island* (1974) and *High Rise* (1975), three novels depicting the extreme behavioural responses provoked by the new suburban hinterlands of motorways and retail parks that emerged in the 70s. Ballard takes us out of the city centre where the tourists are and into the outskirts, the previously over looked suburban spaces: the Little Chefs and gated communities. The 'non-places at the perimeter of our lives'.¹⁰³ Think out of town dark stores and the new dark kitchen's operating under railway bridges. His writing addresses 'the

¹⁰² Clancy Sigal, *The London Lover: My Weekend That Lasted Thirty Years* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018, p.29

¹⁰³ Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography* (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2010), p.116

loss of emotional engagement with our surroundings'.¹⁰⁴ Highlighting how modern life has created a loss of emotional sensitivity, our emotional responses to situations blunted due to an overflow of imagery. He chose the suburbs as stage sets for his stories as he believed by removing oneself from the centre of the city you 'find un-centred lives' where 'people have more freedom to explore their own imaginations, their own obsessions.'¹⁰⁵ As a result his novels can be read as societal mood maps. Diagramming the future, our present, through stories 'where the layout of a future city is characterised by a transient population living lives of anonymous isolation'.¹⁰⁶

Lazy Railway: disused Platform 5 at Acton Town station is the site of the Acton Town otter's death by electrification. The location of where the first tests in electrifying underground train tracks were carried out by the Electric District Railway on the 23rd June 1903. In 1932 a special train service was set up to connect the District Railway to South Acton station. It only had one car on a single-track spur and went just one stop, transporting staff and freight, in addition to some customers. The line stopped offering services to South Acton in 1959. Locals knew it as Little Jenny. The workforce called it The Lazy Railway.

Lockdown: the job of the cleaners is finally recognised as critical. During the day they carry out their duties as best they can. They sweep, rub surfaces, empty bins, wipe, empty more bins, and attend to any new messes. With mask and gloves they *are* the frontline. At night a special force appears, two operatives I haven't seen before, dressed in white jumpsuits, one with a hose connected to a box on his back, the other guiding and taking photographs. He sprays and disinfects the metal and plastic surfaces, the gateline, the oyster readers, the railings, the metro stand, and jokes about hosing me down. 26/03/2020

London: 'the true identity of London' is Ronald McDonald blowing up and down the Old Kent Road. Patrick Keiller's film *London* (1994) is a melancholic and 'quietly angry study of the city after 13 years of Tory rule'.¹⁰⁷ Using a fictional narrator Keiller sets out to document the 'decline' of London under the Tories and suggests the true identity of London is in its absence. London: the first Metropolis to disappear.

¹⁰⁴ Merlin Coverley, p.116

¹⁰⁵ Merlin Coverley is referencing an Iain Sinclair text on *Crash* (BFI Modern Classics), p.84

¹⁰⁶ Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography* (Harpندن: Pocket Essentials, 2010), p.118

¹⁰⁷ Mark Fisher, *Ghosts Of My Life: Writings On Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Hampshire: Zero Books, 2014), p.226

London Books: I first learnt about London Books through the monthly RMT Magazine and purchased their London Classics 'working class fiction series' in hardback copies with a special 10% off deal through the Union. Robert Westerby's *Wide Boys Never Work* (1937), *The Gilt Kid* (1936) and *They Drive By Night* (1938) by James Curtis, *Night And The City* by Gerald Kersh (1938), Simon Blumenfeld's *Jew Boy* (1935) and John Sommerfield's *May Day* (1936). Look inside the cover of *Jew Boy* and *May Day* and there is a dedication to Bob Crow and the RMT. John King, whose Trilogy of late 90's books on football violence, sex and identity are set in Hounslow, Brentford and Hammersmith co-runs London Books. *Football Factory* (1996), *Headhunters* (1998), and *England Away* (1999). Iain Sinclair is involved.

London Suburbs: in the early 17th Century the London Suburbs had been a refuge for non-citizens, a haven for the city's underclass.¹⁰⁸ In the 19th Century this changed and the 'suburbs now suited the new domestic ideology of the middle class, emphasising family life, the separation of work and home, privacy, respectability, social segregation, and the domestication and isolation of women.'¹⁰⁹

Lots Road Power Station, Chelsea Creek: commissioned in 1905 it enabled the District Railway to switch train operations from steam to electricity. The largest generating station in the world Lots Road powered the Underground until the 21st Century. Decommissioned in 2002 and now just another luxury housing development. The final scene of Anthony Asquith's *Underground* (1928) starring Brian Aherne, Elissa Landi and Cyril McLaglen, is played out on the roof of Lots Road. Brian Aherne is the hero, a member of London Transport Station Staff. Cyril McLaglen plays the villain, an employee of Lots Road. Lots Road also features in *An Alphabet of T. O. T.* (1915) and the following London Transport posters: 'Underground – the moving spirit of London' (1910) by Thomas Robert Way and 'Power Underground' (1931) by Edward McKnight Kauffer.

Managed Decline: our current status: uncertainty. Throughout 2021 and 2022 Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London has made repeated warnings of a 'managed decline' of London's transport network. The impact of two years of on-off Covid restrictions, rising inflation and ideological Tory driven cuts, a political agenda dating back to the 2010 - 2015 Conservative / Liberal Democrat coalition government's decision to

¹⁰⁸ Stephen Inwood, *A History Of London* (Oxford: Macmillan, 1998), p.569

¹⁰⁹ Inwood, p.570

implement an 8.8 billion cut to TFL's budget by 2021. As part of the right wing culture wars we were always going to be their target. A future of reduced maintenance and investment, impacting onto day-to-day operations, creating a spiral of decline that if allowed to happen (but not if Mick Lynch has anything to do about it) will take decades to come out of. See Molly Dineen's BBC documentary *Heart of the Angel* (1989).

Manholes: to connect electricity generated from Lots Road Powerhouse with the District Railway, ducts were built. Power was delivered to Earls Court via a cable subway with high voltage supplies, and then distributed to substations, including our very own substation here at Acton Town, by disused platform 5. High tension cables were then conveyed in open ground ducts in the 6ft area between the tracks and then 12 ft. long manholes (like World War One trenches). These 12 ft. long manholes had no lids and were positioned at regular intervals.¹¹⁰

A Large Otter, A Manhole And An Electric Shock (CASE: Gone To Earth, Track 4) is a response to the death of the otter as recorded in The Daily News, 5th April 1911. Discovering the information in the newspaper report confirmed the otter was a living animal. The soundscape re-imagines the otter's last movements. The track combines electromagnetic recordings (recorded on the night shift using a bat detector inside our Ticket machines and under the Ticket Office floor boards), the screeching pipes (now fixed) from my flat's bathroom, pigeons nesting on Hounslow East station and Northern Line trains passing over the head whilst standing in the old city and south London railway tunnels at London Bridge underground station.

Mansion House Station: the District Line from the Mansion House terminus reached out to Ealing in 1879 connecting the city with suburbia. The District expansion into West London suburbia allowed Landlords and private owners to get people off valuable commercial land within the city and into the countryside, a sinister social cleansing ideology that continues to be copied today. Think Elephant.

Maps: Harry Beck's 1931 design, drawn in his spare time whilst working as an engineering draftsman at the London Underground Signals Office. By fictioning the city space Beck takes a hold of London. An accurate map would be terrifying. Chaotic. A sure sign of a city that's lost control. 'The tube map with its symmetries, its

¹¹⁰ Mike Horne, *London's District railway: A History of the Metropolitan District Railway Volume Two Twentieth Century* (London: Capital Transport, 2019), p.80

rows of diagonals, its repetition of angles, is an excessive rationalization of something that in reality is much more irregular.¹¹¹ It's only at the end of the line that 'this fiction dissolves' as the system releases its grip.

Masks: a photograph of Daphne Oram (the experimental electronic music composer) in *An Individual Note of Music, Sound and Electronics* (1972). The photograph shows Oram as a young girl with her brothers and a friend on their Mad Hatter's Tea Party float in The Hospital Carnival, Devizes, August 1937. In the picture she is the only one not wearing a mask: everyone else is covered up. It's a strange picture. Being in costume in the countryside, humans dressing up as cartoon animals.

In his analysis on *The Mask* (1994), the film starring Jim Carrey, Slavoj Zizek describes 'the phantasmic space of cartoons' and articulates how cartoon animals like Tom and Jerry are 'perceived precisely as humans wearing animal masks and / or clothing.'¹¹² He explains how in cartoons, when an animal's skin is scratched, what appears beneath it 'is ordinary human skin'.¹¹³ In *Troubles with the real: Lacan as a viewer of Alien* Zizek refers to Lacan's concept of the lamella and shows how Lacan articulates the lamella as 'something extra-flat', that goes everywhere and 'moves like the amoeba'. Lacan suggests that this omelette style *Thing* will appear and 'envelops your face while you are quietly asleep'.¹¹⁴ When this happens our bodies join forces with this 'weird organ' and we transform into l'homelette, an egg man. Samuel Beckett style. However, as Zizek explains, the lamella 'can incessantly change its form, and even transpose itself from one medium to another.'¹¹⁵ The lamella is 'a 'something' that is first heard as a shrill sound, and then pops up as a monstrously distorted body', 'unreal, an entity of pure semblance, a multiplicity of appearances that seem to enfold a central void-its status is purely phantasmatic.'¹¹⁶

Mice: London Underground mice are black. This could be dirt but it is worth noting that the typical South of England mouse is brown. Therefore, the Underground environment, according to our Bio Diversity Action Plan 2010, 'may have had a hand in bringing about a change of colour.'

¹¹¹ Rod Mengham and Marc Atkins, 'End of the Line' in Kerr, Joe & Gibson, Andrew, *London: From Punk To Blair* (London: Reakiton Books, 2003), p.169

¹¹² Slavoj Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject* (London: Verso, 1999), p.399, Note 71

¹¹³ Zizek, p.399, Note 71

¹¹⁴ Slavoj Zizek, *How To Read Lacan* (London: Granta Books, 2006), p.61

¹¹⁵ Zizek, p.62

¹¹⁶ Zizek, p.62

Michael: Michael was my favourite. I say was as he's dead. He used to sit directly outside Hounslow East. I'd make him tea and he said my tea was so good that when he wins the lottery he's going to come back and employ me as his butler. We had a good laugh about that. After every tea delivery he'd give me a fist bump. Or ask me to put cold water in so he wouldn't burn his mouth. Michael was framed by the neon lights of Aladdin's. He wore a lumberjack shirt and had learning difficulties. His face was red from sitting in the sun. His hair and clothes soaking wet when he wouldn't move from the rain, no matter how much we'd persuade him to take shelter. People used to crack on about how he had a flat round the corner but they're missing the point. When he died a woman came and stuck his picture up on the railings where he used to sit every day and hung some flowers with a string onto the railings. She shouted at the passengers as they walked through. What did he ever do to you, she shouted. You all ignored him as you walked pass. It was upsetting. A few days later a man came up to me and said when are you going take that picture down, I'm fed up of looking at him every day. Michael RIP. Ex-British Forces, early thirties, looked double his age. Died in September 2019 of septicaemia. M said 'it's that scum controlling him that filled his veins with junk'. He was controlled, as whatever he gained from begging was handed in, in exchange for drugs. So what now Michael?

Modern Nature: Olivia Laing recalls it was through the reading of Derek Jarman's *Modern Nature* (1992) that she developed a sense of being an artist, of being political. And this sense was gained through Derek Jarman's way of planting a garden: 'playfully, stubbornly, ignoring boundaries, collaborating freely'. Derek Jarman writes of a landscape where 'there are no walls or fences. My garden's boundaries are the horizon.'¹¹⁷ He asks: 'Who can guess where it ends?' Experimentation, testing and trying things out was key to how Derek Jarman planted his Dungeness garden. There were false starts. Not everything worked. Not every plant made it to the end. His approach to gardening was similar to his filmmaking. 'Not waiting for funding or permission but picking up a super 8 and assembling a cast of friends. Not hard cash but resourcefulness and effort.'¹¹⁸

Mr J: Mr J is small and round, has chubby cheeks, a bald head and eyes that twinkle when telling a story. In full story telling mode Mr J turns very territorial. He puffs out his chest so you can't get past and if you do manage to squeeze through he

¹¹⁷ Derek Jarman, *Modern Nature* (London: Vintage, 1991), p.3

¹¹⁸ Olivia Lang, Introduction to Jarman, Derek, *Modern Nature* (London: Vintage, 1991), XII

follows you onto the platform, bowing and circling you whilst inflating his neck. The minute he starts preening himself I always take it as a dangerous sign. Mr J's stories tend to evolve around his highly imaginative sex life. Although recently I have noticed that his conversations have been weighted towards illness and death. The others often complain about Mr J, his lateness and revolving fantasies but I just think he has a strong need for companionship.

Museum Depot: the Museum Depot at Acton is being sold. When I visited I had the place to myself. K guided me past rows of old Trams, Buses and Trains. I stop at the old spiral escalator that was discovered at the bottom of a lift shaft at Holloway Road station. I'm officially here to look at posters. *Power: The Nerve Centre of London's Underground* (1931) by Edward McKnight Kauffer, *The Moving Spirit of London* (1910) by Thomas Robert Way, *Nothing Left To Chance* (1930) by Maurice Beck and *Always in Touch* (1930) also by Maurice Beck. The real find is Elsie Henderson's *Underground Aids to Perplexed Parents*, (1917). Sub-titled 'No.1 The Animals and Birds of London' it depicts pictures of animals, hand drawn in multiple squares, like a comic, including foxes, horses, chickens, rabbits, crows, ducks and an otter.

Nightwatch: 7th April 2004, Francis Alys releases a fox into the contained environment of the National Portrait Gallery (London) at night.¹¹⁹ The Gallery's CCTV system is used to follow the fox's movements. Watching the single screen version it is exhilarating when the fox first appears, strange, alien and beautiful.¹²⁰ An interloper. An outsider. Watching it look for food, sniffing paintings of chinless chins up on its back legs, trying to get out, ending up curled up on the Gallery's furniture as if to say 'what is it that you want from me?' Meanwhile, we, the viewer are placed into the position of the watching low rank CCTV security officer. By looking at the fox we question our strange rules and sense of separation and alienation from the natural world.¹²¹ This out of place animal unsettles us. It feels like we are now the intruders. By doing so questions our relationship with animals.

'These creatures, whether they are calm or unruly, ultimately do not respect modern man's administration of social exchange or spatial boundaries. They also cannot be

¹¹⁹ Commissioned by Artangel, 'Seven Walks' (2000 – 05). (*Guards, Shoeshine, Shady/Sunny, The Commuters, Railings, Ice4Milk and The Nightwatch*).

¹²⁰ Miwon Kwon, 'Dogs and the City, 2010' in *Animals*, Ed.Ramos, Filipa (London: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2016), p.203

¹²¹ Miwon Kwon, p.205

fully eradicated, contained or repressed, despite man's controlling efforts to maintain the semblance of civilised order by doing so.¹²²

North London Line: was the prototype for a London orbital railway. Together with the District Line their tracks land lock The Gunnersbury Triangle. The old North London Line is now run by Transport for London, controlled by Arriva and owned by German State Railways. In contrast to LU, London Overground uses zero hours contracts and spilt shifts rosters.

Nostalgia: a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Svetlana Boym defines nostalgia (from nostos—return home, and algia—longing) as a sentiment of loss and displacement' but also 'a romance with one's own fantasy'. Nostalgia is elusive. It is not clear what we yearn for. We use nostalgia as a defence mechanism, especially when the world is in flux. 'Nostalgia is a longing for a place, but actually it is a yearning for a different time—the time of childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams.'¹²³ It is a rebellion against 'the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress' and 'a symptom of our age; a historical emotion'.¹²⁴

Old City and South London Tunnels: Sunday morning. A field trip to Underground Electric. The Old City and South London Railway Tunnels.¹²⁵ London Bridge underground station. Hidden tunnels no one knows about. It's where I used to work. South London days, and nights. Months. Years. I meet D in the old Station Supervisors Office at London Bridge. Just like old times, memories spiral through way over familiar spaces, faces and smells. Messroom smells. Locker room smells. The same heaving crowd congestion. I have the urban explorer Bradley Garrett's red hair on my mind. Not necessarily a good thing. I don't think he even has red hair. In the control room H tells a story about how he's just moved to Watford and to get to know his neighbours he set up his semi-professional LIVE PA system in his front

¹²² Miwon Kwon, p.203

¹²³ Svetlana Boym, *The Future Of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xv

¹²⁴ Svetlana Boym, xvi

¹²⁵ The City and South London railway opened the world's first deep-level electric railway on the 18th December 1890. I visited the tunnels of the Old City and South London in February 2020. (The field recordings I made that day are used in *CASE: Gone To Earth* and *CASE: This Is The Gunnersbury Triangle Wake*.) The line ran from King William Street to Stockwell. The tunnels connect with the Jubilee extension underground passageways that plough under the Crossbones Graveyard.

garden and played his back catalogue of Winston Churchill speeches. Full volume, all day and all day into the night. A playlist of Churchill's top ten hits. A complete and utter racket.

To access the old City and South London tunnels we go down escalator number 9, turn left, stop by a blue door, open the door with the master key, walk in, walk through a few more doors, down a very steep step ladder and we're in. A maze. Pitch dark. D has a torch. I can hear the movement of the crowd above. Footsteps. The sound of mice, running back and forth, making noises. Above. And below. The footsteps of trapped mice engraved over us. Their footsteps and cries etched into me. Scratched in with dry point. I think of Piranesi and South London detective stories. Being a private eye. A shamus. A sham. An undercover private dick, inside the warm stomach of this worm, walking up its insides, through the red eye of my police style body camera until D says: John, that's enough.

Old Man: the authority of the 'old man' is God. A loaded sentence if ever there was one. Line controllers run the show, above ground. Hyper-articulated. Hyper-charged. Highly skilled, demanding, communicating critical safety instructions and in return details have to be precise and succinct, there's no room for error or chitchat. I always take a deep breath before picking up the phone. Still undo the top two buttons on my shirt. Pen and paper in hand. We never meet the old man. They never meet us. We listen to their voices, speak on a daily basis but I have no idea what they look like. They could be sitting next to me for all I know it, watching me in the café as I write this down.

Otters: Mr Grassmann claims to have seen an otter emerge from beneath a raft of the West End Rowing Club's premises at Hammersmith Mall and enter the river, on November 17th, 1923. Mr Poulter states that there were frequent signs of otters in this neighbourhood, and that one had been seen in a small tidal pool not three miles from Hammersmith in 1921-22.¹²⁶

Otter Fur: From the 1700s it is recorded that otters were poached for their fur. One trick hunters liked to play was to trap the otter pups first, therefore causing a distress call to sound alerting the mother and bringing her to break cover. The mother otter would then be captured and killed with weapons like darts or arrows. As the desire for otter fur increased through the centuries so hunting developed, transferring

¹²⁶ Fitter, R.S.R, *London's Natural History* (London: Bloomsbury Books, 1945), p.195

capturing skills from traps into guns. Using guns had the clear advantage of not only making the process a whole lot quicker but also increasing the volume of kills as the hunter could now spray rather than snipe bullets. They also started to use ships as weapons. Groups of hunters were sent out in canoes, to paddle, seek and kill. Orders were given to pile up the canoe as high as possible, retreat and then venture out once more. This process went on and on and on until whoever was in charge got bored and gave the orders to stop.

Otter fur has been used to make capes, belts and sashes. Tails of otters were used for Gentlemen's hats and belts, and also Children's mittens. In China the Royal family once wore shoes made out of otters. There is a scene in the 1969 film *Ring of Bright Water*, based on the 1960 book by Gavin Maxwell, where Graham Merrill (Bill Travers) looks into a London window display that presents a mannequin dressed in otter fur.¹²⁷ However, the introduction of silk as an available consumer item resulted in the demand for otter fur to decrease in the late 20th Century. Also, as the numbers of British otters decreased during the 1970s consumers stopped buying otter fur as a conscious effort to prevent the animal from extinction.

Otter Hunt: The 'noble' sport of otter hunting was not banned until 1978. Until then otters were seen as vermin and chased by a pack of hounds, followed by hunters using sticks. After the ban, otter hound packs were switched to hunting mink. The game of otter hunting consisted of the otter being chased in river and over land. If the hounds sniffed out a pregnant otter, or a young mother with pups, the tradition was to 'leave aside' for another time. Often the male otter would be given a head start as a sporting gesture. *Tarka the Otter* by Henry Williamson and published in 1927 is *the* must read otter novel. It is read as a critique of the First World War, an animal tale that presents a mirror to the futility of human war. Williamson served as an infantryman near Ypres in the winter of 1914 - 1915 and a transport officer on the Ancre in 1917. In the 1930s, after the publication of *Tarka the Otter*, Williamson took membership of the British Union of Fascists, expressing publicly his admiration for Hitler in the 1930s. He was a British organicist fascist, a blood and soil type. David Cobham's 1978 film *Tarka the Otter* was released the same year as the ban. Narrated by Peter Ustinov it is considered a classic.

¹²⁷ Made in 1969 the film was directed by Jack Couffer, and starred Bill Travers, Virginia McKenna, Mij the Otter and Jonnie.

Our Pink Depot: is made up of transcripts and interviews that Nina Wakeford made on site during the Northern Line extension between 2017 - 2019. Wakeford mixes the voices, stories, banter and insights from engineers, rail gangs, architects, flower stalls, market porters, lesbian and gay DJs and Northern Line Tube drivers. I love it. The book captures the different layers of our work place environment, connecting the tunnels below with the Market Tavern above, and by doing so drawing out a socio-political thread between the 1980s (pit closures, clause 28, mines, nightclubs and politics) to the present day. 'Some of them overlapped in the Market Tavern, back in the day. Others will drive passengers along the track.'¹²⁸ The book is framed through a historic May Day track walk in 2019 with six Northern Line Train Operators that Wakeford instigated along the new under construction Northern Line extension (now open). This use of track walk to reveal an insight into the underground working environment follows in the footsteps of Molly Dineen's iconic BBC documentary *Heart of the Angel* (1989) and *Under Night Streets* (1958), British Transport Films. The 2019 Northern Line extension walk included playing music (loudly), explaining their choices, speaking out Public Announcements, whilst remembering underground staff who had died from HIV and AIDS.

Paranoid Investigations: The ghost of the Acton Town Otter haunts my investigation. On one level this is through the sense of a 'cover up', out of focus high up figures within a big organisation holding information back about the missing stuffed otter. In *The Cover Up, (CASE: Going Green, Track 7)* the encounter with Marilyn is based on a real life conversation at the Transport Library with the librarian who was insistent that for the Victorians, showing animals in railway stations was 'no big deal'. And of course, paranoid investigations are central to a psychogeographic approach (hauntology's natural partner in crime). The suspicion Iain Sinclair has for big organisations holds no limits. On another level, the reality of staying up all night as a post Fit For The Future lone worker, tired, isolated, in the dark (in every sense), exhausted from extreme shift work, does lean towards a state of confusion, a perfect receptive for a paranoid hallucinatory vibe.

Photographic Evidence: is used throughout the Investigation as narrative starting points. The photograph of stuffed animals at Charing Cross underground station

¹²⁸ Nina Wakeford, *Our Pink Depot* (London: Book Works and Art On The Underground, 2019), back cover

studied in detail in *CASE: Going Green*. In *Public Displays of Power and Control 2 (CASE: Gone To Earth, Track 6)* an early 1900s London Transport photograph of Acton Town station is fictioned. A photograph of First World War Dummy Tracks used as a backdrop for writing *CASE: This Is The Gunnersbury Triangle Wake* and *CASE: In The Name Of The Otter*. This photograph was first spotted in Hanna Rose Shell's *Hide and Seek: Camouflage, Photography, and the Media of Reconnaissance (2012)* and is included in CASE NOTES, *Images*.

Psychogeography: I am not Iain Sinclair. I am not a psychogeographer. I own not one item of Gore-Tex in my wardrobe. I refuse to stamp my feet up and down on suburban train platforms, in East London.¹²⁹ Sometimes I do wake up thinking I want to be David Seabrook but quickly slap that thought away.¹³⁰ Am I in denial? Telling stories from the edges of the city. Journeying through Zone 4 railway stations, along canals, motorways, under flyovers. Carrying out night work. Riding the night bus. Wearing my uniform. Walking the type of spaces us white males can walk. Lauren Elkin in *Flâneuse* (2016) argues for women walking in the heart of the city: 'I like the built environment, I like cities. Cities themselves. The heart of them. Their manifold quarters, sectors, corners. And it's the centre of cities where women have been empowered, by plunging into the heart of them, and walking where they're not meant to. Walking where other people (men) walk without eliciting comment. That is the transgressive act. You don't need to crunch around in Gore-Tex to be subversive, if you're a woman. Just walk out your front door.'¹³¹

Punk: Laura Grace Ford would never call herself a psychogeographer. 'I think a lot of what is called psychogeography now is just middle-class men acting like colonial explorers, showing us their discoveries and guarding their plot.'¹³² The intense relationship she has with the city and how she navigates its spaces as hard-edged drifts is 'diaristic' and layered.¹³³ 'I have spent the last twenty years walking around

¹²⁹ Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2016), p.19

¹³⁰ David Seabrook is an alternative psychogeographer, with no gore text in site and rather than hanging about in East London his cult book *All The Devils Are Here* (2002) is set in Kent.

¹³¹ Lauren Elkin, *Flâneuse* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2016), p.20

¹³² Laura Grace Ford in Mark Fisher's 'Introduction', Ford, Laura Grace, *Savage Messiah* (London: Verso, 2019), xvii

¹³³ Grace Ford, ix

London and living here in a precarious fashion, I've had about fifty addresses. I think my understanding and negotiation of the city is very different to theirs.¹³⁴

In *Savage Messiah* stories of her life bleed into others, the pages working as 'layers of memories colliding, splintering and reconfiguring.'¹³⁵ She captures London's loss, London of the 70s, 80s and early 90s drifting into a bland 'New Labour' city, 'a London haunted by traces and remnants of rave, anarcho-punk scenes and hybrid subcultures.' What Mark Fisher brilliantly describes as 'the voices of the officially defeated: the punks, squatters, ravers, football hooligans and militants.'¹³⁶ And as a result Fisher argues, Ford's hauntological work becomes increasingly urgent. A real need 'to document the transient and ephemeral nature of the city', 'as the process of enclosure and privatisation continues apace.'¹³⁷

Quest: for a missing stuffed otter. I haven't given up. Not yet. Looking in a field of over 150 different taxidermists in London between 1840 and 1960. Rowland Ward. Brazenor Brothers. Edward Gerrard and Sons, for starters.

Radio Ballads: *The Ballad of John Axon* is one of the 8 ballads written and performed by Charles Parker with Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger. Sacked in 1972 from the BBC, Charles Parker's socio-political ballads were seen as expensive luxuries. Born in Bournemouth on April 5th 1919, Parker was the son of a redundant railway clerk. He died on the 8th December 1980 (the day John Lennon was assassinated). In *CASE: This Is The Gunnersbury Wake* and also *DEMO Tracks* I experiment with song. Singing songs with Sissy in the front room of our flat. The combination of sound, text, song and spoken, cultural history in Charles Parker's *Radio Ballads* is the inspiration. On the Night Shift listening to the wide-eyed political observations of Kirsty MacColl, Ivor Cutler, PJ Harvey, Pulp and JARVIS, The Kinks and Half Man Half Biscuit.

Radio On: Chris Petit's *Radio On* (1979). Britain's only road movie! A post punk classic, the narration of the film is the flyover. 'Photographed by Martin Schafer, the

¹³⁴ Grace Ford, xvii

¹³⁵ Grace Ford, ix

¹³⁶ Mark Fisher, 'Introduction' in Ford, Laura Grace, *Savage Messiah* (London: Verso, 2019), ix

¹³⁷ Grace Ford, ix

journey along the A4 is converted by the cinematography into one across some unspecified but definitely East European plain.¹³⁸ Features the Great West Road, hospital DJ night shifts, Kraftwerk, Bowie and Free Astrid Poll graffiti. Shot in black and white. What more could you want?

Railway Men's Convalescent Home: 'providing a fortnight's rest and change for convalescent railwaymen absolutely free of charge'.¹³⁹ In Herne Bay, Kent. (Head towards Amy Johnson looking out to sea.) In the original design of *An Alphabet of T.O.T* Charles Pears had hand drawn and painted a small donation box under the image of the Acton Town otter at Mansion House with clear lettering stating: 'Donations in aid of the Railway Men's Convalescent Home's'. However, in the final design, depicted on the same board and the version that made the publication, this information is no longer legible. Hmm.

Railway Spine: caused by the 'significant jolts of acceleration' sometimes experienced in early train carries, railway spine was-just like whiplash during the automobile age-an elusive and baffling illness that was more the invention of contemporary medico-legal incentives and cultural fears than a real neural disorder.¹⁴⁰ Railway spine ranged from 'malaise to immobility, from chronic pain to a full-on state of nervous collapse.' Victorians believe the condition was brought on by 'a state of collapse from fright, and from fright only.'¹⁴¹

Rats: during lockdown the British Pest Control Association reported an increase in rodent sightings of more than 41%. The British Rat changed during lockdown. With less food in outdoor spaces, and no humans in offices, the temptation to come inside (and stick around) was overwhelming. Sinking ships and all that. Pest co.uk states that the British rat population boomed by 25% in 2020, bringing the total to 150m.¹⁴²

Robert Smith: Robert Smith was an 18th Century Rat Catcher who wrote *The Universal Directory For Taking Alive and Destroying Rats, And All Other Kinds Of Four Footed And Winged Vermin* in 1788. (I have a copy!) He was also lead singer of

¹³⁸ Patrick Keiller, *The View From The Train* (London: Verso, 2013), p.28

¹³⁹ Poster, Great Western Railway Company, 1905 in the Wellcome Collection.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Moynihan, *Spinal Catastrophism* (Falmouth: Ubanomic Media, 2019), p.209

¹⁴¹ Moynihan, p.210

¹⁴² Richard Godwin, 'Are We Losing The Rat Race', *The Observer Magazine*, 07/02/21

The Cure. Michael Bracewell defines The Cure as the ultimate suburban band whose songs go on and on forever 'like endless avenues, crescents and drives.'¹⁴³

Sam: they say Sam had a rich girlfriend and lived in Richmond but started heroin and got his girlfriend doing it as well. Her father found out and chased him out. I liked Sam. He was in his early twenties and by the end had somehow wangled it so he was sleeping in Hounslow East station. Sam was very clever as he played on the grey territory between underground property and council property. The grey 'interstice' space no one controls or takes responsibility for. He's your problem. No he's yours. No yours. No yours. A few weeks before Sam moved in the glass panel at the entrance was smashed by a passer-by. Who threw a slab of concrete. The panel was immediately boarded up but then left as no one wanted to pay to have it replaced. Sam moved into the space created with his suitcase and sleeping bag and other bags of belongings. The community were split. Some would complain he was there. Why are you allowing him to live here? Your lodger, they'd say. Others would complain when SUPAs used to try and chase him out. Some customers would bring him food. Homemade curries. There was an incident with a melon. This nice Indian lady brought 3 slices of melon for Sam and left it by his sleeping bag. She insisted that I woke him up to tell him about the melon. I knew he was knocked out with Spice but she insisted. The trouble was she had put the melon right next to his face and when he finally awoke all he could see was the melon and completely freaked out. Spice is popular as it kills time. Deletes huge chunks of the day. I watch a Russian tourist and his fat teenage son take a selfie with Sam's unconscious body, crouching down next to his sleeping bag. Sam was charismatic and I'd speak to him, especially on nights when he was around during the night tube asking for money. An old man came up to me. What are you doing? Letting him sleep here, it's a disgrace. He said: this Sam character has got my grandkids doing junk and next time I see him I'm gonna kill him.

Shitting: during the night no one, and I mean no one, can stop shitting. Everyone is at it. Staff, Contractors, Train Ops, Signallers, Track Walkers, Engineers, Technicians, Maintenance, Cleaners. The whole combine. And always at the most inappropriate moments and often all at the same time. There is no pattern and it seems to be never ending. It must be something about staying up all night.

¹⁴³ Bracewell, Michael, *England is Mine: Pop Life in Albion* (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), pp.115 – 116

Something the Night Turn does to the mechanics of the stomach. Sometimes I think as a company we must be shitting up to 15 times per person each night.

South Harrow Owls: I go to South Harrow with my friend Zuzu, a District Line Train Operator and photographer. We get to South Harrow and start looking for the owls. We spot one near the gateline and Zuzu takes out her camera.

Station Jim: is stuffed and on public display, platform 5, Slough Station. A charity collection dog, with tricks, worked in the station collecting money off passengers in a small box strapped over his shoulders. Barked every time he received a coin. Died whilst working on the 19th November 1896. The passengers chipped in and got Jim stuffed.

Stay At Home: this week a man's been passing through the station who on CCTV looks like a brute but when he speaks, he talks like a poet. His appearance is Middle Eastern and each day he shouts at C's pre-recorded announcements ordering him to *stay at home*. He's big. His freedom pass doesn't work and (according to the latest advice: Key Workers Only) appears that he shouldn't really be travelling. Then he sits on the bench in the Ticket Hall (which C had taped off with red and white hazard tape) and now sags, looking like a piece of discarded bin bag. Today he sits weaving the red and white hazard tape through his big hands and tears it into little pieces. I ask if he wants a cup of water and he says thank you. He smokes a cigarette on the platform and urinates into the bushes. He drinks the water and says: this tough country. Is this happening anywhere else? He asks if I have a pair of shoes he could buy. In the office I look inside every drawer, hoping to find some there, or in a locker. For a split second I seriously toy with the idea of taking C's but I think about it and realise that wouldn't go down well. I go back out and ask the poet what size shoe he is but he says he doesn't know. I look at his feet. They're massive. I tell him: I'm size 9 and he says yes, that will work, I can adjust them.

Stonebridge Park: Patrick Keiller's short film *Stonebridge Park* (1981) uses a fictional narration about a theft committed by the narrator / would be murderer to accompany the picture (obsession) of a metal footbridge. Demolished in 1992 this footbridge, like the one crossing Gunnersbury Avenue that I use to cross from Acton Town to B and Q (to buy over-priced gardening and DIY equipment that never works), had a spiral ramp at each corner and was located in the junction of Harrow

Road and the North Circular.¹⁴⁴ Keiller felt 'its long, narrow walkway resembled the linearity of a film.'¹⁴⁵ And how the several flights of steps, half landings and changes of direction acted like portals into a fictional world.

Suburbs: 'Dreaming, gesticulating, often muttering a few words aloud, they sweep over the Strand and across Waterloo Bridge whence they will be slung in long rattling trains, to some prim little villa in Barnes or Surbiton where the sight of the clock in the hall and the smell of the supper in the basement puncture the dream.'¹⁴⁶

In *Virginia Woolf And The Acton Town Otter (Case: Going Green, Track 5)* the attempt by the fictional Virginia Woolf to break the glass of the display cabinets at Charing Cross station and free the Acton Town otter is used to signify the suffocation of suburban living.¹⁴⁷ Michael Bracewell depicts English suburbia as a strange mix of violence and melancholy, a place where 'the sheer oddness of suburban neatness' holds the 'sinister and sad'.¹⁴⁸

The Gunnersbury Triangle: 'a wilderness of birch and willow trees'.¹⁴⁹ The Gunnersbury Triangle is a small triangle of woodland, landlocked between the District and Overground railway lines in Chiswick, West London. In 1981 local resident Anne Mayo uncovered a plot by British Rail to develop the Gunnersbury Triangle as a 'land with factories and warehouses.' Joining forces with the Greater London Council (GLC), John Craven's Newsround and Hounslow Council, the British Rail scheme was finally defeated in March 1985 and the Gunnersbury Triangle was designated a statutory Local Nature Reserve in 1987. The Case of the Gunnersbury Triangle marks the first time a public inquiry ruled in favour of 'nature in the city'. By listening to the wishes of the local community the case changed the rules for urban

¹⁴⁴ Patrick Keiller, *The View From The Train* (London: Verso, 2013), p.183

¹⁴⁵ Patrick Keiller, p.182

¹⁴⁶ Virginia Woolf, *Street Haunting* (1927) (London: Read Books, 2012), p.18

¹⁴⁷ A further understanding of the early 20th Century desire for English suburbia can be read through the notion of Metroland, the Metropolitan Railway Extension of the early 20th Century. World War One left an England insecure, dazed and confused. From 1915 the Metropolitan Railway tapped into these feelings through a series of publications titled Metroland, each booklet creating an image of rural paradise a few miles from Baker Street. Leo Hollis, *The Stones Of London* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2011), p.312

¹⁴⁸ Bracewell, Michael, *England is Mine: Pop Life in Albion* (London: Faber & Faber, 2009), p.110

¹⁴⁹ David Goode, David, *Wild in London* (London: Michael Joseph, 1986), p.175

nature conservation. As South London Radical History Group point out in the 2004 pamphlet *Down With the Fences*:

‘most of the open spaces in London-commons, woods, greens...exists because they were preserved from development by collective action. Whether by rioting, tearing down fences and re-opening up enclosed land, or by legal agitation, much of the commons and parks that make life in the smoke just about bearable wouldn’t be there if they hadn’t been actively defended...’¹⁵⁰

The Nights Of London: working night shifts I was immediately drawn to *The Nights of London* (1926) by H.V. Morton. Morton uses the pattern of the night to investigate London ‘uncut’, gaining access to the city’s hidden spaces. He reports back with information gleaned from accessing working environments, listening to stories and perspectives told from unheard and little known (or thought about) voices. *The Nights of London* is a rare book on nocturnal London that actually mentions the tube. ‘When The ‘Tubes’ Stop’ is Morton’s slightly terrified account of an engineering hours visit to Piccadilly Circus, taking part in a guided track walk and re-surfacing at Leicester Square. I discovered Morton’s *Nights Of London* through Sukhdev Sandhu’s *Night Haunts* (2007). In his introduction Sandhu describes Morton’s writing as one that ‘marries journalistic precision to dreamy speculation. Not for him the self-obsessed maunderings of psychogeographic writing; he is happy and eager to talk to working Londoners who furnish him with grounded insights that it would be impossible for him to glean on his own.’¹⁵¹

The Tunnel: by Dorothy Richardson, published in 1919, features Miriam Henderson, the first flâneuse in London Literature.¹⁵² Can be read as a precursor to Virginia Woolf’s *Street Haunting* (1927). The journeys Miriam Henderson takes, to and from work, on omnibus or on foot, describe her constantly crossing roads, railway lines and footbridges, ‘as if to mirror her crossing of boundaries in her inner pilgrimage.’¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ McKay, George, *Radical Gardening: Politics, Idealism & Rebellion In The Garden* (London: Frances Lincoln Limited, 2011), pp.13-14

¹⁵¹ Sukhdev Sandhu, *Night Haunts: A Journey Through The London Night* (London: Verso/ Artangel, 2007), pp.15 -16

¹⁵² Bobby Seal, ‘Dorothy Richardson, The Tunnel’ <https://www.londonfictions.com/dorothy-richardson-the-tunnel.html>

¹⁵³ Bobby Seal. <https://www.londonfictions.com/dorothy-richardson-the-tunnel.html>. *The Tunnel* is part of the 13 volume Pilgrimage

Tracks: the need to ‘cover one’s tracks’ emerged in World War 1 due to the introduction of ‘the serial photography of aerial surveillance.’ The new ability to capture images of the ground from the sky made new practices of concealment essential. Suddenly the ‘hidden sought to see themselves as others might see them in the hope of disappearing.’¹⁵⁴ As a result this ‘produced new ways to disappear and, with them, new ways to locate the self so as to hide in plain sight.’¹⁵⁵

Trespass: ‘The notion of crossing a fence, line, wall or invisible boundary is wrapped in a moral stigma that runs to the core of English political and civil life.’¹⁵⁶ Nick Hayes in *The Book Of Trespass* (2020) observes ‘trespass’ as one of the most charged words in the English language. Dating from the 13th Century the idea to ‘establish some reparation for damage-damage to person or land’ means our liberties and restrictions, and our identity, is ‘expressed in terms of land, parameters and property’.¹⁵⁷

Tring: where is the otter now? Is she in a store cupboard in Embankment station? Lost and forgotten in an ex-Station Supervisor’s attic? In the vaults of the Natural History Museum stuffed animal collection at Tring? My trip to Tring to visit Walter Rothschild’s Zoological Museum, now the Natural History Museum, keeps falling through. Lockdown, unplanned Engineering works, sickness, death and the biggest RMT strike since 1986. Someone, somewhere, does not want me making contact with Walter Rothschild.

Uniform: in Jean Rhys’ *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (1931), Julia Martin visits her sick mother in Acton. Julia has been left by Mr Mackenzie, is disapproved of by her sister Norah and has had to sell her fur coat: ‘She began bitterly to remember the coat she had once possessed. The sort that lasts for ever, astrakhan, with a huge skunk collar...people thought twice before they were rude to anybody wearing a good fur coat, it was protective colouring, as it were.’¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Hanna Rose Shell, *Hide and Seek: Camouflage, Photography, and the Media of Reconnaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2012), p.123

¹⁵⁵ Rose Shell, p.125

¹⁵⁶ Nick Hayes, *The Book Of Trespass: Crossing The Lines That Divide Us* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p.17

¹⁵⁷ Hayes, p.18

¹⁵⁸ Jean Rhys, *After Leaving Mr Mackenzie* (1930) (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), p.57

Viv Albertine: ‘The bus was crowded and a man in his late twenties, about six foot two, beige corduroy jacket, floppy fringe, lounged across the last empty seat with his legs sprawled out so no one else could sit there. Lots of people were standing up, letting him get away with it, but I asked him to move his legs so I could sit down. ‘Excuse me?’ he said (here we go), meaning, *Why the fuck are you talking to me, you silly woman?* He was upper-class and supercilious. I asked him again to move his legs so I could sit down. ‘Excuse me?’ he repeated, with a wrinkled-up nose and a ‘You smell of shit’ expression. ‘You heard,’ I said in a nasty skinhead voice. That took him aback. The exchange went on like this for a while, with him not moving his legs and acting all superior as if I were so revolting and thick that he couldn’t understand what I was saying. When I called him a ‘posh twat’ he got his phone and, with a snidey smile, tried to take my picture. I wasn’t having that.’¹⁵⁹

Walking: when I walk, no matter how short the route is, I am ‘always unsettled, between places.’¹⁶⁰ Rebecca Solnit stresses the ‘rhythm of walking’, and by doing so shows how our imagination has ‘both shaped and been shaped’ by the spaces it passes through on two feet.¹⁶¹ When we walk we develop a state in which ‘the mind, the body and the world are aligned’.¹⁶² It creates a moment, this sense that we are free to think without being totally lost in all our thoughts. The rhythm of walking generates a rhythm of improvised thinking.¹⁶³ And a passage through a landscape is the same as a passage through a series of thoughts. We use walking as a way to explore our minds. When I walk I am not tied up to anything. Not tied to the Station Supervisor’s desk, not glued to a wall of CCTV monitors. At the very moment of walking I am detached. Walking is about being outside. Being out in a public space. I walk on platforms, a canal path, in the blue cycle lane of a motorway at the end of a night shift. They are all unique as built structures. These structures unfold in time as we travel along them.¹⁶⁴ The same happens to a story as we listen or read. The narrative unfolds. Lauren Elkin describes walking as ‘mapping with your feet’.¹⁶⁵ By doing this you start to piece ‘a city together’ and make connections. Hounslow. Boston Manor. Osterley. Ealing. Acton. Northfields. Each of these different areas like

¹⁵⁹ Viv Albertine, *To Throw Away Unopened*, (London: Faber & Faber, 2018), pp.192 - 193

¹⁶⁰ Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (London: Verso, 2001), p. 26

¹⁶¹ Solnit, p.4

¹⁶² Solnit, p.5

¹⁶³ Solnit, p.5

¹⁶⁴ Solnit, p.72

¹⁶⁵ Lauren Elkin, *Flaneuse: Women Walk the City* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2016), p.21

different planets, bound to one other. On the Piccadilly train each area blends into the other. Only by walking through do we start to notice the invisible boundaries between them.¹⁶⁶

West London Fiction: a very select field of West London fiction: John King's *Headhunters* (1997), Colin MacInnes *Absolute Beginners* (1959), Lilian Pizzichini's *Music Night At The Apollo* (2014), Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) and *N-W* (2012), Cathi Unsworth *Bad Penny Blues* (2009).

Westbound Waiting Room: the westbound waiting room at Hounslow East is infamous for it's round the clock, 24-hour opera. In fact, the music in the westbound waiting room is so loud no passengers can actually wait in it. For years we've been receiving customer complaints but not one of us knows how to turn it off. Secretly it's our sonic weapon.¹⁶⁷ Five minutes of auditory assault in our waiting room will push you over the edge. Believe me. Think you can spend the next few hours chatting with friends, having a laugh, kissing partners? Think again! However, some of our customers do slip through. An evangelical ex vicar went through a stage of visiting the Hounslow East westbound waiting room every night for months, between 21:00 and the last trains, listening and singing along. He had a black beard and a terrific baritone voice. On the weekend night tube we lock the waiting rooms on our stations to stop drug taking, parties and people having a really good time. I never need to lock the westbound waiting room.

Wheelbarrow: pushing a B and Q orange wheelbarrow up a metal motorway footbridge in full uniform on a rush hour morning is hard work. Plus this brand new B and Q wheelbarrow is difficult to steer. I keep driving it into the edge of the footbridge railings. Its front (and only) tyre feels flat. Let down. (I know the feeling). So I start to walk backwards, pulling it back to front, the wrong way round, cajoling my flat wheelbarrow up the concrete circular slope. I stop and squeeze my left ear and for a split second come over all Philip Marlowe but it doesn't last. I play with my silver medallion because *psst that's what we do in West London*.

¹⁶⁶ Elkin, p.21

¹⁶⁷ In Japan, Station Staff get to prod their passengers with long wooden poles. We on the other hand have loud audio no one can turn off. There is also official guidance to play classical music in Ticket Halls to stop youngsters gathering. Research shows loud Opera can be an effective deterrent.

Working World: Franz Kafka's working world, an office on the 4th Floor of the Worker's Accident Insurance Institute, 'was the secret vanishing point of his writing'.¹⁶⁸ Writing stories through the night with daytime dreams of promotion and work place solidarity, whilst obsessed with keeping the two separate (and failing) is the fusion. 'The world of work became part of his literary imagination.'¹⁶⁹ 'Writing and the office are mutually exclusive, because writing has its centre of gravity in depth, whereas the office is on the surface of life.'¹⁷⁰ Kafka's problem was he kept getting promoted.¹⁷¹

Workplace Writing: my journey to work takes me 2 hours. And 2 hours back. With builders and school kids. Hounslow. Isleworth. Brentford. Ealing. Acton. I've been doing this for years. Taking energy from the UK and Irish Post Punk scene. Listening to *Fontaines DC*, *Yardstick*, *Dry Cleaning*, *Billy No Mates*, *Sleaford Mods* and *Goat Girl*. Singing about their day jobs. Reading books in the last car of the Piccadilly Line (my library) about work. Vigdis Hjorth's *Long Live the Post Horn!* (2020). Noemi Lefebvre's *Poetics of Work* (2021). *Temporary* (2021) by Hilary Leichter. Holly Pester's *go to reception and ask for Sara in red felt tip* (2015). Claire-Louise Bennett's *Checkout 19* (2021). *Nightshift* (2021) by Kiare Ladner.

Woolwich Road: Woolwich Road bus stop. A Sunday pm full sun heat on my back, a rucksack of scrap metal, welded together, bit by bit over 48 hours behind a red curtain with cack handed, high spirited welds. My arms bright red from a brand new Smokers jacket. An orange Sainsbury's bag, split, torn, exchanged for a recycled green version Last For Life version, hung upon a household's railing. Long steel poles with clumsy heads wrapped up in wraparound brown tape. For a second I think I am Robert De Niro in *The Mission*. Next. Two old men, wearing the sun like a cheap ill fitted suit. Dry rot men. The Man with the black hair shouts across to the man with the white. For 40 minutes. Longer. You Liar. Liar. Shut. Shut. Shut. Shut. Shut. Up. Again. And again.

¹⁶⁸ Reiner Stach, *Kafka: The Decisive Years*, (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), p.296

¹⁶⁹ Stach, p.295

¹⁷⁰ Letter from Franz Kafka to Felice Bauer, June 26, 1913 in Stach, Reiner, *Kafka: The Decisive Years*, (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), p.295

¹⁷¹ Georges Perec's *The Art Of Asking Your Boss For A Raise* (1968) is a cult office-drone odyssey.

X: marks the spot. Concrete animal sculptures at Acton Town station. A loop. Referencing the exhibition of stuffed animals at Charing Cross and Mansion House underground stations in the early 1900s, in memory to all wildlife killed on LU territory. The animals are back in West London, back home to the west end of the District and Piccadilly railway. The animal sculptures are casts of the latex animal masks I used previously in the investigation for live events. Stuffed with concrete the inside of the mask acts as the mould. A relief of the 'inside out' mask imprinted into the wet concrete. Cut from the reverse side of latex masks, 'nesting' on the ledge of disused platform 5.¹⁷² The sculptures act as a portal to the exhibitions of stuffed animals in the 1900s. Looking at these concrete 'cut-outs' from the train window I switch from the present to the past and back to the present.

Yarnwork: 'the moment when everything is almost in place'.¹⁷³ The crucial moment in a TV detective show when all the pieces are connected but still they don't add up. It is the pause in the narrative, when everything is hanging by the thread, before the last one big effort is made in solving the crime. Significantly the stitching could still just as easily unravel and come loose. The patterns found in a yarnwork are frequently imagined.¹⁷⁴ Like shifting formants the clues merge, move back and forth, and turn into sequences. The yarnwork by definition is incomplete. Something to be transformed, twisted and re-plotted, its openness is what connects it to another space.¹⁷⁵

Yellow Steps: painted on an old wooden staircase (once collapsed). Now repaired. Staircase is very high. I haven't counted but approximately 20 steps. Yellow paint on each step flakes off. Yellow flakes can be found at the end of each staircase. At the bottom end of the staircase is a bright yellow rectangle, indented, so you are aware you are before or just leaving a staircase that is coming onto a new level. On the left is a metal barrister / railing. There is a bench on the right with a black dedication plaque that can't be read. 2 x black lampposts are situated on the left from tail end to top. They are painted black with yellow stripes at the base of their pillars. Poster frames are attached to the brick wall (white) on the right. There is also a plastic bin:

¹⁷² The idea of using the latex animal masks as negative moulds came about from a visit with Mandy Ure to Rupert Harris Conservation Ltd in East London. 26/11/21.

¹⁷³ Robin MacKay in 'Stages, Plots and Traumas', ed. Gunkel, Henriette, Hameed, Ayesha and O'Sullivan, Simon, *Futures & Fictions* (London: Repeater Books, 2017), p.76

¹⁷⁴ MacKay, p.71

¹⁷⁵ MacKay, p.94

empty. On the left is a door, the shape of a door. The paving stones are grey. Towards the left of this there is the grain of nosing stones marking the platform edge.¹⁷⁶

Zero Hours: Tuesday 7th March 1989. 'The gardener digs in another time, without past or future, beginning or end. A time that does not cleave the day with rush hours, lunch breaks, the last bus home. As you walk in the garden you pass into this time- the moment of entering can never be remembered.'¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Boston Manor. Monitor 4. Camera 26. Night Shift. 28.11.2020

¹⁷⁷ Derek Jarman, *Modern Nature* (London: Vintage, 1991), p.30

Document B

Night Shift Sex Stories

It is amazing the number of sex stories complete strangers will tell you in the middle of the night. Confessions of fucking hang out to dry in the station air. Stories of what we once had and what we're now missing. Coupled with a general feeling of tired disorientation suggests no one knows (or even cares) what words they are speaking. The same story told over and over again, as if tall tales somehow mirror the routine and tedium of night shift work. Listen. I've had all kinds of stories confided in me. From contractors justifying affairs as 'the missus doesn't go in for the kind of kinky stuff that I'm into' (good grief) to accidental dogging disturbances in the Hounslow East car park late at night (and that's why I'm so late in booking on, honest) to proud recitals of full volume pumped up sex freaking out the children and neighbours (and any poor sod happening to be walking down the street). What to do? Sometimes I see these stories as late night tests. A 3am invention test to check how nice, polite, well-spoken John will react. Cover your ears son, I've got a dirty one. Some of the stories are so unbelievable, sheer over the top embellishment. Other stories are just brilliantly comic. Tragic. Wicked even.

Out Of Focus Workers

To the passengers who enter and exit the station we, the Station Staff, are out of focus. Standing on the gateline or behind the glass window of an old ticket office (reformed as the station control point) people pass by and see a shadow, a blur, a wet looking smudge. A drip. What do they do all day? Standing around, chatting! Getting paid. Really. And six minutes until my next train. Being out of focus means our passengers often mistake us. ('You gave me the wrong directions to Hounslow Bus Station'. 'Madam, it wasn't me, it was my colleague on the morning shift.' 'No. It was you'. 'Hmm. My twin?') They mix us up. My black colleagues ask: really Sir, do we all look the same to you? Off duty the tables are turned. Before my shift I now ignore the security guard who sits in his white plastic booth at ASDA. On my rest day I blank the gallery attendant pacing back and forth at the Natural History Museum. In John Lewis I ask everyone I spot in a uniform where the toilets are. Back on duty and doesn't time fly. Everything changes when movement is halted. We are no longer out of focus. Attention. Attention. Will ALL passengers please leave the station, immediately! Delay. Delay. One's time is being wasted. Information has *not* been shared. Hey You There! Don't disappear. I want to make a Customer Compliant.

It's The End Of The Line For You Mr Psychogeography

Walk through an underground station (why not try Charing Cross thinking its Embankment) with a black and white early 20th Century photograph in your hands. Spend time in the wrong place, on purpose. Look for clues in the station space. Touch the damp walls (sewage), examine the brickwork (shrapnel) and then kneel at the bottom of the escalator and inspect the broken escalator teeth. Look up at the ceiling lights. Rub your hands up and down a strip of long black rubber. Go to a greasy spoon behind the scaffolding on Berwick Street. (Gone). Invite Cathi Unsworth to join you. Order ham, two fried eggs and chips. Coca cola. Take out a black notebook and pen. Read your brand new edition of Laura Grace Ford's *Savage Messiah*. Iain Sinclair. Bradley Garret. Will Self. Stewart Home. Boys, eat your heart out!

Surveillance Paranoia

There are owls at South Harrow station. My colleagues believe there are cameras secretly poised inside the owls, an undercover surveillance system cunningly installed by management to keep a closer eye on us. Last Christmas, D, a fellow Station Supervisor and friend, came across a giant stuffed black and white penguin on the platforms at Northfields late at night. Convinced it was a decoy, a Trojan horse style management plant, *a ploy*, D placed the giant penguin inside a filing cabinet with both its eyes taped up, using sticky black and yellow hazard tape.

Watching Wildlife On The Night Shift (via CCTV)

During the night CCTV images are dark and grainy. Fixed. No movement. Move along there's nothing here to see. And then sporadic orange shapes (aliens. Space invaders) approach on the screen's edge. Blobs. Track workers. Out on patrol, on inspection, walking from station to station. Engineering hours. The traction current is off and so they walk on rails, cross tracks, kneel down in the ballast, inspect and grease the points. This is the closest human behaviour mirrors wildlife on the railway. Foxes. Pigeons. Men. Women. Deer. A goose. A badger. No rules. Railway Anarchy. Take the Boston Manor Fox. The boundaries and edges set by our Station Congestion Compliance Plan cease to function when she appears. Yellow lines dissolve. Passengers terrified. The one-way system on the staircase becomes irrelevant. My Public Announcements just hot air. What can I learn from watching the Boston Manor Fox? Do her free actions under the gaze of CCTV provoke a sense of what our surveillance society has lost? And why is there this feeling of nostalgia every time she runs riot in my station?

Everything Always Looks Worse On CCTV

Images relayed on monitors via CCTV have an edge. Especially images relayed via recorded playback. We know whatever it is we are about to see it is now too late to intervene. What makes a surveillance image so shocking? Why is watching a past event unravel on screen as recorded footage so disturbingly captivating? The CCTV image is real-life movement captured on screen. The numerous monitors invite the images to cross over, split up and splice off. Numbers and dates appear in the corners as stamps of proof. We pause. Yes, this is real, this did happen. Is happening. Then. And now. Watching off stage and from a distance. Decisions made to control events or watch unravel. Yes. Everything always looks worse on CCTV. When you go in person the gang of school kids who look so tough and vicious on screen are rather sweet and stuttering in real life. Confession. I am obsessed with watching CCTV at work. I find it hard to pull my eyes away from the camera for one second in case I miss something, even during the night when the station is empty. I'll do myself an injury. Make myself go blind. Our CCTV sets the station limits. The number and positioning of the cameras set the boundaries. And create the station blind spots. If its not captured on camera son it never happened.

What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Territory?

What happens in the street doesn't stay in the street. Street life spills into station territory. The station border blurs. I remember working at Hounslow East when a car accident happened directly outside, a bang and a scream and a crowd, someone knocked over, outside Aladdin's, a father with his young son, boss it's a hit and run! Crossing the station border I help out, get stuck in, dressed as a citizen in uniform, half member of staff, half human.

The Ghost

There are 16 dead flies on the window ledge at Boston Manor station and counting, one for each year I've worked on the company. Working the night shift is analogue. There must be someone high up in office hating the idea of paying us to staff a station all night long. Whoever it is I'll come back and haunt. But they won't see me. Judged by scorecards we already cease to exist. Human interaction. Physical presence. Do me a favour. Automation of the workforce is fast creeping in. Workers United zapped and disappeared. We're clocking off. Replaced with an uber efficiency drive and supply of un-human resources.

The System I Use To Monitor Others, Monitors Me

I work under a constant sense of paranoia. Looking for strange movements. Listening out for any unusual sounds. At night I need to know who's trying to come in and so I select specific CCTV cameras to capture the station boundaries. I must have control over every possible entrance. It's very hard to tear your eyes away in case you miss something. I play music (loudly) and look at the screens. Unlike daytime when there is constant movement, at night CCTV transforms into jittery, still images, black and white shots. In the dark. Then a spider will walk across giving me a shock. Or a moth will get stuck on the camera lens and I'll have to look away.

Feeling On Edge

My sense of space is defined by the limits of surveillance set by station CCTV. At Sudbury Town there is a World War Two Air Raid Shelter. This space is off limits to the public. There are no cameras. No windows for passengers to knock their angry fists on. Areas that the public can't access are bunker spaces. Inner sanctuaries. Mess rooms. Staff toilets. Secure Rooms to catch a breath or two, recap procedures, a last line of defence. Feelings of anxiety occur throughout the night turn. Especially waiting for the relief, the last hour of the shift, a nervous energy, of wanting to get out. Experiencing feelings of agitation, tiredness and being on edge.

Night Shift Tricks And Rituals

Lone working the night shift I have a set of rituals. Tricks to take the edge off the night. For starters I listen to music (or cricket) for 7 hours. I drink camomile tea in a glass. Every hour. Then each night at 03.00 I eat couscous from a German tin box. At 03.30 I lean back on the black leather Office chair, stretch out my legs by opening the lost property safe and place my feet in the metal drawer. There's a knack to it. I turn up the heater. I open the station at 04.40 and copy the numbers, times and destinations of each train scheduled to arrive before 06.30, eastbound and westbound from the timetable, using a black pen on a scrap of paper, and score out each train as it departs with a blue biro, and I do this every single day. I have a Ribena at 05.20 after the first eastbound and an energy bar after the second. At 06.00 I pour a final Camomile tea in a cup and saucer and sip it waiting for my relief, as I turn to Pavarotti, up full volume on my iPod and boom bar. Writing this down feels like I have lost the plot.

Blind Spots

Since lockdown we complain of brain fog. Lacking sharpness. When we move through the stations our movements are controlled. Stand on the right, move along, move right down inside. Switched off our guided movements carry each other along. So when someone runs in a station they stand out. Either something is wrong or they're acting with a self-important urgency.

Surveillance is used to maintain control. Eyes scan multiple split screens. At London Bridge we used to use the CCTV blind spots to avoid the gaze of the observing Supervisors who had us under constant surveillance 24 - 7. Outside the station boundary you are vulnerable. You have now fallen off the screen's parameters.

I Flatly Refuse To Suck Lemons In English Suburbia

Growing up on the edges of the 1980's all my friends wanted to be Robert Smith. I, on the other hand, wanted to be Jim Morrison, bulging leather trousers and all. Reading 2000 AD. Smoking Marlborough Reds on the top deck of the 23, purchased from The George Hotel vending machine. You can't beat having older sisters. So far (aged 45) I've avoided the English suburbs. (And for most of my life having to listen to The Cure). Haunted by a vision of drinking double gin and tonics in the member's bar of a golf course clubhouse. In Kent.

How Do We Go Back To Something That Never Existed In The First Place?

The afternoon after the Brexit vote and I'm working the late turn at Osterley. There's a long line by the ticket machines, stretching way out onto the Great West Road. A young white British couple shout 'You look English' and approach me, smiling, and say: 'at least now that we've got Brexit again all this will go.'

Masculinity Re-fuelled

I have strange encounters with contractors in the station in the middle of the night. At 3am. So passed the moment of exhaustion. Looking (examining) someone on CCTV and letting these strange men into my space. Taken in by their sure footedness or clumsy awkwardness. The unease experienced on the edges of the network, the edges of the night. In this setting 'moments' do happen. Being alone with a cocky man in tight confined spaces, both of us dressed in bright orange, fuelling the weirdness of a late night early morning vibe. Our one to one's can feel like being trapped in a corner of a bad nightclub by the local cock for too long and one too many. Playing social and political power games, with a twist. Between the 'SUPA' and the contractor. We need each other to get the job done.

Guvnor, I Fancy The Pants Off You

A couple have consensual outdoor sex on the station platforms in the middle of the night. Night Tube. A lone voyeur watches in the station office with kettle and radio, from a camera, trying not to look whilst not trying too hard to look away. Hand gripped on the telephone receiver. Should I wake the old man? What would I say? Guvnor, there's people out there and I think they may be having fun? That I am for the perverted, dirty animalistic outdoor fucked up stories where people fuck each other in the rain.

Do You Work Here?

Yes. The zip on our uniform trousers continuously breaks. Snaps off. Jams.
Thank you Wayne Hemingway, MBE. Even with a broken zip wearing a
uniform in Hounslow I am someone to trust. Distrust. Obey. Hate. Fear. Mock.

The Station Supervisor's Office Is My Studio

The Station Supervisor's Office is my Studio. Heavy Winter jacket on, inside fleece taken out and wrapped over my legs, feet on the upside down bin, radio on, notebook out and Marian Engel's *Bear* in easy reach. 3 AM, get up and shut the connecting doors, turn on the radiators, full blast, and the heaters, full blast, position the back of the black leather (broken) swivel armchair against the wall, face the collection of CCTV Monitors, turn the volume up on the radio, FONTAINES D.C. Sing along and sink deeper into my hole. Get up and let the Metro Delivery Man in. Old news. The News. No longer so important but also rather crucial. Wash my hands. Reach up to dry my hands but there's no paper towels. Walk up and down the office with wet hands. Pick up a newspaper. Repeat.

Let Others In

Men stand around with other men, share privilege and say and do nothing. Men wear headphones, read newspapers, look out the window, at their feet, at someone else's feet, stare at mobiles, take pretend phone calls, from the office, and later tell lies to their wife and three children. This is general, all over London. Sir. Time to get off. Move down inside, and let others in.

London Memories Go On Strike

A customer at Hounslow East presses the Help Point, waves me over, stares me hard in the face. With a look of total anger he says in deadpan with real venom: I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW I THINK YOU ARE DOING A FANTASTIC JOB. YOU TUBE WORKERS ARE AN ABSOLUTE CREDIT TO LONDON. Every day he does this. Shakes my hand. What a menace. Being the city's punch bag has its downsides. Entering a dentist in Carnaby Street (I know, I know, and still we go *out* for more wages) the receptionist asked my profession and when I answered everyone booed. I didn't know the Evening Standard was still being read so widely. London memories go on strike. We just can't shake the perception of being the enemy within. But there's more to it than public anger at disruption a strike causes by stopping movement for the day. I think at the root is a very tight British sense of injustice that somehow we're getting something extra and you're not.

Over The Edge

My stress in when passengers go near the edge. This is my job. To keep you away from the edge, to pre-empt people crossing over the edge, to react when someone falls off the edge. I am not referring purely to the platform edge but to all situations, emotional, mental and physical within the station boundaries.

Notes On Crowd Control

I control the crowd. I stagger the flow, speed it up, slow it down and separate the congestion of people by utilising our different spaces. Have you ever witnessed the skilled implementation of crowd control measures at Victoria Underground Station 08:00 Tuesday morning in the peak? Poetry. It takes just one person to set the mood of the crowd, and the stage is set for either a well of understanding support or a fire of impatient anger. Yet the crowd is never static. It is a moving shape, even when held at the barrier. It inches forward, peels off and seeks alternative entry routes in. Asks questions. Everywhere.

Racism Nostalgia

I remember watching John Barnes at Wembley. Listening to the booing every time he touched the ball. Apparently millions of others did too but we didn't say much at the time. Now we can't stop reminiscing over it. *I was there!* By doing so, adding a further stain of racism nostalgia.

July 2021 and a group of working class teenagers and boys in their early twenties, who have done more good than most in recent years on raising realities of everyday experiences of racism within English society, are ridiculed and threatened by the government for taking the knee. They refuse to stop.

The day after the Euro's Final and in the Station Office K is shaking in anger after the racist abuse the black players are receiving, which started in the stadium and continued online, and when he says 'John I can't take this anymore I need to live somewhere else', I reply 'but won't it be the same everywhere' and he turns on me, glares and states: 'not in Africa, not in Jamaica' and I feel a complete idiot.

End Of The Line

23:00 Monday night, Hounslow East station. I am alerted to a male passenger unconscious on the eastbound staircase, a kebab unfolded on his face. I monitor his breathing through the kebab and wait for the paramedics. Working night shifts you stop making an effort to see friends. And after a while friends stop asking you to meet up. You get peopled out and also forgotten. So you form a tight bubble of those that understand. Understand that the British public exhausts you. Knackers you. Each shift they take a bite out of you. And then later, lying in bed, drain you. The trouble with jobs is it's hard to get out, to move on. All change, all change. You develop a false sense of being trapped. The reality is, on a day-to-day basis, I am trapped. I have to get permission to leave my position.

Endnotes

- This is my field: a West London Railway Station at night. Two Platforms. A PA speaker system: no announcements. A Ticket Hall. A Gateline. An Exit and Entry system. Public toilets: (out of order). No Step Free Access. An Emergency Exit. It's the night shift so we have mice.
- This is me. A Station SUPA! Booked on for the first of 7. Engineering hours. A lone worker. In charge of locking up and opening the gates, of signing in the contractors, of seeing out and seeing in the last and first trains, waking up the passengers. Can you hear them? Every month, 7 nights in a row, on repeat, on roster. A routine. Broken by holidays, cover weeks or phoning in sick.
- This is my field. Working in Underground Railway Stations at night. It's where I go to listen. On repeat. Each night I listen out for the unexpected and surprising.
- I conduct sound walks through the empty station. I am attentive. I tell myself to be open and aware. I listen to how sound is shaped by the space. I follow my ears. Different sounds mix and combine as I pass through the various spaces. I walk on concrete, ballast, metal, wood, vegetation. It's a strange experience, listening to an empty railway station at night.
- I walk in silence. Noticing things. A spider's web. Coffee dregs. A leftover piece of chicken leg.
- At night in the station I start to stage imaginative listening inventions. These inventions are bound to fail which is part of the fun in doing them. Mostly they are just interrupted: contractors needing to be booked on, a neighbouring Station Supervisor lonely, bored and phoning up for a chat, the Metro delivery, a Lost Property Collection.

- At Hounslow Central I play the insides of the Ticket Machines like a synthesiser. I move my body as I record, in rhythm with the sounds I am listening to.
- I walk up and down the platforms, repeating lines in my head. As I walk, the lines and words change. Once I get hooked on a line it will not leave my head. I repeat the phrase over and over again and I won't stop repeating it until I write it down on a piece of paper and then finally I can let go.

- **Company Time**
- 03:15 and I'm scanning. Composing. On Company Time. I think Kafka would approve.
- I scan and print and feed the scanned image into the printer's paper tray.
- The punch line in this night time performance, when I should really be putting up posters and re-filling the leaflet racks, is that through all the scratching and remixing I can't remember how the final image came about. Improvising with a photocopying machine I let go.
- Feed the paper in, shut the lid, press the button, stand on the edge. Forget everything.
- 04:00 and I think the Station copier may now be broken. I'll re-write that. I have broken the Station copy machine. Too many late nights dreaming of hanging out with Bill Griffiths in Uxbridge pubs on the Grand Union Canal, love and hate tattooed in black ink on my knuckles, playing the photocopying machine like a grand piano.

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