

THE HAPPENING OF DRAWING:

An exploration of Holocaust sites using
phenomenological applications of drawing
and writing practices.

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THE HAPPENING OF DRAWING:

An exploration of Holocaust sites using phenomenological applications of drawing and writing practices.

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ABSTRACT

'Remembering, as a vital activity, shapes our relationship with the past' (Bonder 1998 :479). This in turn defines our present. Time, then, operates as a distancing mechanism between the events we are 'remembering' and ourselves. This practice-based research investigates how, by being a witness across time, space and place, the bi-modal phenomenological approaches of writing, drawing and reprography can form a coherent embodied arts practice that engages with the present by confronting turbulent pasts.

The research also represents my excavation of self and the mining of personal genealogical memory and experience, having a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother growing up in North Manchester in the 1960s. The representation of Holocaust sites and events in Eastern Europe, via a phenomenological approach, forms the broad archaeological basis to the enquiry.

The two volumes of this thesis – theory and practice – are attempts to locate and determine what Ava Hoffman termed the 'right tone of response and timbre of expression' to the Holocaust event today, nearly 80 years since the liberation of the concentration camps in 1945. It describes the entanglement of historical and personal genealogical narratives emergent against the backdrop of my search for personal meaning within a contested and conflicted Jewish identity.

Key words: Holocaust, phenomenology, embodiment, empathy, memory, identity, drawing, writing, place, and abstraction.

VOLUME 1: THE THEORY

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EUROPEAN FIELD RESEARCH

May 2013 – Kraków, Poland

Sites of Jewish history and destruction including;

Auschwitz – Birkenau concentration camp

Płaszów concentration camp

Multiple sites in the area of the former Ghetto

Jewish Cemetery, former synagogues, and sites of deportation.

November 2014 - Warsaw, Poland

Sites of Jewish history and destruction, including;

Ghetto and former Jewish quarter.

August 2015 – Kraków, Poland

Sites of Jewish history and destruction including;

Auschwitz – Birkenau concentration camp

Płaszów concentration camp

Multiple sites in the area of the former Ghetto

Jewish Cemetery, former synagogues, and sites of deportation.

December 2016 – Berlin, Germany

Sites of Jewish history and destruction and memorial.

November 2017 – Kraków, Poland

Sites of Jewish history and destruction including;

Auschwitz – Birkenau concentration camp

Płaszów Concentration camp

Multiple sites in the area of the former Ghetto

Jewish Cemetery, former synagogues, and sites of deportation.

November 2018 - Prague, Czech Republic

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November 2019 - Budapest, Hungary

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This thesis, for what it is, is dedicated to her.

GS.

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PREFACE

In my practice Holocaust¹ memory is characterised by the sought encounter, an encounter that is in search of something, hoping to find or locate. It represents a curiosity about my reactions to Holocaust sites. These are not the general substrates of history, where no active search for personal meaning is sought. They involve me visiting Holocaust sites with the intention of facing the Holocaust, of invoking memory. It is my direct experience of, and the percepts yielded at, such sites that have formed the material I have worked with throughout this project.

Holocaust memory is a term that will reoccur throughout the thesis. It has many nuanced interpretations, including the memories and witnessing of those who directly experienced the event, and those who have experienced it trans-generationally within families through received narratives. This latter form of memory has been posited as post-memory by Marianne Hirsch (2012). Ava Hoffman further described this second generation and the direct decedents of Holocaust survivors as the 'hinge generation' (Hoffman 2005), who are concerned with transmuting the event into history through what she described as 'a sense of a living connection' (Hoffman 2005: xv). The hinge generation represents the beginning of the separation of memory from history; a history that can only be understood and accessed by those without living memory of the trauma or direct experience of the events. Of the inability of survivors to appreciate the context of history Ava Hoffman writes:

¹ Holocaust, also known as the Sho'ah, meaning catastrophe or Hurban meaning destruction, is the attempted mass extermination of European Jewry from 1933 until 1945, and has become the paradigmatic genocide. This is the event to which my work refers. There are of course other systematic crimes against humanity, including the colonisation of the Americas, those against the Armenians, the Herero massacres, the Stalinist murders and expulsions, and the more recent horrors in Central Africa, the Sudan and Cambodia.

‘Perhaps the very idea of seeing such powerful and difficult experiences in context would have seemed indecent. But we who come after can study the context, can begin to understand, can move from our own memories and our families’ memories to the understanding of history in all its tensions and complexities, in all of its conflicts and chains of cause and effect.’ (Hoffman: 2022)

Diana I. Popescu describes others not directly linked generationally to survivors, or whose connection may be tangential, as post-witnesses. This defines more clearly my own urge to confront this past, where there is an ‘unmediated personal relationship developed with a place of trauma in the present moment’ (Popescu 2016: 2). This form of post-witnessing recognises that with the passing of those with direct memory of the Holocaust, and with the ageing of the hinge generation, Holocaust remembrance is being transformed by post-witnesses – those with new agency and fresh initiatives to redefine the commemorative landscape. It is here that the event is memorialised in terms of structures, art pieces and installations, and the outputs on myriad digital platforms now actively seek to keep the memory alive in the wider public consciousness.

Post-memory and post-witnessing are often used to denote something beyond the personal experience of victims, signifying a space where the imaginations and emotions of others can be opened up. Zygmunt Bauman expressed the phenomenon as a ‘relentless search for a way to express the unshared experience in a form in which it can be shared; an effort to spell out the ineffable’ (Engelking 2001: vii). I will use the term specifically to articulate my own access to this shared space.

This project has explored how memory can be made to migrate from the physical site and, through writing and drawing, be moved closer or further away from consciousness. It is this shimmering, oscillating effect that makes the subject of the

Holocaust so elusive, so intangible, and makes capturing it so difficult. This is why phenomenology as a philosophy of experience is so appropriate as a methodological approach for the research; a method that determines that '[T]he ultimate source of all meaning and value is the lived experience of human beings' (Armstrong 2005).

I have structured my experiences and research into the two Volumes of this thesis as an alternative to the traditional PhD format, forming a distinct and valuable methodological approach to the encounter of Holocaust sites. Volume 1 provides the intellectual process and the methodology employed, and including the theoretical underpinning, and a critical reflection on the essays presented in Volume 2, along with analysis and comment on the artistic practice.

Volume 2 forms a significant aspect of my creative practice; the essays being essential when navigating the evolution of the project. They appear in the order in which they were written, so each is a time capsule of my understanding, representing a different and significant stage of the visual and written research journey. Volume 2 also collates an extensive body of exploratory creative works in which I have used artistic visual practices to articulate my experiences. This includes creative and experimental writing that I have termed 'practice-text'². This writing – either verse or prose – is deliberately woven into the structure of the essay, offering an alternative insight into the subject matter.

The research methods constitute a non-linear, process-orientated mode of activity. This includes the iterative processes of drawing, as a critical and exploratory practice; photography using camera or flatbed scanner, which I will refer to as reprography –

² The term Practice Text originated in discussions with the editor of JAWS (Journal of Art Writing by Students) in 2017 in preparation for the publication of my essay *Necessitating my alliance: A meditation on the Płaszów concentration camp* (2017). I was searching for a term that distinguished my creative writing from my academic, but also suggested that both were entwined and co-dependent in the meaning-making process.

a term encompassing the graphical processes of reproduction and reprinting; and writing as the articulation of a reflective and reflexive response. All are made either in the field, or later in my studio or writing room.

The research in Volume 1 frequently references specific critical and philosophical ideas that have formed my critical framework. These are not intended as excursions into the philosophical narrative, but as indications of the use I make of them as tools in making sense of encounters with place and in re-conceptualising relationships between past and present. Key critical ideas used derive from the philosophical tradition of phenomenology, embodiment, drawing theory and experiential approaches to art and anthropology,³ as well as the academic realm of Holocaust Studies⁴. How these concepts relate and underpin the project are discussed in Part III: METHOD.

There is no singular conceptual framework that informs the research, but rather a collection of ideas picked up at different points – and this is central to the thematic approach of the essays in Volume 2 – as an epistemic mode best articulated as a ‘conceptual palette’, typified by the non-linear process-oriented mode familiar to art-based research. This is a holistic and nuanced approach, capable of embracing often-unpredictable outcomes and, as such, ‘cannot be traced according to linear steps and logical rules’ (McNiff 2009: 79). This approach has facilitated the expansion of my fields of enquiry and points of reference throughout the research⁵.

³ Anthropology is the study of human societies and cultures throughout the world and their evolutionary history. It is also concerned with how societies behave, adapt to different environments, communicate, and socialise with one another. Essentially, anthropology is the study of what makes us human.

⁴ Holocaust Studies includes the investigation of Nazi genocides as historical and social phenomena, questioning their origins and consequences. It also explores the issues of representation and memorialisation through the investigation of film, art, literature, testimony, and public rituals.

⁵ In the introduction to *The Object Stares Back*, James Elkins (1996) explains that the thoughts that led him to write about the complexities of ‘seeing’, took him far outside the field in which he was trained.



FIG 1. Unknown, Rosa and Isaac Speiser.

The research has greatly informed the knowledge and understanding of my family history and how this relates to the wider Jewish narratives of diasporas and displacements, emancipation, and assimilation. It has also precipitated an expanded notion of self and identity relative to my own past, particularly as someone of mixed antecedence, with a Jewish father and non-Jewish mother.

This genealogical history has intrigued me for many years. I have been particularly absorbed by my Eastern European heritage, and this deepened when I first visited Kraków in 2013 and felt curiously connected with the city; it seemed strangely familiar. Soon afterwards I found out that Isaac and Rosa (my paternal great-grandparents) (FIG 1) had left Kraków for England in the late 19th Century, settling in north Manchester – initially in the Red Bank⁶ area adjacent to Victoria railway station, and later in the Cheetham Hill area where I was born.

⁶ **Red Bank**, in the mid 19th Century, was the centre of Jewish working-class life in Manchester. It was the initial home to many poor Eastern European Jewish immigrants who settled in the cramped, squalid terraced houses at the bottom end of Cheetham Hill Road. The area was a breeding ground for working class radicalism as many residents, out of necessity and desperation, joined and

Kraków, as a place of family history and presence, and riven with Holocaust narratives, drew me closer as the research developed, becoming a leitmotif. It was my relationship to the city that underpinned my relationship to the Holocaust. I felt umbilically connected to the histories of those who lived, worked, and prayed there and the presence of their absence, which this project represents, as now they are gone.

During the research, my phenomenological response to Holocaust sites, curiosity about my Jewish antecedence, and consciousness of my own biography have become entangled; a condition I have increasingly appreciated and embraced. The ways in which my history has formed and shaped my behaviours are key to the nature of the physical and intellectual propositions and creative responses I have made and signify an exploration of what Kristeva termed the 'shadows of my own experience' (Eastham and Testard 2012). Kristeva describes being driven to use her own experience as 'guides to her thought', rather than following in the paths of others; an apt expression of the nature of my own research. This is also central to her theory of intertextuality, which posits that all writing exists at the intersection of other texts and is inscribed by subjective experience. These ideas are developed later in the context of my phenomenological approach in Part II METHOD and Part III PROCESS.

It is important to note that since 2020 I have been unable to travel to Poland to undertake further field research due to the pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. I have, however, drawn and written in spaces in north Manchester, such as Cheetham Hill and the areas of early Jewish settlement, and, more recently, the site of Isaac and Rosa's burial at the Jewish cemetery in Urmston, which is about five miles south-west of the centre of Manchester. These proxy spaces connected to

established trade unions. Red Bank appeared in Friedrich Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, 1844 when he observed the conditions in which residents were living. Engels went on to write the Communist Manifesto with Karl Marx.

Kraków and those sites more directly related to Holocaust memory umbilically through my genealogical past.

Another unexpected turn – but one that became central to the direction and identity of the research – was a period of creative psychotherapy I embarked upon after experiencing personal trauma between 2017 and 2019. During this process I needed to excavate my own past to confront behaviours negatively affecting my well-being. This self-analysis had a profound effect on the research, particularly on my phenomenological approach and the observation, experience and subsequent representation of Holocaust sites and past traumatic events. It constituted a collapsing of time and space in which Red Bank, Cheetham Hill and Kraków became entangled with my own past and present.

It is significant that this research evolved from my MA dissertation because much of the groundwork and initial excavation took place at this time. I knew that the Jewish Holocaust and my genealogical past were entangled, but I could not have articulated then in what way and to what extent. This MA thesis was entitled '*Encounter with the Holocaust*', (APPENDIX 2), with the word encounter unmistakably elided, and the subtitle '*or perhaps an encounter with the already existing structures of memory itself*'. I intended to record my encounter with the Holocaust 'event', but realised that what I was encountering was not the Holocaust – how could it be? I could only ever encounter its residue, or the ways in which the event has been, and continues to be, mediated. It is through this research and the adoption of a phenomenological critical framework that some kind of encounter has become possible.

Whilst I acknowledge the sense of fascination and intrigue that surrounds the Holocaust, it is important to distinguish what I do from 'dark tourism', in that whilst my practice has potential in educating visitors about past tragedies and creating humility, my practice is not passive. It involves facing the Holocaust and seeking an

encounter with the residual traces of its history. This encounter, characterised also by a search for genealogical identity, is concerned with the deliberate invocation of Holocaust memory and its reification in writing and artefacts.

My own personal trauma from early 2017 significantly shaped the research and the development of the project. The breakdown of my second marriage precipitated a two-year period of deep creative psychotherapy⁷. As part of the recovery process, I needed to excavate my own past. During therapy I spent 10 days at a Vipassana retreat; the oldest Buddhist meditation practice, translating literally as ‘special; super-seeing’ (Sahu 2021:4). The approach centred on insight meditation, a practice of close and intense attention to sensation, the aim of which is to discover the true nature of existence. The overlap with phenomenology is clear. Merleau-Ponty independently sought to investigate what has long been central in Mahayana Buddhist practice,⁸ the becoming of self, truth(s) – both absolute and conventional – and the living relationships of experience.

At the retreat I learned about the observation and nature of impermanence, and the change and flux inherent in all phenomenal existence. These ideas translated readily into my creative practice, where the production of the work became about the lived experience of making, and confirmation that it was viable for the practice to be in a constant state of flux and change. I realised the impossibility of ignoring the experience of therapy and the teachings of Vipassana, and the impact of these on the project. These, and other personal experiences, became major factors in the shaping of the work. The research was rooted in self-reflection from the start, the analysis of pasts – historical, personal and genealogical, and both real and imagined.

⁷ Ostensibly a method used in the psychology of children. The creative psychotherapy process for me involved the use of art images and processes as a means of locating mood and ‘state of mind’, allowing me to meet in a mutually understood space of knowing with my therapist.

⁸ Mahayana Buddhism is not a single group but a collection of Buddhist traditions: Zen Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism, and Tibetan Buddhism are all forms of Mahayana Buddhism.

This intensified in 2017 when the project became firmly situated and embodied in the confluence of my therapy, self-analysis, and practice-led academic study.

The idea of 'empathetic attunement', originating in child development theory and described by Linda Finlay as a 'rhythmic dance' (Finlay 2015: 54), articulates my experience of creative psychotherapy. It is viewed as an intertwining of the biological and the social, the innate and the learned. As the therapy evolved it shifted, positively, from desolation and anguish to reflection, acceptance, consolidation and, ultimately, recovery. The 'rhythmic dance' was between myself and my therapist, my body and the physical environment, and the dichotomy of nature and nurture. It began to significantly influence the research, and with Vipassana the link with phenomenology became clear.

The *Entangled* series (2018/19) marked the significance of emergence and entanglement as central motifs, which were expanded upon at the Artful Research symposium in 2018⁹.

⁹ The Artful/Artistic Research symposia focused on knowledge, insights and outputs that promoted and developed the discourse around creative artistic practice. It clearly showed that, although there was no one way to pursue artistic research, at its core is the artistic practice itself, which functions both as an object of study and as a source of responding to diverse and heterogeneous lines of enquiry that supports the pursuit of original insights.

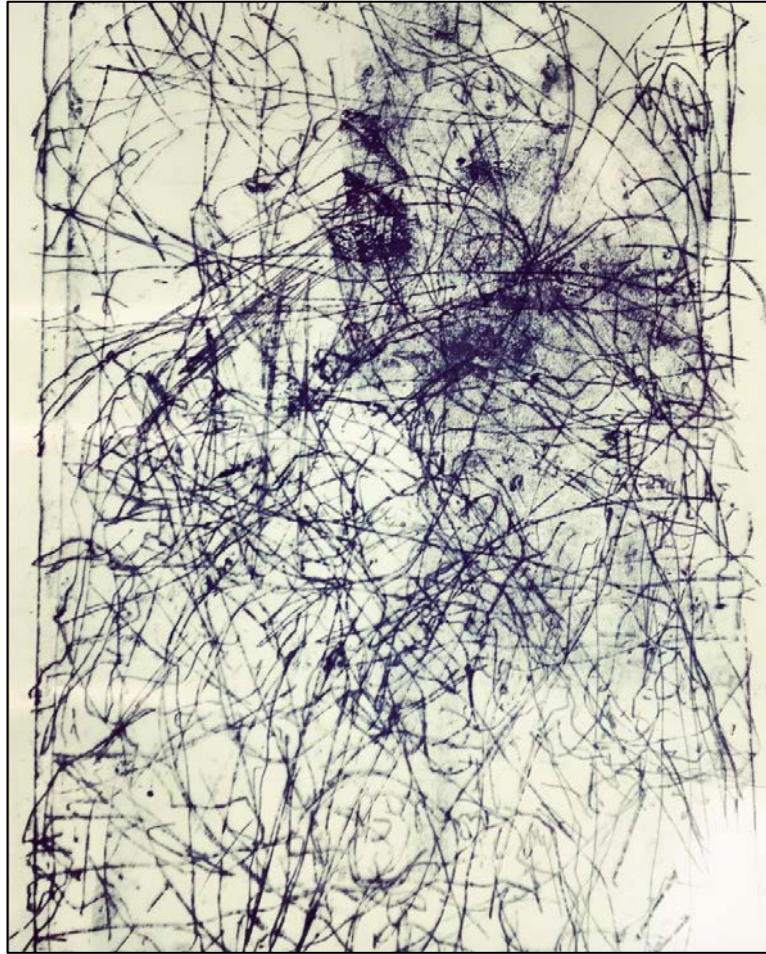


FIG 2. Gary Spicer, Entangled 3, 2019.

Confluence: Moment by Moment in Aesthetic Emotion (Essay 6) developed these further by discussing notions of the observation of impermanence which resonated with what I was attempting in my practice at Holocaust sites. Finally, the 'rhythmic dance' resolved in *The Red Heart* (Volume 2: Essay 7) with the collapsing of time and space and the individual sense of encounter with my own genealogical past. Rhythmic dance is evident throughout all the drawing and practice-text in Volume 2 and summarised later in Volume 1: Part 5, The Essays: A Critical Reflection.

PART I

INTRODUCTION

1.1

Overview and Aims of the Research

The thesis provides an account of artistic practice as a research methodology with a specific engagement with Holocaust sites. It focuses on the direct experience of such sites, rather than forming a secondary response based on any other historical or contemporary witnessing. Here in this introduction, I will clarify and expand on the aims of the research and its value, what it has achieved, and its contribution to knowledge. I will also provide a brief introduction to themes central to the research and its navigation, indicating where in the thesis these themes are expanded upon.

The project aims were threefold: firstly, to develop the use of a phenomenological artistic approach to Holocaust sites. Secondly, to investigate intersecting genealogical and Holocaust narratives through a bi-modal visual art and writing practice, and thirdly to establish a transferable, phenomenological model using writing and visual arts practice that others could adopt when encountering Holocaust sites.

The first aim is supported by Diana I. Popescu's description of the significance of developing a personal relationship in the present with sites of Holocaust trauma as 'the urge to investigate the past by undertaking a real and not only an imaginary journey of discovery' (Popescu 2016: 2). How this might be negotiated in practice emerged as an important strand of inquiry in the research. It was here, in the confluence of my own creative practice and the mediation of the academic scholarship in the field, that I have formed my own critical response to the Holocaust sites I visited.

Popescu further characterises this urge to confront, through investigation, traumas of the past, and to 'conduct[ing] forensic work on those sites grounded in the here and now' as post-witnessing, which 'denotes a position of immediate and unmediated personal relationship developed with a place of trauma in the present moment' (Popescu 2016: 2). In my research – as is expressed in the second aim – this has led to intersecting genealogical and Holocaust narratives, and the aforementioned collapse of time and space around personal and historical pasts.

Saul Friedlander's suggestion that artistic works had the valency and potential to provide fresh insight about the Holocaust through 'allusive, distanced realism' (Friedlander, 1992: 17) articulated something akin to how my own practice contains a duality of post-witnessing, of both my own ability to respond to the experience of Holocaust sites through certain visual and writing practices, and the ability of the resulting images and texts to generate fresh experiences for readers of the work. Thus, the research provides a broad model of practice by which others could navigate their own encounters with such sites, and form further individual responses based on personal experience. My practice demonstrates that it is through art and the process of abstraction – discussed in detail in Part II THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND SITUATION – the articulation of an alternative mediated meaning and understanding of the Holocaust event becomes possible, consistent with my third aim.

1.2

The Contribution to Knowledge

My own direct phenomenological experience of Holocaust sites has ‘touched’ something other in me, something that continues to resonate and shimmer¹⁰, something that my creative practice interrogates and makes visible. This is the work’s primary contribution to knowledge. It is where I situate my practice in relation to much extant Holocaust representation, seeking to give form to objective responses to the event itself or to shape personal responses to the memory and trauma encountered. It resonates with work such as *Charred Journal: Firewritten* (1951) by Morris Louis, and Barnett Newman’s *Station* series (1966), both modernist American painters of Jewish antecedence, as well as that of Christian Boltanski who, like me, was of mixed heritage and had a preoccupation with holocaust memory, mortality, and mourning. Boltanski’s *Humans* (1994), a large work, serves as a monument to the dead, hinting at the Holocaust without being explicit. Gerhard Richter’s *Birkenau* paintings (2014) deliberately veil the Holocaust from the viewers’ gaze through a layer of paint dragged over the surface of four large iconic photographs taken at Auschwitz in 1943.

These artists – other than Boltanski, whose work is conceptual and based in mixed media – are ostensibly abstract in form, and rely on allusion to create meaning complicit with the viewer. My own practice is distinctive because, whilst it seeks to represent an entangled relationship to the sites – a relationship inextricably bound to my own past and contested Jewish identity – it is generated using a phenomenological approach centred on the direct experiencing of such sites. This is discussed more expansively, along with how my practice is situated in relation to it, in Part II, THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND SITUATION. I will also provide here a precis of how the Holocaust has been represented across movements and styles, and a

¹⁰ **Shimmer.** Described in 2.1. METHOD as the oscillation of the subject, or the perception of the barely limned object.

broader overview of the relevant debates in Holocaust representation including memory, witnessing and the ineffable. As a further contribution to knowledge, my practice also attempts to establish how drawing and writing, existing as interconnected rather than discrete constructs, when considered phenomenologically, can elicit methods of embodiment that can deepen our understanding of such events. And finally, the distinctive way my creative practice seeks to represent an entangled relationship to the sites also contributes to the field of knowledge, a relationship inextricably bound to my own past and contested Jewish identity.

1.3

‘How Do I Relate to the Tragic Past of this Site as I Stand Here?’

My practice in engaging with historical accounts and images, and with theoretical positions encountered as a result, raises important questions about what constitutes evidence. Etymologically, evidence, from ‘ex’ (meaning ‘out of’) combined with ‘videre¹¹ (‘to see’), is information that is put forward to help form an opinion or see a truth. In the context of artistic practice and contemporary responses to events in history, the evidence is in the primacy of the response, the individuated nature of the narrative, and the capacity of ‘illusion to tell the truth’ (Horowitz in Fischer, E & Collins, J (2015).

Agamben (2002) contested that language limitations meant those who survived the camps were unable to adequately testify to their experience; Fink subsequently comments that the gaze of something that stares back at us is particularly resonant as a means of forming a viable contemporary response (Fink 1981). My practice has

¹¹ Directly from Latin evidentem (nominative evidens) ‘perceptible, clear, obvious, apparent’ from ex ‘out, out of, fully’ (see [ex-](#)) + videntem (nominative videns), present participle of videre ‘to see’ (from PIE root [*weid-](#) "to see").

involved engaging with these spaces, to interrogate them in order to excavate¹² this response. I have explored notions of being with the subject, being with the work, and of embodiment and the representation of something elusive in a tangible form. In the process, I realised that I was returning to self by excavating narratives from my own past, but also from a present state of mind, accessed through doing or experiencing¹³, then writing about or drawing it so that a creative non-fiction might emerge.¹⁴ The research will demonstrate that, by using drawing, and writing practices, and informed by phenomenological theory, it is possible to gain insight and understanding of Holocaust sites, and that this is an understanding formed by individual lived experience of the world. This is important because the central tenet of phenomenology is 'a deep concern about the way the world appears to the person experiencing it' (Moran, 2000). It is less concerned with explaining experience, and instead seeks to establish methods by which that experience can be described.

The practice goes beyond verisimilitude¹⁵ and simply revealing something about the appearance of the objects I face, but instead reveals the perceptions of the encounter itself, a fundamental aspect of the 'happening'¹⁶ to be deciphered and 'unconcealed', which was Heidegger's interpretation of the Greek word for 'truth'

¹² **Excavation.** Here referring to both searching for meaning and resonance of the physical and metaphorical space and how it engages us, and the how the space pricks, wounds, or bruises (Barthes) us in relation to our existing posteriori knowledge. This idea is developed further in *If Only the Walls Could Speak: The Memory of Place* (Volume 2: Essay 4).

¹³ Doing or experiencing is critical to phenomenal theory. Whilst intellectual knowledge on the subject is gained by engaging with history and the testimony of others, my thesis contests that individual understanding or meaning is achieved through the act or formation of a creative response or action.

¹⁴ Such an approach should not be misconstrued as a reduction of the project to an artistic method for generating new forms of non-fiction using the Holocaust as subject material. The phenomenological method directs that the body is both subject and object. So, the emergence of a creative non-fiction is derived from my 'self' as the subject material formed in the 'shimmering' spaces of Holocaust memory.

¹⁵ **Verisimilitude** means the quality of appearing to be true or real. In art it refers to the concept of optical realism.

¹⁶ **Happening.** Heidegger contests that 'art is the becoming and happening of truth' (Heidegger 1985: 71), meaning that, through art, an implicit ontology and ethics are established, through which a historical understanding of self and the world is made possible.

(‘aletheia’) as ‘the [original] dynamic opening up of the world’ (Malpas 2016, pp. 161–168). This is further discussed in Part II: THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND SITUATION and Part III: METHOD.

Initially, my research was predicated on asking why I felt the need to keep returning to sites of Holocaust memory, and why I felt compelled to delve further into my Jewish antecedence. I was mindful of the intensity of feeling I experienced when I first visited Poland and confronted the Holocaust past face-to-face, in 2011. As an artist and writer, how could – or should – I respond to such places? I felt that confronting such a traumatic past was likely ‘to invoke ghosts¹⁷, to open a space through which something other returns’ (Wolfreys, 2002:03).

I had read a blog post by Victoria Grace-Walden in 2014 entitled *Embodiment and actuality: Sites of a traumatic past*, in which she described standing in the Podgórze district of Kraków and being aware that in 1941, on that spot, she would have been in the ghetto that had imprisoned 15,000 Polish Jews until its liquidation in 1943, when those who had survived were transported to Auschwitz and certain death. What resonated, and in many ways was a catalyst for this study, was her question ‘How do I relate to the tragic past of this site as I stand here?’ (Grace-Walden 2014). This is discussed in the context of Phenomenology in Part III: METHOD So, what do I do with the somatic and visceral nature of this response, the tension and anxiety – that tightness I feel across my shoulders, the acute awareness of breath, a restless need to express...to elevate, to vent?

Here I turned to Kierkegaard, who, in his early work, writes of a phenomenon that in theology is *tremendum et fascinatum*, that is, a mystery that both repels and attracts.

¹⁷ Ghosts. Not to be taken in the literal, supernatural, sense. These ideas recur in the writing as conceptual devices to articulate feelings of absence, lacuna and aporia. Evokes Derridean thought; notions of out of time or “out of joint”, referring to the return or persistence of elements from the past. Explored in *If only the Walls Could Speak: The Memory of Place* (Volume 2: Essay 4)

His notion of ‘a sympathetic antipathy [or] antipathetic sympathy’ (Hanson, 2010: 163) is the paradox of being drawn to something so repellent where quiet contemplation alone is not enough. Something must come out; explicated through emergent narratives written or drawn that, however fleetingly, make the invisible, and the dreadful, visible.¹⁸ This is discussed further in the context of the practice in *Necessitating my Alliance*¹⁹. (Volume 2: Essay 2)

In my practice, meaning is not to be found in what the marks represent as much as how they can be reified as gestures, as an enactment of their making. As in (FIG 3) *Jestem z tobq* (I am With You; 2022), drawings made at the gravesides of my great-grandparents, where the inevitable temporal distance becomes entangled with feelings of closeness, create an innate and intuitive spatio-temporal juxtaposition. Phenomenology is therefore both a subject of my enquiry and a method, comprising a set of practical and conceptual procedures applied to the production of creative outcomes, and as a tool to understand my process. See Part III: METHOD: Phenomenology.

The practical outcomes formed in the process, in keeping with the phenomenological method, necessitate the use of my body as the instrument of measurement registering the percepts at the sites of Holocaust memory. This introduces an important strand of the research – that of the ‘broken body’.

¹⁸ I have always found my visits to Poland to be emotionally draining. ‘To approach the kevarim (tombs) of the many tzaddikim (righteous) left there with forethought and trepidation leaves one with a sense of spiritual elevation that does not wear off quickly’. (Hoffman)

¹⁹ First published in JAWS in 2017. In Volume 2, I present a revised and extended version assimilated into the wider context of the thesis. Spicer, G (2017) *Necessitating my alliance: A meditation on the Płaszów concentration camp*, JAWS, Volume 3, Numbers 1-2, 1 September 2017, pp. 119-130(12), Intellect publishing.

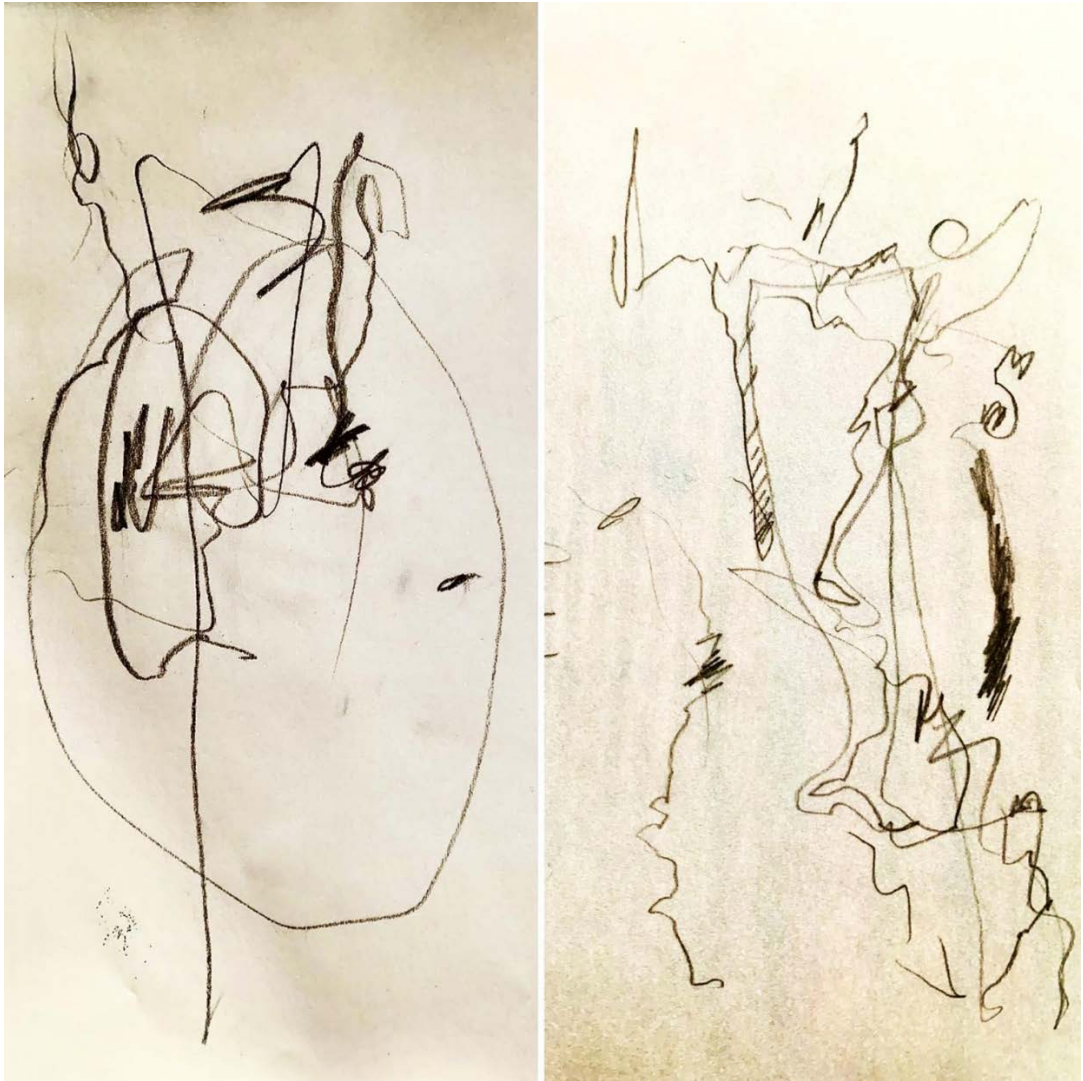


FIG 3. Gary Spicer, *Jestem z tobq (I am with you)* 2022.

1.4

The Broken Body

My insights into the experience of both physical and emotional pain derive from being diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis, a chronic inflammatory autoimmune disease, at the age of thirteen. The condition causes the spine and other areas of the body to become inflamed and fused. Consequently, experience and empathy are significant in the way in which I understand and navigate the pain of others; something I have brought to my phenomenological approach and to the experiencing

and representation of Holocaust sites. This is central to the narrative in *The Red Heart* (Volume 2: Essay 7).

Phenomenological theory views the self 'as embodied, performative and intersubjective' (Jones 1998:39); not separate from the body or viewed merely as a sign for conveying its significance of meaning, 'it [the self] is filled with it' (Jones 1998:39). In the context of my practice, therefore, my body – my broken body – is inextricably bound up with self and is agential in the creation of meaning. My body, and my steel hips and spine, become elemental in the mix of metaphor and meaning. The resulting indivisibility of body and pain has, in my case, realised a fluidly contested site of meaning, which has been central to the out-workings of this project.

The research is an attempt to understand, through creative application, the nature of identity and connections of belonging already known. Whilst mindful that identity is performative – a process – and never fully formed, the research is also fastened to the notion of a displaced Jewish identity. An identity I knew I could never wholly realise. I am not Jewish, but my father was. He broke with the 'chain of Jewish continuity'²⁰ by marrying outside the faith and transgressed the boundaries of a heritage that deemed my parents' marriage not only prohibited, but impossible. My childhood was therefore conflicted by virtue of it not being possible for me to belong to this community with which I identified, as, in accordance with traditional Jewish law (*halacha*), it is matrilineal descent that determines Jewishness.

What my parents did was the cause of a familial schism that was never fully reconciled, and that part of me that felt Jewish was never properly acknowledged. I was – and still am – on the outside, an observer, as a manifestation of partial belonging. During the process of identification, I felt the significance and emotional

²⁰ Deuteronomy (7:3)

facticity of the Holocaust as a profound moment in Jewish history; something my genealogy²¹ determined I was not, when observing from outside, yet that I feel inextricably bound to.

The genealogical aspect of the project, whilst not indicative of a direct familial link to the Holocaust, or any known Holocaust survivors, is connected by my paternal great-grandparents' migration from Kraków in the late 19th Century²². The project investigates ways in which these pasts are contested by the present, including my own genealogical history, and argues that there could be new ways of imagining connections between them.

1.5

The Journey, Time, and Distance.

The spectacle of the Holocaust, with its rich literary legacy, acts a catalyst for philosophical and theological thought in a Jewish, European, modern world context. This was a field to which I knew I could contribute and a subject I felt connected to, if only tangentially, and was one I felt I needed to confront. The research interrogates and documents that journey. The metaphor of the journey, particularly as an expression of one's own experience, which is at the heart of the Jewish theological experience, was one I identified with whilst writing my master's thesis, and has been sustained throughout the doctoral research. Sebald's psycho-geographic symbolic walk around East Anglia in *The Rings of Saturn* (1995), from which he tangentially interrogates sites and events pertaining to war and trauma – including the Holocaust – is particularly pertinent, not least because his journey was as much about his

²¹ For the purposes of law, those with one Jewish parent or one Jewish grandparent were classed as racially Jewish. As a Mischling – a term used by the Nazis to denote those with both Jewish and Aryan ancestry – I was a hybrid, a mongrel, a half-breed, and as such would have been equally vulnerable to the effects of the genocide.

²² My great-grandparents were escaping the pogroms that followed the assassination of Russian Tsar Alexander II. They were amongst two million Jews that left the region during this period.

mindset as it was the landscape he was roaming and interrogating. This creative response to the experience of place particularly resonated with my approach, as shown in Part II, THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND SITUATION: 2.4 Holocaust Writing and Volume 2: Part IV Conclusion, and the metaphor of the journey denoting transformation, passage, and transition from one state into another is developed in the first essay in *Portal* (Volume 2: Essay 1).

Although the physical sites are still there to be seen, the history they contain has been progressively more obscured by the passage of time – both literally, with the reclamation by nature, and metaphorically, through the distancing effect of time. The spatio-temporal effects of distance in the context of the Holocaust, as articulated by Eva Hoffman, have been a leitmotif in the research since the beginning, and many of the earlier works were an attempt to grapple with this phenomenon: ‘Stand too close to horror, and you get fixation, paralysis, engulfment, stand too far and you get voyeurism or forgetting. Distance²³ matters’ (Hoffman, 2004: 177). Hoffman believes that an indirect view of these events – as mediated by art, literature, and film – can be problematic, and that locating what she terms an ‘adequate valence of reaction’ (Hoffman, 2003: 178) may contribute towards our distancing from it. She cedes, however, that engagement with this past is possible with imaginative integrity and that it is inevitable that this mediation is viewed through the filter of our own ideas’ (Hoffman, 2003:178, 180). Avraham Burg describes the extent to which the Holocaust is woven into contemporary Jewish culture, commenting ‘[Un]like other events of the past [the Shoah] does not recede but is coming closer all the time. It is a past that is present, maintained, monitored, heard and represented’ (Burg, 2008: 22).

²³ **Distance.** Hoffman appears to be conflating time and space in this reference. Distance, whilst primarily being a spatial phenomenon, is imbued here with a temporal aspect in its capacity to paralyse, engulf, forget, or remember.

The increasing memorialising of activity around the Holocaust since the 1960s attests to this phenomenon, in stark contrast to the immediate post-war years where the event was avoided. This is seen in various accounts, such as Peter Novick's *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* (1999) and Idith Zertal's *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood* (2005), where the invocation of the Shoah is cited as a means of consolidating the position and legitimacy of Israeli nationhood and military power. To this end Zertal mourns the loss of the Shoah as an event of trauma and 'monstrous genocide' that has become increasingly subsumed and politically entangled. My work, whilst part of a contemporary facing and post-witnessing (Popescu) of history, is also about confronting how this history is vicariously entangled with my own genealogy and identity.

When confronting Holocaust sites, it can be difficult to disentangle oneself from the *a priori* knowledge of the popular narratives of which we are aware; narratives that have contributed to an indirect and mediated view of events driven by media, literature, film and, more contemporaneously, art. The phenomenological method determines that this *a priori* knowledge – which is inevitable – is 'bracketed'. (Husserl 2017). Bracketing is Husserl's methodological device that requires the deliberate shelving of one's own existing beliefs or knowledge regarding the phenomenon being investigated. The methodological focus is instead on the revealing and significant qualities of the direct experience of presence. Anything other – according to the method – is considered tangential to meaning. This is discussed further in *Necessitating my Alliance: A Meditation on the Płaszów Concentration Camp* (Volume 2: Essay 3).

A new contemporary genre of Holocaust representation emerges when acknowledging the inevitable effects of temporality and distancing. The potential of witnessing, initially through post-memory (Hirsch, 1997), as the inheritance of the memory of others – in her case, her parents, and later through the concept of post-witnessing (Popescu, 2015), expands this further, suggesting that this new genre:

‘denote{s} the condition of belatedness that characterises individuals, irrespective of their familial connections, who engage in investigative, reflective, and creative thinking about what the Holocaust means to them and to the times they live in (Popescu, 2016:01).’

She gave credence to the culturally mediated memory practices of the now post-witness generations and the artworks, memorials, film, and literature that is produced, demonstrating the living connection of ‘memory and imagination’ (Popescu 2015). This is discussed in Part II: THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND SITUATION.

Time and distance create a vicarious experience of the Holocaust that, according to Hirsch, becomes suffused with imagination and creation in the retelling. In addition, Popescu argues that artistic endeavour and the value of imagination in contemporary Holocaust representation have important roles in keeping memories vivid and accessible for future generations. This was an important realisation, having seen hundreds – if not thousands – of books on the subject in Kraków and Warsaw bookstores, and having asked myself what form my addition to the archive would take. It became clear to me on meeting other academics in the field at the *Tracing Topographies* conference in London (2015) that individual stories and narratives indeed add dimension to our collective understanding. The conference premise was to discuss any new perspectives afforded by spatial distance and through temporal lapse. I was interested in questions relating to Paulo Giaccaria’s presentation, *Space and Memory*, which was concerned with how Holocaust sites are now viewed through the work of time, and the variegated forms in which the sites exist today. Some clearly function as places of memory and memorialisation, or as museums, such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, whilst others, like Płaszów, have been transformed and overwritten and exist as palimpsests, and yet others have been returned to wilderness. This led me to understand, at an early point of the research, how Holocaust sites exist as a ‘field of tensions between competing understandings of

history' (Giaccaria 2015: 23), and how time, as an interaction of continuity and discontinuity, makes the reading of these spaces difficult. I was realising that my own post-witness account – my own 'sought encounter' with the event – could make a meaningful contribution to knowledge in the field. What I was unclear about at this point was the methodology.

1.6

Beginnings, Notions of Archaeology and Excavation.

When I began the research in 2016, I was focused on the Płaszów work camp just to the south of Kraków. The camp was popularised by Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's List*²⁴ (1993), which was based on Thomas Keneally's book *Schindler's Ark* published in 1982. I had read this book when I was 25, and it connected me geographically and culturally to an otherness I knew existed as a concept. Now that concept had a form, a place, and an origin. The rationale for choosing Płaszów was that the site has not yet been turned into a spectacle²⁵. Almost nothing remained of the original camp, the past dismantled and threatened with erasure, but, to me, this extensive site still retained an uneasy and uncomfortable authenticity. The site hadn't been distorted or reconstructed to facilitate tourism; its history was evident in a far more subtle way. Its undulations and topography obscuring yet marking and laying witness, such as at *Hujowa Górka*, (FIG 4) where the Germans exhumed, burned, and reburied the bodies of around ten thousand previously killed Jews to conceal evidence of their crimes prior to their retreat from the area.

²⁴ In fact, nothing remains of the site as it would have appeared in 1942. Spielberg constructed a film set near to the original site. This included a reconstruction of the commandant's villa. The original site is also a memorial to the incinerated bodies of victims who lie beneath the now grass-covered hills.

²⁵ **Spectacle.** Deriving from its Latin root *spectare* ('to view, watch') and *specere* ('to look at') and invoking images of extravagant display and performance, as well as images of violence and atrocity. Here, I mean to suggest notions of authentic and inauthentic dimensions of experience. It is important in my practice to attempt, as much as possible, to avoid the distractions of display and performance made explicit, at the Auschwitz-Birkenau site in particular.



FIG 4. Gary Spicer, *Hujowa Górka*, Płaszów, Poland, 2017.

These mounds allude to the site's grievous history (FIG 4). Notions of archaeology and excavation had much more resonance in this space than the more populated site of Auschwitz-Birkenau²⁶, with its iconic remains and camp geography still resembling its original form.

The past that took place here was no flickering spectacle; it was lived and breathed. I can see it and I can walk through it, the barracks, the latrines, the horses and carts, chicken run and the grey house. And the hills are full and bloated, rolling as they now do gently, undulating, now feminised, reclaimed, returned to nature and part of what lives, and breathes, and changes.²⁷

In the excerpt of practice-text above, made after my first visit to the camp, I allude to my imagining of the space as it was, and how I observe the functions and activities

²⁶ Auschwitz-Birkenau. After the war, Poland went through a period of severe deprivation and need. Many of the barracks at the camp were dismantled by the local population for the wood. Looters (gleaners) also stole artefacts and sifted through ash pits for gold tooth fillings and other valuables.

²⁷ The writing in full appears in *Necessitating my Alliance: A Meditation on the Płaszów Concentration camp*. (Volume 2: Essay 3)

taking place. The description of the landscape shows its capacity to obscure, yet not fully conceal. I am observing how nature has also reclaimed the site and, through time, has assimilated it into the wider environment, existing now as a palimpsest.

FIG 5 shows a map of the Płaszów concentration camp, which functioned from 1942 until early 1945, indicating the location of its original features. I used this to map the terrain relative to how the site appears today.

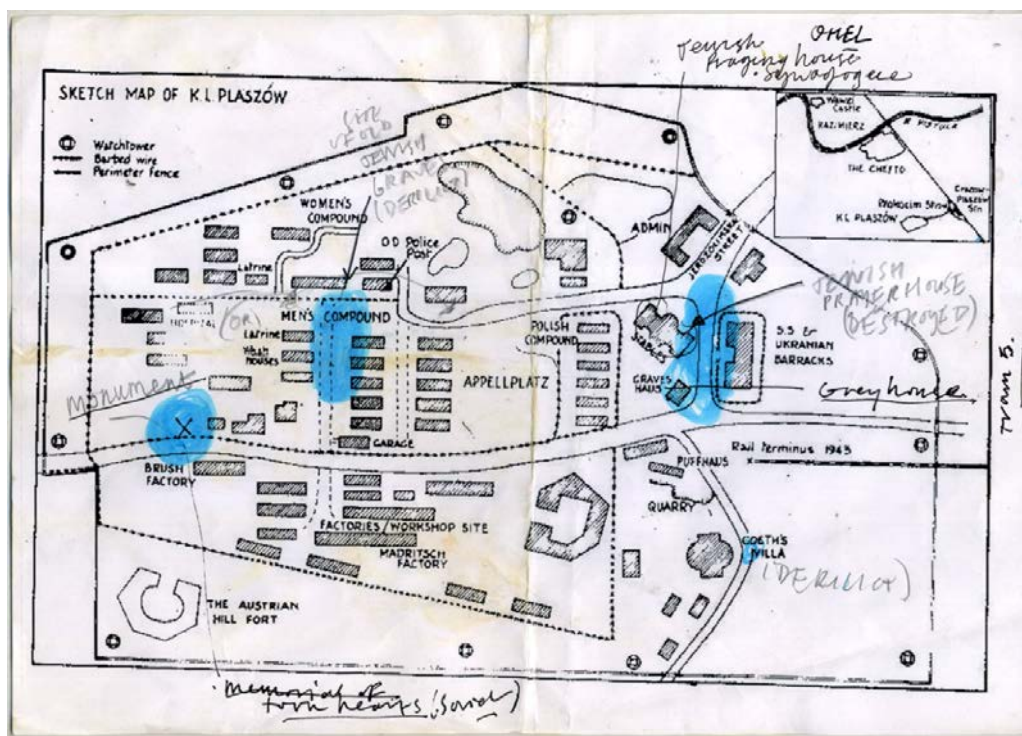


FIG 5. Gary Spicer, *Map of original Płaszów site layout*, Journal 1, 2016.

As the research progressed, it became clear that, although the project was centred primarily on the Holocaust sites themselves, they were inextricably bound with the ‘self’ as a receptor, mediator, and interlocutor of these spaces – both genealogically and in terms of body meaning and ‘experience’, all of which is consistent with a phenomenological approach. The research interrogates how these sites have left gaps in understanding and comprehension, and their capacity to be reified and represented in some way; lacunas in which reimagining’s and perceptions could

easily and readily take place. The limen, which in psychology is the term for threshold, the point at which a stimulus is strong enough to produce a response, or where a measure of understanding might begin to form, is revealed in the phenomenological method by providing the tools to describe experience and exposing these gaps in understanding – gaps that, in the visual practice, serve as the activation of notional and graphic spaces. This is discussed further in *Portal* (Volume 2: Essay 1).

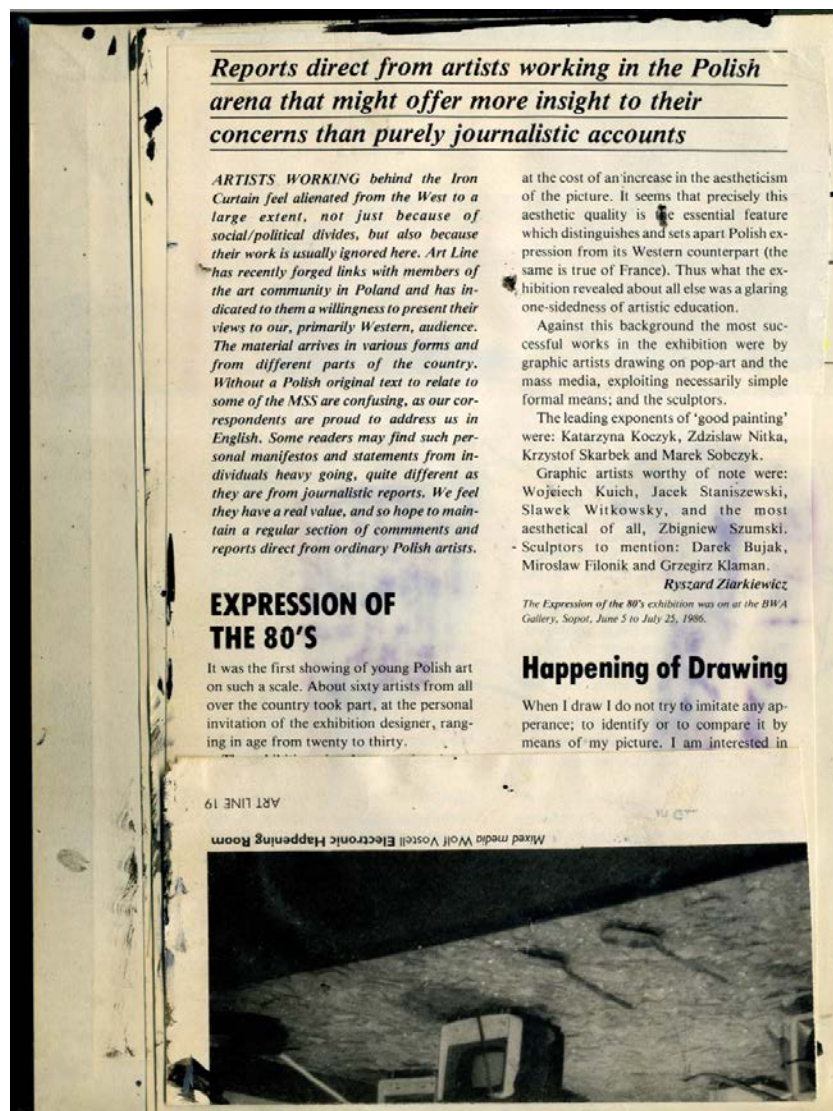


FIG 6. Gary Spicer, *Happening of Drawing*, Sketchbook, 1986.

In my practice I will often juxtapose the natural phenomena of sky, landscape, or water against the residue of the trauma being encountered or the free will of the

Nazi perpetrators. D.J. O'Connor makes an interesting distinction between human-based events, and those events that occur naturally and without human intervention such as 'eclipses of the sun or moon, showers of rain, earthquakes, heartbeats, sunrise and sunset...or the fall of a leaf from a tree'. (O'Connor 1971: 3). These he characterises as 'happenings'. Alternatively, 'actions' are the outcome of human decisions and choices. This is an interesting distinction in my practice in relation to the Holocaust. It is also an interesting theological dilemma when contemplating the relationship of the victims with God, as in this excerpt from *Aesthetic Emotion: Water and Blood -Víz és Vér – (ESSAY 6)*.

***The sky now falls through and into the blue – blonde – reeled and rubbed,
Pushed high out into the wind and there it hangs and is still on its thread,
Buffeted on the breeze and taken on the drift, by the dappled and flickering
eddy.***

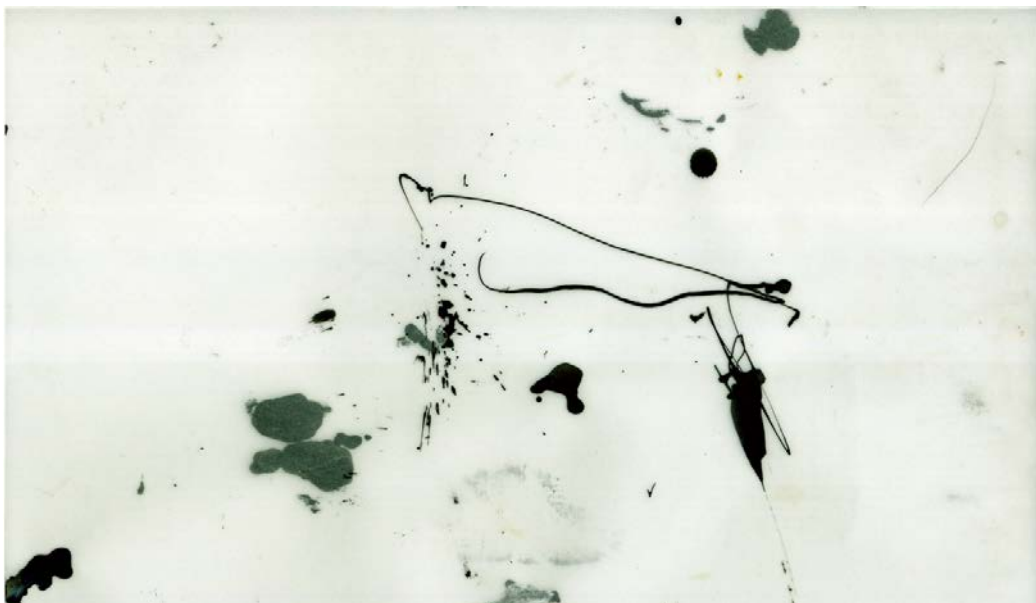


FIG 7. Gary Spicer, *Isaac*, 2022.

I had read a review of an exhibition by Eastern European artists entitled '*The Expression of the 80s*', which took place at the BWA Gallery in Sopot in northern Poland from June 5th until July 31st, 1986. Ryszard Ziarkiewicz wrote the review in ART LINE magazine (1986), and I cut this out and stuck it in a sketchbook. I was drawn to

a statement by one of the featured artists, Grzegorz Klamon, (FIG 8) entitled *The Happening of Drawing*²⁸ (FIG 6). I have adopted the heading for the title of my thesis and adapted it to frame the phenomenological approach I have used.



FIG 8. Gary Spicer, *Grzegorz Klamon*, Sketchbook, 1986.

²⁸ **Happening.** Allan Kaprow initially coined the term Happening in 1959 to describe non-linear events that took place in galleries involving sound and image projection, such events pre-empted performance art, which evolved later in the 1970s. John Cage was reputed to have staged the first of such at Black Mountain College in 1952. Chance Operations involved the reading of text, music, and dance in a structured, linear form. In contrast, Kaprow, who studied under John Cage, developed his own version of happenings to be more improvised and spontaneous. There is a clear phenomenological link between both Klamon's approach and Kaprow's earlier happenings. Both practices operate phenomenally, but in different ways. Both are affective and perceived multi-sensorially, which in Klamon's case is in part due to his somatic and gestural approach – very much referencing the abstract expressionist action painters of the 1940s and 1950s. But in Kaprow's happenings, the body becomes central to the audience experience in the creation of a more theatrical, multi sensorial performance. Happening has evolved in the practice to include consideration of Heidegger's notion of truth or unconcealment, *Aletheia*. As "the [original] dynamic opening up of the world"²⁸ (Malpas 2014:264).

Klaman's statement read like a treatise, a formal exposition of a state of being. He was describing drawing as an explicatory process to unfold meaning and to seek clarity. The idea – and connotations – of *Happening* resonated with me. I knew my practice was impulsive and gestural, and I knew expression was at its core, but I was becoming aware that the process revealed something other than the physical traces of its mark. Klaman expressed it like this when describing his own approach to drawing:

'When I draw, I do not try to imitate any appearance; to identify or to compare it by means of my picture. I am interested in emotional drawing rather than in a visual one. I like the process of drawing itself...I emphasise every gesture taking it out of the context of the picture. I draw on the pieces of paper using one gesture, my whole energy. This way of articulation allows me to draw with ease. I like sharp, impulsive lines. I like drawing with all my strength' (Klaman, 1980).

Klaman's reflections on drawing certainly resonated with my own as is evident in FIG 7 *Isaac*, another image drawn at the graveside of my great grandfather. I will reflect on Klaman's ideas more closely, and what is transferable from his context into mine, in Part III, METHODS: Drawing 3.2.

Finally, whilst appreciating the danger of over-personalising the research, and the loss of focus that can result in convolution and over-complexity, it has been important throughout that the project engaged me on a human level and not be divorced from feeling, emotion, and personal experience. Therefore, the transformative possibilities of art, and its facility to express through gesture and plasticity what cannot always be conveyed in conventional language has been articulated throughout the project through the poetic potential of art-based

research. This situates my work as part of the turn in academic research that is embracing creative practice as a legitimate source of knowledge contribution.

‘As students venture more deeply into the labyrinths of the creative process and confront the inevitable challenges of the journey, the reliance on poetic ways of viewing and expressing [their] experience grows stronger’ (McNiff, 2009: 80).

PART II

THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND SITUATION

Part II of the thesis focuses on the theoretical context of the practice, and where and how my work is situated in relation to it. To do this I provide an overview of relevant debates around memory, experiencing and witnessing, and discuss how these relate to the nature of flux in the practice. I also discuss how notions of shimmer and parallax inform the phenomenological experience. As part of this, the concept of the ineffable and the oscillation of subject and object, and the quality of becoming, are also explored. I introduce Graham Harman's Object-Oriented Ontology – OOO – (2018) in which he argues that objects – whether human or non-human, real or fictional – are mutually autonomous, an idea that influences the way in which all artists and writers systematically interact with objects. These ideas will also be discussed in Part III: METHODS in a broader discussion on New materialisms and OOO.

I then move on to how the Holocaust has been visually represented, with reference to key movements and artistic styles. I will make the case for using abstraction and the oblique rather than the literal and the iconic. I also discuss the dynamic nature of the alliance between viewer and maker and how, in any reading of images, abstraction itself, in denoting an absence that cannot be legitimately or literally filled, must always remain beyond our grasp.

Finally, I examine how the practices of writing and drawing in my work, which constitute the evidence of my post-witnessing, intersect, and represent the residual traces of phenomenological evidence. Here I also discuss examples from the practice of others and how they relate to and inform my own. I look at the intersection of the writing and drawing practices of others, including how these relate to my own practice. I will also cover the intersection of writing and drawing, including reflection

on the use of different modes of art writing in contemporary practice and how this is situated within the context of artistic research.²⁹

2.1

Memory, Experiencing and Witnessing

‘There is no subject matter to capture but only a witness to be borne’.

(Patterson 2018: xiv).

This statement reinforces how, in witnessing, we bear something, carry something thereafter; it can be a burden, as well as a joy (Givoni 2016: 63). There is no possibility of capture, nothing to frame, only the chance to invoke. As a subject, the Holocaust is elusive – we cannot capture it, but the Holocaust ‘captures us’ (Patterson 2018: xiv). In attempting to capture the Holocaust, it is difficult to extricate oneself from the memory of others and the ways in which the Holocaust has been interpreted and translated into different shapes and forms of thought over the decades since the liberation.

Reflecting on her personal connection to the Holocaust, Eva Hoffman, whose parents were both survivors, warns of the danger of memory becoming uncoupled from history through natural generational dilution and the passing of time. Memory becoming history and understanding it ‘with all of its tensions and complexities, conflicts and chains of cause and effect’ (Hoffman 2022) in an age where there are no direct survivors, Hoffman contests, poses significant challenges for remembering in relation to authenticity and denial. This is something I will discuss in relation to the

²⁹ **New Modes of Art Writing 2:** Intersections of the Critical and the Creative Voice. 10th November 2017. I jointly organised the conference, which examined how art is encountered through different modes of writing, and whether there are ways of bridging the gap between different writing practices, for new forms to emerge. The conference set out to explore the space where we might begin to rethink writing as a further agency of creative practice, encouraging exploration of its potential as an artistic form in itself, and as a method of critical enquiry.

emergence of virtual Holocaust memory that brings us into critical interstitial spaces that ‘exist[ing] between multiple layers of pasts and present in embodied ways’ (Walden 2019).

In post-memory ‘the consequences of traumatic experiences are passed on to the second generation as a powerful affective and moral education’ (Hoffman 2022). Hoffman – whilst acknowledging that her parents’ memories are not her own – still vividly feels their humiliation and, through their silence, feels the ‘consequences of their trauma, and their unhappiness something she felt compelled to rescue them from’ (Hoffman 2022).

My project does not seek to interrogate Holocaust memory in any prescribed way, rather, it reflects the way art practice transforms and mediates our understanding through the process of transfiguration – a process constantly in flux – and the way in which this continues to ‘shimmer’ in the manner I describe in the introduction ‘as the oscillation of subject or object, or the perception of the barely limned object’. A similar phenomenon described by Hoffman in *After Such Knowledge* (2005) as ‘memories erupt[ing] in flashes of imagery, in abrupt and broken refrain’ (Hirsch) and how the ‘fragmentary phrases of her survivor parents “lodged themselves in my back like shards”’ (Roper 2023: 22). The metaphors of shimmering, shattering, and flashing signify the oscillation of past and present, and its effect on memory and witnessing.

My practice explores how temporal fields of past and present coalesce around self to enlighten and broker an extended understanding of the past that is anchored in its semiotic dimension in the present. Describing the emotional and contextual facility of memory, of it being constantly in flux and as a means of defining ourselves, Donougho (2002) writes:

‘Memory does not revive the past but constructs it. The quest for memory is the search for one’s history. Sites of memory are collective yet individual, living yet dead, ours yet belonging to others. In the landslide of commemorative memory, memory shimmers, becomes strange things’.
(Agnew 2005: 198)

In Journal 3, (FIG 9) I noted the term ‘shimmer’ while attending the ‘The Materiality of Nothing’ symposium at Lancaster University, a term which resonated with aspects of my own practice. I was contemplating the idea of the oscillation of subject and object³⁰, and the quality of becoming. ‘Becoming’ and ‘being’, discussed more in Volume 2 Essay 1: *Portal* as Heideggerian constructs, are iterated throughout the research as a ‘moving towards’ of understanding and knowledge of ‘self’ in relation to my encounters with the vestiges of death and trauma experienced at Holocaust sites.

³⁰ **Subject and Object.** First observed by Kant, ‘subject’ refers to the wilful active, conscious individual, while ‘object’ refers to that existing outside of itself, which the subject observes. OOO (Object Oriented Ontology) discussed in Part III: METHOD instead determines that an ‘object’ does not solely refer to solid material entities but also to human beings, animals, characters, and even entities such as Holocaust(s).

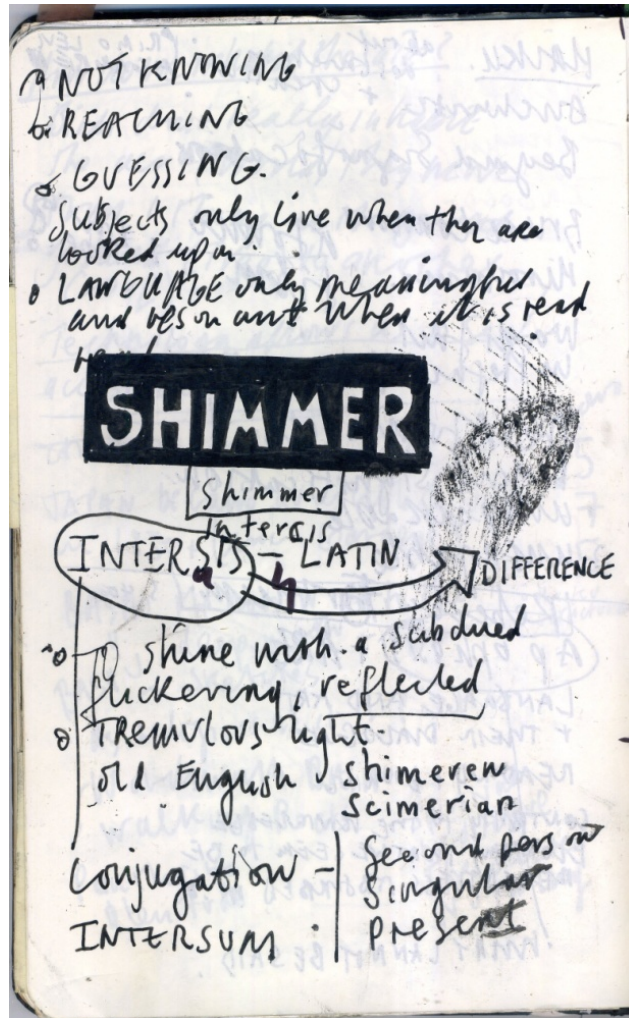


FIG 9. Gary Spicer, *Shimmer*, Journal 3, 2017.

This 'entanglement' of self in attempting to contemplate aspects of being and becoming through the identification of the quality 'shimmer' – which will unfold as another central motif in the research – is discussed in Part III: METHOD and signifies the opening-up of the subject and object, and the possibilities of my own becoming.

This notion of shimmer also relates to recent scholarly debate around Holocaust sites that suggests we must consider time in relation to memory. Such sites are now viewed through the shimmering work of time, and as time passes and the distance between us, our worlds, and the actual events of the Holocaust increases, very few survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders remain: only memory persists. The pursuit of

memory is therefore intensified and is manifest in its many forms. It is becoming the only way of relating to the Holocaust.

‘Remembering, as a vital activity, shapes our relation with the past, defining our present. Both personal and societal memories are always subject to be constructed, repressed, denied. They present imperfections, impermanence’s, textures. They are slippery, unstable, and subject to distortions. Memory is selective. It is built upon a dialectic relation between remembering and forgetting. So, as time operates as a distancing shade between the memorized events and ourselves, the way memory is constructed in the present implies the shaping of the future’. (Bonder 1998 :479).

Bonder’s description of Holocaust sites as impermanent and of variegated ‘textural’ appearance echoes ideas posited by Paulo Giaccaria at the *Tracing Topographies* conference in his *Space and memory* presentation. How time, as a co-action of continuity and discontinuity, makes the reading of these spaces problematic, a phenomenon, is most acute when encountering those sites that have been returned to wilderness, as with multiple sites in the forests of Galicia – in modern-day Ukraine. In his book *The Clearing* (2005), photographer Ori Gersht, the son of Holocaust survivors, confronts the wilderness of these Holocaust sites as they exist today. It includes the following from Steven Bode:

‘His photographs record a kind of spiritual journey in which his own emotionally charged encounter with this unfamiliar, yet endlessly evocative landscape is combined with a discreet, but equally personal rite of observance; one that cannot help but involve a further confrontation with the horrors of the past’ (Gersht, Bode, et al 2005: 6)



FIG 10. Ori Gersht, *Liquidation*, 2005.

A ‘personal rite of observance’ describes my own journey and feelings when in these spaces; spaces that are blank, and devoid of ‘evidence’, yet replete, and heavy with history. Historians and geographers such as Giaccaria have now begun to investigate the roles of *space* and *place* in the Holocaust and its umbilical link to memory³¹, with Giaccaria describing also how such places exist as a ‘field of tensions between competing understandings of history’ (Giaccaria 2015: 23).

This study of the mental and physical spaces – cognitive memory – includes the human processes of sensation, perception, thinking, learning, memory, imagination, conceptualisation, language, and reasoning. In cognitive memory these processes are

³¹ They have examined the mental and physical spaces associated with the Holocaust – including the concepts that informed Nazi geographical planning and the myriad physical sites and infrastructure (camps, ghettos, hiding places, execution sites, and localities) that are inseparable from our understanding of the Holocaust.

intertwined with affect and our own beliefs, influenced by what we feel and what we do. The banality of many Holocaust sites as they are today, seemingly ordinary spaces that, like Plaszow, conceal their grievous histories, can be read in conjunction with our own percepts and imagination to elucidate how victims experienced the Holocaust as both 'a physical reality as well as a cognitive process' (Stone 2016: 49-50). This is an essential element of the post-witnessing experience in relation to my practice and phenomenological approach.

Considering the confluence of cognitive memory with affect and our own beliefs, extending the literary term 'parallax' is useful when contemplating Holocaust spaces from multiple viewpoints for new and insightful understandings to emerge. Such perspectives can derive from alternative modes and approaches that overlap, reconfigure and complement, such as writing and drawing, where no single definitive final description is possible, only the sum of interacting – or contradictory – fragments. The overall effect, constituting a multidimensional type of seeing that shimmers and is never fixed, in phenomenological parlance, is of sensing the experience.

Parallax accepts the 'reality' of gaps (aporia) and errors in trying to perceive a situation or event such as the Holocaust. Giorgio Agamben describes as an 'essential lacuna' (Agamben 1999: 13) the impossibility for Holocaust survivors to bear witness to what they in turn witnessed. Consequently, contemplating survivors' testimony, 'necessarily meant interrogating this lacuna or, more precisely, to listen to it' (Agamben 1999: 13). Agamben describes how certain words can fail, and others are understood in a different way and elevated, given a different sense. The parallax view is 'to listen to what is unsaid' (Agamben 1999: 14). This idea is discussed in 2.2 The Ineffable, in relation to Mark C. Taylor's concept of Seeing Silence.

When contemplating the fallibility of memory, Paul Ricoeur distinguishes memory and remembering from imagining. He cites 'the irreducible feature in the living experience of memory' and how there is a danger of affecting the faithfulness of remembering as 'truth' by confusing one with the other. (Ricoeur 2006: 7) My visual practice conspires to bring the referent of the past into the present, but it does not constitute something remembered, which is consistent with other forms of cultural collective memory. Instead it documents an investigation of the imagined past and its translation into the lexicon of my present experience through drawing and writing.

Conversely, in contemplating the act of forgetting, Marianne Hirsch suggests how the placeness of Holocaust sites, and their condition and status as 'monuments', where the work of forgetting is held back or blocked, ensures that 'the spatiality of memory [maps] onto its temporality' (Hirsch 1997: 22). In doing so, the spoken and the written are conflated, so that we remember in both pictures and words. Hirsch's idea is complicated by those, such as me, whose connection to these places has nothing to do with personal experience or recollection, or those connected through a direct familial link, but instead Hirsch's idea is bound up with imaginative investment and a need to confront the evidence and to respond. The work generated at Holocaust sites – the 'trace' of my witnessing – demonstrates how my drawing gives temporal form to my experience and how it apprehends:

'A moment of time and shows that this is an act of aesthetic creation, the transformation of reality into an object that possesses inner necessity and meaning' (Hellerstein 1997: 36:2, 34-44).

And then, in the reading of the marks, is an attempt to evaluate how my intervention '[transforms] a moment of reality into a work of art, a readable text that possesses internal coherence and authenticity' (Hellerstein 1997: 36:2, 34-44).

In 1919, James Joyce wrote in the margins of his notes for *Ulysses* (1922) that 'places remember events', thus questioning the conception of memory as being bound by

time and as a recollection of the past. '[P]laces, instead of being merely settings or scenes, are active agents of commemoration' (Casey 1993:277). This concept of imagining that physical spaces could have sentience is the focus of Essay 4 Volume 2: *If Only the Walls Could Speak: The Memory of Place*. Jozefinska 14, Kraków, was once the main hospital in the city ghetto. It was within this building that everyone present was murdered, floor-by-floor, room-by-room, during the liquidation in 1943. Joyce's comment resonated with me, as did architect Richard McCormac's idea that 'building is memory'. Peter Finch, in an article in the *Architects Journal* in which he contemplated the symbolism of buildings, wrote, 'the patina of time, both physical and metaphorical, is something that invests architecture with a very particular symbolic meaning' (Finch: 2016).

Asked to design a space to house John Ruskin's work and his collection of books, paintings, and photographs, McCormac remembered Ruskin's comment that 'we cannot remember' without architecture and analogous words such as monument, memory, history, and story emphasising the means of recall, reinforcing the idea that architecture – like literature and landscape – is part of our collective memory.

Dylan Trigg suggests in *The Memory of Place. A Phenomenology of the Uncanny*, (2012) that the memory of places, and the concept of placeness itself, is central to our sense of self, written and encoded deep in the body and its experience of the world. Therefore, the ways in which buildings as bodies themselves can contain memory and have the capacity to remember is wholly contingent on our alliance and interanimation³² (Bachelard 1994). In so doing, the past, having outlived [its] death' is then revealed, made palpable and present. Such sites, when confronted phenomenologically, 'occupy the spectral trace of an event left behind, serving to

³² **Interanimation** is when two elements or forces; 'body and soul', 'words and pictures 'or two individuals conspire to extend the meaning of each other.

testify to the past through a logic of voids, disruptions, and hauntings' (Trigg 2012: xxvii).

The past in the present is also explored in Max Silverman's *The Memory of the Image* (2013). He writes how, in the first chapter of *The Arcades Project* (1982), Walter Benjamin reconfigures history by detaching it from a familiar linear and scientific conception and reframes it by inserting it into a non-linear, spatial, and poetic concept of what he called the 'constellation' or the 'dialectical' image where 'the chronological distinctions between past, present and future are transformed' (Silverman 2013: 124) and overlap. This transformative de-temporalising of memory may also be understood to reconfigure a linear construction of history into a sort of montage, allowing a layering of personal and collective histories to take place. This is how my practice can encompass 19th Century Kraków (nee Austrian) history, through my paternal Jewish ancestry, as well as the emergent European Holocaust narrative and the early 20th Century history of Jewish migration into North Manchester. The constellation is completed by the recurrent motif of the 'broken body'.

The notions of distance and proximity on memory, and Burg's idea that the Holocaust 'is a past that is present' and moving closer all the time, is evident in the increased visibility of memorialising activity around the Holocaust since the 1960s. (Burg, 2008: 22). This is in stark contrast to the immediate post-war years where the event was avoided. Various accounts make mention of this, including Peter Novick's *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* (1999) and Idith Zertal's *Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood* (2005), where Zertal invokes the Shoah as a means of consolidating the position and legitimacy of Israeli nationhood and military power.

To this end Zertal is mourning the loss of the Shoah as an event of trauma and 'monstrous genocide' that has become increasingly subsumed and politically

entangled. My work, whilst part of a contemporary facing and post-witnessing of history in terms of its meaning in the present, is also about confronting how this history is entangled vicariously with my own genealogy and identity.

The notion of the past in the present is further explored in Dylan Trigg's argument that the Holocaust sites, when considered phenomenologically, somehow retain the potential for the resuscitation of past trauma in the present through their materiality and presence 'by placing the past in the confluence between memory and imagination' (Trigg 2012). Trigg describes 'the place of trauma [vibrating] with an indirect language' (Trigg 2012): a language to be heard, 'seen' (Taylor) and, ultimately, deciphered.

A new contemporary genre of Holocaust representation emerges when this language is heard or seen, a language that acknowledges the inevitable effects of temporality and distancing. The potentiality of witnessing, initially through post-memory (Hirsch, 1997), as the inheritance of the memory of others – in Hirsch's case, her parents, and later through the concept of post-witnessing – expands this further, suggesting that this new genre:

'denote{s} the condition of belatedness that characterizes individuals, irrespective of their familial connections, who engage in investigative, reflective, and creative thinking about what the Holocaust means to them and to the times they live in' (Popescu, 2016:01).

Here Popescu gives credence to the culturally mediated memory practices of the now post-witness generations and the artworks, memorials, film, and literature that is produced, so demonstrating the living connection of 'memory and imagination', as in my practice, where the experiencing of Holocaust sites is 'happened' by memories that are resuscitated and formed through imagination into gesture or text. (Popescu 2015).

2.2

The Ineffable

'Oh you, thieves of the authentic hours of death,
Of the last breaths and of the eyelids falling to sleep,
Be sure of one thing:
The angel gathers together.
What you cast away'.

Nelly Sachs *'Dein Leib im Rauch Durch die Luft'* [Your Body in the Smoke through the Air]. In *den Wohnungen de Todes* [...in the Dormitories of Death] (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1946).

Nelly Sachs' poem *'Your Body in the Smoke through the Air'* is an example of what she termed 'scenic poetry' where she employs symbolism as a mechanism to express the ineffable by alluding to mysticism and religious ritual. Ehrhard Bahr suggests that, by referencing Jewish mysticism and entities that are equally beyond words, 'Sachs was provided with "objective correlatives"³³ to describe the unfathomable' (Shapiro).

As a German Jew, Sachs witnessed the rise of the Nazis as they came to power in the 1930s. This experience temporarily led to her losing the ability to speak. She later wrote, '[W]hen the great terror came/I fell dumb' (Rosenfield 1988: 91). For Sachs, this enforced muteness would seem to symbolise the notion of ineffability, which was inextricably bound to the Holocaust after Adorno's dictum regarding the 'barbarity of poetry after Auschwitz' (Godfrey 2003: 10). This was confirmed further by Agamben (1999) when he posited that it – the Holocaust – could not be borne witness to, even by those who experienced it first-hand. In addition, the notion of the ineffable is bound to more contemporary debates regarding the valence of

³³ In literary criticism, an objective correlative is a thing or an event that systematically represents, or links to, emotions. In this instance, the mystery of religious promise and fulfilment.

reaction (Hoffman 2005) and how the Holocaust is subsequently – and viably – represented.

The idea of the Holocaust being ineffable is problematic and contestable, when artists and writers regularly ‘attest to both the legitimacy of the inexpressible expression and the multiplicity of ways to give it voice’. (Walton 2009: Abs) Adorno suggested that the witness was silenced by the limits of grammatical possibility. The expression that can express that which cannot be expressed would therefore defy logic and grammar. In *The Ground of the Image*, Jean-Luc Nancy (2005) confronts this oft-repeated notion that the Holocaust is something incapable of, and mocking the potential to be, described; of being overwhelming and ineffable. ‘Forbidden Representation’ – the third chapter in *The Ground of the Image*, translated from the French ‘*La Representation Interdite*’ interestingly does not wholly signify Nancy’s intention. ‘Interdite’ extends the notion of ‘forbidden’ to also embrace the idea of being disconcerted or taken aback. So, ‘forbidden’ in this instance exacts both a moral and legal imperative. An imperative that in the Torah, Exodus 20:3-4 extends to the violation of Jewish law. This is discussed later in Part II, 2.3 Visual Responses to the Holocaust, Jewishness, and Identity.

‘You shall have no other gods beside Me. You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth’. Exodus 20:3-4.

Sarah Kofman, a contemporary of Jean-Luc Nancy and who, with Derrida, formed the ‘*Philosophie en effet*’ in Paris, wrote extensively on Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud, particularly in relation to her own position as a Jew. In 1987 she wrote *Smothered Words* a meditation on the necessity and impossibility of narration and memory in which she confronts and discusses for the first time the murder of her father Berek Kofman, a Rabbi who, whilst imprisoned in Auschwitz for his refusal to work on the Sabbath, was summarily beaten and buried alive. The circumstances of her father’s murder, the muting of his words in prayer and Kofman’s own reluctance to write or

speak about it for so long reinforces further the notion of the ineffable in relation to Holocaust narratives.

Kofman did not talk or write about the trauma felt by her father's murder in Auschwitz until late in her corpus. She writes, regarding the protracted nature of arriving at a place where she felt the need to confront this past, 'My numerous books have perhaps been the necessary detours to bring me to write about 'that'. (Kofman 1996: 3) In French 'that' translates as 'ça', and this become emblematic in her writing as a means of articulating what the Holocaust had come to mean for her, described by Griselda Pollock as 'the substance-less void before and beyond representation' (Chare and Williams 2013: 205). The circuitous journey Kofman took to 'ça' towards the moment she felt able to give form and substance to the void was necessary to avoid the confrontation. In the encountering of residual trauma, timing is everything. On Kofman's journey to 'ça' encapsulated in *Smothered Words* Griselda Pollock commented:

'In finally ceasing to evade 'ça' /it', the unprocessed past, of which she was the effect, flashed into the present as her own becoming. But 'ça' remains an enigmatic signifier of that becoming and its moment in writing in 1993. It is the enigma Kofman bequeathed to her readers. Thus, the question, for all the analysts of this little book, is not what is the referent for the tantalizing 'ça', but what remains encrypted in the word:' (Chare and Williams 2013: 204).

Griselda Pollock³⁴, quoting Geoffrey Hartman alludes to how, when attempting to represent trauma with language where words and or gesture replace things, the ensuing 'construction of memory is not a literal retrieval but a statement of a different sort' (Chare and Williams 2013: 206). This idea is supported by Janet Wolff describing the allusive, where the attempt to represent vicarious trauma is bound to

³⁴ I was asked to join a panel with Professor Griselda Pollock (Leeds University) and Professor Sue Vice (Sheffield University) in 2016 for an after-screening discussion of the film *Son of Saul* about the Sonderkommando, directed by Lazlo Nemes, at the Friends of Hyde Park Picture House (APPENDIX III.vi).

the idea of reaching and guessing. (Discussed further in Part II, 2.4i Abstraction: Potent Forces) The event or the moment can only ever be expressed in its negativity; the gap or space left by the experience – hence the suggestion that it is absence or the presence of absence that is being represented not the memory of structures and objects that were literally present. It is this concept, according to Hartman, that drives our desire to see and make visible the seemingly ineffable and inexpressible.

Griselda Pollock also cites the notion of the gap that can in some way be partially³⁵ breached by art and the aesthetic. That art transforms, rather than representing, the trauma it seeks to express, and something of its residue may be aesthetically encountered ‘across the gaps between letters and words or in forms that wander around it’ (Chare and Williams 2013: 206).

The notion of art as a transport station of trauma alluded to above was a concept created by Bracha L. Ettinger, whose art and writing explores how, through aesthetic encounter with place, and specifically objects that exist as material witness to Holocaust memory, it becomes possible to transform trauma and the seemingly ineffable into material indices, artwork, writings, and photographs.

³⁵ According to Pollock, the art (or the literature) that seeks to represent the trauma not directly experienced becomes “an originary site” for the encounter and can only ever ripple or shimmer with meaning and recognition. Through art it is possible to know vicariously something of the trauma, rather than it being reduced completely. It (trauma) will always “evade” depiction entirely.



FIG 11 and 12. Bracha L. Ettinger, *Draw-notebooks*, 2009.

Ettinger’s polymathic practice is rooted in her genealogical past. Both her parents were Holocaust survivors. Her father Uziel Lichtenberg escaped the Lodz Ghetto to fight alongside the partisans, only to be imprisoned again in Hungary. He left documents and diaries detailing his experience, which have informed narratives and themes to which Ettinger regularly returns, and that underpin her psychoanalytical and philosophical practices.³⁶

³⁶ Bracha L. Ettinger’s artistic practice supports her work as a senior clinical psychologist, practicing psychoanalyst, and theoretician. Her work connects female sexuality, psychoanalysis, and aesthetics. Her thinking is informed by amongst others the ideas of Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Francois Lyotard,

Ettinger's artistic practice focuses on how objects – and places – resonate, interweave, and are overlaid to form extended personal narratives that are rooted in the post-memory of her pre-war European Jewish heritage. Like myself, (FIG 13) the journal, or in her case the 'draw-notebook' (FIGS 11 and 12), feature as an integral part of her practice. They serve as artefacts that are not ancillary to the practice but are a foundational and constituent part of it. The 'draw-notebook' defines one of her regular artistic activities and exists somewhere between writing and drawing. (See Part IV, 4.2.iv, The Journal)

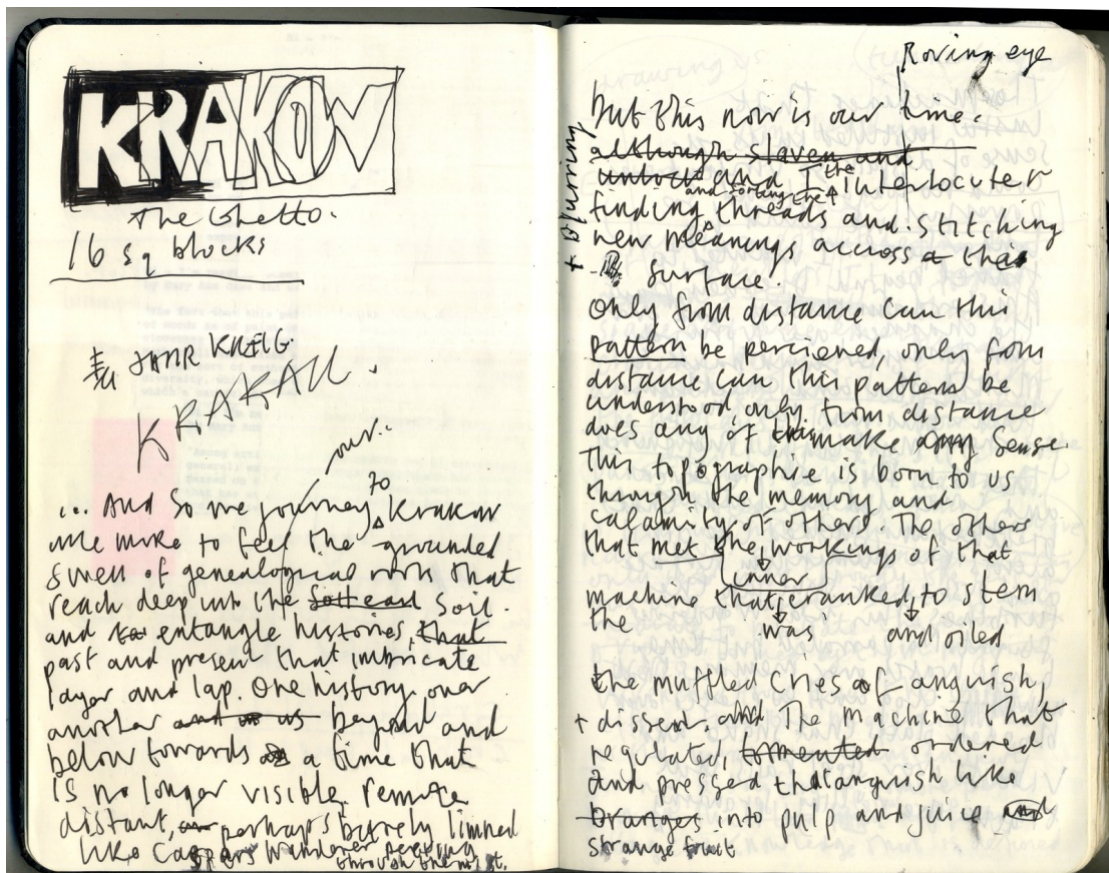


FIG 13. Gary Spicer, *Practice-text*. Journal 4, 2018.

Ettinger aims to shape our understanding of the human body and the psyche in relation to the representation of physical and psychological traumas. She grapples with what Griselda Pollock suggested were defining features of trauma: perpetual

Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Jacques Lacan. She draws most heavily on Lacan, including the Life Drive, Fragility, the Other, through which she introduces the notion of Co-Emergence.

presentness and permanent absence, both of which relate directly to my own practice. Psychic trauma is not bound to time and space and exists outside of these boundaries it 'colonizes its hosts by its persistent inhabitation of a subject who does not, and cannot, know it' (Pollock 2013: 02).

This is like Agamben's notion of the survivor's inability to witness or to account for their experience 'It happened but I do not [and cannot ever] know it' (Pollock 2013: 02). This was the residue of trauma encountered with my own therapy, the process intent of excavating meaning and understanding to determine a path forwards, or towards. Paradoxically, trauma is also permanently absent, is formless but evident in its traces, and manifests as depression or anxiety.

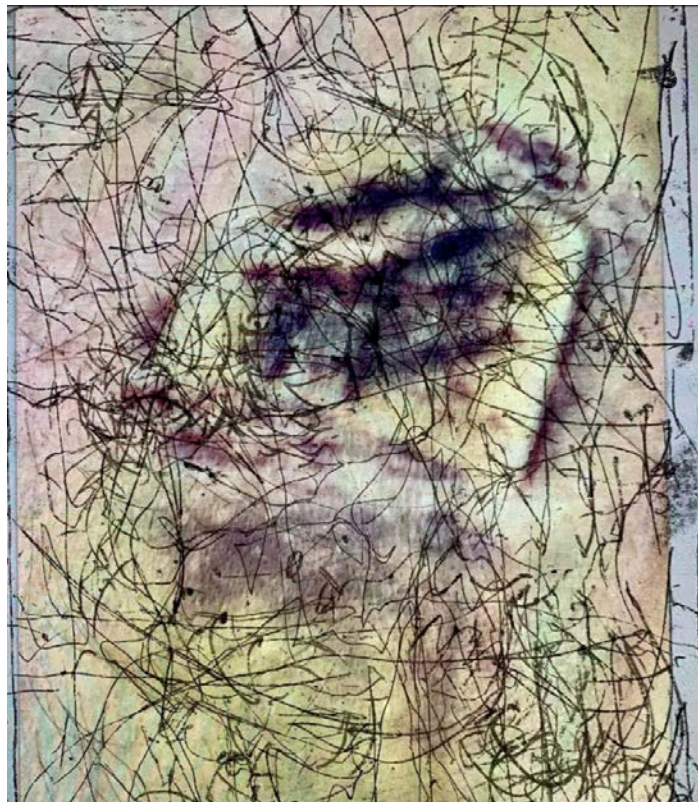


FIG 14. Gary Spicer, *Tkanka bliznowata* (scar tissue), 2022.

It is through art that the void or emptiness felt in the 'presence and absence' can become discernible as form, to be apprehended and, ultimately, to become readable and knowable. *Tkanka bliznowata* (scar tissue) 2022 (FIG 14) is a line drawing made

at my great-grandmother's grave overlaying an image of my scar taken post-surgery after remedial hip surgery in 2020. It represents both psychic and physical trauma that is umbilically connected to the topography of Kraków and the Jewish Holocaust narrative.

Mark C. Taylor discusses the ineffable in the context of the spiritual in *Seeing Silence* (2020). He cites abstraction as having further transformative properties in terms of giving substance to that which surpasses the capacity of language or figuration to express. "[A]rtistic abstraction becomes something like an alchemical process that transforms base matter into spiritual matter", (Taylor 2020: 99), a process called 'sublimation'³⁷ that reaches the limen level of consciousness to produce a physiological or psychological response. This would concur with Janet Wolff's earlier assertion that abstraction, in its capacity to be allusive, is a more suitable vehicle to express the seemingly ineffable and to communicate what words or figuration cannot express.

The concept of transformation and its translation through my visual practice is consistent with Graham Harman's idea of establishing the presence of an object by reaching beyond the features through which it is immediately announced and perceived.³⁸ The concept is expanded in some ways by Mark C. Taylor when he describes that a way of hearing silence is, paradoxically, by seeing it³⁹. He characterises silence as 'a plenitude that is a lack, a void that is a fullness' (Taylor 2020: 2). And in hearing and punctuating the silence it becomes possible for 'the saying to be said and the unsayable to be heard' (Taylor 2020: 2). This describes aptly

³⁷ **Sublimation.** From the Latin *sublimare*, to sublime; sublime, sub-, up to + *limen* threshold.

³⁸ In *OOO*, Graham Harman asks whether things, animals, and other non-human entities experience their existence in a way that lies outside of our own species-centric definition of consciousness?

³⁹ Taylor is writing from a theologian's perspective, his perception of silence connecting to God and the 'apprehension of the Unspeakable, Unnameable, Unknowable' (Taylor 2020: 2), all familiar tropes associated with Holocaust witnessing and representation.

the phenomenological experience of drawing and writing at Holocaust sites and the intensity of thought and perception necessary in the moment of creation. To see the silence at these sites and to encounter the fullness of the void, according to Taylor, necessitates us listening to the silence, but in a different way.

The idea of characterising silence is further evident in Josef Bor's *Terezin Requiem* (1963) in which he describes how silence 'penetrated' and continues to penetrate Holocaust spaces, 'it spread throughout the room, strident and imperative; it overwhelmed everything, froze the walls into dumbness', (Bor 1963: 41-42). For Bor, silence becomes the place, or the non-place.⁴⁰ This clearly sets out the challenge for artists and writers seeking to represent the Holocaust, of transforming the silence, 'the veil that hides the light, the life, and the word of the ineffable' into language 'not by filling the silence with word, words, words, but by making the silence speak' (Patterson 2018: 48).

Harman's idea of 'waking up the object' was pertinent for my research, as, when drawing or writing in the field, perceived phenomenological experience feels like looking beyond the materiality and specific markers of time and space. For me this further reinforced the notion of writing and drawing as being a process of 'shifting', to describe the way in which both transmogrify and transubstantiate encountered objects, the transformation and oscillation of subject or object, and the quality of becoming. These qualia are individual instances of subjective, conscious experience that are ineffable and cannot be apprehended or communicated. Sometimes referred to as 'the raw feels that accompany conscious experience' (Gillet and McMillan 2001: vii), they also allow us to gaze inwards and to 'gain knowledge of

⁴⁰ **Non -place.** (2009) Marc Augé's concept describes those places that are frictionless, to which no-one belongs. Places where people transit and pass through. Most of those who 'passed through' Auschwitz, all those that could not work, children and the old and infirm, on arrival, would go from the cattle trucks through processing on the platform and straight to the Crematoria. Holocaust sites such as Auschwitz represented the 'ruins' of both memory and place (Janz.Ed, 2017).

what it's like to be us' (Jensen 2019:117) My practice concerns what it feels like to directly experience sites of Holocaust memory rather than being a secondary response to any other historical or contemporary witnessing.

In *Art as Experience*, (2005) John Dewey articulates a system of translation from experience to objecthood that, for me, clearly resonates with any phenomenological means of investigation into how we express an understanding of sensual experience or phenomena – or qualia. Dewey differentiates the qualities of art from the way these qualities are manifest and represent an 'intellectual conclusion' to the experience (Dewey 2005:39). The art, signs and codes, marks, and gestures, have no intrinsic qualities of their own other than what they signify, in the creation of another experience that can be read and quantified. Dewey believed that the process of art-making and aesthetic engagement can yield something mysterious and ineffable:

[Elements in an artwork] 'that issue from prior experience are stirred into action in fresh desires, impulses, and images. These proceed from the subconscious, not cold or in shapes that are identified with particulars of the past. ... They do not seem to come from the self, because they issue from a self not consciously known'. (Dewey 2005:65)

By being truly 'present' in the world, along with our individual memories of it, experiencing can possess an unconscious dimension otherwise unknown. This is a direct response to the experience, a conduit through which it is channelled and given substance, a process of attunement and embodiment central to the phenomenological approach. (Discussed in Part III: METHOD). The object, therefore, here the Holocaust site, is transformed by our experience of it – a process that means the artist or the writer can reach through to the ineffable and a sense of knowing.

When confronted with an image such as *Photograph #283*⁴¹ (FIG 15), one of the Sonderkommando photographs taken at Auschwitz-Birkenau, an image that truly ‘reaches beyond the features through which it is immediately announced and perceived’, the speculative and philosophical dimensions of its meaning, or what it is connecting to in us, become paramount. Through the generative potential of art and literature, as discussed by Barad, Horowitz, Hoffman, Blanchot and Sontag, these meanings continue to multiply, but the expression of the unbearable through contemporary art-making can also create obfuscation.



FIG 15. Unknown, *The 4th Sonderkommando Photograph*, 1944.

Perhaps the metaphor of the fog (nebel) that filmmaker Alain Resnais expressed so well, is apposite here.⁴² My own practice, both writing and drawing, centres on this

⁴¹ **Photograph #283.** One of four images taken clandestinely at Birkenau by a sonderkommando. They were taken on a camera and film smuggled in and out of the camp in 1944. They represent the only material evidence of the killing process.

⁴² Alain Resnais’ documentary *Night and Fog* (1956) documents the abandoned grounds of Auschwitz, alternating between past and present while reflecting on the rise of Nazi ideology and the harrowing lives of the camp prisoners.

contradiction of expressing something seemingly ineffable, something so intense it cannot be framed. Using the term 'hauntology of literature', Elisabeth M. Loevlie describes how writing can operate as a mechanism that gives shape and substance to phenomena that may resist the traditional ontological boundaries of being and non-being, what is alive or dead, writing that in its abstracted form does not have to refer to a fixed reality, or to sustain any particular meaning. Yet writing 'gives us access to vivid and sensory rich worlds' (Loevlie 2013: 336); writing whose ontology need not be static and predetermined but can be shimmering or 'ghostlike'.

In describing how Jewish tradition defines the human being as the *medaber*⁴³ or 'speaking being', David Patterson reinforces how the Holocaust represented a decimation of the word, for which no word exists, where the man is reduced to silence – a silence as we have learned that we can discern and see...to invoke (Taylor). In the Holocaust 'it is the demolition not only of the expressible but also of the ineffable, the immemorial, the hidden.' (Patterson 2019 :41) In '*Ich Erinnere Mich An Alles*' (I am Pink Now) in Volume 2, Essay 4 *If only the Walls Could Speak: The Memory of Place*, I draw on the capacity for writing to be free to construct and sustain imaginary worlds, and to challenge the orthodoxies of what is extant and real 'because it releases and sustains this ontological quivering, [and] can transmit the ineffable, the repressed and transcendent' (Loevlie 2013: 336).

This not only references religious idolatry or iconography, but a belief that images can conceal and ultimately disclose 'aspects of humanities relation to the Godhead' (Crowther 2016: 143) or that other as defined by the individual; that which invokes wonder, spectacle, or awe. That transcendent moment which goes beyond immediate comprehension, or which contemplates an encounter with the seemingly ineffable.

⁴³ In Hebrew, *Medaber* is the present tense, singular, masculine of '*ledaber*', to speak, hence it means 'speaking'.

As images are encountered and observed, they are necessarily transformed by ‘memory, imagination and symbolization’ (Crowther 2016:144). This intervention represents both the self-consciousness and the presence of the viewer, who is complicit with the artist in any reading and meaning of the work being encountered (Kuspit). The imagination is therefore central to the production of the post-witnessing historical artefact.

2.3

Visual Responses to the Holocaust: Jewishness and Identity⁴⁴

Here, I reflect on the ways in which the Holocaust has been represented and witnessed in art, and particularly its relation to Jewishness and identity. This involves references to modernism and its associated timeline, and the challenge posed to its principles by the advent of post-modernism in the mid to late 20th Century. In so doing, I will situate my own practice, both philosophically and practically, in relation to the art movements and styles discussed. Alongside this discussion I articulate some of the key philosophical and theological ideas that constitute the field in question and have served as touchstones in the generation of my own contribution to it.

Art reflects society and culture, and in the process of its making, and subsequent reception, contributes to how we understand who we are and how we relate to each other as human beings. In this guise, art becomes a method by which we can express – or reckon with – our inner thoughts, feelings, and experiences. It fell to those who had directly experienced the Holocaust to first make work that recorded and recounted this ‘disaster’ (Blanchot 1995), as an outlet for their trauma and as an act of bearing witness. Mostly documentary-style in approach, these images form a

⁴⁴ Significant parts of this section appear in the essays in Volume 2. I have chosen to reference these parts accordingly and replicate them verbatim rather than to paraphrase them. It is important that the essays retain their integrity as temporal artefacts and as a significant part of my creative practice.

graphic archive of the conditions in the camps and the stark realities of what took place there.



FIG 16. Marianne Grant, *Pile of dead bodies, Bergen-Belsen*, 1945.

Marianne Grant's image *Pile of dead bodies* (Bergen-Belsen; FIG 16) lays bare the ruins of the Holocaust and depicts the erasure of the 'broken body' as faceless and nameless. Whilst none of my work refers directly to this trope, it is alluded to in the entangled *Topographies* series of images made in 2018, where intersecting, repetitive lines begin to unconsciously reference bodies and body parts that nearly appear in the miasma, barely limned. In this excerpt of practice-text, I am referring to this allusion and the reluctance of the image to fully define and announce itself.

I can barely limn forms, complete forms. I can only see shapes that suggest forms, maybe people, maybe animals. But certainly, shapes that are or were living things, organic in nature, roots, bulbs, growth, or decay? I once saw

fungi at the base of a huge damp oak in the park and it looked like this. Forming like stacked discs that had been skimmed and sunk into the bark. Magical and mistrusted, ancient taboos, death, and decomposition.

Drawn black Lines coalesce and mass around these shelf-like forms in the centre of the image and then break towards the left edge, perhaps they are limbs? But they seem to be moving quickly, quickly out of the space.

Is it a foot that appears at the bottom of the image?

This is otherworldly.



FIG 17. Gary Spicer, *Topographies*, 2018.

Holocaust survivors were working through intensely complex familial trauma in their work, like Charlotte Salomon, who laid bare the brutality and destruction the Holocaust had on whole families. Her mother committed suicide when she was eight years old. After 'Kristallnacht' in 1938 her father was sent to a concentration camp, and, as the persecution intensified, eight further members of her family committed suicide. Salomon's work, made between 1940 and 1942, combining historical events with personal memories, memorialised their lives. She was murdered at Auschwitz in 1943.

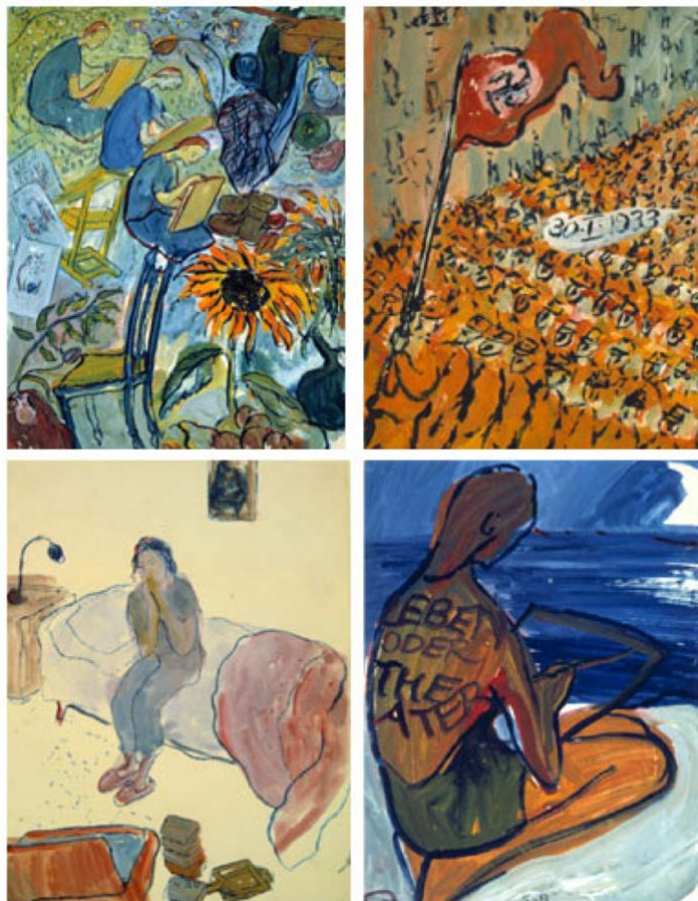


FIG 18. Charlotte Salomon, *Life or Theatre*, 1941–42.

The images she produced – 700 gouaches – represent her life rendered as part memoir, part fiction, an imagination of filmic and theatrical references that attempt to navigate, in the form of a necessary and understandable escapism, the course of

a young life surrounded by self-destruction and despair, against a backdrop of Nazi hatred and murder (FIG 18). The work, whilst aesthetically very different from my own, clearly has roots in primary witnessing and experience, but shares a desire to reckon with the past in a way that remains entangled with the present, a past that she feels impelled to confront and represent⁴⁵.

It should be noted that many artists in the years following the Second World War were affected by the Holocaust in much the same way as the Dada artists were by the carnage of the First World War. Artists responded to the Holocaust, either directly or indirectly, and some responded in the context of their own sense of what it was to be Jewish in the post-Holocaust era. Here I will focus on artworks and movements that have informed the development of the research and examine the context of its production against the backdrop and trajectory of Modernism.

As a Russian Jew, Marc Chagall left Paris to escape the Nazis in 1941. His work was essentially cubist, but he played with aspects of the French tradition, Russian folklore and interspersed this with Jewish motifs and narratives. Chagall painted *Apocalypse in Lilac, Capriccio* (FIG 19) in 1945 after the death of his wife. The image, made after a long period of personal mourning, was made in response to the media coverage of the horrors being uncovered in the concentration camps. In pencilled Cyrillic⁴⁶ (upper right) he wrote what translates as 'Apocalypse', and this work *Capriccio* (fantasy) is seen as 'the bleakest of Chagall's many crucifixions' (Wullschläger 2008: 147).

⁴⁵ The title of the work *Leben? oder Theater? - Life or Theatre*, is consistent with HG Adler's notion of life as a stage, a stage where, even when we don't believe we're still on it, we are wrong, 'for they took you away and set you back onstage amid the fleeting journey' (Adler 2009: 4). It is the metaphor of Solomon's life as a fleeting journey, (she was murdered when she was just 26,) which is being documented in the 700 images of *Leben? oder Theater?* (H.G Adler and *The Journey* is discussed in *The Red Heart* Volume 2: Essay 7).

⁴⁶ Chagall was born in Russia. The Cyrillic alphabet is the script used to form and write the Russian alphabet.



FIG 19. Marc Chagall, *Apocalypse in Lilac, Capriccio*, 1945.

That the image was painted shortly after the death of his wife is significant in the same way my own broken body heightens empathy and emphasises attunement to the trauma woven into the fabric of Holocaust sites. It is natural when in a dark or troubled space to be drawn to expressing feelings of sorrow and introspection, or to find a suitable repository for anger and despair. In Chagall's case this is also suffused with a natural affinity for the suffering of Jewish people. 'In this image, Chagall draws on one of his familiar motifs, the image of the crucified Christ, as a metaphor for the persecution of the Jews. A quite brutal, visceral image, unusually direct and unambiguous for Chagall, it is charged with the ambition to depict pain and sorrow'. (Spicer, Volume 2: Essay 7, The Red Heart: 7.3, A flight of Emancipation.

The Red Heart is my own *Apocalypse in Lilac, Capriccio*, and it appeared without thought or conscious reference to the latter. In therapy (discussed in the introduction) I needed to excavate my own past as part of the process. Recording the progress of my own healing in a journal, a process known as creative psychotherapy, involved the use of art images and processes as a means of locating mood and state of mind. It allowed me to meet with my therapist in a mutually understood space of 'knowing'. This form of 'rhythmic dance' (discussed later in Part III: METHOD) was key to how I would work with media and place in the field when becoming attuned at Holocaust sites. In one key session I made four drawings, including *The Red Heart* and *Shadow of the Heart*.

The Red Heart (FIG 20), like *Apocalypse in Lilac, Capriccio* (FIG 19), emerged from a space of personal trauma. The image, and the meaning that emerged retrospectively through therapy, reinforced the leitmotif of the heart in the work as a synecdoche for something much greater; the connectedness I feel to the Jewish catastrophe, as expressed through the drawing and writing made when experiencing Holocaust sites. *The Red Heart* is also a symbol of continuity and empathy in the context of my great grandparents' 'flight of emancipation' from Kraków⁴⁷, and represents continued reflection and examination of my contested Jewish identity.

⁴⁷ The part historical, part fictional story, and part memoir *The Red Heart* will form the basis of future research post Ph.D. A book and a play are planned.

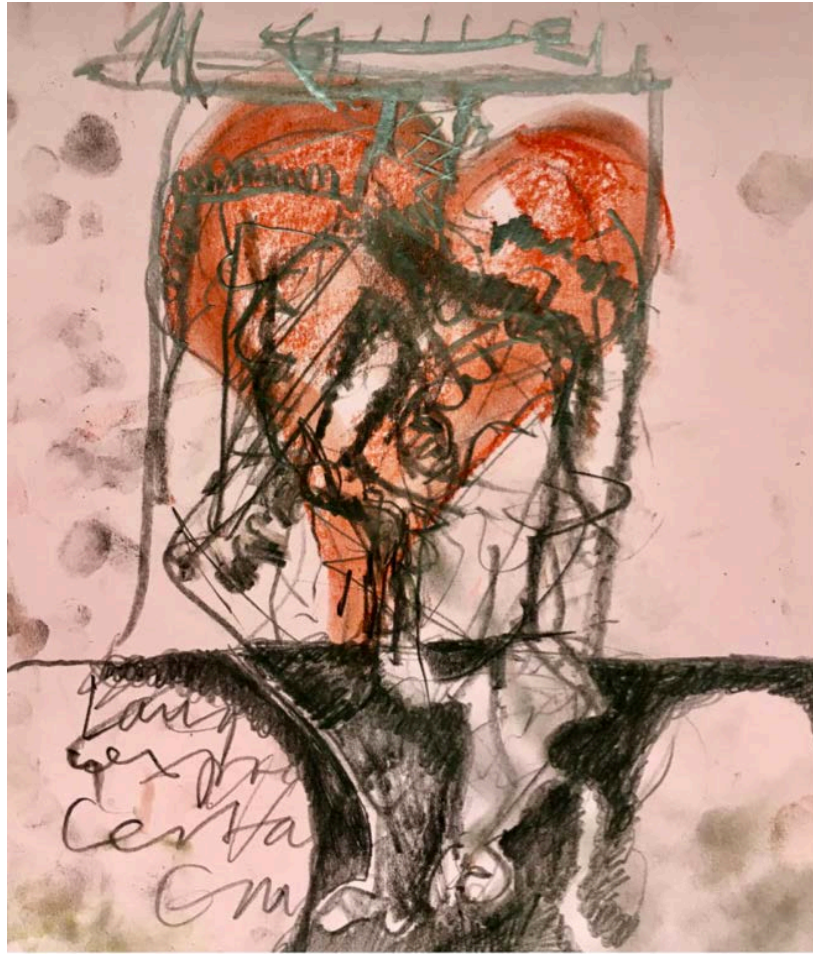


FIG 20. Gary Spicer, *The Red Heart*, 2018.

Similarly, Ron Kitaj's work represents an all-consuming examination of his own Jewish identity. Active between 1960 and 2007, most of his work was made against the backdrop of post-modernism, but his work and his approach represented a deliberate continuity of the language of modernism. As an artist he believed in the 'imbrication of art with history and experience and in its universality' (Corbett 2000: 50), at odds with the contradiction of traditional values espoused in post-modernism thought that emerged in the mid to late 1970s. It was in this period that Kitaj began a series of paintings that demonstrated his growing interest in the Holocaust.



FIG 21. Ron Kitaj, *If Not, Not*, 1975-6.

FIG 21, *If Not, Not* (1975-76) was titled after historian Ralph E Giesey's book *If Not, Not* (1968). On receiving their king, Giesey recounted that the people of the Aragon region of Spain were reported to have said: 'We, who are worth as much as you, take you as our king, provided that you preserve our laws and liberties, and *if not, not*' (Jewish Chronicle 2013). This is significant because it represented for Kitaj the same attitude he had towards being a Jew and his growing interest and concern in his own Jewishness. He believed, initially, that it was only possible for him to be Jewish if he was observant and religious, a position that changed when he learned later that Jews were murdered in the Holocaust regardless of whether they wanted to be Jews or not. Nazi murder was ideological and pathological, not based on observance of religious doctrine.

In *If Not, Not*, Kitaj alludes to TS Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) in which he confronts the horrors of the First World War. Kitaj's composition disintegrates into incoherent and discordant fragments that depict individual scenes, 'a sign for a broken world,

that describe[s] a landscape out of kilter'⁴⁸ (Jewish Chronicle 2013). Kitaj was adamant that, after his Jewish awakening, he would not make work that 'didn't confess human frailty, fear, mediocrity, and the banality of evil as clear presence in art-life' (Ashbery and Shannon et al 1981: 43). This statement could be equally applied to Chagall and Solomon, who also contrived to convey their unconscious through symbolic imagery, that representing;

'spontaneously the particular and peculiar contents of [their] unconscious, and reflecting the caprice, the sadness, and the power of the however tortured imagination of [their] people' (Schneider D.E 1946: 115-124).

After Chagall, another generation of Jewish artists migrated to America to escape the tumult in Europe. But modernist art critic Clement Greenberg, referencing abstract expressionism, dissented on the role that their Jewishness played in the identity of the work. He contested that Jewishness should be between the individual and their faith, and should not be proclaimed or channelled into the meaning of their art-making, a view that he also held about how the Holocaust itself should be encountered by Jews; that is, in private and without ceremony.

Greenberg's rationale, was for the most part, fixed in his belief that appreciating and understanding art was a matter of 'self-evidence and feeling...rather than intellection or information' (Rubinfeld 1997: 129), but it was also due to assimilation. Most of the artists he was referring to were first-generation abstract expressionists, some of whom were Jewish, and whose work carried the traces of war heavily. They included Mark Rothko, Adolph Gottlieb, Barnett Newman, and Lee Krasner, who were also

⁴⁸ After the First World War, modernism saw artists break with convention by challenging established orthodoxies of religion and state, this accelerated even further post-Holocaust. By breaking these societal taboos, and challenging the paradigm, artists and writers began to reconfigure what art was meant to be.

American either by birth or adoption. It was here in their Americanism, according to Greenberg, that theirs and their works' identity should lie, not in their incidental Jewishness.

Greenberg's view is not difficult to fathom in the context of the massive cultural shift towards America – and New York in particular – that abstract expressionism represented. This was an intrinsically American movement in scale, self-assuredness, and confidence in its capacity to express authentic feeling in the face of the trauma of World War II, which was clearly understood by those who felt it appropriate. For these artists, I would argue, it 'was' to do with their Jewishness, particularly the impact of the Second World War and the Holocaust, which absorbed those who were assimilated Eastern European Jews. The artists' very identity and existence were being so violently contested and threatened.

Greenberg's school of thought, however, was that art should be encountered in an entirely detached manner – and it is possible to read Abstract Expressionism in these terms, by way of its force, material substance and gesture. But I would argue that this theory of 'objective detachment', originating in the 19th Century with Ruskin and the Formalists, but a position abandoned by historians such as Rosalind Krauss, misses the crux of art – particularly as it exists in relation to phenomenology – as its expressive power, as imbued by the artist, the artist's position, and in its historical contextualisation. In *The Optical Unconscious* (1993) Krauss further discredits Greenberg's notion that 'Art...is disclosed only in experience, not in reflection upon experience' (Rubinfeld 1997: 129), a dispute which questions the notions of the origins of truth⁴⁹ – such as what is real, what is true and where truth comes from.

⁴⁹ For modernism, new truths, were rooted in the ideas and beliefs of individuals and were posited as a reaction to the traditional and outmoded truths of the past. But by the mid to late 20th Century, these ideas were waning, when the sceptical and unclear boundaries of postmodernism emerged, where individuals began to believe that even the notion of personal truth was an ambiguous and ultimately unknowable position.

My own practice and approach, whilst umbilically connected to a modernist trajectory and the work and ideas of the abstract expressionists and individual truth, ultimately recognises that this is an ambiguous and unknowable position – in the sense that truth is always to be reached for and is difficult to apprehend, a situation that defines the postmodern condition. My practice also does not recognise the traditional boundaries of discipline and media, as it deliberately challenges and pushes against the accepted paradigms of writing and drawing, instead asking what these methods could be.⁵⁰

2.3 i

Abstraction: Potent Forces

Making art as we have seen is always a reflection of the society, culture, and time in which it is made but this is always mediated by the body of the artist, and in phenomenology this is indistinguishable from the mind and the psyche. It is improbable that Jewish artists associated with abstract expressionism, given some were European refugees, could avoid the Holocaust in relation to an expression of their own Jewishness, or as a prism through which the catastrophe was refracted. Mark Rothko confirmed as much when he commented regarding the persecution of Jews and the wound that was the Holocaust, testifying to how paramount these thoughts were in his political attitude, ‘this kind of disfiguration and this kind of thing you cannot touch, but it is, you know, part of what you feel and part of what you express about the tragedy of it all’ (Baigell 2006: 64).

When stating that such disfiguration was something that cannot be touched, Rothko appears to be suggesting that, although the Holocaust is beyond us and our comprehension, it is how we ‘feel’ about it that enables us to express something of

⁵⁰ I was exposed to these ideas when I was thirteen in the text *Art without Boundaries: 1950-70* in the seventies. This is significant because it established an awareness of the radical and the subversive very early in my art education and established the trajectory of my thinking.

the tragedy. This is entirely consistent with the phenomenological pretext of my project: what it is that is being represented and ‘unconcealed’ at Holocaust sites?



FIG 22. Mark Rothko, *Red, Yellow, Blue, Black, and White* (Detail), 1950.

Werner Haftman offered an alternative reading of Rothko’s images of stacked rectangular blocks of colour, consistent with the notion of things that cannot be touched and readily and easily expressed, (FIG 22) likening them to veils that serve as ‘metaphors for the hidden God,’⁵¹ and to the ‘veils in the biblical tent and to the Temple curtain’ (Baigell 2006: 75). Alternatively, the veils might represent ‘not an invisible God, but a God that never existed’ Baigell 2006: 75). Additionally, the ‘happening’ of the Holocaust can only mean that behind the veil there is just an indeterminate void.

⁵¹ **Hester Panim** is a commonly used term in the Torah meaning ‘hiding face’, referring to concealed Divine Providence, not the absence of it. “I will become very angry at them on that day, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them. They will be devoured, and plagued by many evils that will distress them, and will say, ‘Do we not suffer because God has left us?’” (Devarim 31:17).



FIG 23. Gerhard Richter, *Birkenau*, 2014.

The Heideggerian notion of *aletheia* – truth – and lack of concealment contrast with the associations and connotations of obfuscation and ‘veiling’ inherent in the work of Gerhard Richter. Richter, born in Dresden in 1932 as the Nazi grip on absolute power was taking hold, recognised the importance of time, place and *zeitgeist* on the historical significance of the work produced in any era. He believed that the abstract expressionists demonstrated a ‘heroism [that] derived from the climate of their time’ (Sotheby’s 2019). In contrast he recognised that his own time – and place – was anything but heroic, as Germany reckoned with the reverberations of the Second World War. He contested that the blurring achieved by the squeegee being dragged across the surface served as ‘a metaphor for Germany’s shame at its Nazi past – and attempts to wipe that period of its past away’ (Sotheby’s 2019).

FIG 23, *Birkenau* (2014) is one of four large scale images that are ‘veilings’ of the iconic Sonderkommando photographs on display at the Auschwitz Memorial Museum. ‘The series holds in tension the complex relationship between

representation and abstraction, and the opposing forces of destruction and reconstruction' (Metmuseum 2021), In this way it becomes possible to interpret Richter's abstractions and his recurrent use of the scraping, veiling effect, as the expression of 'a post-truth age', 'an age defined by obfuscation' (Sotheby's 2019). *Photograph #283*⁵², the Sonderkommando image used by Richter in the *Birkenau paintings* was also used by Yishai Jusidman, a Mexican artist of Jewish heritage. Entitled *Prussian Blue* (FIG 24), it was one of several paintings and reprographic images that formed an exhibition of the same name in 2017.



FIG 24. Yishai Jusidman, *Prussian Blue*, (installation view), 2017. Image: Charlie Villyard.

Jusidman explores the tensions that can exist between colour and history, perception and materiality, found through colour and, in particular, Prussian blue. He uses this specific hue as a vehicle to represent the Holocaust and explains how the walls in the gas chambers at the Majdanek concentration camp were randomly permeated with

⁵² An ekphrastic reading of *Photograph #283* is the subject of *Essay 2: Photograph #283 and the Inheritance of Distance* in Volume 2.

an intense blue. This was formed because of a chemical reaction between cyanide in the pesticide Zyklon B, used to murder those locked in the chamber, and ferrous elements in the walls. Jusidman suggests how through the motif of Prussian blue the 'Holocaust chose to express itself'⁵³ (Jusidman 2017).⁵⁴ Jusidman's embracing of blue echoes my own in *Blue Plaszow* 2015 and *Emet* 2016, (FIG 31) images where the colour was formed, unplanned, as in Majdanek, by a glitch in the 'process'.

Twenty years before the advent of abstract expressionism, but formative to its thinking, Paul Klee, in his *Pedagogical Sketchbook* (1973) and further extended in *Creative Confession* (2013), drew out what he conceived as the elements of a non-referential visual language that did not emanate from the realm of visual appearances. (FIG 25) He described as 'exactitude winged by intuition' (Sujo 2001: 14) the imperative to uncouple the notion of the real from the exact, in terms of its representation stating that:

'The purer the graphic work, that is, the more the formal elements underlying linear expression are emphasized – the less adequate it is for the realistic representation of visible things' (Chipp 1992: 183).

⁵³ In defining the trajectory of modernism, critic Clement Greenberg believed that the elimination of the artist's hand – which he saw as a contaminant – was necessary in the art-making process to create work liberated from romantic subjectivity. In so doing, it is the work's materiality that is so elevated.

⁵⁴ Adapted from a lecture given by Yishai Jusidman at Salem State University, Massachusetts, on November 4, 2017, as part of the symposium 'Emerging Consequences: Aesthetics in the Aftermath of Atrocity.'



FIG 25. Paul Klee, *The Carpet of Memory*, 1914.

Klee was emphasising intuition, along with the inherent agency of the materials used and the articulated abstract gesture, to create and engender 'potent forces' (Spicer, Volume 2: Essay 5). These ideas articulate the approach I have termed intra-abstraction (as an abstraction that emanates from within both the subject – in my case the Holocaust sites - and the subject, as myself), an approach consistent with notions of inscape⁵⁵ and the visual depiction of the psyche. Drawing and writing being the mediums, tools, and settings through which these inner states become entangled with objects in the outer world, are projected and become visible.

Mark C. Taylor cites abstraction as having further transformative properties in terms of spirituality. '[A]rtistic abstraction becomes something like an alchemical process that transforms base matter into spiritual matter', (Taylor 2020: 99) – a process called

⁵⁵ **Inscape.** Defined as the unique essence or inner nature of an object, a person, place, thing, or event. Especially as it is depicted in literature or art. Poet Gerard Manley Hopkins who derived the term, believed that everything was characterised by inscape, defined as the distinctive design that constitutes individual identity. Inscape is discussed in Volume 2. Essay 5: The Emergent Subject.

'sublimation'.⁵⁶ This begins to explain the rationale for abstraction in art expressing the seemingly ineffable, as sublimation does reach the limen level of consciousness to produce a physiological or psychological response. It is therefore apt to communicate what words or figuration cannot express.



FIG 26. Morris Louis, *Charred Journals: Fire written*, 1951.

An exhibition in New York in 1997 that featured Morris Louis's *Charred Journals* from 1951 (FIG 26) which evoke the Nazi book-burning in 1933 where university students burned upwards of 25,000 volumes of 'un-German texts,⁵⁷ and Rico Lebrun's Holocaust paintings (FIG 27), made over 1955–1959, highlighted for Janet Wolff⁵⁸

⁵⁶ **Sublimation.** From the Latin *sublimare*, to sublime; sublime, sub-, up to + *limen* threshold.

⁵⁷ This symbolic act was reminiscent of the burning of anti-national, reactionary, and allegedly un-German texts, in 1817, by students demonstrating in favour of a united Germany.

⁵⁸ Wolff's argument for abstraction is rooted in a declared distaste for the "facile aesthetic" associated with figurative representations in post-Holocaust art. She argues instead for the idea of an "allusive or distanced realism," (1992:17) as promulgated by Saul Friedlander. She also does not deny the

how the allusive nature of abstraction, as typified by Louis, when compared to literal figurative imagery, such as Lebrun, benefits from the requirement of a priori knowledge, work, and alliance with the spectator. She iterates in *The Aesthetics of Uncertainty* (2015) how the oblique not only preserves the dignity of the dead but also works against sensationalising or theatricalising the visual tropes that litter the genre.

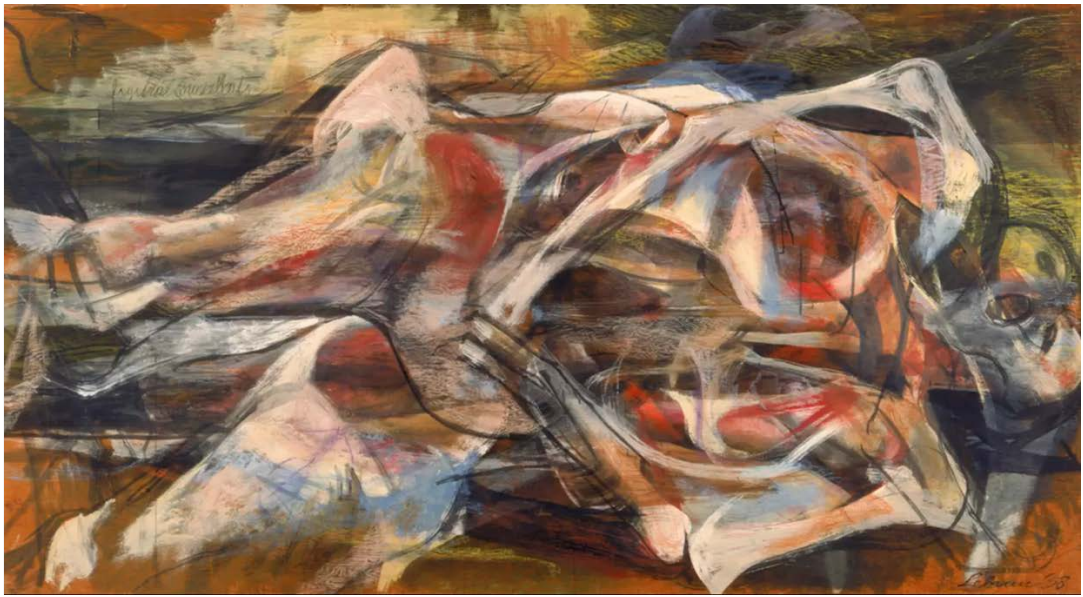


FIG 27. Rico Lebrun, *Victim*, 1 1958.

Lebrun’s approach, somewhat reminiscent of Bacon, with similar use of photographic reference, challenged the dominance of abstraction in post-war American art. He stated that:

‘He wanted to remember that our image, even when disfigured by adversity, is grand in meaning; that no brutality will ever cancel that meaning: painting

possibility that visual pleasure and aesthetic beauty can be acceptable in the genre, citing that attracting the viewer and being catalytic in encouraging deeper meaningful engagement “as an incentive to delve into an intellectually and emotionally taxing interpretative process”.

may increase it by changing what is disfigured into what is transfigured.’
(Amishai-Maisels 1993: xvii)

The idea that making art that brutalises the subject through its use of media is not reinforcing the visual tropes in the manner that Wolff contests, but instead, in its transfiguring of the subject, still maintains the possibilities of the oblique. Rather than disfiguring and theatricalising the subject, meaning is elevated transcendently, beyond its appearance. I would argue that work like Lebrun’s that transfigures the subject, whilst different in appearance, occupies a space not dissimilar to my own, through its processual state of metamorphosis.

For Deleuze, painting is the attempt to render visible forces that are not themselves visible. Like Bacon (FIG 28), in Lebrun’s work, and that of other third-path abstraction painters, the human figure is still dominant. Rather than the figure being represented as disfigured and contorted beyond recognition, it is presented as ‘a focus of physical forces that are made visible through their effects on the body...flesh appears ‘shaken’ - as something descended from the bones’ (Crowther 2012: 15).



FIG 28. Francis Bacon, *Triptych*, 1967.

Deleuze describes abstraction as having these distinctly separate modes or paths and Lebrun's work – and that of Bacon – in which the figure and recognition is only partly submerged and is not violated totally beyond its limits, would constitute the third path. This is further discussed later in this section.

Malevich's *Black Square* (FIG 29) made in 1915, represents the desire for art to not merely replicate 'reality', pre-empting the ultimate move to pure abstraction that came in 1945 straight after the catastrophe, as expressed in the statement that 'visual phenomena of the objective world are in themselves, meaningless; the significant thing is feeling (Malevich 2003:67). The reductive properties of black and white in *Black Square*, as in *Photograph #283*, where the nature of the oppressive black, a space which is both the unreachable and unknown where disappearance and emptiness is evoked, produces an image of absence, signifying the Deleuzian imperative, the making of nothing visible. It is in this 'complex blank' where the something – which is everything – is surrounded by nothing, and is transcendent: sublime, le gouffre, the abyss.

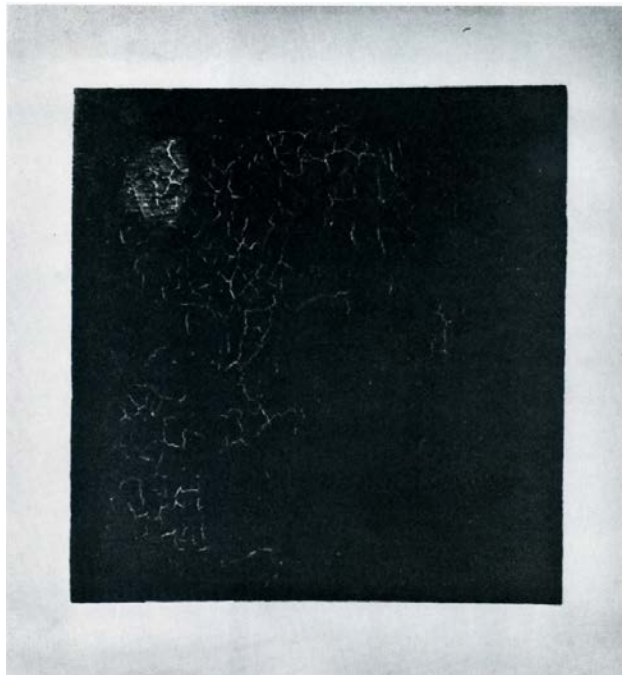


FIG 29. Kazimir Malevich, *The Black Square*, 1915.

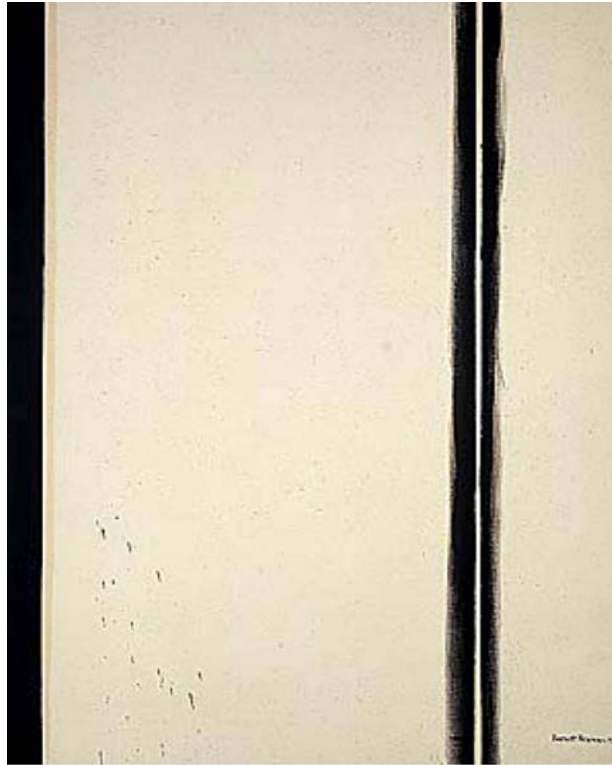


FIG 30. Barnett Newman, *The Stations of the Cross*, 1960.

As with Malevich's images, the paintings of Barnett Newman represent an anti-art aesthetic⁵⁹. Born to Russian Jewish immigrant parents, Newman's canvases, functioning as colour field paintings and often monumental in scale, facilitate, through the absence of any gesture and movement, cerebral meanings and pluralist interpretation⁶⁰. *The Stations of the Cross* (FIG 30), – subtitled *Lema Sabachtani 'why have you forsaken me'* (1960) – is a suite of black and white images painted 15 years after the liberation of the camps, and have been viewed as Holocaust memorials. Discussed earlier in the context of their pure abstraction and denotation of the 'pre-

⁵⁹ **Anti-art** was a term originally coined by Duchamp in 1913. It is art that dispenses with the traditional aesthetic building blocks of art and challenges its position as an elitist institution. It therefore saw the democratising of art and art making as fundamental to its objectives.

⁶⁰ **Abstract expressionism** was the first art movement where meaning was devolved to the spectator and where individual experience was complicit in the formation of understanding. This brought to the encounter a plurality that gave substance and voracity to the process of art making whether that be through action and movement – the body – (Pollock) or stillness and serenity – the mind (Newman, Rothko).

emption of death' (Raphael 2020: 40), the images deliberately reject any direct painterly or gestural motifs. In his choice of titles, such as *Uriel*, *Abraham* or *Lema Sabachtani*, which allude to Jewish themes, Newman gestures towards a residual meaning or intent that can never be present in its abstract form. However, the naming grounds the work, offering a broad contextual framework. I have also titled some of my work in this way, such as *Emet* 2017 (FIG 31), meaning 'truth' in Hebrew, or *A Vis Szelen* 2020 (FIG 32), meaning 'at the water's edge' in Hungarian. Here the use of a language can either be a deliberate obfuscation to deepen or enrich responses, or a deliberate attempt to attach the work to specific physical or linguistic spaces, such as Hebrew, Hungarian, and Polish, often linking to where the work was conceived or determined.



FIG 31. Gary Spicer, *Emet*, 2017.



FIG 32. Gary Spicer, *A Viz Szelen - At the Water's Edge*, 2020.

At the core of the research is the problem of how to express or illuminate something of the non-representable and the ineffable in relation to the Holocaust, whilst exploring and examining the artistic, ethical, and authorial challenges this inevitably presents. My drawing and writing represent traces of this attempt and what it is to be complicit through the creative act, in a transformative moment.

David Patterson responds, in *The Holocaust and the Non-representable: Literary and Photographic Transcendence* (2018), to the biblical absolute in (Isaiah 43:10), which states 'You are My witnesses', confirming what I have recognised through the process of this research to be true, that 'we do not capture the Holocaust it captures us' (Patterson 2018: X1V). This is the notion of expressing that which is beyond us and in so doing locating a 'truth' rooted in Jewish tradition. The prohibition of the idolatry of false gods, discussed in 2.2 The Ineffable, that led in the Jewish tradition to a religion mediated by words and not pictures, makes apparent the distinction between truth – and in this case the transcendental – and the image or visual

representation of that truth. This reinforces the powerful enunciation articulated in the introduction that pre-empted the schism between Christianity and Judaism. 'He is a jealous God and admits of no other Gods. He is not Christ and Christ is not He' (Hilberg 1985:06). In contesting that the representation of the Holocaust was 'interdite' – that is, something to be 'forbidden' and for which the attempt to do so should disconcert or shock, Jean Luc Nancy confirms the agency of a monotheistic god and the edict not to seek to represent the catastrophe.

Nancy also links truth to the violence manifest in visual representation. We have already seen how Polish artist Grzegorz Klaman's early approach in the 80s attempted to unravel and reveal, through the synergies of body and gesture, a personal, immediate, and intuitive truth. Heidegger's interpretation of the Greek word for truth (aletheia), proposes that meaning is not to be found in what the marks represent, as much as how they can be reified as gestures. Emet, as the Hebraic conception of truth, contests that appearance and reality are two separate things and argues that only by means of abstraction (from the particular to the universal) can the truth about ultimate reality be known. The violence is in the relationship between the image and the truth it seeks to represent – specifically in how its existence rivals the extant truth of the object. The image in some way 'disputes the presence of the object' (Nancy 2013: 21) or acts as a challenge to its authenticity. As the image does not ever attempt to be the presence of the object and does not represent the object in the mimetic sense, it is instead better understood as 'presence as subject' (Nancy 2013: 21), or the subjective truth. This is an idea reminiscent of that promulgated by Graham Harman, discussed previously in Part II. THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND SITUATION, of alluding to 'objects that cannot quite be made present' emphasising the nature of a multi-dimensional mode of seeing 'that shimmers and is never fixed' (Harman 2012: 14). In this way, as writers and artists, we are not seeking to represent the Holocaust but instead reify our phenomenological experience of its residual traces.

For the image to emerge from the substrate, or the form to be hewn from the block, it must first be imagined. 'Imagination is not the faculty of representing something in its absence; it is the force that draws the form of presence out of absence' (Nancy 2013: 21). When I wander at Birkenau seeking to represent and invoke something of what it means to be present at such spaces, or to give form and substance to something that is not there anymore, I am conscious of how I am drawing – quite literally – the form out of the palpable absence. Indeed, for me, it is this notion of absence – manifest as silence – that is the real challenge to capture, rather than the subject of the Holocaust itself. For further discussion, see Volume 2. Part V: The Essays a Critical Reflection. Dorota Glowacka suggests that the 'place' of Holocaust atrocity itself is an image of absence. The paradox here is that the Holocaustal God, through His very absence, was present during the catastrophe. His absence – and a vastly diminished Jewish presence in Europe today – denotes a dense absence through a vicarious presence.

This notion of transmuting absence, manifest as silence and void, was what John Cage saw in Robert Rauschenberg's *White Paintings* 1951 (FIG 33). He viewed them as less an expression of the artist, and more as 'backdrops against which the flux of the world might stand out' (Taylor 2020: 25). *The White Paintings*, in a similar way to the Malevich *Black Square* (FIG 29), focused on the notion of making 'nothing' visible, or visualising the removal or reduction of an object – as with Husserl's *Epoche* – as the setting aside of preconceptions and beliefs. Rauschenberg was seeing how far he could push an object and for it still to retain some meaning. John Cage saw these images as 'shadows', as 'dust', and described them as 'mirrors of the air' (Cage: SFMOMA). His controversial *4'33"* was made as a direct response.⁶¹

⁶¹ *4'33"* written by Cage in 1952. Pianist David Tudor sat at the piano at the Maverick Concert Hall in New York closed the lid and sat still and silent for *4'33"*. The piece was a deliberately ambiguous provocation. On the one hand it was meant for the audience to 'hear' and be aware of silence but also that profound silence was not achievable due to the presence of repressed ambient noise.



FIG 33. Robert Rauschenberg, *White Painting* [three panel], 1951.

Like Merleau-Ponty, Cage's work had drawn inspiration from Buddhist theory and practice. Merleau-Ponty had sought to develop a radical re-description of embodied experience, central to Mahayana Buddhist practice⁶², the becoming of self and the location of truth. This is discussed in Volume 2: Essay 7, *The Red Heart*, in the context of my recovery and creative psychotherapy in 2017, where I was introduced to such ideas, and their impact on the project. Buddhist beliefs of art as reflecting nature, or what Cage called 'self-alteration', had informed many of his line drawings, discussed later in 4.2ii, Drawing: The Opening of Form.

There has always been a measure of abstraction in my visual practice. By which there has been an element of figuration that has been transmogrified (Lebrun would say transfigured) through the process of making, and distortion, and the glitch; the images, existing in a state of processual state of metamorphosis, have always been

⁶² Mahayana is a collection of traditions including Zen, Pure Land, and Tibetan Buddhism.

anchored loosely in the world of verisimilitude. *Uszadekfa Vagyok - I am driftwood*, 2022 (FIG 34) is an example of how I did not consciously abandon literal representation during the project, but of how there was a gradual attenuation of instantly recognisable motifs as the work developed. In this image there is a reference to moving water, simply depicted as small broken lines at the base of the image. Overlaid are fractious and oblique marks that sometimes seem to conspire to depict bones or faces. This was unintentional but is an inevitable aspect of its reading by viewers complicit in the understanding of the image's formation, the repeated incidents of murder by the Arrow Cross militia – Hungarian Nazis who shot thousands of Jews and others at the bank of the river Danube in 1944 and 1945. The metaphor of myself as *Uszadekfa* – driftwood – alludes to the wider Jewish diaspora and to my own journey in search of a contested Jewish identity.

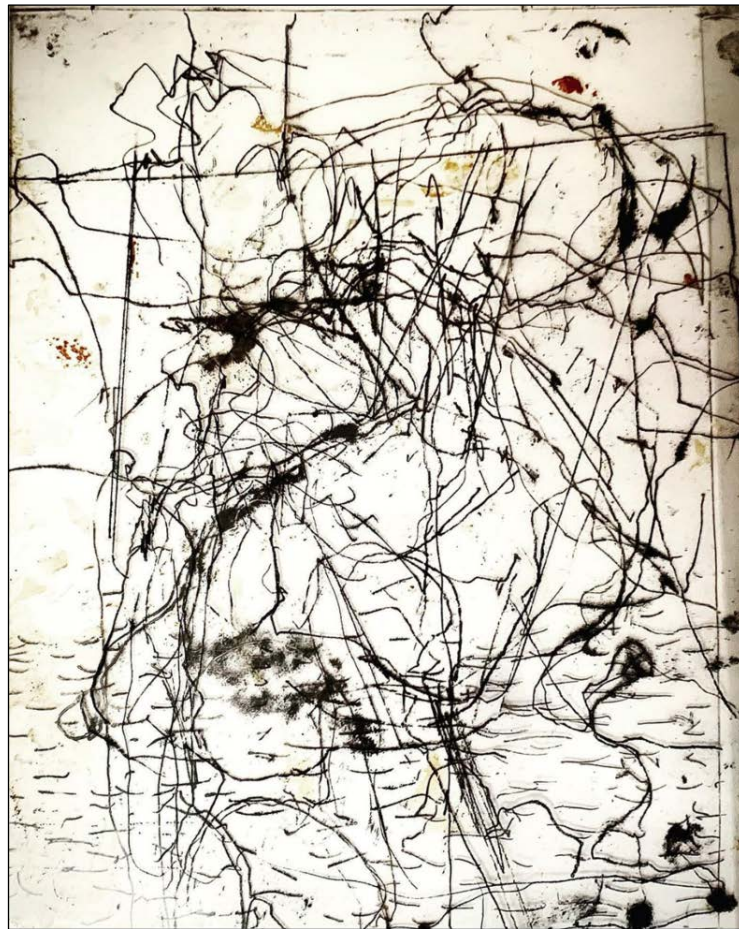


FIG 34. Gary Spicer, *Uszadekfa Vagyok - I am driftwood*, 2022.

I believed that what was being represented could not be fixed or static. For the work to adequately embody the experience, there had to be ambiguity and uncertainty. What I was making could only ever be an attempt; representing something of the absence and presence felt at those places and, at best, be a better failure than before.

My broader practice can refer to the figure, or be abstract, but it is always allusory, always referring to something. This could be a feeling or a thing. Its starting point is always determined; its end point is less so. Trying to represent something other than physical likeness defined the trajectory of modernism. This gained further traction when artists began to reckon with the crisis that developed after the Second World War. Painting needed to be confronted afresh in the aftermath, like it had never existed before; in Barnett Newman's words, it needed to 'start from scratch'. (Cernuschi 2012: 32)⁶³. The notion that modern art, particularly through abstraction, signified a wiping of the slate clean and could reveal 'important truths' echoed Heideggerian notions of *aletheia* meaning 'true; sincere, frank; real and actual, as the first and original concept of truth'. Newman reasoned that 'new forms and symbols were required' (Cernuschi 2012: 35) and that to do so, there was a need for the invention of new stylistic models and solutions. Wonder, awe, transcendence, and the notion of the sublime were all characteristics that these new forms sought to invoke. Similarly, the recurrent tropes associated with absence, hiddenness and concealment galvanised the visual responses of those artists, such as Newman, who sought to reckon with the catastrophe of the Holocaust. In describing the Holocaust as 'a theological "black hole" so dense that it fails to emit even a single ray of light' (Mitchell & Mitchell 2001:545), Ismar Schorsch in Holocaust readings and

⁶³ The notion of 'starting from scratch' was a pre-occupation of modernism. Throughout its timeline, it continued to develop strategies where it claimed to have broken with the past, or to have reached 'the end of history'. The idea of historicising the past, as a concept that defines the linear modernist view has been supplanted and is now passed, making way for the postmodern condition of plurality and individual truths.

interpretations reinforces notions of the catastrophe as an anti-revelation⁶⁴ of 'sublime absence' (Raphael 2020:106). This has been a characteristic of post-Holocaust art since the abstract expressionists, some of whom were attempting to 'represent the anti-revelation of the Holocaust through the very absence of representation' (Raphael 2020:106).

Coalescing around the distinct fields of writing, drawing and philosophy, my practice moves freely between the figurative and the abstract, although, as the research has progressed, the work has become increasingly abstract. The resulting imagery is ambiguous and alludes to the Holocaust without being explicit. It invites viewers to create or discard meanings, whilst always being aware that a definitive meaning remains forever elusive.

In 1953, two years after the *Charred Journals* images were made, Louis, influenced by the recent paintings of Helen Frankenthaler he had seen in New York, began using stained raw canvases with diluted pigment rather than applying paint with a brush. Frankenthaler was a bridge between the first generations of abstract expressionism, which included Pollock, De-Kooning, Rothko and Newman, and the second generation, which included Louis, Kenneth Noland, Frank Stella, and Joan Mitchell.

⁶⁴ **Anti-Revelation:** An antonym to revelation, meaning, 'to unveil' i.e., God's disclosure of himself. The term *Hester Panim* further describes the opposite concept of silence and non-intervention by God during the Holocaust where He failed to appear and reveal Himself.



FIG 35. Helen Frankenthaler, *Open Wall*, 1953.

Helen Frankenthaler's somatic approach to painting, a variant of which was also adopted by Jackson Pollock, was to work with the canvas prone on the floor and to move amongst it – indeed, to move with it – rather than to address the surface formally and be separate. Frankenthaler would push and move the paint with her body from 'within' the surface, the image formed through an intimate symbiosis. (FIG 35).



FIG 36. Jackson Pollock, *Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)*, 1950.

In Pollock's case, although this involved separating himself from the surface, he was still umbilically connected to it. He would draw in space, so that the drawn elements would 'happen' as gestures in the air, before falling, flicked, or flailed, onto the sedentary canvas below (FIG 36).

This 'rhythmic dance' was likened to the sand-paintings of the Navajo and Pueblo native Americans of the Southwest, which for them held religious rather than aesthetic meaning. This resonated with the grander aspirations of abstract expressionism, which were defined by the 'search for spiritual healing and a re-evaluation of humanity's place in the world', a tacit reference to the cataclysm that was the Holocaust and the 'particular parade of cruelties' reaped during the Second World War (Visser, Wilcox 2006:182). For Pollock, this further resonated with Newman's earlier protestations about how this American brand of modernism was called upon to 'wipe the slate clean', to reveal 'important truths.' This was confirmed in conversation with Robert Motherwell, when Pollock the native Indians' 'vision has the universality of all real art' (Belgrad 1999:45).

Heideggerian notions of unconcealment and the desire for 'important truths' link directly to the project and to references of Jungian thought. This is further explored in Volume 2: Essay 5 *The Emergent Subject*, and later in Essay 7: *The Red Heart*, in the context of my own creative psychotherapy. Jung's ideas had invested the Abstract Expressionists with a new authority by affording the artists the means of 'thinking about the link between their subjective unconscious and the social situation' (Belgrad 1999: 45). In my own case, the authority – and recovery – were derived from insights afforded by spontaneous drawing and writing, when used as a tool for the investigation of subconscious themes and traumas.



FIG 37. Gary Spicer, *Shadow of the Heart*, 2018.

Shadow of the Heart (FIG 37), made during my creative psychotherapy in 2018, resonates with the notion of an uninhibited creative psyche, as conceived by the Surrealists in the 1920s. Psychic automatism was conceived by Andre Breton as a 'pure state, by which one proposes to express – verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner – the actual functioning of thought'. (Breton 1972: 26)

In creative psychotherapy, I experienced Jung's method of 'active imagination', a similar process of turning inwards to engage in dialogue with inner images, thoughts, and symbols, and of then interpreting the writing or images produced to come to new understandings of self. Maximising the experience of a 'pure state' links the methods of meditation, active imagination, psychic-automatism, and how the

abstract expressionists sought to ‘attempt to paint the messages of the psyche’ (Braff 1986).



FIG 38. Joan Mitchell, *City Landscape*, 1955.

All the Abstract Expressionist painters worked at scale and produced monumental works, but the method of Pollock and Frankenthaler, working ‘in’ or circumnavigating the space, with the canvas prone, differs significantly from the easel approach of artists such as Joan Mitchell, Rothko, Gottlieb, and Lee Krasner. Mitchell, one of the second-generation Abstract Expressionists (FIG 38), would survey the canvas from as far away as possible, and to ‘become estranged and separated from the visceral body; [juxtaposing] freedom and control, which in equal measure fuel the florid gestures that scatter across the picture surface’ (Spicer V2: Essay 3). Joan Mitchell’s recurring theme of blue is discussed in Volume 2 – Essay 3: *Necessitating my Alliance: A Meditation on the Plaszow Concentration Camp*. The theme of distance is discussed in Part IV - THE ESSAYS: A CRITICAL REFLECTION - 4.1 Distance, in this volume.

Whilst working at scale is not a feature of my practice, gesture and movement are important aspects of the mark-making process, and so awareness of physical scale in relation to my body is important. I am attuned to the motors of the body that

determine the arc of gesture – the wrist, the elbow, and the shoulder – each motor representing an increase in the range of the arc the body can realise. Mark Godfrey, in *Abstraction and the Holocaust* (2003), referring to Maurice Blanchot, in *The Writing of the Disaster* (1980), expresses it as '[t]he disaster always remains to be said. It is always beyond meaning' (Godfrey 2003: 45).

For Blanchot, the disaster is what cannot be expressed or put into words, nor should it be, because this absence, this vacuum, is the very thing that denotes the unrepresentable as it is itself fragmented and hard – or impossible – to decipher. It is the loss, grief or anger that is felt by catastrophe when silence and personal reflection is compelled. This corollary defies attempts to describe, in any meaningful way, the full horrors of the Holocaust, because it is always impossible to do so.

Viewers assemble meanings or moods that may shimmer with a sense of the symbolic or the metaphorical, but none of it can be constructed into any real understanding. The essence of why abstraction, as an idiom, services our need best when articulating something of our desire or compulsion to confront the Holocaust, is as Blanchot posited that: 'when all is said, what remains to be said *is* the disaster. Ruin of words, demise writing, faintness, faintly murmuring what remains without remains (fragmentary)' (Blanchot 1995:33).

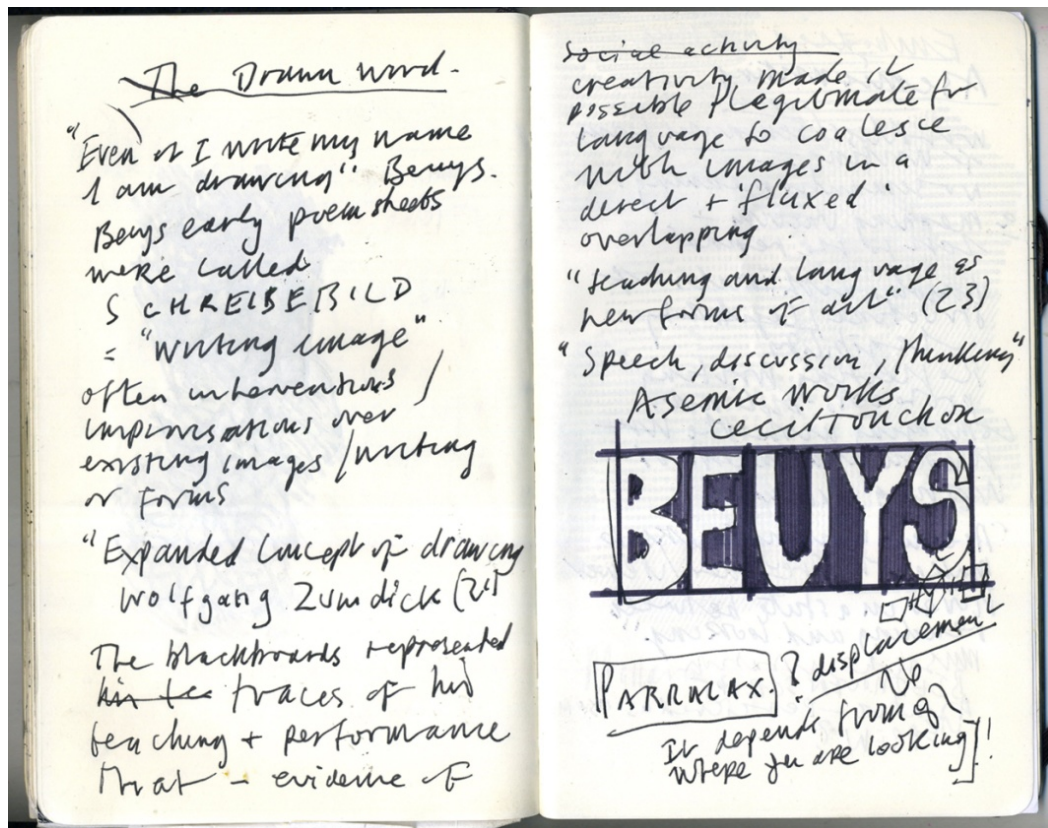


FIG 39. Gary Spicer, *The Drawn Word*, Journal 1 2016.

Blanchot's statement articulates further the sense in which I use language and words as fragments, or 'murmurs', and as elements of visual representation themselves. In my practice, as part of a modal loop of drawing and writing, they serve as complementary explicatory devices. FIG 39 is a spread from Journal 1, *The Drawn Word* (2016), and refers to expanded notions of drawing, of writing image, and of interventions and improvisations that overlay the existing concepts of images or writing forms.

As the project has evolved and the work has become more focused on absence and the visual articulation of the 'presence of absence'⁶⁵, the practice has become

⁶⁵ In the documentary *Engineering Evil*, (2011), Michael Berenbaum, when describing the death camp at Sobibor as the presence of absence, said "You can barely imagine or fathom what is there. But that

increasingly more abstract in form: more allusive, more sensorial, and increasingly extended, particularly in relation to notions of the psyche and consciousness and my own self-awareness and personal identity.

Mark Godfrey writes that abstraction 'can represent the Holocaust in real ways, distinct from other art forms' (Godfrey 2007: 251). He explains that the effects of such work, which seeks to meditate upon and embody the Holocaust, can be defined by some basic traits. First is the ability to render the readings of the work 'flexible and multiple', rather than 'singular and rigid'. Second is that the work facilitates the conception of 'mnemonic environments', and finally that the work is resistant to specific symbolic readings and conducive to the act of remembering. In this way, abstraction, by virtue of the demands it makes on readers and the implicit withholding of easy, trope-like meanings and interpretations, is instructed by the lesson that Maurice Blanchot described in *The Writing of the Disaster* (1995), in which he urges us to 'learn to think [with] pain' (Godfrey 2007: 254), or by 'learning to think, even when one is [in] pain'⁶⁶ (Berghahn and Hernand, 2005: 113). Through this, we are moved closer to the trauma of another, such as that buried in the residue of Holocaust sites.

The inversion of absence to become a kind of presence is given new meaning by Michael Berenbaum⁶⁷, a difficult concept to conceive and trace, and one that in the

absence shows a presence. The ghosts are there, the images are there, the souls are there, the evil is there, and the magnitude of what happened is there, even if it's unseen".

⁶⁶ I have insight into the experience of both physical and emotional pain, having been diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis at the age of 13, a chronic inflammatory autoimmune disease. I have also experienced psychological trauma that required two years of therapy. Both have meant that the pain of others is not a phenomenon to which I have become inured. This experience and empathy are significant in the way in which I understand and navigate the pain of others and have brought to bear in my phenomenological approach to the representation of Holocaust remembering and sites of trauma. They are discussed in *The Red Heart*. (Volume 2: Essay 7)

⁶⁷ Michael Berenbaum is a writer, lecturer, and teacher specialising in the development of museums and the development of historical films. He once described as the 'Americanization' of the Holocaust:

process of its conception becomes more and more elusive. But in the attempt – in the reaching – it becomes possible to find meaning in the incomprehensible, particularly when this is viewed through the lens of personal experience. Michael Berenbaum, in discussing the past in the present, suggests:

‘If you look today at the sites of destruction, there is a paradox. It is the presence of absence and the absence of presence. You see something, and what you see is also what's not there. And if you don't see something, then that looms present for you in an extraordinary way’ (Berenbaum 2011).

In Judaism, as articulated in the second of the Ten Commandments, the graven image of people, animals and plants is forbidden, and any images of God or the celestial was particularly prohibited. This not only sowed the seed of a culture that would be mediated for centuries by words and written language and not by images, but it also led to the questioning of what it was to represent the human form. To just view the physical presence – the physis – and not the spirit, or to ignore the ensouled body – that is made in the image of God – was seen as egregious. Steven Schwarzschild expresses this idea thus and reinforces the manner and the circumstances by which a legitimate representation of the human form could be made. ‘The distortion of the human image in Jewish art is in effect not a reduction but an expansion of the human form’ (Raphael 2020: 38) In so doing there is a recognition that the mimetic representation of the physis is not the whole, but a fragment. Schwarzschild claims in addition that the ‘Jewish requirement of deliberate mis-drawing – a rejection of the Greek principle of art as mimesis or imitation – is one of the earliest and originary principles of modernist art’ (Raphael 2020: 38/39).

the transformation of a sacred Jewish memory into a significant part of the conceptual and physical landscape of the American public culture’. (Skolnik 2007: 408)

The notion of appropriating the relentless modernist progression of distortion, abstraction, and, ultimately, nothingness and then claiming it as a Jewish aesthetic in modern art is appealing given the context of my writing, but this perhaps does not bear up under scrutiny in the context of distorting the human figure. Jewish artists such as Soutine – although his work, whilst figurative, pre-empted more abstract forms – Chagall, Freud, and Kitaj were all at variance with the aesthetic of implied destruction, violence, and the erasure of pure abstraction. They chose instead to rely on more traditional modes of representation when it came to the human likeness.

A more persuasive case could perhaps be made for pure abstraction through works such as Barnett Newman's *Stations of the Cross* 1960 (FIG 29), diminishing as it does any requirement to distort or mitigate human likeness. His archetypal 'zip' paintings, bereft of any indexical biblical subject matter, instead express the trace and gesture of the absent Holocaustal God, and in Newman's attempt to 'start again' depicting 'humanity in the guise of contemporary art, survey[ing] 'the final route of God-in-man' (Herbert 2008: 132). Matthew Baigell suggests that Newman's images further represent a 'gesture of separation, as God separated light from darkness with a line drawn in the void' (Baigell 2006: 81), and Melissa Raphael, in claiming that pure abstraction is the ultimate Jewish art, suggests this separation is perhaps 'another anticipation of disappearance, another pre-emption of death' (Raphael 2020: 40).

Janet Wolff makes the case for abstraction and the oblique, over the literal and the iconic. Although she makes it clear that her views are not part of the chorus that cites the Holocaust as being unrepresentable, she is keen to negotiate the effects and efficacy of the distinctive artistic statements. Abstraction necessitates an alliance between viewer and maker. One can of course respond viscerally or even spiritually, as with the work of Mark Rothko perhaps, where no title will direct or inform an intended meaning. We are brought to meaning independently, intuitively, or, as in the case of my own practice, through the conjunction of *a priori* intelligence and the thematic juxtaposition of texts and related material.

Deleuze writes about the ascetic nature of the potential for a spiritual connection through abstraction, its denial, and its emphasis, therefore, on the cerebral (Crowther 2012). In *Who Thinks Abstractly? Deleuze on Abstraction* (2016). Brent Adkins describes how Deleuze counters the Hegelian belief that abstraction was a non-philosophical mode of thought and somehow was unresolved. He contested that it should not be seen as in opposition to the concrete, but that it was rather inimical to the discrete: not something separate and disconnected from signification, but part of the whole. In this way he saw abstraction as having distinctly separate modes or paths, as described by Crowther in *The Phenomenology of Modern Art. Exploding Deleuze, Illuminating Style* (2012).

The first 'path' is characterised by artists such as Mondrian or Kandinsky and the Op artists of the sixties⁶⁸, abstraction that makes no attempt at verisimilitude or signification. Art Informel,⁶⁹ an approach to abstract painting with an improvisatory methodology and highly gestural technique, constitutes the second path. This would embrace artists such as Jackson Pollock's all-over 'action' paintings, Morris Louis' stained canvases, or Helen Frankenthaler's pushed sensual images. In these works, it is possible for figuration – or recognition – to emerge, and is where, perhaps, this recognition is connected to the embodied nature of the work, where its rhythms generate 'a manual power that occupies the painting in its entirety' (Crowther 2012:205). The third path, considered earlier when discussing the oblique and Deleuze's notion of painting, as the attempt to render visible those forces that are not themselves visible, is characterised by Francis Bacon, where the figure and recognition are only partly submerged and is not violated beyond its limits, as with Pollock. Crowther views the second path as a catastrophe that, in referring to Blanchot, signals how his own sense of such a catastrophe or disaster, whilst

⁶⁸ In the late 1950's and 60's, Op art, short for Optical art was geometric abstraction, dealing with optical illusion.

⁶⁹ **Art Informel.** Michel Tapiés in his book *Un Art Autre* first coined the term in 1952 to describe art based on highly informal procedures, which was often gestural.

dispensing with the diagrammatical nature of verisimilitude, does not dispense with the unity of rhythm and matter, or the mastery and manipulation of matter or materials, or, in Blanchot's case, words and meaning.

This short tract of practice-text demonstrates the phenomenological connection of body and sensation where, when working in the second path, the work attempts not to describe experience but to describe how experience is experienced, where unity of rhythm and matter exist in the gesture of the marks, FIG 33. *Uszadekfa Vagyok - I am driftwood*, 2022, and in the writing. This is also remembered in Harman's *Object-Oriented Ontology* (2018).

If I look too hard, I am stilled, if I think too hard... the same. If I let the objects speak for themselves, I can recover.

2.4

Holocaust Writing

'The revelation of the word as the place in which men maintain a relation to that which excludes all relation: the infinitely Distant, the absolutely Foreign. A relation with the infinite, which no form of power, including that of the executioners of the camps, has been able to master, other than by denying it, burying it in a pit with a shovel, without ever having encountered it.' (Kofman 1998 :35)

Contemplation of the fallibility of language and stories to properly express the ineffable nature of that which will always be 'foreign' and beyond the grasp of language, is expressed above by Sarah Kofman in the extract from *Smothered Words* (1998). The writing demonstrates a conjunction of Blanchot's ideas in reference to

‘the infinitely Distant’ and ‘the absolutely Foreign’⁷⁰ (Blanchot 1993:127), with regard to the murder of her father in Auschwitz. The idea of testimonies being reduced to ‘stories’ by the idillicising nature of fiction, even when it is describing grievous things, is equally troubling for Kofman, particularly when ‘the narrative voice speak[s] clearly and cogently without ever being obscured by the opacity or the enigma or the terrible horror of what it communicates – not even by death’ (Mitchelmore 2018)

Jean Luc-Nancy, when contemplating what writing meant for Sarah Kofman, said;

‘[W]riting was what it should be, or perhaps what it is for anyone when it is considered, not in its particular qualities of style or voice, but above all in its bare gesture, in its delineation, its tracing, or (as she used to say) its scratching, not to say its scribble. In other words, before being the inscription and transmission of a thought, it was an attestation of existence.’ (Deutscher and Oliver 1999: VIII)

And in the context of my project, this is what writing is for me too; an attestation of existence and experience, a vehicle through which experience can be delineated and verified. Before it represents thought and the manifestation of ideas, it is the mark of the ‘felt’ experience, a direct translation of phenomena at its most foremost without interpretation, just at first, the raw emotions, a ‘certificate of presence’ (Rabate 2012: 86).

Robert Antelme, himself a survivor of Dachau, which Kofman articulates above, writes, in attesting to his own existence - and survival – of the disjunction of what was experienced, and what it was possible to testify to:

⁷⁰ Blanchot is referring to God, the one God, as taught by Jewish monotheism. How language and words are always bound to fail in the attempt to bring men closer to Him.

‘The disproportion between the experience we had lived through and the account we were able to give of it would only be confirmed subsequently. We were indeed dealing then with one of those realities which cause one to say that they defy imagining’. (Antelme. 1992 :4)

Antelme confirms that only by sifting through and dredging the experience, and further imagining through what they witnessed, ‘could there be any attempt [by survivors] to tell something about it’ (Antelme. 1992: 4), so that those who would seek to deny them, would be unable to ‘bury it (the evidence) in a pit with a shovel’ (Kofman 1998: 35). But even before the camps were liberated, written witness accounts existed. Documents by five known authors, who were part of the Sonderkommando, were buried in the grounds of the crematoria at Auschwitz. These documents represent the first attempt at portraying and reporting on the events that took place there. This primary testimony includes descriptive witness accounts of what happened and metaphoric elegiac writing that is both poetic and reflective.

One of the five, Leib Langfus wrote of the loss of his wife and son in the camp and represented the first attempt at conveying the shape and scale of the atrocity unfolding. Another, Zalman Gradowski, ‘a bearer of secrets’⁷¹ because he too witnessed first-hand the killing at Auschwitz ,and as an example of rich elegiac writing, uses the repeated motif of the moon – perhaps as a metaphor for God – in his found testimony, written on 81 numbered pages and buried in an aluminium canteen amongst the ruins of the crematoria in Birkenau in 1945’ (Spicer, Volume 2 - Essay 2: *Photograph #283 and the Inheritance of Distance*). Gradowski writes how

⁷¹ Hannah Arendt employed the term ‘bearers of secrets’ regarding Jewish leaders during the Holocaust. But Idith Zertal described Arendt herself as such when discussing the Jewish position in relation to the Holocaust in the 1960’s. ‘when Jewish pain and sensitivity were only capable of absorbing a tale of absolute evil versus absolute good. And the fact that this narrative stemmed from within...from a Jewish woman who was well acquainted with the Jewish story and knew the profoundest Jewish “secrets”’. (Zirtal 2005: 134)

he could not comprehend why the moon, despite the suffering it was witnessing and illuminating, still:

‘Appeared with magnificent charm, escorted by her retinue, (the stars) carefree, calm, happy and content went out on her secret excursion to see how her realm, the night-world, fared, and granted humanity a ray of her light’ (Chare & Williams 2016).

Subsequent Holocaust writing has become increasingly multi-layered and intertextual. Fictional treatments become entangled in ‘a network of survivors accounts, other fictional treatments, historical narrative, filmic representations, the existence of which is conditioned by factors of collective memorialisation’ (Sebald 2008: 283). ‘With the passage of time, the temporal distance between the Holocaust and representation is collapsed so that the worlds of the text and the reader’ (Sebald 2008: 283) overlap. The action and the events then being described as occurring in the past now unfold in the mind of the readers present (Ricoeur 1990). These meanings and the narratives contained are cumulative and form larger constellations or networks of meaning. They are charged by the individual reader, and by the unique experience they bring to it. Nothing in the whole process of conception, authorship, and interpretation is neutral.

There are infinite modes and ways of approaching writing. Expository, descriptive, narrative, and persuasive are the four core modes, and these, along with argumentation, would be classed as fundamentally rhetorical. Finally, there is creative. Some writers, however, deliberately challenge this orthodoxy, employing a hybrid approach that moves between modes. This is evident in the Holocaust writings that are descriptive and intent on appealing to our sensory perceptions to help us imagine the event in some way. This can be fused with the desire to influence and persuade the reader where facts are juxtaposed with opinion and the interpretation

of events in an attempt by the writer to convince readers of the efficacy of their experience and opinion. Primo Levi, in *If this is a Man* (1987), whilst describing the experience of his incarceration, is persuasive in his use of language and imagery, and is more concerned with what the Holocaust represented and its effects on what it is to be human. This would also be true of Viktor Frankl in *Man's Search for Meaning* (2008). Frankl, a psychiatrist before the outbreak of war, observed the way in which the prisoners coped and behaved whilst incarcerated. His maxim was that everything can be removed from us except our ability and inner decision to choose the attitude we take to our given circumstances.

In contrast, Charlotte Delbo in *Auschwitz and After* (1995), who doesn't narrate but presents her experience in a series of vignettes and poetry, writes forcefully and persuasively, her intension being 'il faut donner a voir, - they must be made to see' (Delbo 1995: xvii). The narration of the history and the use of metaphor in W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (2001) and *The Emigrants* (1992) offer the further dimension of exploring the lingering effects of Holocaust memory and its legacies, rather than focusing on the desperation of life and death in the camps or in the ghettos. Holocaust fiction, but rooted in the author's direct experience, is typified by Aharon Appelfeld's, *The Iron Tracks* (1998) and H.G. Adler's *The Journey* (1950). Appelfeld tells the tale of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust and of surviving injustice, whilst Adler, without any direct reference to the Holocaust, relives its nightmares through a fictional breakdown of society. The expository writing of Holocaust historians including Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101* and *The Final Solution in Poland* (1992), Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, and David Cesarani, *The Final Solution* (2017), would serve as examples of a mode singularly concerned with being objective to inform and to explain.

The Holocaust as a subject of critical and academic enquiry gained traction in the 1980s following research in the 60s and 70s that sought to examine the event from historical and political science perspectives. Raul Hilberg's study, *The Destruction of*

the European Jews (1985), was the first comprehensive study that defined the field and pre-empted the surfeit of expository and rhetorical, writing that still pervades today.⁷² It is in this expository mode where the subject is systematically interrogated and explained. Holocaust diaries, witness accounts and film documentaries emerged from as early as 1947, and in the case of Bernstein's *Night Will Fall* (2014), were designed to function as indisputable proof that the catastrophe happened.⁷³

In popular culture today, the Holocaust has moved from the margins into the mainstream, with myriad titles in literature and film that seek to ask different and specific questions that have enabled us to confront complex issues. These questions draw attention to how we regard ourselves in relation to the Holocaust and the complex textual matters and issues of interpretation it has come to represent. These are matters that, in turn, help us to understand and to construct our own responses to the origins and aftermath of such atrocities. The literature has afforded us a way of seeing, through a range of heuristic devices that Robert Eaglestone has posited is a new 'conceptual optics of Holocaust criticism' (Eaglestone 2022). The literature attunes us to, and has provided us with, innovative ways of thinking about a range of contemporary issues, including human rights, secrecy and complicity, ethics and responsibility, memory and memory politics, the understanding of evil, and its origins and manifestations, trauma and trauma culture, and notions of truth.

⁷² Representations that emerged in literature included: H.G Adler's *The Journey* (1962); Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1947); Victor Klemperer's *I Shall Bear Witness* (1985); Paul Celan's *Die Niemandrose/Sprachgitter* (1980); Eli Wiesel's *Night* (1960); Cesare Pavese's *The Burning Brand: Diaries 1935-50* (1960); and the many accounts of Primo Levi, which include *The Drowned and the Saved, I sommersi e I salvati* (1986) and *The Black Hole of Auschwitz* (2002). Film documentaries have included Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985); Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog* (1956); Marcel Ophuls' *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1969); and Sidney Bernstein's *Night Will Fall* (2014), which was directed by Alfred Hitchcock

⁷³ In its original guise *Night Will Fall* was a film called *The German Concentration Camps Factual Survey*. It was made to ensure that incontrovertible proof existed that these crimes took place. It was also seen as important after the liberation to discredit Nazism in Germany and beyond. The Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force commissioned the film in 1945 but politics prevented the film ever being completed as it was deemed too politically sensitive and harrowing to show.

In *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust* (1988), James E. Young analyses lots of the variant Holocaust narratives including survivor accounts, documentaries, and fiction. His expository enquiry is predicated on the idea that we can only ever know any era in history other than the one we are in through the many representations that are made. Any meaning and understanding of these eras is inevitably mediated and then processed through interpretation, and transformed through memory and its many textures, caught in the confluence of traditions, ideals, and individual experience. Any mode of re-imagining⁷⁴ the Holocaust is then potentially ethically problematic because of the need to tread lightly over the memories of those that perished. Yet the very uniqueness of Holocaust testimony and the subsequent representations of post-witnesses such as myself, lies in its 'seeming aporia' (Eaglestone 2004: 23) – that is, in its implicit doubt and disjuncture.

Referring to Holocaust fiction in *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (2004), Eaglestone cites the process of identification as being the mechanism through which the reader bridges this 'seeming aporia', and describes this as how a reader 'identifies' themselves with the detail and characters of the textual narrative. In this way, the incomprehensible is made more comprehensible: 'Precisely because it relies on the illicit and impossible grasping of comprehension of another's real and represented experience as one's own' (Eaglestone 2004: 23). Georges Poulet wrote in *The Language of Criticism and the Science of Man* (1970):

'A book is not shut in by its contours, is not walled up as in a fortress. It asks nothing better than to exist outside itself, or to let you exist in it. In short, the extraordinary fact in the case of a book is the falling away of the barriers between you and it. You are inside it; it is inside you; there is no longer either outside or inside' (Macksey 1970: 57).

74 **Re-imagining.** I draw on the true etymological meaning of imagination being the 'faculty of the mind which forms and manipulates images' or 'to form an image of, [to] represent'.

Poulet affirms the extent to which writer and reader are entwined, a mutuality also expressed by filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky as a dependence that deepens the 'emotional, spiritual and intellectual experience' (Tarkovsky 1996:176). This is discussed in *Necessitating my Alliance: A Meditation on the Plaszow Concentration Camp* (Volume 2: Essay 3).

This notion of grasping for comprehension – and meaning – as expressed by Eaglestone when describing a reader's identification with a text as a means of vicarious experience, is thematic in my practice and forms part of my phenomenological approach (See Part III: METHOD). The following extract of practice-text from Volume 2: Essay 5, *The Emergent Subject: Artful Research* illustrates this. It is an example of 'modal looping' (writing from drawing), which is discussed further in Part 4 the Phenomenological Toolkit.

I don't know what this is...

But I am grasping what I can.

Marks bleed and solidify, coalesce...are emptied, hollowed...muddled and meander. How dense can this become? Stack and layer, Stack, and layer. I become a reader of the marks. As with a dense piece of text...I grasp what I can, equally in the landscape, the inscape those dense spaces of Holocaust memory. Concrete, stone, wood, steps, birch trees, hills and paths now grassed or graves, traces, and tracks, buttressed and stacked, I am overcome...but I grasp what I can. I wilfully see or not...the violence and the slaughter, perhaps I am inured?

I began my project with this aporia in mind when I asked how I could express and represent the feelings experienced when confronting Holocaust sites, and I would contest that empathy, defined as a condition that leads one to feel vicariously the

experience and distress of the other, is an important part of the process. So, if it is true that if we cannot empathise with something, we cannot imagine it, which for Adorno was the ultimate ethical transgression, hence his oft-misunderstood dictum that it was 'impossible to write poetry after Auschwitz'⁷⁵ (Guyer 2007: 228). It therefore then becomes problematic for the writer, or the artist to respond to such events, without having such a capacity.

W.G. Sebald confronts the Holocaust in essays that 'constituted a literature of atonement' (Kundani 2010) – Sebald's father was in the German army.- Sebald's own view of the Holocaust and its legacy was formed in part by his connection between 1966 and 1969 with the Jewish community in Manchester, living amongst the communities in which I had grown up. This experience inspired the final narrative in his book *The Emigrants* (1992), in which he raked over the remnants and after-effects of the Holocaust on the individuals and communities he describes. *The Emigrants*, like all Sebald's texts, is characterised by the embedding of photographs that are not explained, and serve to deliberately destabilise the narratives that necessarily oscillate between fact and fiction.⁷⁶

The Emigrants tells the stories of four part-fictional, art-memoir encounters with aged men who can find no peace or reconciliation with their pasts. The final narrative

⁷⁵ Adorno's words were never intended to silence poets or artists, quite the opposite. His statement was made specifically in response to the poetry of Paul Celan and the imperative for art and culture to respond from within despite the obvious aporia. Adorno knew that poets, artists, and contemporary thinkers would always be compelled to respond to the seemingly ungraspable and unrepresentable, but he believed that their insistence and compulsion to speak had to be tempered with the knowledge that their ideas would most likely never reach or touch those who bore witness, so was always destined to fail.

⁷⁶ Images were central to Sebald's writing. Sometimes these images would be manipulated on a photocopier or would undergo change via another process. Sebald's intention was not just that the photographs should illustrate and support the text but that they would also provide an adjunct and an extended meaning to the writing and work in concert. Considered as 'documents of absence' (Sheppard 2014: 390) by Sebald, photographs would often direct the narrative or be selected to support a particular story. (McNay 2019) This is a process akin to the Modal Loop in my own practice, as described in 4.3: The Modal Loop.

is of an encounter with Max Ferber in Manchester, a Manchester that Sebald describes as dark, gloomy, and post-industrial. This is a Manchester with which I am familiar as a child growing up in the sixties, the period that Sebald's encounter with Ferber, a Jew who fled Nazi Germany, took place. It is also a Manchester that informs the backdrop to the assimilation of migrant Jews in North Manchester, as well as my genealogical past. It is the canvas onto which *The Red Heart* (Volume 2: Essay 7), the story of my great grandparents' emancipation and subsequent arrival in Manchester, is painted.

Primo Levi wrote retrospectively of his experience at Auschwitz. 'The camp was my university', he said in the afterword of *Survival in Auschwitz* (1996). His writing is from the standpoint of how the Holocaust reflects on our capacity to be human. In *The Black Hole of Auschwitz* (2002), he refers to the inadequacy of words to describe the experience:

'Words do not work, because of 'poor reception', because we live now in a civilisation of the image, recorded, multiplied, broadcast; ...In all our tales, verbal or written, there are commonly expressions such as 'indescribable', 'inexpressible', 'words are not enough to...'it would take a new language too...' (Levi 2005: 82).

This idea that words are not enough, that language in its known and understood form is inadequate to express such an event, is at the root of Adorno's pronouncement, and Hoffman's comment about proper and adequate valence of reaction, Agamben's lacuna, and the ideas of Auschwitz survivor Alvin H Rosenfeld, who, quoting Claude Lanzmann, said 'To portray the Holocaust, one has to create a work of art...The artist usurps actuality' (Rosenfeld 2011: 02). The idea that art and fiction is the vehicle that can best make the Holocaust imaginable has traction, without any diminution of the role and significance of historians, Rosenfeld posits, as 'historical memory broadly

conceived may depend less on the record of events drawn up by scholars than on the projection of these events by writers, filmmakers, and artists' (Rosenfeld 2011: 02).

Because language is not the same as experience, and the world is experienced in 'wordless ways', Maxine Sheets-Johnstone in *The Corporeal Turn* (2009) describes the challenge of 'linguaging experience', which defines my own phenomenological approach. Sheets-Johnstone explains that the original function of everyday language is as a tool for naming objects and describing what they do. This idea 'gives precedence to stable items in the world, not to dynamic events experienced in the real world, in a directly felt sense by living sentient bodies' (Sheets-Johnstone 2009: 363). The idea that language functions to reify objects and acts as a propositional tool to describe them, e.g., 'the wind... blowing', means that the actual experience of the dynamic phenomenon itself is not being expressed. This is an idea further developed by anthropologist Tim Ingold in *Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather* (2007), in which he suggests that to properly describe how we sense and experience the weather, for example, we need to 'be the wind', to become entangled or 'commingled' within it. This is discussed further in *Necessitating my Alliance* (Volume 2: Essay 3) in the context of my experiencing and representation of Holocaust sites in a way that goes beyond the physical space and objects being encountered, and further articulates the phenomenological method. Furthermore, in 4.2ii: The Opening of Form, Sheets-Johnstone is quoted explaining how it is through drawing, as an adjunct to writing, that such phenomena are brought into view. It is this dichotomy that my project has sought to interrogate.

Perhaps my inclination, so as to mitigate this dichotomy when discussing the Holocaust, to embroider language, to obfuscate, to make denser and denser, longer, and longer, sentences that twist and turn and form their own topographies, is related to the lack of efficient conventional forms that can mediate the subject matter. Language can be used concisely and with precision, reductively, but can also be (as in my practice-text) a probing, a reaching for words...an indecision as with the fragility

and tentativeness of a drawn mark, and then can be potent, direct, and decisive, unambiguous, sure.

But George Steiner, in *On Difficulty and Other Essays* (1978.) posits, 'At certain levels we are not meant to understand at all, and our interpretation, indeed our reading itself, is an intrusion' (Lang 2017: 01), suggests that not understanding is a viable proposition, and that not everything is to be understood. It is the attempt and the notion of edging nearer that sustains us.

Jessica Lang describes further the notion of blankness and inaccessibility, referencing Adorno's 'barbarism' and Agamben's aporia as 'textual silence'; 'a silence that challenges the norms of reading' (Lang 2017: 03). Texts that attempt to render images of the Holocaust in our imagination on the page are legitimately stifled by the readers' inability to image and understand.

Lang states that it is language itself that forms a barrier between writer and reader, which is a defining characteristic of Holocaust fiction. She suggests that Holocaust texts 'bear within them an inbuilt inaccessibility that is an important, indeed fundamental part of the text' (Lang 2017:6). This resonates with my experience of Holocaust sites – what is not there speaks volumes.

Lang's investigation into the limits of representation from the perspective of writer and reader further reinforces the dichotomy – and of course it is possible to be both reader and writer – situating this as she does in relation to expression and understanding, respectively. Paul Ricoeur makes a similar point when discussing reading and understanding, which resonates with Barthes, and the sentiments expressed in *Death of the Author* (1977):

‘With writing, the verbal meaning of the text no longer coincides with the mental meaning or intention of the text. This intention is both fulfilled and abolished by the text, which is no longer the voice of someone present’ (Ricoeur 1976:75).

Here Ricoeur is reinforcing the disjunction between writer and received meaning. It is the voice of the reader who simultaneously mediates and moulds whatever the writer’s original intention of the text may have been. And in the end, he posits that the reader – and this was said in relation to his conception of history – ‘works up the material given in perception and reflection, fashions it and creates something new’ (Ricoeur 1976:75). Ricoeur also refers to guessing and reaching, both actions pertinent to descriptions of the purpose and processes of drawing. He contends that ‘the first act of understanding take(s) the form of a guess’ (Ricoeur 1976:75), the artist or the writer having authorship of a now-mute text or image.

In terms of how the authorship of a mute text is given form and substance, Maurice Blanchot, in *The Writing of the Disaster* (1995), uses a fragmented writing style that attempts to explore the extremes of human experience. Implicit in his approach is the deliberate lack of continuity and unity, implying something that can never be total and that appears to ‘seek its own erasure’; consistent with the notion of the removal of traces and obliteration that characterise a disaster such as the Holocaust. In the foreword to *If This Is a Man* (1991), Primo Levi writes of his experience of being deported to Auschwitz in 1944, describing how, when trying to express and articulate immediate and violent impulses, the writing took on a ‘fragmentary character: the chapters written not in logical succession, but in order of urgency’ (Levi 1991: 16). Like Blanchot, the idea of a deliberate lack of continuity reflects the broken, fractured history it seeks to represent.

In *Auschwitz and After* (1995), Charlotte Delbo also seeks to give literary form to the unsettling and shattered memory of her Auschwitz incarceration. Writing in a poetic and fragmented style, she expresses the overwhelming change of language, wrought with horror, confronted to muteness, or to the opposite – an infinite stammering (Hoppenot: 2014:193).

‘We wait.

The SS women, cloaked in their capes, examine the number,
going over the human additions again.

We wait.

Taube returns. He has the answer. He whistles softly to call the
Dog that follows him. The dog is dragging a woman by the nape of
her neck.

Taube blows his whistle. Roll call is over.

Someone says, “Let’s hope she was dead”” (Delbo 1995:101).

Like Levi and Blanchot, Delbo is representing memory that, due to its traumatic nature, is always resistant to chronology and logic. Each also is highlighting the discontinuities of memory, memory that is broken and inevitably diminishing through time. Paul de Man described this as the ‘disintegration of the witness’ (Felman 1989: 721), signalling both this diminution and the absence of the authoritative and ‘drowned’ witness testimony of those who perished (Levi 1986). The writing structure seeks to represent these disjunctions to scope ‘the immeasurability of loss and its reiteration’ (Felman 1989: 193).

Writers such as Sebald, Delbo and Blanchot employ a nonlinear narrative to better portray the fragility of human memory and the fragmented way it recalls events. The narrative represents how when memory is lost, and uses referential language to

communicate disconnected ideas and facts that can be recalled along with persuasive rhetoric, becoming sutures in the rupture that is broken and fragmented remembering⁷⁷, creating a form of remembering immanent in Holocaust memory.

Several other hybrid texts have had an impact on the practice including, Michel Butor's *Passing Time* (2021); Robin Lippincott's *Blue Territory* (2015); Katja Petrowske's *Maybe Esther* (2014); Gillian Rose's *Love's Work* (1995); Angela Morgan-Cutler in *Auschwitz* (2014); and the stories, artwork and poetry of Ava Kadishon-Schieber in *Present Past* (2016), who draws from her direct experience of being a Holocaust survivor and that of Maria Stepanova *In Memory of Memory* (2021) is a prose memoir in which Stepanova interrogates the relationship of her personal and family histories with broader societal and cultural history. This text, along with Olga Tokarczuk's *Drive Your Plough Over the Bones of the Dead* (2009), a meditation on human compassion set against the backdrop of the Polish landscape, and Gillian Rose's *Love's Work*, have also informed the trajectory of my next project, *The Red Heart*, which is an evolution of Essay 7 in Volume 2. (Discussed further in the conclusion)

Love's Work (1995) by Gillian Rose, written after being diagnosed with terminal ovarian cancer as an illness narrative and memoir, and an exploration of her Jewish identity, juxtaposes intertextually layered, intersecting narratives and geographies in fluid temporality. This text particularly has had a direct influence on my own writing, not least because there is a connection with locality – Rose had familial connections to the same area of Cheetham Hill in North Manchester where I was born: 'my Godforsaken families- from Kalisz and Lodz to Treblinka, but also to the East End of Manchester, Cheetham Hill Road, and to the East End of London, Whitechapel Road' (Rose 1995:19). *Love's Work*, an example of an atemporal narrative mode not unlike

⁷⁷ When Primo Levi describes the true witnesses of the Holocaust as those who 'drowned' i.e., those who did not survive, he sets in train the notion that there is an inevitable aporia that implies that the witnessing of those that survived – including himself and Delbo – those that were not submerged, is by implication second degree testimony.

Sebald's, connects to Rose through the central strand of the writing, which is derived from a struggle with Jewish identity and the self. Reading Gillian Rose and investigating the relationship of the present to the past, its dynamic and counterpoint, further confirmed to me that my practice was in the nexus of specific points of history and self, and represented a process of self-discovery and mnemonic construction⁷⁸.

Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn* (2013), Kadishon-Schieber in *'Present Past'* (2016), and Angela Morgan-Cutler in *Auschwitz* (2014) all too signalled a multifaceted approach to memory writing and its juxtaposition with the present. Such works evoke memories of the Holocaust and its relationship to art – Sebald through the psychogeography of a symbolic walk along the East Anglian coast, from which he tangentially interrogates historical places and events, including the Holocaust, and Kadishon-Schieber through allusive and non-linear, atemporal narratives that address the significance of the Holocaust's aftermath.

Gillian Rose shifts between the philosophical and the personal, confronting her contested feelings and relationship to her own Jewishness. Morgan-Cutler, with no direct experience of the Holocaust, confronts this past 'through experiencing contradictory sensorial and cognitive reactions to the memorial sites, which resemble cognitive dissonance (Popescu: 2016). Part fiction, part autobiography, Morgan-Cutler's *The Rings of Saturn* (2013) challenges the orthodoxy of literary categories and, like Sebald's work, defies categorisation. The question of why we are drawn to visiting is a dissonance familiar to me and the catalyst of my own project, as is the challenge of what – after more than 75 years – is there left to uncover?

⁷⁸ Mnemonic devices: Miguel Mesquita Duarte, in his analysis of Gerhard Richter's Atlas and Birkenau images, talks of the (Dis) Figuration of memory in the work, particularly in his use of photography and abstraction and their role in the representation of the traumatic past in his work. I am interested in how these and my own images act as mnemonic devices and an invocation to remember. My practice also explores the aporias and complexities that are confronted in doing so.

The notion of writing being a hybrid juxtaposition of the recalled and the imagined is central to my approach. My own genealogical writing interrogates notions of journey and temporality, the past in the present. It explores geographic transition – spatial and psychological – as well as interlocution and the narration of events and memory. All are facets that document and chime with my foundational understanding of phenomenology and how its ideas are best accessed through ‘experience’. All these motifs and a more expansive examination of self are developed in *The Red Heart*: (Volume 2: Essay 7).

Writing as a hybrid juxtaposition of the recalled and the imagined informs my approach to the practice-text that spans the categories of description and narration. This is evident in the accompanying essays in Volume 2. It is writing that aligns with my drawing practice, where both represent expression voiced through graphic gestural means, crafted and articulated as measured responses.

Two conferences in Nottingham and Cardiff were pivotal moments in developing my thinking on writing and its nexus in my practice with drawing. The conference in Cardiff Metropolitan University, *Writing Between the Lines: Exploring Creative Writing as a Research Methodology* in September 2016, focused on practice and self-reflection as a research methodology, and on how creative writing can combine the philosophical enquiry of our understanding of self and the world we live in. The Nottingham Trent University conference, *Critical Creativity: Exploring Creative-Critical Writing* in June 2016, explored the relationship between critical and creative writing and how writing can cross formal boundaries. When viewed through a lens where writing and drawing had blurred edges, these conferences represented a significant shift in terms of what my practice could be and how this would be manifest in the project.

To maintain this momentum, I organised a symposium in 2017: *New Modes of Art Writing 2: Intersections of the Critical and the Creative Voice*⁷⁹ (FIG 101). Its primary focus was how we write about arts practice and situate it within the context of our artistic research. The way art is encountered through different modes of writing was examined, and whether, by bridging the gap between different writing practices, new forms could emerge. The space where we might begin to rethink writing as a further agency of our creative practice was discussed, encouraging exploration of its potential as an artistic form in itself, as well as a method of critical enquiry.

My own presentation at the symposium, entitled *The Red Heart: Melding practice-text, critical text and image*, sought to interrogate how memory and imagination can become entwined through time and space. The presentation, which happened when I was still in therapy, represented how I was working out how to assimilate the impact that therapy was having on the research. I was experiencing loss acutely and tracing genealogical lines in the past that were clearly entangled with my present. I described it in the abstract of the presentation:

Memory is caught in spaces, in landscape, in brick, in structure. It is caught in the shadows of those things lost or forgotten'. The Red Heart seems to serve as a beacon of what is carried through time, through memory. Those things absorbed (Spicer 2017:05)

⁷⁹ **New Modes of Art Writing 2.** When we first put out the call for papers, we provided a list of possible areas in which writers and practitioners might wish to site their potential contributions to the symposium; this included encountering art through writing, performative writing about art, ekphrasis: and writing from the visual and auto-ethnography. The list wasn't meant to be exhaustive, but we were keen to try and capture voices from varied backgrounds and to present the symposium as an eclectic event. Whilst clearly centered on arts practice, we were pleased that the call also provoked submissions that went beyond the boundaries of the art school. Therefore, as well as art and design practitioners, we also had contributions from creative writers and those for whom writing derives from personal experience to understand cultural experience in the form of reflective practice.

The Red Heart (Volume 2: Essay 7), written in a hybrid mode, interrogates further ideas of loss, displacement, time, and memory, and in Volume: Part V, a critical reflection examines the essays within the broader context of the thesis.

Hungarian survivor and novelist Imre Kertész, in his Nobel acceptance speech asked whether it is possible for any writer to evade the spectre of the Holocaust, and contested 'one does not have to choose the Holocaust as one's subject to detect the broken voice that has dominated modern European art for decades' (Kertész 2003: 607). He suggested that all modern European art in some way reflects the 'broken voice' of the post-Holocaust era, a voice that permeates all Holocaust writing and literary works because the Holocaust 'is imaginable only and exclusively as literature, never as reality' (Brugue et al, 2020 :203).

PART III

METHOD

In Part 3 of the thesis, I will focus on the means of procedure employed to inform the production of my written and drawn responses to Holocaust sites. I will begin by discussing phenomenology and how it has informed the ways in which I have encountered, experienced, and understood the sites I have visited. I will discuss the acts of embodiment, empathy, wonder and entanglement that represent the specific procedures and ‘conceptual optics⁸⁰’ of focus. I will then discuss the significance of impermanence in my approach and the nature of change and flux, that is key to all phenomenal existence. Finally, I will briefly discuss New Materialisms and the Object-Oriented Ontology of Graham Harman, and how some of these ideas translate into my creative practice.

3.1.

Phenomenology

‘The goal of phenomenology is to clarify and therefore to find the ultimate basis of all knowledge’ (Stein 1989:3).

Edith Stein, a disciple of Edmund Husserl, goes on to stress that, to truly locate the basis of all knowledge, it is critical to exclude any existing or scientific knowledge, and that, in fact, the whole known and surrounding world ‘(including the physical as well as the psycho-physical person of the investigator himself) is subject to the

⁸⁰ A term used by Robert Eaglestone at the BIAHS. *New Directions in Holocaust Literature* in October 2022. He was referring to the conceptual lenses through which we view ideas being expressed in Holocaust literature.

exclusion or reduction' (Stein 1989:5). What is left, and what can never be subjected to doubt, is the individual's experience of the thing in question, the perception, or the memory, the very 'phenomenon of the thing' (Stein 1989:5).

Phenomenology has an intense concern about the world and how it appears to the individual experiencing it. It is much less concerned with seeking to explain phenomenal experience, being instead in favour of establishing methods by which that experience can be described. Although primarily focused on the subjectivity of the observer, phenomenology is also concerned with how a consensus is drawn about the shared way in which the world is encountered, experienced, and understood.

There are several complex, and often interconnected, sets of narratives that have evolved and been nuanced by thinkers in the field, including Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger Sartre and Stein. Intentionality, consciousness, embodiment, empathy, and personhood are central motifs, but in my practice the themes of 'embodiment' and 'empathy' are employed as the main phenomenological approaches, in addition to 'wonder' and 'entanglement', which are also central methodological features of my practice.

Phenomenology is both a subject of my enquiry and a method. The approach is being used to test and evaluate its applicability to the premise of my research of how to respond when encountering sites of Holocaust memory. It constitutes a set of practical and conceptual procedures being applied to the production and understanding of my process and practice outcomes.

Positioning phenomenology as a methodological approach in my practice rather than as a theoretical framework suits the practice-led emphasis of my enquiry because it situates the approach as a descriptive and analytical tool that enables me 'to explore

the experiential facets' (Mezga 1993: 66-77) of the sites I am encountering. The use of a phenomenological approach also provides a structure – and a sensual vocabulary – through which, as an artist and writer, I can deepen and articulate my understanding of such sites and the entangled feelings that they evoke. Because phenomenology seeks to establish a consensus of shared features of experience – defined in the tradition as intersubjectivity⁸¹ – through the production of writing and artwork as practical creative responses, it becomes possible perhaps for others to vicariously experience the image or the moment being described.

3.1i

Embodiment

In phenomenology, all conscious experience is embodied in two distinct ways: through the active, lived body as I experience it, touch it, and engage with it selectively – this is the organ of will, or the 'I' body, and then there is the physical body, which is subject to the laws of gravity, space, and environment. Both are inextricably intertwined and it is in the way I relay the embodied activity of strokes, gestures, clicks and contours that captures the 'being of art'.

I am in the space of Birkenau, my lived body engages with and touches the space, orientates myself in it, and my physical body is exposed to the elements and the environmental and prevailing conditions. Merleau-Ponty (2012) contends that the subjective space of art and expression arises from the space in-between these different bodies of experience; that is, the reaching out to touch and sense, and the physical attributes of the space itself as one's body is exposed to it. It is from this conjunction, best articulated by the coming together of things one can determine and select, and the things one is bound to feel and experience by being in the space, that 'meaning' arises. This is the drawing, the mark, the response, or the move to

⁸¹ In philosophy, intersubjectivity is the conflux between people's cognitive perspectives.

click the shutter and take the photograph, a punctum⁸² of sorts, being pricked or bruised by what is felt and experienced in that place and an experience that is personal, individually felt and is different for everyone.

In addition, there is a temporal dimension to the concept of the space in-between, in terms of the relationship between the sites as they were then and as they are now, where the embodied moment exists in the conjunction of different temporal spaces. When representing Holocaust sites of memory, these encounters become 'sutured into [our own] story of the Holocaust' (Grace-Walden 2014) and the embodied acts of drawing, writing, or photographing, in different ways, begin to testify to our being present and confront the last vestiges and traces of what took place.

3.1.ii

Empathy

Phenomenology has been described as the only philosophy that attempts to characterise the relation of the self and the subjective experience (including emotions) of the other as 'an-other' in empathy (Moran 2002:22). As a phenomenological proposal, empathy is a mode of perception, defined as 'a perceptual-imaginative feeling towards and with the other person's experiences' (Svenaesus 227-245). It is not important to have experienced the same thing, as it means – literally – the capacity to 'feel alongside' using one's imagination to understand the experience of the other.

⁸² Roland Barthes, in *Camera Lucida* (1993), talks of the punctum as a photography-specific effect encountered when unpacking the uncoded level of how photographs are experienced and our individual responses to them, an experience separate and distinct from any previous knowledge and experience. However, I am contesting that, in the process of embodiment, when primarily experiencing, and at once being responsive to, such places as Holocaust sites of memory, it is how we are pricked and bruised by the encounter that creates the impulse to draw and gesture and that this experience is akin to the way in which the intensions of the photographer are obviated when looking at a photograph. I survey this vista now, in this time and space. This drawing is about this encounter and all that I experience in the process of its making.

Hans-Georg Gadamer, discussing empathy as a sort of 'transposition of self' into the realm of the other, stresses that, whilst it is necessary to relinquish 'something' of ourselves to imagine and become aware of otherness, we must not completely disregard ourselves in the process. A necessary confluence must occur for this imagining to 'happen'.

'Only this is the full meaning of 'transposing ourselves'. If we put ourselves in someone else's shoes...then we will understand [them] i.e. become aware of their otherness, the indissoluble individuality of the other person, by putting ourselves in [their] position' [Moran 2002: 336].

But, as Levinas points out, we can never truly know the other, as empathy does not extend to having insight into the other's life and personal identity. Whilst empathy does represent our ability to imagine – through self-transposition – what the other might have felt or is feeling, it can never amount to truly knowing, and must acknowledge 'the forever-indirect knowledge of the unknowable' (Moran 2002: 534).

In my practice, the confluence of self and an-other represents the affective experiences of emotion, mood and feelings that serve as conduits through which embodied *a posteriori* knowledge of the lived experience of my encounters – in the form of writing and drawing – can emerge. The process signals an entanglement, which represents as much a sense of empathy with myself as with an-another.

3.1.iii

Wonder

'It is in the encounter [with such presencing] that we are given over to wonder- a wonder that is not provoked by anything other than the simple 'happening of being' a happening in which we are ourselves always implicated' (Malpas 2017: 17-18).⁸³

Malpas's quote begins to describe some of the key aspects of my practice, and the ways in which I have engaged with the subject of the Holocaust using phenomenology as a tool of analysis, and a method to ground it. Notions of encounter and wonder – a seemingly strange and contentious word to describe my encounters with such places – underpin the practice.

Wonder stimulates the need to express and articulate the experience of my encounters and drawing traces the 'happening' of these 'excavations' – described earlier as the [un]concealing of meaning and resonance of physical and metaphorical spaces – made during these encounters. These will represent excavations of self, as well as of Holocaust history and memory. The practice then, represents a merging – a confluence – of self into Holocaust history, where the former is the focus. Such excavations are made possible by the capacity of [the reader] to be caught by objects in moments of wonder when 'contextual objects take on a life of their own' (Greenblatt 1991: 44), and where the object begins to oscillate or shimmer beyond the boundaries of its formal or literal denotations.

In his article *'Resonance and Wonder'* (1991), Stephen Greenblatt contrasts resonance with notions of wonder and suggests that with wonder we are arrested by

⁸³ **Presencing.** A complex idea in Heideggerian thought meaning 'being' or 'being in the world'. (Heidegger 2010). It can also be interpreted to mean making present. In my practice, drawing facilitates this process.

objects to the extent where all other incumbent voices draw back and fall away. 'Where the act of attention draws a circle around itself from which everything, but the object is excluded' (Greenblatt 1991: 49) describes the moment where we become engaged in a private – and reciprocal – dialogue with the object of our interest or fascination. This articulates exactly how Holocaust sites of memory exist as objects and place(s) of 'resonance and wonder' for me, and the powerful incantation to respond to that which they exude.

Greenblatt gives the example of children's drawings made at Theresienstadt (Terezin) concentration camp in the then Czechoslovakia. (FIG 40-43) Walls of these drawings are on display at the camp museum, and it is impossible to not observe, as I did when I visited in 2018, how the museum became more of a space of memory than of artefacts, serving as 'secularized Kaddish' (Greenblatt 1991: 46) a wall of commemorative prayers for the children who were murdered. Here, wonder is manifest as 'a state of enchanted looking' (Glücklich 2014: 123).



FIG 40. Artist unknown, *Butterflies*. (Top left)

FIG 41. Bedřich Hoffmann, *At the Railway Station*. (Top right)

FIG 42. Karel Sattler, *Life in the Ghetto (Funeral)*. (Bottom left)

FIG 43. Artist unknown, *Tale Motif*. (Bottom right)

Images: The Theresienstadt Collection.

So wonder is both to be full of awe and amazement, but also to be curious, doubtful at something strange and unfathomable. It requires us to uncouple ourselves from the controlling desire 'to know' and to fully comprehend, both of which only serve to 'erase that which we were seeking to capture' (Fisher & Fortnum 2013: 23). It is only by yielding to the unsettlement – and vulnerability – that wonder entails and the realisation that, as according to Lyotard, 'nuance and timbre are the distress and despair of the exact division' (Fisher & Fortnum 2013: 23).⁸⁴ In other words, it is in the margins, at the blurred edges – the shimmer – where it might be possible to make images and representations. Andrew Brown, writing in *the Guardian* about Otto Dov Kulka's book *Landscapes of the Metropolis of Death* (2013), said:

'In one sense [this terrible] absurdity and wonder cannot by their nature be explained. Absurdity and wonder can be revealed, and their ramifications expounded, but they cannot be made to make sense; they can't be reduced to any explanation' (Brown 2014).

Kulka's book is describing how, as a child in the Familienlager (family camp) in Auschwitz, he heard *Ode to Joy* from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony being played a few hundred metres from the Crematoria. In his book, Kulka tried to explain 'the terrible wonder of it' (Kulka 2013: 26):

'At the heart of the famous phenomenological reduction lies the orientation of wonder...wonder is the face of the world. Wonder is the moment of being when one is overcome by awe or perplexity – such as when something familiar has turned profoundly unfamiliar, when our gaze has been drawn by

⁸⁴ The term nuance is proposed by Lyotard here to represent the conceptual mediation of what he describes as an opening to a sort of infinity.

the gaze of something that stares back at us.' (Eugene Fink⁸⁵ in Van Manen 2015:04/05).

In the context of the Holocaust, however, what Fink posits would appear to be contrary to the more generally accepted view that it is surely our inability to accommodate and become familiar with the Holocaust in the first place that is the issue, not that it suddenly becomes unfamiliar through the phenomenon of wonder. When I have written about wonder or have tried to draw through it whilst in the moment, I have become conscious of ceding to the overwhelming feelings being experienced. I am conscious of creating by gazing into a space that is gazing back, and it is this encounter that is being represented. It is of course the unknown that is being shaped and formed, and by gazing into a space and reaching back into a past, it becomes possible to be transported to another place beyond the sites given limits. This is entirely consistent with my phenomenological project. 'From a philosophical perspective, it is not at all surprising that wonder is the central methodological feature of phenomenological enquiry' (Van Manen 2015:05) (FIG 44).

⁸⁵ **Eugen Fink.** A protégé of Husserl, who learnt from him by talking to him, listening to him, and thinking with him. Not through the mode of 'dead discourse' (Plato; Van Manen 2015) i.e., text and books, but 'the living speech', which is itself interesting from a phenomenological perspective.

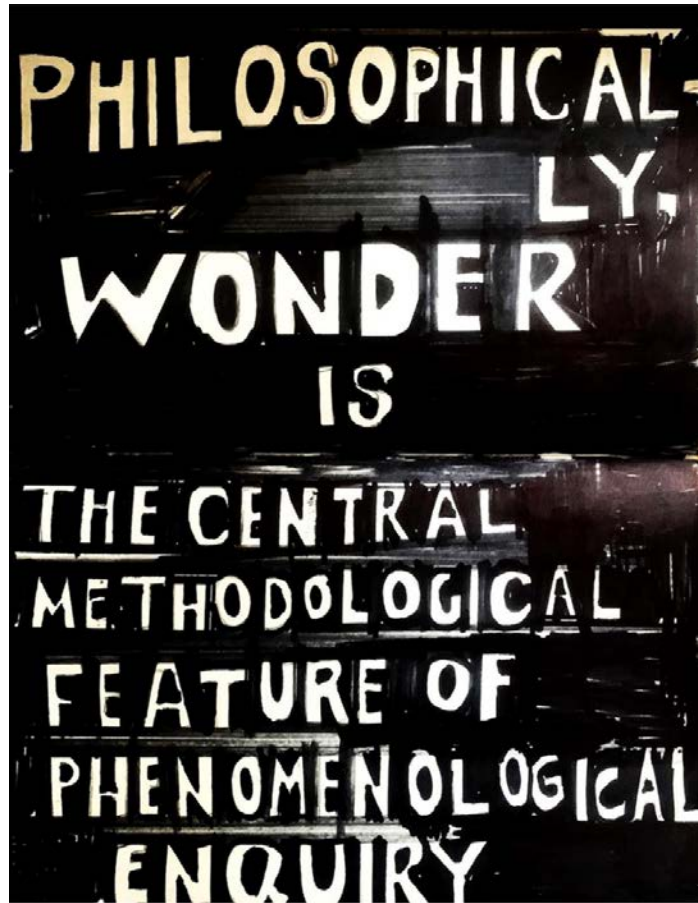


FIG 44. Gary Spicer, *Wonder is...* Journal 5, 2020.

Wonder, along with dread and veneration, is connected to the conception of awe and has been informed by 18th Century writings on the 'sublime'.⁸⁶ It is part of the way in which the world is revealed to us, subjectively, and through our consciousness. This connects with the expression of otherness and the 'beyond' I articulated when describing being 'transported' and 'beyond limits.' This is undoubtedly a primal connection with the spaces I encounter that, despite my connection being humanistic rather than religious, I can equate the feeling with what Rudolf Otto described with a Latin phrase: *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. He was describing what he saw as the factor that binds all theological thought, the

⁸⁶ **Sublime.** Inspiring awe, unparalleled, of spiritual value. First published in 1757, Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* articulated the different stimulation required to render such emotions and response.

notion of the ‘wholly other’ which has the capacity to render us silent and overwhelmed. This is what I described earlier, ‘the intensity of feeling I had experienced when I first visited Poland and confronted this past for the first time’, a past that I identified with and felt the overwhelming need to confront and represent.

3.1.iv

Entanglement – Intertwining

When I think of my work in phenomenological terms and my response to the Holocaust event and the sites of memory and history I encounter, I am imagining the work, the sites and myself as an integrated mechanism⁸⁷. This concept alludes to my receptiveness at sites of Holocaust memory, and how I engage with both material and immaterial aspects of self. In the process I have become aware that it isn’t the physicality and objecthood of the Holocaust I am trying to represent, but rather through the sites of memory I encounter I am revealing my own entangled⁸⁸ – often conflicted – relationship to it.⁸⁹

The past is entangled with the present and with imaginative investment, the events that happened in the past are appropriated and projected into the present and there they can be creatively reconstructed to have a much stronger link with the preoccupations of the present (Maguire 2017: 63).

⁸⁷ **Integrated mechanism.** Descartes first referred to the amalgam of the material and immaterial as constituencies of what defined us as human, body and mind – the body being the material substance of our being. Of course, to separate the body (or in this case, the organ of the brain) from its function of thinking is to ignore that it is the specific wiring and synapses in the brain that makes us who we are.

⁸⁸ **Entanglement.** Heidegger’s notion of entanglement within language represents how its craft meaning and nature becomes hidden because we are so bound up with its “inherited concepts”. The possibilities of poetry to reconfigure language necessarily challenge this paradigm and allow for new and unexpected meanings to emerge.

⁸⁹ Marianne Hirsch’s statement when commenting on the significance of witnessing by others whose connection to this past is not actually mediated by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation (Hirsch 2012:107), and this begins to articulate the three stages of my working method.

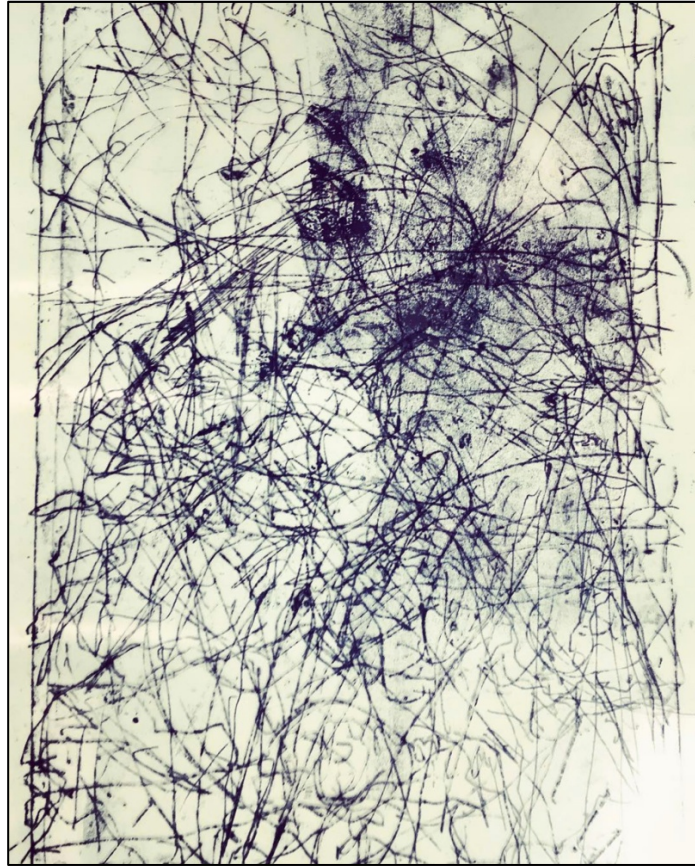


FIG 45. Gary Spicer, *Farkhapt – Entangled*, 2020.

The practice has also revealed how my apprehension of objects⁹⁰ became fused with traces of my own lived experience, which I contend is fundamental in a phenomenologically based approach to drawing and representation. Merleau-Ponty and his notion of the interconnectedness of mind, body and object is also a leitmotif in the research that can be experienced and enacted through the act of drawing (FIG 45). How the body participates in the external world connects Merleau-Ponty with Buddhist thinking, as expressed by Dogen,⁹¹ who contested that it is the body that

⁹⁰ **Objects.** As well as the phenomenological I am drawing on Graham Harman's deduction in *The Third Table* in which he posits that "objects are deeper than their appearance to the human mind" (Harman, 2012: 4) and that the 'culture of the arts' seeks not to reduce objects to their scientific essences – but to initiate their own 'autonomous realities' (Harman, 2012: 7).

⁹¹ **Dogen.** A Zen-Buddhist teacher, who, in the 13th Century, analysed some of the central issues of philosophy, including the correlation of 'being' (ontology) with 'knowing' (epistemology), as well as the concept of 'body-mind'. His teachings have been likened to the principal ideas of phenomenology.

mediates the world, making it real and knowable, that 'its presence to the world enables things to exist, thus the body and the world are inseparable' (Park, J.Y. et al 2001:85).

Merleau-Ponty's essay *Eye and Mind* (1964) posits that it is through the relationship between the seer and the seen that our experience and understanding of the world is opened up, and that in this way and through our facility to sense, feel, think, and do, it becomes possible to 'make the invisible visible'. The capacity of drawing to make experience, ideas, and memory tangible, and 'to retain and articulate traces of the past' (Ashton 2014: 46-61), are recurrent in my practice, where I reflect upon and express through text and image my responses to the revealing and latent⁹² meanings experienced and excavated during my meditations at Holocaust sites⁹³.

3.1.v

Impermanence

The notion of impermanence is connected to empathy in terms of how we look towards the boundaries – or the edges – of a phenomenal experience. Gadamer views the horizon as an abstraction that is always shifting according to our standpoint; it is always moving away and is distinct and unique to each individual. 'The horizon is...something into which we move and that moves with us' (Moran 2002: 335). In terms of empathy, metaphorically, we can never stand exactly where an-other has stood. We are able only 'to seek the frontier and peer into the unknown' (Vakoch et al 2014:34). This connection of the horizon and impermanence affords us a distinct way of investigating the 'edges' of phenomena or experience. 'No

⁹² **Latent.** Meaning deeper and perhaps truer. The sites themselves – particularly those reduced to clearings, including Płaszów, to the south of Krakow – are haunted by events that are not made explicit by the physicality of the space. Through excavation and the process of creative interrogation, meanings can emerge.

⁹³ The practice demonstrates the physical properties and manifestation of entanglement, which is described further in PART V: The Critical Reflection of Essays. 5.5 Conflux and Entanglement.

perceptual experience will remain forever, and the contents of our conscious lives appear and disappear' (Vakoch et al 2014:34). So, the notion of impermanence, of appearance and disappearance, relates to how – and where – I stand in relation to the experience of the physical spaces I encounter. It also relates to how I relate the historical horizons of the other, to my own when in the acts of transposition and empathy. To realise this in practice, I learned of the importance, when drawing and translating the 'experiencing' of phenomena at Holocaust sites, of being in the present moment, when I attended the Vipassana meditative retreat in 2017. It was in attempting to observe the 'moment' that I realised the link to the phenomenological notions of impermanence, appearance, and disappearance.

Phenomenally, the passage of time can be understood as a series of 'now moments' of what came before and what happens afterwards. Temporally, this is an incredibly small unit of time, but it is where the line that separates – or connects – the past and the future lies. Therefore, 'to phenomenally conceive of this moment, one has to grasp what is already beyond it' (Thatcher 2006). The practice-text below is a working-through, a reading of the marks of a drawing made in the field, whilst pretending not to know⁹⁴ – but in the process asking – what in themselves do the marks, and the images that they construct, imagine, and signify, particularly in the context of past, present, and temporal distance?

⁹⁴ A derivation of Husserl's epoche. A bracketing of the known and of the things previously experienced.

This is otherworldly. This make only allusion; this is avoiding defining itself...I'm struggling. Are there faces in the midst? Am I not looking through a doorway into a space that is neither outside nor inside, space upon space that goes back further and further into the distance mired in the green, brown surface that frames and smothers the image. And inside there are blue lines, blue grey like veins through thin stretched skin.

I don't know what this is...

But I am grasping what I can.

There is also a strong thread of impermanence in the production of my creative work. Alongside the formal mode of production of drawings, prints and photographs, the process of creation itself is often the artwork. I record the development of the work using photography – often on an iPhone (FIG 46). This can also happen digitally via the flatbed scanner. Often this process does not lead to a finished piece, but instead the residue and traces of the activity of making generates a body of visual outcomes, most of which at the end only exist as part of the photographic or digital archive⁹⁵. This is described in 4.2Xi The Phenomenological Toolkit: Reprography.

⁹⁵ This use has some similarities to the documenting of actions and outcomes of ephemeral performance-based art, especially when there is no audience. My documentation is an archive of process and progress, where a subsequent layering obliterates its predecessor, whereas works such as Ana Mendieta's *Silhueta* series made in the landscape from the 1970s, or Joseph Beuys' *I Like America and America Likes me* (1974), are documentary evidence of a performance that has no extant result other than the photographic archive.



FIG 46. Gary Spicer, *Impermanence*: Drawing process and archiving, 2022.

3.2

Phenomenology v New Materialism > OOO

The idea that when we 'see' an object, the object looks back (Merleau-Ponty 2014:71), was fundamental to my *House* series of images made in late 2016 (FIGS 47 and 48). Merleau-Ponty stated that it is human agency that drives our interactions in the world, so the world (and the House) only exists in relation to us. Instead, New Materialism 'de-centres' the human and challenges the notion that we live in a world of dumb and immutable matter where objects are passive and inert. Rather, it contends that matter is active and dynamic.



FIG 47. Gary Spicer, *House*, 2016.

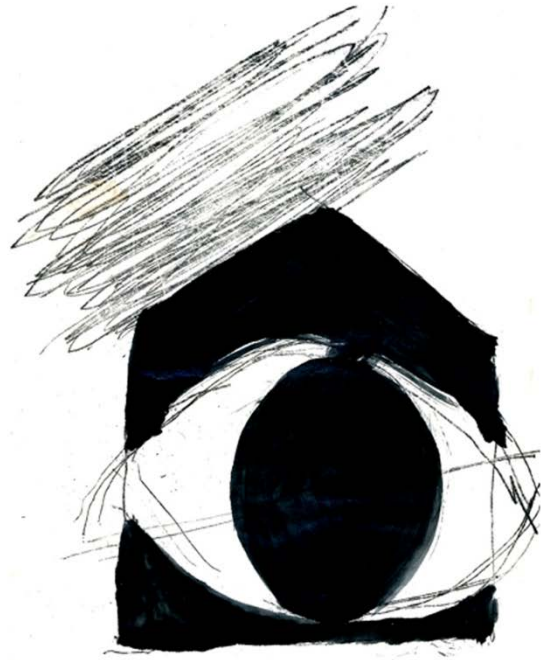


FIG 48. Gary Spicer, *House and Eye*, 2016.

Consistent with phenomenological thinking, my practice is concerned with the nature of the experience and how it can be described rather than what the experience is and how it is structured and composed. New Materialist ontology, however, stresses that only physical matter is real, and discounts notions of the ideal⁹⁶ and the spiritual – which is very much the domain of my practical approach. The approaches do intersect, however, in their examination of the nature of reality, be it ontological, phenomenological, or material.

Although New Materialist thinking is an ontology that is essentially non-representational, like phenomenology, it is still concerned with describing the everyday practices that shape the behaviours and experiencing of human beings.

⁹⁶ Ideal. In the late 14th Century, this meant archetype, ‘the concept of a thing in the mind of God’, hence the allusion to the spiritual and the transcendent. Both are at odds with a New materialist ontology. The abstract notion of an ‘idea’, and the concept of ‘ideal’ that exists only in the imagination, are both derived from the same Greek etymological roots.

Where it diverges from phenomenology is that it is obsessed less over representation and what it means to be human. It is concerned instead with how everyday life shows and manifests itself, and speculates about a 'heightened sensitivity to the fleshy realities of the human body, and how taking the body seriously introduces phenomenological registers that exceed representation' (Thrift 2008:142).

In essence, New Materialism disputes that the world can be – or needs to be – reduced to a picture or a sentence⁹⁷, contesting that.

'Human thinking is action-oriented, scrappy, deeply embodied, heavily influenced by affective radiations, surfing on the cusp of activity, very often nonconscious and not necessarily centred on language' (Boyd, C, P and Edwardes C, 2019: vii).

In non-representational theory, writing and drawing – the cognitive tools I use to describe, not represent, my experiencing of Holocaust sites, are viewed as 'stabilising technologies' that reinforce the picture–sentence paradigm. As such, they can be limited, as tools for the body, as the arbiter of their arc and gesture, to reach beyond and to exceed their seeming representational limitations and constraints.

I have tried to move beyond writing and drawing being 'cognitive gadgets' that embed existing routines (Boyd, C, P and Edwardes, C). I have never sought to represent anything other than my experience: the pictures do not represent the sentences, and the sentences do not represent the pictures. Rather they attempt – as with the modal loop – to challenge the limitations and parameters of each, by

⁹⁷ The idea that an unbridgeable gap exists between what can be expressed in language and what can only be expressed non-verbally. Picture–sentence meaning contests that statements are only meaningful if they can be defined or pictured in the real world.

maintaining a fluidity and a porosity that seeks to reimagine the picture–sentence model.

In *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (2018), Graham Harman argues that objects, whether human or non-human, real or fictional, are mutually autonomous, an idea that shapes the way in which all artists and writers systematically interact with objects⁹⁸. Object Oriented Ontology (OOO), in disputing the Kantian ‘duality’ model, instead determines that ‘objects’ are not solely solid material entities, but are also human beings, animals, characters, and even entities such as Holocausts. In OOO, Harman asks whether these other non-human entities experience their existence in a way that lies outside of our own species-centric definition of consciousness.

OOO also posits that, when encountering an object, we, as the wilful active, conscious, individual, are inside a third object⁹⁹, in which the ‘sensual’ object –the Holocaust site in my case – becomes activated and becomes part of our own consciousness and experience. In this scenario, a duality of encounter, where neither could ‘happen’ without the existence of the other, suggests that the third object, as our experiencing, is equal – in terms of an event – to the sensual object itself. So, when in the field, at a Holocaust site, and beginning to draw and gesture my experiencing, the marks made represent a third object, which is impossible to paraphrase or reduce, because the sensual object withdraws from access in the process. Harman designates this activity of material response to the ‘sought’ encounter, as allure:

⁹⁸ First observed by Kant, an ‘object’ refers to that which exists outside of itself, whilst the ‘subject’ refers to the wilful active, conscious individual.

⁹⁹ Here connecting to the third table as discussed in Part III METHOD, Harman’s deduction in which he posits that ‘objects are deeper than their appearance to the human mind’ (Harman, 2012: 4).

‘What we find in allure are absent objects signalling from beyond—from a level of reality that we do not currently occupy and can never occupy, since it belongs to the object itself and not to any relation, we could ever have with it’ (Harman 2011: 245).

As described earlier, my phenomenological practice involves reaching towards and into a space, an experience, signalling from elsewhere, which is posited by Harman as a space that we can never occupy, although the allure compels us to try.

Although my practice does not affirm any direct influence of New Materialist or OOO thinking, favouring instead the phenomenological framework of ‘the state of being’ over the formulation of the process of becoming (Deleuze)¹⁰⁰, I recognise that intersections, which I have not fully explored in this research, certainly exist. These include the areas of embodied experience and its role on affecting ‘the agency of matter in the complex processes/events of producing knowledge’ (Golanska 2017: xiii).

¹⁰⁰ Whilst the phenomenological proposition of the ‘state of being’ appears oppositional to the new materialist thinking of the ‘process of becoming’, in my practice, they both intersect at the point of the embodied, arrested ‘minute’. The ‘state of being’ pertaining to the experiencing of the phenomenal moment and the ‘process of becoming’ both require the necessary alliance of the writer or the artist, with the active and dynamic object.

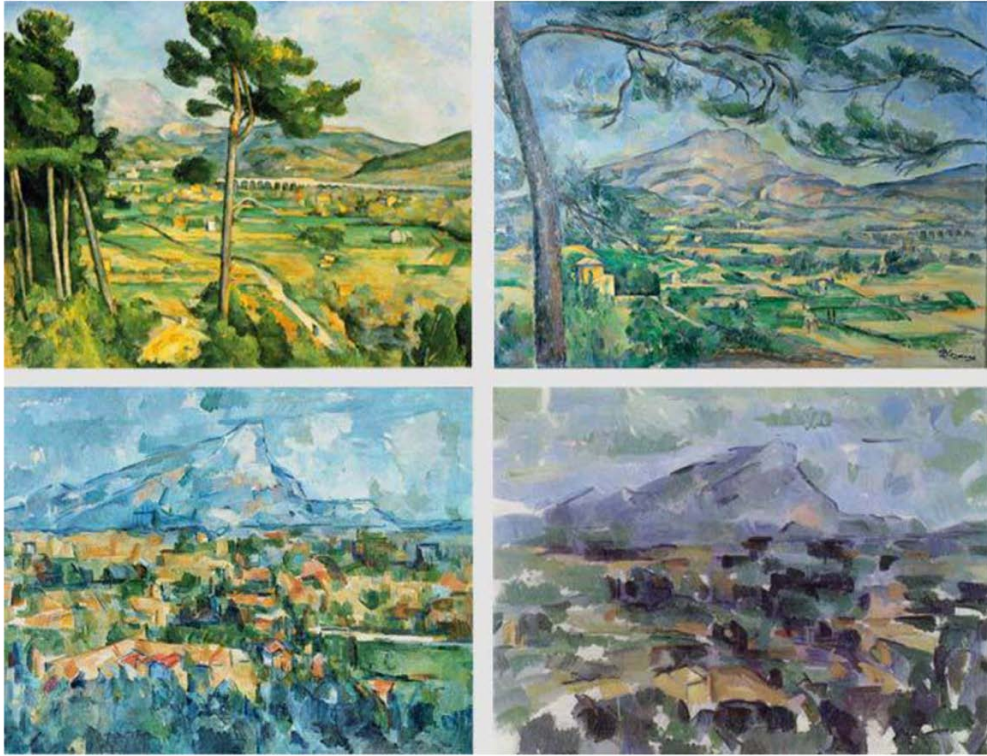


FIG 49. Paul Cézanne, *Montagne Sainte-Victoire*, 1882-1906.

This connects to the earlier discussion on impermanence and the phenomenal passage of time, and how this can be understood as a series of ‘now moments’ of the before and the after. When Merleau-Ponty said of Cézanne’s repeated depiction of *Montagne -Sainte Victoire*, (1882-1906) that he was striving ‘to paint the instant of the world (Negrette 2020: 260), as the definitive ‘now’ moment’ (FIG 49), he was iterating what Deleuze would term later as ‘the process of becoming’. This was a process that Cézanne believed, in order to grasp the reality of the ‘active and dynamic’ Montagne-Sainte Victoire, necessitated him ‘becoming that minute’ as a fully embodied experience in the production of knowledge.

In 1945, Merleau-Ponty published an essay entitled *Cezanne's Doubt*, the same year as *Phenomenology of Perception*. The essay was centred on Merleau-Ponty’s fascination and intrigue with Cezanne's uncertainty, and the struggles and tensions he felt in representing the world as it appeared to him. For Merleau-Ponty, Cezanne's

real struggle was not the classical difficulty of art, that is, art of sufficient rigor and technical precision, 'but the struggle to wrest a meaning from what is inherently mute and yet strains to speak, to bring to vision what is normally transparent and yet is the very vehicle of vision' (Toadvine 1997: 547). This is consistent with the rendering of my own individual experience in the field at Holocaust sites, the uncertainty felt by 'not knowing', and the need to reach and stretch for meaning. Art that is produced as a response to painful experience, such as the Holocaust, when viewed through a New materialism's prism, presents 'new ways of interacting with the past/present/future...can trigger a deeper understanding of [such] events' (Golanska 2017: xv). In the process, it can provoke meaningful and affective connections. Again, in the context of New materialism, this is centred on the use of affect – that is, the experiencing of feelings encountered as part of life, rather than the cognitive thoughts and interpretations of self and others, which has been the pretext of my phenomenological enquiry.

If New materialism was an attempt to counter the emphasis on the subject – as us – in response to the new paradigms of the 21st Century, by 'addressing questions about the nature of matter and the place of embodied humans within a material world' (Coole and Frost 2010: 3). Graham Harman's OOO theory placed this matter – or, rather, the objects – at the centre of its enquiry, to which no hierarchy, no privilege and no idealism was attached. OOO recognised all objects equally, irrespective of scale, and sought to investigate their nature and relations with each another and with ourselves. As I posited earlier in Part II THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND SITUATION: The Quality of Becoming, it was Harman's ideas around the 'waking up an object', and how a literal – static – configuration and understanding does not have to be the preminent aspect of its 'existence'. This has reinforced how, in my practice, writing and drawing have served as processes of 'shifting' in the transmogrification of the objects – the Holocaust sites – being encountered.

Through my practice I have investigated the agency of the media and materials I have used, and the marks and gestures that have emerged, and in so doing have questioned what my images, as active and dynamic responses, are 'doing', rather than what they might 'mean'. The inert and closed idea of meaning and materialism ultimately interests me far less than the dynamism inherent in doing, or 'happening'. It is the potential volatility of doing, its unpredictable nature, that defines the approach of writers and artists in my field who are not seeking answers or a solution, but who place virtue in the creative act despite the unforgiving nature of the active and dynamic nature of subject matter.

The value of such endeavour is in the attempt, the capacity to do so only developing through repeated attempts to engage, and it is this chasm – this differend¹⁰¹ – between the signifier and the signified that makes aesthetic representation so problematic. The question – and the challenge – is how to navigate what, in *Remnants of Auschwitz* (1999), Giorgio Agamben called 'an essential lacuna' (Agamben 1999: 13) when describing the impossibility for Holocaust survivors to bear witness to something that cannot be borne witness to – and on what terms, as artists, and thinkers, we do so.

¹⁰¹ Differend. The term coined by Jean-Francois Lyotard (Lyotard 1988). Initially as a response to Holocaust denial and the position that it is only those that experienced the gas chambers who can attest to their existence. Differend refers to 'a wrong or injustice, which cannot be proved to have been a wrong or injustice because the means of doing so has (also) been denied the victim' (Oxford reference).

PART IV

PROCESS

Part IV focuses on process, and discusses the actions and procedures used to realise the aims of the project and their application to practice. Initially, I will provide an overview of the phenomenological method and how I have registered my perceptual responses to the physicality of Holocaust spaces, objects, or memories. Under the heading of 'The Phenomenological Toolkit', I will then discuss the creative procedures employed during the project. I will discuss drawing and writing, which lie at the core of my creative practice, and explain how, in response to phenomenological experience, repetitive and habitual responses are mitigated, and the opportunity for surprise and spontaneity encouraged.

In 'The Opening up of Form' I will explore how, through drawing, the process of our own making, and our own looking, is revealed, and how, by being inextricably bound to the body and to movement, it represents the most direct conduit between the eye, the mind, and the hand. 'The Drawer's Gaze' will focus on the space of drawing, and how the body is experienced at Holocaust sites which, I will argue, is essential to the understanding of both the object of the encounter and the process of drawing itself. I will then concentrate on the writing. Here I am referring specifically to the 'practice-text', creative writing made either in the field, as a later distillation, or as part of a 'modal loop' when ekphratically responding to drawing or photography. I will argue that, in the practice, the writing process is a primary stimulus and aid to perception that has served as a means of excavation and self-analysis (Tilley: 2016). This will be followed by a discussion on how drawing and writing intersect in the practice, both as plural activities, not limited by convention, but existing instead as fluid and malleable forms that are able to open up and reveal – to 'un-conceal'. I will then stress the importance of the journals in the practice and how they exist as traces

– and stages – of learning, as well as repositories of thought, musings, meditative contemplation, and curiosity.

I will then consider the significance of printmaking, reprography, and photographic processes in the practice. Etching, as a contradictory medium in its use of acid and steel, corrosive action, and emergent properties, progresses into the use and significance of cloth and the process of devore or burnout. I will conclude the section on the ‘phenomenological toolkit’ by explaining how laser cutting technology, used to topographically plot drawings, which are then transmogrified through reprography via the flatbed scanner, precipitated the emergence of light, became a leitmotif in the practice. I will conclude Part IV by briefly explaining the process of modal looping, which may involve writing about a visual image from my practice, in a form of ekphrasis, and then redrawing from the writing. This is a process that, rather than diluting the work, filters and intensifies the ‘gesture’ in relation to the experience.

4.1

Overview of the Phenomenological Method

The project has articulated why feeling and ‘feeling into’ the object – here, the Holocaust sites – is fundamental to the process of artistic production and making, particularly when viewed through a phenomenological lens. Indeed, this is also true of viewing the work. I have sought to examine how the roles of artist and spectator can become conflated where ‘The artist becomes the spectator of his own work as he creates it’ (Dufrenne 1973: xivi).

Phenomenology is the most appropriate tool of analysis because it ‘provides descriptions not explanations’ (Priest: 2003:31). Through my practice I have structured my experiences so that what I make is not just a version of the experience – which it clearly is – but is also evidence of the process of feeling into the experience,

and ideation. Engaging in this way, confronting the remnants of the Holocaust sites themselves, and with the added genealogical dimension to my practice, has compelled me to generate particular and nuanced creative written and drawn responses.

My perceptual responses to the physicality of Holocaust spaces, objects, or memories, intend to register 'rich and thick'¹⁰² descriptions (Tilley 2016: 25), and to intuit the myriad nuanced 'notes' that derive from these embodied experiences. An overview of my phenomenological methodology is as follows:

1. Initial research and investigation. Mapping the territory. List-making. Appreciating its former structure and geographies. Note: This does not preclude 'epoche' i.e., Husserl's term for 'bracketing' what is known, or knowledge of previous responses made in the space.

2. Fieldwork. Becoming familiar with the wider aspects of the places of concern. Walking, attuning, sensating. Opening myself up to it, identification, making myself receptive. How by being attuned do I identify with the experience, how does it resonate, what is being evoked?

3. A type of seeing that is remembering, feeling, intuiting, and comingling¹⁰³. This is a prelude, a precursor to the act of drawing. As an example, the following excerpt from some writing of my first encounter with the Płaszów concentration camp in 2016 shows how the narrowing of the gap between the subjective and the objective

¹⁰² The adjectives rich and thick are, for Tilley, devices that allow others to comprehend the textual "nuanced complexity" of the experience, or, in his case, the landscapes being described.

¹⁰³ *Commingling*. A term used by anthropologist Tim Ingold when describing how sound 'as a phenomenon of experience' is a blending, or a *closer or more thorough mingling, of our immersion in, and commingling with, the world* (Ingold 2011: 137).

is also an attempt to fuse the mental and the physical. It fuses both mental and physical responses to the initial experience.

Still, in stasis and mute. Motioned only by the action of my looking. I am brought, caught in the fabric of my own history, strewn as that is with the innumerable traces of others, to this place. Through which I now walk, wander, wonder, my feet being pricked by the sharp grass, through the gaps in my sandals but always treading softly through the silence. Embodied, I am present. Necessitating my Alliance: A meditation on the Płaszów Concentration camp. (Volume 2: Essay 3).

4. Confronting the significance of the space. The representation and mediation of experience. Writing and visually recording – be it still or moving film. Creating a written and visual text, not just diagrammatic or abbreviated notes. There is a recursive¹⁰⁴ aspect to my practice that seeks to identify patterns through repetition, doing the work enough times to reach ‘attunement’.¹⁰⁵

5. Revisit data. Work in the studio, drawing and writing. Emergent narratives. Modal looping.

¹⁰⁴ Recursive. Deborah Harty in drawing//phenomenology//drawing: an exploration of the phenomenological potential of repetitive processes considers how the process of repetitive drawing can record the movement and sway of the artist’s mind and the making of the drawing itself. I will interrogate this phenomenon in The Emergent Subject: Artful Research (Volume 2: Essay 5).

¹⁰⁵ Attunement. Becoming attuned, in harmony but also for me a conceptual phenomenological approach to finding resonance, soundings at the sites I visit. ‘Capable of being affected and moved’. For Heidegger ‘this was Anganglichkeit meaning letting something come close’. (King 2001: 57).

4.2

THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL TOOLKIT

4.2 i

Drawing

The fundamental attributes of drawing and its intimacy and immediacy can be thought of as phenomenological through their capacity to record visible traces, but also as a conduit through which bodily movement, gesture and pulse can detect and magnify our connectedness to the world. Drawing animates our 'being in the world' through its connectedness to our body, and our 'being' is made demonstrable through the trace of this movement. Throughout the project, I have sought to interrogate the relationship between the sites of Holocaust history and myself. I also wanted to make sense of why such sites resonate with me in the way they do, by engaging with this past and its 'imagined' legacy using a phenomenological approach.

The approach is as follows:

- When I draw, I am paying attention to what I am doing but, paradoxically, trying not to think about it, a process familiar to practitioners of exploratory drawing. I am watching what I am doing. I become an observer¹⁰⁶.
- I am present in the act of the drawings becoming, in the moment.
- I am aware that what I am doing is 'happening' right now. As when one plays a musical instrument and is thinking, rather than being in the present moment.
- I am not critical. I do not choke the potential of the moment. I am meditative.

¹⁰⁶ A process like psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theory of 'optimal experience' (2008), which posits that what makes an experience genuinely satisfying is a state of consciousness he called 'flow'. In this state people typically experience deep enjoyment, creativity, and attunement.

4.2.i

The Establishment of Restrictions and Obstacles.

The drawing process is riven with habit, repetitive tendencies and rituals – all obstacles when engaging with objects phenomenologically approach. Such an approach places importance on the individual’s intuitive responses to ‘momentary’ sensorial experience. The drawing is ‘of’ nothing other than the physical tracts of this encounter. The method mitigates repetition and habit and creates the opportunity for surprise and spontaneity. A phenomenological approach to drawing necessitates that the artist becomes a conduit through which the experience is processed into action, gesture and mark, a process of transmogrification.



FIG 50. Maggi Hambling, *6am drawings*, 2021.

The direct transmogrification of thought into gesture as a tool for mitigating habit and repetitive tendencies is demonstrated in Maggi Hambling’s *6am drawings* (FIG 50), which, in a similar fashion to Julia Cameron’s concept of *Morning Pages* (2013), discussed later in Writing 4.2iv, are precursors to the grander statement of painting

– or writing – which seek to expedite awareness and attunement. Such exercises, rooted in Breton’s psychic automatism, encourage the artist or writer to witness the process of ‘thought functioning in a real manner’ with the principal objective of accessing the ‘pure and the real’ (Matthews 1991: 45). Indeed, Hambling describes herself as ‘a seeker after the truth’ and as wanting to make ‘something real’ (Hambling 2023).

My approach has drawn significantly on the ontological writings of Martin Heidegger¹⁰⁷ and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who both posited that the body is an important source of mediation between the self and the world. This is an important factor in determining the efficacy of my responses to the Holocaust sites I encounter. I have employed drawing, as a tool of phenomenological enquiry, as the apparatus to test this out. The psychic automatist method of seeking to access the functioning of thought, which, in my case, is in relation to the representation of experience, is central features of its execution (FIG 51).

¹⁰⁷ It must be acknowledged – particularly in the context of this thesis – that Heidegger was a Nazi whose philosophical position in 1933 was aligned with the notion that Hitler offered Germany a new reality. After the war Heidegger described the Holocaust as a manifestation of modern technology, like mechanised agriculture. Whilst some would suggest that these extreme views should see his writings banned as being dangerous and subversive, others cite his politics as being an ‘escapade’ (Arendt) and naïve, and that he, along with many others during this period, succumbed to temptation.

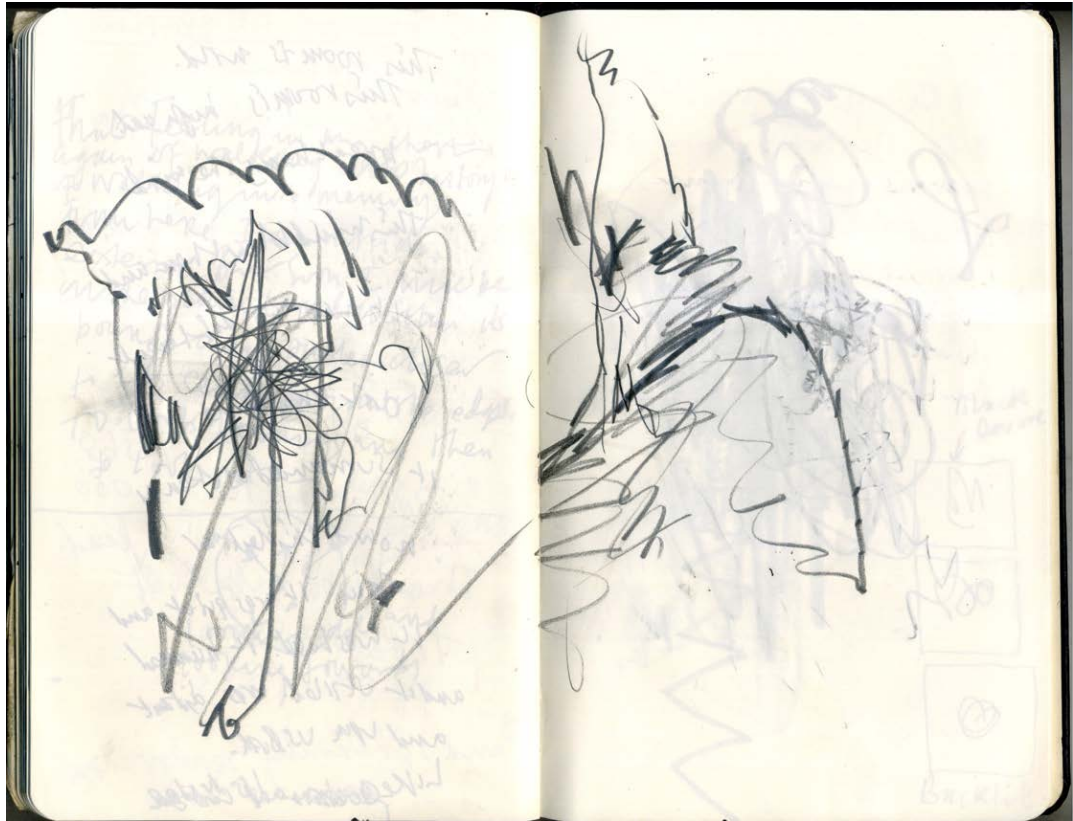


FIG 51. Gary Spicer. *The Wind Blew, then it was Silent 2*, Journal 13, 2020.

In responding directly to what is being invoked by the Holocaust sites I encountered, my body, best described as being like a receptor attuned to mediate stimuli with a physiological visceral response, there is another clear link to psychic automatism i.e., the concept of my body as a machine, or apparatus, a vessel through which the subconscious takes precedence over the wilful and the deliberate. Deleuze and his thoughts on abstraction, the making of covert and indirect – often subconscious – references, and the derived notion of the indeterminate and the new meanings generated, also inevitably suggest intertextual origin, where writing and drawing exist at the intersection of other images and texts. Again, the complicit nature of self and the Harmanian notion of the third object, as the uniquely individual consequences of the commingling of the real object – myself – and the sensual object – the Holocaust site – are discussed earlier in Part III: METHOD.

It would be inaccurate, however, to suggest that the process is unconscious. The drawn responses are reflexive and emergent, and I am conscious of my body, as an apparatus, and its activity. Indeed, this consciousness is integral to the practice. In the micro form, this results in the production of drawn or written artefacts, and in the macro, it represents part of the excavation of my own genealogical history and the location of selfhood. In the context of my practice, drawing is a tool to excavate and make visible something of these pasts. In *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968), Merleau-Ponty describes the 'intertwining' of subjective experience and objective existence as a 'chiasm' (1968: 130), suggesting that subjectivity arises from the space 'in-between' these bodies of experience. My practice investigates this gap through writing and the 'happening' of drawing. The gap or space of encounter is discussed in *Necessitating my Alliance* (Volume 2: Essay 2).

In *The Object Stares Back* (1996) James Elkins describes the 'happening' of the drawing process, suggesting that:

'As you look you have to also be thinking about drawing, so that in a way you are recording what you see. This is a specialised kind of seeing which entails the thought of drawing and the thought of seeing (sensing) together' (Elkins 1996:96).

The modes of the artist can be many and varied; the phenomenological approach is not reducible to the manipulation of media and materials alone as others view them, although the integrity of the materials and the artist's knowledge of their unique properties and behaviours are important. Ideally, the mode and the rationale for its use should be traceable in the resultant work.

4.2.ii

Drawing: The Opening of Form

In *The Phenomenology of Painting* (2004), Nigel Wentworth assumes the intentions of the artist are fully formed. This is not the case for me when drawing. I know my motivation, but how this is manifest is a combination of the materials' agency and the process of 'making' itself'; certainly, when the method is phenomenological and is attempting to describe and be faithful to individual experience. What drawing is, or what it could be, drives the practice. I posted a version of this writing on my website *Creative Culture*¹⁰⁸ (FIG 52) early in the research entitled *Le-Plaisir-au-Dessin - The Pleasure of Drawing* (Nancy)¹⁰⁹.

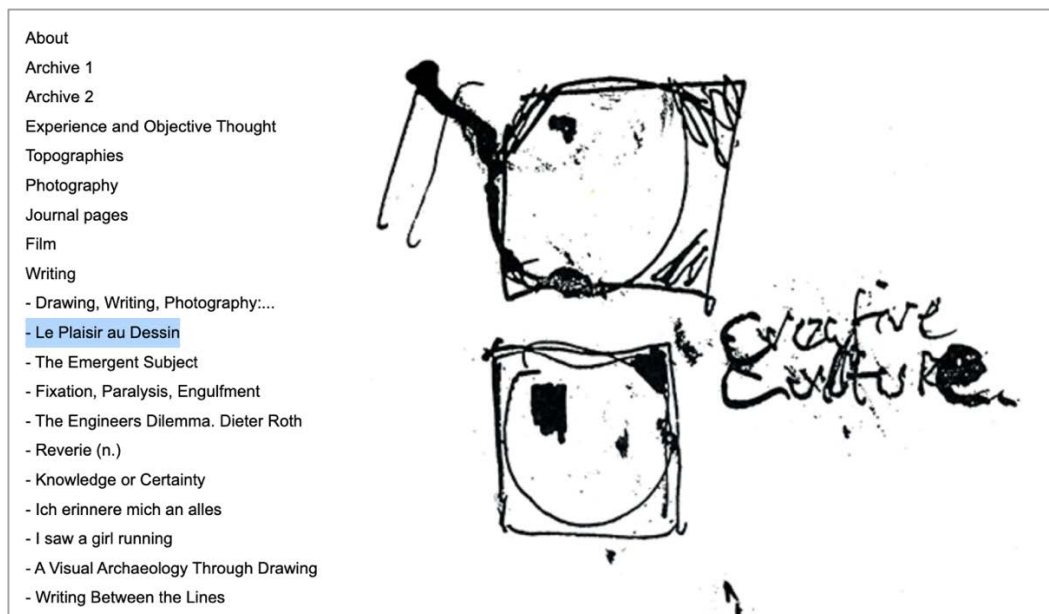


FIG 52. Gary Spicer, 'Creative Culture' Website splash page, 2022.

The writing was an attempt to pull threads of knowledge together to construct a working meaning and definition that embraced what it felt like to draw, how it is

¹⁰⁸ **Creative Culture** garyspicer.net A catalogue of writing and practice.

¹⁰⁹ <https://garyspicer.net/Le-Plaisir-au-Dessin>

manifest to the viewer, and how the activity related to the world – or worlds. Rather than reproducing that definition verbatim here, I have included a critique below as a revision of the thoughts and ideas originally posited. It is expanded here to include cross references gleaned through the research.

Drawing is distinctive by virtue of the primacy of its method, in its directness. John Berger articulated this when making the comparison with painting, that ‘drawings reveal the process of their own making, their own looking, more clearly’ (Berger 2005: 43). This process is inextricably bound to the body and to movement, representing the most direct conduit between the eye, the mind, and the hand, and, as soon as the thought is imagined, it is brought into existence by the mark.

If the mark is an articulation and extension of our body, the somatic and the corporeal, made evident and becoming visible, I was curious about why we gesture, why we express and how this is manifest. How does the arc and journey of the drawn line correspond to the body, particularly alluding to dance and motion. In *The Corporeal Turn* (2009), Maxine Sheets-Johnstone explains how, through drawing, we animate aesthetic surfaces and bring into view and enliven new expanses. How this process formed early understandings of contour, shape, and boundaries, as evident in Palaeolithic cave art, ‘attests to the discovery of drawing and its power to capture the form of a thing by delineating its form and boundaries’ (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:142). This process began our early emergent understandings of the world and the relationship our body has to it. It also signalled the way in which drawing would evolve into a ‘qualitatively more complex tactile-kinaesthetic act’. Such learning that began with the animation of form led us to ‘open ourselves to new possibilities of attunement’ (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:144), and ultimately created the potential for all modes of artistic expression.

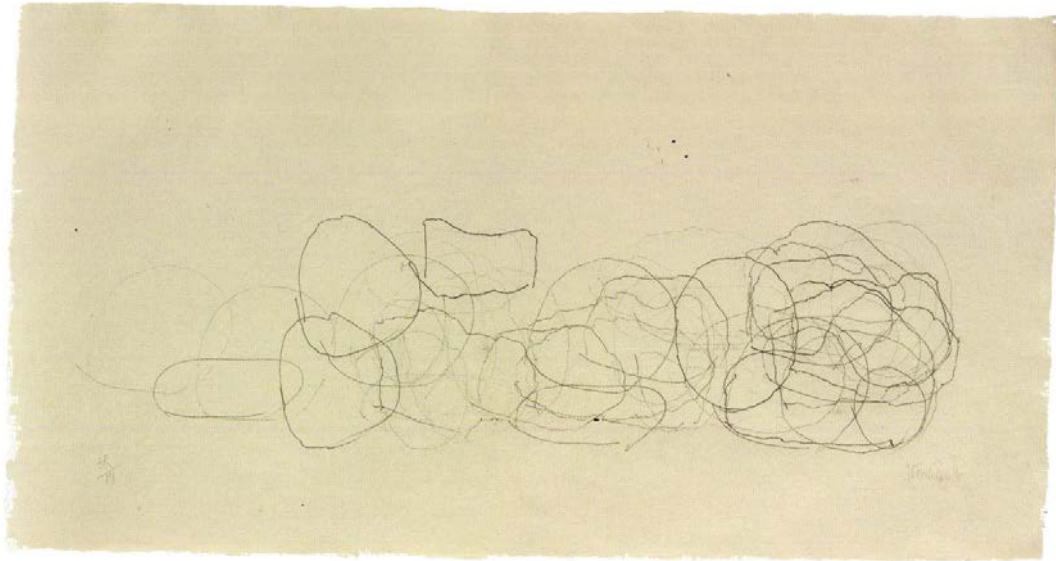


FIG 53. John Cage, 3R/17 (Where R = Ryoanji), 1992.

For composer John Cage, drawing was often a means of meditative contemplation embracing chance and encounter. His *R=Ryoanji* series, begun in 1983 (FIG 53), and inspired by the arrangement of fifteen rocks in a garden in Kyoto, reflects on the randomness of nature and involved drawing around stones, tracing their organic form and nuanced structure.

Like *Slimaki* 2016 (FIG 54), these drawings are attempting to reveal the process of their own making, The drawing determined by the edge and profile of the object, using chance encounters with objects in its making. *Slimaki* 2016 was a series of drawing made by drawing round snail shells collected from a field trip to Płaszów in the spring of that year. Whilst my practice is not concerned with such a systematic approach to chance as Cage, the *Slimaki* series of images is reminiscent of Cage's work in terms of the drawing existing as a graphic and a symbolic representation of place – through the object, and as a process where the action of the 'doing' is privileged and traceable.



FIG 54. Gary Spicer, *Slimaki (Snails)* 2016.

Tim Ingold reinforces how drawing relates to anthropology, arguing how artists are ‘wanderers, wayfarers, whose skill lies in their ability to find the grain of the world’s becoming and to follow its course while bending it to their evolving purpose’ (Ingold 2011: 211). The ‘act’ of drawing, the gesture, is significant and complicit in the resulting trace that is left on the surface. For Pollock (FIG 55) and Frankenthaler (FIG 56), the process and the intention come before the object, and it is the energy and the action of the ‘doing’ that is privileged.



FIG 55. Hans Namuth. *Jackson Pollock*, 1950. **FIG 56.** Ernst Hass *Helen Frankenthaler*, 1969.

Pollock and Frankenthaler both made work somatically, their bodies in a symbiotic and necessary relationship with the materials, the substrate, and the act of creation itself. Their processes were significant enough to be documented by film-makers Hans Namuth and Ernst Hass, respectively. In both cases, the canvas was the stage, the field of energy and activity. For Pollock, 'vivid, metonymic traces of 'the body of the painter' [are] epitomised by the gesture' (Gaiger, J & Wood, P 2005: 142), and for Frankenthaler this was epitomised via 'pouring, pushing, smoothing gestures as she knelt on or near the canvas as a surface continuous with her space and movements' (Gaiger, J & Wood, P 2005: 144). I followed a similar approach with the *Khurbn* series of images made in the field at Płaszów in 2017 (FIG 56 and 57), where the attempt was to open up and locate form through the making and the doing.

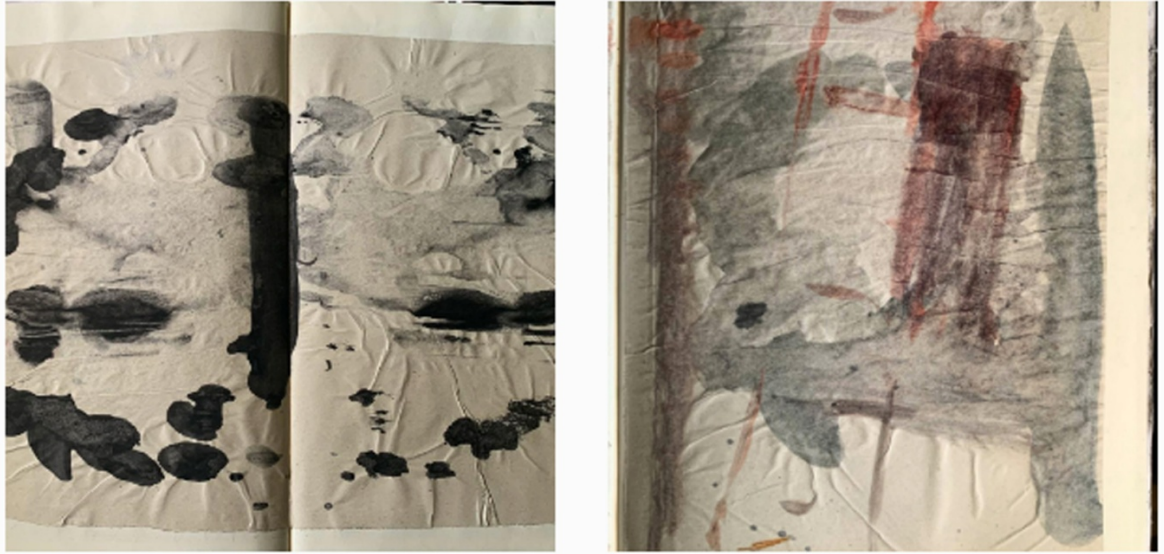


FIG 57 and 58. Gary Spicer, *Khurbn I and II – Destruction* 2017.

Maxine Sheets-Johnstone makes an interesting distinction between drawing and dance, which is that, whilst the process of drawing is determined by the opening of a form, a dancer moves through it, which in turn is moving through them. But common to both modes and crucial to the phenomenological approach, is that 'painter and dancer take their bodies with them' (Sheets-Johnstone 2009: 308).

Similarly, Richard Serra emphasises the somatic nature of drawing, originating from 'the act of doing'. (Hoptman 2002: 11) He further contends that drawing is 'ideas, metaphors, emotions, language, and structures' (Hoptman 2002: 11).

Freilekh (FIG 59), below, was made at the Kupa Synagogue, a 17th Century synagogue in Kraków, during a musical performance. It demonstrates the connectedness of drawing to movement and dance. It was drawn without looking at the page, and references the system and format of musical notation.

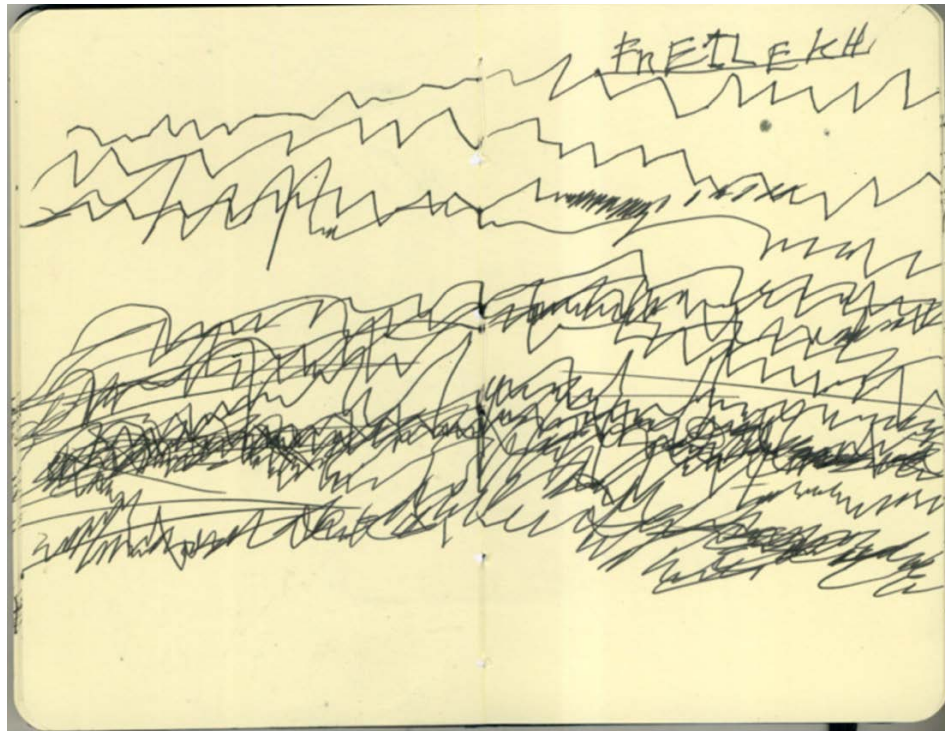


FIG 59. Gary Spicer, *Freilekh* 2017.

Consistent with the corporeal dimension, Paul Klee described drawing as ‘taking a line for a walk’. (Klee 1960: 16) This walk can be conscious or unconscious, planned, or unplanned, continuous or broken, straight or articulated and twisting, quick or slow, ponderous or urgent. John Berger added that ‘drawing is discovery’; and introduced the idea of the journey and of encounter and Louise Bourgeois linked further with the body, saying that ‘drawing suppresses the unspeakable’ (Kovats 2007: 240), and suggesting that drawing has the capacity to speak and shape understanding of the otherwise inexpressible. She goes on to say that ‘the unspeakable is not a problem for me. It’s not even the beginning of the work. It’s the reason for the work; the motivation of the work is to destroy the unspeakable’ (Kovats 2007: 240). Bourgeois attests this can never happen, drawings do not speak, but that it remains the aim. This concurs with the overriding ambition of art that confronts Holocaust trauma – that of reaching to express something of the catastrophe, always in the knowledge that attaining any such ‘likeness’ is impossible, and by engaging in the attempt, we are confronting and reconciling something in ourselves in relation to it.

When Gaston Bachelard said in *The Poetics of Space* (1994) that ‘we cover the universe with drawings we have lived’ (Bachelard 1994: 33), he was referring to the imagination and how it ‘mows and ploughs’ (Bachelard 1994: 33) to generate individualised furrows of investigation and thought. This is translatable into visual and written form. Bachelard was referring to topophilia¹¹⁰, and the emotional connections we share with physical spaces, real and imaginary. But drawing generally necessitates personal and individual ways of responding to the world; it being the most direct conduit between brain and hand, through which we can represent or express ideas and feelings.

Drawing is an intimate and private act that makes visual the traces of our thought processes before they become formalised. ‘Drawing is an opening. The opening is the beginning, the origin’ (Nancy 2013: 01), Drawing thereby is initially defined as an inchoative concept – a beginning, and is primal and part of a semantic order, which combines act and potency. Drawing has traditionally been seen as the precursor of greater things, the prelude, the ‘birth of form,’ (Nancy 2013: 54) rather than the resolution or the ‘thing’ itself, the statement, the building, the monument, such as *Guernica* (1937) or *The Birth of Venus* (1480) perhaps.

Definitions of what drawing is, and what it constitutes, litter the discourse. Definitions that exist to serve curatorship and bureaucratic need, focus on its formal material characteristics, and what distinguishes it from other categories such as painting or sculpture. An example would be ‘the act of making lines on a surface...’ to be found in dictionaries of art and similar. Other definitions focus on drawing as being purely the traces of thinking associated with conceptual and process art¹¹¹.

¹¹⁰ Topophilia literally means love of place, popularised by Yi-fu Tuan, a human geographer in his book *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values*, in 1974.

¹¹¹ Coming to prominence in the 60’s these movements dispensed with the focus on the aesthetic that had driven modernism. Instead, it was the concept of the work that was privileged not technical skill or aesthetics.

This is the case when Deanna Petherbridge wrote, in *The Primacy of Drawing* (2010), of ‘the thinking hand’, and alluded to Heidegger’s conception of *handlung*¹¹², which captured the notion of ‘an innately human propensity to act, to bring present things forth into presence, to position them in the space of *Aletheia*’ (Pimentel 2019:188).



FIG 60. Gary Spicer, *Shadow of the Heart*, 2018.

Drawing emanates from the tensions within the body of the artist, and those between the artist and the surface. It is in the scratching, erasing, and refining of the

¹¹² **Handlung.** Meaning in the German to plot. In Heidegger it was associated with repetition and something one puts one hand to, a vocation or craft. It ‘captures the notion of an innately human propensity to act, to bring present things forth into presence, to position them in the space of *Aletheia*’.

drawing as it emerges that moves the artist closer and closer to a truth. Perhaps it is this contemplation of a haptic truth that defines the act of drawing. The verb 'to draw' expresses action and existence. *Shadow of the Heart* 2018 (FIG 60) was made towards the end of my creative psychotherapy, and its essence, along with *The Red Heart* (2018), was to connect with a truth and excavate a meaning through which I was able to reconcile and reframe certain aspects of the past. The drawings represent a haptic truth that emerged as a part of this investigative and iterative process.

4.2.iii

The Drawer's Gaze

When I am in the field, I am aware that I am drawing in a place not intended for drawing. I am also conscious of the effect of the environment on the drawing. Drawing with phenomenological intent necessitates being attuned to the physical and sensual phenomena experienced when present in the space, whether that be outside in the elements, or in an interior space such as the resonant and historic Kupa synagogue mentioned above (FIG 58 *Freilekh*; 2017). It also requires the artist to be sensitive to the temporal dimension of the drawing process itself. Drawing is not the fractional opening of the camera's aperture as with a photograph, but takes time. There is a space of drawing, so how the body is experienced in this space is essential to our understanding of both the object being encountered and the process. I am aware of how other images or memories have superimposed themselves over what I experience at the sites I visit. Nothing is truly neutral. The drawing is a conflation of what we already know and what we do not. In this way there is always uncertainty and doubt. The practice-text below articulates the process.

The drawer's gaze, transformation, reverie...Moment-by-Moment, object-to-object, though, over, and above. Open gazed, not dwelling. Casting...listening for what is being spoken in the silence.

Drawing disciplines my looking, sharpens and makes more apparent my

unknowing. The seeing only confirming the things I don't know and can never know.

A seeing that sees through and into what is being drawn. More than just the eyes and vision – 'knowing' a seeing that sees the nature of things, where the drawer meets the subject...insight?

The penetrating gaze.

The type of 'seeing' experienced through drawing locates the 'specifically human capacity that opens-up to empathy, to compassion with all that live or dies' (Franck 1993:39).

Insight has connotations of knowledge, as does sight. So, what we see is absorbed as knowing and experience and further builds on our understanding of the world and how we exist in relation to it. This type of seeing gives sight to what we have seen, which Paul Klee described using the example of walking through the forest, that the trees in the forest were looking at him. Merleau-Ponty in *Eye and Mind* (1964) described this confrontation as an overlap and reversal of vision with the visible 'it is not enough just to look' (Van Mannen 2005: 42). In practice this is manifest as being sensitive and receptive to what is being 'seen' and entering into a dialogue with the subject. I was always taught by my teacher to have a conversation with whatever was being drawn and to listen, rather than to project meaning onto the piece. How does it want to be drawn, want to be seen? This brings us close to what Mark Taylor defines as learning to listen to silence, as discussed earlier in 2.2 The Ineffable, in relation to Taylor's concept of Seeing Silence.

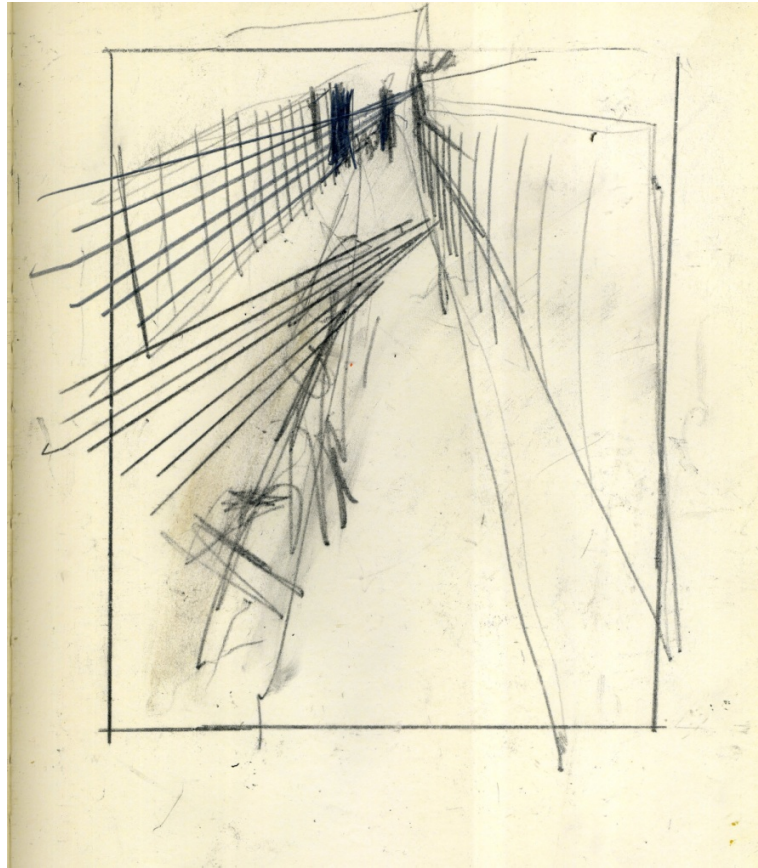


FIG 61. Gary Spicer, *Portal*¹ 2013.

My drawings are evidence of how sites of Holocaust trauma have been seen and drawn, and how they have ‘touched’ me. They also trace the conversations that took place during the process of their forming. This is reminiscent of W.H. Auden’s comment, ‘How do I know what I think until I see what I say’ (McEachern 1984:279).

4.2iv

Writing

I employ the method of allusion in my writing. This is evident in the practice-text in Volume 2. The example below of ekphrasis, written whilst meditating on FIG 61 *Portal*, 2013, highlights the metaphor of shadows and introduces the motif of ‘blackness’, and the concept of the black hole as an all-consuming, powerful, foreboding force, a force beyond our comprehension and understanding. There is

also an allusion to cattle and of a people degraded and reduced to farm animals, being inadvertently led, not to death, but to salvation and heaven.

And cast black into the stone, another shadow over and under theirs meets and they converge, then reduced to a point, are shrunk tight, before moving through an outer darkness and into a black hole. Leading to another place in the past. The lines as tracks lead off and away...off the page...beyond the frame...to the unseen and the absent...

exeunt omnes.

Looking past now into the shadows I see the black.

Along with the limned shapes of the cattle, herded, beaten, and driven... shuffle and sway, steaming and scared.

No one is leading, they move as one,

towards the light.

This example of practice-text uses the covert and the indirect to make and form often-subconscious references. This derived notion of the indeterminate and new, often profound, meanings generated, has intertextual origin¹¹³, which is often a feature of Holocaust writing where the writer is stretching for meaning to find the right note or valence of response¹¹⁴. Biblical references, such as the great flood or

¹¹³ **Intertextuality** (Kristeva 1986). An idea originally posited by Jules Kristeva in the 1960s, describing the way in which a text is shaped by and exists through their relation to prior literary texts. She argued that because of this no text could ever be truly or uniquely original.

¹¹⁴ Sylvia Plath in *Daddy* (1962) in translating her feelings of emotional conflict towards her father and his premature death through Holocaust imagery, and Aharon Appelfeld in *The Iron Tracks* (1998) and his reliance on allusion and allegory to represent the horrors of his Holocaust experiences are two examples.

Babel, are commonly used as a means of explicating the oppression and the scale of the event. When juxtaposed with the Holocaust, such allusions reverberate and shimmer, transforming their prior meaning, and become charged and suffused by their contact with the present. 'An allusion is a form of heteroglossia which moves across time but not in one direction only, as the new retroactively invigorates the old' ¹¹⁵ (Prescott, 12: 2012, referencing Bakhtin¹¹⁶).

Christopher Tilley, who has written extensively on archaeological theory exploring the relations between hermeneutic, phenomenological, structuralist, and post-structuralist perspectives, when discussing writing and its potential for acuity, said, 'the very process of writing is a primary aid and stimulus to perception' (Tilley, 2016: 30). I have long engaged in writing as a method of excavation and self-analysis, and found inspiration early in my studies through Julia Cameron and her concept of *Morning Pages* (Cameron 2013), which constitutes three pages of longhand, stream-of-consciousness writing with no subject, and no themes: the writing can be about anything and everything. In this way thoughts and ideas that may be submerged or obfuscated are excavated and brought into focus (FIG 62 and 63). The realisation that this process was not only concerned with authority and agency, but more fundamentally concerned with the discovery of a sense of authenticity, is the root of my phenomenological approach. The notion of 'being in the world' (Heidegger 2010), and what it means to be oneself, and to make representations about oneself, coalesce in my practice with regard to what my responses to the Holocaust event should or could be. This notion is discussed further in *Necessitating my Alliance* (Volume 2: Essay 3).

¹¹⁵ Heteroglossia refers to variant forms within a single language.

¹¹⁶ (Bakhtin 1981) was referring to stylistic and social differences in language and the inherent tensions that may exist within a singular text.

Free writing 1 (Nov 15)
 Now without fear I make
 a move to a more open space
 a space with rabbits and
 wolves. A space dense with
 trees and a space closed to
 the Sp. Sky. Pumping through
 the lines I can access more
 familiar less rigid areas
 where consumption and
 digestion can take place.
 Place again being central
 to my thinking, a landmark.
 A large cog in the machine
 of my thinking - Open
 waiting to be filled, hungry
 and ached. I need to feel
 valve and pressure. To
 refresh the dire liquidity
 of the day. The detritus
 folded, packed and obscured.
 An oblique array to
 thoughts, an inventory of
 deceit. Why is are these
 ideas less practical than
 they ought to be? Why less
 accessible? Back to the
 space beneath the trees.
 This space glistening with
 happenings yet static +
 unfurled into the ever
 receptive, never full (or)
 complete repository that
 is my imagination. This
 is spun and wringed, fitted
 and placed, ordered and

then removed and then
 returned. Such breaking
 through penetrates the broken
 tops of trees and warms
 the floor. Underfoot
 heating, a constant surprise
 and a strange concept. Back
 to childhood where the trees
 are always absent replaced
 as it was by concrete and
 glass, ^A crescent shaped wilderness
 but a playground of sorts. An
 adventure where I wander
 and wonder. Finding out
 about nothing but something.
 Drift, drift and locate
 chance and serendipity.

Set sail, leave port and
 head South keep traveling
 until the wind shifts or the
 land is hit and another
 world is found, another space
 as yet unyielded to clock
 and time, unmanaged and
 instant. Tick-tock drama
 passing and dis-closing. Holding
 secrets. Tell-tale signs of
 passing, layering + obscuring
 like fossils - compacted +
 forgotten, past. Not remarkable,
 mundane, commonplace but
 then objects, meaningful and
 desired, to be explained
 understood, mediated and
 remarked upon.

FIG 62 & 63. Gary Spicer, Free-writing, pages 1 and 2, Journal 1, 2016.

I use both writing and words as modes of response¹¹⁷ (FIG 64 and 65). I often moved between modes, sometimes distinctly, sometimes with overlap. My writing and drawing practices exist in the chiasm of the abstract and the mimetic, in the sense that mimetic need not be restricted to the skillful reproduction of appearance or the use of illusionistic techniques. It can also refer to an intense identification with what is being observed. A body mimesis is where the response might encode the essential dynamic of the form being observed – for instance, mimesis as mime. In this way it becomes possible to reconstitute and fuse fragments of the historical memory archive with a present-day response to the material Holocaust sites, as they exist today. This might link embodiment and the phenomenological method, as discussed earlier in Part II.

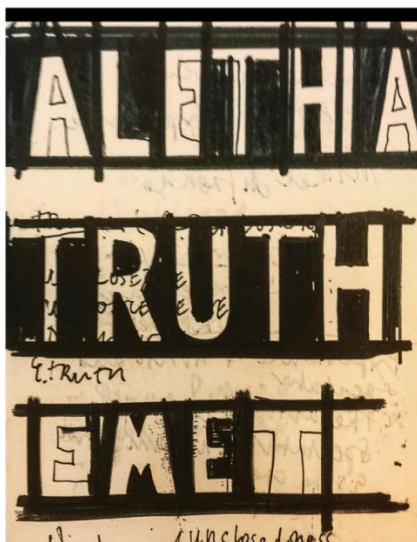


FIG 64. Gary Spicer, *Aletheia*, Journal 5, 2018.

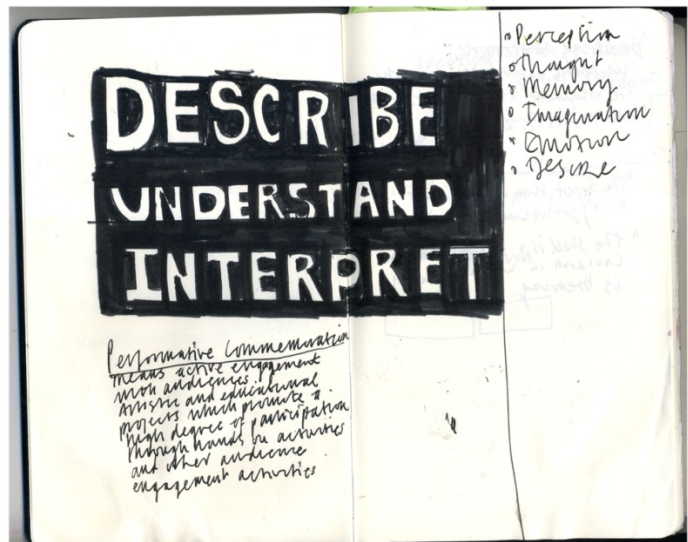


FIG 65. Gary Spicer, *Describe, Understand, Interpret: Lettering as Images*, Journal 5, 2018.

The ontological dimension, through a reading of Merleau-Ponty, is evident in my attempt to find ‘new words [language] to convey [the] experience of the world’ (Dreon 2016:49), which is consistent with Merleau-Ponty’s assertion that language

¹¹⁷ I use both prose as a means of writing through ideas and hand-drawn lettering as images that are restatements of philosophical ideas or literary allusions.

restructures and reconfigures our experience of the world. In *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968), he describes the ‘intertwining’ of subjective experience and objective existence as a ‘chiasm’ (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 130), suggesting that subjectivity arises from the space ‘in between’ these bodies of experience. My practice investigates this gap through writing and visual practice by focusing on experience as a holistic sensual endeavour, where what is visible, vies with what is intangible. This process is explained further in 4.2v Drawing and Writing: Intersections.

Merleau-Ponty compared the phenomenologist to an artist whose palette is words, where language, widely accepted as the primary medium of inquiring about the world, becomes a linguistic trace of lived experience. Visual artists and writers animate their experience through the same prism of wonder and excitement, paying particular attention to similar motivations and inspiration and the desire to seize and articulate meaning. Of course, what they both share is the inability to recreate the world. What both mediums do is to provide tools – pencil, brush, pen – by which the world can be investigated and expressed; mediums that need to be intentionally and intellectually activated to form and shape auxiliary meaning, a meaning that, in relation to the primary experience in the lived world, can only ever be fleeting.

4.2 v

Writing and Drawing: Intersections

In my practice, drawing and writing are not limited or confined by media or convention. This notion of fluidity is a leitmotif, in both the writing and the visual practice, and manifest either as temporality and the effects of time and distance, or as the translation of vaporous thoughts into fluid and malleable form¹¹⁸. Klamán’s

¹¹⁸ **Vapour.** I mean by this that much of the work is instinctive and derives from the subconscious. These thoughts or instincts – which I describe as vaporous – only become tangible once they are drawn or written. Even in this form they remain malleable, fluid and impermanent.

approach in 1986 represented an attempt to open up and reveal through the energies and synergies of body and gesture, a personal and immediate, intuitive truth, an act of un-concealment and aletheia.

My own joint practice of drawing and writing reflects the way in which contemporary artistic practice has seen a blurring of the boundaries between photography, film, writing and painting. This began in the 1950s and gained traction with postmodernist thinking, beginning in the 1970s, which remapped the role and definition of drawing and writing – and the arts in general. This movement was chronicled in *Art without Boundaries* (1972), a pivotal text in my early appreciation of how the traditional orthodoxies associated with our navigation and reading of all creative disciplines was being challenged and undermined by new and subversive approaches.

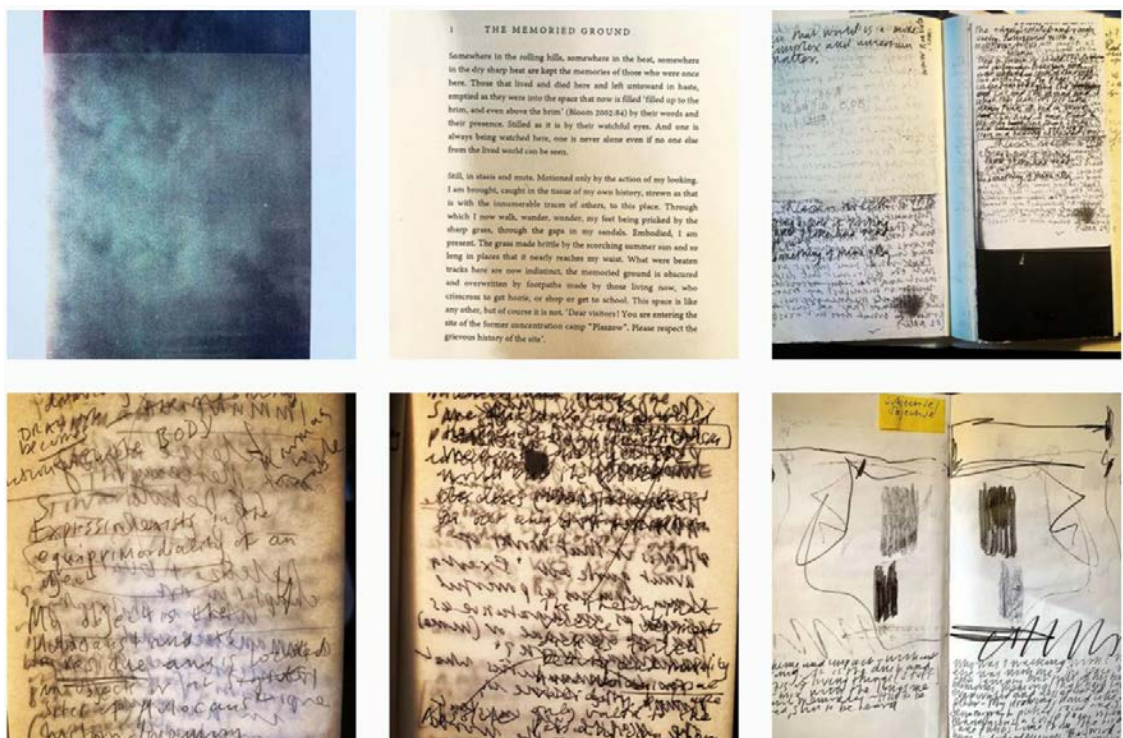


FIG 66. Gary Spicer, *Plurality: Writing and Drawing*, Instagram 2022.

Writing and drawing modes are clearly distinctive, both having their own material and technical vocabularies, but they have sufficient shared vocabulary to facilitate the exchange of certain characteristics, such as that between the auditory and the visual, the gestural, as well as invocation of speech through writing, and of rhythm through drawing (FIG 66).

Joseph Beuys' practice demonstrates a state of flux, overlapping image and language – both written and spoken. For Beuys, writing is never simply coded language. It is breath, sound, rhythm, image, and evidence of the tracts of thinking. This is what Wolfgang Zumdick described as an 'expanded concept of drawing' (Farthing & McKenzie 2014: 21). Beuys' early poem sheets, which he called Schreibebild, meaning 'writing image', were improvised writings, often made over existing images. These sheet notes often deliberately obliterate a previously existing order, as in *Receiver in the Mountains*, 1973 (FIG 67), and *Tunnel*, 1964 (FIG 68), where Beuys outlines essential components of a planned action¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁹ Beuys' actions (or performances) were often ritualistic and drew on themes of birth, death, and transformation.

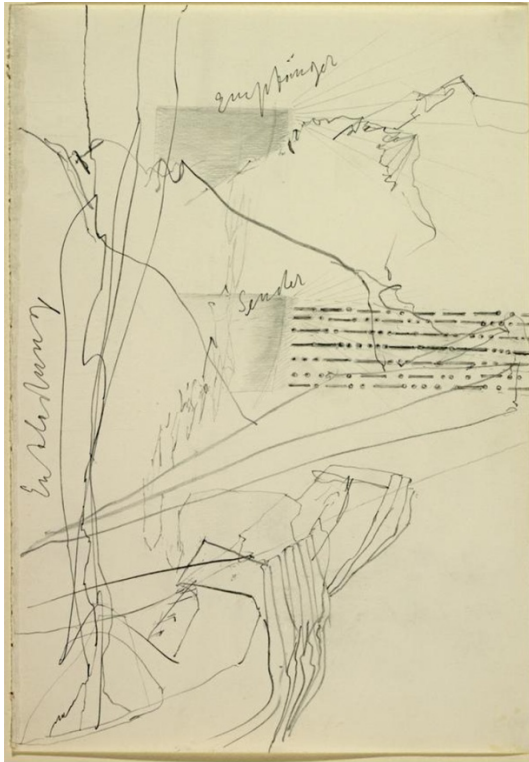


FIG 67. Joseph Beuys, *Receiver in the Mountains* 1973.



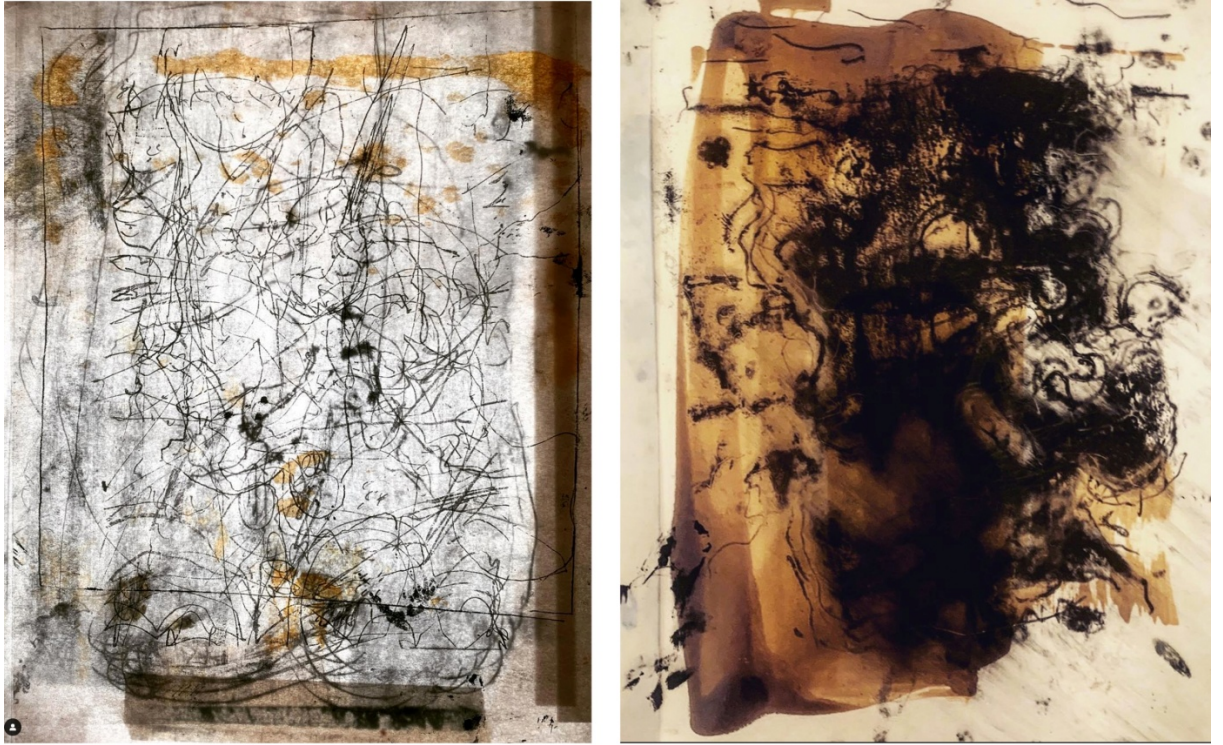
FIG 68. Joseph Beuys, *Tunnel* 1964.

To Beuys, even writing his name was drawing. The juxtaposition and coexistence of text and image that runs right through his work demonstrates his belief that one was no less important than the other. According to Zumdick, the rationale for this strategy lay in Beuys's epistemology and his belief that thoughts and thinking are foundational creative acts. A living experience is formed in our thinking when an object is encountered by our senses and absorbed into our inner space, and 'here through thought, we can re-enter, rethink and reshape what we have experienced and what would otherwise have lacked coherence and not made sense' (Farthing & McKenzie 2014: 24). Thinking, for Beuys, is the primary artistic act, through which the intimate and progenitive modes of drawing and writing are transformed and realised.

In *The After Auschwitz Sublime* (2001), Gene Ray discusses the extent to which words and image are co-dependent for meaning, and whether words are necessary to act as an enabler for the artist to posit the intention of the work. He quotes Rosalind

Krauss when discussing Joseph Beuys and the often-oblique references to the Holocaust in his work: 'One is almost helpless without the explanation offered by the artist' (Ray 2001:57). It is impossible, or unlikely, according to Krauss, that the images or objects themselves have the agency to communicate meaning, and particularly not the specific meaning the artist has in mind. Can objects or images possess a subtext that points to a specific meaning? Gene Ray, again in reference to Beuys, suggests that the adoption of an indirect, rather than literal, approach makes this possible. The 'strongest works function through formal resemblance, material affinity and allegory rather than through direct representation or confrontation' (Ray 2001:59).

The integrity of 'material affinity', its natural behaviour, and what it might innately communicate or suggest, chimes in with my own visual practice, where narrative and meaning are entangled with the use and agency of the media and materials being used. The imagery is dark and heavy, and often permeated with black, and, as the project has evolved, becomes ambiguous, disruptive, stark, and figuratively absent. *The Vis es Ver* (Water and Blood) series, made in 2019 (FIG 19 and 20) use acetate stop-out varnishes and lithographic ink, applied with improvised tools.



FIG's 69 and 70. Gary Spicer, *Vis es Ver* (Water and Blood) 1 and 2, 2019.

The heavy watercolour paper, which could support abrasion and repeated exposure to running water, ensured that the image would not disintegrate in the making, reflecting the failure to erase the image or memory of the Holocaust but recognising its fragility and vulnerability, as in the *Vis es Ver* series.

The series is an interaction with writing and video, made on the banks of the Danube in Budapest, near a monument that consists of 60 pairs of 1940s-style shoes forged from iron by sculptor Gyula Pauer. The videos form part of the *Vis es Ver* body of work, each lasting for one minute and entailing sustained close-ups of the river taken at the exact point at which Jewish victims were shot in the winter of 1944–1945 by the Hungarian fascist 'Arrow Cross militia', and fell into the Danube. See (FIG 71). *Csillamlík* (Shimmer), Film stills Volume 2: Essay 6 discusses this work further.

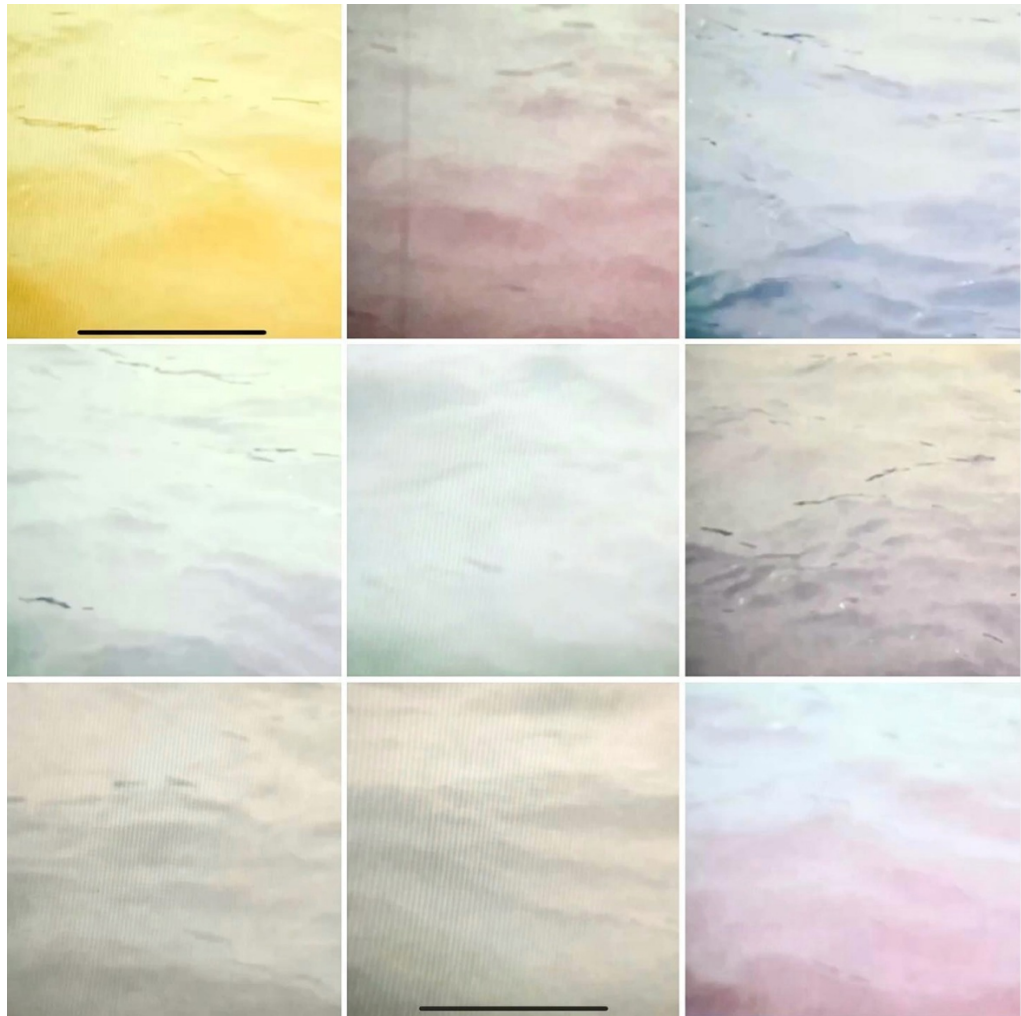


FIG 71. Gary Spicer, *Csillamlík* (Shimmer) Stills from the 1-minute film, 2019.

For the most part my practice does not mix words and images, as in Spiegelman's mimetic, *Maus* (1986) for example, where text and images exist as multimodal facets, serving as a singular medium, such as image and sound in cinema, and are inextricably bound to the motif of the central narrative. In *Maus*, text and image work together in a complementary and integrated form. However, in my work, text and image serve as complementary but distinct modes. I can adopt a mode of writing that is drawing, or conversely a mode of drawing that is writing.

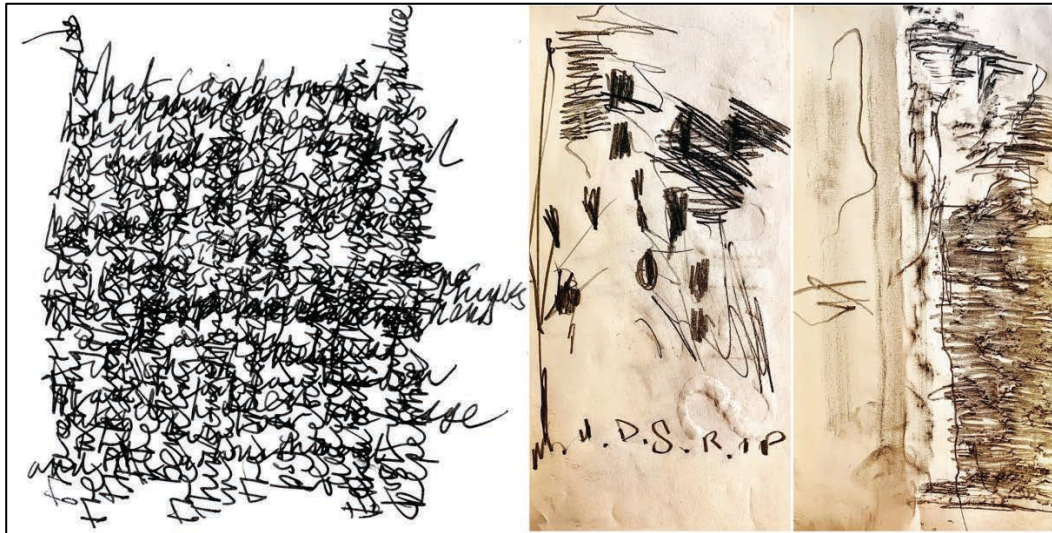


FIG 72. Gary Spicer, *Guilt and Sin*, 2021.

FIG 73. Gary Spicer, *M.D.S.R.I.P*, 2022.

In my methodology, the practice-text and images can overlap, as in *Guilt and Sin* 2021 (FIG 72) and *M.D.S.R.I.P* 2022 (FIG 73), but only in their connectedness to the hand and the motion of gesture. Their intentions are distinct. This is similar to the work of Beethoven or Tapes (FIG 74, 75), where both text and images serve as tools for notation and are transposed into graphic codes using marks to register percepts and phenomena, yielding a type of drawing that is very close to – adjacent to – writing. Adorno, quoted in Krakauer 1998, refers to these codes and their loss as central to the navigation of and excavation of meaning:

‘All works of art are writings, not just those that appear as such; more specifically they are hieroglyphic-like writings to which the code was lost and its lack is not the least of what contributes to their content by that loss. Works of art are language only as writing¹²⁰’ (Krakauer 1998: 131).

¹²⁰ Drawing has existed as an artistic endeavour for 200,000 years, as long as the modern form of human. Writing is only 4 to 5 thousand years old.

Adorno's quote links to my exploration of the notion of a lost code; the loss of the ability to directly interpret abstract material ciphers and to construe meaning from their marks and gestures, in the same way as we now deduce meaning from words and text. The premise that all art is writing informs my practice, where the two methods blur, and serve as codes, impulses, marks, or symbols. This is reminiscent of Tapies again, or a Beethoven manuscript perhaps? The music it signifies is for the moment, ephemeral and immaterial, not existing of anything. Now free from the marks' original intentions, we are left with scrawls, scribbling, marginalia, gestures, and 'hieroglyphic-like' ciphers. Art.



FIG 74. Beethoven, *A page from Sonata No: 32 in C minor op.111.*

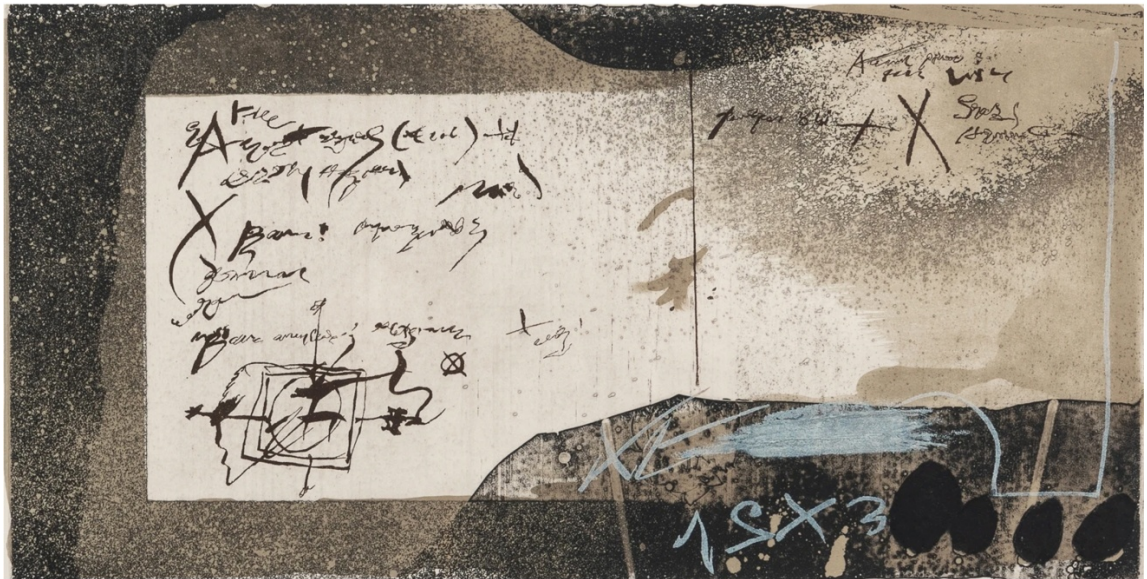


FIG 75. Antoni Tàpies, *Manuscript*, 1976.

4.2 vi

The Journal

Earlier in the thesis, I discussed different modes of writing: expository, descriptive, narrative, persuasive and creative. I sought to explain how these modes sat in relation to Holocaust literature and my own theoretical and creative practice. I discussed how my project activates these modes to re-conceptualise the relationship of past and present, and how I might experience my own history in the context of the past.

The journals exist as living, breathing documents, traces of current learning and reading, process, progress, and interventions, as well as a repository of thought, musings, meditative contemplation, and curiosity. They are a vehicle to record the formation of ideas or prototypes. They often contain the beginnings of practice-text and my responses to place or object, or the out-workings of ideas derived from the field.

The journal is a long-established method in creative reflective and reflexive practice. This probably dates to Leonardo and Galileo during the Renaissance, although it is likely that these journals were most likely bound into volumes much later and not initially conceived as such.

The reflexive journal¹²¹ is central to the process of modern qualitative research, recognising that the researcher is inextricably bound-up with the research and the choices being made as part of it. It is a space where these choices, pre-suppositions, and experiences are made visible to the reader. It is where research outcomes are formulated and constructed, 'a construction that originates in the various choices and decisions researchers undertake during the process of researching' (Mruck and Breur 2003:03).

My journals are the tracts of choices and selections I have made through the research process. They represent how my own position and hierarchies have persuaded and influenced such choices. (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton 2001: 325). Rather than subjugate or create systems to mitigate the effects of this subjectivity, or what (Denzin 1994:501) referred to as 'the interpretive crisis', practice-led research seeks to 'make experiences, opinions, thoughts, and feelings visible and an acknowledged part of the research process' Ortlipp 2008: 695).

¹²¹ The reflective journal is a record written by researchers, which is made and kept throughout the research process. The journal – like my own – includes details of what has been done, thought, and felt.



FIG 76. Bracha L. Ettinger: *Notebooks*. Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Torino. Photo: Pazit Dank 2021.

The journal – or notebook, as she refers to it – is central to the practice of visual artist and theoretician Bracha L. Ettinger, whose visual practice, like my own, is entwined with her written and theoretical thinking. Ettinger's practice extends to psychoanalysis and philosophy. Her notebooks move between the figurative and the abstract and are primarily concerned with light and colour, creating a mood that oscillates between lightness and darkness. In a recent lecture (2021), Ettinger said:

'A lot of my thoughts develop in the solitude of the studio. Me and the colour, me and the pigment, the pigment [who] resists me and the pigment that I try to understand and then how colour works, how colour becomes light, how certain colours never become light. Fragments of thoughts arrive...and I write them down, they arrive through the process. And then to major events and

certain traumatic events to elaborate through the painting... Something I am still struggling with today' (Ettinger 2021).¹²²

Typically, Ettinger's notebooks (FIG 76) 'annotate and trace her associations, reflections, and working notes, joining together words and drawings'¹²³. They represent a duality of practice, writing and drawing where neither mode is elevated or privileged.

In my journals, as evidence of the residual traces of thinking, writing becomes drawing and drawing becomes writing, both being suitable mediums because of their immediacy, and their directness and urgency. Both can be nuanced because they are haptic, can be dragged and gestured, and are responsive directly to mood and evocation. Situated writing and drawings are made on-site, and memory drawings are made afterwards. It is here that narratives begin to emerge. These are determined by the choices made during the process of making, from the resonances between materials, ideas, objects, and subject, with the action of doing leading to definition.

These books – artefacts – represent the journey of the research and have been used as a guide in tracing its progress and determining the direction and content of the thesis. Along with photography, the journals are the repository of the second stage of my phenomenological approach in response to the sites and spaces I encounter, (above in Methods) during which I am familiarising myself with the wider aspects of

¹²² Part of the Lacan in Scotland series of lectures, which seeks to provide opportunities to engage with Lacanian psychoanalysis and related theories. This lecture delivered by Ettinger in November 2021 was entitled *Life Drive and the Feminine*. <https://lacaninscotland.com/> (Accessed 03 March 2022)

¹²³ Bracha L. Ettinger in conversation with Marcella Beccaria and Andrea Vilianni as part of the Bracha L. Ettinger. Bracha's Notebooks exhibition at the Castello di Rivoli in Turin. November 2021–February 2022.

the object, its murmurings, its placeness, becoming attuned to its notes and timbre¹²⁴.

As Ettinger's practice is rooted in her autobiographical past and includes the elaboration of personal traumatic events, it becomes resonant with my own, with her notebooks seeking to explore and analyse such events – or at least represent or confront them. As a record of the analysis of my own personal trauma experienced during the trajectory of this research in 2017, I drew the letters RECOVERY and placed them on the front of my journal. (FIG 77)

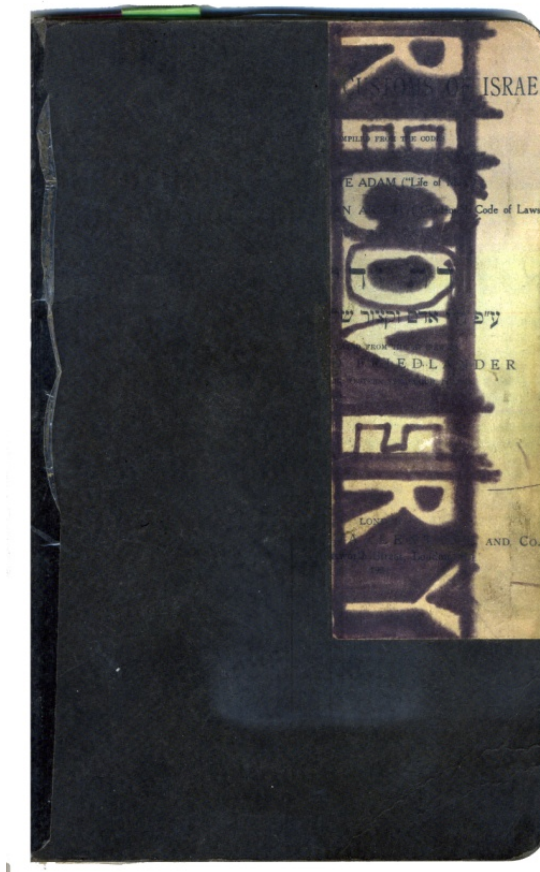


FIG 77. Gary Spicer, *Recovery Journal* (Cover) 2017.

¹²⁴ The idea of notes and timbre emerged during an exposition of the practice in late 2017. This was used to distinguish the uniqueness of individual and nuanced responses and to allude to the concept of the chorus of post-witness response amongst writers and artists contemporaneously in response to the Holocaust.

It was in the space of the journal that I would connect and thread my thoughts and ideas, strategically plotting my journey, week by week. I would scribble here the words and thoughts that resonated and chimed, thoughts that often would enter the room unexpectedly and without warning during therapy, then be written down, waiting to be interpreted. It wasn't long before this process, which involved the excavation and analysis of my genealogical past, began to overlap with my artistic practice, and especially with this research project. It became clear that the personal trauma and intense analysis that followed were inextricably entwined, not only through process and phenomenological method, but through the entanglement of encounters with Holocaust sites of memory and the location of my own partial (sic) Jewish identity¹²⁵. An entanglement rooted in empathy and identification.

The journals signal the trajectory of my thinking, timely interventions, connections, and fortunate encounters. In their chronology they represent the evolution of my understanding and the expansion of my points of reference. As a repository for written reflection and contemplation, they reveal the process and the sequencing of thought and encounter.

4.2 vii

The List

The use of the list is a recurrent motif through the journals. This is where I capture and begin to represent what is emerging. The fractured act of notation is important. Lists can be made in the field, a *précis* of information or ideas encountered, or as a response to work being made, either in terms of the emergent themes of the process or the relation of one to the other. List-making as an art form, the list as residue, the list as a device to service order, evolve understanding and clarity coheres my own creative practice. This is reminiscent of Beuys and his itemised recursive,

¹²⁵ See *The Red Heart: Volume 2: Essay 7*

performative actions (FIG 78), or Twombly's gestural notations, located in a space between writing and poetry (FIG 79).

There is also a link with the bureaucracy of the Nazis, their obsession with numbering and accountancy, that resonates here. As do the archival lists that appear in commemorative memorial spaces such as the *Hall of Names* in Yad Vashem, an ongoing archive of nearly three million pages of testimony, each representing the life story of a Holocaust victim.

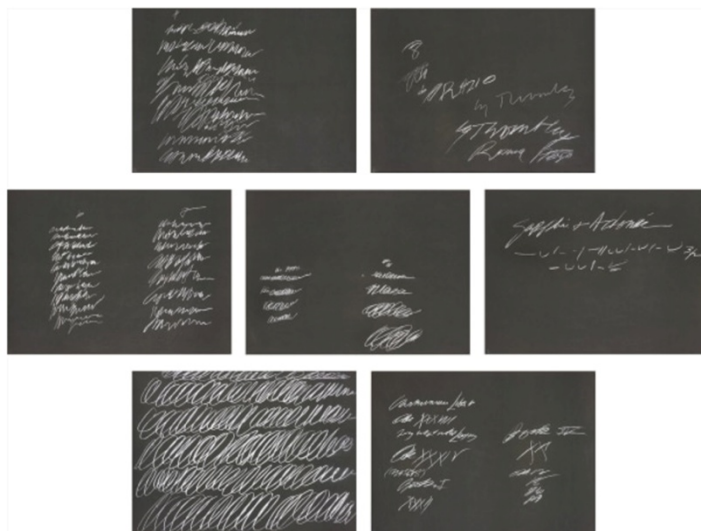


FIG 78. Cy Twombly, *Seven plates*, 1968.

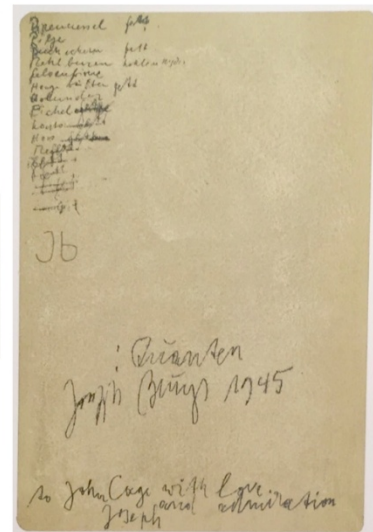


FIG 79. Joseph Beuys, *Quanta*, 1982.

The list is a method of being with the subject or part of a systematic enquiry as to what a piece of work is doing. An important instalment in the process of attempting to reckon with the subject and part of the labour of doing that gives the work value. Henri Michaux, in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (2010), said, 'I write in order to pursue myself' (Quoted in Perec 2008: 10). This describes the extent to which writing and the drawing up of lists – as a constituent part of my phenomenological approach – serve as a method of mapping percepts that derive from my subjective and

objective encounters with Holocaust sites of memory. The process of listing is often the initial means of excavation.

Species of Spaces is layered with the psychoanalysis of memories of spaces and objects, and analyses how such spaces are progenitive and reproduce the memories that belong to them. I was mindful of this when writing Essay 4 in Volume 2, *If Only the Walls Could Speak: The Memory of Place*, remembering how spaces remember events and how 'places are one of the means by which the past keeps itself present' (Emmons 2016: 55). The notion that memories can reside in places other than our minds, such as houses, churches, disused synagogues, or clearings, including Płaszów. As well as deriving from percepts of a space in the field, in my practice listing is also part of the reflection process on work produced, of taking stock, of re-reading the work, of an objective appraisal, that often lead to cuts and further juxtaposition. In addition, as manifest in a broader context of the work, I am aware aesthetically of the allusions of stacks, spines, scars, and vertebrae, and of linear structures like tracks and ribs. (FIG 80 – 83) All objects and referents that begin to conflate notions of the broken body: tracks and traces and the temporally entangled narratives of personal and collective Holocaust narratives.

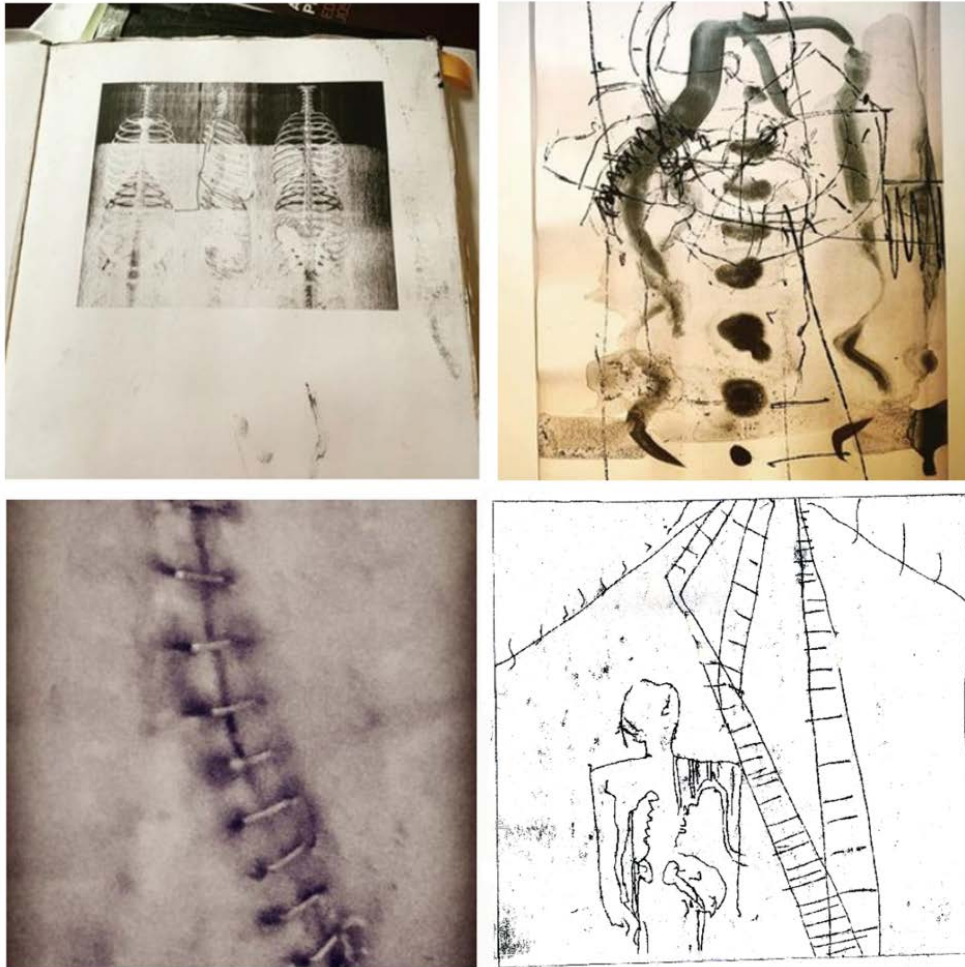


FIG 80 Gary Spicer, *Ribs and spines*, Journal 2 2016 (Top left)

FIG 81 Gary Spicer, *Konwergencja – Convergence* 2020 (Top right)

FIG 82 Gary Spicer, *Scar tracks*, 2018 (Bottom left)

FIG 83 Gary Spicer, *Auschwitz*, 2013 (Bottom right)

The list is often a device I use to begin the process of making work. FIG 84 is a stream of consciousness written after I attended a lecture by artist Jon Barrowclough on the concept of the emergent subject. The recurrent motifs illustrated in (FIG 80–83) often have origin in the journals, which function as an intimate space of affirmation and as a repository of musings and marginalia, which gain traction in the practice. My practice is made more coherent by my awareness of list-making as an art form, and the list as residue, a device to service order, and evolve understanding and clarity. In my practice the list is an important mechanism to build and multiply initial responses, to link and correspond thinking. These words are often the catalysts for the practical and aesthetic choices I make when beginning work. As themes and ideas emerged at

the beginning of the research project, and in the early stages of the *Víz és Vér - Water and Blood* work (2019), and as I was gathering and assimilating sources, I made a list on my website to record my progress. Themes such as the notion of fluidity, of finding oneself in the story, of deep thought – like staring into an open fire – of reverie, erasure and impermanence – which is a leitmotif in my practice generally – began to emerge and coalesce.

- The Emergent Subject

ADAM PHILLIPS [on Sebald] Tradition of Melancholy. People who try to locate this fundamental feeling of loss in history [anchor]...at a loss. The history gives you some sort of story about this. The feeling is that there has been some sort of catastrophe that cannot be located and that one is living in the aftermath of that catastrophe. To capture perception [Patience After Sebald] "I want to tell you a story about a walk but in fact I have told you a story about the catastrophes of Western culture since the Second World War. The fear is; if you stop and allow yourself to be a writer [an artist] the catastrophe will be like an avalanche. Whereas, if you keep walking, you might be ok". HG ADLER [The Journey] serves as an image of fate [or] a timeless metaphor for the plight of the people who have been forbidden. The metaphor also represents memory itself, which sets out onto a journey and is also dragged along through constant wandering. Rings of Saturn. An account of a walking tour in Suffolk. But is really a metaphor for [Adler / Journey metaphor] for the catastrophe in Europe [Holocaust]. The people he meets, the places he visits, the historical and literary references prompted by what he sees and what he senses. To take my mind on a journey. Red Bank [North Manchester] Becomes a palimpsest for meditations about Holocaust events and catastrophe. Memories and continuities [and that nothing ever entirely disappears. To Make film, to draw, etch and print and to write. Mieke Bal: Stories – Acts of Memory. Matta, Gottlieb. Avoidance of contrivance. Emergent narratives. The Emergent Subject. Artist Jon Barraclough. Film and sound. The choices we make affect the narratives. How do we investigate, what emerges? To make the invisible, visible. To re-invoke something that we cannot see anymore. How time affects the way we see things. Transcendental, irreverent, artist as sorcerer. Karen Wilkins American commentator on the Abstract Expressionists. How do we draw transcendental? [This connects with time] Da Vinci Deluge drawings. "Make the clouds driven by the impetuosity of the wind and flung against the lofty mountain tops, and wreathed and torn like waves beating upon rocks; the air itself terrible from the deep darkness caused by the dust and fog and heavy clouds" [The Notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci, 1888, Volume 1, section 605] Drawing:Film:Narrative. Breaking the boundaries of the process of movement and time.

#283 AND THE... (1,215 views)

FIG 84. Gary Spicer, *The Emergent Subject*, garyspicer.net 2016.

Printmaking

At the beginning of the project, I made a series of etchings. It was clear to me that this medium was appropriate. Etching is acid, alchemy, metal, corrosion, layering, heating, melting, revealing, and the image coaxed and emergent. The process is clearly a powerful metaphor for my narratives – most obviously in the use of acids, which were used in the crematoria as an effective and efficient method of murder. Further symbolism of erosion, immersion, and decay are implicit in both ‘processes.’ Through etching, images are re-fashioned, re-imagined, obliterated, or overdrawn, and are palimpsests. The means of etching allows a further dialogue to take place, as the integrity of the process itself, where the artist works in tandem with its own idiosyncrasies and possibilities, is implicit in the drawing and printing process.

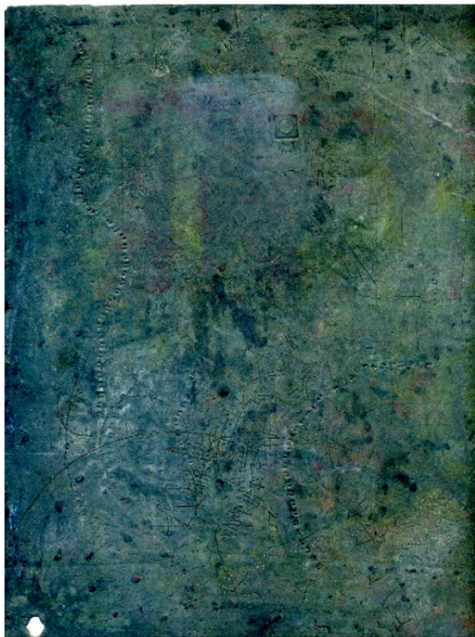


FIG 85. Gary Spicer *Niebieski* [Blue] 2016.



FIG 86. Gary Spicer *Kwas* [Acid] 2016.

The image above, *Kwas – Acid*, (FIG 86) shows yellow staining of hydrofluoric acid accidentally left on the plate before printing, displaced by the pressure of the heavy rollers on the press. It was a hydrocyanic acid-based pesticide invented in Germany in the early 1920s, branded as Zyklon B, that was used in the extermination camps.

The pigment Prussian blue is a derivative of hydrocyanic acid, and over time the walls of the gas chambers began to stain blue. This phenomenon is referenced in the image *Niebieski – Blue*, (FIG 85) where I realised that Prussian blue was a means of visually articulating a direct relationship between the ‘depiction and what it depicts’. This phenomenon is discussed further in *Necessitating my Alliance: A Meditation on the Płaszów Concentration camp* (Essay 3).

Kwas (2016) emerged as I was ‘interrupting’ the etching process, subverting it in some way. In its purest form the process involves a plate – traditionally copper, although zinc is often now used as it is cheaper – the surface of which is thinly covered with an acid-resistant ground, usually wax based, through which lines can be drawn through to expose the bare metal beneath. The plate is then immersed in acid and the metal exposed by the drawing is ‘bitten’ by the acid, producing incised lines of varying depth and thickness according to the time it is exposed to the acid. To print, the wax resist is removed, and an oil-based ink applied and pushed into the lines. Then, being careful to wipe only the ink from the bare metal surface, a thick absorbent paper – like that used for water colour painting – is laid over the plate, before it is passed under heavy pressure, through a printing press, where ink is forced into the lines to make the impression.

I will often subvert the process and use the chemicals, including the acid and straw hat varnish, as compotes to mix and make marks, and will draw on the plate as it is immersed in the acid, blocking out areas to push other areas to corrode completely. In this way the ¹²⁶plates themselves have become artefacts. My collection of prints taken from the backs of plates, and my layering of drawings over textures found on discarded old plates, maximise the serendipitous nature of the process and further stimulate the use of chance and glitch. This resonated with the subject as being

¹²⁶ Straw Hat Varnish is a shellac based methylated spirits saturation solution. It is used as a quick drying stopping out varnish.

discriminating yet crude, but still controlled and measured. Ultimately all images and their production are part of an overarching process, during which selections and judgements are constantly being made.

Distinct from etching, monoprinting produces a unique print, best suited to when the exploration of an image or subject serially is required. Whilst etching uses a steel plate as a prepared surface to create identical prints, mono-printing is a hybrid process of drawing and print, by which images can be produced quickly, intuitively, and spontaneously. It involves evenly rolling slow-drying lithographic ink on a lithographic stone or glass surface, then placing a thin substrate, such as newsprint, over the inked surface and drawing. The mono print is lifted on to the reverse of the paper (FIG 87). *Bambi*, made in 2018, is part of a spontaneous series made after a field trip to Birkenau on discovering a herd of deer often appear through a fence adjacent to Crematoria 5.

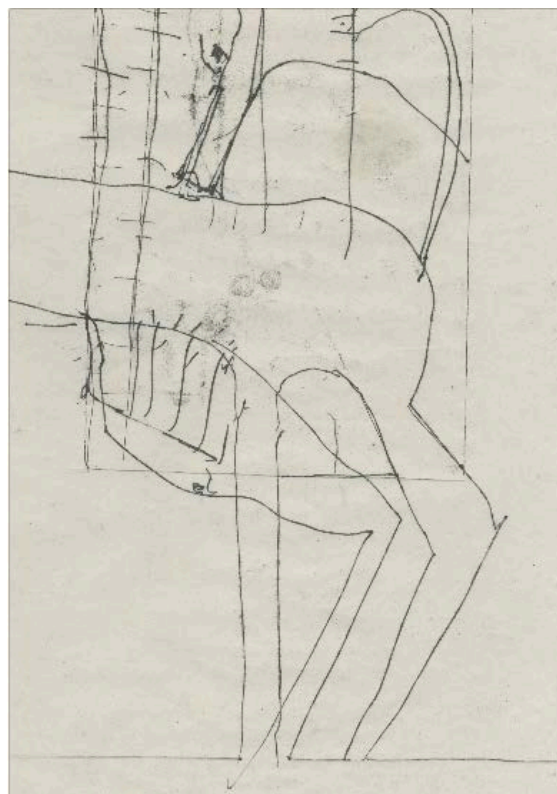


FIG 87. Gary Spicer, *Bambi*, mono-print 2018.

Using acetate as a substrate also allows for the opportunity of layering. This was used in my *Topographies* series, made in 2018 (FIG 88). I articulate in *The Emergent Subject: Artful Research* (Essay 5) how the many strands and possibilities of the research project began to coalesce and become entangled through the phenomenological approach of representing sensorial experience and responses to Holocaust sites and accounts of trauma. It also signalled, in psychological terms, a growing awareness and significance in the context of the project, of the topography of the mind and the imagination, the inner, the outer, the mind and the body. The *Topographies* series sought to visually articulate these ideas, exploiting the spontaneous and seriate nature of the monoprint process. Such themes are well-served by either the slower, more systematic, process of etching, or the more impulsive attributes of monoprint, both of which are still rooted in drawing and the articulation of marks.

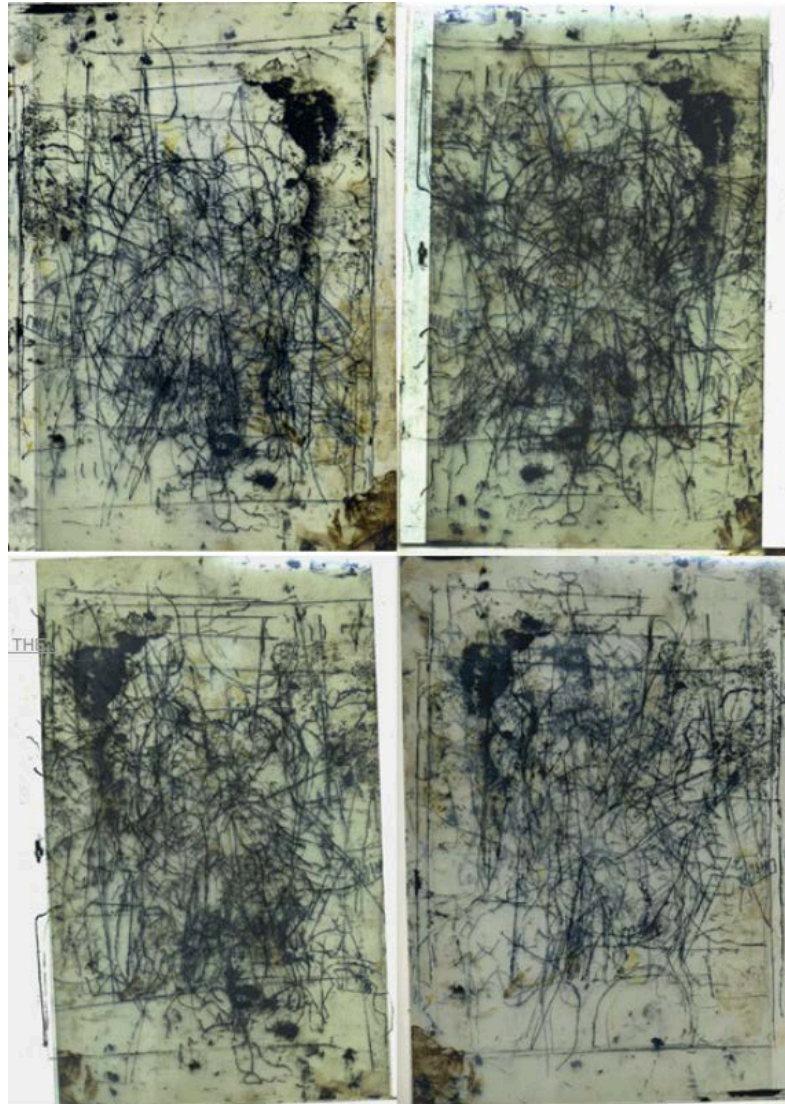


FIG 88. Gary Spicer, *Topographies*, mono print on acetate 2018.

4.2 ix

Reprography

I am not a purist when it comes to traditional processes. Once learnt and understood, I will often break into the process, subverting it to create hybrid techniques that best express the mood or the 'felt' experience being evoked.¹²⁷ In my practice, etching,

¹²⁷ **Subversion and extension.** In the tradition of William Blake, for example, an artist also in constant search for ways of imaging and writing the ineffable.

either on prints or plates, or mono prints could be scanned using a digital flatbed scanner. This is how the layers or stacks of acetates were brought together and digitised as single images in the *Topographies 2018* series (FIG 88). I discovered that scanning the metal etching plates created an unexpectedly blue metallic hue. The glitched image, where the medium format film must have been exposed to light prior to me developing the image, created a blue tinge See FIG 31 *Emet*, 2017, and FIG 89 *Blue Płaszów*, 2015. This led to blue becoming an apposite leitmotif in the work and became manifest in the writing too. See examples of practice-text in *The Inheritance of Distance: Photograph #283* (Essay 2) and *Necessitating My Alliance* (Essay 3).



FIG 89. Gary Spicer, *Blue Płaszów*, 2015.

I have also made drawings with a laser cutter (FIG 90). This involved creating a series of vectors of the drawing that traces the trajectory of the line, its arcs, splatters, and gestures in the articulation of a new cartography, seen from the air, where the

valleys, dips and rises scribe the features and terrain of a fictive landscape.



FIG 90. Gary Spicer, *Topographies 2*, Laser-cut, 2019.

Here I am intimately involved with – and close, almost inside, the process, by drawing, and simultaneously removing myself from the process. This distancing and separation from the moment of production would appear to be counterintuitive to embodied phenomenology, but it is consistent with the etching and reprographic aspects of my practice that begin with repetitive gestural drawings that can be processed, edited, and transformed in some way. These approaches complement

each other as the different methods provoke different ekphrastic responses, so they, sometimes measurably, close the gap that Merleau-Ponty described as the ‘intertwining’ of subjective experience and objective existence. I am mindful also of that gap that exists between writing and drawing, most potent at the point of translation, a gap in which new meanings can arise.

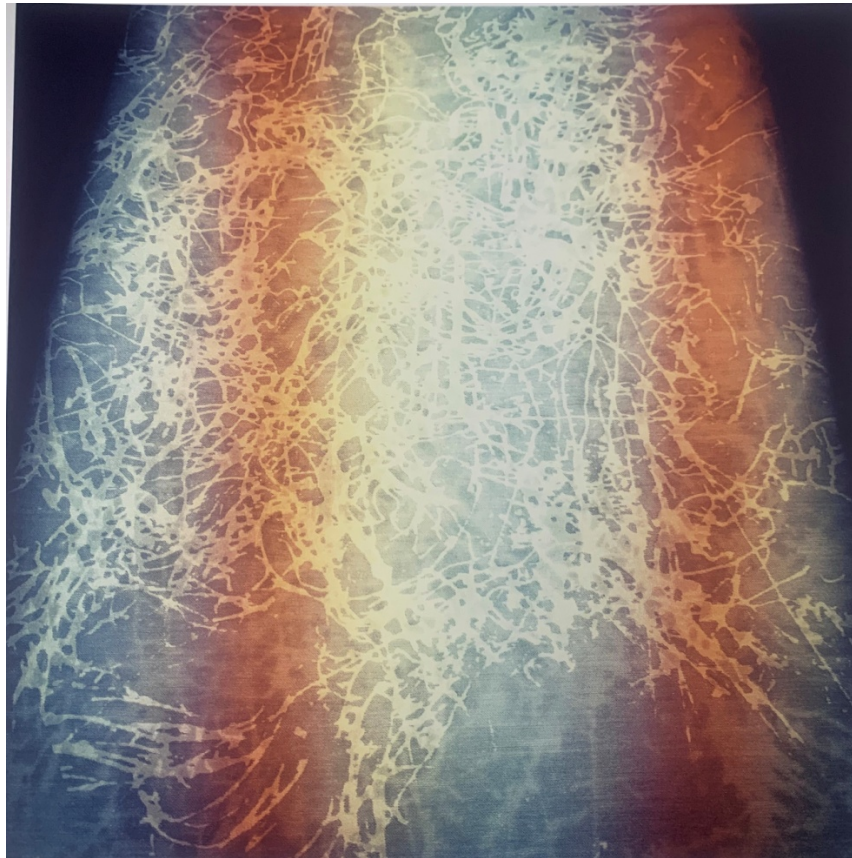


FIG 91. Gary Spicer, *Ner tamid* (Eternal Light) Devore on lightbox, 2019.

Using a flatbed scanner and light box to investigate the theme of light, and how it manifests mechanically as ‘an optical unconscious’¹²⁸ has been explored as a further

¹²⁸ **Optical unconscious.** A phrase first used by Walter Benjamin in 1927, when describing film as an emergent realm of consciousness, and how it represented a ‘zone of debate between people and their environment.’ (Leslie 2000: 57). The idea is also prevalent in thoughts of the veil (chador in Iran) worn across the face by Muslim women as a means of separation. The metaphor of the screens surface is explored as a cinematic device by Jehanne-Marie Gavarani in her essay *Shifting Sands, Imaginary*

reinforcement of impermanence. This theme was first discussed in the introduction, where I explained how the process of creation itself is often the artwork. I record the development of the work using photography or the flatbed scanner at various stages of production. The lightbox has been used in the production of *Ner tamid* (FIG 91), which means 'eternal light' in Hebrew, as a means of capturing translucence and a further exploration of the idea of the 'haptic veil', as discussed in *Photograph #283* (Essay 2) and the *Inheritance of Distance* (Essay 3) in relation to the *Birkenau paintings* of Gerhard Richter (2016).



FIG 92. Gary Spicer, *Konnyek a szememben* (Tears in my Eyes), Laser cut and devore, 2020.

In *Ner tamid* 2019 and *Konnyek a szememben* 2020 (FIG 92), the drawing is formed by the devore or burn-out process, where a mixed-fibre material undergoes a chemical process that dissolves cellulose fibres present in the mix to create a semi-transparent pattern. This is like etching, where marks are rendered through a process of disintegration. When projected with light, devore creates a haptic veiling effect. The drawing appears mellifluous, barely limned forms, which, when layered, conflate the narratives of entanglement with notions of palimpsestic, past and present.

Space and National Identity, which appears in *Postcolonial Film: History, Empire, Resistance*, edited by Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, Peter Hulme, 2014, Routledge.



FIG 93. Gary Spicer, *Halacha* (Path) (Devore), 2019.

Ner tamid and my other reprographic images, work with the illusion of touch, constituting an invitation to reach through the image beyond its surface as a point of meeting and convergence between the viewer and the subject. ‘The viewer is offered a look from the other side of the shadow screen, invited to touch, see and reach fully through’ (Weaver-Hightower and Hulme 2014: 129). In (FIG 93) *Halacha* (2019), light illuminates the in-betweenness – emphasised by the devore fabric, which dissolves to create a plane of intersecting, entangled lines.

4.3

The Modal Loop

Where word and image are part of the same image they are entangled, operating in the same field and plane. In the modal loop, however, they have a separateness that is crucial for the writing–drawing process to function. This is where I may make a

drawing, and then write about the drawing and what it is 'doing'. It is then possible to draw again from the writing. Writing from drawing and then drawing from writing completes the modal loop. This does not dilute the work; instead, the work becomes filtered, more intense. A distillation takes place. This transposition of modes is important. What still survives is the core of the experience. What is less core is becoming detached and is discarded. Moving between modes in this way represents a fossicking process, sifting out the thing that matters, the thing that for me chimes as an articulation of my experience. Words and image are acting in concert. When reading the marks, the process intensifies and deepens. In a sense I am getting closer to the meaning. In somatic terms I am reaching and stretching further. Poetic ekphratic language (such as in the practice-text) relies on the intensity of the visual and drawing practice.¹²⁹ As an artist and a writer, I can make words reinforce another piece of practice, so when writing after drawing I am working with an understanding of the vocabulary of the marks. I may begin by putting marks down instinctively, but, by using words to re-imagine them, they become a vocabulary that can be deployed.

¹²⁹ Poetic ekphratic language (practice text) can also be derived from engaging with photographs as in *Blue Płaszów 2016* or with *Photograph #283*.

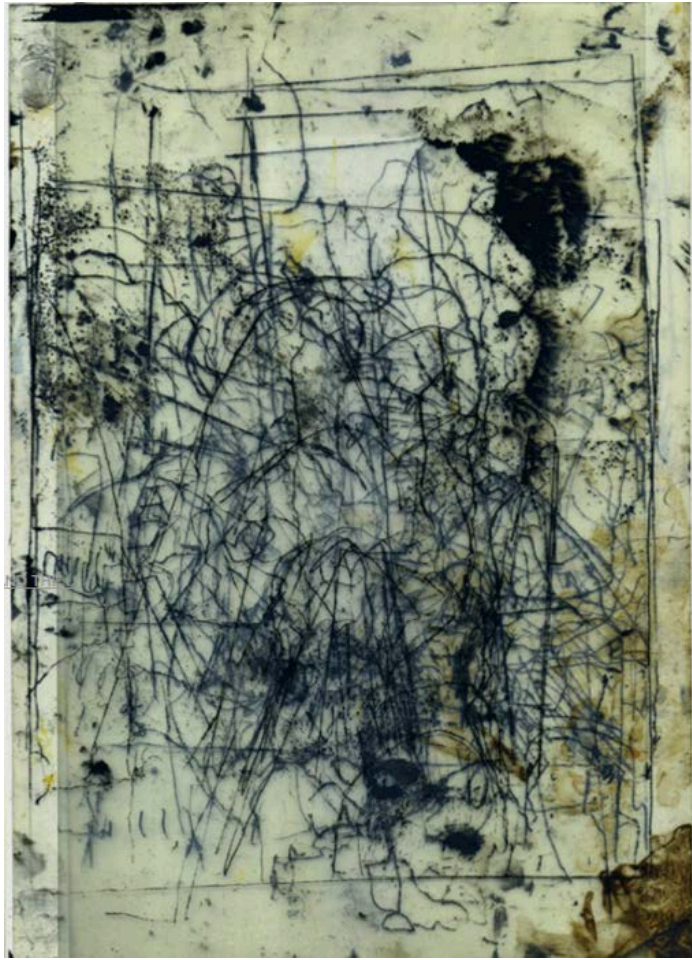


FIG 94. Gary Spicer, *Topographies*, 2018.

The practice-text below is a working through, a reading of the marks, which asks what the marks do, and what is signified by the images they construct. What is the drawing doing? It is a reading of one of the *Topographies* series of acetate layered drawings made in 2018. (FIG 94). It demonstrates further the use of allusion and how the writing made from the drawing deepens, rather than dilutes, the search for understanding – and the stretch to find a valent¹³⁰ reaction (Hoffman, 2004.)

¹³⁰ **Valent.** In part deriving from valence in chemistry, also borrowed from Late Latin *valentia* 'power, capacity,' noun derivative of Latin *valent-*, *valens*, present participle of *valēre* "to have strength.

I can barely limn forms, complete forms. I can only see shapes that suggest forms, maybe people, maybe animals. But certainly, shapes that are or were living things, organic in nature, roots, bulbs, growth, or decay?

I once saw fungi at the base of a huge damp oak in the park and it looked like this. Forming like stacked discs that had been skimmed and sunk into the bark. Magical and mistrusted, ancient taboos, death, and decomposition.

Drawn black Lines coalesce and mass around these shelf-like forms in the centre of the image and then break towards the left edge, perhaps they are limbs? But they seem to be moving quickly, quickly out of the space.

Is it a foot that appears at the bottom of the image?

This is otherworldly, allusion. This is avoiding defining itself...I'm struggling. Are there faces in the midst? Am I not looking through a doorway into a space that is neither outside nor inside, space upon space that goes back further and further into the distance mired in the green, brown surface that frames and smothers the image. And inside there are blue lines, blue grey like veins through thin stretched skin.

I don't know what this is...

But I am grabbing what I can.

The modal loop demonstrates how, in my practice the notion of reaching – and, sometimes, of guessing¹³¹ – is integrated into the method. In a series of lectures entitled *Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (1976), Paul Ricoeur said, ‘We have to guess the meaning of the text because the author’s intention is beyond our reach’ (Ricoeur 1976: 75), meaning that, as readers, our groping attempts at meaning and reification come with no guarantee. In essence, this is because the author is absent and can no longer ‘rescue’ the work (Ricoeur 1976: 75). But the attempt at meaning is important and relates directly to why I am engaged in the work, as there can never be meaning, nor full understanding, of what Blanchot terms the Holocaust ‘disaster’.

Blanchot uses the term disaster to describe something seemingly unthinkable. ‘Is not the disaster its own writerless writing, which by definition has no author because it entails the destruction of authorship?’ In *The Writing of the Disaster* (1995), Blanchot uses fragmentary writing to explore the extremes of human experience. This mode of writing for Blanchot represented incompleteness, a lack of unity and, by its nature, denoted its own erasure (Volume 1 Part 2 The Field 2.2). It will always remain beyond our grasp, defying and challenging authorship. ‘There is no reaching the disaster’ (Blanchot 1995:01), as it is its own ‘writerless writing’ (Schuster 2014: 163-171). But where words and the formalities of written language fail, the abstract, the gestural, the sublime can articulate something ‘other’. This is the Happening of Drawing.

Writing and drawing do not have a hierarchical relationship in my practice. One is being fed directly into the other, and from this something else emerges, but importantly something exists in the gap that cannot be reduced to words or images, and it is at its most potent when in that translatory process. But these outcomes can never be truly deciphered. There can never be a true and definitive set of meanings

¹³¹ **Guessing** in my practice is a consequence of not knowing and of reaching for meaning and understanding, ‘The making process often balances a strong sense of direction with a more playful or meditative state of exploration and experimentation’ Fisher and Fortnum R (2013).

that can represent the Holocaust disaster, only allusion. In making the work I am released – in some measure – from the intention to make the work, as it is impossible to do justice to the scale of the disaster. But, in a small way, each groping attempt ratifies the compulsion to even try. Something shimmers, something small is revealed or exposed, excavated in each attempt, showing this is an articulation of my process and methodology. W.H Auden asked, ‘How do I know what I think until I see what I say?’ (McEachern 1984: 279), referring to the organic and spontaneous nature of writing that could equally be applied to the process of drawing or the modal loop where both methods coalesce around the attempt to describe the subjective experience.

The relationship of writing and drawing also coalesce around gesture. Before spoken language there was gesture, and before written language there was drawing viewed as a form of visual communication. If the marks that make up a drawing can be interpreted as traces of a gesture, and when confronting that page of hand-drawn Beethoven manuscript (FIG 24) and its ‘hieroglyphic-like’ codes, it becomes clear how inextricably connected gesture and meaning are. It follows that gesture itself can be central to the way in which drawing – and writing - communicates. ‘The role of gesture is not to act as a means for the ends of transmitting a message, but simply to show up the ‘being in a medium’ of human beings’ (Graves-Brown 2013: 555) means that drawing is a pure expression of self, of being, a ‘drawing without ends’ (Graves-Brown 2013: 555). As modernism ultimately produced drawing that was concerned with the recesses of the unconscious through Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism – the sublime and the spiritual – both in terms of its production and interpretation, it represents a nexus with the phenomenological project through its embodiment of unique meanings¹³² and ‘gestural and ontological subconscious’ (Crowther 2017: 02).

Whilst mindful of the intentional distinctiveness of each mode, Tilo Reifenstein

¹³² In *Necessitating My Alliance* Volume 2: Essay 3 I refer to the connection between the nature and valency of subjective experience and the postmodern project.

discusses the potential for aesthetic overlap in the written and drawn marks, and their shared gestural investment and interevolution:

‘Indeed, the graphematics of writing already overlaps with the graphic marks of drawing; after all we talk of dash, stroke, underline, ellipsis, hash, rule, asterisk, obelus, circumflex, highlight, slash, solidus and so on. The nomenclature suggests writing’s investment in the material, gesture, form and iconicity of the practice and work of drawing’ (Reifenstein 2017: 171-186).¹³³

It is in the juxtaposition of how both modes relate to each other where the timbre of my own written and visual response to Holocaust sites is formed. Here I am specifically describing writing as it sits within my creative practice as practice-text: a method of response at Holocaust sites. I use drawing and practice-text as my means of archaeology and the things excavated, the drawings and writings themselves, the objects, to be read and interpreted as exegesis where I become a reader of the marks, deciphering meaning and ‘unconcealment’ (Heidegger 2010) – which was Heidegger's interpretation of the Greek word for truth (aletheia). Meaning is not to be found in what the marks represent as much as how they can be reified as gestures, and the enactment of their making, the perpetually recurrent rehearsal of their happening. Here, an important element of intentionality in distinguishing between drawn and written modes needs to be made. I can approach drawing by being in the intentional mode of writing and to produce marks that feel like writing. Conversely, I can intend to ‘write’ by inducing a drawing or calligraphic mode, but whilst aware

¹³³ **Graphemics or graphematics** is the linguistic study of writing systems and their basic components, known as graphemes, which represent the smallest functional unit of a writing system.

of the shared gestural investment, a prerequisite of this kind of intentionality requires seeing both modes as distinct rather than combinable and interchangeable. Therefore, my role as a writer working with words as my medium is distinct from when I want or need to be the artist. In each mode my body is immersed and complicit, either as a vessel for thought and imagination, or as a series of motors to gesture and express. For example, the representation of disappearance, absence and void are all key ideas that locate my project, and as words their meaning is hermetically sealed within the framework of language itself, and exists in relation to the ideas associated with other words. But, according to Derrida, words do not refer to thoughts or feelings, and the ideas associated with them do not exist outside of the frameworks we employ to express them.

According to Derrida, texts, in some sense, write themselves and are not sovereign to the intentions of the writer (Sjostrand 2021: 104). So, when in my drawing mode, absence is not driving the visual response: I am seeking something other, and that something other has independent heredity and is driven by personal connections, experience, and memory. The drawing performs a different function to verbal language and happens in a different way. Something emerges and develops in physis. The mode is critical. I know the attitude. I know when I am writing in the drawing mode, so it is possible sometimes to move around processes and modes. In this way I can find synergy in the overlap of drawing and writing. But the process of making, creating, and juxtaposing is crucial. Levi-Strauss described the overlap and blurring of modes as being 'not so much separate conditions, as separate poles of an extended argument containing difference' (Garner 2008: 37). In my practice both modes represent handwriting, and are an inflection, a sort of *accidence*¹³⁴.

¹³⁴ **Accidence, or flection**, is how a word can be changed or altered in form to achieve a new, extended meaning.

The examination of 'Process' in Part IV has shown that the practice has drawn on the procedures, discussed here as the 'phenomenological toolkit', that have best described what was experienced in the field at Holocaust sites, or have been appropriate agents to develop or consolidate mood or meaning later, in the studio. To this end, the blurring of modes has been a leitmotif in the practice, including writing and drawing and the distinctions between writing modes themselves. The practice has also challenged the orthodoxy of the modernist divisions between writing, drawing, painting, and photography, having drawn freely from such palettes to generate the images and visual ideas shown here. The plurality of my approach, one not limited by convention, is instead fluid and malleable. It is inextricably bound to the body and to movement, with a phenomenological intent that aims to open up and reveal – or, more precisely, un-conceal.

PART V

THE ESSAYS: A CRITICAL REFLECTION

5.0

Introduction

Part 5 is a critical reflection on the seven essays that appear in Volume 2. I have evaluated them as a group and as a body of work that represents a significant aspect of my creative practice. When reflecting on the essays, it became clear that they were centred on four main themes that were fundamental to my research overall, and reflected my thinking and the ways in which the ideas being encountered in the process were affecting the creative practice. Whilst not completely restricted to these themes, the four main strands that I will discuss in Part V are distance, silence, personal graphology, and conflux and entanglement. It will also become clear how these themes are confluent and connected. After each section I briefly recapitulate the theme or idea discussed, and draw the various strands together to demonstrate how, collectively, the essays represent different aspects of my research process.

The essays in Volume 2 appear in the order in which they were written, so each one represents a different stage of the visual and written research practice and of its evolution. The earlier essays confirmed the investigative parameters of the project and connected with the foremost and most well-known thinking in the field, as discussed in Part II: THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND SITUATION.

The conflux of subject and object, introduced in *Necessitating my Alliance: A Meditation on the Płaszów Concentration Camp* (Essay 3), developed increased traction in *The Emergent Subject: Artful Research* (Essay 5), *Aesthetic Emotion: Water*

and Blood (Essay 6), and culminated in the final essay, *The Red Heart* (Essay 7). This defined the trajectory of the research as it developed in the essays.

A brief overview of the essays is as follows:

Portal (Essay 1) represents the border crossing and my entryway into the subject. It is an explication of the origins of the project and the feelings and thinking that informed the direction of the research that followed. *The Inheritance of Distance: Photograph #283* (Essay 2) is shaped by my ekphrastic response to one of four images that were taken clandestinely by a prisoner at Auschwitz that show the killing process. The writing focuses on the notion of distance and its role in modern interpretations of history. The essay uses Photograph #283 as the catalyst for imagining. *Necessitating my Alliance: A Meditation on the Płaszów Concentration Camp* (Essay 3) discusses the need for an essential alliance between artist and subject, and artist and audience and shows how this mutual dependence deepens the 'emotional, spiritual and intellectual experience' (Tarkovsky 1996:176). The essay investigates how the gesture of drawing as a projection of the body, and as mediator between mind and world, can serve as a vehicle through which Holocaust topographies can be encountered. *If Only the Walls Could Speak: The Memory of Place* (Essay 4) is based on an encounter with Jozefinska 14 in Kraków, the site of the former hospital in the city's ghetto. During the liquidation of the ghetto in 1943, everyone in the hospital – including doctors, nurses, and patients – was murdered. I used the quote from Luke 19:40 'If they remain silent, the very stones will speak' as a catalyst to imagine how places like this might bear witness to such events.

I wrote *The Emergent Subject: Artful Research* (Essay 5) when I realised the extent to which I was becoming entangled with the object of my investigation. The phenomenological approach I was employing meant my own histories and my own body were creating dense entwined topographies. See 5.4 *Conflux and*

Entanglement. The essay represents how Holocaust memory and narratives were beginning to be 'reinterpreted, projected and reframed alongside genealogical narratives that derived from myself', a process that reached its zenith in *The Red Heart* (Essay 7). *Aesthetic Emotion: Water and Blood, (Víz és Vér)* (Essay 6) was written on my return from a field trip in Budapest in 2019, when I began to be able to answer the question that drove the research at the beginning: how do I express the feelings I get when visiting Holocaust sites of memory?

The essay begins with Donald Kuspit's description of how, when in that moment of absolute visual and artistic connection, the object becomes ontologically enigmatic. In this way, the sensuous experience of encounter is made more intense and emotionally provocative. The essay develops to support the idea proffered by survivors Saul Friedlander and Aharon Appelfeld that 'only art had the power of redeeming suffering from the abyss' (Kaplan 2007: 1).

The collection of essays in Volume 2 reach their culmination in *The Red Heart* (Essay 7) which represents the confluence of Holocaustian and personal genealogical histories and narratives. The essay sees the introduction of Isaac and Rosa Speiser, my paternal great-grandparents, as the nexus between Polish sites of Holocaust memory and the sites of early Jewish migration to North Manchester, and my own genealogical heritage. Largely practice-text, the essay explores this connection, using a combination of cultural and personal memory entangled with fiction to draw out meanings and understanding of self in relation to the object.

Because each of the essays in Volume 2 represents an important facet of my enquiry written as part of the unfolding trajectory of the research, I wanted to ensure that the full story of the project was told. To this end the essays adopted particular voices

in the 'telling' that supports the narrative and steer of the writing.¹³⁵ Whilst the four themes are distinct, there is inevitably overlap. But I have reflected here on what the essays are doing, how they are doing it, what is happening between them, how they converse with each other and what is evoked in the process.

I have treated any new (and unanticipated) insights or connections in and between the essays, or between the essays and my visual practice, that occurred through the reflective process, as products of my methodology.

¹³⁵ I am not just referring to the conventional nuance of tone, word choice, point of view, syntax, punctuation, and rhythm that usually determine voice in writing. In the context of the seven essays, I am thinking more about how the voice used reflects the content, the themes and the empathies being expressed in the writing.

5.1

Distance

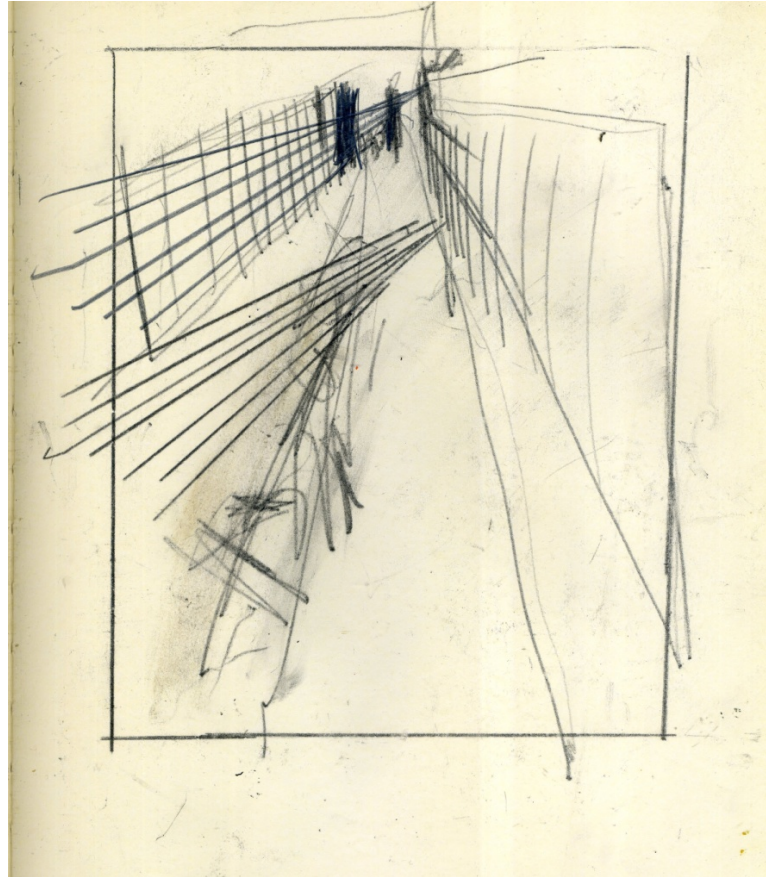


FIG 95. Gary Spicer, *Portal*¹ 2013.

Discussed in the context of where I stand in relation to the Holocaust, recognising that I will always be outside of the event, yet with the distant past still holding a presence in the present. *Portal* (Essay 1) emphasises that, although the event does not represent my own direct history, in making my account I am complicit in the historical archive of contemporary post-witnessing, and although it is not my history, I am making it so.

Portal is written in a projected voice, a voice that attempts to place myself in [an]other space, signifying the fracture in time and space and a point of no return.

Traumatic events and grievous histories do not just exist in the distant past, but also have a presence in the present, a presence my project has attempted to elicit and sense. The quote to this effect from Ernst Van Alphen from his essay 'Caught by Images', published in *Art in Mind* (2005), stresses different kinds of memory, and references Holocaust survivor Charlotte Delbo's belief; that time is reordered in re-enactments of traumatic Holocaust memory and that those who experienced the event are still inside and within it. '[T]he original traumatic event has not yet been transformed into a mediated, distanced account. It re-imposes itself in its visual and sensory directness' (Van Alphen 2005:169).

Van Alphen's quote introduces the notion of the collapsed nature of time where the past that cannot be forgotten must continue to exist in the present, but for the post-witness, they will always be separate and 'other'. The *Portal* image (FIG 61) represents the distance the post-witness must maintain from the inside – a condition of which they have no choice, with the inside being the domain of the primary witnesses and survivors). Later, the essay quotes Saul Friedlander, who juxtaposes the inevitable effects of temporal distance, and the role this plays in modern interpretations of history. It cites the way art can bring fresh and authentic insight to the Holocaust through what he terms 'allusive, distanced realism' (Friedlander 1992: 17).

The image *Portal* signifies the distancing effect of the Holocaust event – investigated further in *Photograph #283, The Inheritance of Distance*. Eva Hoffman said, 'We need to acknowledge the distance at which we stand from events – and from which we must start if we want to further the reach of our knowledge and sympathies' (Hoffman 2005:180). *Portal* therefore represents the border crossing or overlapping of objective presence (the thing – Holocaust sites and memory) and the way in which this is perceived by my body, and translated.

In my creative practice this is manifest as an intuition between thinking and imagining, its transposition into writing and drawing, and an account of how each co-exist to frame a meaningful response. Put more simply, the *Portal* is the threshold of my subjective and interior (psychological) self at its intersection with the exterior objective (physical) world, a very particular exterior world that is utterly 'other'.

In Essay 2 *The Inheritance of Distance: Photograph #283*, the quotation from Karen Barad proposes that the ability to look beyond and through time, telescopically, to what was previously out of reach up into the heavens or down deep into the inner workings of matter, means humanity is better-placed to reflect on the world and, in particular, our place in, and our relationship to, it. This ability to survey the past beyond and through the void of time is our 'privilege' and 'inheritance', and it serves as a mechanism by which, as artists, it becomes possible to access and allude, albeit from the outside, to an increasingly distant past. This introduces a kind of duality and paradox, being increasingly at a distance from the past as time passes, but also able to access it.

When Barad, quoting Shakespeare, says 'the time is out of joint (Barad), meaning that time can be felt in the bones, it resonates with my approach in the context of the phenomenological project. The lacuna that is the gap in understanding encountered when trying to locate a voice to explain or properly comprehend the Holocaust could be seen as the 'skeletal dislocation' Barad mentions when describing time as being like a body, 'a sensation of synchrony'. I feel and experience this disjuncture and break in time in my bones, in my joints. It is a means of expression and of connection to the past.

The idea of distance being the space between my writing and drawing is developed to demonstrate the reliance one has on the other in my practice, being adjacent but permeable modes that 'draw out' meaning. Both are very proximate actions. It is

understood that they are different, but describing that difference is problematic. Although both modes can require different tools, they confirm each other by emerging from a similar place and having a shared vocabulary. In my practice, one of the ways the distance between the modes can be collapsed is through the 'modal loop', as described in Part IV, PROCESS. Here I describe how it is in this confluence where 'allusive distanced realism' can emerge, and where it becomes possible to get closer and represent, in part, something of the exigent feelings invoked by the Holocaust sites I encounter.

Distance then is also cited as a physical mode of observation when discussing the method of the painter Joan Mitchell in *Necessitating my Alliance: A Meditation on the Płaszów Concentration Camp* (Essay 3), where the work is deliberately viewed from a distance to reinforce the estrangement of the artist's visceral body from the picture's surface. This is reminiscent of when, in my practice, I am working in my studio with drawings and writing made in the field. Although my visceral body is removed from the direct phenomenological experience of the site that the 'marks' represent, the residue of that visceral experience still exists in the gestures and intuitive nature of the marks. So, being removed from the primacy of the experience, looking from a distance – through time and space – it allows the 'self' greater traction in the encounter.

With the introduction of 'inscape' in *The Emergent Subject: Artful Research* (Essay 5), the theme of the psyche is used as a means of further expressing the entanglement of inner and outer worlds, and how the artist enters the realm of 'the invisible and return[s] with a gift: the invisible transformed into the visible' (Milledge 2012: v). The essay contends that distance, both temporal and psychological, is mitigated where the phenomenal memory of experiencing Holocaust spaces retain their shimmer long after having left. It is this shimmer that is felt and exercised in the studio when generating new visual responses.

The drawing – or writing – derived from these vicarious encounters becomes conduits for knowing and guessing. This is discussed in relation to how, in the practice, I shape responses to these spaces with my writing and drawing, ‘which while being distinct from the phenomena observed and experienced, are complicit in my responsive feelings to it’. This process, which assesses the distance between the knowing and the not knowing in the formation of imagined, allusive responses, is discussed in *The Emergent Subject: Artful Research* (Essay 5) in the context of the collapsing of time and space, or temporal and physical distance. This is made explicit in *The Red Heart* (Essay 7), where the confluence of established Holocaust narratives and genealogical narratives of early Jewish settlement in North Manchester becomes clear.

By Essay 7, with the experimental autobiographical voice and nature of *The Red Heart*, the theme of distance is evident in relation to how these two histories are collapsed and conflated. Isaac and Rosa Speiser’s flight of emancipation from Kraków, and their arrival and subsequent struggle through poverty to establish a foothold in a new land is imagined, and represents the intertwining of personal and broader cultural memory and histories that articulate the *raison d’être* of the project: by using drawing and writing as interconnected rather than discrete constructs, the interconnectedness of subject and object can, when collapsed through time and space and processed through a phenomenological lens, elicit embodied responses to sites of Holocaust memory. Furthermore, the project explores how this can serve to deepen understanding of such events. This is further examined in 5.4 *Conflux and Entanglement*.

Eva Hoffman’s edict ‘Stand too close to horror, and you get fixation, paralysis, engulfment; stand too far, and you get voyeurism or forgetting. Distance matters’ (Hoffman 2003: 177) reinforces the agency of distance and its need to be understood. This extends Karen Barad’s new materialist notion of time and skeletal dislocation, where time and distance become visceral and a means of expression and articulation.

The image being analysed in Essay 2 *The Inheritance of Distance: Photograph #283* is described in this essay as never being fixed and always in transit, and, like, the general search for meaning and understanding, always just out of reach. But it is the ungraspable nature of the image, or, as for Maurice Blanchot, the perpetual distance we are always from the object, that ‘opens the imagining’ (Arce 2016: 65). The imagining process facilitates the hypostatizing and reification of such opaque images and brings the reader closer to phenomenological meaning and understanding.

The example of Gerhard Richter’s *Birkenau Paintings* (2014) ably demonstrates the reification of such imagining. Richter obscured large facsimiles of the four Sonderkommando photographs – of which Photograph #283 was the fourth – with dragged layers of paint deliberately obfuscating the image. The quote from Buchloh in Essay 2 suggests that, whilst documentary photographs intend to bring us closer to the catastrophe, they only serve to aggregate the distance between subject and the viewer¹³⁶. Richter’s paintings, therefore, by obscuring the original images, enhance and thematise this sense of distance. This effect of veiling permits the spectator to view from a safe distance and allows for the possibility of further imagining.

The use of an abstracted visceral visual language as a device to express the Holocaust and its ‘frightening reality from a safe distance’ (Ziva 1988) is discussed in Essay 5 *The Emergent Subject: Artful Research*, when looking at the work of Jankel Adler, who lost his entire family in the catastrophe. Abstraction allowed him to express viscerally, using gestural and enigmatic sweeps, the darkness and personal nature of loss, whilst, like with Richter, affording the viewer a safe distance from which to view

¹³⁶ The Sonderkommando images were meant to provide evidence of the actuality of mass murder to contemporary spectators. The nature of the clandestine way in which the photographs had to be taken, meant that the images (particularly Photograph #283) were abstract, ambiguous and in their raw form obfuscated, threatening because of what they do not show. In a sense, the necessary extrapolation brings the catastrophe ‘closer’ to the contemporary viewer.

and contemplate the subject. Referring to confessional poetry, Essay 2 *The Inheritance of Distance: Photograph #283* illustrates how this veiling effect forms a backdrop when dealing with transgressive, and often violent and confrontational, subjects such as the Holocaust, serving as a metaphor to support turbulent, dark, and desolate life journeys in writing. Anne Sexton in *After Auschwitz* (1973) and Sylvia Plath in *Daddy* (1962) are further examples of the genre.

Survivors such as Paul Celan veiled their direct experience of death and suffering through metaphor and allusion, to create a distance that would encourage the reader's imagination. This supports Ava Hoffman's contention that 'fixation and paralysis' is a consequence of standing 'too close to horror'.

'Black milk of morning we drink you evenings we drink you at noon and mornings we drink you at night we drink, and we drink.'

Paul Celan, *Death Fugue*, 1945.

The Hebrew concept of Hester Panim is the idea that God did not abandon the Jews during the Holocaust but was with them in their suffering, although maintaining a distance – a distance that, for many survivors, did not affect the intimacy of their relationship with God 'by a hairsbreadth' (Kolitz 2000: 82). His non-intervention was a means of demonstrating that man himself was responsible for the morass and collapse of order during the catastrophe.

My interest being located within the residual traces of the Holocaust reveals how the event is now viewed through the prism of our own ideas and contemporary histories and reflects the emergence of the post-witness; those with no direct personal or even familial connection to the event, but whose version of personal mediated witnessing contributes to the archive of present-day 'remembering'.

Kierkegaard's paradox of 'sympathetic antipathy [or] antipathetic sympathy' (Hanson 2010: 163), which is that of being drawn to something repellent, as articulated in *Fear and Trembling* (1843), was first introduced in *Portal* (Essay 1). It is used to articulate the paradox of my desire to confront the traces and tracts of the Holocaust by encountering the physical sites of trauma and anguish, but being equally repelled and alienated by the experience and knowledge of their grievous histories. It is akin to 'the conflicting desire to know and yet not to know, to see and yet want to look away'¹³⁷ (Thompson 2007:19). Kierkegaard said it was the prohibitive nature of the subject that awakens the desire, but that in so doing knowledge is acquired rather than ignorance perpetuated.

Essay 2 *The Inheritance of Distance: Photograph #283* describes distinct forms of distance. Firstly, there is a kind of enforced distance that results from temporal separation, and the otherness of the Holocaust, then there is the chosen distance, adopted by Richter in the *Birkenau paintings* (2014) to establish an equivalent for the experience of the first kind of enforced distance – and then Paul Celan, who, in *Death Fugue* (1945), puts his own direct experiences at a distance so that something else can happen for the reader. Distance is therefore discussed in its many guises, including: spatial distance; as an interval between points in time; as gaps of understanding and comprehension; of reaching and stretching, including imaginatively, through time and space to grasp meaning; the concept of epistemic distance; and the theistic notion that God maintains a certain distance from us so that we retain a sense of responsible and moral independence. All have been addressed in the seven essays.

Being stilled by the pervasive silences I have encountered, and being drawn to hear such silence paradoxically by 'seeing it' (Taylor 2020) in the context of phenomenological encounter, became the methods by which I have endeavoured to understand the gap created by the inevitable effects of distance. It became possible

¹³⁷ Rooted in the theological proposition that God is both wrathful and kind.

in this way to reify my experiences of Holocaust sites, giving material form – either written or drawn – to such experience.

Veiling through metaphor and allusion when writing or drawing has allowed the effects of distance, and the gap created, to be filled with imagination, and to invite the viewer or the reader to be complicit in the forming of new and contemporary understanding and meaning. This is evident throughout the visual practice in images such as *Csillamlík* (Shimmer) 2021, and in the practice-text below when describing the Danube in Budapest. Both examples are taken from the *Water and Blood* (*Víz és Vér*) body of work (2018–2021):

Flux, ebb, and shift,

Away and towards, tidal

Pulled by moon and gravity.

Into shapes,

Solemn and grim, twisting and turning,

The rivers eyes, stare back ‘seeing’.

That human capacity to ‘open up empathy to compassion.

With all that lives or dies’ (Franck).

The impenetrable enigmatic object

Potent and aesthetically pure

Doubt and wonder, awe, and urgency,

...the majestic rolling Danube.

5.2

Silence



FIG 96. Gary Spicer. *Ich Erinnere Mich An Alles (I am Pink Now)* 2016.

'If they remain silent, the very stones will speak' Luke 19:40. Berean Study Bible.

Here, silence is conceived as a void or a lacuna (Agamben, 1999) to signify the unspeakable or the unknowable, imagined as stillness or stasis. The idea of transmuting the percepts of silence into a form that can be drawn – which defines my practice – reinforces Mark. C. Taylor's concept of *Seeing Silence* (2020) as a means of appreciating its resonance and attempting to reckon with that which remains, or purports to be, unsayable.

Silence, extrapolated to encompass nothingness, voids, or blanks is what confronts the artist or writer when encountering sites of Holocaust memory. It is the primary

thing sensed and experienced in such spaces. In *Portal* (Essay 1), this experience of being personally stilled in silent contemplation when experiencing the residue of Holocaust sites is discussed with reference to Agamben's notion of the unsayable, and the impossibility of those that experienced the catastrophe to attest to it themselves. The essay introduces the notion of 'seeing silence' (Taylor) as a vehicle to explain how the muted voices of those who died and those who survived to bear witness, but who were unable to testify, can be 'heard'. This paradox, of hearing the resonance of silence, by seeing it, is realised in the practice by considering how the potential of silence can be mediated by gesture and form, through the drawing or writing process. In *If only the Walls could Speak: The Memory of Place* (Essay 4), the body is described as a resonance chamber, as part of a multisensory structure. It is in this way, by mediating phenomenological sensory experience that the seeming anomaly can be obviated (FIG 95), such as at Jozefinska 14 in Kraków, the site of the former hospital in the city's ghetto.

The theme of silence is developed in *Photograph #283 and the Inheritance of Distance* (Essay 2) when discussing Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) and the idea that it is through omission, and of what it doesn't show, that the Holocaust is 'remembered' in the film. The stillness, silence and gaps in the narrative that characterise the film further emphasise the ways in which the void, when filled by imagining, resonates far beyond the limits of the familiar Holocaust tropes.

The idiosyncratic aspects of the research and the context within which it sits is discussed in *Necessitating my Alliance: A Meditation on the Płaszów Concentration Camp* (Essay 3), where the silence serves as a conduit through which the words and presence of those who were murdered can be heard and through which as post-witnesses – by 'treading carefully', we can become embodied and present. 'Embodied phenomenological engagement' with such places leaden by memory is proposed in *If Only the Walls Could Speak: The Memory of Place* (Essay 4) as a means

by which we can learn to listen and see such silence. In doing so, creative and imaginative forms of representation become possible.

How such silence is held and absorbed in buildings such as the Ghetto Main Hospital in Jozefinska 14 Kraków is explored throughout Essay 4. The building is now a block of residential apartments, and it is painted pink. Being inextricably bound to such memory and events connects to Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'touch and touched', and how as both subject and object the post-witness artist or writer can experience, sense, and become entwined with such events. *Conflux and Entanglement* is discussed in 5.4.

These things are me and they are still...

I am pink now...

Mark C. Taylor asks how it is possible to hear what is silent and begin to contemplate and figure the void that confronts us in such spaces (Taylor 2020:149), and here lies the phenomenological challenge. As phenomenology is about appearance, have my encounters been with the void? By which I don't mean 'non places'¹³⁸ yet there is certainly a discernible vacuum...empty of space, a vacuum created by that sense of the unspeakable and the unknowable.

¹³⁸ A neologism conceived by anthropologist Marc Augé to describe frictionless places to which nobody belongs, such as airports, depots, or public spaces. The paradox is that, because everyone is alienated from such places equally, anyone can feel at home in them. Holocaust sites of memory, while being frictionless in the sense that they are not lived spaces, are abundant and rich with the absent presence of those that arrived and 'left' quickly, but whose passage was abiding and enduring.

Portal (Essay 1) describes this void as the darkest black¹³⁹, a void or blank, absorbed within and its impenetrable nature. It likens this black to fear, but extrapolates this to include horror and incredulity, the responsibility of artistic endeavour being to shed light and illuminate, transmuting and shifting the form of stillness to percepts that can be drawn or written aloud, a process that the practice is predicated and dependent upon.

A written equivalent of the *Portal* image expresses how the notion of drawing at Holocaust sites of trauma, spaces not intended for drawing,

iterate the past and cast shadows that converge with the present, looking towards another place out of the picture, off the page, representing the absent and the unseen.

The act of describing images – be they my own or those significant to the enquiry – has developed throughout the practice. Ekphrasis is used to read the image, to ask what the image is doing, what the marks are doing, the gesture, composition, the light and the dark and, in some cases, the curation or environmental setting. This is particularly significant in *The Inheritance of Distance: Photograph #283* (Essay 2), which is the interrogation of an image first encountered at the Auschwitz Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2013.

The essay suggests the image represents the distance the post-witness is forced to encounter the event from, and that this vantage point means they are forever ‘othered’ in relation to it. Here, distance and silence overlap. By being ‘inside’, as a

¹³⁹ The artist Anish Kapoor who bought the rights to Vantablack, an industrially produced material recognised for its properties of possessing the most complete and purest black available, sequestered it for his exclusive artistic use in 2016.

true witness, which, according to a Sonderkommando survivor, was so horrific, the unintelligible nature of the experience renders those inside witnesses mute; they had 'no voice' (Felman & Laub 1992:231). The essay suggests it is the post-witness who, by giving sight to the silence – a metaphor for the muted victims who survived their experience of the 'inside', or for those murdered and drowned, and upon whose testimony we can never draw – now have contemporary guardianship to perpetuate the victims' memory and to represent and give form to a sort of vicarious remembering.

Heidegger claims that through art we can encounter new worlds and, in the attempt, disclose some inner truths. He saw art and the action of connecting thinking with physical objects and material as critical and transformative moments. I articulate this process as 'transmutation', it is the shifting and disclosing of form, the truth, or, according to Heidegger, the critical moment unfolding out of itself, from the inside out. This is further supported by Michel Dufrenne when he suggests that art expresses truth, not by imitation or verisimilitude, but instead by opening up the subject and 'expressing something of its essence' (Dufrenne 1973:527-28). In phenomenological terms this refers to its type, qualities, relations, or eidos – that is, the essential insight and intuitive comprehension of the object's essence.

On the other hand, Becket's quote 'Try again. Fail again. Fail better' (Becket 1983) expresses the ultimate futility of ever adequately representing the Holocaust for those that endured it, but that, in the production of profound, idiosyncratic, and intuitive work the attempt to remember brings us closer to the truth rather than moving us further away. That phenomenology provides the tools to describe experience, rather than focusing on its causes, begins to articulate the methodology employed in the generation and execution of the practice. It is a practice operating in the space between word and gesture, and in its confluence, is attempting to open up new territory.

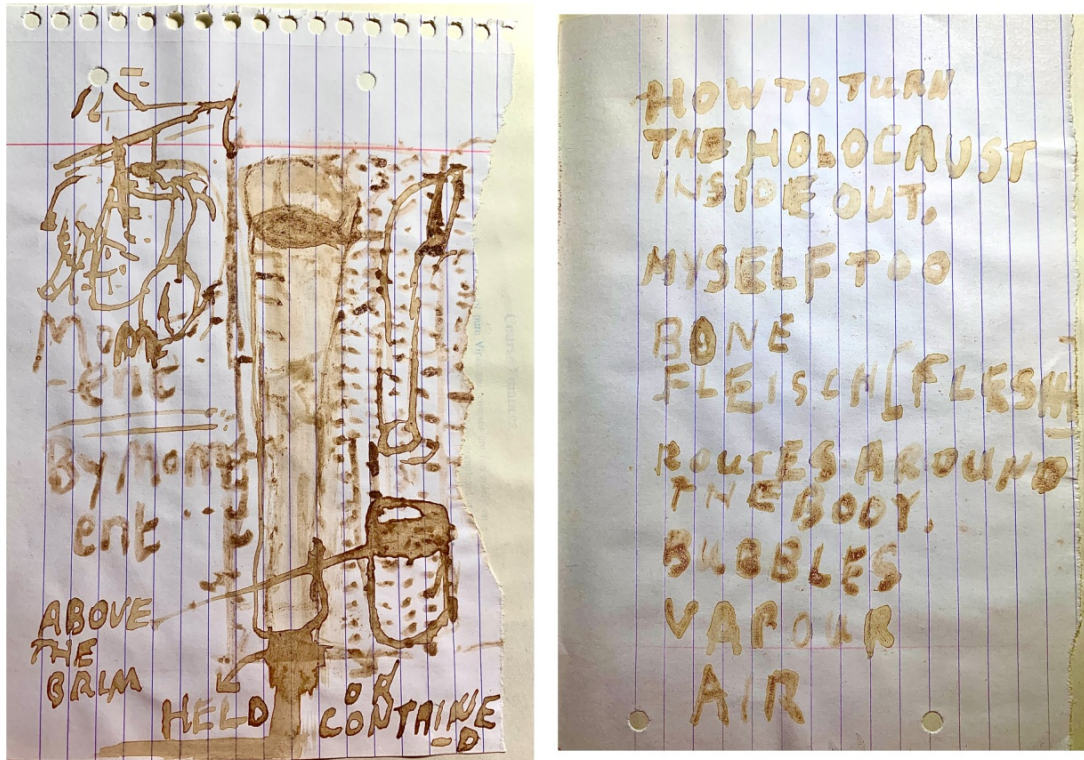


FIG 97 and FIG 98. Gary Spicer, *Moment-by-Moment*, 2017.

This idea of art – particularly in abstraction – being a vehicle to reach beyond and articulate what cannot adequately be expressed through conventional spoken or written language – a phenomenon particularly pertinent for subjects that cannot be seen any more, such as the Holocaust – is a leitmotif across all the essays.

In *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012), Merleau-Ponty articulates a theory of expression where he contemplates the nature of thinking in relation to language. He questioned whether what he described as an ‘inner life’ of thought had to be expressed linguistically through language or whether ‘thought must be in some sense, prior to the speech that expresses it’ (Walsh 2016: 01). Whilst there is clearly a connection between thought and expression, Merleau-Ponty suggests that there is a layer of experience that lies beneath expression that could be expressed as ‘thought-experience’ (Walsh 2016: 01). Is it this experience that exists beyond words

and outside of the scope of linguistics that is embodied best somatically and viscerally through art and gestural modes of expression? And it is in silence where:

‘Words break off and meaning fades into ambiguity, here the clarity of certainty is sacrificed in favour of a more rigorous, phenomenologically grounded approach to our understanding of language and its relationship to truth’ (Binderman 2017).

Giorgio Agamben, in *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (1999), describes the gap in comprehension and the impossibility of conventional forms of language to articulate the horrors of the Holocaust as a lacuna, reinforcing the argument. And through drawing, this lacuna can be deliberately obfuscated and impenetrable, deliberately evasive, and purposefully ambiguous. This is further supported by philosopher Jean Luc Nancy, who states that ‘Drawing is the gesture of a desire that remains in excess of all knowledge’ (Nancy 2013: 2). Meaning what was being drawn – and imagined – in *Portal* (2016) or in other examples, such as *As I Lay Dying* (2018; FIG 100), only becomes tangible once they are formed, possibly as an expression of ‘thought experience’. Jean-Luc Nancy also commented on what lies between the hand and the trace: ‘an entire thought or experience of the world comes to be gathered in the vibration of the mark [trait]’ (Nancy 2013: 101). A line is a good source of designating the point of origin between thought and gesture, or between our percepts arising from experience and the practical outcomes we make in response, and we can use a line as a vehicle to articulate that thought experience, that ‘bringing into appearance’ (Nancy 2013: 101).

Abstraction, as a means of representing what cannot be expressed through verisimilitude, or conventional spoken or written language, is discussed further in *Photograph #283; The Inheritance of Distance* (Essay 2), particularly in its capacity to allude and not be reliant on the familiar visual tropes that have come to define the

Holocaust event – including emaciated skeletal bodies being bulldozed at Belsen, the iconic entrance to Birkenau, the striped prisoner uniform, SS insignia, and the ‘arbeit macht frei’ sign at the gates of Auschwitz. Janet Wolff asserts that abstraction is a deliberate distancing strategy that ‘privilege[s] the allusive over the figurative’ (Wolff 2016:54). Saul Friedlander, without distinguishing abstraction, still cites art as being the medium by which the potential of new and valent meanings might be derived.

It is through seeing the silence at Holocaust sites of memory, and in ‘the gesture of a desire that remains in excess of all knowledge’ (Nancy 2013), that visual responses become possible in my creative practice. Later, such images become vehicles for the potentiality of written language, and the resultant signs and symbols assembled and abstracted to form an expression of my ‘being with’ the subject. This idea, in alliance with both those that experienced, lived, and drowned in the Holocaust, and to engage directly with them, as well as with the audience, underpins *Essay 3 Necessitating My Alliance: a Meditation on the Płaszów Concentration Camp*. This essay articulates the process of attunement with the self, our own thinking, and sensations, but also that attunement with the other, an empathy that produces an innate awareness of the other’s experience.

Connectedness or empathetic attunement is described here as ‘respond[ing] to the [others’] perception of reality at that moment, as opposed to one’s own or some ‘objective’ or external view of what is real’ (Finlay 2015: 54). This is something I shared and experienced during my therapy in 2017 (FIG 97 and 98 *Moment – by – Moment*), which were drawn clandestinely at the Vipassana retreat in 2017. It signalled the point at which my own understanding of self became entwined with my understanding of, and immersion in, the memory of the experience of the other. This related specifically to those whose voices I was seeking to hear in the silence at Holocaust sites of memory. This empathy – the embodied relational process – would form the basis of my creative responses in such places as the project developed.

In Aesthetic Emotion: Water and Blood (Víz és Vér) (Essay 6), the quoted text by Susan Smart invokes Pascal who, when overwhelmed by the stars, writes 'The eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me,' (Stewart 2005: 99). This feeling corresponds with my own when stood in Płaszów or Auschwitz, Terezin, the ghettos of Warsaw or Kraków or staring into the Danube at the spot where thousands of Jews were murdered and fell into the drift. It is unerringly silent, even despite the milieu of visitors and contemporary life happening today. Like Mark C. Taylor has written, one must learn to hear, listen to and interrogate the silence, a silence that emanates from the past.

Merleau-Ponty, in his *Eye and Mind* essay (1964), offers further thoughts on the subject–object discussion that reaffirms the earlier quote by Sartre where he suggested that objects were not inert, but instead act as conduits through which we can access the past. In *If Only the Walls Could Speak: The Memory of Place*, (Essay 4) the chiasm is introduced, as Merleau-Ponty's conception of how subjectivity arises from the space 'in-between' the subjective body and our encounter with the object, and how in this conjunction, the object looks back and returns our gaze. This serves to reaffirm their equiprimordial¹⁴⁰ nature, meaning that their existence together is equally fundamental.

In *A Poetics* (1992), Charles Bernstein dissects Merleau-Ponty's notion of the chiasm, re-contextualising it from the standpoint of poetry. Bernstein transmutes Merleau-Ponty's notions of absorption and impermeability as the warp and weft of poetic composition and interprets the 'flesh' as the words themselves. The notion of 'thickness' is seen as the means of communication between reader and the poem. The phenomenological correlation of subject and object is discussed further in 5.4

¹⁴⁰ **Equiprimordial.** A term that originated in the 1960s and was formed as a response to, but not an exact translation of, *gleichursprünglich*, a term used in a lecture that Martin Heidegger gave in 1927 called 'The Basic Problems of Phenomenology'.

Conflux and Entanglement. Sartre's concept of 'interanimation' discussed in Essay 4 further develops this necessity of an alliance of 'place' with the individuals who encounter them. In this way, the sensing and experiencing of specific places becomes entwined with what is already present in our consciousness and forms an essential element of the confluence and of our understanding.

In the writing '*Ich Erinnere Mich An Alles*' (*I am Pink Now*), I am exploring the capacity for the building at Jozefinska 14 to be prescient and hold the memories of the events that took place there. Elizabeth M. Loevlie uses the term 'the hauntology of literature' to describe writing that can give form to those 'spectres of existence that resist the traditional ontology boundaries of being and non-being, alive and dead' (Loevlie 2013: 336), and that can be abstracted, without needing to conform to any fixed reality. She suggests that in this way the meaning derived from such writing 'gives us access to vivid and sensory rich worlds' (Loevlie 2013: 336). Essay 4 suggests that, in this shimmering space between the extant and the imaginary, it becomes possible to transmit something of the seemingly ineffable.

Essay 4, *If Only the Walls Could Speak: The Memory of Place*, restates one of the aims of the project: of attempting to articulate through creative practice the direct experience of phenomena that cannot be optically seen. This allows the term 'seeing' to be qualified in its many guises, including as something optically seen, transmuted, or envisioned through imagination, or through phenomenological percept.

Described in the practice-text of *The Red Heart* (Essay 7) as a 'silence, in which I am caught, hooked and snagged in the threads of my own history, strewn as that is by the innumerable traces of others', pre-empted the way in which I, as the subject, was becoming increasingly aware of the entanglement of my own history and the residual traces of the Holocaust memories and pasts I was experiencing and evoking. See 5.4. *Conflux and Entanglement.*

At the start of Essay 3 *Necessitating my Alliance*, I described the silence at the Płaszów concentration camp as casting long shadows – as possessing visual properties – and it became possible for me to draw it. ‘My hand sensing the murmurs, movement and intensity of thought begins to pulse and mark the white page. A gesture. A scribble and then... still...again...breathe. Attunement.’ Practice-text *Necessitating my Alliance: A Meditation on the Płaszów Concentration Camp* (Essay 3)

Being stilled by the pervasive silences I have encountered, being drawn to hear such silence paradoxically by seeing it. ‘Through a strange synaesthesia, to see the invisible is to hear silence, and to hear silence is to see the invisible’ (Taylor 2020: 01). In the context of phenomenological encounter, this became the method by which I have endeavoured to understand the gap created by the inevitable effects of distance. It became possible in this way to reify my experiences of Holocaust sites, giving material form, either written or drawn, to the percepts of such experience.

5.3

Personal Graphology

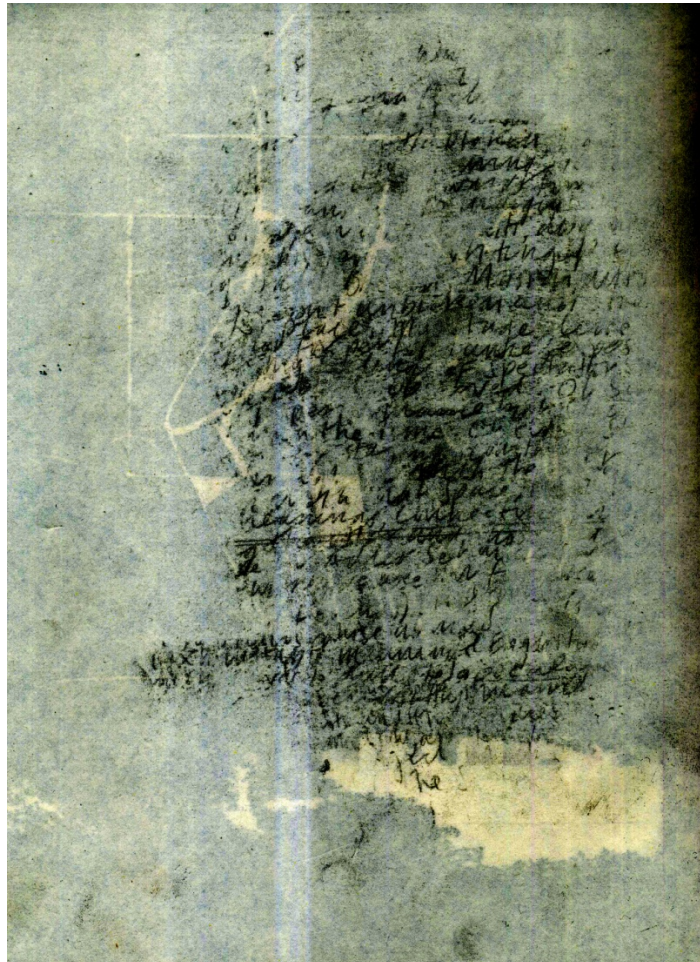


FIG 99. Gary Spicer. *Cross-text*, 2017.

This theme emphasises the closeness of writing and drawing in my practice and how this is manifest in Volume 2. I demonstrate how both modes originate from a similar source and are inextricably linked. They serve as methods to reify the percepts I have experienced in the field, and as reciprocal parts of my creative process. Writing and drawing are both graphic mediums and offer complementary responses as manifestations of a ‘personal graphology’; each is a version of my handwriting, both direct traces and evidence of thought. The relationship in my practice between these

complementary – yet interrelated – modes is a recurrent theme of the essays in Volume 2.

Asger Jorn's statement that 'a picture is written, and writing is a picture' (Kurczynski 2017:40) emphasises the way in which he viewed both modes as interchangeable, differing only in the way they are interpreted. *Crosstext* 2018 (FIG 99) demonstrates the calligraphic and the graphic functioning of text as text[ture], or as the fragments of a symbolic visual language.

This functioning of text in *Crosstext* is reminiscent of micrography¹⁴¹, the art of drawing with letters, which developed as a method of concealing the nature of God in decorative images that did not transgress the second of the Ten Commandments, which is: 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image' from Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7. This commandment was enshrined in ancient Jewish law, and it reinforced the impossibility of adequately representing God or of creating anything that could stand in for him, including abstractions. In Judaism, God is not material, and his bounds cannot be prescribed by the limits of form; to do so would be 'a fruitless attempt to take God captive to the limits of the human imagination' (Raphael 2009: 7). Parallel to this idea is the suggestion that it is impossible to represent the Holocaust, or that the victims of Holocaust did not have the capacity to adequately testify to their experience (Agamben 2007). The rationale being that language – as a manifestation of human accomplishment – is deemed insufficient to capture and express humanity's nadir, as was witnessed during the catastrophe (Adorno 1953), one being incompatible with

¹⁴¹ **Micrography** is a Jewish scribal art in which minute script is arranged into abstract or figurative designs. Originating in the 9th Century CE in Egypt and the Holy Land, the practice then spread to Europe and Yemen. 'It appeared initially in medieval Biblical codices accompanied by Masorah, a body of grammatical rules on the pronunciation, spelling and cantillation of the scriptural text that ensured the correct transmission of the Hebrew Bible'. British Library. <https://www.bl.uk/> (Accessed 25th May 2022)

the other. So perhaps, as it is futile to try and represent God, the same difficulties apply to attempting to represent the catastrophe, where both are equally placed 'at the limits of human imagination'.

Necessitating My Alliance (Essay 3) further sets out the mechanism through which the practice seeks to evidence the past, and cites Sebald and the part-hybrid, part-fiction, part-memoir and part-travelogue nature of his writing, as well as his photographs, which serve as haunting adjuncts to the text. The essay draws parallels with Sebald's approach and my own, but in my creative practice, drawing represents an additional level of documentary evidence. This compliments photography – or as it is characterised in my practice, a facet of reprographics – and writing. In outlining the phenomenological approach taken and describing how the capturing of subjective experience of Holocaust sites is an attempt to reveal the direct experience of presence, Essay 3 begins to establish the parameters of the project. It reinforces the importance of being sensitive and receptive to physical, mental, and nuanced sensation in the written and drawn responses. The practice-text in the essay made during my first encounter with Płaszów is an example of that, fusing both mental and physical responses to the initial experience and percepts. The writing – as is most common in terms of approach – is written in the first person with a lyrical flow. It is driven by empathy and a desire to feel and see the trepidation felt by those that were here before. The individuated experience is central. 'Embodied, I am present'. Evidence of being physically present is manifest in the primal responses made and which is captured in the writing. The 'felt' presence of those that died there merged both with the void that is the space today, and that sense of my own past and what I am bringing to the experience.

Jean-Luc Nancy's recurring idea of drawing necessitating 'a savoir-faire or know-how' that goes beyond knowledge and making (Nancy 2013: 2), suggests that, in striving to respond to the sensed experience of places such as Płaszów, we are stimulating something – or attuning ourselves to something – outside of our conscious and

predetermined world, which only becomes tangible once it is drawn or scribed. This is further reinforced in the text by reference to Primo Levi, who used writing to stimulate the act of remembering itself. It is like the act of writing or drawing is a precursor to an act of emergence. When Janet Wolff suggested that the familiar visual tropes that often accompany Holocaust debate could potentially, by their very repetition, promote passive looking rather than curiosity, she was advocating that, through abstraction and the oblique, viewers and readers create or discard their own meanings. This approach encourages the idea that no sole truth or meaning exists or can be extrapolated, and that imagery created in response to the catastrophe can only ever be allusive – and full disclosure always elusive.

The use of a ‘personal graphology’ that vies between writing and drawing and sometimes exists in the overlap has been critical in determining my response to the experience of sites of Holocaust memory, and my encounter with the vestiges of the catastrophe. Abstraction, and its capacity to veil or to refrain, was imperative in the uncoupling of the real from the exact; an idea developed in Essay 5, *The Emergent Subject: Artful Research* 5.4 Intra-abstraction: Potent Forces, when discussing Paul Klee’s belief that a non-referential graphology existing outside of the realm of visual appearance, which he described as ‘exactitude winged by intuition’ (Sujo 2001: 14). He theorised that ‘the purer the graphic work the less effective it is in the realistic representation of visible things’ (Chipp 1992: 183). Reality, therefore, is not the same as exactitude, and the personal graphology used to exact this reality – such as an approach that incorporates both drawing and writing – needs to be flexible enough to embody the physical, mental, and nuanced sensations experienced.

5.4

Conflux and Entanglement



FIG 100. Gary Spicer. *As I Lay Dying #1*, Monoprint, 2018.

In this excerpt of practice-text, I reflect on the ways in which I have become entangled with the subject through space and time, and how this has brought me closer to understanding my percepts of the phenomenological experience of Holocaust sites of memory and my own relationship to them.

From where I now stand, the mists have cleared, and the fog lifted, and I see sharply and in such clarity the spaces of fragile memory overlapping with the projections of my own imagined past.

In Essay 3 *Necessitating my Alliance: A Meditation on the Płaszów Concentration Camp*, this example of practice-text above demonstrates an overlapping of temporalities and the merging of past and personal histories, defining an approach in which the reader is invited to feel what I have felt and imagine what I have imagined. The conflux of object and subject,¹⁴² an emotional and genealogical merging through time and space that was characterised by Heidegger as a ‘oneness’ between subject and object, had brought me closer to understanding the percepts of my phenomenological experience of Holocaust sites of memory and my own relationship to them. As a musician I can accord this idea with muscle memory. The moment I become conscious of what I am playing, is the moment I am removed from the moment of playing and the music I am making. I have described in Essay 3 how the very relation between human and object can be accounted for phenomenologically, and how such an approach provides alternative and insightful ways of understanding phenomena such as landscape saturated with Holocaust memory.

Anthropologist Tim Ingold used the word ‘commingled’ when describing how to sense the weather, meaning that one becomes the storm or the rain, is entangled within it, an enmeshing of subject and object: Heidegger’s ‘oneness’. Essay 3 reinforces the importance of this multisensory approach by introducing *gleichursprünglich*, meaning ‘of the same origin’ to support Ingold’s ideas, ‘To feel the wind, then, is to experience this commingling. Whilst we did not touch it, we touched in it’ (Ingold 2007: 19). *If only the Walls could Speak: The Memory of Place* (Essay 4) outlines how such a multisensory approach affects drawing in my creative

¹⁴² I discussed in Part III METHODS how Entanglement, as part of my phenomenological process, represented a means of describing the nature of language and how, due to it being bound up with ‘inherited concepts’, its meaning and nature become hidden. I suggested that the possibilities of poetry to reconfigure the orthodoxies of language challenge this paradigm and allow for new and unexpected meanings to emerge.

practice as the mediation of sensory experience. Susan Kozell's quote in Essay 4 describes how the body, in the phenomenological translation of these sensory experiences as a resonance chamber. This experience is then activated through emotion where according to Jean-Luc Nancy, their affects; impressions, intuition, imagination, and memory are infused. Such affects are then codified in my drawing and expressed in my writing as a translation – and a representation – of the mediated 'felt' experience. This is manifest through imagination to voice and articulate something of 'the void' – best articulated as the presence of an absence.

Barrett Mandel suggests that it is in the act of creating illusion (or allusion) in art and literature where a salient truth can emerge, because such truths reside in our 'human being' (Horowitz 1997: 5). The caveat is that, with a phenomenological approach, the ways in which we, as artists, apprehend the world are never absolute, and by always remaining fluid and subjecting our truths to review and reinterpretation, we are being receptive to the evolution and understanding of our own experience. It is the understanding of individual experience in the context of a reading of my own history and genealogy that mitigates any claim that the work seeks to speak for the dead or the silent. It does not. The work produced is an account of my individual percepts and responses to the catastrophe, and an investigation of my entanglement with it.

The Emergent Subject: Artful Research (Essay 5) signalled the stage in the research where it was becoming clear the extent to which there was a conflux, because of the embodied phenomenological approach, with my own genealogical history and experience and the sites of Holocaust memory I was encountering. The essay explored the significance of this in the context of the research. Drawn from the notes of a presentation I made in 2018¹⁴³, and focusing on how I used practice in my

¹⁴³ The Artful/Artistic Research symposia focused on knowledge, insights and outputs that promoted and developed the discourse around creative artistic practice. It clearly showed that, although there was no one way to pursue artistic research, at its core, is the artistic practice itself – which functions

research, the essay was pivotal in the trajectory of my thinking. I began to see how my own history and self were intertwined with the subject – far beyond the embodied nature of the practice. This phenomenon was first visually represented in the *Topographies* series made in 2017 and 2018. These were a series of place-drawings where the agency of materials and process contributed to the configuration and determination of the visual responses. This began a phase of my research practice where drawing became a method of reflection and re-examination. In citing the etymology of ‘topography’ as a conflation of the Greek ‘topos’, meaning ‘place’, and ‘graphien’, meaning ‘to write’, the essay established the terrain to be explored and investigated, where the body would become tributaries that overlap with the mind and the imagination.

The notion of the ‘broken body’ also emerged during this part of the research. Clearly the theme resonates with the broken bodies of the victims, although this was not its motivation. My ankylosing spondylitis and its overlapping with a two-year period of creative psycho-therapy – articulated in Essay 7, *The Red Heart* – enabled the work to represent empathy and be embodied with the subject and the emergent narratives of genealogical histories and place, trauma, and emancipation being encountered.

This crisscrossing of historical and genealogical threads confirmed that the work was inextricably bound to self. These themes first emerging in 2017 were to become more refined in FIG 100, *As I Lay Dying #1* (2018), work made after experiencing the site of the Arrow Cross massacres on the banks of the Danube in Budapest, with the unseen – the now unseeable – and the compulsion to locate them in some way. This idea was given credence through the quotation by Paul Crowther discussing ‘passive receptivity’ (Crowther 2016: 129). It resonated with me as a practitioner when he

both as an object of study and as a source of responding to diverse and heterogeneous lines of enquiry – that supports the pursuit of original insights.

described how, from the million possible permutations of line, mark, and gesture, one emerges, and how that mark ‘imposes itself from its own necessity’ (Crowther 2016: 129). This reinforced the criteria used in the assessment and reading of the marks and gestures made in the process.

The work of Chilean artist Roberto Matta illustrated the idea of the entanglement of inner and outer worlds, described as ‘a landscape discovered within the self’ (Kamien-Kazhdan 2010) in *The Emergent Subject: Artful Research* (Essay 5). The way in which Matta’s work and my own have a similar analogous ancestry in terms of a spontaneous approach to drawing reaffirms how emergent, and often unexpected, themes can develop through the evocation and excavation of the subconscious. Here the essay references Jungian thought derived from analysis and insights afforded by spontaneous drawing, when used as a tool for the investigation of subconscious themes and traumas¹⁴⁴.

Essay 5 discusses how feelings of uncertainty also relate to the ways in which real and imagined topographies are collapsed temporally and spatially when encountered in the practice and the ensuing search for meaning. *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience* by Erin Manning & Brian Massumi (2011) explores this idea of ‘research-creation’ as a form of thinking. Essay 5 argues that it is in this confluence of theoretical, contextual, and practical enquiry that research is created through practice. ‘To perceive in the everyday: a thinking of the world’s varied ways of affording itself’ (Manning & Massumi 2011: vii) is a way of thinking fundamental to phenomenological enquiry. The concept of intra-abstraction (as an abstraction that emanates from within both the subject, and with the subject as myself) further defines the methodological approach used in the practice.

¹⁴⁴ This is explored further in *the Red Heart* in Essay 7, in the context of my own experience of creative psychotherapy when I needed to excavate areas of my own past as part of the process.

Intra-abstraction, my term for describing the means of articulating phenomenological enquiry is discussed in *The Emergent Subject: Artful Research* (Essay 5), as the process of art-making itself, the doing. This is where the self, as an 'artefact', becomes real. In the case of myself as subject, my broken body, steel hips and fused spine become elemental in the mix of metaphor and meaning. It is argued that phenomenology, when viewed as a method of interpreting the self 'as embodied, performative and intersubjective' (Jones 1998:39), can never be separated from the body or viewed as a perfunctory sign for conveying the significance of meaning and self, but it must, by definition be 'filled with it'. (Jones 1998:39). In so being, phenomenology is always agential in the meaning-making process.

Essay 5 goes on to link the idea of the subjugated and frail body with notions of the Untermensch – sub-human - and anti-Semitic tropes. When this idea is connected to my own 'broken' body – albeit *mischling* – a pejorative legal term in Nazi Germany meaning half-breed or mongrel, one who was 'raised in, or on the edge, of the [local] Jewish community' (Benvenuto 2004), it emphasises the importance of the embodied nature of the practice and the projection of self as a vehicle to fasten and reflect such concepts. In conclusion, Essay 5 asks rhetorically if art symbolises the articulation of our embodied aesthetic experience, which, in my case, is elemental as part of the phenomenological approach. In which case, my body as the unique reactive site and echo chamber must represent the vessel through which emotions, anxiety and sadness are experienced, mediated, and projected.

The final two essays *Aesthetic Emotion: Water and Blood* (Essay 6) and *The Red Heart* (Essay 7) both set out to express the motivations behind my need to confront and articulate a response to the residual traces of the Holocaust and its legacy. They are written partly in a witnessing voice, with the writing becoming more emotional and richer in personal narratives as it builds on the themes, ideas and confidence developed in Essay 5. A sense of storytelling sees the writing being infused with

personal experience and genealogical histories that are layered and become further entangled with voices from the past.

Aesthetic Emotion: Water and Blood (Essay 6) cites Susan Stewart, whose contemplations of sea and sky and their infinite reach – neither being something that we can stand in the middle of or encompass – builds on the theme of natural phenomena. It adds to the ideas of anthropologist Tim Ingold, discussed earlier, in relation to being ‘commingled’, meaning that in the desire to explicate and imagine we strive to become entangled within, so that subject and object are entwined as in this practice-text from Essay 6:

***The sky now falls through and into the blue – blonde – reeled and rubbed,
Pushed high out into the wind and there it hangs and is still on its thread,
Buffeted on the breeze and taken on the drift, by the dappled and flickering
eddy.***

Here Essay 6 becomes more explicit in its narrative relating to the entanglement of self, body, and mind with the catastrophe, which flows seamlessly into the final essay *The Red Heart* (Essay 7). Discussed first in Essay 6 is a short film central to the *Water and Blood* body of work, *Csillamlík* (2021), which translates as shimmer, a close up of the Danube River, and connects the partial dislocation with the past implicit in the film with the diagnosis of subluxation in my cervical spine¹⁴⁵. This is discussed as part of *The Emergent Subject* in Essay 5. Obvious parallels with my own degenerative spinal condition and the broken bodies of Holocaust victims are described as ‘incarnate motifs’ that serve to collapse time and space and inform the

¹⁴⁵ This is where there is a varying degree of slippage of one vertebra relative to the adjacent vertebra because of ligament damage. In my case this is due to the chronic degenerative condition of ankylosing spondylitis.

phenomenological reading of what I experience and imagine at Holocaust sites of memory.

Earlier discussion that described the excavation of my own genealogical past as part of creative psychotherapy undertaken between 2017 and 2019 aid in understanding the interface of the *Water and Blood* and *The Red Heart* essays. The overlapping of phenomenological responses to sites of Holocaust memory in the present with my genealogical Jewish antecedence from the past became confluent with my own history (and present) in the process of my own recovery from trauma. In referencing the experience of a 10-day silent meditative retreat during this period, and the introduction of the nature of 'impermanence', *The Red Heart* (Essay 7) begins to articulate how the research and the psychotherapy collapsed time and space.

The Red Heart explains how Merleau-Ponty, whose ideas had been central to the project from the start and who had sought to develop a radical re-description of embodied experience, had also investigated what had long been central in Mahayana Buddhist practice, the becoming of self, of truth. In so doing, the practice became fully entangled with self and the lessons of the awareness of being, moment-by-moment, of breath, the observation of impermanence and of turning the self and the subject inside out began to manifest in the visual and written work being produced.

The idea of impermanence in the creation of the work – a facet of production evident throughout the project – is explained as the essay concludes. Notions of fluidity and transience present in *Csillamlík* (2021), define how the work is made and recorded. These notions accord with the fragility of memory, the palimpsestic nature of how images are layered and overwritten, and the digital, eclectic nature of contemporary 'creative' witnessing.

The Red Heart (Essay 7) is the culmination of the creative written practice and a point of departure for the practice. It is bridged in Essay 6 by a discussion of Husserl's 'natural attitude' or 'everyday knowing' (Zahavi 2003: 45), which specifies that immanent responses to how we experience phenomena yield conscious descriptions of that experience, which supplant responses based on supposition. This 'attitude' underscores the 'reaching for meaning and understanding' evident in the practice-text throughout the project, described in *The Red Heart* as insight or a penetrating gaze; a 'true' encounter with a subject. This essay represents an exploration of this 'true encounter' with self through intense psychotherapy and a negotiation with intersecting and entangled pasts. It sees the emergence of Isaac and Rosa – my paternal great grandparents who emigrated from Kraków in 1897 – as vehicles to umbilically access a genealogical past located in Poland, at the heart of the Jewish Holocaust.

This conflux of subject and object is further reinforced when discussing the coming together of the innate – what is brought to the experience – and the felt and perceived. Heidegger's notion of poesis and the idea of something 'unfolding out of itself' highlights the moment of creation, and the closeness of the real and the perceived in the making and forming of artistic responses to something that is no longer there. This elicits the idea of an object shimmering with new and invested meaning, absorbing, and reflecting the light of feelings and new insight.

If *Portal* (2013) represented my entryway into the project and a border crossing from a place outside and other to the subject, *Conflux and Entanglement* (5.4) represented the stage of the journey where I became embodied and entangled within the narratives and topographies I was encountering.

I discuss Andrey Tarkovsky's notion of mutual dependency with the 'emotional, spiritual and intellectual experience' of the viewer (Tarkovsky 1996:176). This idea

recurs in the essays to define the subjective nature of understanding and the individuated nature of the formation of narrative, either real or imagined. The idea of connectedness, or empathetic attunement, as experienced during my therapy in 2017, is described as the point of conflux between both the innate and the learned, regarding self. It allowed the excavation and subsequent understanding of self, and my immersion in the memory and experience of the other, becoming of central importance in *The Emergent Subject: Artful Research* (Essay 5) and beyond.

Through the embodied phenomenological approach that has informed and driven the research, *The Emergent Subject: Artful Research* (Essay 5) sees the confluence of topological narratives deriving from my own genealogical history, and my experience of, and encounters with, sites of Holocaust memory. The image used to illustrate this essay, *Topographies* (2018), a dense web of criss-crossing and intersecting lines, depicts the decussating of the object and the subject, the geological and the historical.

The final two essays *Aesthetic Emotion: Water and Blood* (Essay 6) and *The Red Heart* (Essay 7), have a sense of 'storytelling', where the writing becomes layered and suffused with imagined personal histories and narratives. It is here, where a 'witnessing' voice, able to invoke and emote personal genealogical histories, as they cross over with the object, becomes more apparent.

5.5

Summary

The reflection in Part 5 has demonstrated how I employed the methods used, and located the primary themes and ideas encountered at the point they have emerged. I have set out to show how the four main themes being discussed evolved and connect in the practice. Part 5 has also enabled reflection on the way in which the project has developed, how the practice has informed any understanding acquired,

and the extent to which the theory and the practice were entwined. It has also deepened my understanding of the implications of applying my chosen methodology.

In reflecting on what the essays were doing, I have confirmed the evolutionary nature of the research and how it has been led by the practice and the nature of doing and experience, a foundational aspect of my phenomenological approach. This can be seen most clearly in *Personal Graphology* 5.3 and *Conflux and Entanglement* 5.4 when describing the assimilation of personal narratives, deriving from my creative psychotherapy, and how they overlapped and coalesced with my encounters with Holocaust sites and narratives. Both 5.1 *Distance* and 5.2 *Silence* highlight the nuanced interpretations that lay beneath the themes, coalescing their variant meanings around the subject and the methodology. The Ava Hoffman quote from *After Such Knowledge* (2005) that insisted, 'Distance matters' (Hoffman 2005: 177) had a profound impact on the research. It was probing this idea, in its many guises, and asking how it mattered, that ensured it remained a leitmotif throughout the essays.

I suggested in the introduction that any new unanticipated insights or connections that occurred through the reflective process would be treated as products of my methodology. This occurred when reflecting on the theme of *Silence* 5.2 and how it was entwined with notions of the lacuna, the void, and absence. It confirmed how it was the reification of the silences heard or seen that represented the substrate used to register and invoke my percepts and felt experience[s] of Holocaust sites. It also articulated how such a phenomenological approach and the visual and written responses being made in response to these sites, sites that were now essentially blank and emptied of the trauma that has come to define them, resonated with my own genealogical history and empathies. The 'lacuna', a motif used by Agamben in *Remnants of Auschwitz* (2000) to describe the inability of those who experienced the Holocaust to adequately testify to their experience, was a belief that led to the recurrent tropes of the Holocaust being ineffable and unrepresentable. It was this

gap, or aporia, which was conceived in the research from the start as a space to be probed and questioned, that is articulated throughout the essays and the accompanying visual practice.

Finally, *Personal Graphology* 5.3 locates the individual nature of the approach and determines the basis of the contribution to knowledge; a sought encounter with Holocaust sites that utilises drawing and writing as complementary graphic modes to invoke memory – memories that are an entanglement of personal, genealogical and Holocaust narrative pasts.

PART VI

CONCLUSION

Drawing is a ghost subject...before drawing evolved into a 'questioning' of something visible [there], it was a way of addressing the absent, of making the absent appear. (Berger 2005:19).

The quote above by John Berger appeared in *Berger on Drawing* (2005), and it refers to three intrinsic characteristics of my project. Firstly, it articulates the idea of questioning as being fundamental to the methodological enquiry of drawing. Secondly, it expresses the way in which drawing is concerned with making the absent present and bringing the subject – whatever that subject is – into appearance and material existence, of reifying the abstract. Finally, it aligns the process of drawing with the idea of ghosts and invisibility, defining drawing as a ghost subject, which, for me, it has proven to be. I explained in the introduction that the likelihood of confronting such a memory-laden past would be likely 'to invoke ghosts', to open a space 'through which something other returns' (Wolfreys: 2002:03). That something other is expressed and scattered throughout the pages of both volumes of this thesis.

FIG 101 is a page from the back of my *Recovery Journal*, which has been discussed at various stages through the thesis. It was written towards the end of my creative psychotherapy in 2018. 'Being incredibly sensitive to the past' was elemental to the research, and how both my own past and the Holocaust had become entangled. 'Tuning in very quickly from the perspective of loss', as is written in the journal below, was the point at which I became aware that this had happened. Being attuned and receptive formed the basis of my phenomenological approach, an approach applied to both my recovery and my experience of Holocaust sites. This was the Essence of the project and why it has been so inextricably bound to self.

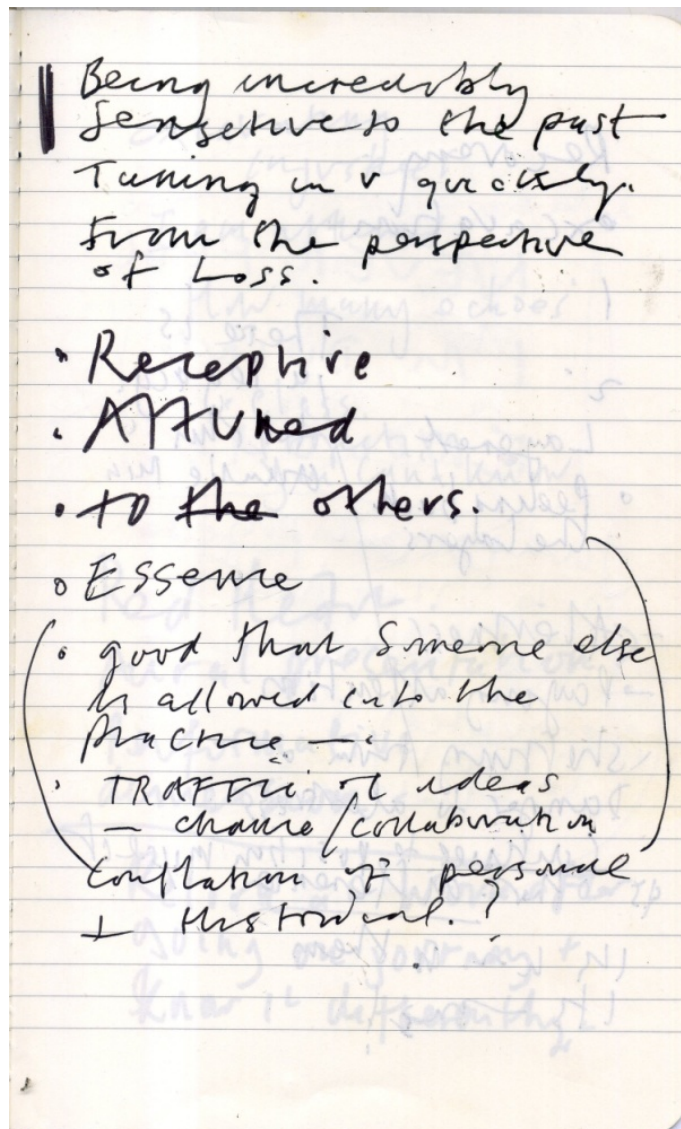


FIG 101. Gary Spicer, *Recovery Journal* extract, .2018.

In 'Post-witnessing and the Holocaust' (1.3) I said that I edited out the word encounter from the title of my master's thesis, 'Encounter with the Holocaust', because I realised then that I couldn't encounter something that was not there anymore. What I could encounter was the vestiges of the events of the Holocaust that in my project involved confronting the spaces and sites that now exist as memorials, museums, or clearings across Eastern Europe. This thesis, which stands as an evolution in terms of focus and emphasis, has involved 'Facing the Holocaust'

and has been characterised by the sought encounter, and the experiencing of Holocaust sites. The practice has sought to locate something other than the physical, and to reify this something other, into words and drawing.

In an interview that appeared in the documentary *Regarding Susan Sontag* (2014), Sontag recounts being 12 years old and finding, in a bookshop, a book that contained photographs of Holocaust victims taken during the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp. This moment she describes in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003) as a moment of 'shift', meaning that she knew her life would never be the same again.

'I opened this book, and I thought I was going to faint, I was so upset, I immediately closed the book. I was trembling. And then I opened it again. And I knew what I was seeing. I knew the Nazis had killed a lot of Jews. I knew that I was Jewish, but I didn't know it meant what I saw' (Sontag 2014)

I too was that child whose first encounter with images relating to the Holocaust was in a book at a friend's house. I was younger, probably about 9 or 10. At the time the images appeared otherworldly; I had no idea of the context of what I was looking at or why people had done this to others. I learned later that the dying and the dead in the pictures, who to me looked like skeletons or desecrated dolls, were all Jewish. I knew that my father was Jewish and that I had Jewish family, but I also sensed that what I was seeing was shameful, it was a secret. My encounter was with a past that had not yet been reconciled. It was the late sixties; for most, it was all still too close.¹⁴⁶ Memories of the Second World War dominated the public consciousness, but the role of the Holocaust was marginalised, and it took much longer to seep into popular awareness and understanding. The Eichmann trial in the early 1960s sparked growing concern, particularly in America where it began to slowly permeate the

¹⁴⁶ Also, remembering the Holocaust did not start serving powerful political interests in different places until much later, including in Israel, where in the aftermath of 1948, remembering the Holocaust wasn't seen as useful, at least until Eichmann and the realisation that the Shoah could be politically useful for a state built on the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and not yet articulated as public memory.

mainstream. The trial also precipitated growing remembrance in Israel. Wider popular interest in the Holocaust did not really begin in earnest until the late 1970s, where in America there was a growing body of academic texts, films, literature, and television productions. In Britain, the closing sequence of *Knowledge or Certainty*, episode 11 of Jacob Bronowski's 1973 series, *The Ascent Of Man*, represented the point at which the Holocaust began to enter the wider popular consciousness. The episode features a spontaneous piece to camera by Bronowski as he walks into the shallow pond adjacent to Crematorium 5 at Birkenau. My critical response to this oratory, features in APPENDIX III.ii *Bringing Forth and Bringing to Light*.

In the introduction to this thesis, I refer to Kierkegaard and his notion of 'a sympathetic antipathy [or] antipathetic sympathy', the paradox of being drawn to something so repellent. The pictures in that book were dreadful, but I couldn't stop looking. I now realise it was because I knew that my genealogical identity was somehow entangled with them and that I was personally connected to the past, and the present, that they represented, meaning that I kept looking and did not avert my gaze. It has ultimately been why quiet contemplation was not enough. Something had to come out; eventually, explicated in written and drawn narratives that have attempted to make the invisible and the dreadful, visible, and to reveal what it was I was seeing over 50 years ago and what those grievous images mean to me now. My thesis then, has been to set out how my drawing and cognate writing practices informed by a phenomenological approach, make it possible for experiential explorations of Holocaust sites to 'happen'.

I used the word 'happening' in the title of my research project to express the wonder, contingency, and experiences of grievous sites of Holocaust trauma, and the myriad tracts of witness testimony and memory that I have since encountered. The places and the memories inculcated have been mediated in the project by the connected processes of drawing and writing and centred on the impact such experiences have had on my senses, emotions and being. I had no preconceptions about how my

practice would develop, other than to know that it would be informed by critical theoretical engagement and its application. Initially this was to be an investigation of the Plaszow concentration camp site, but it became clear quite quickly that it was unnecessary to limit the enquiry to a single site. Consequently, research in the field has taken place at multiple sites in Krakow and Warsaw, including the topography of the ghettos in both cities, Theresienstadt – or Terezin in the Czech Republic, and multiple sites in Berlin and Budapest. In addition to these locations, there were also sites in North Manchester, including the site of ‘Red Bank’, an early area of Jewish settlement for new migrants adjacent to Victoria railway station, which was where my paternal great-grandparents lived after arriving in Manchester at the end of the 19th Century. I have also worked at sites of historic Jewish burial and heritage in this area.

Because the pandemic meant that travel outside of the UK from early 2020 became impossible, the sites of early Jewish settlement in Manchester connected to the migration of my great-grandparents, including their site of burial at the Urmston Jewish cemetery, became sites of phenomenological interest and opportunity. Although this was unexpected, and certainly unplanned, it had the effect of grounding the research and strengthening the geographical link with sites in Eastern Europe to which, for me, the sites in North Manchester were umbilically linked. It created an expanded field: a field existing outside of geographical boundaries.

My psychotherapy that had taken place before the pandemic lockdowns, during which there was an imperative to be attuned and sensitive to the past, meant that my connection to it became cerebral and not fixed in space and time. I was moving temporally across and through the narratives I was excavating, I was confronting the past in its many guises. The subject, as myself, was becoming inextricably entangled with the objects of both historical and genealogical pasts. It was also forming and shaping empathies with a universal Jewish past to which I was becoming more and more intrigued and drawn towards as the project progressed. Phenomenology as a

vehicle to articulate the experience through creative practice of that which cannot be optically seen – of what is not there anymore – has been my method, in combination with anthropology and what it is to be human, as a means of telling my own and the stories of others. Tim Ingold's notion of 'commingling' has been central in this regard, where, in the attempt to physically respond to phenomena one had to become it, be with it. This was essential when encountering sites of Holocaust memory, where through this immersion I was able to register percepts; it became my breath, my orbit, and in response, I began to write and to draw.

The unforeseen need for therapy in 2017 and the effects of my degenerative spinal and joint medical condition, ironically, aided the phenomenological method, regarding embodiment, empathy, and attunement. In reflecting and representing pain and trauma, I was able to 'be the pain'. So, I was commingled not only on a genealogical level in terms of a shared Jewish ancestry, but also viscerally on an intuitive level. This is an example of how the project has not been defined by linear steps, as I specified in the introduction, it has been 'process-oriented' and driven by the circumstances and the impact these have had on the practice.

Merleau-Ponty provided the initial framework to position my research, particularly his ideas of embodied perception and how we know the world through the body. Both ideas are expanded in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (2013). Along with Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty posited that the body was an important source of mediation between the self and the world. Both have maintained a consistent theoretical presence throughout the project. Merleau-Ponty's belief that artists and art-making were comparable to the means of the phenomenologist (whose palettes were words and language), connected his ideas with the project's *raison d'être* from the beginning.

Together with drawing, words and language have formed the linguistic and drawn

traces of my lived experience at Holocaust sites of memory and the basis of the phenomenological approach. This contemporary reading of Merleau-Ponty is consistent with my attempt to find 'new words [language] to convey [the] experience of the world' (Dreon 2016:49).

In a later and unfinished text, *The Visible and the Invisible*, (1969) Merleau-Ponty describes as a chiasm or crossing-over (the term being derived from the Greek letter chi) the nature of subjective experience and objective existence. In essence it is our ability to both touch and be touched that represents the ambiguous status of our bodies. Merleau-Ponty regarded this as a 'single fundamental phenomenon' (Baldwin 2004: 1). In the context of the practice this has been understood as a conjunction of subjective individuated experience and the objecthood of Holocaust sites, their silence, and their ghosts. The resulting happening and reification of these inert entities was activated through the body and gesture, being touched by, and touching the void, recalling Ingold's commingling. Claude Cernuschi, in describing the 'nothingness' of the void, and citing Werner Brock, contends that by 'our exposure to it [the void] the strangeness of the things that are will be newly and deeply felt:'

'Presence is not only contingent on oneness, apprehension, and a sense of place, but also contingent on its inseparability from, as well as its incommensurability, with the void' (Cernuschi 2012: 95).

So, it is presence and being – the body – that have determined and activated meaning in places such as the Holocaust sites I have encountered, which otherwise might be absent and examples of nothingness.

Another Greek word this time for truth, *aletheia* is what determined Heidegger's search for meaning. In the practice this has been manifest in the gesture and the enactment of making: the happening, rather than the finished thing itself. Described by Heidegger as unconcealment, 'the bringing into appearance' or 'the blooming of the blossom' (Williams 2017:87), discussed in Volume 2: Essay 1 *Portal*, this

articulates the impermanent nature of the work in terms of its production and archiving. The work is at its most potent when it is 'unfolding out of itself' (Dufrenne 1973:527-28), and in the process of its making and becoming.

In distinguishing between phenomenology, as the method through which my experience(s) of Holocaust sites have been articulated – where the emphasis has been on something other than the physicality of the sites – and New Materialism (Coole, D and Frost, S: 2010), as a theory that disputes the prioritisation of the embodied human subject, the specificity of my methodological approach, and its focus on process and becoming, is located. The project represents how the experiencing of Holocaust sites, as an embodied activity of strokes, gestures, clicks and contours, has captured the 'being' and the individuated truth of these encounters. But with Graham Harman's Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) – which sought to investigate the nature and relations of objects with each other, and with ourselves, his notion of 'waking up objects', and how a literal (static) understanding of an object – a Holocaust site – does not have to be the preeminent aspect of its 'existence', I saw a connection that confirmed how my drawing and writing practice represented a 'shifting' in the transmutation of the objects – the Holocaust sites – I was experiencing.

The concept of necessitated alliance, which first surfaced in the practice-text in *the Inheritance of Distance: Photograph #283* (Essay 2) and became the central focus of (Essay 3) *Necessitating my Alliance: A Meditation on the Plaszow Concentration Camp*, was established early in the trajectory of the project the critical relationship between subject and object. This developed later in the practice in combination with the notion of entanglement, and later with Tim Ingold's 'commingling', and proved essential in the context of a phenomenological methodology. It also established the importance of a further 'dialogue' – an alliance – between artist or writer and audience, as being complicit in the meaning-making process. FIG 102 from journal 3 (2018) identifies the point at which this became key to the research, where the

synonyms of association, bond, compel and imperative are drawn out to reinforce its significance.

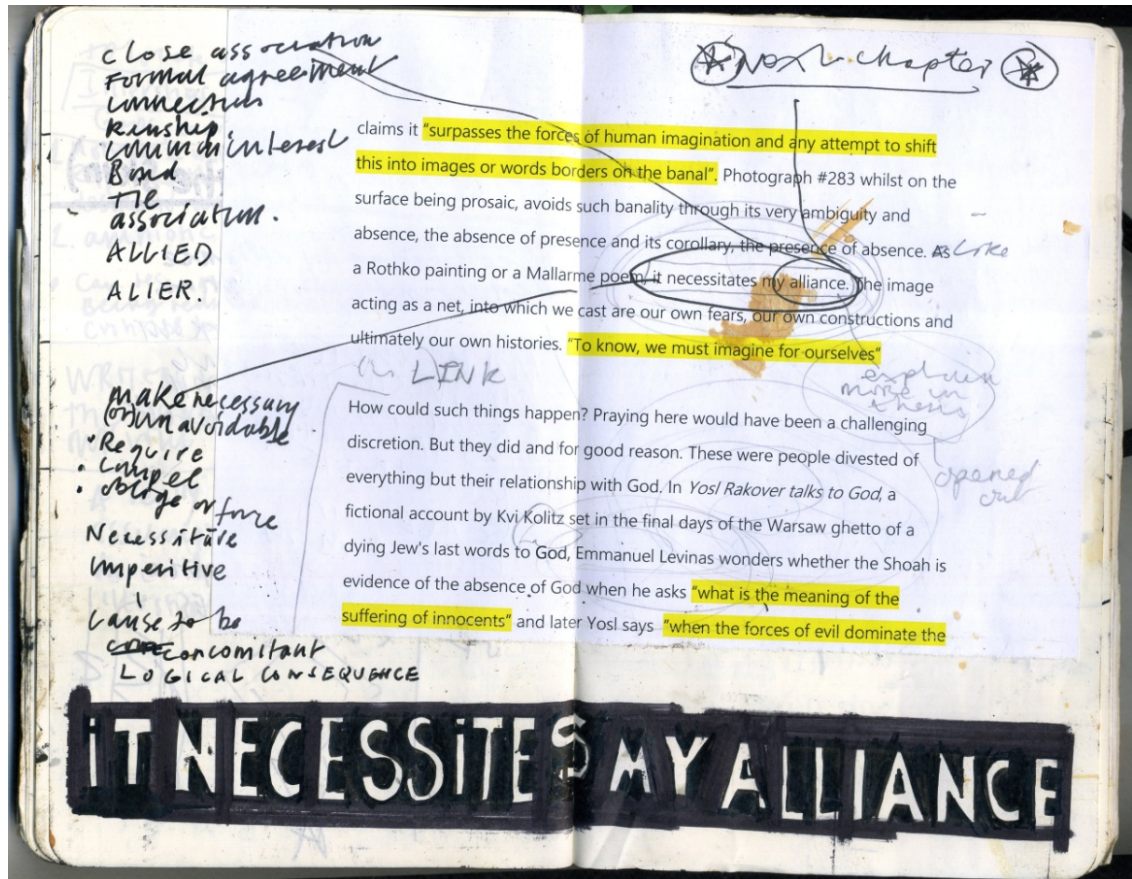


FIG 102. Gary Spicer, *Necessitating my Alliance*, Journal 3, 2018.

The notion of the journey best illustrates the nature of the research and how it has evolved. Being 'process-oriented', it has been organic, its direction determined by my artistic practice and the evolution of my theoretical knowledge, understanding and its application. The critical framework has provided the scaffolding onto which the project has been bound, but the process has determined the outcomes and the knowledge derived.

H.G. Adler, in *The Journey* (2004), articulates as a journey the descent into chaos and destruction that the Holocaust represented, describing 'the winding paths of a

solitary realm' (2004: 04). My own project can also be defined as a host of crisscrossing, intersecting paths. This is made explicit in the *Topographies*, made in 2018 (FIG 88), and in subsequent works, such as FIG 103 *Steel Hips*, made in 2018. FIG 103.



FIG 103. Gary Spicer. *Steel Hips*, 2018.

Whilst the project clearly represents an epistemological journey of learning and encounter, it has also been an inward journey of a search for self and reconciliation. The section of practice-text below, taken from 3.3 Journey in *Necessitating my Alliance: A Meditation on the Plaszow Concentration Camp* (Essay 3) is apposite:

And like on Adler's stage I dance and pierce the space, reaching and stretching into the past to reveal, that which is broken. And in stretching, a

space that moves beyond the pale of writing and the limits of memory shed just enough light to limn the outlines of forms now rendered in drawing, marking, and gesturing, in and across the surface. Seamlessly transmogrified.

This is where the primary contribution to knowledge established in this project lies, both as an application of phenomenological approaches to the use of drawing in the 'experiencing' of place, and in the attempt to establish how drawing and writing, when viewed and processed through a phenomenological lens, elicit methods of embodiment that can deepen our understanding of sites of trauma and constitute a legitimate form of post-witnessing.

In terms of the potential for transferability, I am reminded of one of my students – let's call her Anna – who commented, as we walked, solemnly, through Birkenau whilst listening on headphones to the sustained and detailed oratory by the tour guide, who was impressing on the assembled group the scale and suffering of those who had passed through – however fleetingly – the death camp. The guide reminded us in whose steps we were walking. My student, Anna, said, 'Gary, I don't know what to think and I don't know how to respond'. Feeling this way clearly distressed her. She couldn't understand why her feelings could not be processed into a salient response. I remember asking the tour guide to stop. I told her that my students needed to talk. I reassured them that it was ok not to know what to think. Processing the information, the numbers, the stories, and the suffering that had been experienced in the very place that they were standing was difficult and challenging. The event was so big, and the history so grievous. It was a condition that would later inform my own need to reconcile and articulate a response to such sites. A condition that pre-empted the trajectory of this research.

The potential for transferability, and as a means by which students such as Anna could begin to articulate something of their experiencing of such sites, lies in the application of the phenomenological method, where the focus is placed on the encounter with the individual's perception of the sites of memory and trauma. The physicality and any previous or known representations of the place, is being 'bracketed', and seen as of secondary importance to the primacy of the visceral response. It is in the process of 'doing', be it drawing, writing, as in my own case, or by dancing, or making music, that it becomes possible to get nearer, or to making, as Ava Hoffman stressed, 'the right tone of response, and measure of expression in relation to this event' (Hoffman 2004: 177). I believe in the act of doing, as made further explicit by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone in *The Corporeal Turn* (2009), we can find an alternative means of 'linguaging experience' – just as Anna needed, when she was wrestling with 'bodily feelings [that are] not easily or readily describable'. My proposition, because directly linguaging a dynamic phenomenon is often problematic, is that when language falters, as 'sentient, living bodies' (Sheets-Johnstone 2009: 363), we are moved to draw, dance, or play, to locate that right measure of expression.

This work began in 2013 with my master's thesis. Through a reading of phenomenology in this project, and its application to my perception of Holocaust sites and the criss-crossing of genealogical threads across my contested Jewish past, I have discovered a means through which I can articulate experience and represent it, adequately and with purpose. I now want to take my doctoral research further by developing the story, begun in Volume 2: Essay 7, *The Red Heart*, of Isaac and Rosa and their flight to emancipation in 1887, when they moved from Krakow through Lower Silesia, to make a new life in North Manchester. I want to trace this journey, locate their life before and the expectations of what a life elsewhere would be, and how this ultimately was experienced in Cheetham Hill. I will be writing a book, part-memoir, part-journal, and part-fiction, that will chronicle and imagine their journey. The plan is that a play will also grow out of this text where, perhaps through performance, consciousness can be revealed and re arranged in ways beyond the

capability of the text. It is something I have never done before, but I can imagine it with all the 'sentience of my living body' (Sheets-Johnstone 2009).

Finally, the evidence discussed and explicated in the thesis demonstrates a clear departure from the paralysing debates over the veracity and, indeed, legitimacy of artistic representations made from encounters with Holocaust sites. But it is Holocaust survivors, such as Aharon Appelfeld, who stated that 'only art had the power of redeeming suffering from the abyss' (Kaplan 2007: 1), that fuel the argument for artists and writers to add to the field of contemporary post-witnessing that serves to mitigate the possibility of the ultimate betrayal of those who suffered: to forget.

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APPENDIX I

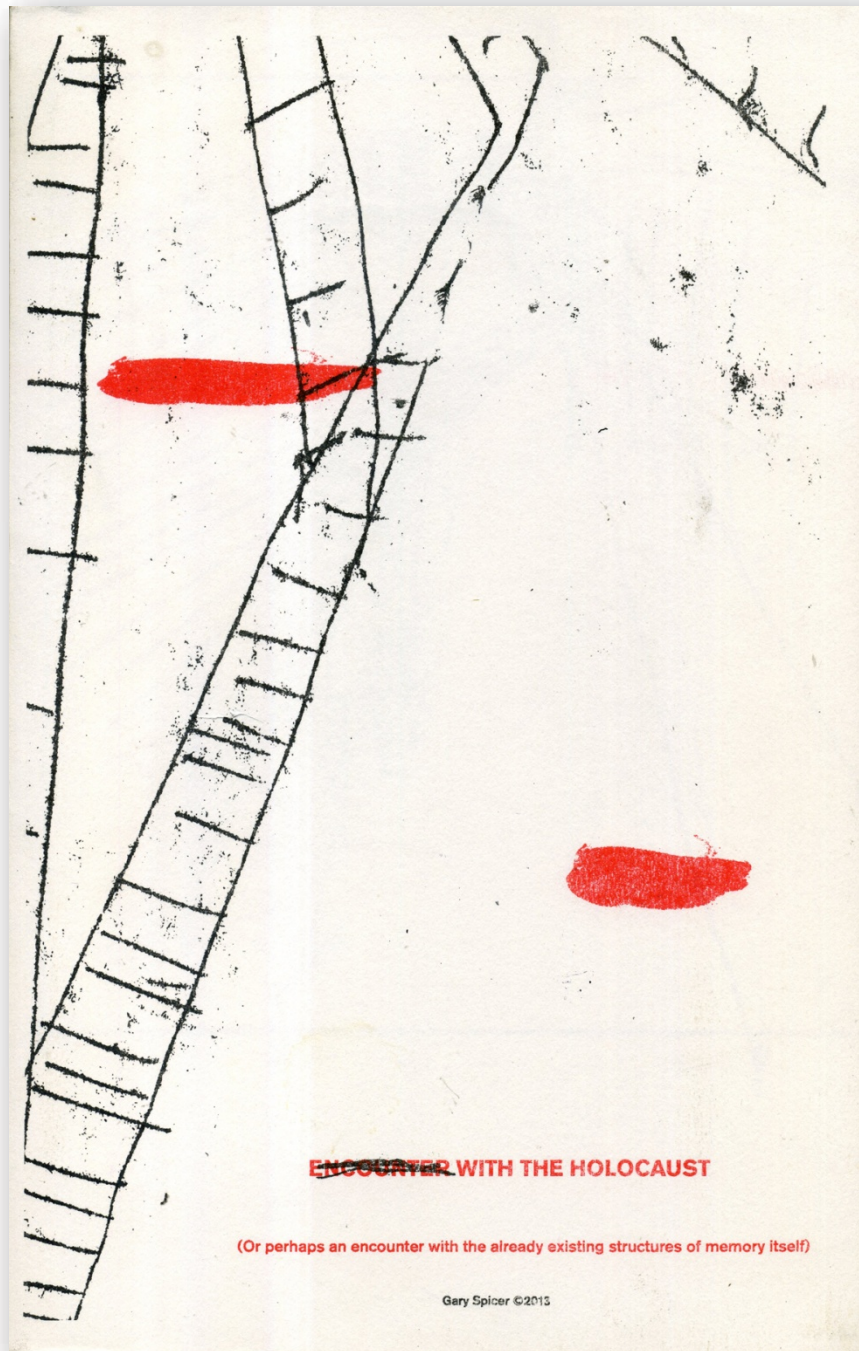
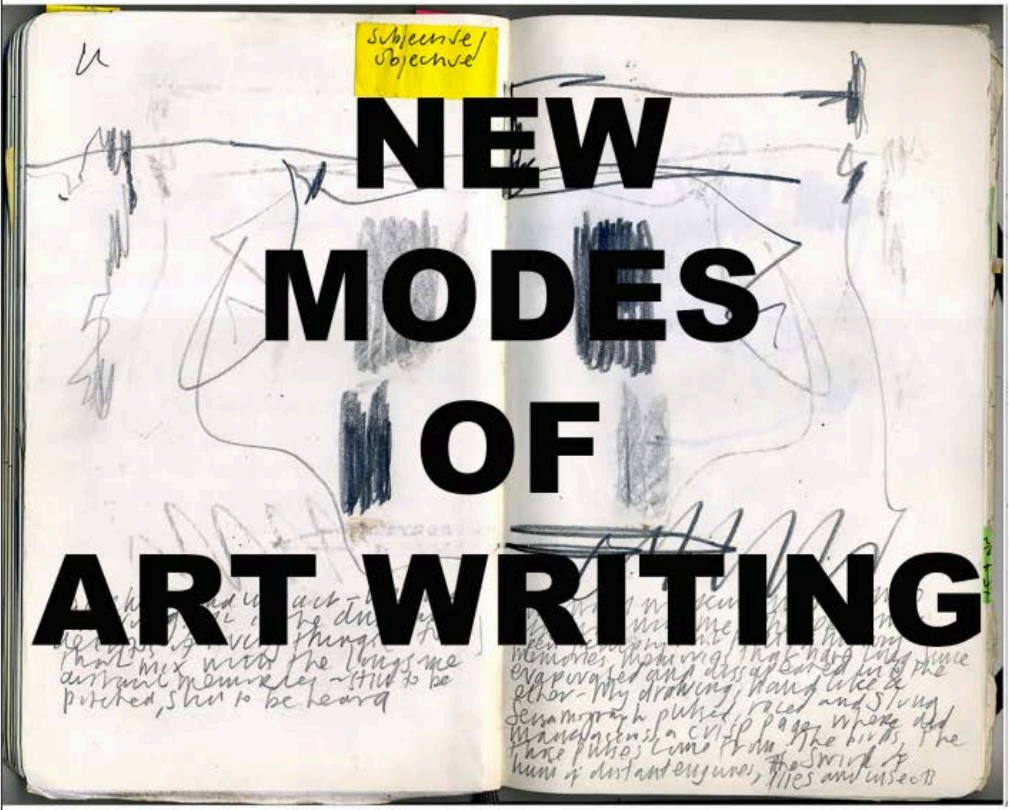


FIG 103. Gary Spicer, *Encounter with the Holocaust*, Master's Thesis 2013.

APPENDIX II

CONFERENCE



**NEW
MODES
OF
ART WRITING**

INTERSECTIONS OF THE CRITICAL AND CREATIVE VOICE

<p>The conference schedule can be found here; http://newmodesofartwriting.harts.online/about/</p>	<p>In the Conference Suite, Student Union Building, Manchester Metropolitan University, 21 Higher Cambridge Street, Manchester, M15 6AD</p>	<p>FRIDAY NOVEMBER 10 2017</p>
<p>To book your free place go to eventbrite.co.uk</p>		
<p>Search for New Modes of Art Writing 2</p>		




  

FIG 104. Gary Spicer, *New Modes of Art Writing*, Conference 2017.

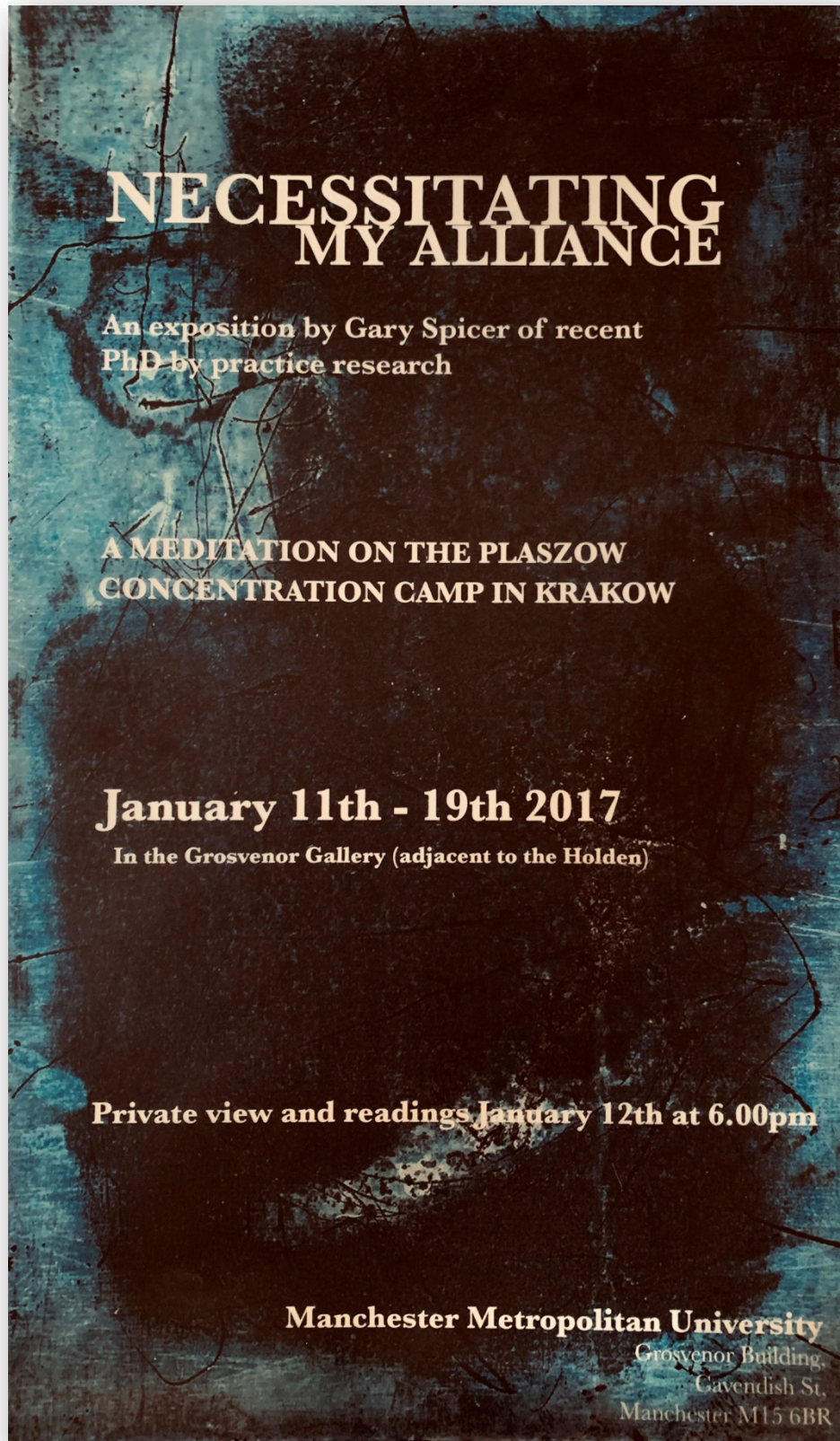


FIG 105. Gary Spicer, *Necessitating my Alliance*, Exposition Poster, 2017.

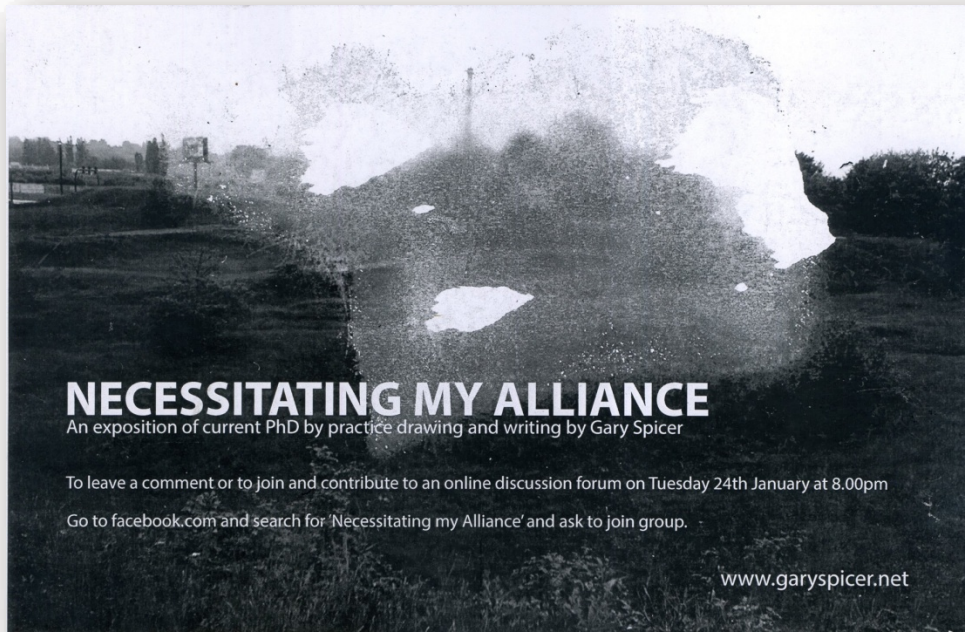


FIG 106. Gary Spicer, *Necessitating my Alliance*, Promo for online discussion, 2017.

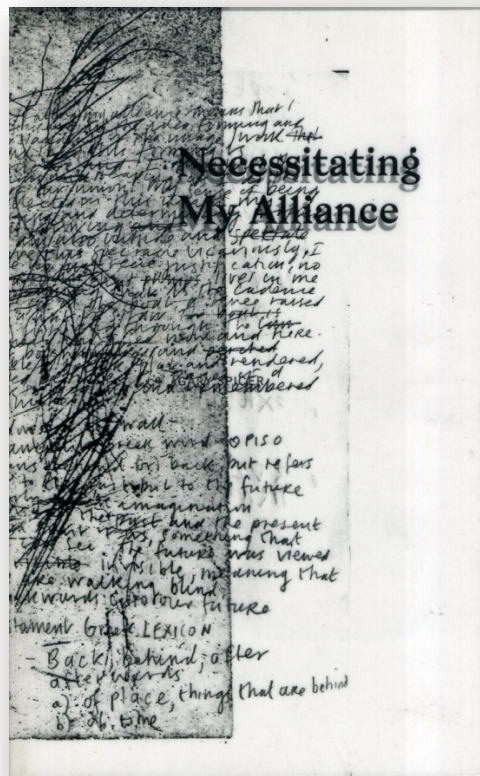


FIG 107. Gary Spicer, *Necessitating my Alliance*, Publication (Cover), 2017.

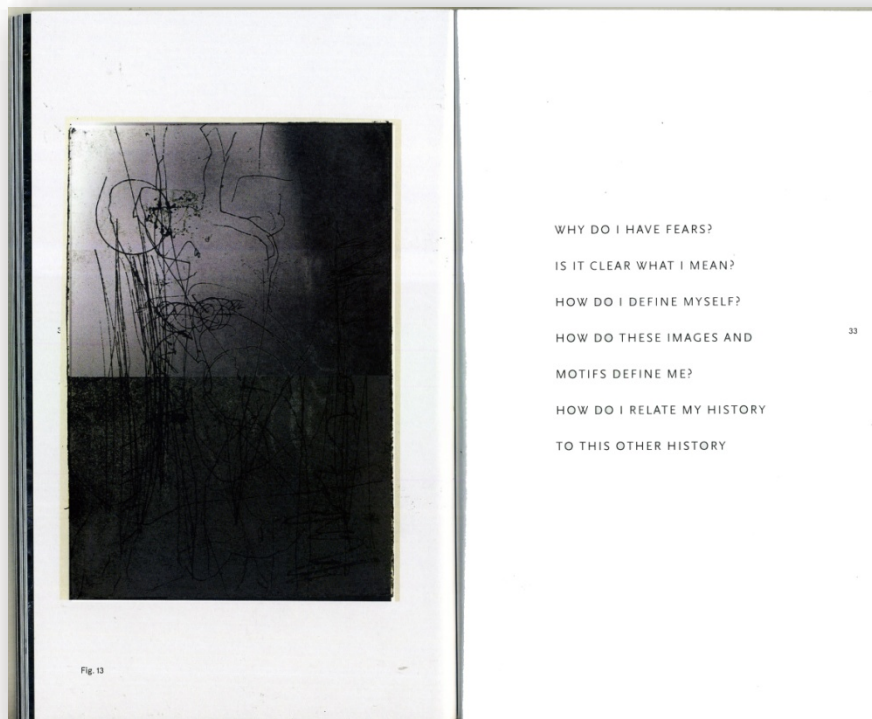
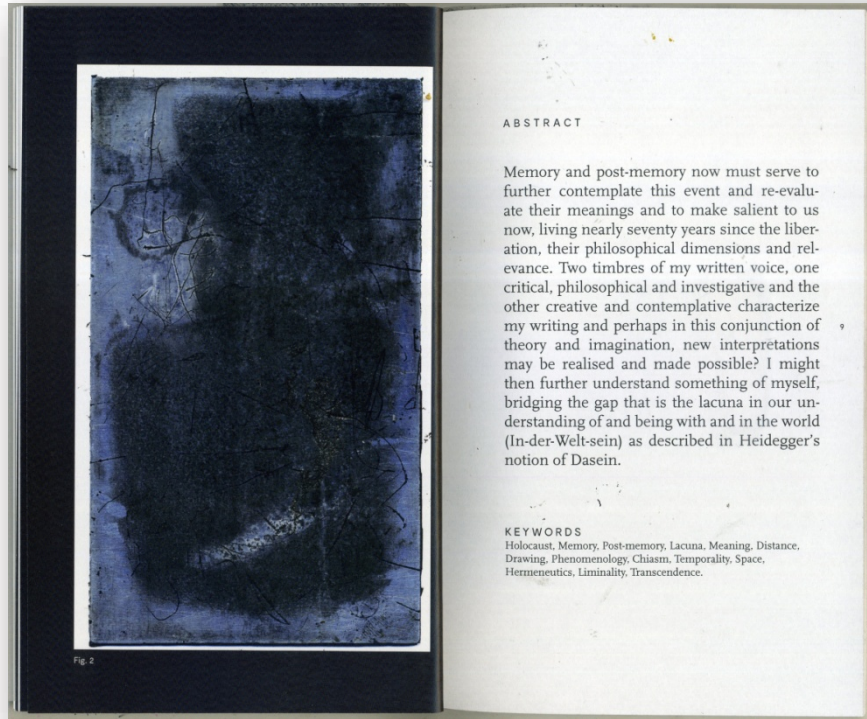


FIG 108,109. Gary Spicer, *Necessitating my Alliance*, Publication (DPS), 2017.



Son Of Saul Hungary 2015

Screens daily from Friday 29th of April.

The Sunday screening at 5pm will include an introduction by Dr Dominic Williams (University of Leeds), co-author of a recent book about the Sonderkommando as well as a post-film panel discussion with Prof. Griselda Pollock (University of Leeds), Prof. Sue Vice (University of Sheffield) and **Gary Spicer (Stockport College)**



FIG 110. Gary Spicer, *Son of Saul*, Panel discussion promo 2017.

APPENDIX III

3.1: Knowledge or Certainty – Jacob Bronowski

‘There are two parts to the human dilemma. One is the belief that the end justifies the means. That push-button philosophy, that deliberates deafness to suffering, has become the monster in the war machine. The other is the betrayal of the human spirit: the assertion of dogma closes the mind and turns a nation, a civilization into a regiment of ghosts — obedient ghosts, or tortured ghosts. It’s said that science will dehumanize people and turn them into numbers. That’s false — tragically false. Look for yourself. This is the concentration camp and crematorium at Auschwitz. This is where people were turned into numbers. Into this pond were flushed the ashes of some four million people. And that was not done by gas — it was done by arrogance, it was done by dogma, it was done by ignorance. When people believe that they have absolute knowledge, with no test in reality, this is how they behave. This is what men do when they aspire to the knowledge of gods. Science is a very human form of knowledge. We are always at the brink of the known, we always feel forward for what is to be hoped. Every judgment in science stands on the edge of error and is personal. Science is a tribute to what we ‘can’ know although we are fallible. In the end, the words were said by Oliver Cromwell: ‘I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken’. I owe it as a scientist to my friend Leo Szilard; I owe it as a human being to the many members of my family who died at Auschwitz, to stand here by the pond as a survivor and as witness. We have to cure ourselves of the itch for absolute knowledge and power. We have to close the distance between the push-button order and the human act. We have to touch people’.

Jacob Bronowski. *The Ascent of Man* (p370-374) .

3.2: Bringing Forth and Bringing to Light

The writing below is a response to Bronowski's oratory that I delivered at the Nottingham conference in June 2017 entitled *Critical Creativity: Exploring Creative-Critical Writing*:

These words were spoken in episode 11 of Jacob Bronowski's epic history of science and civilization. *The Ascent of Man*, published in 1973 and described by Bronowski as 'A personal journey of intellectual history' and as "monuments of unaging intellect" here citing Yeats' poem *Sailing to Byzantium* in which Yeats enunciates the anguish of old age and the imperative to remain active and vital even when the heart is 'fastened to a dying animal' (the body). I am interested in these juxtapositions of art and literature, art and science and further intrigued by the philosopher's use of art in their writing. Reflecting upon and questioning reality in different ways and seeking to depict the rational and the spiritual dimensions of this enquiry, in its relation to 'being in the world' helps to define my practice. Like Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger or Gaston Bachelard who said there existed two forms of thought: scientific and poetic. And when not seen as a binary it becomes possible, like in Bronowski's writing and oratory, to exist in the confluence of both.

When he describes 'Science (as) a very human form of knowledge'. Bronowski connects the mind and the soul, the tangible, and the abstract, of what is and is not understood and how we are always stood on the brink of the unknown but reach and stretch forward 'for what is to be hoped'. My own practice embodies this idea of the unknown and of guessing to visualise form, of working with the potentiality of the known to depict what abstract intrigue exists beyond the veil, an extrapolation. But recognising also that there is always a degree of positive concealment. It is desirable to not know and to strive to discover, to be driven by the why? rather than the how. We cannot know or expect to know, for as Bronowski says, as he kneels at the pond

adjacent to Crematorium 5 at Auschwitz, 'This is what men do when they aspire to the knowledge of gods.'

I admire this writing because it is clear, and it is emphatic. Whilst Bronowski had the outline (a sketch) of what he wanted to say to camera, it is clear he is responding to the poetics of the space. The embodiment and the assimilation of his thought 'into' and 'of' the space is what make it emphatic. In these few lines, Bronowski exemplifies how language can equate to and harnesses our intention to understand, that which is – or appears to be – beyond our grasp. His use of literary allusion in the form of a quote by Oliver Cromwell reinforces the power of the oratory, 'I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, and think it possible you may be mistaken'. His language is structured simply. There is no affectation here, no pretence. It is language intended to communicate and not to obfuscate. His use of figuration makes accessible themes of destruction and waste. There is also fragility in his language, the language of one reaching and stretching for the tools to articulate the moment of his thoughts. This vulnerability bridges the gap for the reader / listener who sits outside of Bronowski's lived experience, in that moment but who is invited to be present vicariously.

My research practice has sought to deal with the seeming binary of that which is tangible and that which is unknown, and I am inspired by words like Bronowski's that seem insistent that the burr of my voice should emerge – emergere – 'bringing forth and bringing to light,' that which in the words of cultural historian Raymond Williams, is my "art lived through experience".

Gary Spicer Nottingham, June 2017.

APPENDIX IV

Enmity: A Hateful Mythology

The Holocaust was the culmination of over fifteen hundred years of systematic and legislative decree. Since the 4th Century AD three anti-Jewish policies¹⁴⁷ have existed where the succeeding policy has emerged as an escalation and an alternative to its predecessor, conversion, expulsion and ultimately annihilation. The Nazis invented nothing regarding the negative perception of the Jews but in the Holocaust, they took the final step¹⁴⁸. Annihilation was the zenith of Jewish persecution, and the nadir of what actions humans were capable of.

The roots of this enmity lie in the period that saw the emergence of Christianity. Initially as followers of the Abrahamic faith, Christians still observed Jewish laws. But the Torah states that there is only one God and 'He is a jealous God and admits of no other Gods. He is not Christ and Christ is not He' (Hilberg 1985:06) so when Christianity elevated Christ to Godhood any reconciliation became untenable. Once The Bible in Revelations 3.9 referred to the 'Synagogue of Satan' it established a linked Jewish identity and association with evil and the devil that would be exploited for centuries. So began a period of forced conversion where hateful mythology began to circulate of reviled but fictitious practices of Jews. The Black Death in the 14th

¹⁴⁷ Termed as policies by Raul Hilberg. Governments and administrations decreed these courses of action.

¹⁴⁸ It is debateable as to whether the 'final solution' was in any way a planned and natural conclusion to the centuries of Jewish persecution and the 'Jewish problem' in Europe as the Nazis saw it. Historical processes don't necessarily work in that way, as there are always different potential outcomes to particular developments and events as they occur. This would be intensified during times of political and societal entropy. A persuasive argument made by Arno Meyer in *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken* was that the downturn of German military prospects in 1941 after the invasion of Russia intensified anti-Semitic violence and murderous tendencies. In terms of our wider understanding of this history and the incomprehension that follows that such things could happen, Walter Benjamin posits that astonishment and disbelief cannot be the starting point for our understanding "unless it is the understanding that the concept of history in which it originates is untenable". (Evelein 2014: 76)

Century was blamed on Jews. The portrait of the Judensau – that of a Jew being suckled by a sow, an image commonplace in the Medieval period further popularised the folklore and began a theme of destructive caricatures that would become embedded in the psyche. The ultimate failure of the policy of conversion led to the forced exile of Jews. So began the second policy, the expulsions.

The third policy began in 1941 when the systematic and institutional distrust and marginalising of the Jews reached its zenith and when the Nazis unleashed their policy of annihilation. It was a policy of industrial genocide with the intention of ridding Europe of its Jewish presence.

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THE PRACTICE

Introduction

Volume 2 contains a collection of essays, and a body of additional visual practice, with a written commentary, to situate the work. I have placed the work in three sections to give a sense of the chronology of when it was made: 2016 - 17, 2018 - 19 and 2020 – 2023. This corresponds to the timeline of ideas and themes being explored in the essays. This is also traceable in the journal pages illustrated.

Each essay is led by an image, either a photograph, drawing or print from my visual practice. In some cases, the image forms the subject of the essay, in others it informs or reflects the intention and ambition. Because the project spans such a long period of time – seven years - it reflects a considerable evolution of thought and learning. The essays trace how this learning and understanding, impacted the drawing and writing practice.

The writing in the essays is characterized by two timbres of my written voice, one creative, contemplative and imagined (which will be emboldened and italicized) this I have called *practice-text* and the other more critical and investigative. The writing is further supported with ideas, images, and extracts from my journals.

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ESSAY 1

Portal

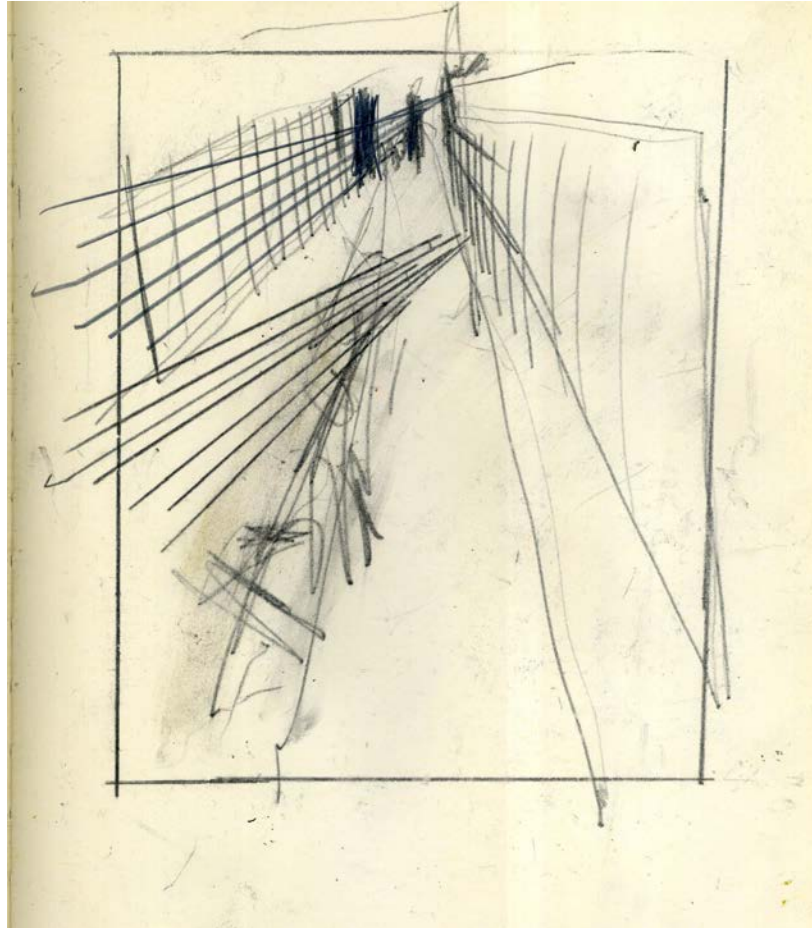


FIG 1. Gary Spicer, *Portal*, ¹ 2013.

'The traumatic event which happened in the past, does not belong to a distanced past: it is still present in the present' (Van Alphen 2005: 169).

This image was drawn in my room at the Royal Hotel on Swietej Gertrudy in Kraków, during the spring of 2013. It was one of a quick series of memory drawings made after returning from a day of field-note enquiry at Birkenau, Auschwitz 2, the

combined Concentration and Extermination camp (FIG 2). The visit confirmed my interest in the residual traces of the Holocaust - its tracks and its ghosts – and when it became clear that Holocaust sites would be a focus for ongoing research and investigation.



FIG 2. Gary Spicer, *The Road to Heaven, Auschwitz-Birkenau*, 2017.

The place continues to both repel and draw me in. I have always had somatic and visceral responses there, but I have also been drawn to contemplate and have been stilled¹⁴⁹ in a sort of solemnity. I remembered Kierkegaard and his notion of ‘a sympathetic antipathy [or] antipathetic sympathy’ (Hanson 2010: 163), the paradox

¹⁴⁹ Stilled. Being drawn to silence. Quiet, contemplative, free from disturbance, made static - and for me – attuned.

of being drawn to something so repellent.¹⁵⁰ Being stilled in silence is all-pervasive in such places. Mark C Taylor said, 'To hear silence is to find stillness in the midst of the restlessness that makes creative life possible...' (Taylor 2020: 02).

Taylor describes this stillness as a void that inevitably leads to black and the darkest black at that. 'There is nothing so black as the black within' (Taylor 2020: 149), and this relates to what is absorbed and what is reflected, black absorbs. In the context of my phenomenological practice, this void...this blank, is absorbed within and is manifest as true black, as dense, and impenetrable.

This blackness according to artist Anish Kapoor¹⁵¹ is about fear¹⁵². But it is also about horror and incredulity, a blackness upon which meaning or light needs to be projected and which through art in some measure, seeks to be illuminated. This is the motivation to make the work, to reach within and to shed light, where the very desire to do this is both pleasurable and frightening. In the knowledge also, which concurs with early Holocaust witness testimony that some silences occur because it is too frightening to voice one's thoughts.

Reframing Taylor's notions of silence around sites of Holocaust memory, I attest to that feeling of the unsayable, of being stilled and hearing the silence that pervades such places, paradoxically, by seeing it¹⁵³, we become aware of how this mode of

¹⁵⁰ Kierkegaard in his early work writes of this phenomenon that in theology is *tremendum et fascinatum*, i.e., mystery that repels and mystery that attracts. This is discussed further in the context of the practice in Essay 3, *Necessitating my Alliance*.

¹⁵¹ In 2014, Surrey Nano-Systems released a material called 'Vantablack'. It was promoted as the world's blackest black as it absorbed 99.965% of visible light. Artist Anish Kapoor controversially bought exclusive artistic rights to 'Vantablack' in 2016.

¹⁵² Kapoor believes that there is no blacker black than the blackness within. This articulates to the phenomenological void and the fear and significance of emptiness. Kapoor describes such dark negative spaces as having "many presences" (Celant 1996). Such presences are what the project has sought to interrogate. Celant, G 1996, Anish Kapoor, Edizioni: Charta, Milan.

¹⁵³ A kind of synaesthesia, that makes visible silence and absence.

seeing transmutes the pregnant silence via a strange form of alchemy, where quiet contemplation alone is not enough. The practice-text below is an example of ‘modal looping’¹⁵⁴, writing whilst looking at the *Portal* image (FIG 1).

I am drawing in a place not intended for drawing.

Looking across and into

the

past.

...And cast black into the stone, another shadow over and under theirs meets and they converge, then reduced to a point, are shrunk tight before moving through an outer darkness and into a black hole. Leading to another place in the past. The lines as tracks lead off and away...off the page...beyond the frame...to the unseen and the absent.

Something must be embodied; vented, and gestured, written or drawn...and there, the lingering and residual dreadful...is made visible.¹⁵⁵

This mode of witnessing is particular to the post-witness, the artist, the historian, and the outsider. *Portal* (2013) represents the distance the post-witness must maintain from the inside, always ‘other’. Those that were on the inside, those who

¹⁵⁴ See Volume 1: 4.3 The Modal Loop.

¹⁵⁵ I have always found my visits to Poland to be emotionally draining. “To approach the *kevarim* (tombs) of the many *tzaddikim* (righteous) left there with forethought and trepidation leaves one with a sense of spiritual elevation that does not wear off quickly” Hoffman, R. (2020).

'drowned'¹⁵⁶ but survived had nothing to relate the experience to. They had no frame of reference. A 'Sonderkommando'¹⁵⁷ who worked in the Crematoria testified:

'I couldn't understand any of it. It was like a blow on the head, as if I had been stunned. I didn't even know where I was...I was in shock; as if I'd been hypnotized, ready to do whatever I was told. I was mindless, so horrified'. (Felman & Laub 1992:231).

So, the inside was, and remains unintelligible. 'Inside has no voice' (Felman & Laub 1992:231), mute and inconceivable. Insiders talked of the vanishing point of the voice, of those who crossed the threshold of the crematoria being the guardians of the truth and the impossibility of the 'drowned' to ever testify to it.

The 'drowned', those who cannot draw breath, cannot speak, cannot call and are mute, are unable to testify. These include both those who died and those who survived. But there is testimony in their existence. This is Mark C. Taylor's silence which begs to be seen by the post-witness, and where its residue, is transmuted and made visible in works like my own. As in *Portal* (2013), that represents this distance, threshold, convergence, and vanishing point.

Whilst Levi's true witnesses are those that were saved and perished but who remain forever mute, those that drowned (Levi 1988), and survived are equally unable to testify to the truth. A truth whose 'loss constitutes precisely what it means to be inside the Holocaust' (Felman & Laub 1992:231). A truth forever inaccessible to the

¹⁵⁶ Primo Levi. *The Drowned and the Saved* (2013). Those that survived to bear witness are the drowned. The true witnesses, those that perished are the saved.

¹⁵⁷ Sonderkommando. The Jews of this work brigade fulfilled many roles in the gas chamber/crematoria complex, beginning with the arrival of deported victims, escorting, and processing them through the killing process, after which they entered the gas chambers to disentangle, remove hidden valuables from the dead including gold teeth and to dispose of the bodies.

outsider but a truth that those writers and artists who can visualize and give literary or gestural form to the silence can reach and stretch for, allude to, guess at and be referential to. And although these attempts are always doomed to failure, they can each time perhaps 'try again. Fail again. Fail better'¹⁵⁸ and articulate something idiosyncratic or profound about the event itself or their relation to it, in the process. Perhaps there are many portals like this one and perhaps it is possible in a state of reverie, to pass through space and time, to be there, to walk their paths, to see this place as they saw it.

As an approach, phenomenology provides the tools to describe experience but not to explain causes. In this way gaps in understanding are revealed. It is in these gaps that I image[ine], a palimpsest, tentatively formed through words and gesture. A light amid darkness, feint but just beyond the limen¹⁵⁹, the threshold where a measure of understanding might begin to form and where the graphic marks made in response don't obscure or fill in but instead, paradoxically, serve as the activation of notional and graphic spaces – and an opening up of territory.

A portal is a doorway, a gate or other entrance. It is also an exit, egress or opening. It is at once a metaphor for an aperture beyond, an abyss or a void¹⁶⁰. It is also a rupture, a fissure in space and time that signifies the point of fracture, of no return. *Portal* (2013) represents both the conjunction of my relationship with the Holocaust and the strands of my own genealogical past around which the disaster was entwined. It is also a record of that early encounter with Birkenau and the trace of my subjective, conscious experience of it, the way it seemed and the way it made me

¹⁵⁸ Samuel Beckett's words from his prose piece *Worstward Ho!* Published in 1983. Beckett promulgated the idea of failure as an essential part of any artist's working method and to be embraced. This is wholly consistent with the artist's responsibility to continue to try and succeed despite failure.

¹⁵⁹ Limen. In psychology the term for threshold, the point at which a stimulus is strong enough to produce a response.

¹⁶⁰ This in the context of 'the black' is discussed in Essay 2 The Inheritance of Distance: Photograph #283

feel. It was, in this sense, a threshold, a border crossing, a place or point of beginning. Recognition that for me this journey was not just about exteriority and physical objects, it was also about an inner world engendering an introspective expanded consciousness.

Heidegger, like Nietzsche (who in his later writings, claimed that through art we could affectively encounter the world), believed that art and poetry could open up worlds (Smith 2007:179), and reveal novel things that would disclose some inner truth where nothing would be disclosed and nothing unhidden.¹⁶¹ His translation of *Poiesis*, that which 'pro-duces or leads (a thing) into being' (Agamben. 1999:72) might be applied in describing aspects of my creative / imaginative practice and the process of its making. 'To make', being an action that connected thinking with physical objects in time and space. Heidegger saw these as critical moments, the notion being inextricably linked to the transformative moment 'the blooming of the blossom'¹⁶², the emergence of the butterfly from the cocoon (Williams 2017:87), hence this idea of something 'unfolding out of itself'. And the production of art, drawing, and writing of 'bringing into appearance' constitutes such a transformative moment. The notion of *abschattungen* (shadows) as a metaphor for how, with a phenomenological approach to poetry, there is the potential for multiple meanings and interpretations of the lived-experience, is further articulated by Michel Dufrenne, who echoes this 'unfolding out of itself' when positing his theory of truth in art. Art attains truth not through imitating the world of the real but instead by expressing something of its

¹⁶¹ The 'Unhidden' is a term deriving from Heidegger's interpretation of Plato's Allegory of the cave. Things are made unhidden and visible by a bringing into the light. In my practice and through the tools of writing and drawing and the metaphor of excavation, sites of Holocaust memory are made unhidden, still shimmering but given tenuous form.

¹⁶² The playwright Dennis Potter talked of blossom and his attentiveness to it when in the advanced stages of cancer. As Heidegger describes the transformative moment of the blossoming, Potter described the acuteness and receptiveness of his senses to the blossom itself due to his illness and the attunement he felt with it.

essence¹⁶³. 'It is through its intrinsic quality and "from within itself" that the aesthetic object relates to the real and displays its truth there' (Dufrenne 1973:527-28).

In *Being and Time* (2010), Heidegger also makes clear that to know and understand what it is to be an authentic human being, we need to always project our lives towards the horizon of our own death. What he calls 'being-towards-death' - Sein Zum Tode - (Avakian 2021:2). He contests It is important that we confront finitude to try to make sense out of being (existing) via the fact of our own death. It is in this way according to Heidegger that 'we shape and fashion our selfhood' (Royle 2018) So, in terms of how I confront – or experience the traces – of the death of others at Holocaust sites I am perhaps moved closer to a sense of my own knowing and 'being' vicariously, as an attuned post-witness.

So, *Portal* (2013), signifies a beginning in my visual and articulated response to the Holocaust and the opening up of the possibilities of my own becoming. But it is also a prelude, at this point still looking on and spectating, still the outsider, a response bound by the act and structuring of thinking, wondering, and imagining. The image represents my curiosity and where I stand in relation to this history. The framing of this history and the extent to which I was resonant and entwined within it, at this point, was still to be properly understood. For it would be later when I learned that what and who I was, and what I brought to the enquiry – as my own essence – body, inevitably would yield a particular and unique witnessing account (Essay 7: *The Red Heart*).

I first came across the idea of art as being somewhere between intellectual understanding and sensual experience, in *Writing on Drawing* by Howard Riley

¹⁶³ Essence. In phenomenological terms what an object is, its type, qualities, and relations, also called its eidos. Essential insight or an intuitive comprehension of the essence of an object is called eidetic intuition.

(2008). In his essay *Drawing: Towards an Intelligence of Seeing*, he described how imagining that a 'sensual presentation of the idea' could be a distinguishing feature of how we understood or could frame a rationale for our art making, it resonated (Hegel, in Graham 1997:174). It was clear to me that this was endemic in my approach and that the narrative of self was inseparable from and entangled in it. Riley construes this balance between *conceptual* intrigue - the way in which an image can elicit new perspectives on the object, and the notion of *perceptual* intrigue – the extent to which an image causes us to gaze and linger, facilitating a deeper re-examining of our relationship to the object which is contemplative and personally nuanced. This balance is advanced in Riley's pedagogy as a qualitative criterion for assessing the quality and resonance of drawing itself, where it is hoped a wider intelligence of seeing could be nurtured. He also advanced the idea that a grammar could be attributed to all creative endeavour, informing this wider intelligence. This grammar proposed that when looking at drawing we look for three levels of meaning. Firstly, what is being represented in the image, secondly how does it engage us, and finally how is it composed?

I looked again at *Portal* (2013) and considered Riley's three levels of meaning and focused on the second mode of *how* a drawing engages us. Because I had knowledge of the means of the drawings biographic and geographic making, I was able to engage in a reflective account of the images production and undertake a re-reading of the marks¹⁶⁴. I was also able to reflect on its connection with space and time and had further opportunity to intuit and consider its wider meaning¹⁶⁵.

¹⁶⁴ Re-reading the marks of my own images is a method of expanding the creative impulse(s) and navigating the meanings and motivations inherent in their making. It is also a method of producing a textual layer generated from the original visual source and forms an adjunct to it. This is a graphic manifestation in my practice of Heidegger and Dufrenne's notion of the 'unfolding out of itself' to reveal essence and truth.

¹⁶⁵ Meaning. The common definition of meaning is whatever is intended to be, referred to, or understood. In phenomenology this is extended to be the meaning of an expression, a meaning expressible by language. An expression therefore expresses as its meaning something intentional as the consequence of an act of consciousness.

The idea of reaching forward into an unknown space or a void to articulate that which cannot easily or conventionally be expressed or understood is often a motivation for artists, writers, and philosophers. It is in this space that the desire to re-invoke something that cannot be seen anymore, the transcendental or the irreverent become central concerns.¹⁶⁶ In the context of the Holocaust, Giorgio Agamben, in *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (1999), described as a ‘lacuna’ the impossibility of speech – a synecdoche of what it is to be ‘human’ – to describe that which the survivors bore witness to. Theodor Adorno and his oft-misconstrued comment that ‘poetry after Auschwitz was barbaric’ (Adorno 2007: 361) was perhaps articulating this in a different way, citing the ethical impossibility both of re-experiencing the abjection, violence and cruelty and of conventional orthodox forms to express adequately the incomprehensible things that took place¹⁶⁷. Philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy has said that ‘Drawing is the gesture of a desire that remains in excess of all knowledge’ (2013: 2), meaning perhaps that at best, it is a response to an instinct, a stimulus that is outside of our conscious and predetermined world, only becoming tangible once it is formed.

So, what is the object in *Portal* (2013)? What is the first level of meaning? What was being drawn? I have investigated this further through the lens of Paul Crowther, specifically Chapter 2 of *Phenomenology of the Visual Arts: Figure, Plane and Frame: The Phenomenology of Pictorial Space* (2009) and Riley’s concept of *perceptual intrigue*.

¹⁶⁶ Levinas and Transcendence. The Unknowable, not knowable. To go beyond, to reach and to reach further. Comes from the Latin prefix trans-, meaning ‘beyond,’ and the word scandare, meaning ‘to climb.’

¹⁶⁷ As discussed elsewhere in 1.4 when trying to come to terms with the Holocaust, its complexity, and the limits it places on language in terms of its unspeakability. It like drawing can be deliberately obfuscated and impenetrable, deliberately evasive, and purposefully ambiguous. See *The Emergent Subject: Artful Research* (Essay 5).

What was being imagined and nuanced during its making and what was deduced from the image through a reading of the marks?

CONCEPTUAL

1

Wooden oak paneled walls, dark and austere, along Labyrinthine corridors and up black-ironed stairs, Kazimierz's Secret, Divine Mercy... Sanctuary. Blood and Water. To remember and now to feel... Made in the gaps, made without forethought, made in a space of reflection and contemplation. What did that mean? How did that affect me? How did that touch me? Residue...aftermath? I am stained and changed.

2

I was enveloped...struck...what were the shadows that lingered and hung? hanging there just above the ground, in stasis, motionless. What casts them? What is blocking the light? I looked above and behind and saw nothing, but the shadows remained, still cast, long and drawn, scribbled across the road. This was the last road, the last steps, an egress, an exit and escape? Levi's Drowned and Saved but who is Drowned and who is Saved? ...And cast black into the stone, another shadow over and under theirs meets and they converge, then reduced to a point, are shrunk tight before moving through an outer darkness and into a black hole. Leading to another place in the past. The lines as tracks lead off and away...off the page...beyond the frame...to the unseen and the absent...

Exeunt omnes.

3

Looking past now into the shadows I see the black.

Along with the limned shapes of the cattle, herded, beaten, and driven...long tracks ...shuffled and sway, steaming and scared.

No one is leading, they move as one,

towards the light.

PERCEPTUAL

Collapsed now,

Spent now,

Empty now,

Past now.

In reading the marks in *Portal* (2013), and extrapolating based on the a priori knowledge of being there in Birkenau, being the maker and arbiter of the marks and having an awareness of their context and intention, I can evolve and seek resonant meaning(s) that exist in the relationship between myself and the objects of my concern, the spaces of Holocaust memory themselves and the drawings, writings and photographs that are made there.

An ekphratic approach¹⁶⁸ with an overarching phenomenological method that assumes the appearance of an object – in this case *Portal* (2013) – is dependent on

¹⁶⁸ Ekphrasis. The Greek for the written description of a work of art produced usually as a rhetorical exercise. Ekphratic descriptions and interpretations either real or imagined are often vivid and dramatic and draw on personal experience and histories to illuminate and make accessible artworks. I have used this method extensively in Photograph #283 and the Inheritance of Distance (Essay 2) and as a catalyst for creative writing (practice-text) throughout the project. Some of which exist as short films in the practice.

myself as the subject perceiving it (noema). The process of how I am experiencing what I am experiencing and how the ensuing beliefs are acquired (noesis) provide the structure to enable further readings and interpretations of the work to take place.

Faithful and accurate representation or reproduction of my experience at sites of Holocaust memory of how (drawing in this case) gives temporal form to my experience of such sites apprehends a 'moment of time and shows that this is an act of aesthetic creation, the transformation of reality into an object that possesses inner necessity and meaning' (Hellerstein 1997: 36:2, 34-44).

The reading of the marks attempts to evaluate how my intervention as an artist '[transforms] a moment of reality into a work of art, a readable text that possesses internal coherence and authenticity' (Hellerstein 1997: 36:2, 34-44).

Crowther combines two philosophical approaches to formulate a theory of the visual arts, which is based on eliciting cognitive and aesthetic meaning and interpretation. The first is analytical, is logical and relies on conceptual distinctions. This would be akin to a formalist methodology of interpretation¹⁶⁹. The second involves descriptive insights consistent with a phenomenological approach. Crowther's 'analytic phenomenology' goes further than exegetic explication and in addition seeks opportunities to engage with more wide-ranging visual aesthetics. By examining *Portal* (2013) my process of defining an ontology that could articulate through art making and writing, a prescient and personal mode and process of existing in the world, began. But perhaps on reflection, the simple phenomenological response – yet a clear provocation - to the question of what was really being apprehended that spring day at Birkenau, is nothing...*all* was being [image]ined.

¹⁶⁹ Formalism's critical position is that the most important aspect of any work of art is its form, how it is made and its basic and discernable visual aspects. Formalism does not concern itself with narrative or the relationship of the content to the visible world.

ESSAY 2

Photograph #283 and the Inheritance of Distance¹⁷⁰



FIG 3. Unknown, *The 4th Sonderkommando Photograph*, 1944.

‘Our theories are our own inventions; but they may be merely ill-reasoned guesses, bold conjectures, hypotheses. Out of these we create a world: not

¹⁷⁰ An abstract of this paper was submitted for consideration as a chapter in 'Mor, P and Jacob, F, (2016) *War and Portrayal: The Expression of the Unbearable in Modern and Contemporary Art*, Paderborn, Germany: Brill/Schöning. This is an Anthology compiled by Dr. Mor Presiado Faculty of Jewish Studies at Bar-Ilan University in Israel and Dr. Frank Jacob Professor of History at Queensborough Community College in New York. The books rationale was to make explicit the notion that the arts are a powerful vehicle for expression, reflection, and witness on human experience, including the unbearable and seemingly ineffable trauma of war and its legacies. The essay has been revised for inclusion here.

the real world, but our own nets in which we try to catch the real world'
(Popper 1976: 60).

The Holocaust as a seismic event from which we are so emotionally and intellectually distanced should not be seen as a reason to distort or obfuscate the history on which artistic responses are based but as a way of reckoning with and further defining our relationship to it. This essay focuses on the notion of distance and its role in modern interpretations of history. Lore Segal emphasises the role of fiction in this regard. 'Fiction does what the theatre does except that it does it in the privacy of your mind. Whereas the essay sets out to discuss its idea with you, fiction wants to stage the idea in your imagination' (Segal 1988:58). So, a further theme of this essay is imagining.

It is important to distinguish memory and remembering from imagining. Paul Ricoeur cites 'the irreducible feature in the living experience of memory' (Ricoeur 2006: 7) and how there is danger of affecting the faithfulness of remembering as 'truth' by confusing one with the other. Although images conspire to bring the referent of the past into the present, they do not constitute something remembered, or signify a true claim of memory. Along with memory and the notion of distance, both in a temporal and geographic sense, the essay documents an investigation of the imagined past and its translation into the lexicon of my present experience through drawing and writing.

Nina Hellerstein whose essay *Phenomenology and Ekphrasis in Claudel's Connaissance De L'est - Knowing the East*¹⁷¹ - (1895) describes how Claudel in a letter to Mallarmé compares his poetry to photography, in particular the way in which the

¹⁷¹ Hellerstein, N (2012). *Phenomenology and Ekphrasis in Claudel's Connaissance De L'est*. Nottingham French Studies, Volume 36 Issue 2, pp 34-44, ISSN 0029-4586 Available Online Mar 2012 Available at: (<https://doi.org/10.3366/nfs.1997-2.004>)

medium gives 'a permanent intemporal form to experience'. In Claudel's case his objective was to provide a faithful and accurate reproduction of 'place'.¹⁷² Hellerstein describes how the intervention of the artist or in the case of *Photograph #283* (FIG 3), the witness, transforms (and elevates) a fleeting moment into a work of art or significant documentary artifact, 'a readable "texte", that possesses internal coherence and authenticite' (Hellerstein 2012). It is the spirit of this phenomenal ekphratic approach that my encounter with *Photograph #283* is undertaken and to experience the self in the process of that knowing.

¹⁷² In Claudel, P (1930). *Connaissance De L'est*, Switzerland: Gonin & Cie, Claudel was striving to describe and evoke faithfully the experience of the Orient and give form to this knowledge in a phenomenological version of Ekphrasis by reformulating the relationship of text and reality (Hellerstein).



FIG 4. Unknown, *Sonderkommando Photographs* (L to R) 280, 281, 282 and 283), 1944.

The examination of one of four photographs taken at Auschwitz/Birkenau in 1944 at crematorium five¹⁷³ (FIG 4) has led to ongoing reflections on the processes and assimilation of this thinking into my own art making and led to a re-examination and recontextualising of some past drawings and prints. I began to think an image made in 1982 (FIG 5) was part of the trajectory of this research.

¹⁷³ The 'photographer' is believed to one of the *Sonderkommando*, (special command) whose job it was – under the supervision of the Nazi's – to oversee the process of extermination.



FIG 5. Gary Spicer, *Untitled* · Etching, 1982.

In terms of the process, the recurring use of the etched line, the use of black as a metaphor for absence or the unknown – so evident in the 4th Sonderkommando Photograph - and the embracing of glitch, alchemy, and chance into the practice, which is also an important facet of the photographs meaning and mystery. I also suspected that in retrospect and in the knowledge of how my practice had evolved in the intervening 40 years that the anonymous black figure was really me. And when comparing this image with other figures made much later, it became clear that these figures have become more confrontational, brazen, direct, eviscerated, and brutal, but they still retained that element of self and of dichotomy.

In the following practice-text, I am analyzing the etching made in 1982, and beginning to identify the threads that connect it to my current research. Indeed threads/moods/evocations that have traversed much of my creative output.

The image is a black and white etching and is of a figure seen from behind. It is difficult to know whether the figure is male or female, but he/she is stood centrally in the image in what appears to be a shaft of light that extends from the top to the bottom. On either side are two black vertical columns that extend along the left and right edge that compress the light and the black figure. The arms of the figure are outstretched and extend into the two black voids either side of the image and then disappear. Thick lines of lithographic crayon have been drawn then etched by acid forming grooves that run like black dirt ploughed and now displaced from shallow open trenches. The plate over etched until the steel at the bottom left corner became so thin it began to perish and flake away in the acid. This edge has been filed to form a curve and is distinct from the others. The etched lines like in Brueghel's 'Landscape with the fall of Icarus' where a horse drawn plough slices the soil, the sharp coulter making a straight vertical unerring cut. The image is heavy, laden with thick black opaque ink resisting definition. Concealing, suppressing, and containing. Looking harder shapes can be limned – or imagined and you are captured in Popper's net to create a world: not the real world... nor found in Photograph #283 where through the tracery of black veins light is bleached through the gaps.

Relief...of sorts.

In the documentary tradition, and with a resonance that represents something with which I cannot fully accord, the Sonderkommando images are sited at the very limits of empathy and function, way beyond their literal denotative meaning, forcing confrontation at a deep and psychic level. This is consistent with ideas proffered by

Stephen Greenblatt in his article '*Resonance and Wonder*' (2018)¹⁷⁴ where he suggests how when museum artefacts, are placed together, they form contexts which create 'resonance'. 'A resonant exhibition often pulls the viewer away from the celebration of isolated objects and towards a series of implied, only half-visible relationships and questions' (Watson 2018:268). This becomes particularly potent in *Photograph #283*, (FIG 3) which is the fourth image in the series. When seen in the context of the other three, the abstract and seemingly prosaic nature of what is or isn't visible in this image begins to oscillate beyond its edges and like in Lanzmann's film *Shoah* (1985)¹⁷⁵, it is characterized by omission and by what it doesn't show, rather than what it does.¹⁷⁶

The film resonates loss and absence, and is characterized by stillness and silence, juxtaposed with witness interviews and the ambient background noise of the natural landscape, the elements, traffic. Silence and gaps in narrative, shape, pauses that serve as metaphors for those who could never testify and the difficulties inherent in remembering for those that could, both perpetrators and survivors. Lanzmann deliberately chose to use no archival footage. *Shoah* (1985) was about the legacy and record of events, as they shimmer in the present¹⁷⁷ not a reconstruction of events in the past. It placed memory at the core of the enquiry. *Shoah* (1985) showed nothing of the actual horror of events, neither does *Photograph #283*, these details are left to our imagining.

¹⁷⁴ Greenblatt, S (2018) *Resonance and Wonder*. A Museum Studies Approach to Heritage, pp 9-18. Oxon: Routledge.

¹⁷⁵ *Shoah* (1985). Over a period of twelve years, Claude Lanzmann gathered 230 hours of location filming and interviews with survivors, witnesses, and perpetrators that were edited into a 9½-hour film. No archival footage was used.

¹⁷⁶ Greenblatt's further concept of being caught in the moment of Wonder is discussed in Volume 1: METHODS, 3.1iii, Phenomenology – Wonder.

¹⁷⁷ *Shoah* (1985) was made over 35 years ago in 1985. The film itself is now part of Holocaust memorialisation.

This deliberate omission of documentary footage - in the case of *Shoah* (1985) – and oblique referencing in the case of *Photograph #283* further reinforces the imagination as the means to extrapolate individual responses to the Holocaust event. In a similar way to how through abstraction rather than verisimilitude, it becomes possible to convey something of the enormity of the event by allusion rather than recourse to the familiar visual tropes that potentially, by repetition, promote passive rather than curious looking. The efficacy and use of deliberate distancing strategies that ‘privilege the allusive over the figurative’ (Wolff 2016:54) is reinforced by Saul Friedlander who believes that artistic works that have valency and adequately bring fresh insight to the viewer about the Holocaust appear to have something in common, namely ‘the exclusion of straight, documentary realism but the use of some allusive, distanced realism’ (Friedlander 1992: 17).

Such creative responses are separate and distinct from the documentary archive, adding to the annals of contemporary witnessing of the event. This essay therefore takes a deliberately Post-modern¹⁷⁸, post structural direction in its enquiry where these interpretations correspond to the valency of ‘new and imaginative forms of representation’ (Liss 1998:01) whilst recognising that to theorize is an imaginative act, one that in post structuralism often makes no pretense of connection with reality and has more in common with artistic abstraction. What these four images may signify, particularly the more oblique *Photograph #283* when seen in the conjunction of theory and the imagination and how they might be interpreted, is my concern here where I begin to make an alliance with the image and the way it begins to resonate and connect with my own histories and knowing.

¹⁷⁸ Postmodernism. I am aware of the implications of postmodernism’s principal tenets. That all knowledge is relative, and all knowledge is constructed. How such ideas might facilitate disbelief in factual statements and events by becoming entangled and confused with re-constructions and expedient revisions, that may lead to, or fuel Holocaust Denial is a real concern.

Elided? Blurred? Smudged? What of my knowing and imagining? For I am invoked to look and to look again through and beyond the image, to squint and burn my stare into the black where I see nothing, yet I see everything. The punctum pricks, wounds, and links with me. That shadow like Hokusai's 'Great wave of Kanagawa', falls and folds into the light, its fringe masking an ominous silence. Photograph #283 anchors me in the permanence of not knowing when the camera clicked and in that snatching of light, I become caught, a witness to the evidence of its mechanical blink. It skewers my looking, this "partial object" (Elkins 2007:87) attracting me and drawing me towards details which interrupt my reading yet hold my gaze.

Roland Barthes described as 'a temporal hallucination' (Barthes 2000:115) the photographer's second sight and how the image is contingent on his presence, on his being there rather than his seeing or insight. As an object the photograph is a confounding and baffling conundrum in many ways, confounding as it conspires to efface notions of absence and presence where the image becomes forged as the sole testament of the event and as such can exist as a memorial, an artifact, or a certificate, perhaps all three? Where does *Photograph #283* sit in relation to such definitions? It is a black and white image looking upwards into trees, which are silhouetted against bright white daylight. This is juxtaposed against the black of a shadow or possibly an obstruction that covers half of the picture frame. There is nothing in this image that indicates its historical significance or suggests its true context. All of this can only reside in the realm of the imagination. In *Images in Spite of All* (2003) Georges Didi-Huberman emphasizes the possibility of the images transmitting something profound, precisely because of their inherent valency but in spite of their ambiguity - particularly *Photograph #283* which if seen outside of the context of the other three would mean very little – But for Didi-Huberman, knowing how these images were taken, snatched, furtive and out of sight of guards, is an important part of their charge and as such they offer us something that post-

Holocaust art could never do. So, Barthes and his notion of the photographer's 'second sight' and the contingency of his presence is at the heart of this attempt to reckon with the unbearable and how it is manifest in art or the artifact.

When the images were shown in Paris in 2000, Didi-Huberman wrote what was to become the first chapter of his book *Images in Spite of All*. (2007) Entitled *Memoire des camps* (Memory of the Camps): Photographs of Nazi's Concentration and Extermination Camps. It provoked a well-documented tirade of criticism. Elizabeth Pagnoux and Gerard Wajcman writing in '*Les Temps Moderne*' 56, no 613 (2001) suggested that to place so much store by these blurry images and impress upon them such significance constitutes the basis of a disastrous logic and is in fact a form of Holocaust denial. Their reasoning being that investing so much evidential collateral in these images is misplaced and only serves to undermine and weaken the legitimacy of this form of image-based Holocaust historicism.

Chapter 2 of the book is dedicated to Didi-Huberman's rebuttal of Pagnoux and Wajcman's criticism in which he attests to the belief that in these images there is the capacity to connect us and make present, even prescient, that which is absent and unknown. But perhaps there is no absence at all, but an outline barely limned so that we cannot quite make out form and bring into sharper focus that which clearly haunts us. Something submerged deep in the blackness. 'Which is one way of saying that we can't seem to see them or talk about them, sufficiently to exorcise the evil that travels with them.' (Crane 2008).

I think Didi-Huberman's advocacy of the imagination as a vehicle to know or to invent for ourselves when looking at the photographs, would, if viewed through the prism of the historian, have some legitimacy when the imagination is the 'very temptation we would need to avoid if we are to remain truthful to those horrifying images' (Savransky and Stengers 2016:57/58). This being the case Pagnoux and Wajcman's

criticism and charges of historical revisionism would perhaps not be unfounded. But I am not a historian and as a writer and an artist, I am fastened to creativity, passion, and the imagination to elicit a version of my own objectivity. My own work speculates on how these ghosts can be reinstated and imbued with the provenance of what Husserl described as the life world - *Lebenswelt* (2001), that includes individuality and perception, that which is experienced directly and immediately in the subjective realm of everyday life. Here, my visual responses can be fixed, just long enough to be interrogated beyond the glance and become suffused and intertwined with the sign that enables them to be expressed through Aristotelian notions of the Poetic.

Perhaps it is here where the image becomes a catalyst and a window for imagination and for wonder and the articulation of how this process of being haunted manifests in me. Significant too is how the imagination through use of a fictional narrative, 'wants the thought to happen to you' (Segal 1988:58) and not be experienced or sensed vicariously. This image then can be ours too. I am mindful here of Barthes staring at an image of his mother, Henriette and recognising that although evident in the photograph, her presence is supplanted by the image, and he is forced to acknowledge that in this moment, 'her loss is real and absolute' (Stamelman 1990:274). And it is through a similar engulfment that my responses become possible, both to *Photograph #283* and in my own creative practice, where the visual becomes a vehicle for the potentiality of written language and where signs and symbols are assembled and abstracted to form an expression of my 'being with' the subject.

I too have felt that profound place, stood in that spot and stared into and through its distance beyond the clutter and notions of the now and connected still to its charge, for my knowing resonates and vibrates beyond the formal dialogue of the image and it still paralyses and still it engulfs me.

My drawing is also a form of ekphratic translation, a transformational intervention made in response to the places I encounter or as a working back into the words. (Volume 1, 4.3: The Modal Loop). Experiencing these places today it is impossible to disentangle from memory the knowledge of what happened there, and what is projected by this knowledge onto the space to which you are psychologically fastened and attuned. *A Posteriori*.

It is then that the fog of the past descends in spite of the sun and the incongruous hum of summertime. To become umbilically connected to a world elsewhere, to go beyond and to form a unique certification of (my) imagined presence.

At the beginning of *Camera Lucida* (2000), Roland Barthes describes how when looking at a photograph of Napoleon's younger brother Jerome, he is amazed to realise that he is 'looking at the eyes that looked at the emperor' (Barthes 2000:03). He goes on to explain how when he mentions this amazement to others, he becomes aware that 'no-one seemed to share it, nor even to understand it,' (Barthes 2000:03) concluding that life consists of these 'little touches of solitude' (Barthes 2000:03). This solitude, in my own case, is often manifest as reverie, for when I stand at Holocaust sites, like here at Birkenau, I can wonder what had taken place under the stretched blue canopy of the omniscious sky, or what the many birches and poplar tress planted at the western end of the camp had witnessed.¹⁷⁹ 'As I contemplate the blue of the sky...I abandon myself to it...plunge into its mystery' (Evans and Lawlor 2012:167);

¹⁷⁹ In recent years, the trees at the site of the Auschwitz camp have been declining due to the natural processes of aging and dying. This has included the loss of three historic poplars, the oldest of which was nearly 100 years old in 2007. Barbara Zając, the Museum's vegetation conservation specialist, posits how these trees are 'silent witnesses to the Nazi crimes.' (Auschwitz-Birkenau: Memorial and Museum).

these are my moments, when I lapse into reverie and stare...into space – into the remembered air -...sometimes seemingly at nothing.

Like looking at *Photograph #283* and like Barthes staring into the eyes of Jerome, it is a moment of solitude, and I am left wondering what to do with my feelings, what they mean, or how they might be expressed and represented? This is the basis of my creative practice. Berel Lang points out in *Holocaust Representation: Art within the Limits of History and Ethics* (2000) that 'We hear it [the Holocaust] referred to as unspeakable, and we usually hear afterward a fairly detailed description of what is unspeakable' (Lang 2000: 19). These schemas would seem to disavow us of the notion that the event is unspeakable at all.

The notion of the 'absence of presence' and its inversion the 'presence of absence' sit amongst the many other familiar Holocaust tropes that includes the ambivalence of God to the suffering of the victims and the hiding of His face (thereby mitigating His lack of intervention), the trope of muteness and the unspeakable, the moral problem of representation itself, the notion of the 'grave in the air' which occurs in renderings such as Paul Celan's *Todesfuge*, 'we dig a grave in the breezes there one lies unconfined' (Felman and Laub 2013:29). Primo Levi and darkness, blackness and shadows prevailing throughout his oeuvre, 'Coming out of the darkness, one suffered because of the reacquired consciousness of having been diminished' (Levi 1988:56) and of course Eli Wiesel and the trope of *Night*, (1982) an account of his endurance in Auschwitz and Buchenwald representing the absence of light and the presence of evil, 'never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which had turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed' (Wiesel 1982: 32). Further Levi tropes of drowning and being saved all exist to liken the Holocaust to schemas we can grasp to imagine what we cannot legitimately comprehend.

The theories and ideas that as artists and writers we develop to try and comprehend the 'darkness, blackness and shadows' may, according to Popper, only be merely ill reasoned guesses but in so doing we create an imaginary world through which we try to excavate something of the real and the unfeigned. We convince and persuade with pen or pencil to offer an alternative, individuated account of not what it felt like to post-experience the Shoah either directly or vicariously or even what it might signify from an epistemological perspective but instead the categorical certainty of what it *means* to us as artists and writers now and today. In so doing and perhaps to enable us to do so, 'we all of us, grave or light, get our thoughts entangled in metaphor' (Bosmajian 2005: 06). I think what binds these notions, and what each represents is an attempt to appreciate or to legislate for what is beyond or at least at the very edge of what our language is capable.

My concept of Jewishness has always been exteriorized and vicarious, like my imagination of the Holocaust itself, the event that changed forever what it meant to be Jewish – or non-Jewish in the postmodern era. This connects to my own search for self-identification and my entangled genealogical roots. Being of mixed heredity from a Jewish father and a shiksa¹⁸⁰ mother who consequently was excluded and shut out of Jewish life. As offspring, along with my brother, I would be what the Nazis called a *mischling*, a pejorative legal term in Nazi Germany meaning half-breed or mongrel, one who was 'raised in, or on the edge, of the [local] Jewish community' (Benvenuto 2004). This is how I felt, and how I saw myself.

¹⁸⁰ Shiksa. Meaning a Gentile girl or woman, especially one who has attracted a Jewish man. The term derives from the Hebrew word 'sheketz', which means the flesh of an animal deemed taboo by the Torah, the most notable being the pig. The marriage of a Jewish male to a non-Jewish woman is considered a serious transgression hence the contempt of the referent. According to ancient Jewish law marrying out of the faith broke 'a millennia long chain of Jewish continuity'. In Deuteronomy (7:3): it reads "You shall not marry them (the gentiles / non-Jews) you shall not give your daughter to their son, and you shall not take his daughter for your son."

In the context of post Holocaust art and literature what it meant to be Jewish and the idea of identifying with its victims became a subject for writers and poets, gaining traction in the 1950's and 60's in the form of confessional poetry. The writing was dark and desolate. It dealt with transgressive often violent and confrontational subjects, Anne Sexton in *After Auschwitz* (1973), and Sylvia Plath in *Daddy* (1962), being examples of the genre where Holocaust referents and narratives form a backdrop and is sustained as a metaphor to support turbulent journeys into what were two irreparably damaged psyches.¹⁸¹ Alain Finkielkraut in *The Imaginary Jew* (1997) problematises this notion of Jewish actualisation and identity even further by fusing the appurtenances of the postmodern era such as identities without substance and the proliferation of images across multiple platforms as the grand narrative¹⁸² of the post-Holocaust era. He further suggests that the rupture in history that was the Holocaust - as an 'unspoken event' - has been a major catalyst for the 'proliferation of images and discourse of postwar cultural thought' (Finkielkraut 1994: xvii).

Karen Barad, in the chapter entitled *Humanist Orbits* from her book *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007) describes how Man, through technology, can magnify the smallest of matter and can also look out and extend his view deep into the far reaches of the solar system. In this way, she contends, he is privileged with being able to reflect on what is beyond us and seemingly out of reach 'and it is this very distinction that bestows on him the inheritance of distance, a place from where he can reflect on the world, his fellow man and himself' (Barad 2007: 134). Barad talks of the world and its possibilities for becoming, that although apart we are connected, entangled with all and each other but that our separateness is the key. This facility is what defines our objectivity and our ability to express, reflect upon and express models of

¹⁸¹ Both Sexton and Plath committed suicide, Sexton at 46 and Plath at 30.

¹⁸² Grand narrative. In postmodern critical theory, a grand narrative or a meta-narrative is an abstract concept that serves as a comprehensive binding term to define historical experience or knowledge. Although not a grand narrative in the way that Religion or Marxism is, the idea of Nazis and Nazism conform to a grand narrative of sorts, where the idea of the Nazi or Auschwitz conforms to a broad construct of evil.

remembrance as is manifest in our creative practice as artists and writers. Similarly, Ava Hoffman in *After Such Knowledge* (2004) explains how this concept of physical and temporal distance is significant in how our relationship to traumatic historical events is defined. 'Stand too close to horror, and you get fixation, paralysis, engulfment; stand too far, and you get voyeurism or forgetting. Distance matters' (Hoffman 2004: 177). I can see how both these interventions, Barad and Hoffman coming as they do from different epistemological worlds define the nature of our complicity in the act of forming, shaping, and revering a history such as this. After all, we can only stand in one place at any one time. I can only stand as an anachronism to the event I observe through the prism of a post-witness, mindful that my preoccupation with these events has created a new and complex distanced belonging that is simultaneously intimate and remote, where there is a compulsion to imaginatively project – to be near and not near. This act of displacement appears to define the post-witness remembering of the contemporary artist and begins to express the inherent difficulties in defining what it is being represented. It also explains why phenomenology as a method of thinking and describing thinking can be a workable approach and method. So, in striving for a higher plain of thinking and attunement, there is the potential to yield individuated and insightful visual outcomes and appearances.

Sara R. Horowitz further explains how the difficulties inherent in Holocaust narration and poetics stop it becoming just a historical event. She also advocates how its narrative makes the history knowable but that the process of displacement can also make the real events inaccessible, harder to comprehend. So, the very means of recovering the Holocaust also contributes to our distancing from it. Writing and drawing begin to coalesce and form around the subject of the disaster itself where 'interpretation take(s) on a particular urgency and poignancy, reflecting the impossible desire to stand both inside and outside of language in order to grapple with the Holocaust' (Horowitz 1997: 44). On the other hand, this gap or distance, between the drawn and written imaginings of the events I am seeking to represent in the practice, can also ease access to the central truths that may exist in the exigent

and primal words and narratives of the testimony of those that were there and existed in the lived space of the Holocaust.

Distance matters and its agency needs to be understood. Because although a static and fixed moment, *Photograph #283* is always in transit, transcendent and irrevocably always just out of reach, always distant from us. 'The ungraspable and vanishing image that opens the imagining' (Arce 2016: 65). And for Maurice Blanchot both the object and the human are always at a perpetual distance, and reality works or is formed and shaped in some way by this *distancing effect*. Like Horowitz, Blanchot discusses distance in relation to imagination where the image, without consciousness is an empty space, and only exists 'itself in itself and for itself' (Moradi 2014: 57-77). So, it is only by reckoning with the space between the object and our imagination that we can mitigate this distancing and detachment.

In *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), Susan Sontag probes the notion of distance imprinted on photography and film and tries to understand what it means. She believes that pictures have the capacity to bring victims' suffering closer to us but that the medium insulates us both through the temporal effects of space and time and the inevitable distance between the object and the subject, witness, and victim from the true impact of the suffering being represented. Perhaps Arce's comment above (2016) demonstrates that it is our capacity to imagine that brings us closer and allows us to contemplate the pain of the *other*.

Barad, Horowitz, Hoffman, Blanchot and Sontag all express the physical and temporal imperatives of distance and how when confronted with *Photograph #283*, the speculative and philosophical dimensions of its meaning or what it is connecting to in us, become paramount, and through the generative potential of art and literature, these meanings continue to multiply but that the expression of the unbearable through contemporary art making can also create obfuscation. Perhaps the metaphor of the fog (nebel) that Filmmaker Alain Resnais expressed so well, is

apposite here?¹⁸³ My own practice, both writing and drawing, centres on this contradiction of expressing something seemingly ineffable, something so intense it cannot be framed, and these responses and murmurings are my own.

...For me, they are portals pointing to a place of consolation (Con-solare) where drawing, as an act of faith, is a leap – a laying siege – that occupies a liminal space that hovers between a witnessing of the attempt, the response, rather than the thing itself (Portal).

This is the imagination, and it can only ever be adjunctive, according with Cartesian theory, which states that the separation of the subject as the knower (myself) from the object that is known, and the nature of whatever reality is then formed or created, can only for each of us, be a sense of *our* own world, derived from *our* knowing and thinking.

Merleau-Ponty and his idea of a new cogito, implying a new and different conception of the 'thinking self' resonate here, because as an artist, any interrogation into the nature of what is real and truthful for us – in terms of the phenomenal experience of Holocaust places - is ultimately an exercise in poetry, the Greek definition of which is 'making'. The process of excavating meaning in such places depends on my capacity like Barthes, to stare deep and long into and beyond the space, and to confront it, trying to decipher its convoluted and tangled messages.

¹⁸³ Alain Resnais' documentary *Night and Fog* (1956) documents the abandoned grounds of Auschwitz, alternates between past and present while reflecting on the rise of Nazi ideology and the harrowing lives of the camp prisoners.

...And now to confront the real and the real's legacy, I wander through such spaces and enact through the process of walking, the events that clog and choke the air. The artist as graphic sorcerer summoning those that perished and ratifying the existence of the events that took place here. These walks become the basis of visual maps and the writing that scatter across these pages and the pages of my journals, articulating the form and consciousness of being in such places, part of the 'now' landscape. This being the physical dimensions of the spaces as they are today and how they appear and manifest themselves to me. What Photograph #283 points us towards however, is a liminal, transcendent, in-between space and beckons one of the familiar Holocaust tropes of God and His unknown whereabouts during the Nazi genocide. Yet how to analyse this moment? An image divided equally, an uneasy symmetry. One side black, amorphous shapes, not determined, hover in the shadow. To the left trees are silhouetted against an arc of light, its apex almost reaching the top edge of the frame, although the image is not deliberately composed – its context suggesting a snatched and random moment. The dark is heavy, heavy with black, concealing, a veil of unknowing. Its dark expanse revealing the situation itself, where it is the space of possibility that allow the image to exist. And in the light, I am directed upwards towards the tops of the trees, arch braced like diagonal ribs, they form an apron that covers and contains me and at once pushes me slowly back towards the black. Yet I am still present and active in the moment and look skywards, through the tracery beyond and into the light, the light like Gradowski's moon¹⁸⁴ that

¹⁸⁴ Sonderkommando Zalman Gradowski, a bearer of secrets because he witnessed first-hand the killing at Auschwitz uses the repeated motif of the moon – perhaps as a metaphor for God - in his found testimony, written on 81 numbered pages and buried in an aluminium canteen amongst the

makes no distinction and illuminates anyway indiscriminately the transgressions and the wretched sins taking place below.

Gradowski could not understand why the moon, still:

‘appeared with magnificent charm, escorted by her retinue, (the stars) carefree, calm, happy and content went out on her secret excursion to see how her realm, the night-world, fared, and granted humanity a ray of her light’ (Chare & Williams 2016).

Written in three parts, the testimony was entitled *In the Heart of Hell* and in part one Gradowski wonders ‘how the moon dares to show herself above the hell of Auschwitz without demonstrating the slightest identification with the people being tortured to death below’ (Gutman & Berenbaum 1998: 525). His buried testimony along with the accounts of other Sonderkommando have become known as the *Scrolls of Auschwitz* and they further engage us in the often-problematic questions regarding the limits of testimony. In another account, this time fictional, Kvi Kolitz writes of a small bottle that was discovered amongst the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto, which was preserved and concealed amongst the debris of stone and human bones. Written as the ghetto was being liquidated on the eve of Passover on the 19th of April 1943, it is an account of the last hours of the ghetto by a Jew named Yosl Rakover.

The book, *Yosl Rakover talks to God* (2000), is a meditation of a dying Jew's last words to *God*. Emmanuel Levinas further interrogating the trope of *God's* seeming indifference wonders whether the Shoah is evidence of the

ruins of the crematoria in Birkenau in 1945, close to where the four Sonderkommando photographs were taken a year or so earlier.

absence of God when he asks why those that are innocent must suffer. When he suggests later that 'the God who veils his face is neither a theological abstraction nor a poetic image' (Kolitz 2000: 82). it perhaps becomes possible to imagine when looking at *Photograph #283*, how we can extrapolate from that which is known and what we can recognise, to depict and imagine the abstraction that exists beyond the literal dimensions of its frame, and where God himself perhaps is in the black, in Hebrew *Hester Panim*, hiding his face. It is also possible that to be found here, are the traces of the complex relationship the Jewish victims had with their God, where for some, the Holocaust destroyed the reality of God and inevitably would have caused some to wonder whether their suffering was because God had forsaken them. And yet for others, the rejoinder...'I cannot say after all I have lived through that my relationship to God is unchanged. But with absolute certainty I can say that my faith in Him has not altered by a hairsbreadth,' (Kolitz 2000: 82) for *your* God is with you in your suffering.



FIG 6. Leonard Da Vinci, *A Deluge*, Black chalk, pen, and ink wash, 1517-18.

Leonardo Da Vinci in his Deluge drawings (FIG 6), deals with the same phenomenon when he attempts to arrest time and space by depicting a huge surge of water and the indiscriminate nature of the destruction left in its wake. Da Vinci describes how in the face of such overwhelming power there were those who finding it was not sufficient to just shut their eyes, 'laid their hands one over the other to cover them more closely so as not to see the cruel slaughter made on the human species by the wrath of God' (Kemp 2007: 318). But in *Photograph #283* God himself was shutting (or averting) his eyes, for in this image we are obviated, our gaze directed upwards and away from what is occurring just below the frame 'And I shall hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured' (Neis 2013: 62). From Deuteronomy 31:17.

A reductive truth, a shard, non-descript yet something, a path to the absolute? Charged as testament, a requiem and tangible proof of the latency of nothingness. Photograph #283 is my window to a space and a zone beyond, Primo Levis' Grey Zone perhaps? Moral ambiguity, good and evil, an ethical compromise under duress, tied irrefutably to my witnessing. It invokes and beckons me (as maybe it beckons you?). Do we answer? And if we do, how then should we respond?

For art to be meaningful, to have longevity, it needs to be curious, provocative, or ambiguous, but none of these adjectives articulate sufficiently the primary motivation for my work, which is deployed through highly personal, individuated investigation. The meaning of the work is not initially in longevity or ambiguity, and the curiosity is my own. I am emphatically my own first reader.

Art also needs to be resonant enough to sustain a plurality of meanings. Creative writing and art in response to the Holocaust, offers the opportunity for such plurality, and they are important because through such stories, the emotional dimensions, the

scars, and the complexity of meaning can be interrogated, expressed, or visualized. Historians offer important and essential context, artists offer an emotional timbre, a sensory connection, and an essential adjunct.

Creative endeavour that seeks to reference the scale of events like the Holocaust is complex. My own seemingly abstract forms are always a response to natural objects and life energies that are freely transposed from natural phenomena through different modalities of reference. It is often through the ambiguity of drawing, that, rather than being a precursor to something more monumental, is an end in itself, the relationship here being closer to writing, and the deconstructive potential of words and language, than any intrinsic evolution of the initial gesture. And while the marks in my work can appear to be self-referential and abstract, they often refer to aphorisms that are not seeking to look like the things or ideas I am trying to represent, but instead 'strive to converge manifest patterns of life energies' (Gerard 2015). (FIG 7) *Water and Blood* (2021) part of a series of impermanent works made in response to the Danube massacres in Budapest between December 1944 and December 1945 is an example of this convergence.



FIG 7. Gary Spicer, *Water and Blood (Vis es Ver)*, 2021.

Drawings can also be a response to other drawings or prints, here referencing notions of Tachisme¹⁸⁵, Hans Hartung or the lesser-known British artist Bruce Taylor, of art seemingly without form, the idea that everything we create in some way becomes something else and is necessarily transformed.

In his notebooks (1998-1999) Anselm Kiefer talks of depiction and creation and describes visiting a lake in the middle of the night when the air was ‘balmy and significant’ (Kiefer 2015: 173) and the inherent difficulties he had in depicting that experience, it refusing to be fixed.

¹⁸⁵ Tachisme - a term virtually synonymous with Art Informel - was the European equivalent to Abstract Expressionism in America.

‘The taste, the expanse, the promise of the air that night is not depicted. Can anything be depicted, after all? Is what you do depiction? What is it, really? It’s more creation. There aren’t really any depictions, just creations’, (Kiefer 2015: 173).

He concludes that the experience ‘still has an unfathomable effect on what develops when you undertake the impossible task of describing the indescribable’ (Kiefer 2015: 173). So, standing, staring, and wondering how the seemingly impenetrable spaces of Holocaust memory I visit can be depicted is part of the process of creation itself, an absorbency of environment, of memory and the stain of what develops cannot be separated from that experience.

I have found etching to be an apposite medium to interrogate and describe the ‘seemingly’ indescribable, because as a system of image making, the concept of emergence is implicit in the drawing and printing process. This tract of practice-text discloses as much:

Apposite because images not entirely planned begin to define and reveal themselves, appearing like sorcellerie in the course of their becoming. And when as before the images were unknown and undisclosed, existing like ghosts in the ether, they can now be unlocked and deciphered by the intuitive draughtsman to form spectral allusions connecting to the wider constellation of practice.

The process can be represented in three stages, drawing, forming and consolidation through the printing process itself and seen as traces, they are each transparent and fluid, where the next stage never completely mitigates interaction with the previous. When seen as layers, the unearthing of the image is part of a process of excavation. All symbolic of the processes associated with the mining of Holocaust memory.

Photograph #283 whilst not a technological glitch like *Blue Płaszów*, (FIG 8) is still unplanned and unexpected and is formed through a not dissimilar alchemistic process.



FIG 8. Gary Spicer, *Blue Płaszów*, 2015.

Both methods are embraced in my practice because each is unpredictable and contributes its own unmistakable 'note' when I am reaching and guessing to form images that attempt to describe something of the indescribable.

Whilst in and amongst these places, I can become quite daunted and inert. In this state, I wander and scope the space. This becomes increasingly important in the process. Here is the absence of presence and over there beyond the memorial, amongst the birken is the presence of absence, and it resonates and vibrates throughout my work, its tendrils weaving a path

through and into the blue. In lucid moments these encounters yield quite abstract and raw data (words, marks, objects) data that awaits translation or dilution. This data, the yielded visceral responses fill my journals and hence this archive is so significant. I realise that to scope is very different than to wander but for me this is a simultaneous activity and I exercise both. In doing so, I am often looking through and into the layers of history, a site map in hand imagining the land and the geography as it was. It is often here that I am in a sort of reverie. And fail and then 'fail better' (Beckett) to find the timbre or that correct 'note' of expression. Failure is very much part of invention, the notes (the marks) are often wrong or at best inappropriately placed. Sometimes this is due to its adjacency or placement and requires moving or re fashioning. I repeat myself a lot, sometimes on purpose, or I reuse and re-contextualise. Yes, adjacency is important, as with words of course. This is why the most abstract forms are so significant, all-encompassing, and much less porous. Like music maybe 'a volume of sound which fills silence with tension.' (Mitchell 2010: 69) I have learnt that my images 'only show themselves in the right distance Figal 2015: 184) recurring only because they are meant to, found because they are meant to be. Or they are lost.

But for John Berger the photographed image of war is doubly violent in both its capturing of violence and in how it does violence to time itself, torn as it is from its historical context. With *Photograph #283* we are left with:

an ethereal residue, a temporal flickering of light, seen askance and fleetingly displaced, not strong enough to provide a clear object of focus.

Berger concludes that such photographs are 'printed on the black curtain which is drawn across what we choose to forget or refuse to know' (Berger 1980: 42). The photograph then is:

the trace of the eye that we cannot shut.

The question with *Photograph #283* is what is it trying to make us see? It resists easy categorization, whilst on the surface being prosaic it avoids banality through its very ambiguity and like a Rothko painting or a Mallarme poem, it necessitates my alliance to form and shape meaning because it is only through imagination that it becomes activated and charged. The image acting as a net, into which we cast are our own fears, our own constructions and ultimately our own histories. And to truly know 'we must imagine for ourselves' (Didi-Huberman 2007: 03). In this imagining, I wonder what they thought? And what they believed? For them, praying here would have been a challenging discretion.

But they did and for good reason, divested as they were, of everything but their relationship with God. And now rapt with its sublime and spiritual accord, I too am drawn to that which has been disappeared. And this journey has led us here, to this place and it is bereft. Yet what it lacks resounds elsewhere, and it is glaring and prescient. For here, those who are obliterated by the black are obscured and perhaps it is I?

In *Photograph #283* I am mediated by Black and white and this 'makes (nothing) visible in a positively illusionistic way' (Richter 2009: 92). Thomas McEvelley, in the article *the Monochrome Icon* (1993), describes the monochrome as a complex blank:

'The fascination with the sublime progressively ate away at the Figure and hypostatized the activated ground. In the twentieth century it developed

finally on the monochrome surface, the pure ground into which all the figures have been dissolved, as its central icon, representing the blank of the erased cultural world' (McEvelley 1993: 12).

McEvelley could have easily been talking about *Photograph #283*, how the image ate away the figure(s) and the hypostatized activated ground and the notion of the pure ground into which all the figures have been dissolved. *Photograph #283* shows us nothing, yet it shows us everything, where content arises from the formal properties of the image due to 'the associative and conceptualizing activities of the human mind' (McEvelley 1993:08). We see everything within a particular frame of meaning which accords to our own consciousness and perception. It is this perception that mitigates the 'complex blank' of the monochrome and the sublime. Meaning is reached for; meaning is grasped, and this meaning is inevitably of our own construction.

Writing of Gerhard Richter's *Birkenau Paintings* (2014), Benjamin Buchloh talked of a mistrust of traces of photographic documents or images that portend to confront or move the viewer closer to the catastrophe when in fact they only serve to move us further away or to 'veil it' (Buchloh 2016: 15).



FIG 9. Gerhard Richter, *Birkenau paintings*, 2014.

This is true of imagery (or texts), that seeks to represent too literally or to fetishize the atrocities committed, where the veil serves as a ‘blurring’ pictorial device, shielding the catastrophe – or its likeness - from the gaze. This would at first appear to mitigate touch and the haptic, but it can also be an invitation to see and to look beyond, to reach out and through ‘touching [it] with ones mind’¹⁸⁶ (Nancy 2005) and ultimately connect to the other. Laura Marks when describing a similar phenomenon in haptic cinema refers to a reader/viewer who perceives with all the senses, thinking with skin, and in the process is yielding perception to physical attributions, as well as those mental operations that symbolise and interpret by proxy:

‘In the sliding relationship between haptic and optical, distant vision gives

¹⁸⁶ Art historian Alois Riegl first described the eye as having the potential for a haptic, nonoptical function. This quote by Henri Bergson in Jacques Derrida’s *On Touching* (2005) describes more lyrically this form of ‘close vision’ (Derrida 2005: 123).

way to touch, and touch reconceives the object to be seen from a distance...In a haptic relationship our self rushes up to the surface to interact with another surface' (Martin 2011: 126).

This permits the reader control of the image and to view it from a safe distance. This process of obfuscation and concealment rather than mitigating the voracity of the message serves rather, to stimulate interest and fascination and facilitates a tempered negotiation of the image(s) that is revealed through a legislated system of layered meaning. In this way, the haptic layering of paint, which is dragged and scraped over four large reproductions of the Sonderkommando photographs, forms each of Richter's Birkenau Paintings. The original images whilst not being completely overwritten are veiled, present but not out of sight. This action serves to create an 'eerie proximity' (Patt and Dillbohner: 2007: 295), where it becomes unclear how near or far the images beneath actually are. We are reminded again of Ava Hoffman's protestation that we may become paralysed and engulfed by standing too close to horror, but by standing too far back...we may forget. So, the veiling device employed in Richter's images not only creates a visual tension between distance and proximity, but it also serves to deframe the original photographs.

The fascination with the sublime has, over a sustained period of history (most notably throughout Modernism), made real and vindicated the conceptual possibilities of blankness, akin to Horowitz's muteness (2012), or in the case of *Photograph #283*, the neutral or averted, askance gaze. McEvelley asserts that the destiny of the sublime is an unveiling of a higher metaphysical reality. Again, we are drawn back to the ineffability of God and the idea that the sublime represents something 'vast, dark, solitary, awesome, and threatening' (McEvelley 1993: 47). And in these terms and in the face of something so uncompromising is equivalent to the *Mysterium tremendum* – 'literally, the mystery that make you tremble' (McEvelley 1993: 47). Like Gradowski drawing down the moon,

‘entrained by its ceaseless circadian rhythm, persistent and relentless, I am carried ‘escorted by her (the moons) retinue... (to beyond the fence), on her secret excursion to see how her realm, the night-world, fared, and granted humanity a ray of her light’ (Chare & Williams 2016).

The image echoes night and day and signals the rapture of light, life giving and redolent, pointing as it does to an authority beyond. The moon is feminised by Gradowski, (her) gender playing an important role in the narrative, where his relationship to it is imagined in the form of a love affair, and where she is represented as indifferent and unmoved. The black though still encroaches and disturbs and is omnipresent. Yet the darkness made visible, as Primo Levi in his poem *The Black Stars* stated, ‘Not energy, not messages, not particles, not light. Light itself falls back down, broken by its own weight’ (Gould & Sheridan 2007: 177). Here contemplating the science of black holes, Primo Levi evokes a phenomenon that suggests our vulnerability and insignificance in the face of such forces, where, as in Auschwitz, our faith in universal harmony is destroyed ‘and the universe (is brought back) to a condition of chaos’ (Gould & Sheridan 2007: 177).

So, if the process of art making is often the endeavour to make the invisible visible, to re-invoke something that we cannot see anymore, where time and distance affect the way this process is materialised and caught, and as the artist, in my responses to *Photograph #283*, written and drawn acts of sorcery capturing the poignancy of the nothing, the blank, yet still recognising the potentiality of the everything.

In the moment of its happening, the camera absorbs light, and for that split second, when the aperture opens and closes, draws in its image and it becomes fixed. Yet in drawing and painting, we render, interpret, and express something seen, understood, or imagined, we mediate, our eyes and our hands forming and shaping. But *Photograph #283*, in its ambiguity, its obliqueness, is rendered like a drawing as it fixes us in its black and white. Here in the realm of the ‘uncertain’ lies the

distinction, and a further rejoinder to Pagnoux's assertion, that such readings of the photograph are evidence of how a passion for constructing nothingness, admonishes those who want to fill the nothingness, rather than to acknowledge it for what it is. But in admonishing those that do choose to create from the nothingness, I think Pagnoux misses the point. It is precisely because the Holocaust is so unimaginable that it becomes so incumbent on us as writers and artists to engage our imagination, and to do so we must find methods for describing that, which is *seen*, if not hitherto imagined. So, it is how we find life in these fragments through a creative process of excavation, that may well include an interrogation of ourselves in the face of such horror, that chimes with my own desire to make sense and attempt to construct my own imaginings, from these seemingly endless 'complex blanks'.

The notion of McEvilley's 'complex blank', of seeming nothingness, a void but multifarious and of endless potentiality, mystery and ambiguity, is preserved with the leitmotif of black which links the essay and the attempt at grasping meaning in *Sonderkommando Photograph #283*;

The Recurrent Black. Black as a metaphor for absence or unknowing. The black figure, Black dirt, Black column, Black voids, Black ink, Black veins. Staring into the black. Something submerged deep in the black. Darkness' blackness, and shadows

Black amorphous shapes. Heavy, heavy with black concealing a veil of unknowing. Covers and contains me and at once pushes me slowly back towards the black. God himself perhaps...is in the black. Printed on the black curtain drawn across what we choose to forget or refuse to know, Obliterated by the black. Mediated by black and white. The black though still...encroaches and disturbs.

A drawing...fixes us in black and white.

And finally, to be reminded of philosopher Karl Popper's words regarding theories (and ideas) being our own inventions out of which 'we create a world, not the real world, but our own nets in which we try to catch the real world' (Popper 1976: 60). Perhaps this is what we do when we abstract, contemplate, and re-imagine the lived world with words and images, images like *Photograph #283* ...we are casting our nets, in our own fashion, to catch something of our own... particular world.

Necessitating my Alliance: A Meditation on the Płaszów Concentration Camp¹⁸⁷

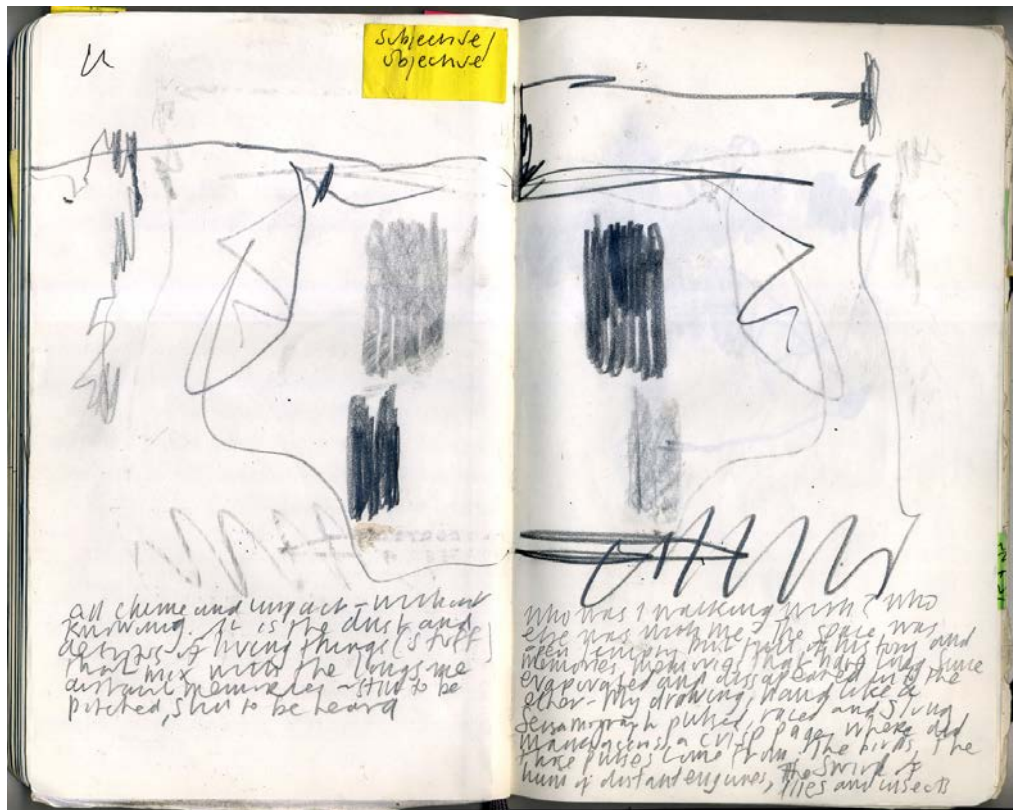


FIG 10. Gary Spicer, Płaszów Topography: Subjective/Objective. DPS from Journal 2 2017.

Płaszów was silent and still but replete with the long shadows of those passed and disappeared. I try to listen and learn to see in the silence the stillness that amid my agitation allows me to create whilst making “the inescapability of death acceptable” (Taylor 2020:02) My hand sensing the murmurs, movement and intensity of thought begins to pulse and mark the

¹⁸⁷ First published in JAWS (Journal of Art Writing by Students in 2016) Here I present a revised and extended version assimilated into the wider context of the thesis. Spicer, G (2017) *Necessitating my Alliance: A meditation on the Płaszów concentration camp*, JAWS, Volume 3, Numbers 1-2, 1 September 2017, pp. 119-130(12), Intellect publishing.

***white page. A gesture. A scribble and then... still...again...breathe.
Attunement.***

In the essay title, I suggest an imperative *alliance* between artist and audience.¹⁸⁸ Andrey Tarkovsky describes the same as the ‘mutual dependence’ of artist and audience that relies on the ‘emotional, spiritual and intellectual experience’ of the viewer (Tarkovsky 1996:176). The viewer has been moulded by the experiences they have had which ‘[in]form [their] predilections and idiosyncrasies of taste’ (Tarkovsky 1996:176). It is not possible therefore for an artist or writer to direct or control the audience’s narrative. This will always be perceived subjectively, the individuated narrative(s) always being in the confluence of the real and the imagined¹⁸⁹. To further extend the notions of alliance and mutuality this essay also investigates how the gesture of drawing as a projection of the body and the mediator between mind and world - ‘At the heart of [which] is the reciprocal interaction between the [artist], the ontology of his or her medium and the visible world’ - works as an alternative vehicle to be ‘with’ and encounter the topography¹⁹⁰ of the Holocaust (Crowther 2011: 73).

In relation to events as difficult to navigate and represent such as the Holocaust, the essay will also look at how, by reaching for meaning through written or arts practice, we can perhaps begin to determine a contribution to what is, as Ava Hoffman describes in her book *After Such Knowledge*, (2004) an appropriate and measured

¹⁸⁸ This alliance extends to those that experienced, lived, and drowned in the Holocaust and my need to engage directly with them and it.

¹⁸⁹ *Death of the Author*, Roland Barthes. The elimination of the author from the ways in which text (or artworks) are interpreted is a further distancing effect in addition to temporality and the indirect view of historical events like the Holocaust – as mediated by art, literature and film that is inevitable as a consequence (Hoffman) “the Author [diminishes] like a figurine at the far end of the literary stage) is not merely an historical fact or an act of writing; it utterly transforms the modern text (or - which is the same thing - the text is henceforth made and read in such a way that at all its levels the author is absent)”. (Barthes1987: 145)

¹⁹⁰ Topography here is used as a term to encompass both the physical features of the landscape but also the nature of the mind and the function of Consciousness.

response before, as we approach a time without living survivors, the Holocaust passes fully into history and myth.

3.1

Beginnings

Płaszów, situated just to the south of the Polish city of Kraków, was a German labour and concentration camp, it opened in December 1942 (FIG 11). Very little now remains of the former camp and unlike Auschwitz, which is approximately 70km to the east, the site is quiet and relatively innocuous; its sparseness and the lack of the structural evidence of what once existed allows the observer time and space for contemplation and imagination.



FIG 11. Gary Spicer, *Płaszów*, 2017.

In my creative practice, my journals, containing both writing and drawing are the repositories for such contemplation. Both mediums are graphic and offer

complementary responses as two manifestations of the same thing, a personal graphology, each a version of my handwriting, both direct traces and evidence of thought and impressions. In my practice, and consistent with Asger Jorn's statement that 'a picture is written, and writing is a picture' (Kurczynski 2017:40), writing becomes drawing and drawing becomes writing¹⁹¹. The only difference is emphasis, where 'writing' (being the umbrella term), shifts from being interpreted calligraphically or graphically. This is evident in *Crosstext* (**FIG 12**) where the writing is barely limned and functions simultaneously as text[ture] and as fragments of a symbolic language. The image refers to the fragments of an old Hebrew Bible text and a Crucifix formed in the shadows along with the shimmering face of Christ.

¹⁹¹ Jorn was essentially extending the idea that was becoming prevalent in the 1940's that a person's handwriting revealed tracts of their personality. He extrapolated that art could also be understood as an index of a person's personality but that this was combined with ideas mediated through a distinct visual language of form. A member of the COBRA movement Jorn's visual language was Abstract-Expressionist based and focused on individual expression. He evolved to develop a conception of art as a public engagement with contemporary culture and politics.



FIG 12. Gary Spicer, *Crosstext*, 2017.

Drawing and writing are suitable mediums because of their immediacy, their directness and potency. Both contain the pulse of the intention, can be nuanced because they are haptic, can be dragged and gestured and are responsive directly to mood and evocation. The two timbres of my written voice both philosophical, contemplative, and reflective, reminiscent of the photographs that accompany the writing of W.G. Sebald in *Austerlitz* (2001), part hybrid, part fiction, part memoir and part travelogue. As Sebald used images as a haunting adjunct to his writing, my reflective voice is intended to serve in the same way, not to be ancillary, but to constitute a second level of documentary evidence. My drawing and visual practice offers a third.

Situated drawings are made on site, and memory drawings are made afterwards. It is here where narratives begin to emerge. These are determined by the choices made during the process of 'making' and are formed from the resonances between

materials, ideas, objects, and subject, it being the action of 'doing' that leads to its definition.

It is difficult now, to appreciate that there was such a hiatus after the liberation of the camps before the events in Europe were meaningfully investigated, or theorized. Those who survived did not want to discuss or confront what had happened to them. Writer Ava Hoffman posits a reason as to why, but she also adds a note of caution, 'Stand too close to horror, and you get fixation, paralysis, engulfment; stand too far, and you get voyeurism or forgetting. Distance matters' (Hoffman 2004: 177). Hoffman believes that our need to reckon with the Holocaust should not be underestimated or diminished and that the challenge now is how to find the right tone of response and timbre of expression. Interestingly she suggests that the indirect view of these events – as mediated by art, literature, and film – can be problematic, and that locating what she terms as an 'adequate valence of reaction' (Hoffman 2004: 178), despite what Susan Sontag described as art's 'corruption of the spectacle of suffering' (Sontag 2003: 7) may also contribute towards our distancing from it. Hoffman, however, cedes that engagement with this past is possible with imaginative integrity and that it is inevitable that 'this mediation is viewed [today] through the filter of our own ideas' (Hoffman 2004:178, 180). Here echoing the thoughts of Tarkovsky.

3.2.

Beyond the Veil

When not seen as binary, body and soul, corporeal and abstract, of what is and is not directly understood, perhaps it becomes possible to exist in the confluence of both, in the ebb and flow of the real and the imaginary. Mathematician and science historian Jacob Bronowski in 'Knowledge or Certainty', the eleventh chapter of his opus *The Ascent of Man*, suggests 'we are always at the brink of the known' (Bronowski 1976: 374), and in so doing, perhaps he impels us to contemplate our

own fallibility; to not know but to strive to discover, to be driven by the why rather than the how. My own practice embodies the idea of embracing the unknown and of guessing and reaching to visualize form, of working with the potentiality of the known to depict what may lie beyond the veil of what we are able to readily articulate and express.

I made the image *Objective/Subjective* (FIG 10) in my journal during my first encounter with the Płaszów concentration camp. I was navigating the space on foot using a map of the terrain as it once was, to orientate myself in what now bore no resemblance to the site, as it would have looked in 1943 (FIG 13).



FIG 13. Unknown, Płaszów Concentration Camp, 1942.

Consistent with a phenomenological approach of gathering data sensed and perceived then explicated through drawing and writing, my creative responses were focused purely on my own personal experience – and as experienced by me - not on assumptions or familiar visual tropes. As a phenomenological approach to interpretive analysis, this process is called *bracketing* and is a useful practical device

when in the field. The process acknowledges that there is a consciousness and an awareness of previous interpretations, but the focus is on those qualities that are revealing and significant to the direct experience of presence. Anything other is considered tangential to meaning. I was capturing something by describing the *subjective* (my own) character of the experience of the site, at this point of what could be sensed rather than what was imagined. Characterizing the *objective* was a response to things that may be nuanced in terms of how they may be perceived, such as topographies, physical elements, and their appearance and presence. To narrow the gap between the subjective and the objective is also to fuse the mental and the physical. The writing below made during my first encounter with the space fuses both mental and physical responses to the initial experience.

Somewhere in the rolling hills, somewhere in the heat, somewhere in the dry sharp heat are kept the memories of those who were once here. Those that lived and died here and left untoward in haste, emptied as they were into the space that now is filled by their words and their presence. Stilled as it is by their watchful eyes.

One is always being watched here; one is never alone even if no one else from the lived world can be seen. Still, in stasis and mute. Motioned only by the action of my looking. I am brought, caught in the fabric of my own history, strewn as that is with the innumerable traces of others, to this place. Through which I now walk, wander, wonder, my feet being pricked by the sharp grass, through the gaps in my sandals but always treading softly through the silence.

Embodied, I am present. The grass made brittle by the scorching summer sun and so long in places that it nearly reaches my waist. What were beaten tracks here are now indistinct, the 'memoried' ground is obscured and

overwritten by footpaths made by those living now who crisscross to get home, or shop or get to school.

This space is like any other, but of course it is not. 'Dear visitors! You are entering the site of the former concentration camp 'Płaszów'. Please respect the grievous history of the site'.

From where I now stand, the mists have now cleared, and the fog lifted and I see sharply and in such clarity the spaces of such fragile memory overlapping with the projections of my own imagined past.

The past that took place here, was no flickering spectacle and was lived and breathed. I can see it and I can walk through it, the barracks, the latrines, the horses and carts, chicken run and the grey house.

And the hills are full and bloated, rolling as they now do gently, undulating, now feminised, reclaimed, returned to nature and part of what lives, and breathes and changes. But what had once sated these mounds does not bear thinking about.

Bodies hastily exhumed from mass graves and cremated on the site; the ashes spirited away.

The landscape that is carved and defined by such events and then carpeted and concealed but now is calmed, needs to be read and understood before it can yield its secrets and it is possible to do so.

I try to read the land by what now grows and notice the interventions in the landscape that have left visible traces, particularly mass sites of burial, that cause interactions with the natural environment that impact directly on flora and fauna growing in the area.

So here, nettles abound, colonising the fertile ground that from the air point to the place where the bodies of those 10,000 prisoners, murdered or worked to death, were exhumed and incinerated.

I sit now, quietly painting and a warm breeze lifts the images that I have laid out to dry on the small public bench in front of the crucifix that commemorates the events that took place here, events that have come to define the Gorka¹⁹².

These images now litter the ground and continue to scatter, each a wash of colour that flicker like large butterflies around my feet. All to gesture the mood that oozes from the imagination when one is 'connected' and attuned in this lieux de memoire.

The idea of reaching forward into an unknown space or a void to articulate that which cannot easily or conventionally be expressed, has been a motivation of art and a dimension of both philosophical concern and literature, where the desire to re-invoke something that cannot be seen anymore, the transcendental or the irreverent, are central concerns. In the context of the Holocaust, philosopher, and political theorist Giorgio Agamben, in *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (1999), described as a 'lacuna' the impossibility of speech – a synecdoche of

¹⁹² Hujowa Gorka is a hill at Płaszów where in 1944 10,000 murdered Jews were exhumed and incinerated by the Germans to hide evidence of atrocities before evacuating the camp.

what it is to be 'human' – to describe that which the survivors bore witness to.

Theodor Adorno and his oft-misconstrued comment that poetry after Auschwitz was barbaric (Adorno 2007: 361), was perhaps articulating this in a different way, citing the implausibility of conventional orthodox forms, those that were tainted by the catastrophe itself to be now capable of expressing adequately the incomprehensible things that took place.

Philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy has said that 'Drawing is the gesture of a desire that remains in excess of all knowledge' (Nancy 2013: 2), meaning perhaps that at best, it is a response to an instinct, a stimulus that is outside of our conscious and predetermined world, only becoming tangible once it is formed, and chemist and author Primo Levi who himself survived Auschwitz and who used writing to stimulate the act of remembering itself.

In *Voicing the Void* (1997) Sara R. Horowitz discusses how through Holocaust fiction and the role of the imagination, it becomes possible to voice and articulate something of this void, one distinct from witness primacy or historical formality. She cites writer and essayist Barrett Mandel and notes 'Language creates illusions that tell the truth', and this is made possible because it is rooted in our 'human being and culture' (Horowitz 1997: 5). The human 'being' is distinct and contributes a chorus of responses tied to individual memory and histories.

T. J. Clark, in *The Sight of Death, an Experiment in Art Writing* (2006), recounts how in one of his letters, French Classical Baroque artist Poussin when describing what he thought he did in his paintings, wrote 'Moi qui fais profession des choses muettes' ('I who make a profession of mute things') (Clark 2006: 3).¹⁹³ Clark's experiment is

¹⁹³ *The Sight of Death* (Clark 2006) as a writing format is interesting. It is a critical text in the form of a

shaped by a record of his looking at two paintings by Poussin, *Landscape With a Man Killed by a Snake* (1648) and *Landscape With a Calm* (1650-51) that are both hung adjacent to each other at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, California. Clark recognised, that the notes made during this repeated process of looking were interesting and served as an archive of his evolving encounter with the images and commented, 'Astonishing things happen if one gives oneself over to the process of seeing again and again' (Krauss 2010:105).

This is consistent with a phenomenological approach to critical observation that insists our apprehensions are never absolute and must always remain fluid and be subject to review and reinterpretation. This begins to answer in part why I keep returning to sites of Holocaust memory for I too am not fixed; I can drift and revisit, and my looking can change and evolve over time consistent with the evolution and understanding of my own experience.

I realize that the implication of the sites being mute might make problematic my creative responses or to bring into question their efficacy; indeed, there is an ethical dimension of daring to speak for those who are now silent. In mitigation I would say that my work only speaks on behalf of myself, the powerful impact that these sites have on me, to invoke retrospection, and stimulate a reading of my own history and genealogy, being the prime motivation.

This process produces work that is sometimes figurative, sometimes abstract, but it is always allusory. It always refers to something. This could be a feeling or a thing. Its starting point is always determined; its end point is less so, the resulting imagery being necessarily ambiguous in the same way that Morris Louis's *Charred Journals*

diary in which Clark writes in many genres at once about his encounter with two paintings by Poussin: *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* (1650–51) and *Landscape with a Calm* (1651).

(1951) (FIG 15) are for example, which allude to the Nazi book burnings of 1933, as well as the Kabbalistic idea that the Torah had its origins in divine black and white fire, or Barnett Newman's *The Stations of the Cross* (1958–66) (FIG 14) which as the series' subtitle suggests 'Lema Sabachthani?' — 'Why Have You Forsaken Me?', makes reference to the last words of Jesus when crucified on the cross, and echoes the sentiments of those who endured their own metaphorical crucifixions in the Holocaust. These images make oblique reference to the Holocaust without making it overt or explicit, and in the process, they invite their viewers to create or discard meanings whilst always being aware that a definitive meaning is forever elusive. Mark Godfrey in *Abstraction and the Holocaust* (2003), himself referring to Maurice Blanchot in *The Writing of the Disaster* (1980), expresses it as follows: '[t]he disaster always remains to be said. It is always beyond meaning' (Godfrey 2003: 45).



FIG 14. Barnett Newman, *Fourth Station (Stations of the Cross)*, 1960.

FIG 15. Morris Louis, *Charred Journals – Firewritten*, 1951.

My drawing is rarely planned, nor is my practice-text¹⁹⁴. I try to respond directly to mood and evocation. The process is a journey that results in the production of artefacts, but in a wider context it represents the excavation of my own genealogical history, and the location of selfhood. In the context of my practice, drawing is used as a tool to excavate a past personally unlived. It becomes a means of archaeology in the production of a synthesized creative response to specific sites of Holocaust memory. Phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, in *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968) describes the 'intertwining' of subjective experience and objective existence as a 'chiasm'¹⁹⁵ (1968: 130), suggesting that subjectivity arises from the space 'in-between' these bodies of experience. My practice investigates this gap through writing and the 'happening' of drawing, which, in this way, becomes an event, and connects with performative possibilities, where the 'Space of Encounter' can perhaps in the future, as my practice evolves, be realized in a more multi-sensorial way.

3.3.

Journey

Płaszów was initially created as a work camp for political dissidents and for early deportees from the Kraków ghetto in 1942. When the ghetto was finally liquidated in 1943 the numbers of Jews imprisoned there grew exponentially. The camp was built on the site of two Jewish cemeteries; attached to one was an *Ohel* (a pre-funeral home) built imposingly in the Byzantine style. Opened in 1932, it was destroyed, using dynamite, on the orders of camp Commandant Amon Goeth in 1943, who before its demolition, had used it to stable his horses. The ruins are still there at the

¹⁹⁴ The initial reaction is visceral (sensual) and purely motivated by the experience. The writing can then evolve to be more cogent or refined without compromising or overwriting the impactful nature of the initial written responses.

¹⁹⁵ Chiasm is Merleau-Ponty's conception of the body, seen as a crossing-over. It is a combination of subjective experience and objective existence or the sensed (received or perceived stimuli) and the sentient (perception and consciousness) A chiasm is also an intertwining, which is the overlapping of objective presence (the thing) and the bodies perception of it and how this is translated. In my practice it also translates into an intuition between thinking and imagining and its transposition into writing and drawing and how each co-exist.

southern edge of the camp adjacent to a housing estate where blocks of flats now overlook the site. The remains of the Ohel, including huge pillars and slabs of stone and concrete, some with Hebrew inscriptions, still litter the ground. I have drawn and written into the feelings that pervade me here, to explicate, make intelligible and lend form to the deadened and the mute, feeling ever closer and yet, distant still. This is place itself as a monument where the work of forgetting is blocked and where, as explained by Marianne Hirsch, 'the spatiality of memory [maps] onto its temporality' (Hirsch 1997: 22), conflating the spoken and the written, so we remember in both pictures and words. This is complicated even further by research practitioners such as myself whose connection to such spaces has nothing to do with personal experience or recollection but is instead bound to imaginative investment, and a compulsion to confront the evidence and to respond.

In the writing below, I am likening the temporal and physical space of the site to a stage, an idea first postulated by H. G. Adler in his fictional Holocaust novel *The Journey*, (2004) in which he describes time as 'the flight [a metaphor for *The Journey*, all our journey's] that consists of a ceaseless progression along the winding paths of a solitary realm, for upon time's stage everything remains fixed in the present' (Adler 2004: 4). My journey that day led me to the *Memorial of Torn-Out Hearts*, a huge monolithic structure built during the Soviet era on what was Płaszów's second mass execution pit.

Mourning, melancholic mourning, time stopped. Now ebbs and flows across this terrain. And like on Adler's stage I dance and pierce the space, reaching and stretching into the past to reveal, that which is broken. And in stretching, a space that moves beyond the pale of writing and the limits of memory shed just enough light to limn the outlines of forms now rendered in drawing, marking, and gesturing, in and across the surface. Seamlessly transmogrified. The stone, a monument as if collapsed from the sky, from somewhere otherworldly, mark a place and a time that is always beyond

and out of reach. This is where the journey ends. It is your first and your last memory, so compelling that it is neither near nor far, but it is inevitable, and it will follow its path in spite of our intentions to denote or describe it. We are for Adler set on our own stage. 'There as elsewhere, we are not forsaken, we are never forsaken' (Adler 2008: 6). And this place is a stage, isn't it? Where memory is slowly poured like concrete into a mold, filling the gaps that form to reach the edge of my thinking and my knowing. In the distance, closer to The Memorial of Torn-Out Hearts, is where I am being led. It has a deep jagged fault that rips and tears across the chests of five figures that are bent almost double under the weight of stone from which they are hewn. One for each of the five countries from where the victims who were last seen here began their journey. The fault symbolises how they were torn not once but twice, signifying also the rupture in time and space that the Holocaust itself has now come to represent. And confronted, paused, and stilled, like them, I am forced up, up into the sky, way above the bristled hem of the birch trees and I am beyond, out, and away, far, far from here.

3.4.

Blue Płaszów

Chance, glitch, and the idea of the emergent subject¹⁹⁶ are central to my practice. I often use old cameras on site, Kodak Brownies for example, equipment that yields unexpected and unpredictable results. Or I can use modern devices such as iPhones by using them in unconventional ways, breaking the conventional rules of composition. *Płaszów cut 4 and 5* (FIG 16 and 17) show images that utilise the *pano* (panorama) feature on an iPhone X. This feature unlike regular wide-angle images,

¹⁹⁶ Whist the motivation and the starting point for the drawing – or the writing - is clear. The way the work develops is subject to the process and the responses I make to the creative decisions and choices that are made in its making. The subject or the broad points of reference, emerge as part of this linear creative process. Another method as with *Płaszów Cut 4 and, 5* 2016, is to cede control of the process, or to create the opportunity for chance, glitch, serendipity to determine the trajectory and outcome.

generates longer format images with a wider spatial field. In essence what is happening is that the technology stitches together several images as you move the camera from left to right across the picture field you want to photograph to create one long photo. iPhone panoramas are a series of images connected to create one long photo. But by deliberately moving the phone up and down, forwards, and backwards whilst panning, the space being photographed is warped and stitched together in a random fashion. This can be done subtly or in a more haphazard way emulating the way we visually engage with spaces, by looking across, downwards and upwards, directly, and peripherally.



FIG's 16 and 17. Gary Spicer, *Płaszów Cut 4 and 5*, 2016.

In this way, I am keen to, in part, cede control of the image making process to maximize the potential for the emergence of the unexpected. In 2015 I took an old medium-format camera to Płaszów and shot a roll of about twelve colour images. When developed, the film was covered in a blue caste. See FIG 18 (*Blue Płaszów* 2015); this became a leitmotif for a body of work where blue became a recurrent

theme. FIG 19 (Emet 2016)¹⁹⁷ is a high-resolution scan of an inked etching plate. It is an image I made shortly after returning from Poland in the summer of 2016. The reflective properties of the steel yield a distinct blue caste across the image surface. This was neither planned nor expected. But like the image *Blue Płaszów* taken in 2015 at the Płaszów concentration camp in Kraków, this frame was tinged with a gentle but distinctive blue caste, ‘my consciousness is saturated with this limitless blue’¹⁹⁸ (Merleau-Ponty 2004: 129).



FIG 18. Gary Spicer, *Blue Płaszów*, 2015.



FIG 19. Gary Spicer, *Emet*, 2016.

¹⁹⁷ Emet. In the Greek/Western tradition truth (Aletheia) truth has to do with a correspondence between thinking – as expressed and mediated by language – and the world itself. The Hebraic conception of truth - Emet - has a slightly different focus. It focuses instead on people and their character as being part of a dynamic and changing world. So ‘the nature of truth becomes grounded in the moments of decision encountered in one’s life’.

(https://www.hebrew4christians.com/Glossary/Word_of_the_Week/Archived/Emet/emet.html)

¹⁹⁸ Here Merleau-Ponty is contemplating the limitless blue of the sky and how by abandoning himself to it, he is drawn together and unified with it. Plunged as he says, “into this mystery” (1962: 214) This notion of commingling is described further in *If Only the Walls Could Speak: The Memory of Place* (Volume 2: Essay 4).

Embracing and assimilating chance into my working methodology allows ideas to coalesce around processes that can yield surprising and unforeseen results. A glitch, meaning an irregularity in behaviour, would usually be associated with annoying failures in technology but when the artist is attuned, these glitches can be embraced within the creative process. *Emet* (2016) is one of a series of etchings that fuse the experiencing of Holocaust placeness with the creation of artefact. None of this was planned or expected. I remembered the blue stripes that were woven into my father's tallit, the ritual prayer shawl that he was given for his bar mitzvah when he was thirteen years old. The 'blue resembles the color of the sea, and the sea resembles the color of the heaven, and the heaven resembles the 'colour' of [G-d](#)'s Throne of Glory!'(Schochet).

Originally, in ancient times, the blue dye used in the tallit was extracted from the chilazon¹⁹⁹. The blood of the animal was exposed to the sun and the ultraviolet light had a chemical reaction with the blood that turned it blue.

¹⁹⁹ The Chilazon is a 'fish' but has a shell and is a type of snail. The blue turquoise dye extracted from it was prized by Mediterranean civilizations.



FIG 20. Gary Spicer, *My father's Tallit*, 2022.

In the journal extract below I am beginning to embrace the notion of blue in my thinking and to reach for allusions that were important to me and significant in my individual conception of its meaning and connotation.

This landscape is as much a landscape of thought. It is malleable and like thought can be shaped, alluded to, elided, and eclipsed by new contexts and new dimensions, by an unexpected intervention, that pricks and wounds us. My path has now led me here to this hazy blue place and I now wander and determine its meaning and the extent of my belonging and offer something 'other' to those that were here. 'Other and beyond reach, the Eden beyond [their] grasp' (Minnis 2015: 220). And if it is to be believed that whatever goes beyond nature, we grasp through faith alone and everything that was Płaszów and everything that was the Holocaust was beyond nature, then all that was left was the authority that lay beyond.

Then in the blue, there appeared, hovering above the ruffled hills scattered with buttercups and cornflowers, darkness, barely visible to the naked eye, a place for the scrutiny of memories.

A ribbon of blue spans the frame and forms a barrier through which the sky cannot penetrate. The grass wrapped, eider filled and smitten with fauna and tucked so tight that my feet cannot move. Lied like whales, which slowly worm and lump through the cold, still, deep blue. Lost here also are the words, muffled somewhere amongst the 'fossilised' cries of the saved who escaped early the rabid claws of the wolves that scented cornered and finally consumed them in chambers on whose walls Zyclon mutated forming a beautiful, Prussian blue, a fitting milieu for such slaughter²⁰⁰.

Now I am moved and stand before the Grey House at the Southernmost edge of the place, close to what remains of the destroyed Ohel here on Abraham Street, now a palimpsest obscured and cauterized. Where the stones that marked the emptied graves were recycled and used for footpaths in the camp, some of which still today mark out where tracks and roads dissected its topography. I deliberately walk over and not around them in a peculiar but conscious act of reverence.

So, grey against blue, I am grey. I am inconspicuous, I have the capacity to mediate and blend, I have the capacity to make nothing visible and I can do it in such a way as to be illusory. And this is the rub; I can be the enchanter, the magus, making the invisible visible to evoke a past that can no longer be seen or 'touched'? In part psychically automatic, (in my work the drawing 'appears', it is unplanned...an ecstatic accident) yet also somatic, deriving as it does, as much from my body.

²⁰⁰ Prussian blue was discovered by accident. A glitch. It was discovered that the potash (used in many pigments) unknowingly had animal blood in it containing iron. The iron created a chemical reaction that resulted in blue.

I am encountering this place in many ways, physical and temporal, from within and from beyond.

I have visited Auschwitz-Birkenau at different times of the year and in all seasons, the clichéd cold and snow, the dark and grey of winter and deep autumn. And I have been there in spring and high summer when the grass is at its greenest, and the sky is at its bluest. Although nature has prevailed and reclaimed this landscape (as it has at Płaszów), it clearly belies and obfuscates the history and the true darkness of this place. Meditations on colour including that on black and blackness in Essay 2 when examining *Photograph #283* and contemplating its significance and resonance, have been important as devices for me to convey and represent the experience; feelings, moods, and evocations, when confronting Holocaust places of memory or their traces, black and blue having been recurrent motifs.

In terms of visualizing the Holocaust, Mexican artist Yishai Jusidman understanding the tensions that can exist between colour and history, perception, and materiality, found through colour (Jusidman 2017), and in particular Prussian blue, a salient vehicle to represent the Holocaust. Jusidman explains how in the gas chambers at the Majdanek concentration camp the walls were randomly permeated with an intense blue hue formed because of a chemical reaction of cyanide in the pesticide Zyklon B - used to murder those locked in the chamber - and ferrous elements in the walls. Jusidman suggests how through the motif of Prussian blue the 'Holocaust chose to express itself'²⁰¹ (Jusidman 2017).²⁰²

I am also mindful of Maggie Nelson's meditation on blue when contemplating the sky

²⁰¹ In defining the trajectory of modernism critic Clement Greenberg believed that the elimination of the artists hand - which he saw as a contaminant - was necessary in the art-making process in order to create work liberated from romantic subjectivity. In so doing, it is the works materiality that is so elevated.

²⁰² Adapted from a lecture given by Yishai Jusidman at Salem State University, Massachusetts, on November 4, 2017, as part of the symposium "Emerging Consequences: Aesthetics in the Aftermath of Atrocity."

in *Bluets* (2009) and its optical interdependence on black:

The blue of the sky depends on the darkness of empty space behind it. As one optics journal puts it, 'The colour of any planetary atmosphere viewed against the black of space and illuminated by a sunlike star will also be blue.' In which case blue is something of an ecstatic accident produced by void and fire (Nelson 2009: 62).

So, blue being produced by void and fire, offset in my mind the curious and jarring juxtaposition of this place with the warm summer sun, and the brilliance and opulence of colour. Additionally, the notion of the blue being an 'ecstatic accident', chimed with the idea of glitch, and its significance in my creative practice.

In *Blue Territory*, (2015) Robin Lippincott's meditation on second-generation Abstract Expressionist Joan Mitchell, whose painting *Les Bluets* (1973) had influenced Nelson (FIG 21) the leitmotif of distance recurs, and he highlights the use of blue in her work. 'I paint from a distance. I decide what I am going to do from a distance' (Lippincott 2015: 81). Carefully surveying the canvas from as far away as possible, Mitchell becomes estranged, separated from the visceral body; she juxtaposes freedom and control, which in equal measure fuel the florid gestures that scatter across the picture surface. She explains that although abstract, her work has content and requires her, for its motivation, to be thinking about something, or to be more precise, there is no such thing as a good painting about nothing; there always has to be content, in the form or in the blue. '...Various shades of blue – sometimes the sky or the lake in summer. Bluer than bleu' (Lippincott 2015: 30).



FIG 21. Joan Mitchell, *Les Bluets*, 1973.

My responses to Płaszów represent similar evidence of the working-through process when it becomes clear that through meditation and contemplation, I am driven to depict not only the places in which I stand or drift across, such as this one, but that I am also excavating something of my own contingency and self. This dimension is explored further in *The Red Heart* (Essay 7).

3.5.

Conclusion

The Holocaust, and any questions now arising, can only be transmuted through what Ava Hoffman terms as ‘a living connection’ (Hirsch 1983: 1) by those who now attempt to mediate and interpret the event from the perspective of post-memory. The author of *The Destruction of the European Jews* (2003) Raul Hilberg cited storytelling and poetry as skills that historians needed to learn if the difficult history of the Holocaust was to be told and more crucially to be heard. This is further reinforced by Marianne Hirsch, who said there was a ‘need for aesthetic and institutional structures that broaden and enlarge the traditional historical archive with a ‘repertoire of embodied knowledge’ (Hirsch 1983: 4, 5). Therefore, whilst appreciating the caveat expressed by Ava Hoffman on the indirect view of these

events by artists being problematic, or Sontag's concern to avoid a 'corruption of the spectacle of suffering' (Sontag 2003: 7), artists and writers in the mode of their encounters are able to imbue the history with a sub-layer of narrative that inflects the event differently from conventional history, helping to ensure that the stories and the histories are accessible, and continue to be told and understood. These encounters can be read as being with what is there, what is still there, what is missing and what has been replaced. Merleau-Ponty suggests that this is achieved through the mediation of the body, or in Joan Mitchell's case, by becoming estranged, separated from the visceral body, so that thoughts and ideas, words, and lines that touch and overlap are imbricated to form patterns of knowing. Benson and Connors, in their book *Creative Criticism* (2014), say that 'to encounter is to be turned, whether for a moment or for life; to encounter is always in part not to know' (Benson and Connors 2014: 5). How I am turned and how I choose to respond to the void of places like Płaszów continues to define one of the primary motivations of my practice.

ESSAY 4

If Only the Walls Could Speak: The Memory of Place



FIG 22. Gary Spicer, *Ich Erinnere Mich An Alles (I am Pink Now)*, 2016.

'If they remain silent, the very stones will speak' **Luke 19:40.** Berean Study Bible.

In 1941- 43, in the building pictured above on Jozefinska 14 Kraków, stood the Ghetto Main Hospital. During the liquidation of the Ghetto in March 1943, German soldiers entered the hospital and floor-by-floor, room-by-room, murdered all the doctors, nurses and patients that were inside. It is now a residential apartment block and painted pink. It can only be assumed that those who now live in the block have found a way to cut out the building's grievous history.

In his essay *Eye and Mind* (1964) Merleau-Ponty described as a chiasm, the subject body – as us – encountering an object - in this case Jozefinska 14 – and how the object

looks back and returns our gaze. The reciprocity of this gaze, described as ‘the thickness of the flesh between the seer and the thing’ is explained by Merleau-Ponty as being the means through which they – the subject and the object - communicate, ‘this distance is not the contrary of this proximity, it is deeply consonant with it, it is synonymous with it’ (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 135).

Charles Bernstein in *A Poetics* (1992) interprets Merleau-Ponty’s theory in the context of creative practice, thus.

‘The thickness of writing between
the reader & the poem is constitutive for the poem
of its visibility & for the reader
of the outer limit of his or her absorption
in the poem, it is not an obstacle
between them, it is their means
of communication. The thickness of writing’ (Bernstein 1992: 97).

And of the chiasm, he writes.

‘The intersection of the visible
& the invisible. This
is the philosophical interior
of my inquiry – that absorption & impermeability
are the warp & weft of poetic composition –
an intertwining or chiasm whose locus
is the flesh of the word’ (Bernstein 1992: 86).

It is the 'thickness' of my writing - and drawing - that determines the extent to which it is absorbed by the viewer or the reader. Defined by Merleau-Ponty as an 'historical thickness' of perception that operates outside of reflective consciousness. It is how both – writing and reader - intersect and communicate and where meaning and understanding is shaped and formed.

What if Jozefinska 14 held memories and could replay the events of March 1943? How would meaning be formed and understood? How 'thick' is the writing that is inscribed by my imagination and the experience of the site today and what remains?

4.1.

Places Remember Events

In 1919, James Joyce wrote in the margins of his notes for *Ulysses* (2010) that 'places remember events' which questioned the conception of memory as being bound by time and as a recollection of the past. '[P]laces, instead of being merely settings or scenes, are active agents of commemoration' (Casey 1993:277).

Architect Richard MacCormac said, 'building is memory' and Peter Finch in the *Architects Journal* said, 'the patina of time, both physical and metaphorical, is something that invests architecture with a very particular symbolic meaning' (Finch: 2016).

My practice is predicated on the belief that places have the capacity to store and release memory and that these recorded events, if appropriately attended to can facilitate our own remembering²⁰³ in the present. These may be clearings in Lower

²⁰³ This notion of replay or residual haunting theory suggests that buildings and the materials of which they are made can absorb and store memories. Given the right circumstances and conditions it is believed they can be released and replay the events and memories that are stored. In 1972 there was

Silesia, buildings still standing on the sites of former Jewish ghettos, or on the banks of the Danube in Budapest. 'Places hold their own histories' (Andrews and Roberts 2012: 37), not only in the physical and structural traces of habitation and decay, but also in the knowledge of events that have taken place there. Such knowledge can only be said to reside in the visitor, who blends his or her own life experience and specific sensitivities with the memory and tracts of the original site. Here the phenomenological question is posed, which layers are already present in me, and which are resident in the place, a priori and independent of the experience or a posteriori, a knowledge only knowable on the basis of experience.

History is learned and understood through books and witness testimony but is also gained from the visible traces and visceral 'experience' of places, where the residues of happening can be sensed, and its percepts given form and measure. A history where embodied phenomenological engagement with its sites of memory has the capacity to yield creative and imaginative forms of representation *but* only if we can learn to listen and see the silence (Taylor 2016).

The idea that the knowledge formed by the *feelings* experienced at places of Holocaust memory, and the *appearance* of such places might exist in some form outside ourselves and is recorded in the material fabric of the place, is distinct from the already existing memory of place and between the traces of what is left or between the residue and my reading/interpretation(s) of it.

Such places don't think and are not invested with mystical properties in or of themselves by virtue of their grievous histories, but their histories and scars can be

a play on the television called the *Stone Tape* by Nigel Kneale. I knew it was significant. I have never forgotten it. Kneale, N. (1972). *The Stone Tape*. London: BBC Television. It aired on the 25 December 1972 on BBC 2.

read and interpreted phenomenologically through creative writing and imagining and given form and presence when energized through drawing and gesture.

David Leatherbarrow in his essay *Buildings Remember* (2016) contends that Joyce's expression is an affirmation of how 'places are one of the means by which the past keeps itself present' (Emmons 2016: 55). Going further, the notion that memories can reside in places other than our minds, like houses, gardens or indeed at Josefinska 14 challenges our accepted notions of perception and de-centres and relocates reflection and representation (Emmons 2016: 55).

On Josefinska St, one of the oldest, major arteries of the original urban layout of Podgórze there are classicist and late-classicist houses from the 1830s as well as Art Nouveau architecture. When conceived these buildings would have been plotted like stories and much like language itself, constructed, and appointed to form and shape narratives. These narratives, in part determined by architectural style, scale and function have been shaped as much by fiction as history (Emmons 2016: 55). So as the buildings and spaces were conceived, placeness and how they might interact and co-exist with people and the body would have been dreamt in the creative imagination. And now another layer of fiction – conceived as my means of accessing this history - is imagined by my own deployment of free imaginative projection. So, although my intellect clearly tells me that buildings don't think and cannot remember, the fictional device allows me to understand and imagine what may have occurred and what the building may have recorded to be released in my memory.

Between 1941 and 1943 all these buildings, which already had cumulative stories and narratives, were absorbed into the Kraków ghetto in Podgorze across the Wisla River. Josefinska 14 was one such building. This essay includes consideration of the historical and fictional dimensions of its being as I imagine the building as an

anthropomorphic entity by attributing to it human lived characteristics of sensual experience, affect and emotion.

In *Spectres of the Holocaust* (2013) Sylwia Karolak, referring to those who perished in the Warsaw Ghetto, asks how we give voice to that which is gone, how to talk [and listen] to that which is not completely dead, no longer fully present, 'but is still too powerful to just go away and disappear'²⁰⁴ (Karoluk: 2013). She discusses the haunting of places and cites the metaphor of the haunted house where ghosts exist in a liminal space²⁰⁵ between life and death, presence and absence, existence, and non-existence. Places haunted by the dreadful things that took place there. Katarayna Bojarska when discussing such post-memory in a Polish context cites the abundance of material relics of the pre-war Jewish world and the 'numerous traces of what the Holocaust left behind in the structure of cities and towns' (Dziuban 2019: 196) Josefinska 14 is one such material relic, a remnant that has subsequently been overwritten, a palimpsest.

Now I am Pink

On the affective capacity of place to evoke, to inspire and to conjure, anthropologist Keith Basso puts it thus 'places have a marked capacity for triggering acts of self-reflection' (Andrews and Roberts 2012: 37). With reference to Sartre, he recalls a

²⁰⁴ Referencing Jacques Derrida and the ontology of Spectral 'Phantoms and Haunted Texts. Derrida first introduced the idea of Hauntology in 1993 as a concept referring to the return or persistence of elements from the past, as in the manner of a ghost.

²⁰⁵ Space and place both define the nature of geography. Space being an abstract and blank concept without substance and meaning. Place, however, is a unique, and 'special ensemble' (Lukermann, 1964, p. 70); that possesses its own history and set of individual meanings. 'Place incarnates the experiences and aspirations of a people' and needs to be understood from the perspectives of those people who have given it meaning.

process of ‘interanimation’, a phenomenon occurring when individuals encounter specific places. In other words, ‘a place remembers only when we animate it to do so by actively sensing it and paying attention to its physical details’ (Andrews and Roberts 2012: 37). But places can only be absorbed of what is present in our consciousness and can only be animated by those that encounter them.

Describing how writing can operate as a mechanism that gives shape and substance to phenomena that may resist the traditional ontological boundaries of being and non-being, what is alive or dead, Elisabeth M. Loevlie uses the term ‘hauntology of literature’, writing that in its abstracted form does not have to refer to a fixed reality, or to sustain any particular meaning. Yet it ‘gives us access to vivid and sensory rich worlds’ (Loevlie 2013: 336) writing whose ontology need not be static and predetermined but can be shimmering or ‘ghostlike’. In the writing below ‘*Ich Erinnere Mich An Alles*’ (I am Pink Now) I am drawing on this capacity for writing to be free to construct and sustain imaginary worlds and to challenge the orthodoxies of what is extant and real ‘because it releases and sustains this ontological quivering, [and] can transmit the ineffable, the repressed and transcendent’ (Loevlie 2013: 336).

4.2

Ich Erinnere Mich An Alles (I am Pink Now)

On the day the photograph (**FIG 22**) was taken, I also made a short film and recorded an improvised narrative during which I began to speak aloud and animate the memory of what I imagined happened in that place. This audio has been transcribed, edited, and extended below.

What was there?

And what remains.

People came to the hospital from miles around, even from beyond the walls of the Ghetto. On that day in March 1943, I saw everything, I heard everything, and I felt everything. The Doctors and the nurses held the sick and would not leave. They were shot. The patients were then killed in the wards whilst still in their beds. I saw that. I saw them enter, draw up in a double line and from room to room, and along the narrow corridors cast a black rabid shadow that fell upon the sick and the old in turn until everyone that moved or uttered beneath its swathe was dead. No breath, no life and no being were left.

Now wrung damp and dead weighted, bled, and slapped hard like old washing on stone slabs. There were screams and there was silence and I heard them both. I am both subject and object. Like Ponty 'Touch and touched' space and being, I lived these things, I am these things. These things are me and they are still...

I am pink now...

And it is all held in stone and polished oak, absorbed in my walls and the space that still hangs above the floor. Then it fell quiet and it was still. I cannot forget and I cannot leave. I have become a ghost and remain heavy, trapped with the burden of this remembering, drawing on mythic or imaginary predecessors, translated, contemporised and re-envisioned. It is fallen silent; the space filled and swollen by 'ambient stillness', a silence that pervades and intrudes with its now heavy history, a silence that is filled with

the fear of the unknown, the unheard. This resonates with me. A silence that is still, in stasis and mute.

I am pink now...

There were the old, carrying books of God, I saw 'the rules and customs of Israel' under their arms and a book of daily prayer. And opened on that page I saw that in March Purim would soon celebrate their salvation. Haman to Ahasuerus, vent and kill and 'rid the Jew from Persia'. And 'Megillat Esther,' who in deception thwarted the slaughter, but unable now to save those from the 'Helmeted, fully armed, sons of Herrenvolk' (Master Race), she turns her face again. And like God can only be with them in their suffering.

'From the moment that one is in the grip of death, it is forbidden to leave him in order that his soul may not leave him while he is all alone' (Friedlander 1934/5694: 197) I saw, and it was clear that none died alone... 'It is a religious duty to stand near the person at the time his soul is about to depart from him'. I was all around and knew as their souls departed when small feathers fell and lay just across their noses and barely parted lips. I saw as no breath disturbed the feathers rest. They were gone from here, the muted but most poignant witnesses, committed forever to trespass in my shadow.

They were once in ritual attire. They were laughing, some were crying. They passed me by quickly along Jozefinska. I saw them crowded in Plac Zgody and again in front of me like I had seen before; 'But [today] the butchery [expanded] in ever widening circles. [It looks] as if they wanted to choke with blood to satisfy their hunger for it. Everyone [was] shooting; everyone who wants, everyone who is willing' (O'Neil 2007: Chapter 8).

I am pink now...

I stand in Podgórze, - meaning the 'foothills,' I am between the Wisła River and the cliffs of Krzemionki which are clearly visible from the rooftop. I was planned by the rules of Magdeburg, Jozefinska part of a giant checkerboard. Over there in the midst where the innocent stood and where they fell, now there is a table on which there are flowers. I can see through and past the table and can still feel the hearts of those that knew... beating faster...

Death climb / in shadow / black and blacker / floor-by-floor / room-by-room / hated and rage / scented and scorned / beating faster / beating faster / silent walls / open mouths / lighted and flung / leather and lamb / silent again / I can see your breath / limned /scarcely there / beating faster / beating faster / beating faster / helmet and skull / shepherd and flock / Emet / Blood and water drowned and saved / beating faster / beating faster / beating faster / being still / still /... still...still...

Hester panim... I am with you in your suffering.

Experiencing the reverberations in and around places like Jozefinska 14 is to be attuned to what I would term the 'resonant presence', the notion that places have to be heard – or the silences seen (Taylor 2020) My creative response is in the confluence of the innate – what I bring to that experience – and the felt and perceived. We cannot approach objects from a neutral position. This is articulated in

Heidegger's notion of poiesis,²⁰⁶ and the idea of something 'unfolding out of itself' where it is our own existing thoughts and beliefs about the object that unfold and fuse with our creative response[s] to the object and the subject and object become conflated to the extent where the feeling and the perception become indistinguishable? Poiesis, which also enables both producers and consumers to gain a deeper insight and sense of how, art functions and helps both to arrive independently at the point where an understanding of the formative conditions of its inception becomes possible:

When knowledge and feeling are oriented toward something real, actually perceived, the thing, like a reflector, returns the light it has received from it. As a result of this continual interaction, meaning is continually enriched at the same time as the object soaks up affective qualities. The object thus obtains its own particular depth and richness (Zaibert 2016: 215).

And it happens when I am confronted with Jozefinska 14. The place becoming remembered and animated by my imagining.

I know there are those who can sense that which is real and still shimmers across my form and who can hold its charge. I know there are those that can see and imagine these things. Whose own memory and experience is pricked surfaced and flowed into mine. They write, make marks and gesture, soaking up the light that is reflected. And each time it becomes clearer, and my meaning made deeper and richer in the present and yours complicit and

²⁰⁶ Poiesis - that which 'pro-duces or leads (a thing) into being'. Rabb (2018) On "Poiesis" Para. 6

entangled in mine. And from where I now stand, the mists have cleared, and the fog lifted, and I see sharply and in such clarity the spaces of such fragile memory overlapping with the projections of my own imagined past.

As phenomenology's central concern is the equiprimordial²⁰⁷ state of how we 'be in the world' through sensorial perception and how in this way our engagement with objects – in this case Jozefinska 14 in Kraków and its residue – is transformed, It is perhaps apposite to refer to an extended definition of the number of senses we possess in our bodies. The orthodoxy is that we have five; others talk of 10, 12, or even 20 senses. The disagreement seems to centre on how they are divided, where one ends, and another begins. The 'five senses' model is based on where the sensory cells are located in the body: the eye, mouth, nose, ear, and skin. The 'twenty senses' model is based on the number of specialized cell types, the types of signals that activate them, and the types of responses they trigger. Which sense is dominating the experience? Why are we feeling, how are we feeling? How can we 'be' the space, 'be' the feeling? In his essay *Earth, Sky, Wind, and Weather* (2007) anthropologist Tim Ingold wrote of sensing the weather...of being the weather...being the storm...becoming entangled, commingled.

This notion of commingling describes well my phenomenological approach and how I am attempting to articulate through creative practice experience and phenomena that cannot be optically seen²⁰⁸. I feel the heat of the sun on my face, I can see the effects of the wind arching the branches on the trees, but I can see neither. When Ingold implores us to be the weather, he is recognising that our bodies are

²⁰⁷ Equiprimordial – Meaning to exist together as equally fundamental. A term which originated in the 1960's and was formed as a response to but not an exact translation of *gleichursprünglich* a term used in a lecture that Martin Heidegger gave in 1927 called *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Heidegger, M., & Hofstadter, A. (1982). *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (2nd ed.). Indiana University Press, pp 432. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1bz3w2k>

²⁰⁸ Seeing. The concept of seeing in its many guises as something optically seen, transmuted, and envisioned through imagination or through phenomenological percept.

equimordial with the world not distinct or other from it. Whilst commingling means to amalgamate, blend, coalesce, fuse, and mingle, 'to combine into a uniform whole', commingle implies a closer or more thorough mingling, Heidegger's *gleichursprünglich*, meaning 'of the same origin' is a more accurate description, 'To feel the wind, then, is to experience this commingling. Whilst we did not touch it, we touched *in it*' (Ingold 2007).

Being responsive to Jozefinska 14 or other significant sites of Holocaust memory in an extended multisensory way begins to articulate the possibilities of how drawing and art making can act as a conduit through which such experiences can be mediated, think Kandinsky and his drawings made through synaesthetic sensing; life, movement, equilibrium, smell, taste, vision, warmth, hearing, speech, thinking, ego, touch.

Susan Kozell, who uses phenomenology as a tool to investigate dance and movement, describes the body as a resonance chamber through which it is possible to experience vibrations that are manifest as impulses and translated into gesture, transliterated in my own practice into both visual and written language. Kozell cites Jean Luc Nancy and how he describes moving between a mode of phenomenology where the experience of seeing and hearing, touching are merely 'described' to a phenomenology of 'affect', where the sensual experience becomes activated through emotion. This more liminal mode, harder to quantify, begins to infuse impressions, intuition, imagination, and memory. These affects, codified in my drawing and expressed in my writing become the signifiers of this felt experience, a translation of the mediated 'felt' experience.

In my practice the reverberating experience of Jozefinska 14 or a more expansive and encompassing site are mediated through phenomenological affect. The tools and the processes employed, the pen or pencil, the etching room, the acid, the scribe,

become the essential props and settings of the 'performative' action informing the 'feel' or 'mood' of the drawings made. As John Dewey asks, the drawings stand for something, but what? This is the nub of the enquiry. Emotions are qualities [joy, sorrow, hope, fear, anger, curiosity] 'when they are significant' (Dewey 2005:43). Dewey qualifies the idea by likening emotions to that of a drama, emotions that develop and change as the drama unfolds, "every experience is the result of interaction between a live creature and some aspect of the world" (Dewey 2005:45). Artistic practice is then a result of this interaction, the object [aspect] being a physical thing, a feeling, a sound, an idea or in my instance via the *traceable* use of media and materials, a site of historical memory or trauma such as Jozefinska 14.

In conclusion, Dylan Trigg in *The Memory of Place; A Phenomenology of the Uncanny*, (2012) suggests that the memory of places, the concept of placeness itself is central to our sense of self and is written deep into the body and its experience of the world. The ways in which buildings as bodies themselves (Bachelard) can contain memory and have the capacity to remember is wholly contingent on *our alliance* and interanimation.

It becomes possible then for the past to be spatially preserved and for its remembering to be located in the present as was posited by Joyce. And when such sites are confronted and understood phenomenologically, it allows them to 'occupy the spectral trace of an event left behind, serving to testify to the past through a logic of voids, disruptions, and hauntings' (Trigg 2012: xxvii). The past 'having outlived [its] death' (Trigg 2012: xxvii) is then revealed, made palpable and present.

I still remember the rumbled herd that caused the clock to stop...in an instant. But it is now gone and past... time's wheel has turned on its arbor to make shade and shadows now form in colour. New people now in residence occupy me. They eat and sleep and get up for work. They watch

television and listen to the radio. They invite others into their homes. They have found a way to banish the history in which they live, to cut it out. They dance in the recesses, balance and fly, pivot on the hairspring that threatens to turn them towards my past. They have chosen to live amongst ghosts on times stage. One day they will move on... but for now...I am pink.

ESSAY 5

The Emergent Subject: Artful Research²⁰⁹



FIG 23. Gary Spicer, *Topographies* 2018.

'When we do not have the words to say something, drawing can define both the real and unreal in visual terms' (Kovats 2007:08)

5.1

Topographies

In 2017 I was grappling with the many strands and possibilities of the research project and beginning to realise - but not fully understand - the extent to which I would become entangled in the net cast by an embodied phenomenological approach to

²⁰⁹ An early incarnation of this essay was delivered as a presentation at Manchester Metropolitan University as part of the conference entitled Artful Research in June 2018

confronting sites of Holocaust memory. These are some notes taken from a blog post from that period called *The Emergent Subject*:

'The Tradition of Melancholy', people who try to locate this fundamental feeling of loss in history [anchor]...'at a loss'. The feeling that there has been a catastrophe that cannot be located and that one is living in its aftermath. To capture perception [Patience After Sebald] 'I want to tell you a story about a walk around Suffolk but in fact I have told you a story about the catastrophes of Western culture since the Second World War'. 'Rings of Saturn'. The people Sebald meets, the places he visits, the historical and literary references prompted by what he sees and what he senses. To take my mind on a journey, Red Bank [North Manchester] it becomes a palimpsest for meditations about Holocaust events, catastrophe, memories, and continuities. [And that nothing ever entirely disappears]. HG ADLER [The Journey] serves as an image of fate [or] a timeless metaphor for the plight of the people who have been forbidden. The metaphor also represents memory itself, which sets out onto a journey and is also dragged along through constant wandering. Wondering? To make film, to draw, etch and print and to write. Mieke Bal: Stories – Acts of Memory. Matta, Gottlieb. Avoidance of contrivance. Emergent narratives. The Emergent Subject. Artist Jon Barraclough. Film and sound. "The choices we make affect the narratives". How do we investigate, what emerges? to make the invisible, visible, to re-invoke something that we cannot see anymore'?

The title of the series *Topographies* of which (FIG 23) is part, draws on definitions which includes observations of regions as seen from above, a detailed mapping of terrain, of its undulations and dips, its features, configuration and structural identity. In Physiology it is the description of regions of the body. In psychology, the mind, and the imagination, the inner, the outer, the mind and the body.

Etymologically, topography conflates the Greek *Topos* 'place' and *graphien* 'to write'.

This series of place-drawings allow the agency of materials and process to contribute to the configuration and determination of the visual responses and began a phase of my research practice where drawing became a method of reflection and re-examination. Where the recollection of being in spaces of Holocaust memory and the phenomenological drawing and writing made in response to the experience of being there served as an archive of primary responses to be reinterpreted, projected, and reframed alongside genealogical narratives that derived from myself. Further explored in *The Red Heart* (Essay 7).

This confluence involved threads of narrative that began to overlap and coalesce around some familiar and some new and emergent themes. The body, vessels, tendrils, roots, vertebrae, hip-bones and spines, inside and outside, tracks and traction, excavation, furrows, attunement, bearing the weight, stilling, stasis, shimmer, reaching and guessing, re-assemblage, warp and weft, the tallit. This overlapping, crisscrossing of historical, genealogical threads visualized in *Topographies* where the unseen – the now unseeable – and the compulsion to locate it in some way confirmed that I am indeed ‘motivated by the unseen’ (Crowther 2016: 128) an unseen that emerges, an unseen that surprises, an unseen that is excavated and found via ‘passive receptivity’ (Crowther 2016: 129) where from the million possible permutations of line, mark and gesture, the one emerges ‘that imposes itself from its own necessity’ (Crowther 2016: 129).

...And when it does...I am ready...I am attuned...I don't miss it...

5.2

Inscape: Psychological Morphology

'As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;

As tumbled over rim in roundy wells Stones ring;

*Like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves - goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,
Crying, What I do is me: for that I came'.*

Gerard Manley Hopkins. *As Kingfishers Catch Fire* (Struever 1995: 247).

The roots of this essay are in a presentation made in 2018 at a symposium in Manchester entitled *Artful Research*²¹⁰ where I and other Ph.D. students spoke about how they used practice in their research.

Hopkins was both poet and Jesuit priest; clearly there is a strong theological aspect to his writing. It is an example of what he called 'inscape' (Gilroy 2016:24), the concept that all things are held together and connected by a unique interior essence. And this order – in Hopkin's case deference to a creator, a God - represents a unifying design. In the visual arts the term *inscape* conveys some notion of representing the artist's psyche, as a kind of interior landscape, that integral aspect of the creative response rooted in our own innateness and unique experience, as expressed in Heidegger's notion of poiesis. (Essay 4)

²¹⁰ The Artful/Artistic Research symposia focused on knowledge, insights and outputs that promoted and developed the discourse around creative artistic practice. It clearly showed that although there was no one way to pursue artistic research, at its core, is the artistic practice itself which functions both as an object of study and as a source of responding to diverse and heterogeneous lines of enquiry that supports the pursuit of original insights.

Inscape can be read as a kind of portmanteau, combining *interior* (or *inward, inside*) with *landscape* and expresses well a phenomenological approach that uses drawing to respond to sites of Holocaust memory and its traumatic past. This past as it becomes confluent with narratives deriving from the artist's own history and geography. (See Essay 7 *The Red Heart*)



FIG 24. Roberto Matta, *Sea of Mothers* 1989.



FIG 25. Gary Spicer, *Canaan* 2019.

Roberto Matta was one of the first artists - of the modern era - to visually depict the interior landscape of the human psyche using abstract forms in an attempt 'to make the invisible visible'. As in (FIG 24) *Mar de madres (océano prenatal): eau de mère, Sea of Mothers* 1989, one of his later works and conceived as projections of his inner state 'a landscape discovered within the self, constituting what he called a psychological morphology' (Kamien-Kazhdan 2010). His complex, dense topographies morph both micro and macro, inner and outer worlds in entangled scratched and gestured forms. Such images, when juxtaposed with my own such as (FIG 25) *Canaan* from 2019, highlight an analogous ancestry, a spontaneous approach to drawing that can yield emergent and often unexpected²¹¹ themes through the

²¹¹ Jungian thought that derived from analysis and insights afforded by spontaneous drawing as a tool of investigating subconscious themes and traumas is further explored in the *Red Heart* in Essay 7.

evocation/excavation of the subconscious and the sublime. This collapsing of time and space and the inevitable entanglement of prevailing and personal histories is what artists and writers do, just as Hopkins was in *As Kingfishers Catch Fire* (1887), or at least in his case, making the invisible more nascent and filled with potential.²¹²

5.3

A Sense of Uncertainty and Feelings of Being Lost

As an artist and an academic I am often embroiled in uncertainty. Particularly as what I do is so enveloped in my person and my being. And these are the challenges. In part my research is about reconciling this question of uncertainty, of losing track, getting lost and being found again...because this is how it feels. This uncertainty is wrapped up in the desire to express or represent something of the scale and nature of a meta-narrative like the Holocaust and the sense of wanting those responses to have value and resonance. But the realisation that although it is possible to experience moments when something resonates and shimmers across a drawings surface or across the written page, one can never quite reach or get near the truth - and of course there may be more than one - which is and will always be, forever elusive. Those that choose to do so can only ever prod the subject from various angles to nudge our understanding closer toward...toward²¹³.

²¹² Potential and potentiality. Both nouns could be ascribed to Hopkins work. The writing itself having the potential through inscape and pitch to reveal something of the Divine. And potentiality being the quality of being, or of having the ability to develop or come into existence.

²¹³ I am always mindful of Thom Gunn's poem *On the Move* 'One moves as well, always toward, toward...Reaching no absolute, in which to rest, one is always nearer by not keeping still.' I have always transmuted the poem's original meaning which was the existential response of the beat generation to the Calvinism of post-war middle-class America to mean praising the virtues of personal endeavour, to keep moving, to reach and to seek. For me this echoes the narratives of the journey, the Jewish Diaspora's and the search for fulfilment, self-actualisation, and truth.

The journey, or wandering²¹⁴ are recurrent leitmotifs in my writing and form an apposite narrative device to signify that only through the attempt and the experience of failure is it possible to move closer to locating the self in the context of the subject and in finding an appropriate, individual, and measured timbre of response. Getting lost in the process, being unable to locate the right word or the right line or gesture aptly corresponds to the unfathomable nature of the subject and is, through its very endeavour part of the narrative which seeks to be expressed and understood.

Bernard Knox in *Backing into the Future* (1994) explains that the early Greeks imagined the past and the present as being in front of them and something that could be seen. This implied that history was not something to be retrieved from the past but was always present and we are complicit in the act of its forming, shaping, and revering. So, through art and the imagination it becomes possible to re-conceptualise the relationship of past and present and to reconfigure how we might experience our own histories in the context of the past. In my practice not only are Holocaustal histories entwined with my own genealogical past, but both are also entangled with the present and the future.

The sense of uncertainty and feelings of being lost and of forever reaching for meaning during acts of research creation relates directly to the atemporal and spatially collapsed way in which I encounter and navigate real and imagined topographies in my practice.' *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience* by Erin Manning & Brian Massumi (2011), explore this idea of 'research-creation' / creative practice as a form of thinking. This goes some way to explicating

²¹⁴ Whilst wandering forms part of my phenomenological process, I would resist the suggestion of a psycho-geographical dimension to my methodology. Psycho geography was conceived as a device to connect afresh with a familiar urban landscape to gain a heightened awareness of one's surroundings. I am not doing so to strategically deviate from a predictable or well-worn path. The Holocaust spaces I encounter can be felt as vacuums, empty and void. They are often conflicted, a curious juxtaposition of the banal and the provocative.

the term practice-based research, which articulates a relationship between theoretical, contextual, and practical enquiry, one in which research, is created through practice. As a research practitioner my practice exists in, is enacted by, and formed in this confluence.

‘Every practice is a mode of thought, already in the act. To dance: a thinking in movement. To paint: a thinking through color. To perceive in the everyday: a thinking of the world's varied ways of affording itself’

(Manning & Massumi 2011: vii).

5.4

Intra-abstraction: Potent Forces

Paul Klee in his *Pedagogical Sketchbook* (1973) - and further extended in *Creative Confession* (2013) - drew out what he conceived as the elements of a non-referential visual language that did not emanate from the realm of visual appearances. He described as ‘exactitude winged by intuition’ (Sujo 2001: 14), the imperative to uncouple the notion of the real from the exact – in terms of its representation stating that:

‘The purer the graphic work, that is, the more the formal elements underlying linear expression are emphasized – the less adequate it is for the realistic representation of visible things’ (Chipp 1992: 183).

Klee was emphasising intuition, and the inherent agency of the material and the articulated abstract gesture to create and engender ‘potent forces’. (Lander 2013: 118) His compatriot Jankel Adler from Tuszyn in Poland, who lost his whole family in the Holocaust, saw the need for a more abstracted visceral visual language when drawing on such dark and personal themes relating to the period. In *Treblinka*, made

in 1948, his use of abstraction as a device allowed him to express the ‘frightening reality from a safe distance’ (Ziva 1988: Abs) and the composition – In **(FIG 26)** *Commemoration of the Polish Dead* made in 1947 with enigmatic and gestural sweeps that distort and fragment the figure.



FIG 26. Jankel Adler, *Commemoration of the Polish Dead* 1947.



FIG 27. Jankel Adler, *Treblinka* (study) 1948

Both images represent the process of moving towards abstraction and a staging post in that progression. A progression that was consistent with the broader mutation of modernism across the 20th Century.

These ideas in some way articulate my approach to what I would call ‘intra-abstraction’ (as an abstraction that emanates from within both the subject and the subject as myself) Charles Olson in his essay *Projective Verse* (1950); describes similar potent forces when positing that poetry should embody the rhythms of natural breath and thought. Olson wrote, ‘A poem is energy transferred from where the poet

got it . . . by way of the poem itself, all the way over to, the reader.’ The work I make in situ at sites of Holocaust memory and the writing or drawing in my journals responds to similar potent forces that Klee and Olsen are describing above.

This is where the energy is.

Such potent forces are rich in allusion and can engender hopelessness in any attempt to respond.

***Moving from pencil to pen to brush, from drawing to text and back again.
Point my camera to the sky, absorb and try to capture the topography, the whole space, the placeness of the space, the materiality of the space, the received and perceived memories of the space and the spaces in-between.***

This captured energy is refined as a concentrate to dilute, reconstitute, and distill back in the studio when I try to make sense of the raw data I have collected. Here I work with the agency of materials and processes that contribute to the configuration and determination of the narratives that emerge.

This notion of emergence, of creating the opportunity for the materials and their agency to support narratives suggest conjuring, of ‘Artist as shaman’, interlocutor or medium at the intersection of what is visible, perceived, imagined and invoked, determining the moment(s) of creation.

This approach is consistent with notions of inscape and the visual depiction of the psyche. Drawing and writing being the mediums – tools and settings - through which these inner states as they become entangled with objects in the outer world are projected and become visible.

‘The role of both the artist and shaman has always been to stand between two worlds: that of the visible and the invisible. The viewers, or the community in the case of the shaman, entrust the artist to go forth into the realm of the invisible and return with a gift: the invisible transformed into the visible’ (Milledge 2012: v).

Distance and its affect are mitigated in this way, the potent memories of being in the place still shimmering long after I have left. The exercise in the studio is how to confront the page but here the mechanical processes in the print room and their inevitable agency are complicit in the generation of new visual responses.

Etching is acid, alchemy, metal, corrosion, layering, heating, melting, revealing, and the image coaxed and emergent. The process is clearly a powerful metaphor for the narrative(s). The coating of steel, the drawing through wax, the submersion into acid, the wiping clean, the inking and scrimming of the plate and its pressure through the press all agential and necessary. It can be re-fashioned, re-imagined, obliterated, overdrawn, a palimpsest. It can be scanned and merged with the photographic process, digitized.

Paul Klee would have argued perhaps that embodied in the art making process was the essence of the art itself. The studio is where the narrative of self as artefact becomes potent and real, my body, my *Steel Hips* (FIG 28) and spine becoming elemental in the mix of metaphor and meaning.

Phenomenology interprets the self ‘as embodied, performative and intersubjective’ (Jones 1998:39). It is not separate from the body, nor does it view the body as merely a sign for conveying the significance of meaning and self ‘it is filled with it’ (Jones 1998:39). In the context of my practice therefore, my body, my broken body is inextricably bound up with self and is agential in the meaning making process.

This process of the excavation of meaning in a New Materialist context is rich with possibility not least because New Materialist perspectives suggest that found objects have agency in and of themselves and not just in their relation to our human past, all 'entities are participants with their own emergence'. (Whitmore) and it is this agency that provides the 'charge' - manifest as wonder²¹⁵ – for my drawn and written responses to sites of Holocaust memory, its buildings and remnants and the emergent topographies of self and psyche.



FIG 28. Gary Spicer, *Steel Hips*, 2017.

5.5

Not Knowing...

Myna Trustram, my Director of Studies (until June 2021) came into the print-room when I was making some work, and she produced some writing as an initial response

²¹⁵ Wonder is discussed in Volume 1 Part III METHODS, in the context of my phenomenological approach.

to the transcript of a recorded conversation we had in the space. I have found it good to let someone else into the practice space, into the traffic of ideas. In response to her visit Myna wrote:

I don't set out to draw a thing

I don't set out to write a thing.

A think thing emerges in lots of lines.

Something changes

You scratch me out...

What was observed distilled and expressed concisely and lyrically by Myna is the central tenet of my approach to drawing. She recognized the process in which spontaneity and instinct are embedded into the generative act of drawing and mark making. The précis refers to emergence and the transformation that occurs in the process of making and doing. The work flows from the confluence of thinking and making – the object – and importantly this process is allied to notions of impermanence and as such can be elided and ‘scratched out’ to get closer, to reach higher for that fleeting, transcendent moment, the ‘elevated moment’. A moment that can only occur when instinct and impulse have been entrusted to ‘[plunge] again and again into this zone of unknowing’ (May 2019).

The idea of not knowing and of wonder in the face of the sublime are familiar tropes when seeking to represent events or phenomena that might tower over us in terms of comprehension and scale or alternatively, those much more subtle and seemingly

indescribable sensations felt in response to a transcendent experience stood in what remains of an empty synagogue in Kazimierz for example, now bereft of its 'kehillah,' its community, but still charged in the fabric of its being with the memories of prayer and congress. Rachel Jones warns that the very attempt to grasp and represent these sensory events – felt deep in our being – will 'inevitably erase that which we were seeking to capture' (Fisher and Fortnum 2013: 23). She explains it is this desire always to know that is our handicap and our undoing and only by letting go of this can we allow ourselves 'to be unsettled into bearing witness to the incomparable and irreplaceable' (Fisher and Fortnum 2013: 23).

5.6

The Subjugated Body

Given that any phenomenological approach to bearing post-witness to Holocaust memory depends on the body as a receptive and resonant system of chambers and sensory functions, emotions, and memories, it is ironic that in Western philosophy it is seen as inferior to the mind and thought. This separatism or duality finds itself at the root of the fear and anxiety that has permeated through Western culture and civilization for over 2000 years.²¹⁶ It has contributed to the Jewish alienation and otherness that psychologically gave legitimacy to the perpetrators for the atrocities they committed during the Holocaust.

Christopher E. Forth in *Writing the Holocaust* (2011), describes culturally commonplace anxieties and anti-Semitic tropes that feminised Jews and further reinforced the willful destruction of the Jewish body and the pseudo-scientific philosophical ideology that afforded it legitimacy:

'It is out of a more general "viscosity" fueled by masculine contempt for the

²¹⁶ This antagonism predates the birth of Christ and extends into antiquity. The Roman politician Cicero in 106-43 BC spoke of the 'odium of Jewish gold' and of Judaism as being a 'barbaric superstition' (Gillespie: 2004: 58).

feminine that the specific viscosity of the conceptual Jew may come into focus' (Dreyfus & Langton 2011:170).

In fastening the Jew to concepts of the subjugated and frail body, - echoed by my own broken body - the body already reviled as Untermensch – sub-human – it becomes clear how anxieties about embodiment could support the compelling narrative of corporeality when interrogating the causes and factors that led to the Holocaust.

5.7

Conclusion

Merleau-Ponty said that art parallels phenomenology in being a means to 're-achieve a direct and primitive contact with the world' (Ponty 2013: vii), to articulate meaning or to provoke a response from another person. Drawing is one such symbolic act of transformation;²¹⁷ an articulation of the 'world as affectively experienced' and which lends itself 'to metaphoric interpretation and understanding' (Chaplin 2005).

If art, in this transformation, is the symbolic articulation of our embodied aesthetic experience and understanding of being in the world, then in making work as a direct response to the experience of sites of Holocaust memory and trauma it is my body as the unique reactive site of my own corporeal presence and potential, that serves as the 'broken' vessel through which emotions, anxiety and sadness are experienced, mediated and projected.

²¹⁷ I am using transformation here to refer to an aesthetic change. I am aware that strictly speaking transformation involves the object being changed into something else completely as in metamorphosis. But in this case the experience remains and something new has been created as a response to it.

My broken body further connects the practice to the subject. As such the indivisibility of body and pain has been constitutive of a fluid contested site of meaning ,and its embodiment, central to the out-workings of this project. The body therefore becomes both the site of destruction and in the embodying moment of making the elusive visible, a site of transformation and regeneration.

Foucault suggested to 'pretend not to know' (Foucault 2005:10), to pretend to be unfamiliar with all the proper words that form the lexicon of visual language, the lingua franca scholars use and default too when describing art with words. He thought that by doing so the subject would be confronted and interrogated on its own terms, tentatively, prodded and cajoled towards meaning, decoded using a different mode to see what happens. Rather like Myna did by writing, knowing nothing of etching or the process involved. This is how I make images, they are emergent, so is the writing, via an encounter with the language itself. 'Daisy chains' of meaning formed moment-by-moment, breath-by-breath.

The Topographical 'place-drawings' which were the catalysts for this essay were an attempt to make visible the elusive and to represent the dense, impenetrable character of the subject and the entangled, fluid nature of the attendant emergent narratives. The images, a series of monoprints were made directly onto separate sheets of acetate that were then layered and scanned, restacked, and scanned again. Each generation of the process being recorded in the sequence that they were made. The practice-text below is a working through, a reading of the marks whilst pretending not to know.... but in the process asking...what in themselves do the marks and the images that they construct imagine and signify?

I can barely limn forms, complete forms. I can only see shapes that suggest forms, maybe people, maybe animals. But certainly, shapes that are or were living things, organic in nature, roots, bulbs, growth, or decay? I once saw fungi at the base of a huge damp oak in the park and it looked like this.

*Forming like stacked discs that had been skimmed and sunk into the bark.
Magical and mistrusted, ancient taboos, death, and decomposition.*

*Drawn black Lines coalesce and mass around these shelf-like forms in the
centre of the image and then break towards the left edge, perhaps they are
limbs? But they seem to be moving quickly, quickly out of the space.*

Is it a foot that appears at the bottom of the image?

*This is otherworldly. This make only allusion; this is avoiding defining
itself...I'm struggling. Are there faces in the midst? Am I not looking through
a doorway into a space that is neither outside nor inside, space upon space
that goes back further and further into the distance, mired in the green,
brown surface that frames and smothers the image. And inside there are
blue lines, blue grey like veins through thin stretched skin.*

I don't know what this is...

But I am grasping what I can.

*Marks bleed and solidify, coalesce...are emptied, hollowed...muddled and
meander. How dense can this become? Stack and layer, Stack, and layer. I
become a reader of the marks. As with a dense piece of text...I grasp what I
can, equally in the landscape, the inscape those dense spaces of Holocaust
memory. Concrete, stone, wood, steps, birch trees, hills and paths now
grassed or graves, traces, and tracks, buttressed and stacked, I am
overcome...but I grasp what I can. I willfully see or not...the violence and the
slaughter, perhaps I am inured?*

The idea of someone coming into the creative space that isn't a practitioner and is not familiar with the processes involved, encouraged me to think about how I reflect upon and be critical of the work I make. In viewing the work not as its producer but as its consumer, from the outside rather than inside and uncoupling myself from the motivations and idiosyncrasies that made it happen, I am confirming the act of drawing as being research, of it being fundamental to the explicatory process of enquiry. Indeed, as *artful research*.

ESSAY 6

Aesthetic Emotion: Water and Blood (Víz és Vér)



FIG 29. Gary Spicer, *Csillamlík (Shimmer)* 2021.

'[A]esthetic emotion²¹⁸. Similarly, experienced as impenetrably enigmatic, the ontologically enigmatic object becomes optically potent, that is, aesthetically pure. Doubt and suspicion become awe and urgency, and the object as a whole comes to seem majestic' (Kuspit, 2009. Para 5)²¹⁹

²¹⁸ 'Aesthetic Emotion' was a term used initially by Clive Bell in 1914 in *The Aesthetic Hypothesis*. For Bell, the state was produced when the attribute of an artwork - which he termed 'significant form' - is intuitively recognised by those viewing the work. Mondrian, later in 1917 however, thought that when achieving the maximum of optical (visual/artistic) power the object becomes ontologically enigmatic, so making the sensuous experience of encounter more intense for the viewer. In so doing, the enigmatic object itself was specified as being emotionally provocative.

Bell, C. (1914). *The Aesthetic Hypothesis*. Available at:

<https://hackneybooks.co.uk/books/524/924/AestheticHypothesis.html>

(Accessed 23rd February 2024).

²¹⁹ Kuspit, D (2009) *Aesthetic Transcendence and Transformation*. Available at:

<https://percontra.net/archive/16kuspit.htm>

6.1

Introduction

Such feelings of *aesthetic emotion* as described above by Donald Kuspit express the intensity of my encounters with Holocaust memory and have informed my visual and written responses to the sites of these experiences. A powerful motivation has been my need to express meaning and articulate the residual traces the event and its legacies have had upon me. This relationship with the object of fascination – the Holocaust - and the ensuing transformative impact of any artistic representations on the reader or viewer forms the basis of this essay.

Aesthetic reactions to the Holocaust have been long debated and their efficacy challenged and questioned, particularly in relation to ethics. Brett Ashley Kaplan in *Unwanted Beauty: Aesthetic Pleasure in Holocaust Representation* (2007) examined the voracity of these concerns and concluded that only by moving away from the paralyzing debates over representation that [have] stymied earlier generations (Kaplan 2007:04) can new and ‘fascinating questions’ be opened up, particularly for future generations. The ‘aesthetic pleasures’ evident in such artworks having the potential to transform Holocaust memory and enliven its history for discussion and understanding, also mitigating the dangers of ‘forgetting’.

Holocaust survivor Aharon Appelfeld suggested that ‘only art had the power of redeeming suffering from the abyss’ (Kaplan 2007: 1) and contested that through art the Holocaust offers the opportunity to question the role of ‘aesthetic pleasure’ by opening up the catastrophe²²⁰ to deeper understanding. In this way the polarization of Holocaust memory and ‘aesthetic pleasure’ is collapsed, and art becomes an opportunity for those inured to archival documentary tropes or those wanting to contemplate the catastrophe from a philosophical and critical position rather than

²²⁰ Catastrophe. Here the Holocaust becomes the ultimate catastrophe, representing the phenomena of catastrophe itself, which is what is being opened to interrogation through art. This also permits it to stand for Holocausts yet to happen.

purely historical and factual to do so.

The irrefutable effects of temporal distance and new developments in digital technology and media, means that second - and now third -generation modes of post-witnessing contribute to the creation of a new, contemporary aesthetic of memory, what Saul Friedlander described as a different kind of representation, a form of representation in which the imagination is complicit in the forming of individuated meaning in 'a meditation on aesthetic means' (Bathrick et al 2008: 142). A meditation in which art can provide new contexts for beauty and represent a process of problem solving that can shape collective knowledge making. (Ranciere 2014) In other words (and consistent with the phenomenological method) the process of art making in response to individual sensorial experience contributes to the wider understanding of, and the potential to attribute concerted meaning to, such difficult and seemingly elusive events. In support Gertrud Koch states 'the imagination claims its own autonomy; it can project, annihilate social existence, transcend it to become radically other' (Bathrick et al 2008: 142). Such concepts that deliberately avoid literal or archival representation seek to raise notions of the presence of absence where such images exist in parallel with those formed in the imagination of the viewer as a response to new and often abstracted aesthetic forms.

In *How Pictures Complete Us* (2016) Paul Crowther argues that pictorial art can go beyond representation and serve as a vehicle for *aesthetic transcendence* – i.e. 'the symbolic overcoming of the limitations of our finite being [that involves] forms of beauty and the sublime, and sometimes a sense of participating in divine being' (Crowther 2016: 158). This not only references religious idolatry or iconography but a belief that images can conceal and ultimately disclose 'aspects of humanities' relation to the Godhead' (Crowther 2016: 143) or that other as defined by the individual; that which invokes wonder, spectacle, or awe. That transcendent moment which goes beyond immediate comprehension, or which contemplates an encounter with the seemingly ineffable.

As images are encountered and observed they are necessarily transformed by 'memory, imagination and symbolization' (Crowther 2016:144). This intervention represents both the self-consciousness and the presence of the viewer who is complicit with the artist in any reading and meaning of the work being encountered. (Kuspit 2009) The imagination is therefore central to the production of post-witnessing historical artifact.

6.2

Memory, Imagination and Symbolization

In March 2018 I visited Hungary and spent time on the banks of the Danube River in Budapest. Here I saw for the first time *The Shoes on the Danube Bank* memorial which was conceived initially by film director Can Togay working with sculptor Gyula Pauer to commemorate the spot where Fascist Hungarian militia²²¹ shot up to 20,000 Jews from the Budapest ghetto. The victims were made to remove their shoes, which had residual economic value and could be sold, before being shot at the water's edge so that their bodies fell 'efficiently' into the river and were carried away. Sixty pairs of old-fashioned shoes cast in iron now line the bank, symbolizing the presence of the murdered absent victims. Here is a first-hand account of this atrocity by Zsuzsanna Ozsváth, a Hungarian survivor of the Holocaust.

'I heard a series of popping sounds. Thinking the Russians had arrived, I slunk to the window. But what I saw was worse than anything I had ever seen before; worse than the most frightening accounts I had ever witnessed. Two Arrow Cross men were standing on the embankment of the river, aiming at, and shooting a group of men, women, and children into the Danube – one after the other, on their coats the Yellow Star. I looked at the Danube. It was

²²¹ The Arrow Cross Party like the Nazi's were fervent anti-Semites. From October 15, 1944, to March 28, 1945, they ruled Hungary in cooperation with the Nazis. This period saw acceleration in the killing. The deportation of Hungary's Jews to Auschwitz happened in just eight weeks, in which 424,000 Jews were deported and murdered.

neither blue nor grey but red. With a throbbing heart, I ran back to the room in the middle of the apartment and sat on the floor, gasping for air' (Rosenfeld 2008: 185-186).

I stood and wrote a list in my journal (FIG 30) to sensorially connect and to attune with the space.²²²

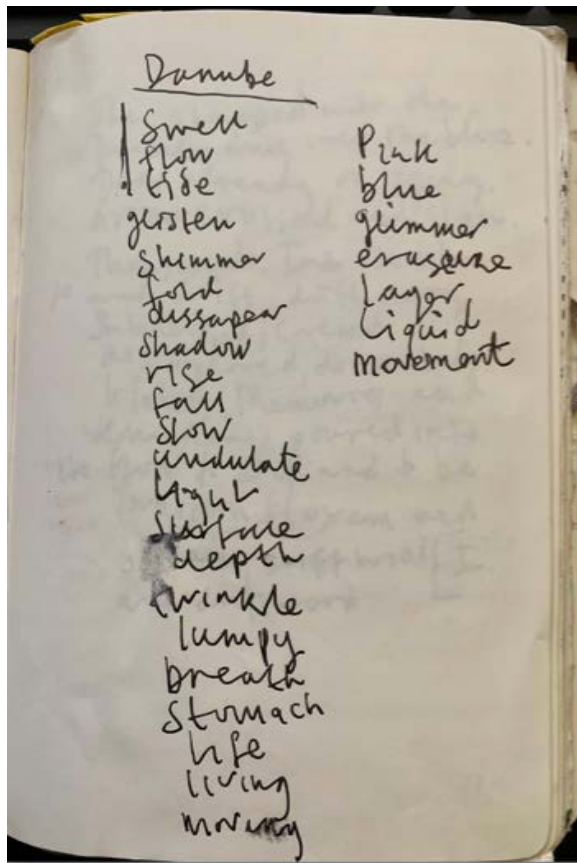


FIG 30. Gary Spicer, *Journal 5* 2018.

²²² As articulated in Volume 1: 4.2 vi, *The Journal*, the list is an important mechanism in my practice to build and multiply initial responses, to link and correspond thinking and that they are often the catalysts for the practical and aesthetic choices I make when beginning work. In the early stages of the *Víz és Vér* (Water and Blood) work, themes like the notion of fluidity, of finding oneself in the story, of deep thought - like staring into an open fire - of reverie, erasure, and impermanence – which is a leitmotif in my practice generally – began to emerge and coalesce.

'Then, I wrote...'

EMPATHY: I am driftwood.

The past is stuck and shimmers, yours, and mine. The mood reaches, stretches, and pulls you towards. I am touched, poured like milk into the sludge of memory forming pools in the folds and the creases. Slowly it seeps, seeping into the mix and softening the edges. It is breaking me down. Soon it collapses into itself, churning and turning like a bloated whale. Now it forms ravines, rivulets chased like thought upon thought it is fused into what I can only imagine, now a shape, a form, a thought to be held, two lines and a point of confluence and union. It is mine and it is yours, now swelled and hovering over the chiasm. It is me...it can only ever be me, then as it is now...passaged through time...shuttle, quickly...across and back...across and back. Its blue dispelled as blond by native Magyar not the mendacious mythic blue posited by Beck²²³ and danced by Strauss. 'Such a powerful river could never be blue'. (Magris 2008).

And into this stream of consciousness they fell, dead or dying 'arrow crossed' and slain, thousands...into the Danube...blonde...now throbbing and reddened and as witnessed by Ozsváth getting redder to drift, drift away. Their bodies submerged now, sunken and disappeared...de-created, lifeless. Their memories and knowledge felled like scattered deer trashed into

²²³ Although immortalised by the Strauss waltz, *The Blue Danube* was first celebrated in the poem by Karl Isidor Beck 1817-79 *An der Schoen blauen Donau* (On the Beautiful Blue Danube) Beck's poetry articulated despair and disillusion with the plight of Jews in Europe. He expressed rage at the social injustice of anti-Jewish policy and the slum conditions in which working class Jews were forced to live. This brought him to the attention of Friedrich Engels who saw Jews living in the same conditions in Red Bank in North Manchester, which helped to inform the book *The Conditions of the Working Class in England* in 1848 which he co-authored with Karl Marx. (Red Bank is featured in Essay 7 The Red Heart)

the flow...Jew... flotsam and jetsam...torso as driftwood...I am driftwood too.

In *What Thought is Like: Sea and Sky*, (2005) Susan Stewart quotes Pascal who in his poem *Pensée* is overwhelmed by the stars. 'The eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me' (Stewart 2005: 99), and the moon in the night sky over Auschwitz observed by Gradowski who wondered how it dared 'to show herself above the hell of Auschwitz' (Gutman & Berenbaum 1998: 525).

I have taken photographs at Auschwitz and Płaszów of the skies above the camps and contemplated how nature would have witnessed and continued despite what was taking place below. In (FIG 31 and 32) the sky is central to the image. In (FIG 31) *The Road to Heaven* a glitch in my use of a medium format camera meant that an image of the train track that ran from the iconic entrance to Birkenau to meet the ramp where the train terminated, overlapped with the path that ran between fences on either side to the crematoria at the far end of the camp. The Germans ironically called the path the *Himmel Strasse*, or the 'The Road to Heaven'²²⁴. The glitch created a celestial juxtaposition of the path and the ethereal appearance of the iconic visual motif of the main entrance to Birkenau in the sky, with the train tracks forming a path ascending towards it. This formed a narrative that I would never have contrived.

²²⁴ Another *Himmel Strasse*, or 'Road to Heaven' existed at the Sobibor extermination camp on the eastern border of Poland.



FIG 31. Gary Spicer, *The Road to Heaven*, 2013.



FIG 32. Gary Spicer, *Witness*, 2013.

Witness 2013 (FIG 32) contemplates the natural phenomena that would have been present as witnesses during the Holocaust and which remain. By gazing into the sky, much as we are obliged to do when encountering *Photograph #283* it becomes possible to contemplate and imagine the past and its resonance in the present. This same phenomenon is experienced when stood amongst the pine forests or the birch trees in Birkenau (Birken is the German for birch) or staring into *Flickering Eddy* of the Danube. It is this that is being contemplated in *Csillamlík (Shimmer)* made in 2021.

Staring into the sky, or into the Danube both with ‘infinite reach [and] recession’ (Stewart 2005: 104) it is clear why encompassing such visual phenomenon is so difficult for artists and writers. Neither are things we can ‘stand in the middle of’ (Stewart 2005: 99) both remaining elusive; we can only ever gaze ‘upon’ them. But both phenomena possess a surface beyond and through which imaginations can

penetrate and their depths contemplated. And when using such natural phenomena as a vehicle to express the voracity of Holocaust memory 'in their vast scale and ever-changing motion' (Stewart 2005: 99) we are perhaps permitted to wonder and imagine.

In *If Only the Walls Could Speak: The Memory of Place* (Essay 4) I described the notion of 'commingling' and cited Anthropologist Tim Ingold's belief that our bodies are equimordial with the world and not separate from it and that in this way when contemplating such natural phenomenon by becoming immersed and 'part' of the experience, moving closer to an understanding, however tacit becomes possible. Here I am immersed in the relationship of the Danube and the sky and begin to explore the notion of being commingled and experiencing the phenomenal nature of both.

There are no coordinates, nothing to hold,

Nothing to grasp but to stare and ponder.

Dragged slow into the aching depths and now wondering.

Over here they sat, and thoughts eyes open and fixed gazed above and below, immersed as they were in both's dark steep.

Cannot this be enough?

The sky now falls through and into the blue – blonde – reeled and rubbed,

Pushed high out into the wind and there it hangs and is still on its thread,

Buffeted on the breeze and taken on the drift, by the dappled and flickering eddy.

*Sky and sea, my eyes now brought to the point,
Scoped the high mast as it meets the flow,
I am filled by the memory of what happened under this sky,
Beneath the glistening sheen that now shimmers and blinks,
As if to beckon, beckon me towards.*

I have not forgotten.

*I am changed – now cleansed,
Whisked quick high into the night.
Up into the quilted blue-black above,
And again, swallowed whole as a diver's arc,
Deep into the murky depths, under, over... and away.*

(FIG 29) shows two stills from a short 1-minute film I made in 2018. I later juxtaposed the film to a piece of music entitled *The Flickering Eddy* taken from Bernard Oglesby's solo piano works album *Torah* (2013). I made the work *Csillamlík* (Shimmer) in 2021. I had known of Bernard's work for some time. As a photographer, composer, and pianist I had always felt Bernard's music was visually rich in imagery. He himself recalls how he came to embrace music solely as a visual language. 'I no longer looked to the traditional structures of score writing and began to create a visual code to which I could assign sound, expression, pitch, and percussion'. His musical output is nearly always based on historical events and death, some of which relate directly to the Holocaust.

6.3

Dislocation - Subluxation²²⁵

Csillamlik would seem to represent a partial dislocation with the past. I am standing at the same spot filming the same river but am dislocated, disrupted by times passing. And I am also dislocated bodily and internally, subluxation having been identified in my cervical spine by CT scan in 2021, around the time of *Csillamlik*.²²⁵ This represents a similar layering and slippage in time and space in which my body is complicit. *Víz és Vér* (Water and Blood) was my creative response to the experience of events in Budapest in December 1944 and December 1945 and the diagnosis of my cervical Subluxation in 2021.



FIG 33. Gary Spicer, *Víz és Vér*, 2020.



FIG 34. Gary Spicer, *Subluxation*, 2021.

²²⁵ Subluxation: meaning incomplete or partial dislocation of a bone or joint. In my case this is in the upper cervical spine where there is a varying degree of slippage of one vertebra relative to the adjacent vertebra because of ligament damage. In my case this is due to the chronic degenerative condition of ankylosing spondylitis.

The *Víz és Vér* / Subluxation images (FIG 33, 34) restate the importance of bodies, bones and joints that have been a leitmotif of the work I have made throughout the project. This is articulated more expansively in *The Emergent Subject: Artful Research*. (Essay 5)

Whilst these images clearly reflect the familiar trope of the dead and dying Holocaust and concentration camp victims, it was never their primary intention. The bodies in my images – the allusive skeletal frames – have always been a reference to my own broken and arthritic body, the arthroplasty²²⁶ I have undergone and the ongoing subluxation of my spine.

Undoubtedly, these have served as embodied, incarnate motifs that collapse time and space in the course of my post Holocaust witnessing. Such motifs also inform the phenomenological reading and symbolic representation of what is experienced and imagined.

6.4

Confluence: Moment-by-Moment

In early 2017 I was in therapy following a traumatic experience. As part of my recovery, I began to excavate my own past and confront some difficult truths. During this therapy I attended a 10-day silent *Vipassana*²²⁷ retreat. The approach was centered on insight meditation, which is the practice of close and intense attention to sensation, the aim/ambition of which is to uncover the true nature of existence and the nature of impermanence. This is the teaching that universally everything is impermanent and has beginning, middle and inevitably an end. The overlap with

²²⁶ Joint replacement surgery.

²²⁷ Vipassana means seeing things as they really are. It is one of India's most ancient techniques of meditation.

phenomenology became increasingly clear as the process and focus evolved. I learned later that Merleau-Ponty independently sought to investigate what has long been central in Mahayana Buddhist practice²²⁸, the becoming of self, truth(s) - Absolute and conventional - and the living relationships of experience.

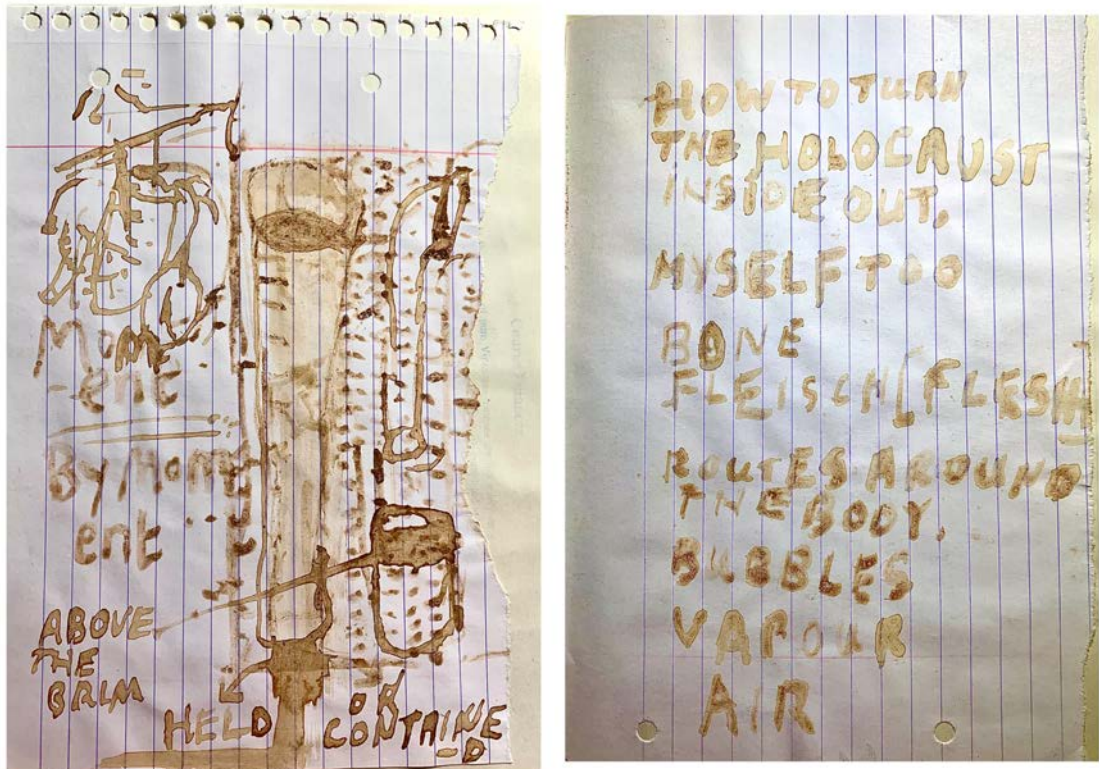


FIG 35 and FIG 36. Gary Spicer, *Moment-by-Moment*, 2017.

(FIG 35 and 36) were made at *Vipassana* in Hereford in 2017. We were asked not to write or read during the 10-day period of meditative retreat. Anything that detracted from our ability to focus entirely on the momentary self, to reflect and be aware of sensation, the inhalation and effects of breath and air needed to be avoided. On the final day, I relented and fashioned out of a dead stem of a hollowed plant, a crude quill. For the drawing solution I mixed some tea with red clay soil found just outside

²²⁸ Mahayana Buddhism is not a single group but a collection of Buddhist traditions: Zen Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism, and Tibetan Buddhism are all forms of Mahayana Buddhism.

my room. Some pages torn from an old writing pad served as the substrate. I needed to begin the process of making sense of the intense experience of the previous 10 days, as when present at sites of Holocaust trauma, something has to come out and be expressed. The lessons learned of the awareness of moment by moment, of breath, the observation of impermanence and of turning the self and the subject inside out all resonated with what I was doing with the subject of the Holocaust. Not drawing it from the outside but drawing it from the inside, seeing beyond its veneer and 'container'. Just as my body is made up of flesh and bone and veins that form routes for blood and air to circulate, the Holocaust is an event defined by flesh²²⁹ literally and philosophically. An ever expanding and never to be completed plethora of intersecting accounts and witnessing that each constitute sinews or threads of understanding where the 'object' relentlessly and interminably stares back and challenges our capacity to comprehend, assimilate and represent.

It was at this point of my research that my phenomenological responses to sites of Holocaust memory in the present and the entanglement of my genealogical Jewish antecedence from the past became confluent with my own history (and present). The ways in which this history has formed and shaped my behaviors and experience is key to the nature of the physical and intellectual propositions and creative responses I make in the field. This is discussed further in *The Red Heart* – (Essay 7)

²²⁹ In *Eye and Mind* Merleau-Ponty began to define his concept of 'flesh', which he articulated as a concrete symbol for being, 'the ever coiling, always immanent but never realized reversibility of being'. (Braiterman 2014) Because our bodies sense, because they see and touch, Merleau-Ponty argued that they are always themselves are seen and touched by objects in the world. This is further articulated in CHIASM (see footnote 42) where the body and the world intersect and cross over into each other. In so doing, we are not just a subject (body) encountering an object; the object now looks back and returns our gaze. This is expressed in the context of drawing in Volume 1 PROCESS 4.2.iii The Drawers Gaze. The *Topographies* series of images begin to articulate the idea of flesh/chiasm (Merleau-Ponty 1968) as meandering thin lines that cross and intersect sinuously, internally inside their own ambit. Rather than articulating the intersecting concept as the Greek letter chi (χ), it is visualised as a more extended or extensive plethora of tendril like threads or veins.

As the work has progressed its very nature has been generative and fluid. The process of making work necessitates working over (overwriting) previous marks that are recorded photographically at each stage of the process. This approach is consistent with the nature of impermanence and the layering and fragility of memory, memory as palimpsest. Impermanence here concerns not only my response to phenomena directed at material or mental objects of perception, but also concern abstract objects, moods, evocation, and responses made to mental and subjective experience.

Flux, ebb, and shift,

Away and towards, tidal

Pulled by moon and gravity.

Into shapes.

Solemn and grim, twisting and turning,

The rivers eyes, stare back 'seeing.'

That human capacity to 'open up empathy to compassion.

With all that lives or dies' (Franck).

The impenetrable enigmatic object

Potent and aesthetically pure

Doubt and wonder, awe, and urgency,

...the majestic rolling Danube.

Csillamlík (2021) represents this fluid, impermanent nature of physical creative responses to the Holocaust. It symbolises depth, surface, transience, and time. New perspectives will always emerge. The post-witness will be compelled to respond. It will never be enough just to look. Art and literature will always be formed by the residual traces of seeing, a seeing *through* and *into* the encounter relying on more than optical vision.

Husserl believed that the 'natural attitude' of what he called 'everyday knowing', (Zahavi 2003: 45) took for granted the way things really were in the external world. This everyday knowing should be put aside or 'bracketed' and replaced by epoché, or 'reduction' (Zahavi 2003: 45). Focus and attention would then be on what is immanent, without any presupposition or preconception. In this way a pure conscious description of the phenomena would be possible. Is this insight? a penetrating gaze? A knowing that sees the nature of things where the artist or the writer truly encounters the subject?

ESSAY 7

The Red Heart²³⁰

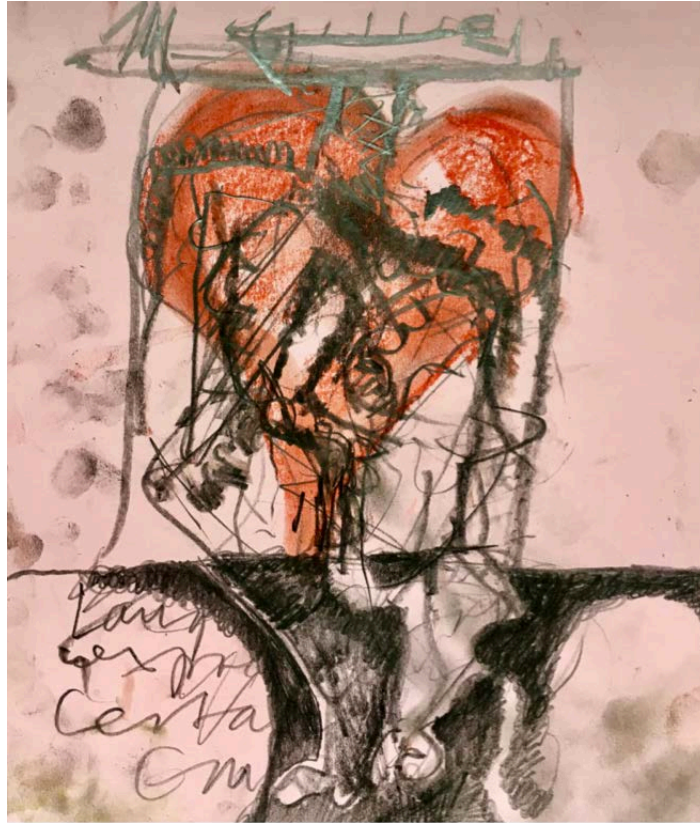


FIG 37. Gary Spicer, *The Red Heart*, 2018.

Memory is caught in spaces, in landscape, in brick, in structure. It is caught in the shadows of those things lost or forgotten. 'The Red Heart' seems to serve as a fryktory, a beacon of what is carried through time, through memory. Those things absorbed. Spicer 2018.

²³⁰ *The Red Heart* was the basis of a presentation made in Manchester as part of the *New Modes of Art Writing 2* symposia in 2017. The rationale being that creative writing or what I call practice-text could be an adjunct to visual practice and augment the critical underpinning that the traditional thesis represents.

7.1

The Uncanny

My genealogical history has intrigued me for many years. I have been particularly absorbed by my Eastern European heritage and this accelerated when I first visited Kraków in 2013. Curiously I felt connected with the city, it was strangely familiar. Soon afterwards I found out that Isaac and Rosa (my paternal great-grandparents had left Kraków for England in the late 19th Century.

Nicholas Royle connects this sensation of being strangely familiar with Freudian notions of the uncanny as ‘nothing other than...the experience of a supplement without origin, a disturbance of any sense of familiar ground’ (Wolfreys 2018: 35). And Freud himself defined the uncanny as an uneasy sensation which becomes manifest in certain situations and specific places. Linked to the idea of ghostly return, a haunting sensation of something unforgettable and recurring, of memories poignant or persistent. It is ‘that class of frightening which leads us back to what is known of old and long familiar’ (Wolfreys 2018: 35).

This is a sensation I have felt many times since whilst present at sites of Holocaust trauma, of being repelled and attracted simultaneously, an apprehension experienced most potently through the interaction of a person and a place. It is a sensation impossible to truly contain and represent which is perhaps a parallax for the unrepresentable nature of the catastrophe itself. Something always escapes, is undecided and defies categorisation, is heimlich/unheimlich.²³¹ Julian Wolfreys describes the felt sensation of the uncanny as a subjective frisson²³² where

²³¹ Heimlich/unheimlich – In English translates to ‘homely’ and ‘unhomely’, Freud’s concept of the uncanny as described by Helen Cixous in *Fiction and its Phantoms*: (1976). A reading of Freud’s *Das Unheimlich* (The Uncanny) as ‘the disquieting strangeness’.

²³² Frisson. Excitement. Etymologically derived from the Old French fricons, meaning, a trembling.

something 'causes us to shudder inside of ourselves, our becoming disturbed' (Wolfreys 2018: 36).

In phenomenological terms and in the context of this project, it is these feelings and this experience that is being represented, drawn, and written...over and over again, without ever truly capturing, something always escapes. In the attempt, the reaching to find the marks, the words that resonate, I can purposefully distort and challenge orthodox methods and approaches, creating arbitrary obstacles to introduce the opportunity for surprise and to reveal the unexpected...

In the darkness in the inky black are the real and the imagined, a phantasmagoria of the haphazard and the illusory, the ill-defined and the elusive, Alain Resnais 'Night and Fog'²³³ a perfect storm. Dragged and stretched in my stomach, etched in lines, and spawned as gesture, loose and open shouldered then tight and muted, collapsed at the wrist. Sometimes the risk is not to splatter but to hold and slow. Slow to think and slow to breathe, and sometimes holding your breath...compose and write whilst beginning to reach for air... but to breathe.

Terry Castle again referencing Freud described these feelings as like 'a sort of phantom, looking up out of the darkness, the source of which we cannot locate' (Castle 1995: 7). But we try.

²³³ *Night and Fog* – **Nacht-und-Nebel-Erlass** - Anyone suspected of endangering German security in the occupied territories was arrested and either shot or 'disappeared' under cover of 'night and fog' (meaning, clandestinely)

7.2

Time and Space are Collapsed.

The past is the past, including my own but I am distinguishing here between a generalized social past, written, and contested as 'history' in the broad sense, and the individual sense of my own genealogy and the tracts of my own life.

In Essay 5 *The Emergent Subject: Artful Research*, I discussed how these pasts could become confluent with narratives drawn from my own history and geography and how my practice involves 'mapping' one onto the other. It is here where time and space are collapsed, and the significant points of coincidence are encountered.

I am interested in how memory migrates from the physical site and through writing and drawing is moved closer or further away. It is this shimmering, oscillating effect that makes the subject so elusive, so intangible and capturing it so difficult, (linking to thoughts of the absence of presence and its corollary, the presence of absence). And perhaps such memory can never be truly captured and imprisoned. It needs only ever to be evoked *or* invoked?

Drawing becomes a conduit for our knowing, our guessing, but through time we forget, events recede and get pushed further back, memory becomes unreliable and frayed. This is the source of anxiety that I refer to when I am shaping responses to these spaces with my writing and drawing, which while being distinct from the phenomena observed and experienced are complicit in my responsive feelings to it. I am assessing the distance between the knowing and not knowing in the real and imagined spaces I encounter in Poland and sites of early Jewish settlement in North Manchester where my paternal family settled in 1900. Both pasts are collapsed and conflate.

Looking at Rosa...

My God I can see my eyes in hers. And I can feel the air drop from my lungs and stopped in the realisation. Remembering Barthes in Camera Lucida and the photograph of his mother and his meditation on her dying. The elusive and the often-fragmentary nature of memory and of remembering and only when looking at an image of her from before he was born did he find her alive. Like Rosa, the butterfly brooch, the decorative hem on the V neckline of her dark dress emphasising her classic delicate necklace, all chosen for the photograph. The hair parted in the middle, brushed, and held, the symmetry of the hooped earrings that hang lobed and gently sway over her small and narrow shoulders emphasising the perfect balance and proportions of her face. Like me she is small. Like me she has eyes as black as coal, eyes that fix and pierce, eyes that reveal. How could she have known that over a hundred years later I would be poring over every detail, every crease and shadow, imagining the before and the after and what I would say...what I would say if she turned, and I was there...I can only imagine...

Time and space are collapsed.



FIG 38. Unknown, Rosa Speiser.

In *The Memory of the Image* (2013), Max Silverman writes how in the first chapter of *The Arcades Project* (1982), Walter Benjamin reconfigures history by detaching it from a familiar linear and scientific conception and reframes it by inserting it into a nonlinear, spatial and poetic concept of what he called the 'constellation' or the 'dialectical' image where 'the chronological distinctions between past, present and future are transformed' (Silverman 2013: 124) and overlap. This transformative notion of de-temporalizing memory reconfigures history into a sort of montage and allows for a layering of personal and collective histories to take place.

Intersecting narratives of past present, the real and the imagined forms the basis of *Aesthetic Emotion: Water and Blood* (Víz és Vér) (Essay 6.) The practice-text documents historical events and personal trauma and uses my great grandparents and their flight of emancipation from Kraków at the end of the 19th Century as the

vehicle through which these events are embodied. In this way, the notion of the journey itself becomes an important metaphor for my own search for identity and psychological recovery. It also helps me to understand why I return to these sites of Holocaust memory and seek to connect with their disparate but connected histories.

H.G. Adler a survivor of the Theresienstadt and Auschwitz concentration camps writes in *The Journey* (2011) of a fictional world that is beset by a collective mental aberration from which it does not awaken until it is too late, the Holocaust is discussed obliquely via allusion and never referred to literally. The 'journey' metaphor articulates the relentless inevitability of moving through life, experiencing happiness and sadness, of conflicting beliefs and addictions and ultimately the unfathomable nature of being.

Adler describes this journey as being on time's stage²³⁴ where you live in the present and gather experiences, good and bad. Those who made the journey to the camps, to the certainty of their death, did not believe that they were still on the stage but they were wrong 'for they took you away and set you back onstage amid the fleeting journey' (Adler 2011: 4) Adler describes the journey as flight, like Isaac and Rosa's flight of emancipation in 1887 from Kraków. He contended that it is memory itself that sets us on the journey and drags us along 'through constant wandering'²³⁵ (Adler 2011: 4).

²³⁴ On 'times stage' everything remains fixed in the present. We always remain part of it, whatever road we take or town we enter. Everything we do is part of our temporal journey, which to Adler is times stage.

²³⁵ First appearing in 17th-century Amsterdam, the **Wandering Jew in Christian legend** is doomed to wander until the end of time because he denied and slighted Christ on the way to the crucifixion. As a result, in 70 AD the Jewish state effectively ceased to exist when the Romans began to drive Jews from the land, they had lived in for over a thousand years.

A flight of Emancipation

Isaac and Rosa Speiser's²³⁶ flight from Kraków, their arrival, and subsequent struggle through poverty to establish a foothold in a new land is imagined here. The writing is experimental in its approach and forms part of the search for identity that this investigation in part represents. It is necessarily fragmentary – itinerant in nature²³⁷ - and deliberately collapses time, space (distance) by intertwining personal and broader cultural memory and histories.

It was the completion of the Kraków and Lower Silesian Railway, which was completed in 1847 that made it possible for my great-grand parents Isaac and Rosa to consider leaving the city, which was then controlled by Austria²³⁸. It is ironic that the railway, whilst providing my great grandparents with the possibility of 'a flight to emancipation', was also central to the mechanising of the murder of European Jews in 1942. It is clear that many of my own extended family would not have made the passage undertaken by my great-grandparents and would have taken the alternative journey and perished.

²³⁶ The family name went through several incarnations before finally resolving as Spicer. It was originally Speiser in Kraków in the 19th Century. When my great-grandparents came to England it became Spizer, then Spiser and finally Spicer.

²³⁷ The writings of W.G. Sebald and Michel Butor, both with connections to Manchester use the train station as a symbol of transit and frictionless, liminal space and as a terminus for and intersection of, the past and the present.

²³⁸ Historically, Poland's existence has been heavily susceptible to the aggression of major Eurasian powers. Therefore, its history has been erratic and dominated by subjugation and the existential issue of how to preserve its national identity and independence. It has often been disappeared from the map and sought survival only through sustaining its language, memory, and traditions before ultimately re-emerging. This history of enslavement clearly resonates with the Jewish experience. During the latter half of the 19th century, Kraków was under Austrian control, until it regained its former stature. In 1918 it was returned to Poland.

The 'Red Heart' is my own 'Apocalypse in Lilac, Capriccio' 1945 and it appeared without thought or conscious reference to it.



FIG 39. Marc Chagall, *Apocalypse in Lilac, Capriccio* (1945).

In this image, Chagall draws on one of his familiar motifs, the image of the crucified Christ, as a metaphor for the persecution of the Jews. A quite brutal, visceral image, unusually direct and unambiguous for Chagall, it is charged with the ambition to depict pain and sorrow.

Chagall's lilac loaded watery brush glances the edge of those falling, forever falling whilst clasped and clung together, he around her and her around him like in the dark chasm of 'the Red Heart' it is unclear if they were ever saved or if they were drowned. She, arms outstretched reaches up towards a broken (stopped) clock falling from the sky. Time is ended.

Apocalypse...catastrophe. Portrayed as a hermaphrodite, Chagall's Christ, phylacteries²³⁹ fastened to His arm and head and draped by a Tallit bearing witness to the Torah and the Mitzvah, and so identified him/her as an observant Jew. And on the floor at the feet of Satan, here manifest as a swastika'd Nazi and beneath his serpent tail lie more scattered scenes of Jewish suffering, burning synagogues, hangings, and naked skeletal death. The ladder with rungs and rails that echo the tracks that ushered those wretched into Birkenau is moved left and away from the Crossed Christ who appears to be calling, "I beseech you...think it possible that you may be mistaken."²⁴⁰ (Bronowski (1973: 374)

The station, which was sited on the north side of the River Irk between the workhouse to the north and the Walkers Croft cemetery to the South began its life as a single-story building incorporating a wooden footbridge over the river. In 1887 it had now grown into quite an imposing steel structure in which the 'Red Heart' now incongruously sat, stilled, and pulsing its red billowing light flooding over the faces of those which stood and stared. Rosa and Isaac, who were now sat on the long edges of their suitcases, were entranced.

Perhaps the Red Heart was from the future, from space, an anachronism. Perhaps the Red Heart was a gate to ...another Portal?

²³⁹ A small leather box containing Hebrew texts on vellum often worn by Jewish men at morning prayer as a reminder to observe the laws of the Torah.

²⁴⁰ Jacob Bronowski bending over a pond at Auschwitz, where several of his family members were killed delivered an unscripted piece to camera for his documentary series *The Ascent of Man* in which he confronts concerns about the use of science and technology for the destruction of human life on a massive scale, the words were said by Oliver Cromwell. (Appendix III)

Memory is caught in spaces, in landscape, in brick, in structure. It is caught in the shadows of those things lost or forgotten. The Red Heart, a fryktery, a beacon of what is carried through time, through memory. Those things absorbed. A silence, in which I am caught, hooked, and snagged in the threads of my own history, strewn as that is by the innumerable traces of others. This body, my body is the carrier of that history. This mind stores innumerable traces and moment by moment, breath by breath this Heart, this Red Heart memorializes them, those gone before and those not yet called to the stage. So, if the body is 'the vehicle of being in the world' a pivot around which the world, our world turns, then the objects in it must have different faces, meaning my reading of the world is always temporal, never static. So, the Red Heart exists from all sides, it exists inside and outside. It is strewn across time...it shimmers. It is not quite real...it is surreal, a conduit, a gateway, a border crossing. Its flashing red, translucent and gossamer, veined, womb'd and unborn. It is pulsating and of the living not of the dying.

I am curious.

Neither Isaac nor Rosa Speiser had ever seen the sea, until now. Kraków was miles from any coastline. Poland bordered the Adriatic to the south where the Dalmatia coast lay squeezed between the sea and Bosnia and Herzegovina, but this was many miles away. Only now on this epic 'flight' had they envisioned what must have appeared a strange and curious phenomenon and it wouldn't be the last.

They had journeyed across Europe by train to Hamburg-St. Pauli port. There they had boarded the SS Cameo travelling in the third-class 'tween decks' area of the ship with other mostly Jewish Eastern European migrants. They

had left Kraków, Malopolskie, then part of the Austrian-Hungarian empire to escape the uncertainty and persecution that followed the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, which Russia had falsely blamed on the Jews. When riots and pogroms ensued, Isaac and Rosa were among the two million who moved west. It was a 'flight to emancipation' and it was 1887. Isaac was 21 and Rosa was 20 and when they finally arrived at Victoria railway station sited at the northern edge of the city of Manchester. It was winter.

The 'Red Heart' towered above the heads of Isaac and Rosa, its light draping over their bodies creased and tired from their long journey in equal measure. As I approached it, I noticed how its soft round edges were bound by the hard steel of the station structure and that it connected with the ground at its narrowest point. I noticed also that it appeared to be leaning slightly to one side. Isaac's shoulders were cut across the heart and his spine dotted its length until it met the station floor. Below was the child whose outstretched arm seemed to be lost in the black. So, I decided to skirt around the heart to see for myself. I wanted to walk into its light, the light that was spilling into the darkness and illuminating the faces of the few that were still gathered and staring curiously on the platform. It was like a stage, Adler's timeless stage...²⁴¹ The Heart appeared to have fallen from the sky and on impact had pierced the floor and had remained upright. Behind it there was an empty space, a void. The watching figures were shaped, limned, and could be construed without being defined. They remained fragments with none of the parts making up a full person. Only the pit below the stage offered a space other than that which the Heart filled above the surface. Under the Heart, a chasm, dark, dank, and unknown, only the clasped hand of Isaac gripping the child who was appearing to fall in silence.

But perhaps was being thrown below into the black? It wasn't clear from what I saw.

In therapy, I needed to excavate my own past as part of the process. In my recovery journal I would record and trace the progress of my own healing. Here I would connect and thread my thoughts, my ideas, strategically plotting my journey, week by week. I would scribble here the words and thoughts that resonated and chimed, thoughts that often would enter the room unexpectedly and without warning then written down, waiting to be interpreted.²⁴² My therapist asked if they could read aloud from my journal and whether I could respond visually with an array of art materials to the words. I knew some were angry, bitter, colourful... some sad, some confused, some hopeful. I made four drawings, and one was the *Red Heart*. I used chalk pastels and pencil, I responded instinctively, not laboured. I drew quickly.

Later I was asked to imagine walking into the image. What did it mean, why had it emerged?

So, as I skirted around the Heart to see for myself. It was important to experience the light, not to intellectualize or to assume what it would be like but to feel it, to feel its barbed tines against my skin and to feel the ache for myself. Those falling, forever like in Chagall's Capriccio whilst clasped and clung together, he around her and like in the dark chasm of the Red Heart it is unclear if they were ever saved or if they were drowned.

Polish artist Miroslav Balka's *Winterreise* (2003), a series of videos including a film entitled *Bambi* filmed at Auschwitz-Birkenau in the snow of a hard winter. In *Bambi*, roe deer are seen grazing, their presence

²⁴² It wasn't long before this process overlapped with my artistic practice and especially with my PhD research project.

clearly at odds with the aura and significance of the site. As with other sites of extermination, nature has reclaimed them, obscuring, and further distancing us from their 'grievous histories'. The film's title is ironic; Disney's *Bambi* was released in 1942, which coincided with the Wannsee conference in Berlin where the details of the final solution to the 'Jewish problem' in Europe were agreed.

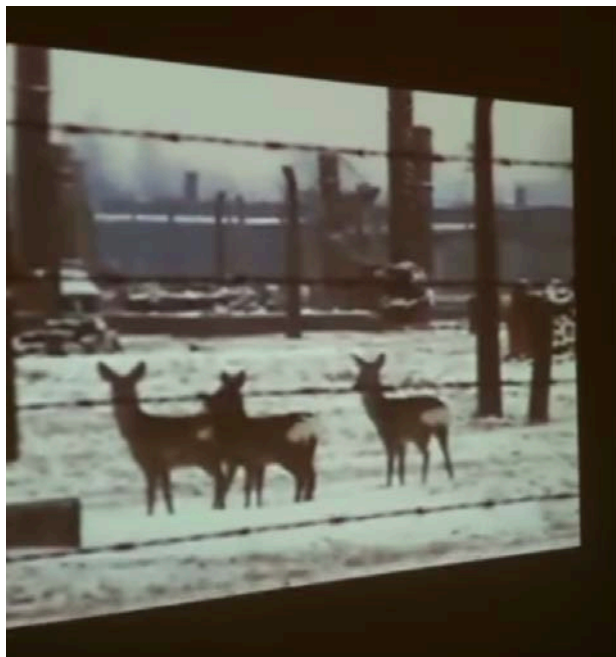


FIG 40. Miroslaw Balka, *Bambi Winterreise* series, 2003.

Stags' horns like trees formed rigid frames that moved in and through the gap in the fence adjacent to ruins of Crematorium 5 at the far end of the Birkenau camp, near to where the memorial stands today. Stilled, they watch and stare, their breath forming flutes of condensation that hang in the early morning air. Frivolously cropping the ground in groups, cast in that space, blind to that darkened history and in full colour. And in 1942 in open meadows, in clearings in the woods, the bleakest winter yields to the inevitability of spring, where Bambi's mother, is hunted, stalked, and felled. A metaphor for the Jewish Holocaust, as the seasons turned in time on their

axis, the young, the old, the vulnerable were being snatched in spite of nature and felled in their turn.

Now they are present in the vaporous breath of the roe deer... and just as soon...they are gone.

As with many of my generation, as a child Bambi was my introduction to the notion of death and loss, and that as well as wonder and beauty, there was also danger in the world. Later in my early teens I realised that there existed existential threats to our very being, like nuclear catastrophe and the Holocaust and that they were real. Pictures of naked, nameless bodies piled high being pushed slowly into open graves, collapsing like dolls, were images that were impossible, once seen, to erase. Balka's Bambi has helped to join the dots.

The drawing of *The Red Heart* (FIG 37) revealed a complex series of narratives that cemented and linked my own genealogical past and Polish/Jewish antecedence with the Holocaust, Diaspora, and emancipation - notions of the wandering Jew - and most significantly with the body and trauma.

Jung reflects on his childhood and drawing in *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* (1995). He recounts when he was exempted from drawing classes despite demonstrating a facility for it because drawing was only meaningful to him if it reflected or connected with the way he was feeling or what stirred his imagination. He remembered drawing trees with deep tangled roots, even then pre-empting a 'deeper connection to the unconscious' (Elwood 2020: ix) that would be central to his thinking later.

So, as well as being my own *Apocalypse in Lilac, Capriccio* (1945) *The Red Heart* was a psychological portrait of my own entangled past and like in Jung's entangled tree

root drawings, a 'deep rooted connectedness with the "self" within.' (Elwood 2020: ix).

PART 7

ADDITIONAL SELECTED VISUAL PRACTICE

Commentary on Practice

Examples of images I have made during my practice-led study are reproduced throughout this thesis so that the evolution of the visual aspects of the project, and their resultant learning are made explicit. Appendix 1, provides an additional selection from the visual practice to demonstrate further the range of practical work undertaken, along with a brief supporting script as a means of navigation for the reader/viewer. The work is divided into three sections, work made between 2016 - 17, between 2018 – 19, and between 2020 - 2023. Presenting the visual work in this way is intended to demonstrate the trajectory of the practice, and why it developed in the way that it did, with reference to the more academic research and theoretical framework supporting it. Each section will begin with a selection of pages from my journals in which my thinking, musing and points of reference are evident. Drawings, prints, and reprographic images will then situate the work in the context of a production timeline.

2016 - 17

The early part of the project focused on the notion of distance, both physical, metaphorical, and temporal. Ava Hoffman's quote 'distance matters' (Hoffman 2005:177) was particularly resonant in showing how the navigation of distance manifested itself in the representation of the Holocaust sites I encountered and became a pre-occupation (Image 1). At this point, I was keen for my experiencing in the field to be a representation and a depiction of the past(s) I sensed, whilst at the same time, experiencing its residue, in the present. Early readings of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012) were beginning to impact on my thinking, particularly as it related to the body, hapticity and flesh. I was comfortable with the idea of 'not knowing' (Image 2) in fact, that no one could ever really know this past

or approach understanding the experience of those who did. This was fundamental to my realisation that it was my experience of residual traces of the past that I was representing. Thus, I was at a distance from the past that these traces are a residue of. It was the notion of reaching and guessing from a position of distance, that perhaps moved me closer to an understanding, and towards a means of answering my primary research question - originally posited by Victoria Walden in her research on embodiment - of 'How do I respond today to these sites of Holocaust memory'? (Grace-Walden 2014).

Images 3 and 4, were made in the field at Płaszów, as an early scoping of the site in 2016. I was still grappling with the feeling of a personal umbilical connection to Kraków and to the past I was 'sensing' and as to where this feeling was coming from. The crucifix was a reference to the monument that sits on top of Hujowa Górka (FIG 5) that I discussed in the introduction. In Polish a Górka is a small hill, Hujowa Górka is the site where in April 1944, the Germans forced prisoners from the camp to exhume and incinerate the bodies of around ten thousand murdered Jews, in their attempt to hide the evidence of their crimes. The motifs of the gap, lacuna, and of intertwining and entanglement, were established early in the research as central ideas to develop in the practice. How we physically (and actually) exist and what is subjectively and individually experienced - phenomenological ideas discussed by Merleau-Ponty – became increasingly important to me. It was also at this point that the idea of 'happening' as an event of creation - drawing or writing - began to define the nature of my responses. This was reinforced later by readings of Heidegger and the adoption of the concept of 'Dasein', which was a version of 'being' that only humans possess, and the notion of an inter-play of concealment and appearance.

Drawn at the Izaak Synagogue in Kraków, Image 9 was a visceral response to being inside and 'with' a space no longer used for prayer. It was the first time that lines in the drawings began to entangle and intertwine. This developed later, in the *Topographies* series 2018, made in the studio two years later and which recurred in subsequent work. Images 11-16 were etchings made in 2017 from drawings and

writing made in the field. Etching was a process I embraced early in the research because I felt it had the visual gravitas to take on the weight and meaning of the narratives being encountered.

Images 17 and 18, are small postcard size paintings made at the site of Hujowa Górka. I remember them scattering and blowing across the Górka on the warm summer breeze, on a beautiful summer day at Płaszów. This unanticipated, sobering juxtaposition reinforced to me, how nature had reclaimed the site and had suppressed and overwritten the traces of what had happened there. I believed then, as I believe now, that those that perpetrated these crimes have not defeated nature - and in this I include human nature - and its capacity to reclaim and reform itself, after tragedy and shock.

Images 28 and 29 were etchings exploring Merleau-Ponty's notion of the House. It was an example he used in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012) to explain how vision derives from a place that need not to be locked within its perspective. It appears from a distance, from inside and from above.

'The house, as Leibniz said, is the geometrical plan [le géométral] that includes these perspectives and all possible perspectives; that is, the non-perspectival term from which all perspectives can be derived; the house itself is the house seen from nowhere'. (Merleau-Ponty, 2012: 6)

This idea, of an object existing from multiple perspectives, from near or far and from inside and outside, directed my practice throughout 2017. I made several prints and drawings exploring this concept of seeing the sites from nowhere, yet from all possible perspectives at the same time.

Images 31 and 41 *Duch* and *Płaszów Duch* (Ghost) are examples of glitch and chance. I usually include elements of chance and glitch to disrupt other creative habits and rituals in my practice and have encouraged these disruptive components even more

in this project to adopt a more fully phenomenological working attitude and approach. It was important to be neutral, in terms of the apparatus that makes and gestures the marks, hands, wrists, elbows, shoulders etc., and not to impose overly familiar mechanisms and approaches. In these images, one a photograph and the other an etching plate, adjacent or overlaid substrates had stuck to and 'lifted' the image surface.

2018-19

The second and most intense period of work begins with journal references to Merleau-Ponty's desire to identify the specific role of the body as a mediator between the world and the self (Image 41). The complicity of the body as the mediator of materials and subject, and its significance in the carrying of the message and meanings being excavated was central to my thinking. The first mention of New materialisms (Image 42) sees the work begin to confront ideas of matter, and its presence - as ourselves - and all structures that de-centre the self and its capacity to encompass the dynamics of the world. Notions of the intangible, the philosophical, subjectivity and consciousness, as the place where my practice resides, were challenged by the post-humanist revision that sought to make room for the epistemic importance of other material agencies.

The practice would return to epistemic revisions later with Graham Harman's *Object-Oriented Ontology* – OOO – (2018). My focus now, however, remained on the agency of the individual in meaning making, and how the idea of 'seeing and doing for ourselves' (Image 44) was central to our experiencing of the world. In this way we are moved away from ordinary interpretations of the world that inhibit critical thought, and closer to phenomenological concerns of how consciousness presents the structures and objects of the world as part of our experiencing of it. This phase of practice included my own personal therapy and how the associated excavations of self, so central to the process, impacted so positively on the research.

The realisation that I was the journey (Image 49), always in flux, and that my body - my broken body - and my relationship to it, served an important purpose, to flag up physical and emotional reactions, including fear and denial. The body in absorbing such reactions teaches us a lesson, by hurting and drawing our attention to it. The concept of the Red Heart an idea that consolidated and defined my therapy, was first revealed here (Image 51) as a part of the process of interrogating my past, of excavation and unearthing.

The idea of 'seeing and doing for ourselves' and of the complicity of the artist in meaning making, was manifest in *Mitzvot 1* and *Mitzvot 2*, meaning 'commandment' (Images 53 and 54). A series of monoprints on acetate that were laid over ink drawings, represented the 'moment' of experience. The work sought to develop the notion of Merleau-Ponty's *le géométral*, and my experience of observing Holocaust sites from everywhere and from nowhere simultaneously. Image 53 appeared to allude to Casper-David Friedrich and his *Wanderer over a Sea of Mist* (1818) although, I was not conscious of this when I made the image²⁴³. In this scenario, seeing myself observing the site. The idea of self, began to emerge as an important element in the representation, both the body and its physical form and structure and the residue of my own memories, histories, and experience. The notion of the broken body, with its allusion and metaphor, and capacity for empathy, in terms of being embodied in the work and its meaning, gained traction in these images as I communicated and expressed my ideas and feelings. Traces of bones, spines, ribs, vertebrae, and hips can be deciphered. The lines began to form separate veils of meaning, that were layered amongst visceral gestures emanating from the sites themselves, and my experiencing of them. See images 55 to 65, particularly 62, *Steel Hips* 2018, in which this is made explicit in the title.

²⁴³ Friedrich's picture depicts a Rückenfigur (figure from behind) - a trope that makes observation and perception overt and self-conscious. We as spectators of the picture look with the Rückenfigur and 'he' also stands in for us. *Mitzvot 1* (2018) thematises my position as someone looking/experiencing from a distance.

Images 66 to 69 made secretly at the 'Vipassana' retreat, introduce ideas of impermanence and the observation of self, its teachings positing that through direct experience, thoughts, feelings, judgements, and sensations become clear. This was consistent with phenomenological theory and could be assimilated directly into the research. Indeed, the research revealed striking similarities between Merleau-Ponty's ontology and Buddhist teaching. Merleau-Ponty's concept of hyper-reflection, so central to the way in which I have made work in response to Holocaust sites, and the Buddhist notion of mindfulness meditation practices, as a means of insight and revelation. The drawings began to interrogate this confluence.

Images 70 - 76 Introduced material and symbolic qualities of light into the work via use of the flatbed scanner and lightbox, as a further reinforcement of impermanence, it being the moment of making the work, it's happening and unconcealing that was being elevated. Image 76 *Brak* meaning 'absence', uses projected light through a devore etched fabric to create a haptic veiling effect illuminating the in-betweeness, the lacuna previously identified as a space I wanted to interrogate in my practice. In the *Ner tamid* series, which translates as 'eternal light' in Hebrew, the transcendent, the tangible and the unknown, vie to bring forth and bring to light, what has been felt through lived experience.

Images 79 -82 are examples of images using the laser cutter. These experiments made in 2019 when I was exploring notions of topography and mapping. I was also fascinated by the translation of the drawn, felt line into a vector. I had seen the images taken of Auschwitz-Birkenau from the air in 1944. It seemed like this might be a vehicle to further explore and plot Merleau-Ponty's notion of vision that derived from a place not locked within its own singular perspective and could appear from a distance, from inside and from above simultaneously. I was also attempting to 'fold' in my own topography as a structural schema of gestured marks and imagination. I realised that whilst this approach offered interesting possibilities, it entailed too many distracting obstacles and involved an over-processing of the gestured line,

which I felt could adversely affect the immediacy of the drawing, which was central, particularly in the context of epoché and my phenomenological approach.

Images 83 - 92 were all part of the *Vis es Ver - Water and Blood* - series of images that were made in response to the murder of thousands of Jews shot into the Danube in Budapest in 1944. The images were made in the studio, as a response to video footage I had made there. One of these was edited, into a short film, put to music, and entitled *Csillamlík* (Shimmer) in 2021. I used cold running water to repeatedly drench heavy watercolour paper substrates that had been inked, abraded and re-inked. I then layered with acetate and monoprinted lines and several permutations digitally photographed, none were permanent. The images were intended as metaphors for the failure of history to erase the images or memories of the Holocaust, whilst acknowledging their fragility and vulnerability, particularly as they recede and become increasingly distant. Once again, 'Distance matters' (Hoffman 2005: 177).

2020 - 2023.

The final period of practice, one that was less productive, it being an intensive writing up period and time for collating the accumulated body of work. That said, some important work was made and which in some ways, came to define the output. In journal 13 in 2020, I wrote:

'Perhaps my job is to narrate process and to provide a mediated truth - not never [sic] a witnessed or observed truth, as this is impossible, even for those who did witness. For them, the images are scorched on their retina's and have [already] recorded a visual impression. But the traces of that visual imprint seem never to be emotionally experienced. [But] Through those that witnessed, we often hear traumatic re-enactments of [their] visual imprints'.

I was writing about how traumatic memories from the past can be replayed in the present. And how the initial imprint was never, and can never, be experienced and

reconciled by those who witnessed it. This was an early idea posited by Agamben in *Remnants of Auschwitz* (1999). I returned to it at the end of the research in the context of *Object-Oriented Ontology – OOO* (2018) and the way in which through art, it becomes possible to wake up objects - which can be memories - and through imagination, reify and re-enact something of the experience. Survivor Saul Friedlander articulated this, as discussed in my introduction, as a means of generating fresh insight about the Holocaust through ‘allusive, distanced realism’ (Friedlander, 1992: 17).

This period occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic during which it was impossible to travel outside of the UK to sites in Europe, so I was drawing and writing at sites in North Manchester, those which connected to my own familial history, including the graves of my Great-Grand parents, who emigrated from Kraków in 1887. Journal pages and images 95 - 107 were either drawn in the field or made in the studio, working with the idea of roots, and contemplating notions of home, belonging and diaspora. I was thinking also of assimilation (Images 104-106) and particularly in image 104 on finding an entangled root system at Rosa’s my Great-Grandmothers grave, of the process of inosculation, where roots or branches from separate trees that have lived in prolonged intimate contact, can abrade each other, exposing their inner tissues and eventually fuse together as one. Making this work, I had been contemplating how my practice would evolve on the completion of my doctoral research, and how I wanted to write about Isaac and Rosa - my Great-Grand parents - and their flight to emancipation from the pogroms in the Austrian empire. Inosculation, as a metaphor for assimilation, proximity, and taking root, both in a wider cultural context and as a Speiser familial narrative, seemed apposite. The roots of this narrative already exist in the story and origins of the *Red Heart* (Volume 2: Essay 7) and will represent continuity, which began with my MA dissertation in 2013.

Finally, image 108 entitled *A Day of Clouds and Thick Darkness*, taken from Zephaniah 1:15, an image drawn quickly on thin tissue paper. The marks forming shapes that

allude - unconsciously - to wings and Klee's *Angelus Novus*²⁴⁴ (1920), and to shadows and ominous foreboding. The Old Testament passage, in its entirety reads:

'That day is a day of wrath, a day of troubles and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness'.

This seemed like a fitting place to stop. The Holocaust was such a day in history, if a day can last 12 years from 1933, when the Dachau concentration camp opened, until the camps were finally liberated in 1945. Klee's *Angel*, (1940), as described by Walter Benjamin in *On the Concept of History*, was 'looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating' and in this contemplation, as there has been in mine, exists 'a melancholy view of historical process as an unceasing cycle of despair' (Penkower 2021: ii). The drawings and writings I have made here, represent the residue of this despair as it was manifest to me, at the - now benign - sites of some of the worst atrocities that I encountered in the field.

²⁴⁴ Walter Benjamin called the image the *Angel of History* as for him it represented, philosophically, a cyclical view of history, positing that history repeats itself, and the essential forces of nature and human nature are changeless, and that past patterns of events, are prone to recur.

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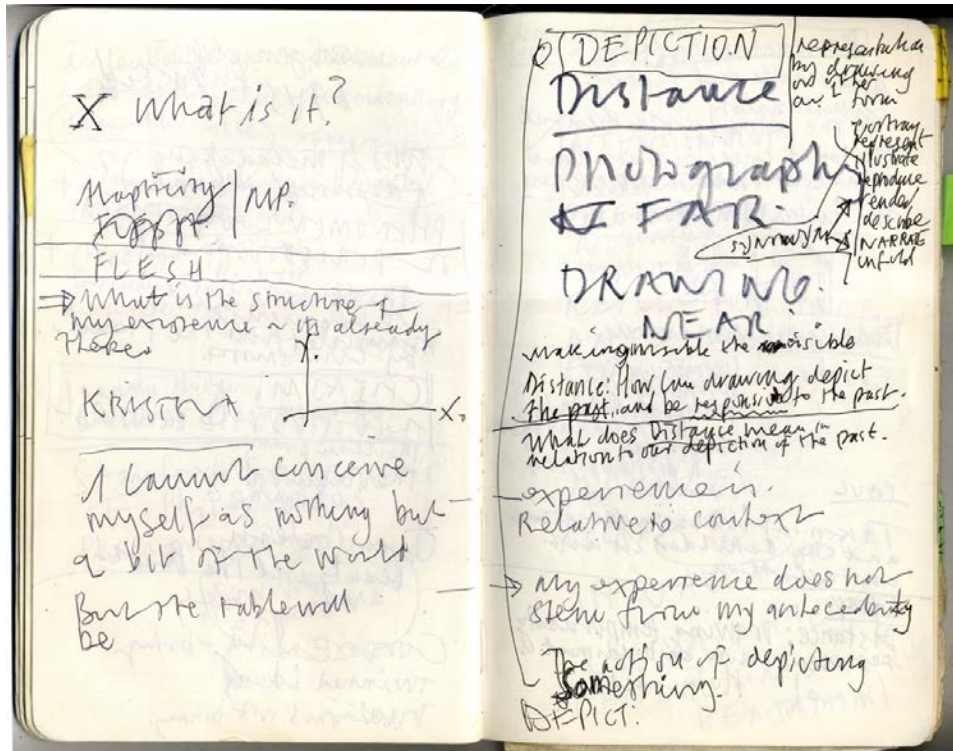
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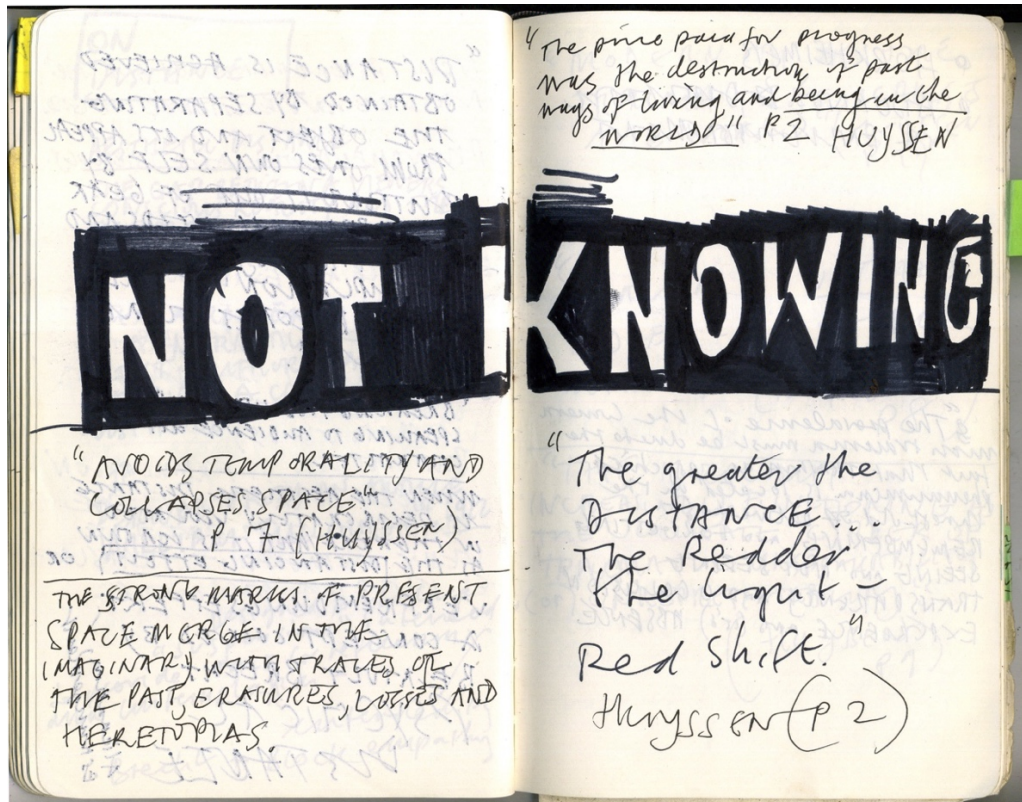
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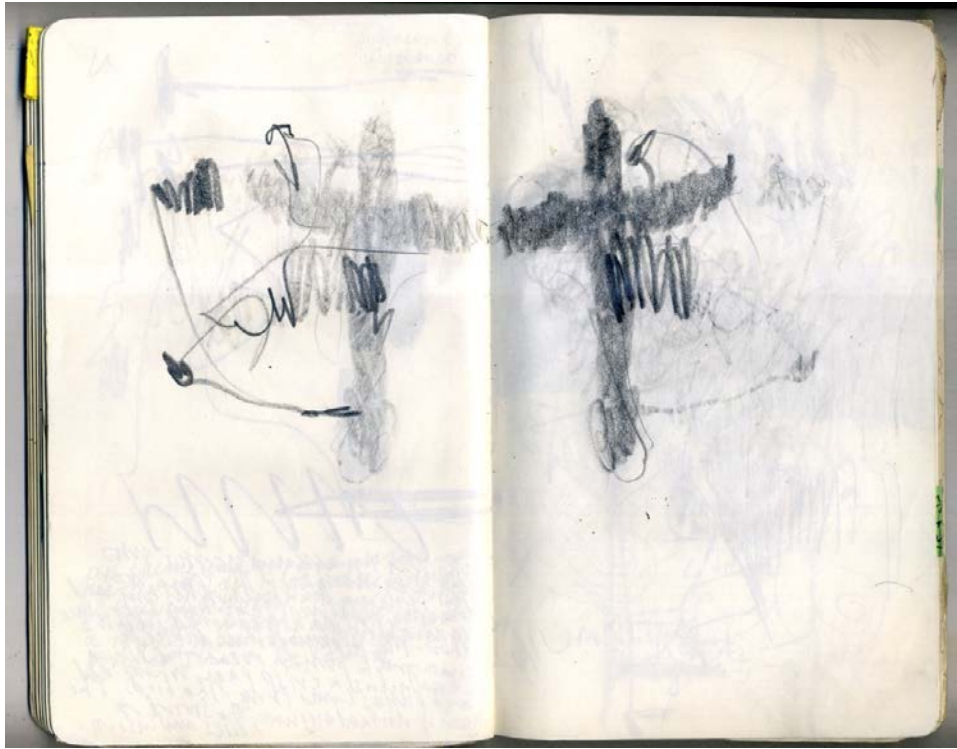
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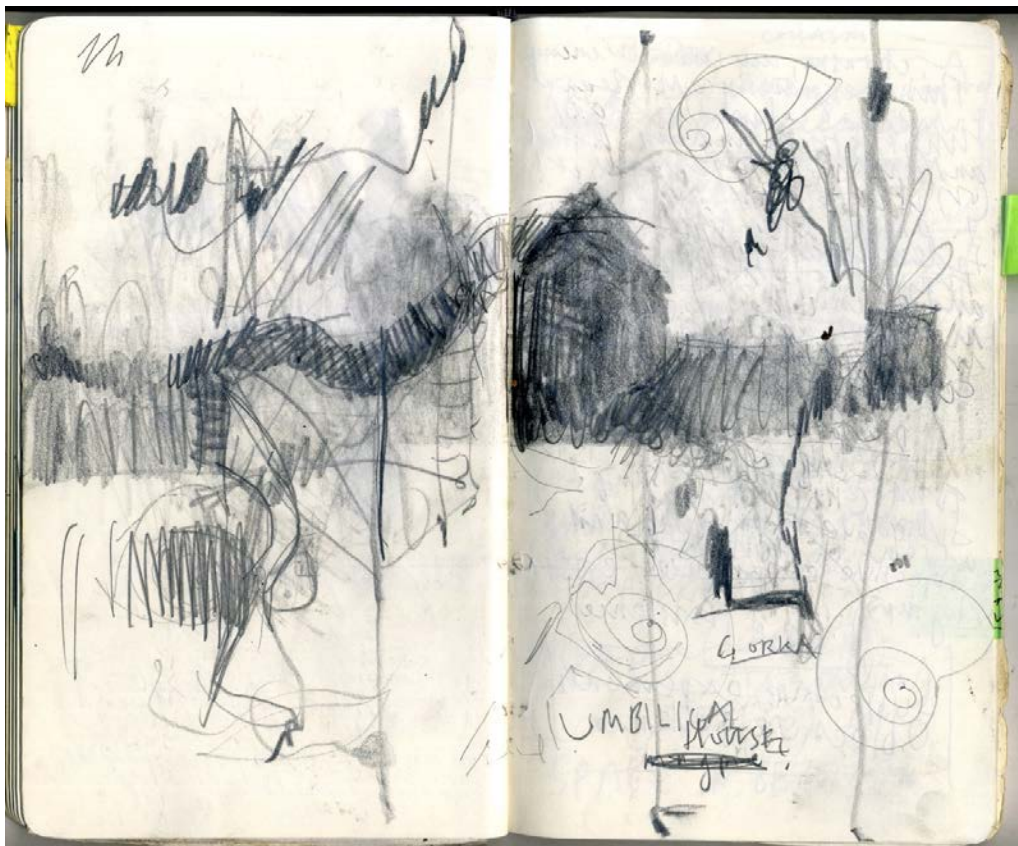
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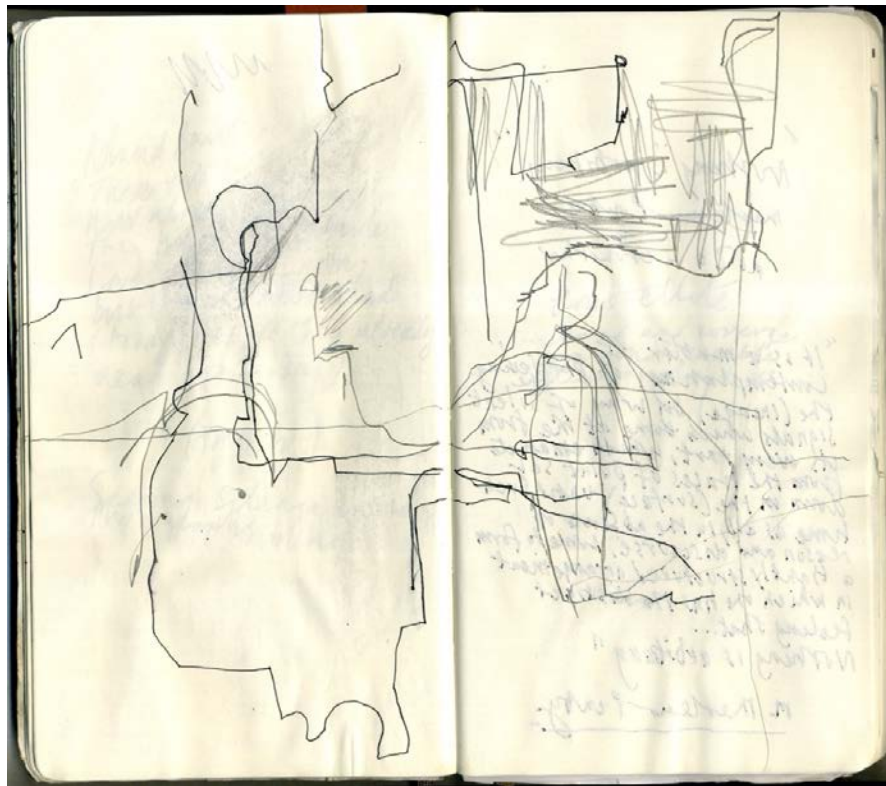
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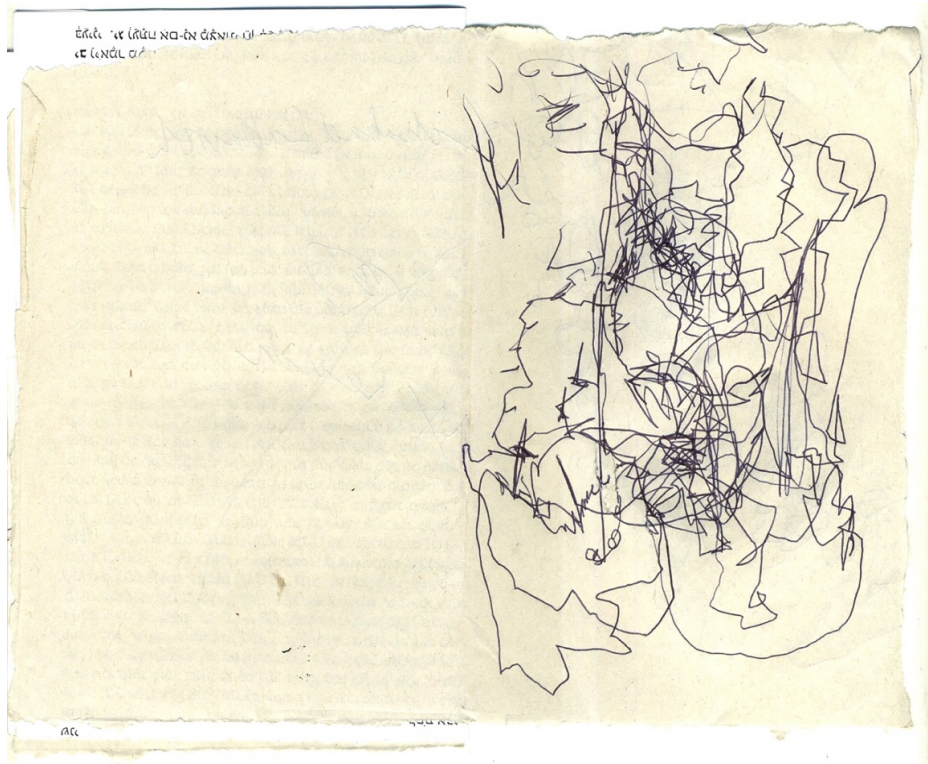


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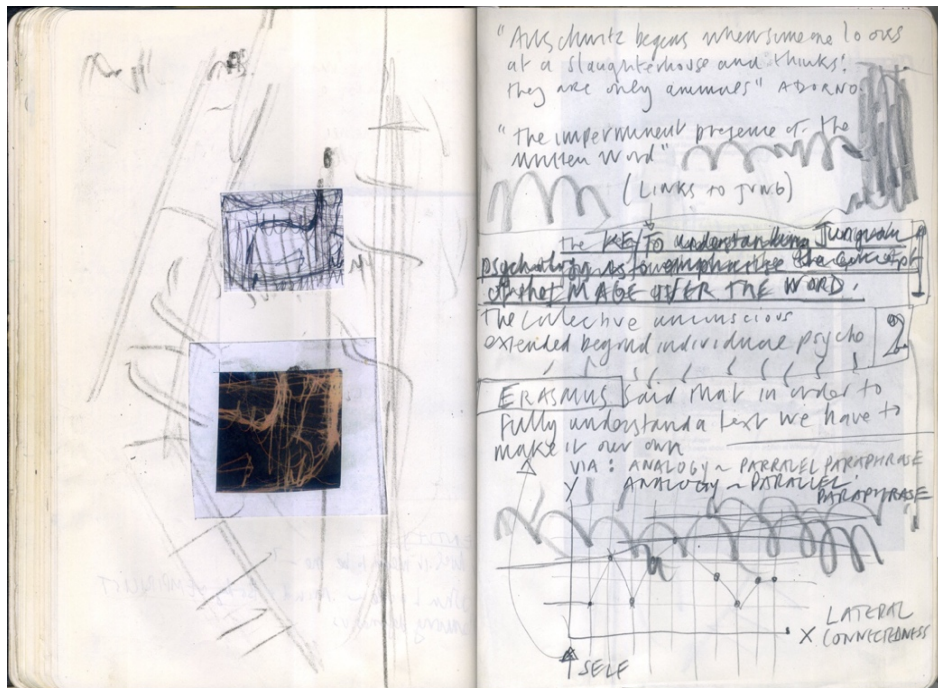


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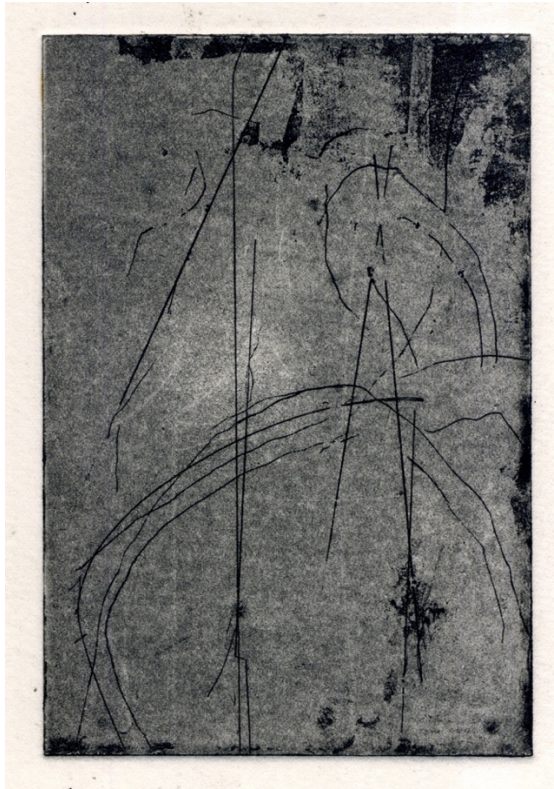


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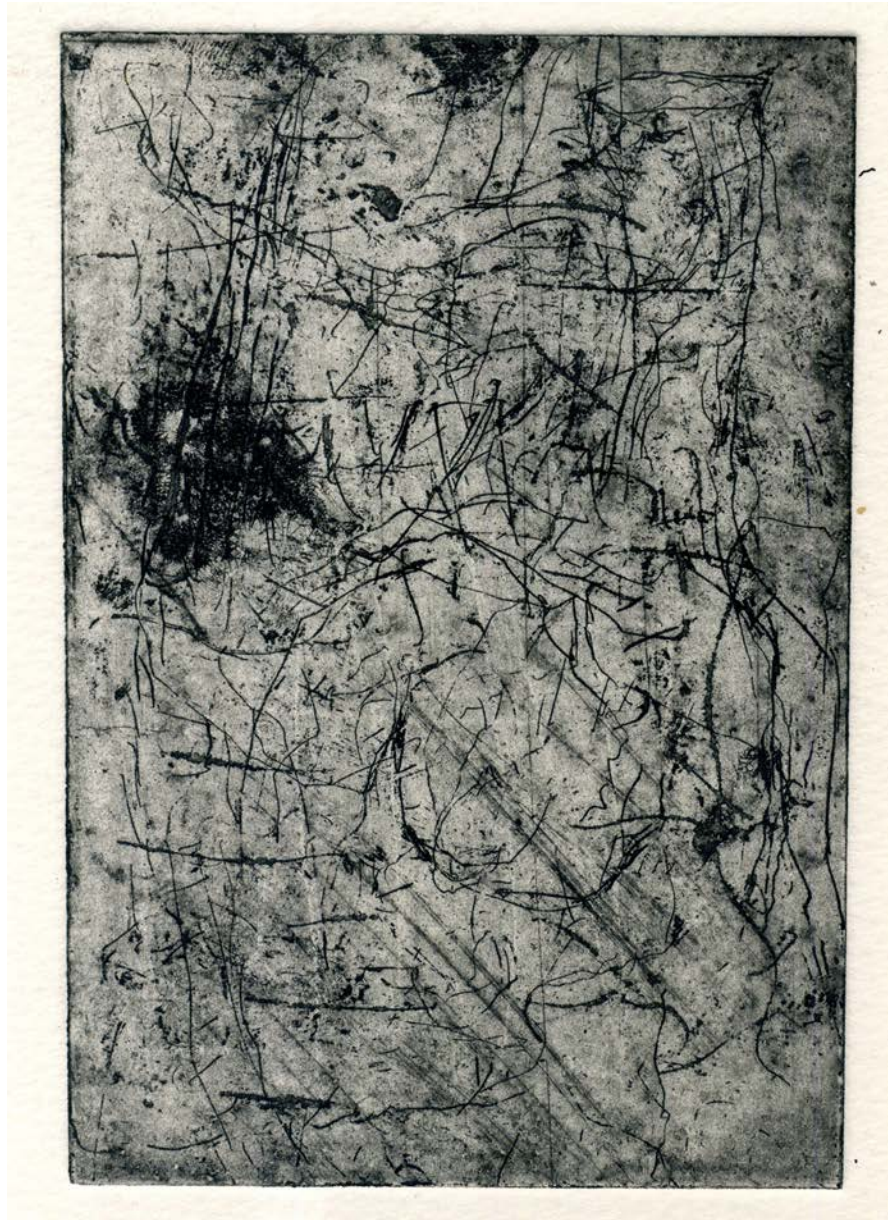
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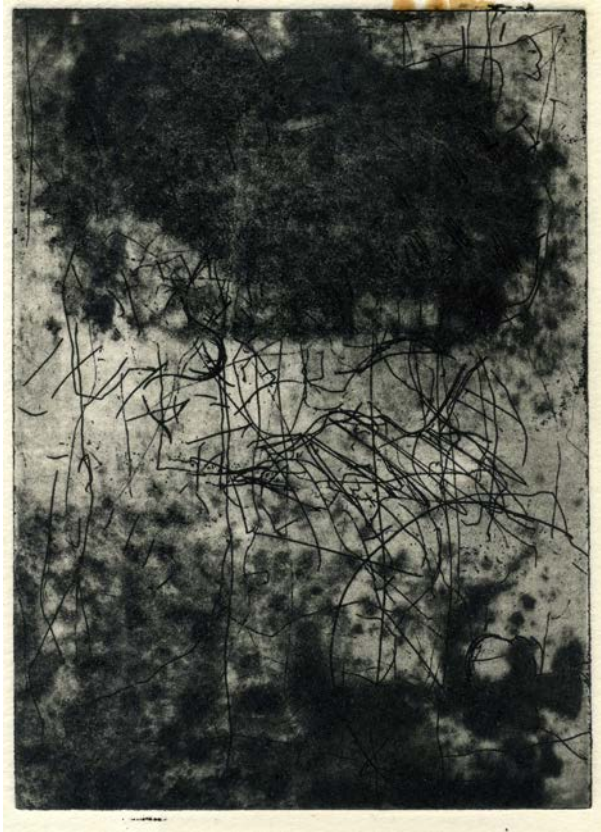


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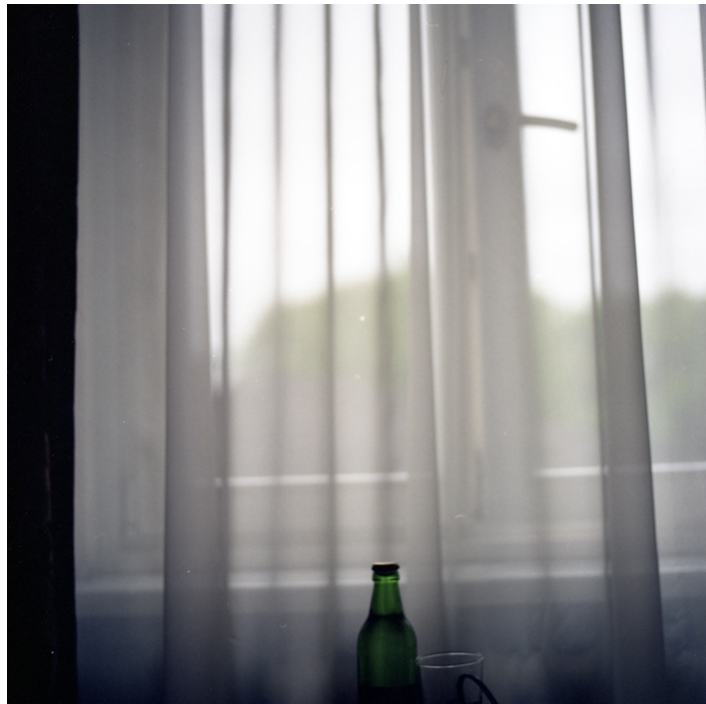


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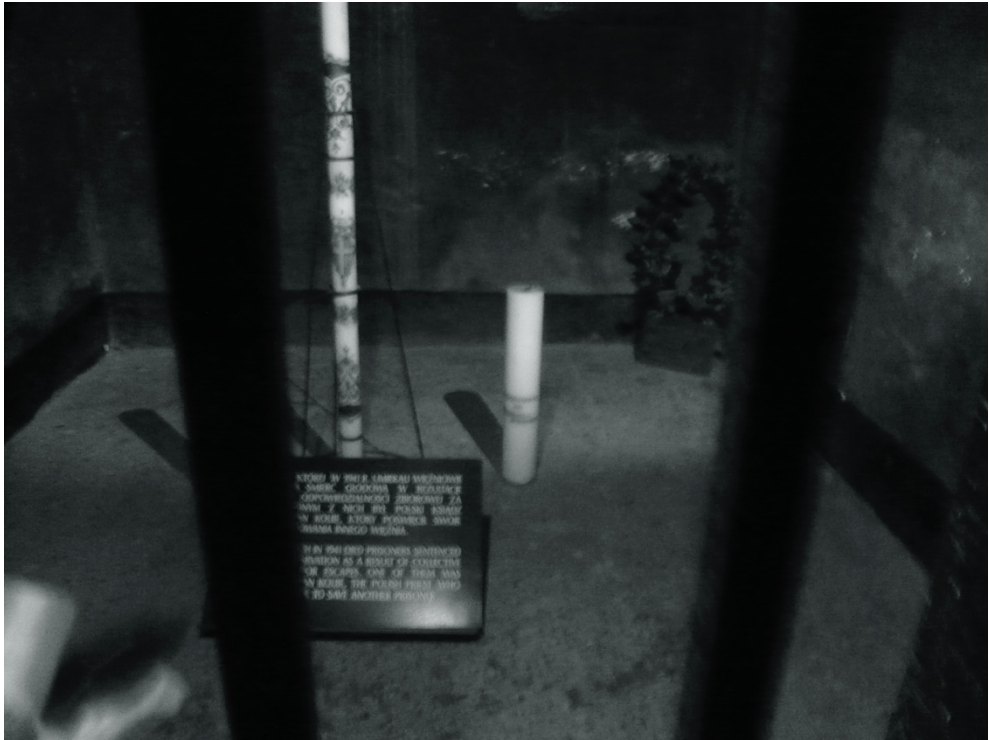


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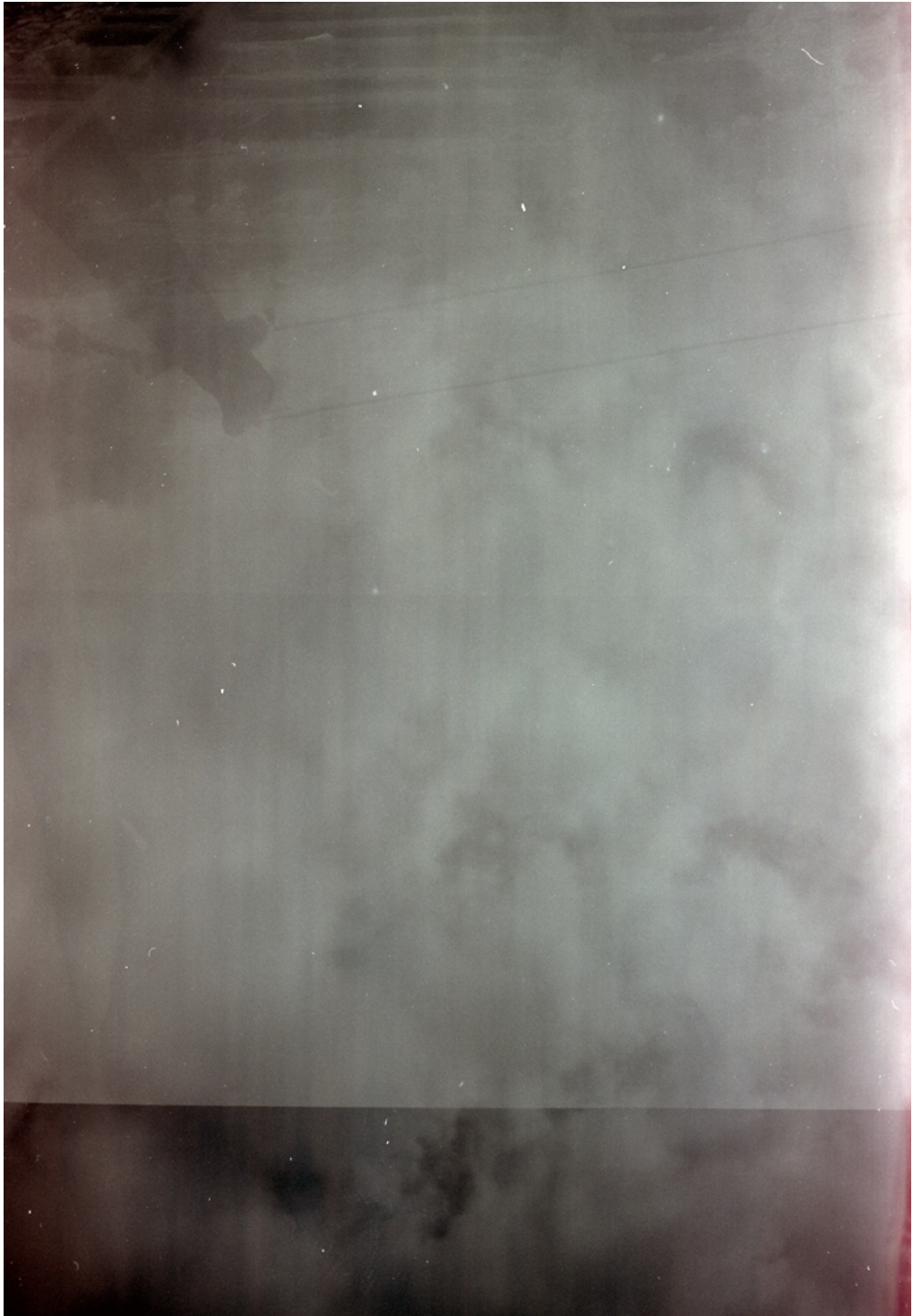


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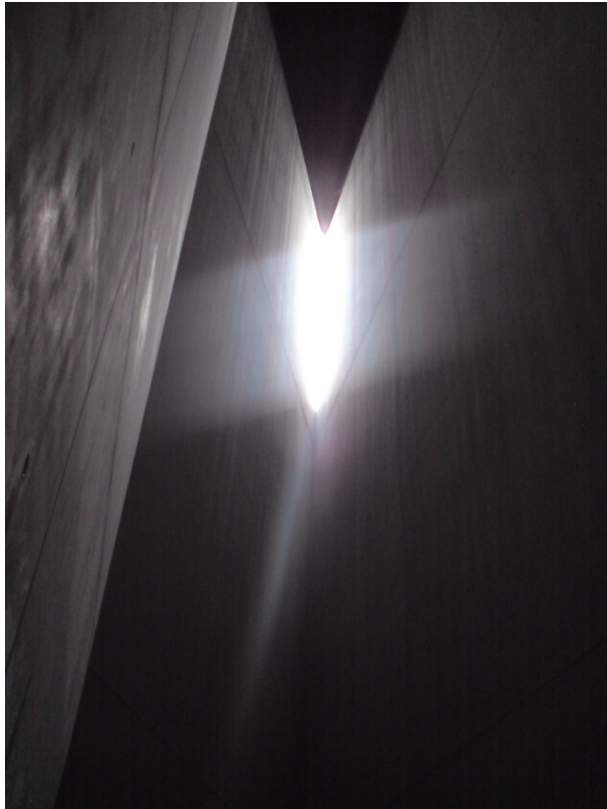
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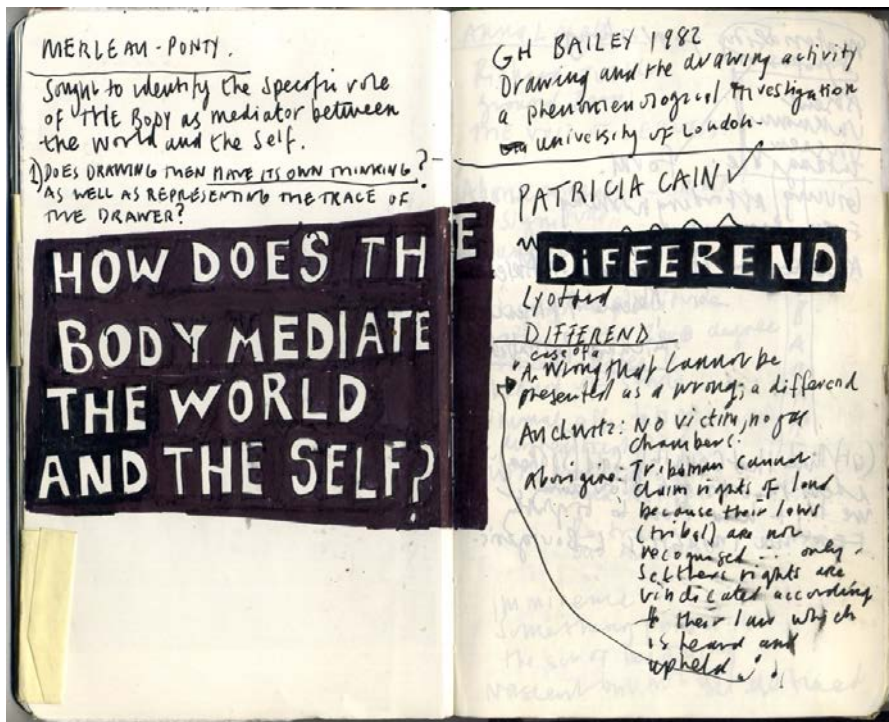


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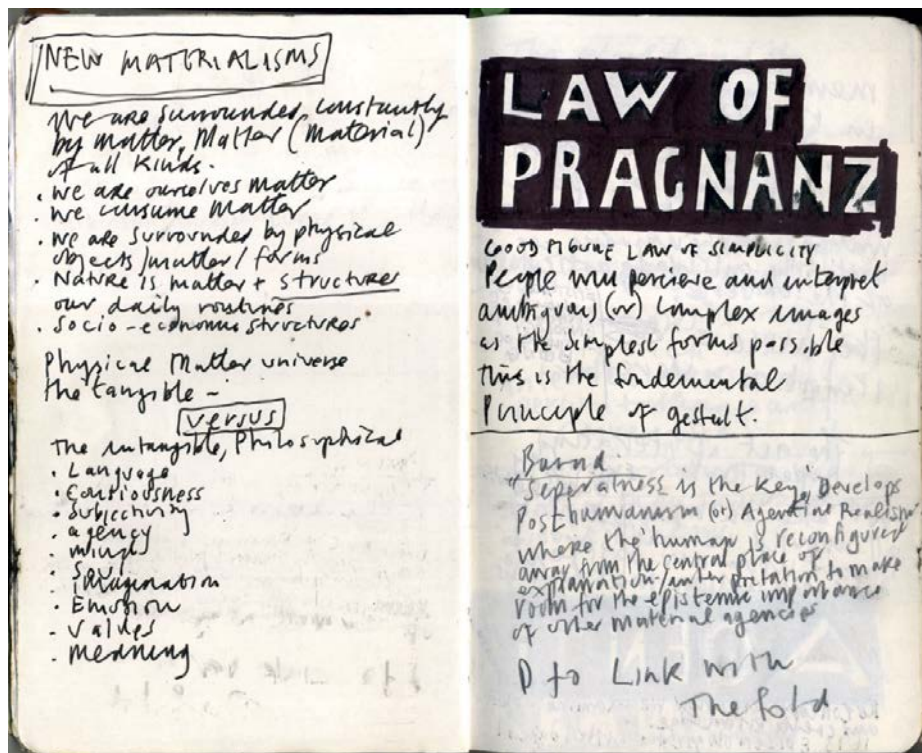
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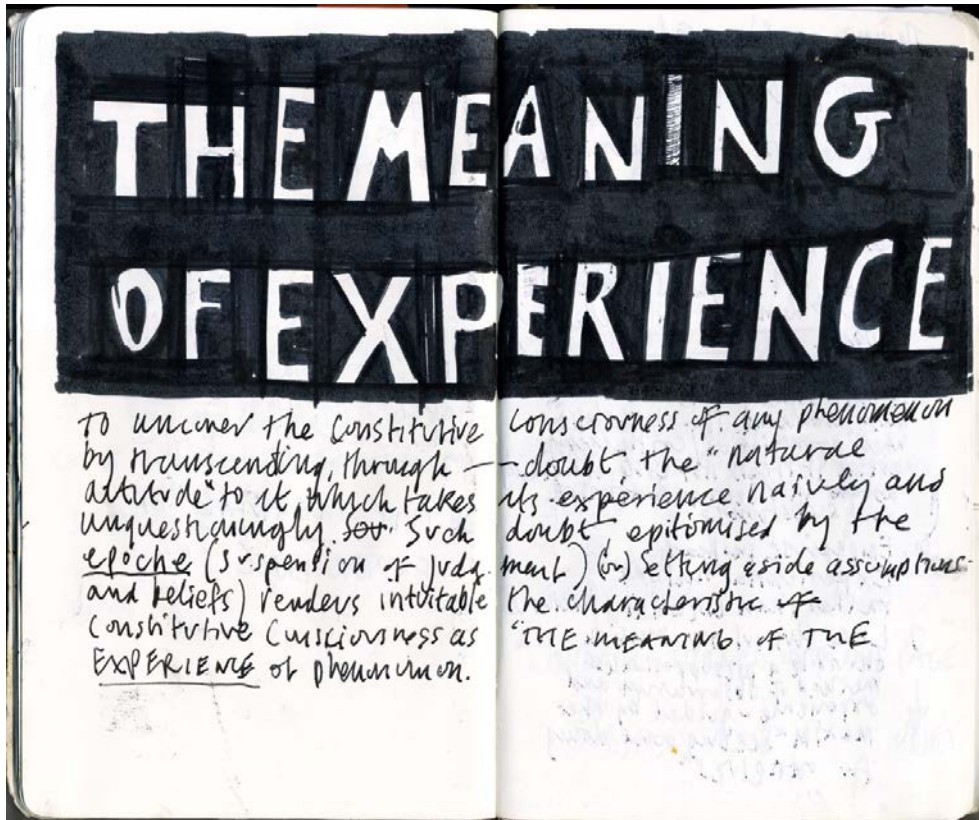


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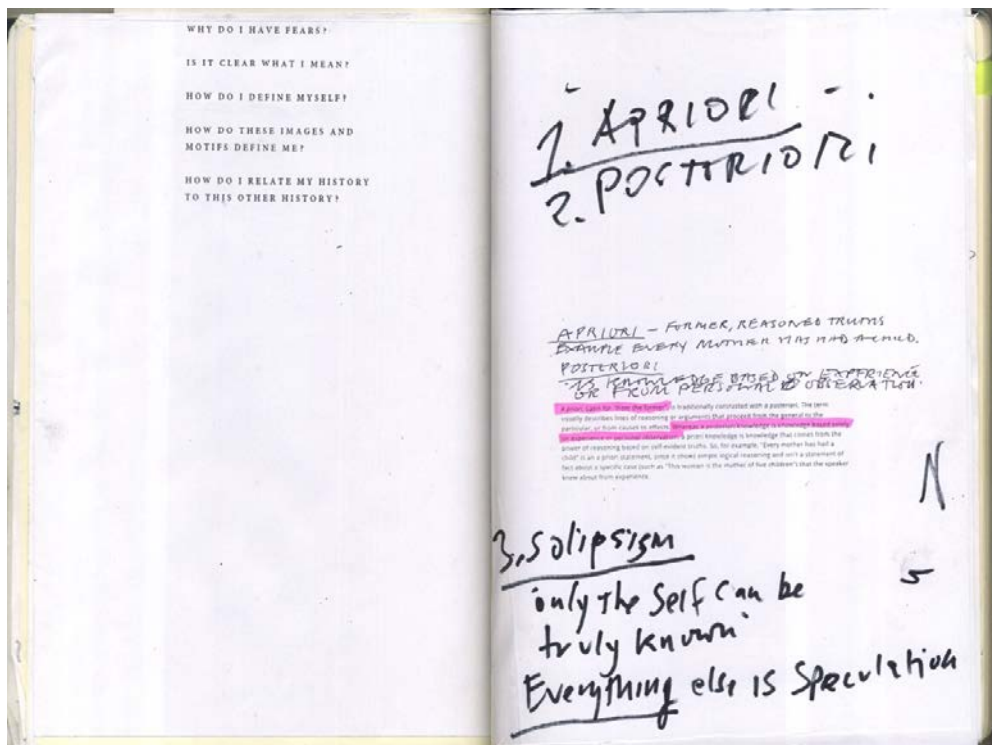


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492

I am the journey.
 Always in flux
on the move.
 David Wejner.
 Let it find you.

• Stilling;

The body has
 come into the
 room.
 The place
 where it is all
 H m x d .
 H m s .

This relationship
 with my body
 has served a
 purpose.
 The body is plugging
 my physical +
 emotional reactions.

• Running with the
 fear. (disruption
 through confrontation.)

(consideration)

Observed my denial.
 And now its teaching
 me a lesson.

EQUANIMOUS

Birthing

Even tempered
 Calm and Composed
 Calm state of mind and
 attitude to life so that you
 never lose your temper or
 become upset.

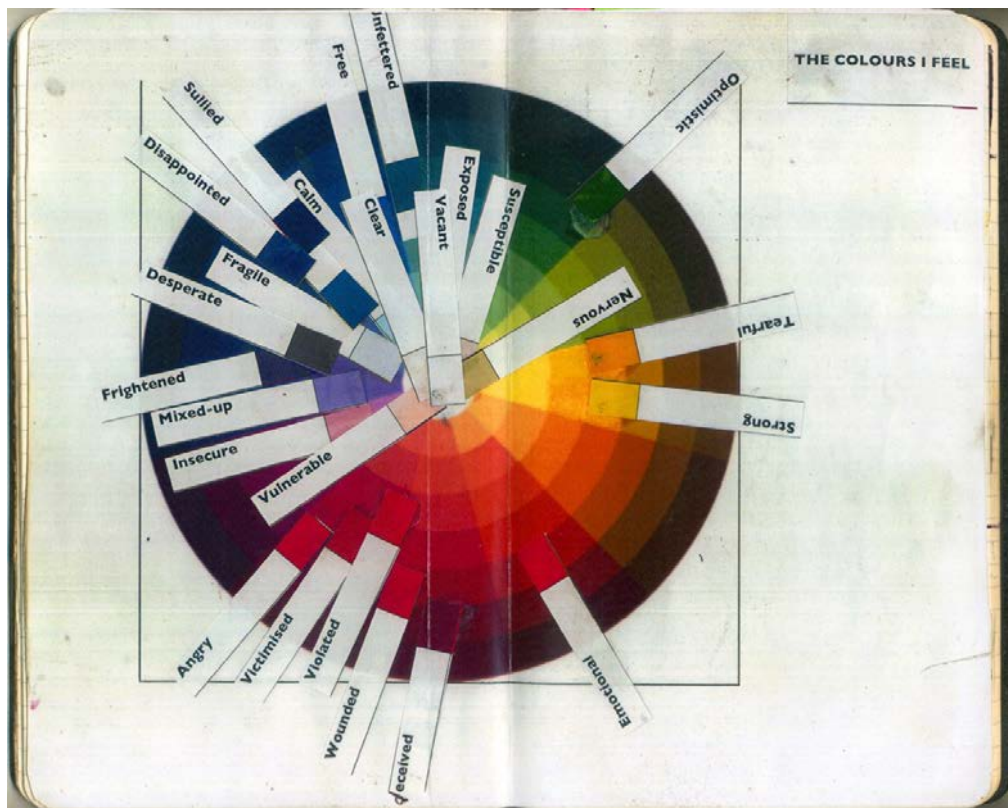
Composure, peace, calm
 and poise.

• The space in-between
 the occlus
 • The heart. (Spine)
 • The broken heart
 • Heart Spine
 • Spine Heart
 • SHADOW
 Shadow of the heart
 Heart's shadow
 Boat/vessel
 floats float
 keeps out water
 A float
 protects
 sanctuary

Walking across the firmness
 I stopped when there lying
 half revealed and half darkened
 was a heart. A red heart. It
 caught my eye because it shone
 and caught the flickered
 as the sun blinked its light
 across the ridge of the black
 firmness which rose in which
 it lay.
 I didn't know or care how
 it was there or whether it
 was a sign for me to find.
 I just knew it mattered and
 that it was important. I bent
 and brushed the heart of the
 earth which had been away
 the earth that had escaped
 hands covered it and kept
 it from the light, submerged
 and dark in the earth below.
 I held it the palm of my
 hand. It extended from my palm
 and about half way up my
 middle fingers. It was neither
 large or small but it was
 significant. It was formed not
 flat and slightly
 entirely

As I held it it began to
 beat a flashing red light
 light, pulsing slowly, then
 faintly, pulsing slowly, then
 faintly, like the heart in
 front of a lamp, distant
 light house beacons
 wobbling across the night sky
 or a star seen through
 a million million miles of
 space and time.
 As it shone I clasped
 my hand shut and held it
 tight. The light bled through
 my skin and red through
 my skin and began to fill
 my body with its edge
 and into the warm form of
 my frame.
 I could feel this light in my
 head and in my chest and
 my own now quivering, beating
 heart. I felt one, only, red,
 unthinkably red, a pulse,
 with each beat this
 deepened and with each beat
 this drew a connection that
 formed new shapes, new
 images and new shapes -
 not denied, not accepted, not
 bargained for but of
 acceptance

51



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 495



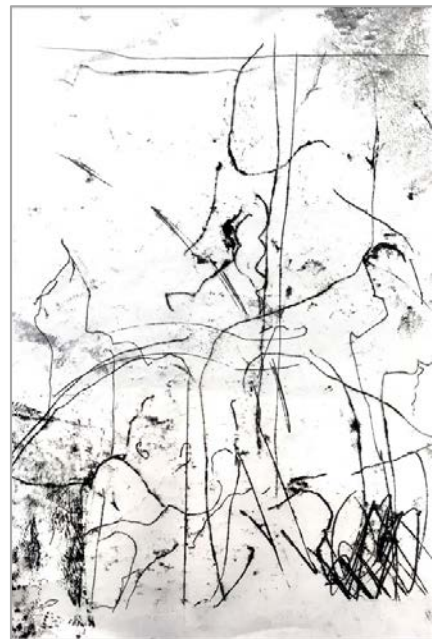
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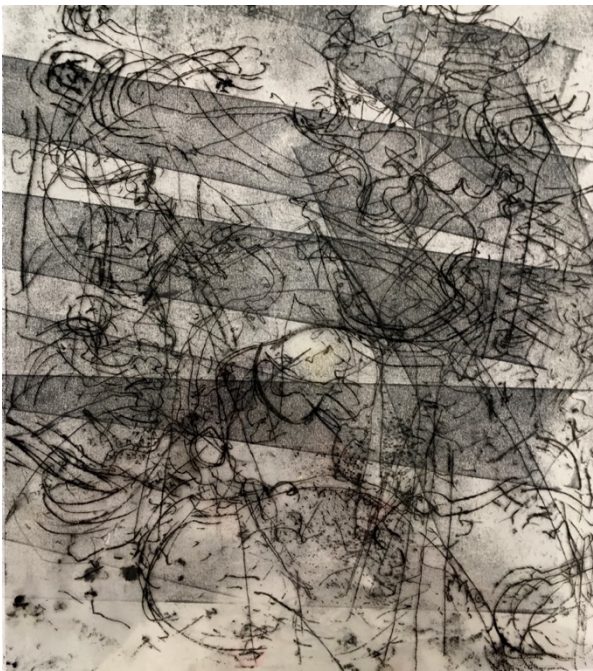
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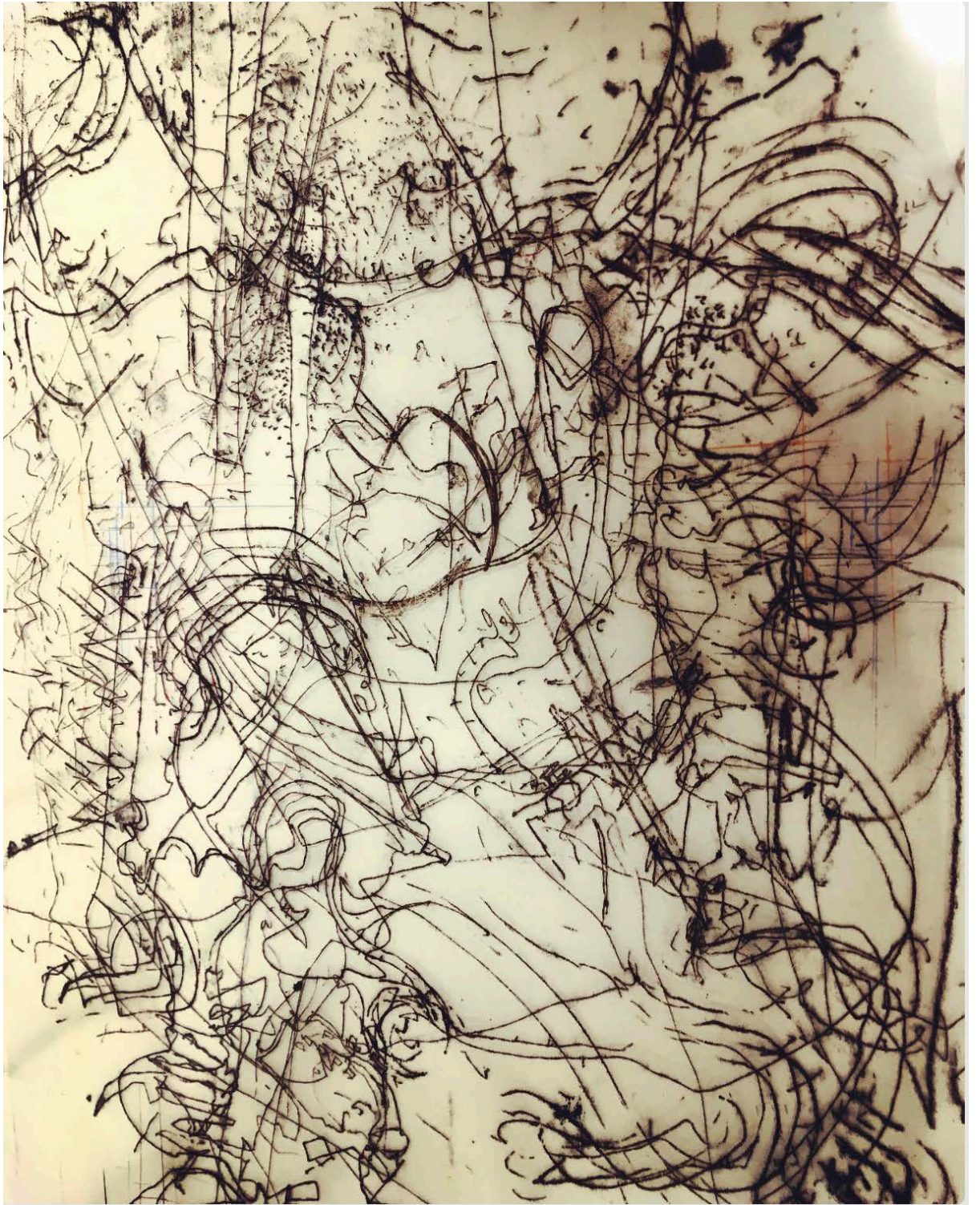
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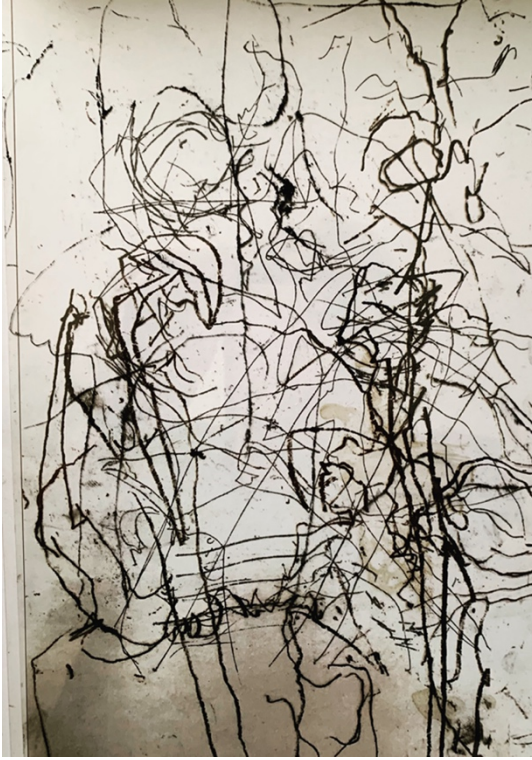


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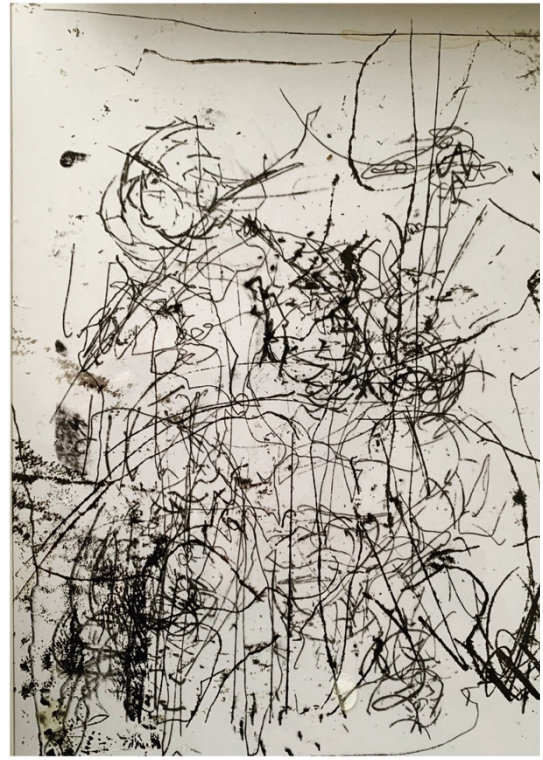


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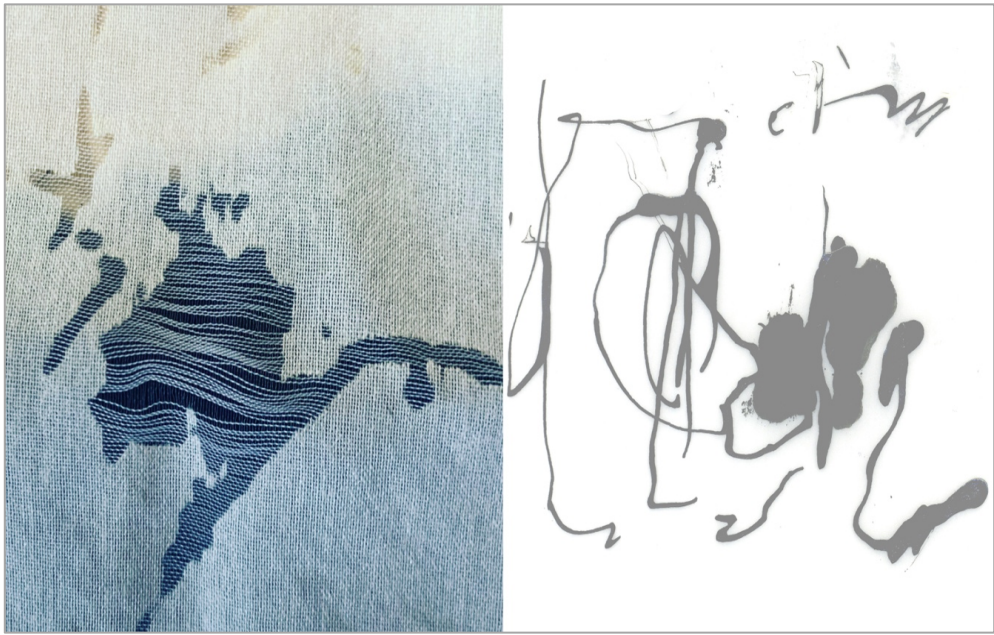
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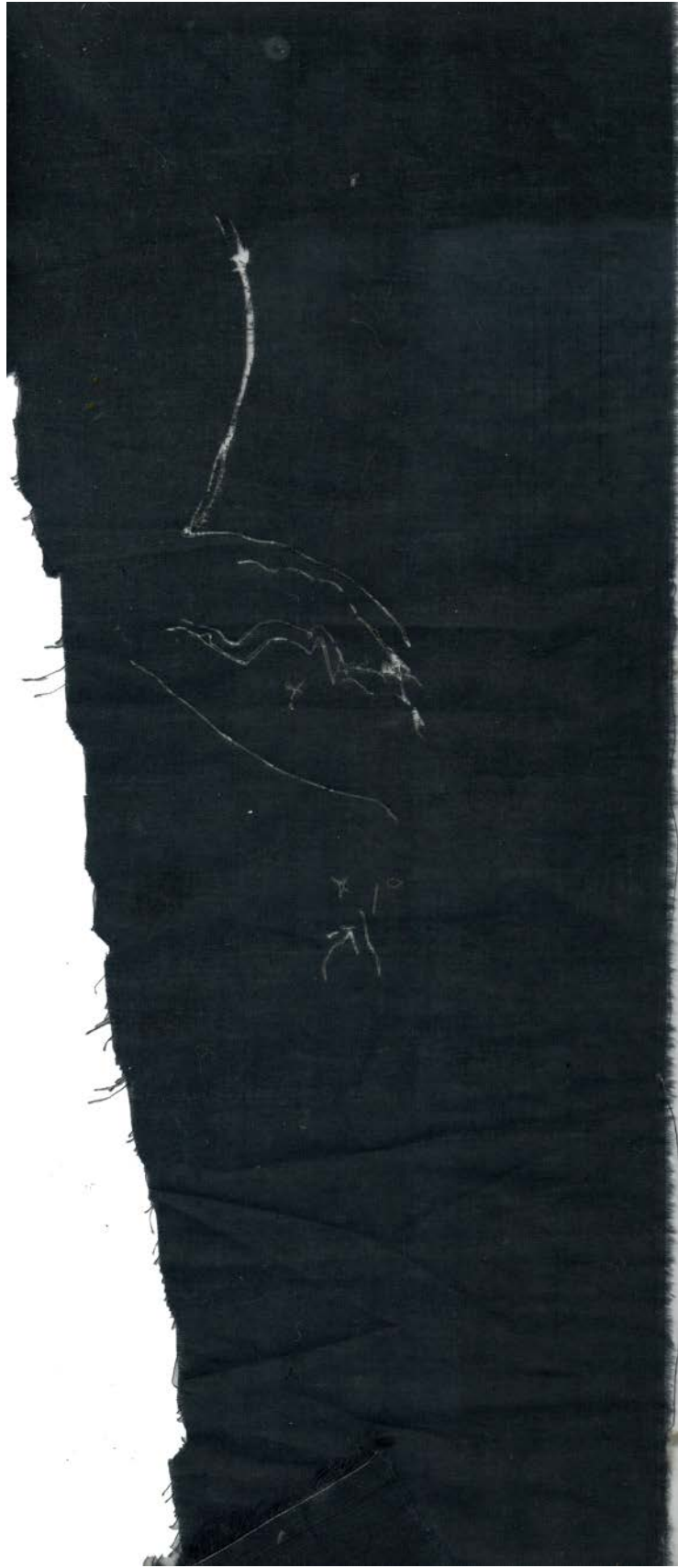
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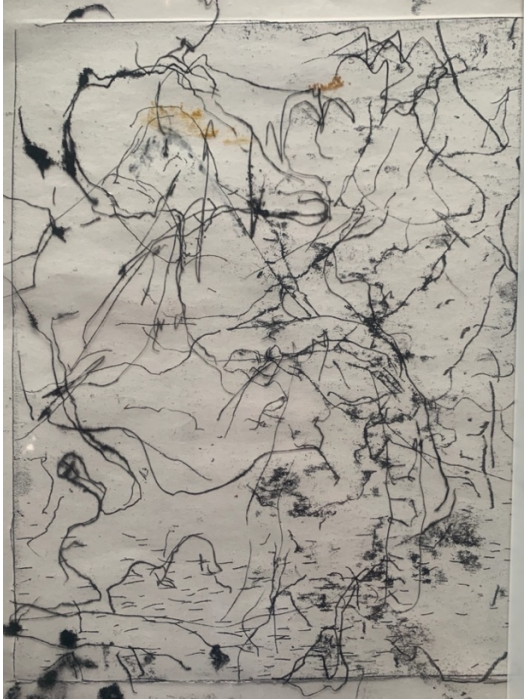


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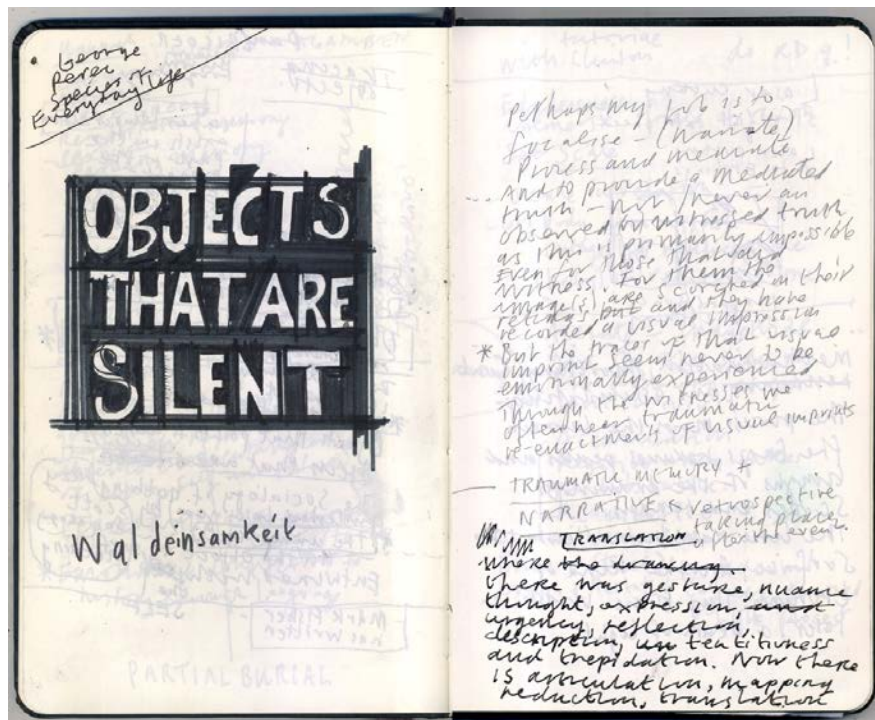


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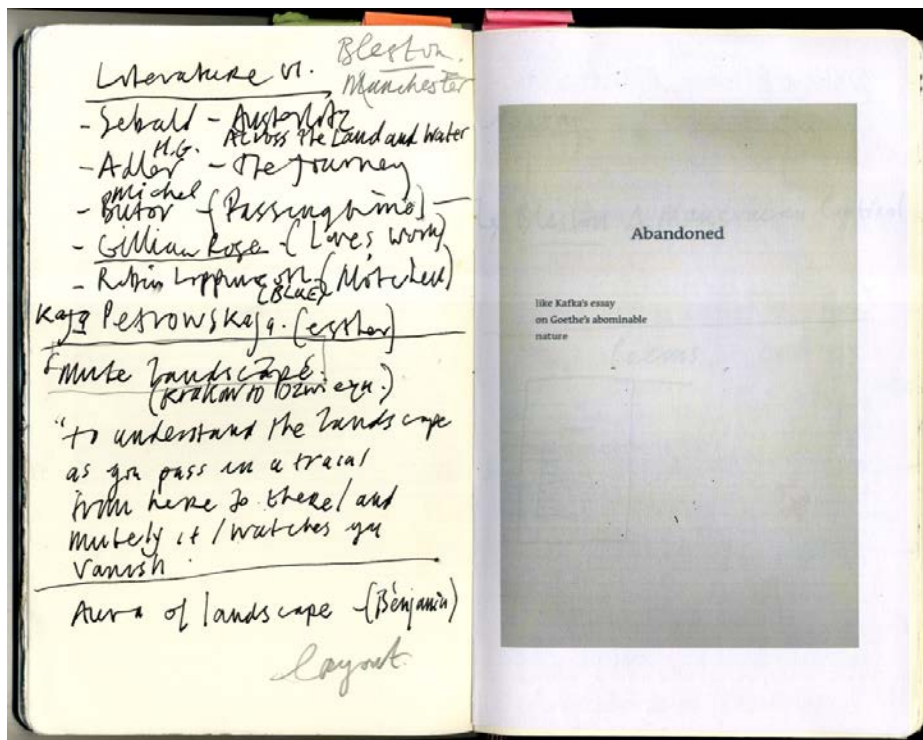
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2020 - 23

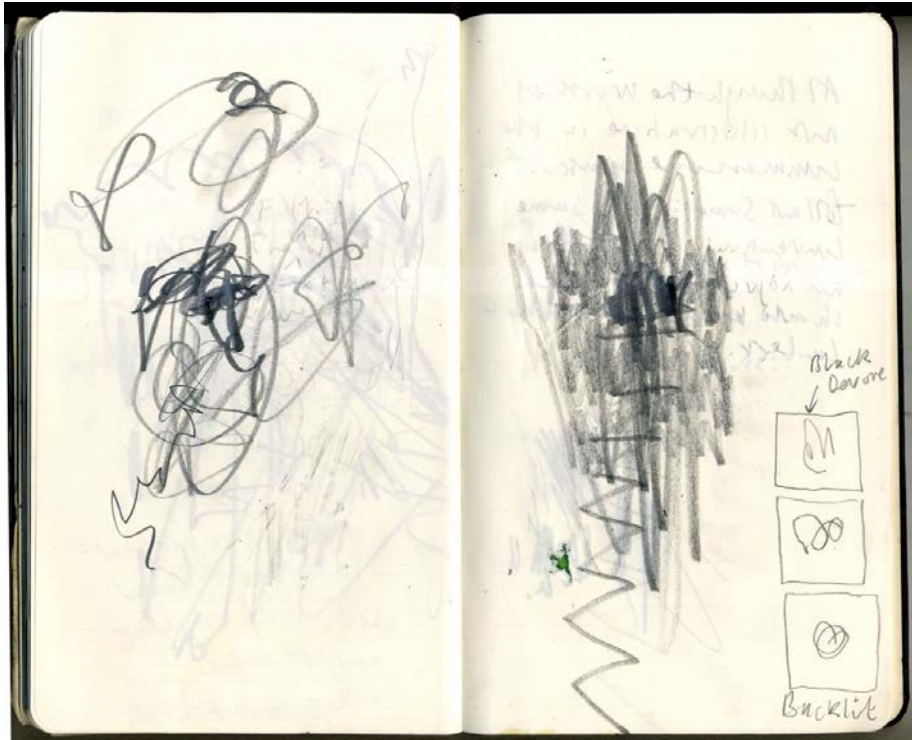


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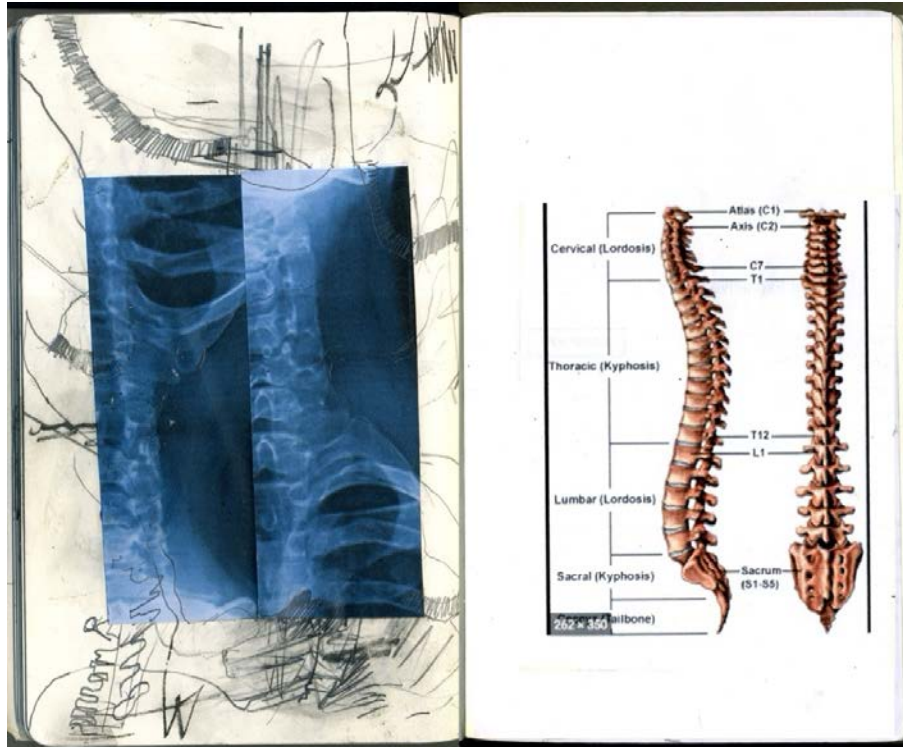


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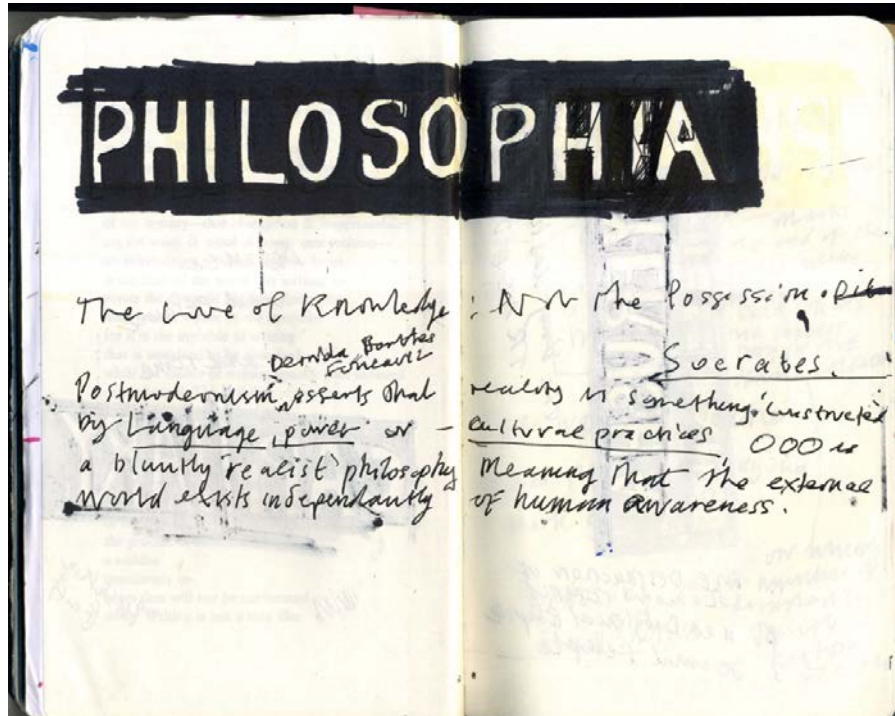


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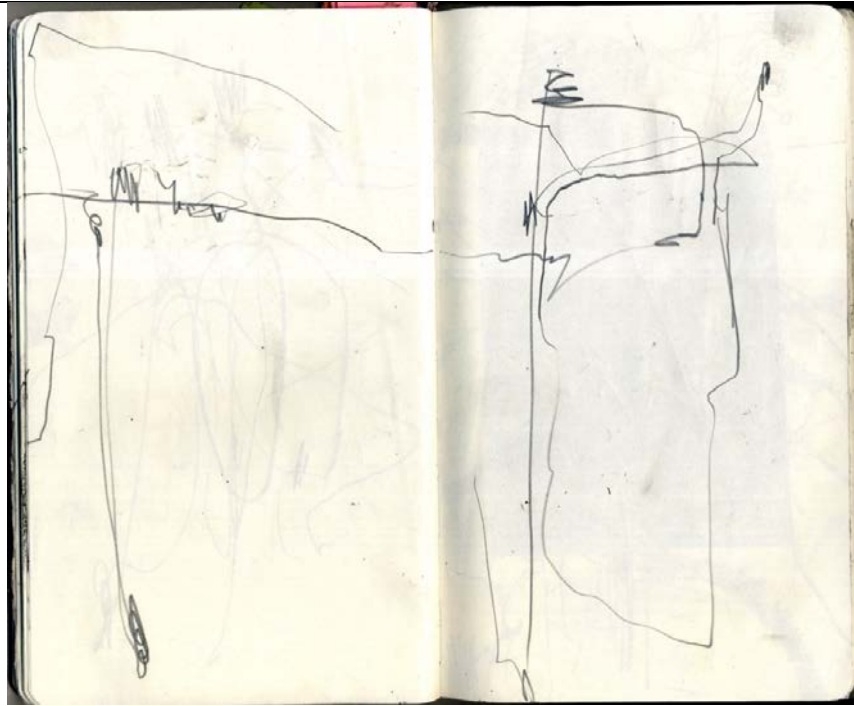


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2. *Not Knowing.* Journal 2, 2016.
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4. *Umbilical House,* Journal 2, 2016.
5. *Chiasm,* Journal 2, 2016.
6. *Something of Mine Also,* Journal 2, 2016.
7. *Abrahama Street,* Journal 2, 2016.
8. *Płaszów Mapping,* Journal 2, 2016.
9. *Izaak Synagogue.* Journal 4, 2017.
10. *The Impermanent Presence of the Written Word,* Journal 4, 2017.
11. *Untitled,* Etching, 2017.
12. *Untitled,* Etching, 2017.
13. *Untitled,* Etching, 2017.
14. *Untitled,* Etching, 2017.
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16. *Untitled,* Etching, 2017.
17. *Płaszów Phenemonmologie,* Gouache on paper, 2016.
18. *Płaszów Phenemonmologie,* Gouache on paper, 2016.
19. *Olam Ba Ha - The World to Come,* Etching, 2017.
20. *Kastn – Caste,* Etching, 2017.
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22. *Kastn - Caste III,* Etching, 2017.
23. *Kast Krayz – Caste Cross,* Etching, 2017.
24. *Fauna i Flora,* Etching, Digital, 2017.
25. *Powietrza (From the Air),* Etching, Digital 2017.
26. *Wasy (Tendrils),* Etching, 2017.
27. *Powloka (Shell),* Etching, 2017.

28. *The Object Conceals Nothing 2*, Etching, 2017.
29. *The Object Conceals Nothing 3*, Etching, 2017.
30. *Four Species*, Etching, 2017.
31. *Duch – Ghost 2*, Mixed-media, 2017.
32. *Auschwitz, Block 11*, 2016.
33. *Royal Hotel*, Kraków , 2013.
34. *Auschwitz, Block 11 2*, 2013.
35. *Auschwitz, Death House*, 2017.
36. *Feminised landscape*, Płaszów, 2017.
37. *The Road to Heaven*, Birkenau, 2017.
38. *Birkenau Sky*, 2013.
39. *Void Jewish Museum*, Berlin, 2016.
40. *Duch – Ghost 2*, Mixed-media, 2017.

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- 41 *How Does the Body Mediate the World and the Self*, Journal 8, 2018.
- 42 *Law of Pragnanz*, Journal 9, 2019.
- 43 *Agential Realism*, Journal 8, 2018.
- 44 *Seeing and Doing for Ourselves*, Journal 9, 2018.
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- 46 *Only the Self can be Truly Known*, Journal 11, 2019.
- 47 *The Black*, Journal 9, 2019.
- 48 *The Sides are Falling in Again Today*, Recovery Journal 10, 2018.
- 49 *I am the Journey*, Recovery Journal 10, 2018.
- 50 *Equanimous*, Recovery Journal 10, 2018.
- 51 *The Red Heart*, Recovery Journal 10, 2018.
- 52 *The Colours I Feel*, Recovery Journal 10, 2018.
- 53 *Mitzvot 1*, Monoprint, 2018.
- 54 *Mitzvot 2*, Monoprint, 2018.
- 55 *Entangled 1*, Monoprint, 2018.
- 56 *Untitled*, Monoprint, 2018.

- 57 *Zlamany (Broken)*, Monoprint, 2018.
- 58 *Zlamany i Niebieski, (Broken and Blue)*, Monoprint and Collage, 2018.
- 59 *Untitled*, Etching and Mixed-media, 2018.
- 60 *Entangled 2*, Monoprint, 2018.
- 61 *As I Lay Dying*, Monoprint, 2018.
- 62 *Steel Hips 2*, Monoprint, 2018.
- 63 *Entangled 3*, Monoprint, 2018.
- 64 *Viscera 1*, Monoprint, 2018.
- 65 *Eternal*, Drawing, 2018.
- 66 *Body Flow*, Vipassana, Clay soil and Tea on Margined Writing paper, 2018.
- 67 *Free Flow*, Vipassana, Clay soil and Tea on Margined Writing paper, 2018.
- 68 *Impermanence*, Vipassana, Clay soil and Tea on Margined paper, 2018.
- 69 *Moment by Moment*, Vipassana, Clay soil and Tea on Writing paper, 2018.
- 70 *Ner tamid #2 (Eternal Light Series)* Acetate Drawing on Lightbox, 2019.
- 71 *Ner tamid #3 (Eternal Light Series)* Acetate Drawing on Lightbox, 2019.
- 72 *Ner tamid #4 (Eternal Light Series)* Acetate Drawing on Lightbox, 2019.
- 73 *Ner tamid #5 (Eternal Light Series)* Acetate Drawing on Lightbox, 2019.
- 74 *Entangled (Eternal Light Series)* Acetate Drawing on Lightbox, 2019.
- 75 *Entwined*, Devore, 2019.
- 76 *Brak - Absence (Eternal Light Series)* Devore on Lightbox, 2019.
- 77 *Varfn aun Veft – Warp and Weft #2*, Devore, and Ink Drawing, 2019
- 78 *Varfn aun Veft – Warp and Weft*, Devore, 2019.
- 79 *Untitled*, Laser cut experiment, 2019.
- 80 *Untitled*, Laser cut experiment, 2019.
- 81 *Untitled*, Laser cut experiment, 2019.
- 82 *Artykulacja - Articulation*, Laser cut, 2019.
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- 85 *Vis es Ver #3 – Water and Blood Series*, Acetate on lightbox, 2019.
- 86 *Vis es Ver #4 – Water and Blood Series*, Acetate on lightbox, 2019.
- 87 *Vis es Ver #5 – Water and Blood Series*, Monoprint, 2019.

- 88 *Blue grey like veins through thin stretched skin*, Acetate on lightbox, 2019.
- 89 *Vis es Ver #6 – Water and Blood Series*, Acetate on lightbox, 2019.
- 90 *Vis es Ver #7 – Water and Blood Series*, Acetate on lightbox, 2019.
- 91 *Vis es Ver #8 – Water and Blood Series*, Acetate on lightbox, 2019.
- 92 *Vis es Ver #9 – Water and Blood Series*, Acetate on lightbox, 2019.

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- 97 *Cervical (Lordosis)*, Journal 14, 2021.
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- 103 *Tehillim - the Book of Psalms*, 2022.
- 104 *Kraków skie Korzenie - Kraków Roots*, Found Object, ink and Digital, 2022.
- 105 *Abba – (AHB-bah) Aramaic, “Dear Father”*, Drawing, Ink and Digital, 2022.
- 106 *Jestem teraz z Toba – I Am with You Now*, Drawing, ink and Digital, 2022.
- 107 *Jestem teraz z Toba #2*, Drawing, ink and Digital, 2022.
- 108 *A Day of Clouds and Thick Darkness*, Zephaniah 1:15, 2023.