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STEPZ

A Psychogeography and Urban Aesthetics Zine

PILOT EDITION – SUMMER 2015

A Welcome From the Editor

Welcome to *Stepz*, the new zine for and by those interested in psychogeography and in critiquing, appreciating and debating urban space.

I started *Stepz* following the completion of *Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography* (2015). I felt there were voices that I was unable to represent therein, for various reasons. *Stepz* does not have the strict editorial rules applied to it that would be the case in an academic article, textbook, or even in a novel. It is, what you might call, 'editorially restrained'.

When researching for *Walking Inside Out* I looked at some of the 1990s psychogeography-related zines and alternative texts (like the London Psychogeographical Association's newsletters and Tom Vague's 'Wild West' zines). These have historically been a part of psychogeography, going back to the sixties and the Situationists – for example, their 1966 pamphlet 'On the Poverty of Student Life'. If, how I have suggested in discussions about what I've termed 'the new psychogeography', there is a current resurgence, then it needs to be marked in some way that represents an alternative mode of publication to the mainstream one. So...here it is. I hope you enjoy it. Feel free to provide feedback at www.urbanecune.co.uk and tell us what you think and whether you would like to see further editions.

Please note: this pilot edition is in digital and limited edition hardcopy format. While I am happy for people to circulate and copy the magazine as much as they wish, all the authors gave their creative time for free and the magazine is un-copyrighted and not run as a profit-making publication, so please keep that in mind. I have also added a hidden symbol to the hard copy version in order to track its propagation over ley lines.

Tina Richardson



Illustration by Ian Long

Hostile Architecture and the Right to Shop: Psychogeography of Surveillance and Social Control

by William Davis

I chose this topic because I have a long-standing interest in both the technology and politics of surveillance and other aspects of large-scale security. Since the 9/11 attacks, the topic has become more public. I chose to examine how surveillance and other security measures affected me in my daily life. The war on the emotion of terror has resulted in a range of measures such as protective cordons around public buildings and, in the UK, the increase in routinely armed police officers. At the other end of the spectrum there are privatised litter patrols and property owners fitting metal spikes on pavements to deter rough sleeping.

I use the term psychogeography in the broadest possible sense of the word. I take it to mean the study of how the environment affects me and others in every way. I take the environment as the whole of the constructed physical, technological and social space. I organised my responses in terms of my behaviour, emotion and thinking. I am presenting this article in an informal style with personal anecdotes.

I set myself tasks, inspired by a reading group I attended to follow exercises from 'Quantum Psychology' by Robert Anton Wilson. The goal was to question our current world views, or 'reality tunnels' as Wilson calls them. One exercise was for each of us to adopt a different persona for a few days, such as a Satanist or estate agent, and notice how it affected our views. We then discussed our responses.

I explored a given area, the conurbation between Littlehampton and Brighton. I limited myself to walking and public transport. I did this in three stages:

- To record the extent of surveillance as objectively as possible, without taking time to consider my reactions to it.
- Repeat the exercise, adopting the persona of someone who is generally supportive of the authorities, typically with a right of centre political bias.
- Repeat from the point of view of a person who is sceptical and/or critical of authorities.

Prior to the exercises, I rated my strength of belief in the motivation of the State and the efficacy of the technology to counter crime:

- How far are the authorities using surveillance in the best interests of society? (0% no trust at all, 100% total trust in authorities). I rated this as 65%.
- How effective are the current technologies in dealing with crime

overall, including terrorism? (0% totally ineffective, 100% totally effective) I rated this as 55%.

Stage 1 - Observe security features as objectively as possible. Examples included:

- Various CCTV cameras, both private and official, fixed on buildings or dedicated poles.
- A police station, accessed via steep steps or a ramp, to the door well above street level.
- Police driving by. Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) on patrol and private security staff, both inside and outside shops or other buildings. Security guards wearing body armour, tactical vests and carrying large Maglite torches.
- Bus shelters with thin benches, fixed at an angle. A low, wide wall with small metal studs added to the top. Rubbish bins with skips with locked lids. A small area of disused land, blocked off with breeze blocks, to prevent entry. It had previously been used by homeless people to sleep in makeshift shelters.
- Various signs indicating alcohol-free zones, Happy Face logos with 'Smile You Are on CCTV', a full sized sticker of a policeman placed in a shop window.
- Online/Media: A local newspaper article about Community Speed Watch volunteers, who are now allowed to monitor drivers' speed with a speed camera, and liaise with police.

Stage 2 - Adopting the attitudes of someone who tends to support government policy, and generally right of centre political beliefs. I achieved this mindset by reading a couple of editions of the Daily Mail, a middle-market UK newspaper that follows a conservative line. It has a reputation of being critical of various marginal groups, such as migrants, benefit claimants and travellers. I noted my responses:

- I was pleased to see the CCTV, and would look up and smile at them. I thought that there should be more of them, and that anyone who would object must have something to hide.
- I was pleased to see that the police station was well defended.
- I was not happy to see police driving by. They should be walking around,

in pairs, on the beat. The PCSOs, whilst not as effective as 'proper police', should have more powers, for example to be able to carry batons and CS spray.

- I was particularly pleased to see the various measures that made life difficult for homeless people, preventing them from sleeping in bus shelters or going through bins for food. I felt little concern for them, believing it was their 'lifestyle choice'.
- I was pleased to see signs indicating alcohol-free zones, although believed that drinking alcohol in the street should be banned outright in public.
- Online/Media: I liked watching the reality shows, seeing people being prosecuted, extradited or otherwise acted upon. I read about the Community Speed Watch and wondered what I needed to do to join.

Stage 3 - From the point of view of someone who is concerned and sceptical of various aspects of surveillance and social control.

- I did not object to CCTV cameras, as such, but did not like the thought of being watched by strangers. I was not knowingly doing anything illegal, but still dropped my head down whenever I saw a camera.
- Older police stations looked like any other building in a town. A newer one looked like it was designed for defence against zombie invasion. It had no need for a ramp, it could just as easily have been built with access at street level. It added to a general feeling of unease associated with the increased apparatus of security.
- I prefer to limit my contact with the police, but regard them as a necessity. I am less impressed with PCSOs. On one occasion I saw the PCSOs challenge a young man who was distributing a free left/counter culture newsletter in the town centre. The street was full of others, giving out flyer for shops, but they focused on him, saying that he was interfering with peoples' 'right to shop'. I was tempted to ask them exactly what piece of legislation they were referring to, but thought better of it. I had a particularly disturbing experience with security guards when exploring some waste ground near Croydon. I had

inadvertently strayed onto private land, and was approached by several security guards who were particularly threatening. In my experience, it is the security staff with the least authority who are most likely to exercise it in a petty, mean spirited, or threatening fashion.

- Thin seats in bus stops and metal studs on walls are installed to make life more difficult for the street homeless. I describe these measures as 'hostile architecture', that contributes to exclusion and discrimination.
- I'm upset to see the Smiley Face logo associated with surveillance. A symbol that originally represented happy and positive themes, now appropriated as an Orwellian motif.

After the exercises I reassessed my strength of belief below:

- How far are the authorities using surveillance in the best interests of society? 55%.
- How effective are the current technologies in dealing with crime overall? 35%.

Having assessed my reactions to the environment, I considered my possible responses to it. I listed several options:

- Avoid – Follow routes that avoid CCTV cameras. Do not drive anywhere. Do not go online or use a mobile phone.
- Maintain – Ignore the systems. Go about business with little or no concern. Adopt the attitude of 'It doesn't affect me', and is only a problem for people with something to hide.
- Counter-attack – Direct action, such as vandalising CCTV signs, shining laser pointers at the camera lenses or taking an angle grinder to remove anti-homeless pavement spikes.
- Challenge – Humour and drama can be used to draw attention to surveillance, by creating 'surveiltainment'. An established example is the New York City based activists and Situationist pranksters, The Surveillance Camera Players, who perform plays in front of CCTV. A particularly interesting idea is that of sousveillance, whereby citizens set up their own cameras to monitor the surroundings, including security features and authority figures. This is a relatively new idea, and is

becoming more and more accessible, as cheap hi-technology cameras, and other equipment, are becoming more available to general public. Now, in addition to the gaze of surveillance 'from above' there is now the gaze of the citizen 'from below'. In this country direct community action such as guerrilla gardening and yarn bombing promote community-friendly public spaces.

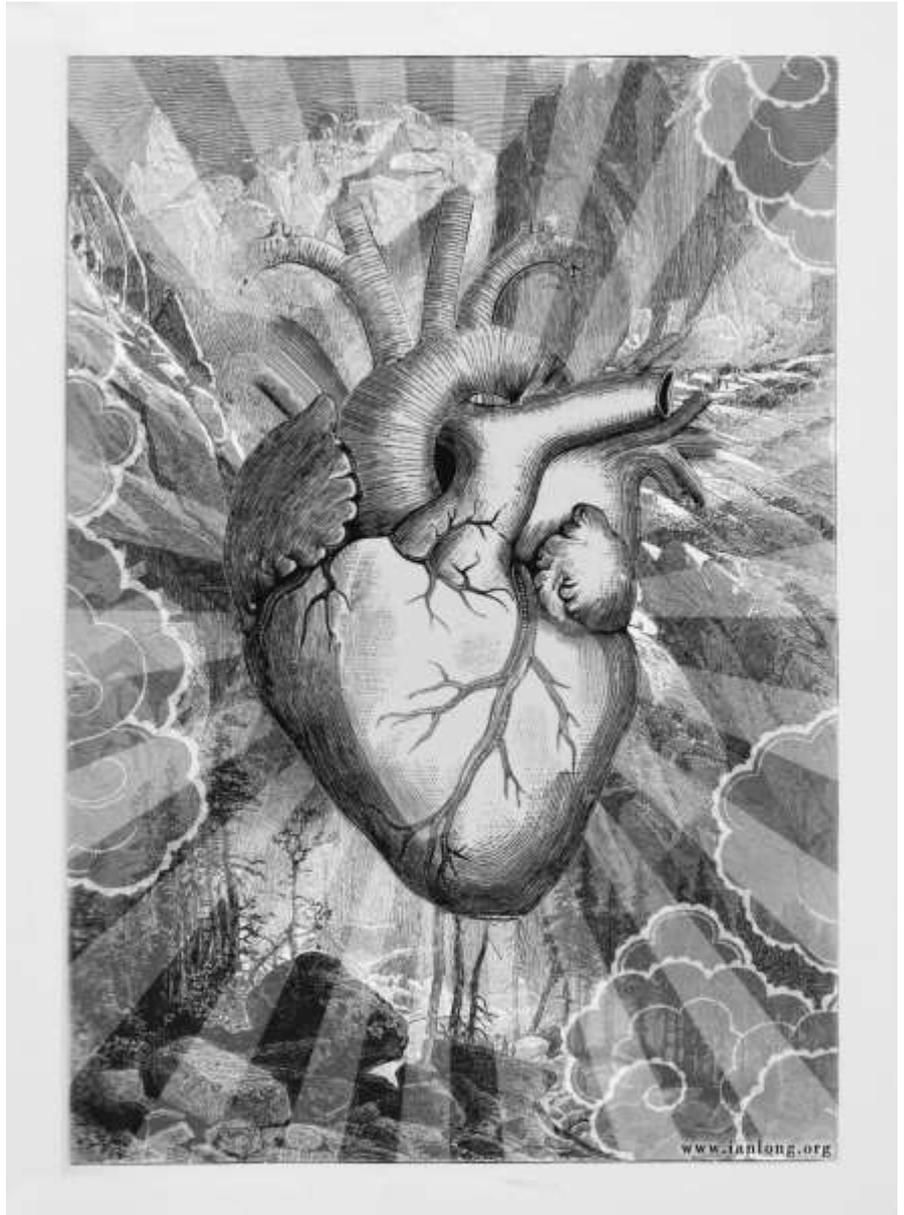
Conclusion: *Following the exercises, both my faith in the authorities and the efficacy of security measures had reduced by a small, but significant amount. I am not identifying anything specific that led to this change. Completing exercises such as this is an awareness raising tool which may be of increased public value to effect change.*

Psychogeography Headlines



The World Congress of Perambulatory Sutures took place in the North of England in May, culminating in two extraordinary events, one held in Huddersfield and one in Leeds. I use the word 'extraordinary' here in the definition of 'specially convened'. These events were 'Class Wargames' at the University of Huddersfield (13 May) and 'The Inside Out of Walking Inside Out' at the University of Leeds (14 May). Psychogeographers travelled through time and space. From as geographically far away as Paris and as temporally distant as the London Psychogeographical Association of the 1990s. This is what the Congress concluded:

We, The World Congress, believe that the cumulative effect of the geographical concentration of these two events in the week beginning 11th May 2015 has probably shifted psychogeographical ley lines across the UK, or at the very least at significant points north of Birmingham. It is also quite likely that at, what are known as, 'perambulatory hinges', such as the one located at the University of Loughborough near the brutalist halls of residence (Towers) and also that situated on the roundabout near Burley's Flyover in Leicester, have been totally thrown off orbit!



Above Us Only Sky

by Bobby Seal
illustrated by Ian Long (above)

"Those who travel to mountain-tops are half in love with themselves, and half in love with oblivion." Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination*

A few years ago, just after the birth of my youngest daughter, I developed a fault with my heart's rhythm; its beat was rapid and irregular. The doctors could find no obvious cause for my condition, but the illness left me physically incapacitated to the extent where I was breathless after walking just a short distance. As someone who'd always been very active, I found this extremely frustrating and became quite depressed.

A couple of months later the medication I'd been prescribed seemed to kick in and my heart returned to its normal rhythm. Now, apart from the occasional short episode and the need to take tablets each day, I'm fully recovered. But, while I was ill I worried about what lay before me: how I would work, how I would care for my family and how I would do all the things I liked to do, like travel and walking.

I worried, but my mind also began to work, very gradually, towards a kind of resolution; a willingness to embrace a new, albeit more restricted, lifestyle. But one thing for me was emblematic of the kind of activity I might never be able to take part in again; I felt desperately sad that I might never again experience the pleasure of walking up a mountain and standing on its peak.

What is it about mountain-tops? Why do they exercise such a hold on the human imagination? In Greek mythology Mount Olympus was the home of the Gods, with the thrones of Zeus and the eleven other deities located in a temple high in the clouds. Mountains also played an important part in the beginnings of the Judeo-Christian religions: Moses received the Ten Commandments on the summit of Mount Sinai and, in the New Testament gospels, Jesus experienced his transfiguration on a mountain-top.

More recently poets, thinkers, artists, writers and composers, from the Romantics to the Beats, have eulogised the mind-expanding possibilities of wandering among the hills. In *The Dharma Bums* Jack Kerouac describes an ascent in the Sierra Nevada and asks: "Who can leap the world's ties and sit with me among white clouds?" Robert Macfarlane, in his *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination*, posits mountains as the only wilderness landscape most of us will ever have the chance of experiencing. When we walk upon a mountain, he suggests, we are forcefully reminded that the world is far more than just a human construct. Mountains have an undeniable physicality about them; in pushing ourselves to reach a summit we experience an altered state of consciousness in both our mind and our body. As the American poet Gary Snyder puts it: "That's the way to see the world, in our own bodies."

But for Nan Shepherd, who spent much of her adult life walking in the Cairngorms and writing about what she saw and felt, mountains are about far more than the masculine obsession with ticking off another peak to be conquered. She preferred to walk upon and among her beloved hills. In wandering in a seemingly aimless fashion she experienced the mountain range as a single entity rather than as a series of peaks. She learned to walk with humility, a pilgrim paying homage to the hills she loved:

*A mountain shut within itself, yet a world,
Immensity. So may the mind
achieve,
Toiling, no vision of the infinite,
But a vast, dark and inscrutable
sense
Of its own terror, its own glory and
power.*

Nan Shepherd, from *In the Cairngorms*

Surely though there is still something special about standing on the top of a hill: that feeling of being closer to the sky and standing above the rest of the landscape, looking down on the everyday world. We gain a sense of perspective, perhaps, that comes from realising how small we are; a dot perched upon an immensity of folded rock.



So what do we see when we stand upon a mountain-top? We see the view, of course; isn't that why we make the effort to reach that point? From our vantage point we see other mountains, rivers, lakes, forests and fields – all of them laid out before us. But what of the summit itself, do we look at that? Or is it a kind of non-space from which we gaze at other spaces, ignoring our immediate surroundings?

I've ascended many hills over the years and can describe the view from the top of most of them. Although, all too often in Scotland and Wales, all I could see was low cloud! The place that's always difficult to describe, however, is the summit itself. The point we strive to reach tends to be flatish, rocky, maybe with a cairn or triangulation pillar at its highest point, but rarely is there anything unique to distinguish one summit from another.

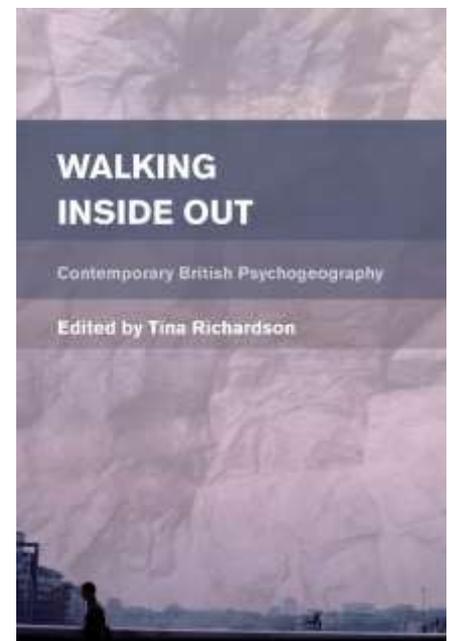


With this essay in mind on a recent walk up Cadair Idris, I ignored taking the usual pictures of my walking companions or the view from the top and instead concentrated on photographing what was beneath my

feet there on the summit: a platform of shattered rock, scree and tufts of hardy grass. Unfortunately, I lost that camera and with it my pictures on another walk the following day. It seems the mountain was reluctant to give up her secrets that easily.

Maybe the answer to what it is that draws us to mountain-tops is not in something substantial like the nature of this bit of rock or that. It is more a case, perhaps, of the jolt such places provide to one's imagination. From the summit there is only one direction; every path I take leads down. But, casting my eyes upwards, I embrace a limitless dome of sky.

Bobby is a writer. His blog www.psychogeographicreview.com provides a good introduction to his work.



Due July 2015. Published by Rowman and Littlefield International.

Walking Inside Out is the first text that attempts to merge the work of literary and artist practitioners with academics to critically explore the state of psychogeography today. The collection explores contemporary psychogeographical practices, shows how a critical form of walking can highlight easily overlooked urban phenomenon, and examines the impact that everyday life in the city has on the individual. Through a variety of case studies, it offers a British perspective of international spaces, from the British metropolis to the post-communist European city.



Night Reading

by J.F. Lawrence

The city-state of New Southampton lies within high-security walls enclosing a society traumatised by its collective experience of the deadliness of the automobile. This society has created a mythology of automotive disasters built on a final and seemingly irrevocable revulsion at the damage done to human life and the environment by its addiction to the automobile. It has rejected all automotive vehicles, proscribing their production by law. Everybody has to walk everywhere, and this has necessitated an inflexible rationalisation of the city's street planning: every thoroughfare is part of a strictly rectilinear grid system interconnecting a complex landscape of buildings, walkways and overpasses all designed with the ideology of enforced ambulation in mind. This cityscape has been drained of all imagination; its architecture is mostly utilitarian, lacking any flair; its streets are uniform in width, being just broad enough for horse-drawn trams and carts; its public spaces are semi-militarised, constructed to facilitate the use of bicycles – banned to the citizenry and only used by the police and the City Guard. No clandestine alleyways or hidden footpaths wait to lead potential wanderers astray. All foot-fall is steered towards the service of work, commerce and pre-packaged leisure provided by corporations whose aloof, inexorable power is disguised behind cheerful logos, mythologised in images of individual empowerment and material success enjoyed by contentedly ideal families. Everywhere is under 24/7 surveillance, under constant suspicion of being a potential site for symptoms of car lust; all images of speed and locomotive power have been banned, and such images are subject to powerful taboos. A curfew restricts night-time movements to commercial and manufacturing traffic, the darkness being deemed a serious risk factor in the cause of accidents. Lone wandering beyond the maze of streets is a subversive brush with random travel, a potential playground for fantasies that can develop into autophilia. Slowness has been fetishised, and even running is viewed with suspicion by the Central Committee. The official unit of length is the ped; all horse-drawn vehicles have meters measuring their average peds-per-hour linked to the city's Transport

Network Guardian. New Southampton is the epitome of the totalised city: efficient, micromanaged and lifeless, a graveyard for dreams.

L. is disturbed by his recurring dream of riding a motorcycle at high speed beyond the city wall, out across the wasteland that used to be the New Forest and along an Autobahn like the ones in the pictures in the ancient car magazines that he and his school friends secretly passed around three decades earlier. He gets out of bed and looks out of the panoramic window of his luxury apartment in the Old Town: the gated community sequestered behind the Bargate Tower, to which Sotonians half-jokingly say all roads lead, and the reconstructed Old Walls. This Norman castle is the seat of the Committee; its ramparts are manned by armed guards who probe the shadows with blinding searchlights, and it stands over an underground network of rooms adapted long ago from the old vaults where mediaeval wine merchants stored their barrels. The powerful street lights blanch the facade of The Guildhall, where L. works as Head Co-ordinator of Public Transport Licensing; they momentarily emphasise the corporate logos on its edifices and neoclassical columns. He looks up at the horizon. The stars are obscured by hologram advertisements projected against the night sky. Darkness is hard to find in New Southampton. L. considers with grim resignation the prospect of the impending day of sustained periods of stress and boredom. Not for the first time he wonders about that motorcycle and where it might lead.



He looks beyond the Old Walls at the western and northern districts of New Southampton, and from his high perspective on the 99th floor of his building he can see the outlying regions, the partially protected hinterland that feeds the city with workers and shoppers: the disputed territory claimed by a resistance group (terrorists according to the Committee) called The Autonomous Association of Ambulatory Anarchists.

The group's influence has rapidly spread beyond the blasted remains of Totton, where it was formed by a subversive group of psychogeographers and political radicals who held

clandestine meetings among the town's ruins until they chose direct action; out to the Waterside, the rusty catwalks across Great Eling Marsh, the rough coracles of impoverished fishers bobbing across Bartley Water; to the tent city and tunnel system running south-eastwards along the River Test and Southampton Water, connecting the tiny shanty towns of Marchwood, Hythe, Dibden Purlieu, Hardley, Holbury and Fawley in a makeshift conurbation of mocked-up housing constructed from the scavenged detritus of industry and civil war; north-eastwards, via the Calmore Bomb Crater, beyond the Test, where the ruins of Nursling, Rowhams, Chilworth (a tin-can statue of Alfred Watkins defiantly stands on the roundabout) and Eastleigh harbour a Situationist-Earth Mysteries alliance militia just outside the northern sector of the security wall. These areas are heavily land-mined, and the tanks of the Southampton Citizens' Army have left tracks there recently.

Apart from the Committee-sanctioned carts that slowly ply the thoroughfares within the city at night, delivering to restaurants, clip-clopping between the docks and warehouses, and an armed policewoman patrolling on a bicycle, there are no souls to be seen below. Dead minds in a dead city.

L. goes into the kitchen to put some coffee on. He will not be able to get back to sleep now, he knows, so he decides to do some reading. He tells his panic room's voice-activated hidden door the key code and goes inside. Again he calls out a key code and watches with anticipation the bombproof safe that descends from the ceiling. Another code opens it, and L. reaches inside. He takes out a tattered paperback, smiling at the title on its cover: *The Revolution of Everyday Life*. How many times has he read this talisman for his philosophy?

He smiles as he sips coffee and pores over the book. He is totally dedicated to being the AAAA's inside man.

J.F. Lawrence is a freelance writer based in Southampton. He blogs on new music, books and other things that attract his drifting eye, as it roves across the memescape in search of sanity, at <https://mrdzhimbo.wordpress.com>. He is a co-author of the genre-warping New Weird urban fantasy story cycle Red Phone Box, published by Ghostwood Books: www.gwdbooks.com/red-phone-box.html

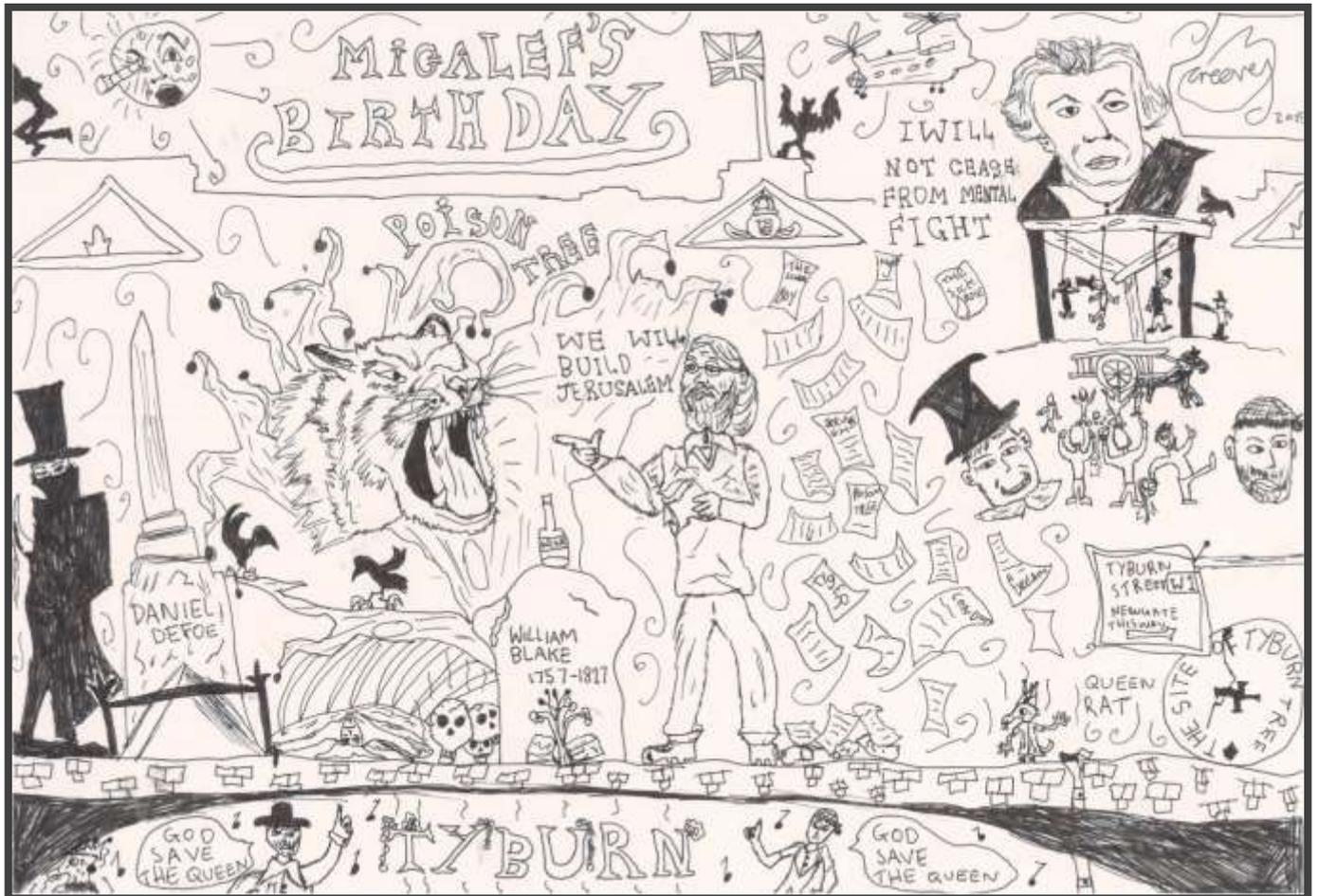


Illustration by Marlowe Chan-Reeves

A Psychogeography Bucket List

by Anna Chism

Ahead of the release of her edited volume Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography Anna Chism interviews Tina Richardson on those spaces and places that are top of her wish list when it comes to psychogeographical exploration.

I eventually find Tina's house just off the Leeds Ring Road. With a pub, bowls club, wooded area and dog-walking field opposite, it is a geographical combination of suburban-rural. I imagine it is an interesting space for a psychogeographer to reside. She has lived in this part of North Leeds for the past three years in a post-Victorian terraced house along with her elderly companion, ex-hippy turned nun, Sister Moonshine.

Tina could not be described as a reluctant interviewee, giving interviews to anyone who will give her a minute of their time. As part of the current revival of psychogeography she is one of the 'the new psychogeographers', the moment whereby psychogeography is

becoming increasingly self-conscious and reflexive.

Tina welcomes me into her study – a room full of books and objet d'art resembling a pretentious kitsch version of Freud's office – and we settle by the window with our rooibos. I throw my coat over a fluorescent green plaster-of-Paris version of Rodin's *David* and congratulate her on the record-breaking numbers of pre-orders of her new volume. And we begin.

AC: Tina, tell me the top three places in the world you would like to carry out a psychogeography-related project.

TR: At the moment – and this list would possibly be different if you asked me in a year's time – it would be Dubai, Camp Bastion and Wymondham College.

AC: Well, I've heard of the first two, but where the heck is Wymondham College and what makes it a place ripe for psychogeography?

TR: It's actually a secondary school in Norfolk not far from Norwich and it used to be a military hospital up until it became a grammar school in 1951. It's

a publicly funded boarding school and has a noteworthy campus format, and needless to say, an interesting history, which actually includes Anglo Saxon finds. At one time the pupils slept in Nissan huts left there by the British Forces and even up until the 1980s attended classes in the huts. Only one Nissan hut remains now, as part of the school's heritage.

AC: What angle would you take if you had the opportunity to work on the campus?

TR: Well, while it would be easy for me to use the same methodology I did for my PhD – a schizocartography of a campus space (in that instance the University of Leeds) – I think Wymondham College lends itself better to one of haunting. For instance, part of the original hospital had a mortuary, but more significantly than that are the anecdotal stories that have become memes promulgated by the pupils themselves. These ghostly stories about the college are passed on to all the new pupils by the older ones, often carried out in performative way on specific dates each year.

AC: Tell me what it is about Dubai that takes your urban fancy?

TR: Ever since I've been a psychogeographer I've been interested in Dubai. I used to teach a class on it and used it as an example of a postmodern space. In a way it is a post postmodern space. If Los Angeles represents the postmodern city par excellence, then Dubai represents the next phase of urban development, whatever the name for that might be. Dubai needs its own school of urbanism and theory like Chicago and Los Angeles had. This potential school will look at a dynamics of urbanism whereby actual physical space is created from 'nothing', either vertically, as in Blade Runner and The Fifth Element, or horizontally, for example like Dubai, from the sea, by creating islands of sand.

AC: What kind of problems might you anticipate if you were to carry out psychogeography in Dubai?

TR: I'm not sure what it is like for a woman to walk in Dubai. It is not a pedestrian-friendly city, by all accounts. I did a project in Los Angeles – the city of cars – and that was interesting in a place where walking was a rare process of moving about the city. However, in regards to Dubai, my interest is in the spaces that have been formed out of the sea, such as the Palm Islands. These islands can be seen from space. They have changed the lay of the land on a very fundamental level and in an amazingly creative way.

AC: Thanks, Tina. Now for your final space. Surely you've missed the psychogeographical boat on Camp Bastion?

TR: Yes, I'm afraid that's true. Ideally I would have loved to have done a project during the peak of its decommissioning, but it is coming to an end now. Camp Bastion is returning to the desert from whence it sprung, a bit like Dubai but in reverse. Camp Bastion was a city as well as a military airbase. It required a project in itself in the dismantling of it – actually costing six times more than that of its creation. It's a unique space and it is this that makes it intriguing to me. Before Camp Bastion, Chernobyl was on my bucket list, but Chernobyl has been worked and re-worked a lot in recent times.

AC: How would you have made your case for doing a project in Camp Bastion?

TR: Well, I wouldn't have passed the security checks even if there was the remotest chance they'd have allowed a civvy on the camp. They would have taken one look at my website and thought 'There is no way we are letting that lefty subversive anywhere near this base'!

AC: What other places are on your bucket list?

TR: Portmerion, Fordlandia and Celebration would all be interesting places to explore, and for similar reasons, and are definitely on my list.

AC: Before we finish, can I ask you what you are working on now?

TR: I'm currently scheduling talks for the promotion of the book and working on the autumn edition of Stepz.

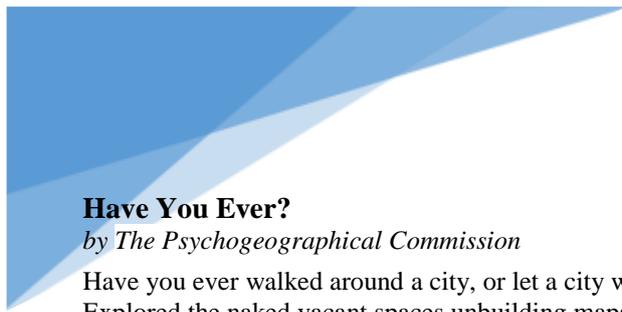
Tina's edited volume *Walking Inside Out: Contemporary British Psychogeography* is published by Rowman and Littlefield International and will be out in July 2015. You can find out more about her work on her website: www.schizocartography.org

Originally from Argleton, Anna Chism is a scaffolder turned journalist. She was the editor of *The Argleton Argus* for 10yrs before turning to freelance reporting. She now lives with her gerbil in Furrisyde, Berks.



Psychogeography Blogs & Websites

- www.particulations.blogspot.co.uk
- www.unofficialbritain.com
- www.sartreandsartre.com
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- www.psychogeographicreview.com
- www.shrinkingcities.com
- www.some-landscapes.blogspot.co.uk



Have You Ever?

by *The Psychogeographical Commission*

Have you ever walked around a city, or let a city walk through you.
Explored the naked vacant spaces unbuilding maps within your mind.
Holding thoughts of strange pavilion, synapse fire down alley dark.
Soothing hum from dead surroundings, strangled rivers bound in stone.

Have you laid upon a pavement, and bathed upon the street.
Vibrations slowing heartbeat brick and iron helixed spine.
The throbbing of the concrete slab, its pulse becomes a tide.
A living breathing organ pumping people through its veins.

London always was a strange place, full of dreams and dice rolls cast.
The same faces still inhabit archetypes of Jungian mind.
Razored strips of cloud sail back, in silvered pools of rain.
Burning laser sigil formed divine metropolis of life.



The Historic Symmetry of Caledonian Park

by John Rogers

I first spotted the top of the clock tower in Caledonian Park from the street that ran in front of the estate where I lived on Barnsbury Road. A tantalising white spike rising above tree canopies spied on the way to take my toddler to the swings in Barnard Park. All roads led to that spot from the high ridge running north from Pentonville Road. Copenhagen Street ran down one side of the estate, on which stood the King of Denmark Pub, one of the estate blocks was even called Copenhagen House – all in honour of the illustrious history of the area in the shadow of the clock tower that had previously gained notoriety as Copenhagen Fields, named after a forgotten Danish noble.

The tower stands on a hillock rising from a sacred plain that stretches across the floor of the Fleet Valley reaching out at the foot of London's Northern Heights. This is where William Blake saw the golden pillars of Jerusalem in his 'drama of the psyche':

The fields from Islington to Marylebone, To Primrose Hill and St John's Wood, Were builded over with pillars of gold, And there Jerusalem's pillars stood.

Blake the Druid having visions of Jesus wandering in the lush pastures now built over, and being rebuilt once again transitioning from puking out the stink of noxious trades and railway smog to new blocks built of solid Capital rising amongst the fields of Victorian houses

and council estates. You need to look carefully for the gold pillars of Jerusalem. The poet's feet in not so ancient time must have walked those same Barnsbury Streets laden with myths emanating from the springs gurgling to the surface of the pleasure gardens which in turn had taken the place of oak groves and it is believed, Merlin's Cave (also the name of a 70's prog rock venue near where the cave is said to have been).

I'd carried out a survey of sorts 10 years ago, baby strapped to my chest, old Olympus 35mm camera to make the visual record of the trip. The local newspapers had been full of horror stories about the area. The decaying Market Estate that wrapped itself around the three sides of Caledonian Park had been declared 'Hell' by its residents, a young boy, Christopher Pullen, had been killed by a falling door. There were reports of collapsed ceilings, exposed wires, boarded-up windows. Sex workers pushed north by the Kings Cross redevelopment patrolled Market Road and operated amongst the park undergrowth. Two prostitutes from this beat had been brutally murdered. A £41million regeneration scheme had been drawn up to demolish the estate, improve the park and restore "the historic symmetry of the site", reopening the north-south axis.

I set out again on a sultry May Day weekend, following the footsteps in reverse of the huge demonstration in support of the Tolpuddle Martyrs that had mustered on Copenhagen Fields in 1834 before the 40,000 protestors headed for Whitehall. The martyrs are

commemorated with a large mural on Copenhagen Street and the local police station sits ironically in Tolpuddle Street. In 1795 an enormous gathering of Chartists, 100,000 strong, met at the Copenhagen House pleasure garden. A radical spirit permeates through the damp soil here working its way down the valley to Holford Square where Lenin plotted the Russian Revolution.



Today the atmosphere is muted. There is the bleak humour of the Breakout Café opposite the gates of Pentonville Prison. Market Road appears free of streetwalkers replaced by students ambling along the pavement to the 'Prodigy urban student living'. The park where the sex workers plied their trade is now the scene of picnicking families and gentle kickabouts. Hawthorn blossom drapes over the Victorian railings that had contained the vast Metropolitan Cattle Market that moved here from Smithfield in 1855 - the 'smooth-field' itself a place of medieval vision and congregation. Is there a subconscious need to slaughter cattle on sacred ground?

The clock tower had been built for the cattle market both of which had been overshadowed in their day by the famous Pedlers Market. It was considered one of the great wonders of London. The topographer HV Morton described the scene in his 1925 book *The Heart of London* – a friend picks up an Egyptian Mummy, Morton is offered a human skeleton for 10 shillings. The painter Walter Sickert proclaimed it his idea of heaven. A fella by the name of Jack Cohen had a stall that by the terrible magick of this zone became Tesco supermarket.

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After the Second World War there were no signs of the 2000+ market stalls and the loud banter of the traders. Robert Colville describes a state of “weed-covered dereliction” in 1951 with the four grand market Gin Palaces looking “gaunt”. None of the three that remain still trade as boozers. The White Horse and The Lion have been converted to residential while The Lamb has progressed from “gaunt” to abandoned, aluminium grills filling in the gaps between the wrought iron filigree that adorns the entrances. It’s difficult to summon up the clamour of the masses that flocked here for political gatherings and market trading. The only people by the still standing market gates are a couple with a toddler scuttling over the gravel path on a scooter.

The builders of the new housing that has replaced the Market Estate – Parkview, have conceded defeat to the resonance of the Clock Tower and opened up that north-south axis, the low-rise blocks folding back discreetly trying to stay out of view. The failed modernist development of the previous scheme had attempted to contain and frame the tower at one end of a wide-open cracked paving-slabbed piazza. The beautiful mural depicting the heyday of the Caledonian Market didn’t even want to be there anymore when I last visited and was peeling off the wall in a bid for escape. The power of the clock tower, and the final acknowledgement from the planners that the estate was an architectural mistake, smashed those Le Corbusier inspired concrete pillars to the ground. A street name commemorates the short life of Christopher Pullen.

York Way flops over the apex of the rising ground at one end of the park and estate where the surviving Corporation of London blocks sail the skyline. This ancient thoroughfare previously known as Maiden Lane that EO Gordon, a century after Blake, dreamt linked the Pen Ton Mound near Copenhagen Street with its sister Holy site on Parliament Hill, and saw druid ceremonials process northwards to celebrate the solstices. In this vision York Way was one of the principle roads not of a New Jerusalem but a New Troy built by the war refugee Brutus. It now leads to a New Kings Cross.

John Rogers is the author of This Other London: Adventures in the Overlooked City published by Harper Collins. He directed the documentary The London

Perambulator, and also produced and co-presented Ventures and Adventures in Topography on Resonance 104.4fm. You can find out more about him at www.thelostbyway.com

Emotive Terrains - PhD Thesis

by Bill Psarras ©

2011 – 2015
Goldsmiths University of London

Title: *Emotive Terrains: Exploring the emotional geographies of city through walking as art, senses and embodied technologies.*

Abstract: Walking has always been the nexus between humans and the city, constituting an expression with artistic, cultural, performative and sensorial implications for an array of artistic and intellectual voices. This thesis investigates the personal and shared emotional geographies of the city (e.g. streets, tube stations) through performative and aesthetic considerations of walking, senses, metaphors and embodied technologies. Three areas primarily inform this thesis and shape its chapters:

1 contemporary urban walking theories and artistic spatial practices (e.g. flaneur, psychogeography)

2 sensory/technological aspects of walking and of contemporary city and

3 the investigation of emotional geographies.

The research has opened up new dialogues within the 21st century city by highlighting the sensory and social importance of walking as art and the flaneur in the production and exploration of emotional geographies. Consequently, it proposes a hybrid walking as art method, which is pursued through a trialectic of actions, senses and selected metaphors (e.g. “botanizing”, “weaving”, “tuning”, “orchestrating”) amplified by technologies. The core inventive method and methodology is personal or shared walking, shaped by the qualitative sub-methods of talking whilst walking, embodied audiovisual/GPS tools, metaphors and

online blogging. These methods contribute to a live reflection and documentation of sensory and emotional attentiveness.

Outputs of this research include a series of fully documented walking artworks in London and Athens, presented through audiovisual means and maps. This thesis argues that the trialectic of actions, senses and metaphors through technologies extends our understanding of walking and flaneur as a hybrid method of production and analysis. Consequently, it recontextualizes the concept of flaneur in the 21st century city by proposing the one of the *hybrid flaneur/flaneuse* through a merging of artistic, sensorial, sociological and geographical standpoints. Therefore, the thesis offers new and distinctive insights into the practices and theories of walking, regarding interdisciplinary explorations of emotional geographies of the city.

Bill Psarras (1985) is a Greek artist and musician. After BA and MA studies in audiovisual and digital arts in Greece and UAL, he holds a PhD in Arts & Technology from Goldsmiths University of London (AHRC funded). His walking-based work focuses on hybrid explorations of flanerie and emotional geographies in the 21st century city through walking as art, senses and embodied technologies. His works have been exhibited in international festivals (Europe, US, Australia) and group exhibitions. He has published in international conferences including ISEA 19th and Emotional Geographies 2013 and as a keynote speaker at the University of Chichester. He is a rock guitarist and the man behind Ludmilla MS ambient project. www.billpsarras.tumblr.com and www.hybridflaneur.wordpress.com

Small STEPZ

by Sophia Emmanouil

(please see p11-12)

‘Small STEPZ’ is a playful psychogeographical study of Chapeltown Road in Leeds through the eyes of her 5 year old explorer daughter, Elena. It is a collection of images, thoughts, objects, interventions and observations from Elena during a playful drift where her little STEPZ take her in urban spaces that become alive and animate in her eyes.



Small STEPZS in Chapeltown Road

What if we begin to see the urban space as alive and animate as a 5 year old?

What if every object found had a story?

What are the chances of finding again the experience of the "quest" we lost in our current culture of 'Immediacy'?



Follow Elena in her playful drift in Chapeltown road, collecting objects, images, stories, textiles, tastes, and the stories she is creating in her attempt to find those elusive items.



(see previous images)

Sophia is an Architect and Senior Lecturer in Architecture at the University of Huddersfield. She is also a participatory arts facilitator and runs a range of projects in partnership with schools, community groups and other Voluntary and Community Collectives. Her research, which incorporates Situationist approaches to space, place and mapping, transgresses architecture, design and education, and takes experimental approaches to sustainability and psychogeography. Sophia's work also considers art, design and architecture from a public engagement perspective. Elena is five year old and loves painting, stories, exploring and discovering new places. She collects objects, takes pictures and makes collages. She likes popcorn and the sea. She is an explorer of all sorts. For more info about Sophia's Work: <https://www.hud.ac.uk/ourstaff/profile/index.php?staffuid=sdesse> Email: s.emmanouil@hud.ac.uk

Birmingham's Chrome Chrysalis

by Ally Standing

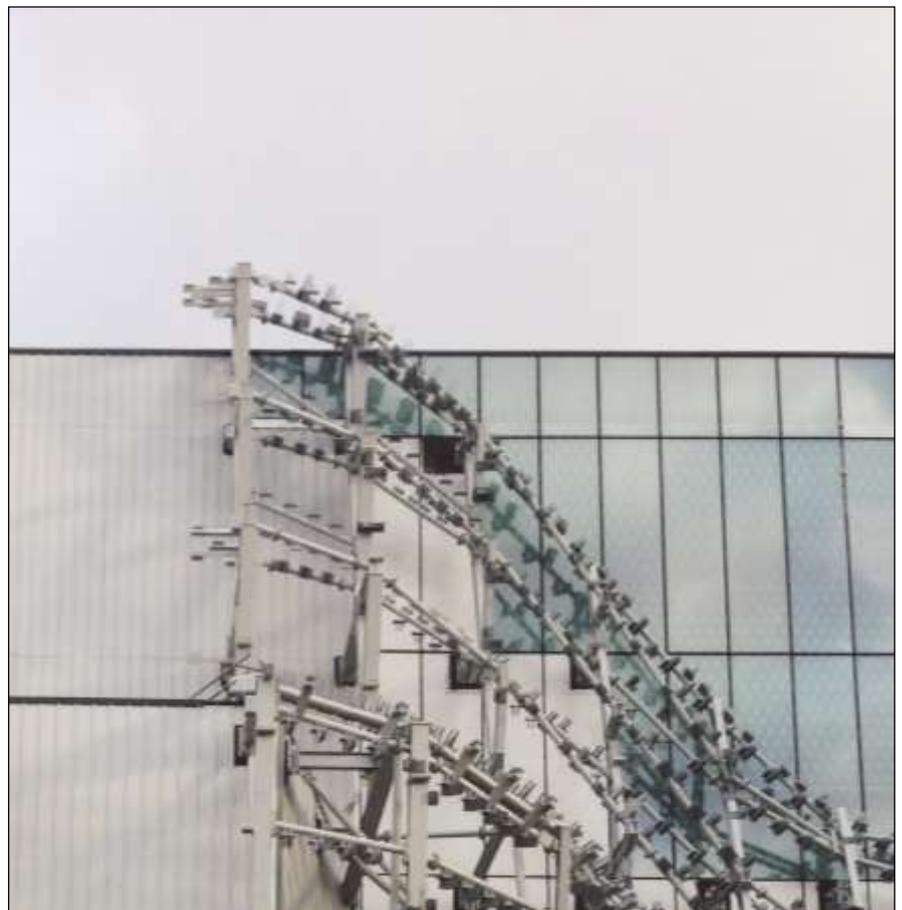
Birmingham: a city who, in terms of urban planning, lives by its motto, *Forward*. It is well known for its post-war period of redevelopment, which saw the demolition of many historic landmarks, rapid construction of social buildings and high-density public housing schemes, as well as a feverish phase of road-building. Despite brave and visionary intentions, it was this period of redevelopment which gave the city the 'concrete jungle' tag it has struggled to shake off since then. The Birmingham of today is ready to shed itself of this negative reputation; trying to come to terms with its status as a post-industrial, postmodern city. John Madin's Central Library of 1974, a prominent example of Brutalist architecture - which has been called 'Birmingham's most loved and hated building' - awaits demolition later this year having failed to achieve listed status, and as I write, the 1967 version of Birmingham New Street station is undergoing an extensive metamorphosis. Unlike the library, the station is still in daily use and is passed through by thousands of commuters each day, to whom the construction process is simultaneously revealed and concealed. Many users of the station

may not give much thought to the construction taking place - but for the seasoned urban explorer, it makes the perfect place to reflect upon the city's changing aesthetic ideals, and on how public spaces behave.

Birmingham New Street station, at the time of construction in 1854, had the largest single-span arched roof in the world. Sadly, this once record-breaking roof was dismantled after WW2 having been badly damaged during the Birmingham Blitz, and in 1964 this impressive Victorian station fell victim to the city's post-war period of 'brumolition' and was demolished to make way for a rebuild which would open in 1967, and which proved to be largely unpopular. The platforms in particular were dark, gloomy, and oppressive, with the weight of thousands of tons of concrete above: a million miles away from the bright and lofty expanse of the original station.

The current £550m redevelopment by Gateway Plus sees a complete transformation of the station's entrance, concourse and exterior, the latter being perhaps, for urban onlookers at least, the most visually dramatic element of the renovation: week by week, we watch the

main structure of the building become wrapped in a freeform metal framework, whose appearance does something to conjure up the image of an alien exoskeleton, growing like a strange fungus across the edifice. Onto this framework panels of reflective cladding are attached, spreading slowly over the structure like scales, creating an amorphous silver outer structure, an urban spectacle which is interesting on a number of levels. Not only is this aspect of the construction visually engaging, it also provokes thought about the shift from modernism to postmodernism. The imposing and monumental structures of the Brutalists with their unashamed use of concrete as a main building material, often forming the façades and interiors as well as the internal structure, have been replaced by the *trompe l'oeil* of postmodernism: structural support mechanisms hidden away in favour of materials that convey an almost impossible lightness of form. This 'trickery' is something apparent when observing the current development of New Street's exterior - the metal framework on top of the underlying structure revealing the secret behind the illusion.





In most cases, our experience of modern-day projects is that of rapidly-erected buildings, concealed from public view and access during construction. All of a sudden, the building seems to appear from nowhere, and it is hard to remember what was there before, or even to imagine it never existed. Being a nationally vital transport link in constant use, redevelopment of New Street makes slower progress than other projects might, due to the logistics of allowing thousands of people to safely use and move through the station daily. This also means that those passing through the station can get closer to the construction process than they perhaps would with other private projects.

The experience of this space during construction is interesting. Throughout the station, endless signage directs those who pass through, their paths constantly re-routed through temporary corridors which open and close as the development progresses. The process is simultaneously revealed and concealed to the viewer: sounds of construction can be heard behind what seems like miles of boarding, some of which is printed with artists' impressions of how the station will look when finished - which though common practice, seems strange to print onto something used to conceal the structure itself. As well as artists' impressions, we see recurring graphics used throughout the station on signage relating to the redevelopment - a caterpillar and a butterfly - the ideal representation of metamorphosis.

Though a somewhat clichéd visual metaphor, it is interesting to consider the different layers of concealment (the cladding and framework, the boarding and protective wrapping) as a cocoon of sorts, and the station itself as a living and breathing organism.

Outside the station, temporary structures act as interventions which are at once within the public realm, and outside of it, blocked from close access with fencing. At night these structures become all the more visually interesting, for many of them are covered with temporary strip lights, which are also present throughout the station, some of them glowing eerily behind gauze-like mesh. Some are installed laterally on the boarded walls, creating a strange 'exhibition' of walls and spaces. Though different materially to those used in the late 60s and 70s, the lights have a captivating and ephemeral quality which does something to bring to mind the work of artists such as Dan Flavin. Viewing and experiencing these lights and structures in this way brings about questions as to where the line between public art and public intervention really lies.

Birmingham New Street Station, in its current state of redevelopment, is the perfect place in which to reflect upon the city's changing ideals and landscape. The development of the building's exterior is not only visually striking and engaging, but also sets up a dialogue between the modern and the postmodern. There is a certain duality which seems evident in several aspects of the development: the station user is both allowed to pass right through and amongst the construction while simultaneously having it obscured and concealed from them. Also, it is a project which although will change the look of the station beyond recognition, actually leaves many parts of the internal structure unchanged - evidenced by the old Pallasades sign (the shopping centre above the station which has now closed) still on the wall, but covered now with the reflective cladding. Views on this redevelopment are mixed: some eagerly await its end, inconvenienced by the constant re-routing, some are unimpressed by the visual effect of the exterior - 'Selfridge's ugly sister' - but personally, I feel that the station is more interesting in its current state than ever before, and that a closer and more creative look at

this changing place offers a wholly different experience.

The Memory in Place

by S.:

One of the mysteries of memory is how it endures. When a neural protein lasts for only a few weeks and the cortex is slowly regenerating, how do our memories persist when our experiences and thoughts outlast the brain itself?

It is widely accepted that we don't actually remember things that happened a long time ago, but we remember the last time we remembered them. It also comes as no surprise that the brain should use external markers as signposts to memories, which help renew the triggers to batches of related inputs in what can be a badly maintained index. This is how a glimpse of something, a taste, smell or a feeling can suddenly take us back to a long forgotten memory, which sometimes can take minutes or even hours to reform in a coherent form. Places leave all sorts of markers in the brain and the longer the time period you spend there, the more of these markers you create and the more engrained they become as being 'of that location'. Moving into a new home often gives a feeling of living in an unreal place, somewhere you're not used to, with strange noises and a sense of coldness, but within a few months however your mind acclimatises and it feels like home. This is due to the process of building triggers associated with warmth and security which, amongst others, reduce the immediate environment into an externalised 'mind palace' of retriggering neural associations. In a way personalised emotions and events are being stored in the brick work making it more familiar. The opposite of this can be felt in January, when a house suddenly feels empty as Christmas decorations are removed. Associations have been made with the tree, cards and decorations which are then missed when they are removed, only to be renewed the following year on the restoration of the connection to the objects leading to an easing to the recovery of memories concerning Christmases past.

It's often remarked that a person's home or even their desk at work reflects a projection of their mind. A further extrapolation would allow someone to read another person's room or desk psychologically as a projection of them.

Crime scene detectives do it all the time, assessing a scene with the trained eye, or an art critic looking for indicators to behaviour, habits and likely chains of cause and effect, entering another person's memories using their triggers.

It should therefore come as no surprise that the older the building is (or the more lived in), then the more it will contain a history of its many inhabitants and remnants of their memory markers, some of which are more accessible than others. What was important in the room could possibly be divined from the positioning of furniture, detectable in the wear of carpets or worn indentations in wooden floors along with their most common movements. The size and placement of paintings can be found in the fading of wallpaper that used to be around them, along with their preference for portraits or landscapes. Scratch marks of differing types (even those covered in paint) can distinguish the presence of dogs or cats. Not only is it possible to recreate the room/building in question, but it should also be possible to recreate the people if enough of the projection remains.

Rooms contain access-ways to engrained thought patterns directly from the past. When walking around them, your mind tries to reconstruct a narrative using the physical information, your own memory pathways and reconstructed indicators to make sense of the frozen, antiquated markers. Why would you have placed things like this? Who would sit in each chair? What happened daily in this room? What would be in their field of view? Sometimes you get things wrong, but people and their motivations down the ages haven't changed that much. We all still have the same basic fears and desires guiding our lives.

The markers of our modern day everyday environment are thrown in as an unconscious key to a largely subconscious code, combining with those frozen in the place to produce a reconstruction of the past, even occasionally specific events if there is enough information left. With these engrained markers - empathy and imagination - memories can outlast not only the short time span in which they first occurred, but the person who once created them.

S.: is currently attempting to resurrect Toutatis, the ancient Celtic God of Roundabouts, and investigating the

everyday uses of Druidry and other magick systems in Town Planning for upcoming Psychogeographical Commission projects. For more details on the Commission and its work, visit www.psychetecture.com

Ipsissmus Yeats: The Poet-Magus in London

by Niall McDevitt
photos by Max Reeves

1 London was Yeats' third eye, bearing witness to the Victorian occult revival and the literary-aesthetic movements of the fin de siècle: Pre-Raphaelitism, Symbolism, Decadence, Modernism. As 'National Poet of Ireland', the stock image of Yeats is Dublin theatre-manager/cultural nationalist and Sligo poet/folklorist; but he spent long periods of childhood, youth, middle-age and old-age in London. West London is the Yeatsian heartland, but significant sites abound.



2 "Here you are somebody", warned an aunt in Ireland before the Yeats family emigrated to England, "There you will be nobody at all". The London episodes of Yeats' childhood were unhappy. Yeats' father abandoned law to paint, and moved his family from Dublin to London in 1867. They lived in bohemian squalor for six years at 23 Fitzroy Road, Primrose Hill. This address is a modern myth: the site of Sylvia Plath's suicide in 1963. She rented the flat for its Yeats plaque. More happily, it was the birthplace of Jack Butler Yeats, now regarded as Ireland's greatest painter. In 1874 the Yeatses moved to 14 Edith Villas, Fulham. In 1879, they moved to 8 Woodstock Road, Turnham Green, in the garden suburb of Bedford Park. Yeats also had sisters, the remarkable Lily and Lolly.

3 Related to a rich Sligo shipping family, the impoverished London Yeats contented himself with a model boat called Sunbeam. Precocious alchemist, he changed its name to Moonbeam. Sailing in the Round Pond, Kensington – the magic mirror of the Modernists – a richer boy's larger boat crashed into it. Another unhappy London moment is told in *Autobiographies*: "A poignant memory came upon me the other day while I was passing the drinking-fountain near Holland Park, for there I and my sister had spoken together of our longing for Sligo and our hatred of London."

4 Yeats attended school at Godolphin in Iffley Road, Hammersmith, but was dyslexic like Blake. Reports labelled him "backward" and "very poor in spelling". Then Godolphin was a working-class school for boys; now it is a super-posh

school for girls. There is no commemoration of Yeats.

5 In 1886 the Yeatses moved to 58 Eardley Crescent, Earls Court, a particularly miserable property. Then they returned to Bedford Park. At 3 Blenheim Road there is a triple plaque for John, William and Jack Butler Yeats. A victim of strokes, Yeats' mother retreated to her bedroom, severely depressed. Yeats began visiting his neighbor William Morris who lived at Kelmscott House, Upper Mall. Yeats transposed Morris's Pre-Raphaelitism to 'Celtic Twilight' but rejected the secularism of the Socialists. Sparks flew. "What was the use of talking about some new revolution putting all things right when change must come with astronomical slowness...?" Morris interrupted Yeats' rant with a

chairman's bell. Some years later they met on Strand. Morris said, "You write my kind of poetry!" but then caught sight of a modern lamppost and began cursing the design. The Yeats sisters learnt arts and crafts with Morris and went on to found Cuala Press, publishing deluxe first editions of Yeats and others.

6 Yeats and Edwin Ellis co-published *The Works of William Blake: Poetic, Symbolic, Critical* (1893). They determined to cure Blake's 'insanity'. Rossetti and Swinburne were hip to Blake but while everyone loved the songs, the prophetic books were off-limits. Yeats and Ellis got the Boehme/Paracelsus/Swedenborg effusions and their three-volume edition paved the way for the 20th century reception of Blake as genius. Yeats even followed his 'Master' to the extent of building his own system, the labyrinthine *A Vision*.

7 Yeats visited Blavatsky at 17 Lansdowne Crescent, Ladbroke Grove, but Madame didn't do magic, afraid of "black arts". Yeats met the charismatic MacGregor Mathers at the British Museum and joined the Order of the Golden Dawn. One of the most important Yeats sites in London – and Western occult sites of all – is 36 Blythe Road, near Olympia. The first floor was home to the Isis-Urania Temple where Second Order initiates met. In 1890, Mathers helped Yeats to envision a "black titan in sands" which thirty years later became the 'shape with lion body and the head of a man' in his apocalyptic classic 'The Second Coming'. In 1900, debarred candidate Aleister Crowley tried to storm the Temple dressed in Osiris mask and Highland kilt. Yeats blocked his entry and changed the locks. This is mythologized as The Battle of Blythe

Road. Yeats' magical alter ego was 'Demon Est Deus Inversus' (A Demon is an Inverse God). Crowley was terrified of this lanky, myopic diabolist, claiming Yeats had sent evil spirits to haunt his 69 Chancery Lane flat. Yeats never made the highest grade of magician: Ipsissimus. Nor did Crowley, though Crowley illegitimately conferred the honour upon himself.

8 Unlike other Irish writers, Yeats was no pub-goer. The exception is The Olde Cheshire Cheese, Fleet Street, where Yeats founded The Rhymers Club, doyens of Symbolism and Decadence. Fellow poets included

9 The Golden Dawn imploded. Yeats joined the Order of the Stella Matutina. Its Amoun Temple was at 47 and 56 Bassett Road, W10. Members observed pagan calendars. Wherever he was, Yeats had to come to London for equinoxes and solstices. Yeats married a young neophyte, George Hyde-Lees, at Harrow Road Registry Office. Ezra Pound was best man. Pound had come to London to meet Yeats "the only poet worth serious study". They became close friends. Yeats was 'Zeus' to Pound's 'Hercules'. Later the Steinach-operated Nobel laureate had multiple

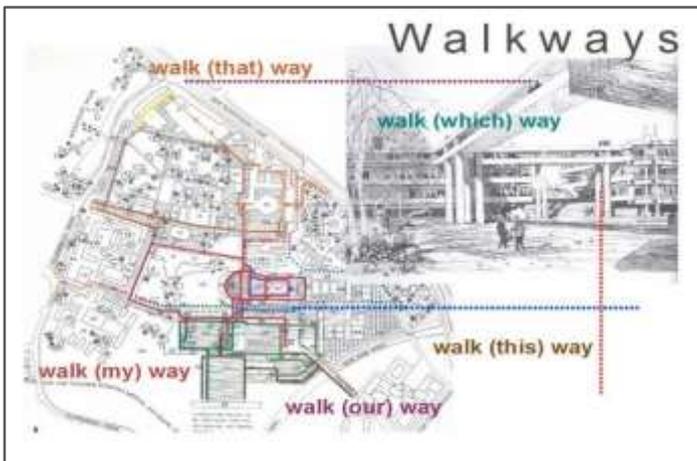


Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, and occasionally the high priest, Oscar Wilde. Yeats lived nearby at Fountain Court, Middle Temple, with poet-critic Arthur Symons. More inclined to asceticism than decadence, Yeats did try hashish and mescal, as well as visiting Verlaine in Paris. His first consummated affair was with novelist Olivia Shakespear, a married woman who rented a flat at 18 Woburn Buildings, Euston, as love-nest. Yeats lived there for 25 years. Poor but dandified, Yeats was known by his working-class neighbours as "the toff what lives in the Buildings".

affairs with women half his age. 52 Holland Park was where he used to meet his final flame, journalist Edith Shackleton Heald.

10 His poetry censors London. One famous line compensates, but is a negative: 'While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey....' Try 'Adam's Curse', 'The Mountain Tomb', 'The Grey Rock', 'All Souls Night' and 'Vacillation'. The sequence 'Upon a Dying Lady' was written for actress Mabel Beardsley – sister of Yeats' friend Aubrey – evoking her Hampstead deathbed. Yeats built no London but mined London for raw materials, the eye of his pyramid. 150 years on from his birth, his stature as poet-magician is unassailable. He is Ipsissimus.

2015 is the 150th anniversary of Yeats's birth on 13 June 1865.



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