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The Re-envisaging Of The Pendle Witches

AILSA READ

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

October 2020

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Abstract

This practice-based Ph.D. examines the historic and current images of the Pendle Witches and re-envisages the portrayal of them through art practice in the light of understanding the suffering they endured. It investigates the transformation they have undergone, from being considered as potential sources of danger in the seventeenth century to becoming caricatural figures of entertainment. The study recognises that the Pendle Witches are now in danger of being consigned to history as mythologised and stereotyped people, who are often portrayed through a misleading set of tropes. It also identifies the current lack of recognition and appreciation by the public regarding the suffering these witches endured. This research uses contemporary art practice to re-envisage them by focusing on their humanity and explores the potential realities of these witches, as opposed to the way in which they are now portrayed. This investigation has explored the historical and cultural development of the visual codes used as a means of representing witches, which was initiated from the fifteenth century onwards by European artists and printers. These enduring images still remain a strong influence in the representation of all witches, including the Pendle Witches.

As a way of forming a personal connection to these witches this research engaged in the experiential method of walking the 51- mile route they were enforced to take across the Lancashire landscape from the village of their interrogation to the place of their trials and executions. This walk was a stimulus in establishing a link with the witches, thereby creating empathy with the hardships they endured, both as a means of research to inform my art practice and also as a creative practice in itself. This was documented through photography and a visual diary to verify the journey and used in future exhibitions. A journal was employed as a complementary tool and a spontaneous way to reflect thought processes by documenting responses to the landscape and later allowing a personal evaluation of the journey. It was also useful to record and highlight the complexities of the walk, as a framework for the thesis and as an *aide memoire* by linking personal thoughts and inspirations to my artwork. The project also used interviews with contemporary witches and a local landowner as research tools for contextual information to broaden the focus of the research. These provided background knowledge to give an insight into local witchcraft practices, as well as investigating the myths which have been fabricated around the lives of local witches. The research methods have been explored to disrupt the now firmly entrenched images of the Pendle Witches and the artwork re-envisages them through the technology of laser cutting as a reference to their vulnerability.

This artwork gives a currency to their recognised persecution and moves away from the sensationalism and fantasy with which they are usually associated. A commemorative trail of ash was scattered along the path during the walk as a performative expression in reclaiming the witches as individuals rather than as a mythologised people.

The research contributes to knowledge by providing visual images which challenge the artistic invention and imagination of previous artists to forge a broader appreciation of the persecution of the Pendle Witches. It disrupts previous historic or contemporary portrayals and argues that re-envisioning the witches informs a better understanding in reclaiming their image for a more accurate depiction, which gives humanity to their lives. The resulting artwork has been exhibited in both solo and joint exhibitions nationally and internationally during the research, where data was collected from the public. These exhibitions have highlighted the significance of the study by demonstrating the lack of information the public have in recognising and identifying the way the Pendle Witches have been continually misrepresented.

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INTRODUCTION

This practice-based research has investigated the stereotyped images which have come to represent the Lancashire Pendle Witches, and explores how they can be re-envisioned through a contemporary art practice. The witches were among a group of twenty individuals accused of witchcraft in 1612 and their trials became known as the Lancashire Witch Trials. Subsequently, eleven of the accused were charged with witchcraft and condemned to death; they are now known as the Pendle Witches.

They were among those persecuted as witches in a discriminatory practice which lasted throughout Europe for nearly three hundred years. It had such an intensity that it is described by Brian Levack in *The Handbook of European History 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation* (1995) as a ‘witch craze’ (p. 607). This term denotes the accusations and unjustified actions against hundreds of people in Europe who were perceived to be witches. Levack points out that few scholars believe that those accused of witchcraft “[...] engaged in the activities they were accused of” (p. 612). The word *witch* has been modified to become a derogatory term instead of appreciating the reality of the unjust persecution suffered by those accused of witchcraft. The research has explored why the Pendle Witches, who were caught up in these accusations, have inherited the stereotyped image of a witch as an evil woman dressed in black, wearing a pointed hat and usually with a cat. Popular culture often uses these caricatured images without considering their true stories. This accepted visual code of witches was originally shaped and fashioned by patriarchal European artists in the fifteenth century and is a motif which continues to influence their depiction in folklore, fairy tales, novels and films.

This is a recognisable image which is repeated as a representation of the Pendle Witches throughout the region of Lancashire where they lived. The scope of this project is to reclaim the portrayal of them by moving away from this usual image of sensationalism and fantasy with which they are associated. As a familiar caricatured figure of fantasy this representation of the witches makes no allowance for any nuance or multiple interpretations; it now presents little or no explanation about the reality of their lives. These misjudged, stereotypical images are now well established and used as a commercial asset in the region, which re-enforces the

fact that the seventeenth century persecution of these witches has largely been disregarded. This current, recognisable and symbolic motif of witches has a one-image-fits-all attitude, which does not allow for multiple interpretations and refuses to acknowledge their real existence. The research posits that current interpretations of the Pendle Witches are incomplete, as they draw on scaremongering images of witchcraft from the fifteenth century to create a caricatured cliché, which functions as a visual code for evil or superstitious practices, divorced from any information about them. Fiction has overtaken fact and they are now portrayed through a skewed misinterpretation, which suggests that they could be consigned to history as stereotyped figures of entertainment.

The research has investigated the original motivation and contributing factors which have influenced this mythologised, well-recognised portrayal, which remains steadfast today. It explores the re-envisioning of the Pendle Witches in the light of the current, understanding of the persecution they suffered, and the subsequent development of the maligned images now used in their portrayal. Although their trials and executions have remained a fascinating and enduring subject for more than four hundred years, this project re-envisiones the witches through a contemporary art practice to dispel the misconceptions and previously held assumptions conveyed by the inaccurate portrayal which they have inherited.

Practice-based art was chosen as the most radically different perspective to disrupt the current interpretations of the witches and thereby contributes to knowledge by highlighting the reality of their victimisation through a lens which prioritises human experience. The re-envisioning of the Pendle Witches increases awareness of their lives and deaths, which have often been largely forgotten or mis-interpreted. The project uses artwork to draw attention to the part of their lives to which little attention has been paid, by redefining their image to give currency and recognition to their vulnerability and persecution.

The aim of this study looks behind the current stereotyped images of the Pendle Witches and re-envisiones their portrayals to reclaim their image through a contemporary art practice.

The objectives are:

To identify and critically analyse the underlying and contributing factors which have led to the mythologised image of the Pendle Witches.

To collect information about the Pendle Witches through experiences gained when walking in the footsteps of their journey to the gallows.

To obtain relevant material from formal interviews with contemporary witches and a local landowner and also through informal engagements with the residents of Pendle.

To disrupt the present images of the Pendle Witches by re-envisaging them through contemporary art practice and present the work in public exhibitions and gallery talks.

To collect data from the exhibition curators and comments from the public, documented in my visitors' book.

To extend knowledge of the persecution of the Pendle Witches by disrupting the popular caricatural representations of them and re-envisaging their image, through art practice.

This project extends knowledge by creating artwork, which adds a new perspective with which to inform the public about the reality of the witches lives. It has investigated the importance of superstition in cementing the traditional image of the witch and has explored ideas of memorial and persecution to find alternative angles of representation. The practice of walking as a method of research determined the perception and portrayal of these witches within this local environment by retracing the path they were enforced to take across Lancashire to Lancaster Castle jail. The walk as an experiential practice also generated an understanding of the hardship of their enforced journey to the gallows. It commenced from the village of Barrowford, where they were originally investigated, and finished in Lancaster where they were convicted of witchcraft and subsequently executed. The varying landscape is largely unchanged since 1612 and the vulnerability faced during the walk alone across the bleak and uninhabited Lancashire fells created an active personal engagement with the witches' lives through senses of fear and loneliness. This promoted a connection to them, whilst also being used to collect informatory material and inspirations to act as stimuli in re-envisaging and memorialising the witches. The premise of this walk during the research was to develop an insight through individual experience and reflective observations on this journey, which is also acknowledged as an independent art practice. It allowed a connection with the lives of the accused without the intermediary of written history or past interpretations. The stereotyped images of witches were positioned on all the way markers along the walk, which established how the Pendle Witches are still perceived today.

Primary research was obtained through interviews with contemporary witches to ascertain whether the current beliefs and historical representations of witches influenced their current practices. These offered a breadth of information on their individual practices as witches, and how they perceived themselves as modern day independent women. This enabled me to incorporate local insight and contemporary information on witchcraft into my own visual interpretation of the witches to inform the aim of the project. The interviews provided cultural material and therefore avoided relying on any historical prejudices. Informal interviews on the journey and an interview with a local landowner provided both historical and local background information on the superstitions and beliefs which remain in Pendle. Photography and a personal journal were used as methods of recording the journey from Barrowford to Lancaster. These methods brought a greater sense of reality, which highlighted and sustained an emotional connection to the witches.

Secondary research was obtained from literature on the historical influences, established practices and background information about the lives of the Pendle Witches. This gave an insight into the culture and beliefs of the populace during the seventeenth century. The research has explored the motivation of Western European artists whose images have continued to influence the perception and visual code of all witches in art and literature. It has considered the role contemporary artists continue to play in envisaging witches through their art practices and why these portrayals have remained resilient, contributing to their inherited construct.

The aim of re-envisaging the Pendle Witches through creative practice and presenting the work through exhibitions, has thus sought to redress the balance of their interpretations by valuing their experience of condemnation rather than the condemning image imposed upon them. It is also structured around a visual image forming a more emotive connection between the audience and these witches, by using artwork and public exhibitions as a platform for communication beyond the bubble of academia. These re-envisaged representations are in the form of laser cut images and sculptural depictions. Photographic portraits of myself in the context of the witch are used as the basis of the art as a continuation of my own embodiment of the witches. As a method these techniques were chosen to maximise the impact of representing fragility and collective memory away from traditionally drawn interpretations. The work actively resists the conventional visual way of conceptualising them and has thus constituted a kind of subversive resurrection. This continues to stress the importance of the individual within history and creates a greater sense of reality and a sustained emotional connection. It re-envisages their created

image which never existed in reality. This is particularly important in adding to knowledge in the context of the modern archetype of the witch, which can be reduced to a single signifier of a hat, for example, with little change in meaning. This typifying of the witch has stripped her of her personal identity and thus her public sympathy, as she has been reduced to a known type, demanding little emotional engagement or acknowledgment of individuality.

Chronology Of The Research Process

March 2016

“*Tic Tac*” a joint, public exhibition in Trento, Italy, of laser cut images, which were inspired by the persecution of witches. The use of laser cutting built on previous experience developed at Leeds Arts University in 2015.

March 2016

Walking from Barrowford to Lancaster as an objective of the research to collect data by gaining an insight into the local perceptions of the Pendle Witches, the landscape they inhabited and the hardship of their enforced journey to Lancaster jail. The walk was also an opportunity to experience spontaneous and reflective thoughts.

April 2016

“*Who Will You Pray For Today*” a solo, public exhibition in Trinity Arts Leeds, of experimental artwork based on laser cutting. This was used to engage with the public’s perception of my work both individually and from comments in my exhibition visitors’ book.

April 2016-2018

Research and development in the practice of laser cutting to critically evaluate how it can be used in future artwork.

August 2016

“*Justice*” a solo, public exhibition in Lancaster Castle, based on information and insights gained on the walk undertaken in March. Information in the visitors book was used for primary data collection.

February 2017

Research and ongoing development of sculptural work, inspired by information and personal reflections gained on the walk, to fulfil a commission for the Duchy of Lancaster in the “*Witches Weekend*” exhibitions in Lancaster Castle 2017& 2018.

March 2017

A repeat of the walk from Barrowford to Lancaster with the objective of collecting more local information from informal interviews with passers-by and using observational skills to note important landmarks relating to the lives of the Pendle Witches as a way of linking the past with the present.

March 2017

An interview with Janet Brennard (a modern day witch, referenced in Appendix E) with the objective of developing an insight into the practice of contemporary witches and how she considers the public’s perception of witches today.

March 2017

“*The Witches Walk*” a public, solo exhibition and gallery talk at Leeds Arts University, to exhibit the development in my work of re-envisaging the witches and gain primary data from the public via their comments in my visitors book.

April 2017

“*Victim or Target*” a joint, public exhibition of “*Mythology*” including an advertised gallery talk at Ann Street Gallery, Newburgh, USA of laser cut work re-envisaging the Pendle Witches and gaining additional information of how all witches are visually perceived in America.

August 2017

“*Witches Weekend*” a solo, public exhibition in Lancaster Castle, with the objective of gaining data on the current mis-representation of the Pendle Witches through my visitors book and conversations with the public.

May 2018

An interview with Gemma McGowan (modern day witch, referenced in see Appendix D) to gain background knowledge about the modern day practice of witchcraft.

July 2018

An interview with Nick Starkie (local landowner, referenced in Appendix F) to inform the project on local and historical information and present day myths surrounding the Pendle Witches.

August 2018

“*Witches Weekend*” a public, solo exhibition at Lancaster Castle, to collect primary data from the many hundreds of visitors to this exhibition (as collated by the Castle administrators).

THESIS STRUCTURE

The individual chapters in the thesis have been allocated a theme and critically analyse the influences which have contributed to the image and the public’s perceptions of the Pendle Witches. Each chapter also puts forward influential artists who have engaged with the individual themes. The creation of the practice-based artwork, which was inspired by each section of the walk, has been detailed, together with documentation of the journey and photographic imagery as referenced in the individual chapters and in Appendix H. Photography was also used to create visual references for the journal and to document the artwork before and during the exhibitions. This structure was developed to analyse the influences which have played a part in the contemporary visual code of these witches. The reflective nature of this practice means that the thematic construct is looser than otherwise to allow the communication of experience as a form of art practice. This approach was necessary to capture the influences which have contributed to the stereotyped images of these witches and became evident throughout the continuity of walking the fifty-one mile journey and also through the interviews which gave a contextual background to the study.

Chapter 1 – Contextual Review

This chapter looks at the contextual literature which has informed this thesis. It considers some of the historians who have studied the lives of the Pendle Witches, as well as the beliefs and the cultures in seventeenth-century England, which contributed to the persecution of witches. It also examines why the Lancashire Witch Trials have gained notoriety and are considered the best known of all the witchcraft trials in England. It suggests that when the definition of the witch changed with the accession of James I, this altered the concept of both witches and witchcraft, which contributed to the chain of events leading to the persecution of the Pendle Witches and their eventual executions.

Chapter 2 – Methodology and Methods

The methodology and methods used in this thesis are considered in this chapter, which are the framework in achieving the aim of re-envisioning the Pendle Witches. Walking as a

methodology and as a method is explored and an account of the theorists and other artists who engage with this as practice. It explains the methodology of experience as a lens to achieve an authentic way of gaining knowledge as a research tool in its own right, which allows engagement both with the past and the present. Interviews with contemporary witches and a landowner to gain primary knowledge are explored, and the process of photography and a personal journal are described as ways of reflecting and documenting the walk. The interplay between the different methods which contribute to the project is described and also why they have been adopted to seek a closer involvement with the research question and the reworking of the image of the Pendle Witches through creative artwork. It also examines the importance of public exhibitions in presenting the research to the public.

Chapter 3 – Walking in the Landscape

This chapter discusses the construct of walking in the landscape and its contribution to the aim of this thesis. As an art practice, walking was a means of seeking a connection with the Pendle Witches and thereby gaining information and inspirations leading to the formation of innovative art. Walking in the present functioned as a connecting link to the witches' lives and deaths. Its influence served as a means of understanding how they are now perceived within the area in which they lived. The walk drew on traces of the Pendle Witches within the landscape to engage with the experience as process. This chapter also identifies the signage and importance of maps as a way to engage with the witches within this environment.

Chapter 4 – The Representation of Witches

This chapter considers how the Pendle Witches are visually portrayed in this area. It investigates how the popular stereotyped perceptions of the witch have been transferred to the portrayal of these witches and are now used in the public discourse to encourage tourism. It considers how these images have been developed by artists who have maintained a persistent fascination with witches and witchcraft. It discusses the different interpretations of the witch by artists and how these became central to the ideology of the time in which they were created. It also links the narratives of some writers to these visual interpretations.

Chapter 5 – Superstitions and Witchcraft Practices

This chapter explores the part that fairy stories have played in the concept of witches and witchcraft and how they have contributed to their enduring image. It considers the influence of

mythological folk tales, which portray the witch living apart from society and how the illustrative images of the witch in children's fairy stories can become embedded in the minds of the viewer. It goes on to consider how these tales have progressed to visual images of the witch in films and television, where witches are now represented as demonic figures of fun.

Chapter 6 – Fire and Burning

This chapter describes the influential element of fire and burning. It considers how fire is associated with witchcraft and the different symbolic associations it continues to have with modern witchcraft practice. It describes the creation of an ash path, which was constructed as a transient memorial to portray the fading memory of the walk the witches undertook and culminated in their executions. The cyclical rotation of death and regeneration and how fire is used as a symbolic element in the contemporary art practices of myself and others is also explored.

Chapter 7 – Silence and Solitude

This chapter examines the solitude and isolation of walking alone. It compares this to the silence which the witches faced when they were ostracised by their communities. The silence of their erased voices is examined, and it explores how this can be represented through contemporary art.

Chapter 8 – The Re-envisaging of the Pendle Witches

This chapter puts forward the interpretive, visual outcomes of the Pendle Witches, which have been created through contemporary art practice and describes the exhibitions where they have been situated over the past three years as part of this practice-based research.

Conclusion

The conclusion draws together the different objectives, which have contributed to the aim of this research. It describes the research methods which have been explored as primary and secondary processes to inform the project and the contribution it makes to knowledge.

Appendix A

Maps of the walk

Appendix B

The Witchcraft Act of 1604

Appendix C

'The Lancashire Witches' poem by Carol Ann Duffy.

Appendix D

The transcript of the interview with contemporary witch J.M.

Appendix E

The transcript of the interview with contemporary witch J.B.

Appendix F

Transcript of the interview with local landowner N.S.

Appendix G.

G.1 Letter from the Duchy of Lancaster.

G.2 Examples from the visitors' book.

Appendix H

H.1. Photographs of the walk

H.2. Photographs of laser cutting

H.3. Photographs of the ash memorial

H. 4. Photographs of the journal

Chapter 1– Contextual Review

Before undertaking the walk, it was a necessary part of the project to place the Pendle Witches within the context of the culture and beliefs prevalent in the seventeenth century, which in turn informed the aim of this project. This thesis does not propose to engage in the detailed historical evidence leading to their execution but to establish a brief résumé of the historical facts and influences which were relevant to this study.

A mistrust of witches has been evident since Biblical and classical times. The deep-rooted belief in superstitions, protective materials and spells led the people of early modern Europe to suppose witches could provide both a negative and a positive impact on their lives. Ronald Hutton in *The Witch: A History of Fear From Ancient Times to the Present* (2018) traces the beliefs and attitudes towards witches throughout history, which provides a better understanding of how the hatred and persecution towards them has evolved in Europe. He suggests that although a global survey has found most societies have focused on the fear and hatred of witches it was only the Europeans who turned witches “[...] into practitioners of an evil and anti-religion” and subsequently hunted them (p.280). He also explains that the construct of the witch created by the Christian theology was designed to “[...] defend society against [this] serious new threat”(p. 280). The Church then perpetuated the fear of witches inherited from antiquity but also partly in the text that is most fundamental to their culture, the Bible (Hutton, 2018, p. 44).

Witchcraft was also seen as a force to help people, as suggested by Keith Thomas in *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century* (1971, pp. 301–303), in which he comments that the Christian Church also developed a strong reaction to witchcraft stemming from a need to counter the public’s reliance on local witches. During the Reformation the Protestant Church became hostile to any form of supernatural activity (Thomas, 1971, p. 304). This reaction from the Church meant that at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the concept of witches as heretics and devil-worshippers had spread from continental Europe to England. Aside from the prevalent misogynistic attitudes and the subservient role of women, which were dominant at the time of the accusations against witches, other factors contributed to their persecution. John Swain in *Witchcraft, Economy and Society in the Forest of Pendle* (2002, p. 84), discusses the suggestion that limited resources and an increase in the population in this part of Lancashire led to some of the poorest in society

developing a means of earning an extra income through witchcraft. He suggests that this could be one of the interlinking influences, combined with social upheaval, patriarchal control, family feuds and religious reformation of the time, which contributed to accusations of witchcraft. Those perceived to be witches became powerless and were the persecuted victims of systematic witch-hunts, now known as the “*witch craze*” (Levack, 1995, p. 607) This persecution spread throughout Europe from the early fifteenth century until the mid-eighteenth century and resulted in trials, tortures and executions of an estimated “[...] forty thousand” people according to Robert Poole, editor of *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories* (2002, p. 3); 85% of those indicted were women.

Although when James I acceded to the English throne he recognised that there were both ‘black’ witches, who were malevolent and evil, and ‘white’ witches or healers, he decided to create a third type, those in league with the Devil (Thomas, 1971, p. 534), and in 1604 he enforced a new Witchcraft Act (Appendix B p.182), within a year of his accession. The complex and little-understood hatred of witches was strengthened in Britain by the enforcement of this anti-witchcraft legislation, according to Barbara Rosen in *Witchcraft in England 1558–1618* (1969, pp. 57–58). This meant a conviction against those accused of witchcraft needed a reduced burden of proof.

A witch, after the 1604 Witchcraft Act, then became defined as:

“A man or woman, who had abandoned Christianity and renounced her baptism, who worshipped Satan as her God, and made a definite act of surrendering herself to him, body and soul, offering herself as an instrument for the evil work he could only perform through a human agent. In exchange, she had been promised anything she desired to have”

according to the historians Edgar Peel and Pat Southern in *The Trials of the Lancashire Witches: A Study of the 17th-century Witchcraft* (1969, p. 54).

This new Witchcraft Act was used to indict the group of two men and nine women from Lancashire who became known as the Pendle Witches. The accusations against them started when Alizon Device, one of the indicted, encountered a pedlar who subsequently collapsed into “what was identified as a witchcraft induced illness” (Poole, 2002, p. 1), which, according to Poole, formed the catalyst which led to a local *witch craze* (Levack, 1995, p. 607) and accusations of witchcraft against these eleven people.

The accused all lived in the rural area surrounding Pendle Hill in Lancashire and were suspected of using magical practices and witchcraft. The information we have gained from charges against them comes from the detailed documentation of the court proceedings described in *The Wonderful Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster* detailed by the clerk of the court Thomas Potts (Poole, 2002, p. 3), these included inducing madness and causing otherwise unexplained deaths through witchcraft. Those who eventually went to the gallows were John Bulcock, Katherine Hewitt (alias Mouldheels), Alizon Device, Isobel Roby, Alice Nutter, Elizabeth Device, Anne Redfearne, Jane Bulcock, Anne Whittle (alias Chattox) and James Device. Although Elizabeth Southern (alias Old Demdike) was also accused of witchcraft she died in jail before her trial.

Their trials were not unique in the history of the English persecution of witches but remain unusual because ten witches were hanged at the same time. The publication of the trial documents by Potts (Potts, 1613), one year after the proceedings helped to create “[...] an unquenchable public interest” in the Pendle Witches, according to Poole (2002, p. x), who suggests that their fame comes in part from their trials being the best documented in English history. Marion Gibson in *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories* (2002, p. 55) expresses some concerns over Potts’s documentary version, which she considers disguises the full account of the trial procedures because of “[...] the omission or addition of significant details”. She states that the judicial system contributed to him writing an account which his patrons wished him to produce. While there is intrinsic bias in Potts’s work based on his employment, Gibson claims (p. 43) that the misrepresentation of the trials is difficult to verify. Despite this bias, Potts gives us an insight into the accusations, which constitutes a unique, even if inaccurate, document, and without it the Pendle Witches and the Lancashire Witch Trials might never have attracted such a scholarly investigation, nor have taken so much hold on the public’s imagination. This written account of the trials has helped to establish the memory of these witches, which has persisted throughout the last four centuries through narrative and artistic representations.

This study has recognised that the many images created through literature, film and art have contributed to the portrayal of the Pendle Witches today. This image and the more contemporary definition of the witch still focuses on alleged crimes and perpetuates their maleficent image, as well as influencing the understanding of the modern-day witch. It is one which takes a more objective view of the history of their persecution and is thus the definition

challenged by this research. According to Rosen (1969, p. viii) “[a] witch means to most scholars a woman with a legal record of her trial and death and a pamphlet account of her crimes”. However, this academic angle on persecution has not affected the popular definition, despite being fifty years old; as the aim of this project my artwork re-envisages the image of the witch in light of a more balanced definition and thus disrupts popular perceptions.

Although the definition of the witch has changed slightly over the years, the derogatory connotation of the word is maintained in contemporary discourse to refer to those who believe in the practice of superstition and sorcery. The word ‘witch’ is defined in *Collins English Dictionary* (2006) as “a person, usually female, who practises, or professes to practise, magic or sorcery especially black magic or is believed to have dealings with the devil”. This definition is endorsed by the editors Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson in the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (2008) which defines a witch as a “sorceress, especially a woman supposed to have dealings with the devil or evil spirits”. Although the 1604 definition in the Witchcraft Act refers to a man or a woman, the use of female gendered pronouns throughout the Act suggests that misogyny persisted in the condemnatory tone of the definition; it must be acknowledged that modern definitions leave open that witches may or may not have been in league with the Devil, but they still rely on the imagery of the 1604 definition, showing that attitudes remain steadfast. Furthermore, these modern definitions are not relevant to contemporary witchcraft practices as discussed in my interviews with modern-day witches (Appendices D and E), bearing more resemblance to a definition from 1604 than to the self-description of current witches. This suggests that these definitions, and the views which accompany them, are outdated.

Thomas (1971, p. 671-672) suggests the interlinking factors of social upheaval, patriarchal control, family feuds and religious reformation in the seventeenth century all contributed to accusations of witchcraft. The historian and researcher Hugh Trevor-Roper (2001) writing in *The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: Religion, the Reformation, and Social Change* explains the wider social context of the European *witch craze*, (Levack, 1995, p. 607) which he considers cannot be disconnected from this persecution and that the witch was persecuted “[...] for simply being a witch” (p. 101) rather than for more specific crimes, and that pressure behind the persecutions could be considered as social. He states that when they could not be condemned by “the old law of the Church” “[...] new legal grounds were devised” (pp. 100–101). He argues that the people accused of being witches were social nonconformists (p. 102)

in a Christian society which was looking for scapegoats at a time of religious intolerance. The Pendle Witches were accused of specific crimes, but as Rosen explained, the burden of proof was sufficiently reduced, so that any evidence against the witches after the enforcement of the 1604 Witchcraft Act needed not be so convincing to a court room and evidence against those accused of witchcraft was “[...] startlingly lax” (Rosen, 1969, p. 51).

Research into the court records by Christine Goodier in *1612 The Lancashire Witch Trials* (2014, p. 70) state that this was the case in the trial of Anne Redfearne. She pleaded not guilty to causing the death of Christopher Nutter but was convicted on very little evidence and Potts’s account of her trial is the one of the shortest records in his trial book. Although Redfearne was the daughter of one of the Pendle Witches, John Clayton in *The Lancashire Witch Conspiracy: A History of the Pendle Forest Witch Trials* (2007, p. 142) states “[...] that there was nothing to show that she had taken part in any of her mother’s magic arts of witchcraft”. Despite a lack of evidence, Redfearne was sent to the gallows and executed with the other nine witches.

Whilst it is possibly true that some of those accused during the witch craze (Levack were social nonconformists, in Trevor-Roper’s exploration of the witch hunt across Europe, he considers the persecution of witches in England to “[...] be trivial” (p. xii) compared to those in Europe and Scotland. His view of social change in seventeenth-century England overly homogenises the accusations against witches; other known causes of accusation include family feuds, deformity, religion and those such as widows considered to be a social burden (Thomas, 1971, p. 671-672). Furthermore, any claims to this end can only be conjecture as so little evidence exists outside of the courtroom.

Owen Davies writing in *Popular Magic: Cunning Folk in English History* (2007) explores the relationship and differences between witches and cunning-folk (a name denoting man or woman who possessed magical knowledge) in early modern societies. He states they were “[...] inextricably bound up with each other” (p. x), although in his study he claims that cunning-folk were often distinguished from witches as they were considered to help their communities often through their unbewitching skills, rather being perceived as being malevolent and having “a diabolic allegiance” (p. 16), which were the traits associated with witches. They were therefore “[...] dealt with more leniently by the courts than those convicted as witches” (p. 164). He suggests it is recognised there are differences also which separate Wiccans and the modern day healers from their predecessors, both culturally and socially (p.196), although

many can often claim an inherited direct link to the practices of their namesakes (p.194). It is also possible to access knowledge from literary sources, but he suggests that they will never have the power or influence in modern communities exerted by the cunning-folk in early modern Europe (p. 195).

Joanne Pearson in *Wicca, Paganism And History: Contemporary Witchcraft And The Lancashire Witches* (2002, pp.126-145) explores the connections of the contemporary witch to those accused of witchcraft in the seventeenth century, whose image “ [...] is commonly regarded as part of the reclamation of female power”(p.190 & 191). Today the power of the witch resides in her own power rather than having any relationship “[...] stemming from God or the Devil” p.194). Pearson also states (p.197) that attitudes towards the Pendle Witches as being people who suffered from persecution no longer inform or relate to contemporary witches or their practices.

Poole (2002) offers a collection of ten essays which place the Pendle Witches within the historical context of the seventeenth century. Some essays give an overview of the different aspects relating to the politics, economics and religious forces relating to witch-hunting, but Marian Gibson (2002, p. 53) suggests in that Thomas Potts shaped the documentation of the witches’ trials to suit his benefactors and “ [...] inspire confidence in the judiciary system” (Gibson,2002, p. 54). Although Potts has undoubtedly helped in shaping the image of the Pendle Witches, this has changed throughout the centuries to become a caricature, which this thesis sets out to challenge.

Chapter 2 – Methodology and Methods

2.1 Outline

This chapter discusses the methodologies and methods used to inform in this project. It describes is practice of human human experience as a means of promoting an awareness of the lives of the Pendle Witches. It explains how walking, which is endorsed as a methodology in *The Art of Walking: A Field Guide* by David Evans (Ed. 2012) and by practioners Richard Long, Carl Lavery and Francis Alÿs, enabled the creation of an experiential link to the witches, both through the landscape and the experience of the journey. This research has used interviews, photography, journal and art exhibitions as methods of research tools. Although

these come from different perspectives, they allow cross-referencing of different areas of practice and research. Uwe Flick in *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (2014, p. 27) states when discussing complementary research methods that they “[...] can compensate for the blind spots of each single method”.

2.2 Experience as a Lens

This thesis prioritises human experience as an epistemology for understanding and interpreting the Pendle Witches. It supports the value of experience as a form of knowledge but acknowledges that an experiential understanding of the witches is not so easily accessed as the intergenerational collective knowledge base. It uses the theory of David Kolb’s (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* based on the learning models of Dewey, Lewin and Piaget. This is in the vein of using experiential learning as a “[...] form of learning from life experience” (p. xviii). It seeks to move beyond dominant knowledge validation processes to analyse and represent through a direct encounter with the landscape and experience of the journey, thereby creating an understanding of the witches’ final days.

The methodology of experience has provided an angle that respects and acknowledges the existence of the witches as having significance, independent of the actions and views of their persecutors, as well as having intrinsic importance aside from the traditional role assigned to them in history. It provides access to those in history whose voices have been systematically erased; attempting to understand the Pendle Witches in the light of their own experiences leading up to their deaths is a crucial act in filling in the gaps of the traditional historical narrative and providing a more comprehensive understanding of this period of time. The walk has thus been of significance in connecting with the possible experiences of the witches whilst eschewing mediating factors such as written history or previous artistic interpretations, which necessarily draw on the lens of the persecutors. Also of importance is the capacity of an experiential narrative to provoke an emotional response through art and thus to draw in an audience, which is vital in the aim of this thesis to promote a wider and more comprehensive awareness of the witches. Walking as experience is a methodology that has also been chosen because of its negative relation to traditional epistemologies; although there are various methods of reclaiming histories for marginalised people, the lens of experience has been used as it is diametrically opposed to the values of traditional knowledge systems developed by the powerful. Audre Lorde suggested in *The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action*

(1977, p. 6), that “[...] the weight of that silence [imposed by oppression] will choke us”. This thesis is an attempt to rectify the silence imposed by positivist epistemologies which have viewed these witches as statistics, radically opposing itself to these knowledge systems by valuing human experience.

The chief drawback to this approach has been the difficulty of accessing the witches beyond the events of their persecution. Record-keeping has historically been the province of the powerful, and so there is no concrete knowledge about the lives of the witches apart from their trials and executions. As a result, the framework of the walk is one which is inevitably linked to the knowledge systems of the persecutor. However, by performing this walk, I have attempted to overcome this drawback by accessing a part of their lives, to which little attention has so far been paid, from the perspectives of the witches themselves.

This project’s use of the lens of experience draws on the work of Kolb (1984) and Lorde (1977) in valuing the experience as methodology and considers those excluded from narratives of power as a different means of helping to understand the past. Whilst acknowledging that a direct understanding of the experiences of the Pendle Witches is impossible, it seeks to place a value on the potential experiences of the accused.

2.3 Walking as a Methodology

This section investigates the theorists and practitioners who have used the methodology of walking as a research tool. This recognised method of research has been employed by many practitioners (as referenced in section three of this chapter) as a lived experience and therefore adds primary knowledge to a project. It was also a critical way in which to examine the history of the landscape and a conscious way to reflect on and survey the spaces, providing an opportunity to access the dominant visual portrayals which have stigmatised these witches. The walk as a private art practice fed into other art practices displayed in public exhibition; the public aspect of my art practice was vital in providing a narrative of the witches distinct from that told by their persecutors. It considers the theory of walking as an art practice to reflect and gain a deeper insight into an historical moment. It examines my own walking practice in relation to other artists. The use of an art practice such as walking to generate knowledge draws on the theory of Graeme Sullivan in *Art Practice as Research; Inquiry in Visual Arts*, (2010, p. 192) regarding art and education, who believes that by using artistic methods of investigation we can broaden perspectives on knowledge, rather than focusing on traditional

self-validating scientific methods. This practice seeks to discover a new kind of knowledge, derived from artistic practice so as to re-engage the past with the present.

Walking was chosen as a methodology as an inherently experiential practice, one which values the experience of the artistic practitioner alongside secondary information. Maggie O'Neil and Brian Roberts suggest in *Walking Methods: Research on the Move* (2019, p. 2) that “[...] walking as an innovative method of research can be employed to critically explore a lived experience in the context of an historical engagement with the past”. This research supports the use of space as a temporal link to create a new historical understanding through the lens of experience. Tim Ingold in *Lines: A Brief History* (2007, p. 93), explains the way many things are interconnected and considers walking “is like picking up the threads of people’s lives”. He suggests that life proceeds along lines similar to pathways or streams cutting through the landscape, and we can respond to it through observation by remaining open to ideas and possibilities. It is this openness of observation of experience separate from secondary information that allows for the re-envisaging of history outside of its usual narrative. As a practice-based research method, Roberta Mock, editor of *Walking, Writing and Performance* (2009), considers amongst others the autobiographical performances of Carl Lavery who memorialises his father’s life in his *Mourning Walk* (2006) looking for connections with the past (Mock, 2009, p. 10) and Phil Smith who uses the method of walking as a generative practice by looking for his own story and thereby finding others (p. 10). Mock writes about a non-sentimental “nostalgia” (p. 11, 2009) in the works of both artists, in which they use this practice to critically re-evaluate the past. This draws on Svetlana Boym’s *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001, p. 12) considering reflective and restorative nostalgia; rather than restoring a pre-imagined version of the journey, this practice has used reflective nostalgia to allow an understanding informed by the sensory experience of walking.

Walking practice by its nature brings time for reflection and self-observation, which allows for reflection on experience as well as reflective nostalgia. Reflection is described by Donald Schön in *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (1983, pp. 308–309) as “[...] reflection-in-action”. This project uses his suggestion of reflective practice through walking as a method of observing and relying on knowledge as understood in the moment, rather than learned knowledge to create an experiential understanding of the past. During the walk it was important to recognise the many symbolic and mythologised images of the witches. These were not only on the way markers of the walk but also in many of the cafes and shops

along the route. There was also evidence of lasting superstitious practices on many of the buildings and verification that the memory of the Pendle Witches was still very inherent in this area. These would be difficult to recognise except through walking on this journey and were noted along with reflective thoughts, which were recorded in a journal and then used as a framework in this thesis as a means of evaluation, in order to ground the work of the thesis in responses to the landscape directly drawn from experience. Rebecca Solnit considers this practice in *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (2001, p. 16). She investigates the ancient association of walking as a means of reflection and considers that walking can be both a cultural and aesthetic connection between “[...] the body, the imagination and the wide open world” (pp. 290–291). In *Interacting: Art Research and the Creative Practitioner* (2011, p. 50) Linda Candy proposes that there must be an “[...] interaction between practice, theory and evaluation” and an interplay between the three in practice-based research; this thesis argues that in experiential practice the three should not be separated, and that in particular the evaluation is a simultaneous part of the practice in order to achieve a totally experiential understanding of the past.

This practice has also drawn on the work of artists who have used walking as a practice to highlight issues of memorial and bodily hardship and has considered the walking practice of Mona Hatoum who demonstrated bodily hardship as experienced in real time. Hatoum walked without boots to focus on the experience which people had to face in the continual police presence and surveillance during the 1980s in Brixton. In her video performance, *Roadworks*, (1985) (Figure 1), she walks with a pair of heavy Doc Marten boots attached by their laces to her ankles and pulls them behind her through the streets. She uses this as a symbolic expression to provoke questions of political and social control, by walking for one hour on the rough London streets with bare and vulnerable feet. This performance by Hatoum expresses fragility and the strength of people under duress. The undertaking of my fifty-one mile walk alone was a similar enforcement of difficult conditions on the self in order to present rather than represent physical hardship and to voice pains which are typically silenced.

Figure 1

This research has also considered the theoretical importance of walking as a methodology distinct from traditional forms of art practice. Francesco Careri in *Walkscapes: Walking as an Aesthetic Practice* (2002) suggests that walking is an art form which allows an artist the freedom of diversification from other accepted art forms and is a movement away from using traditional restricted media. He considers that this trajectory is a form of expression which has

continued to be a symbolic and interpretive practice throughout the history of walking developing from nomadism to land art. This practice has been influenced by Careri's ideas of diversification and has led to the choice of walking as an art practice without the connotations of traditional representations.

Walking as an act of memorial in this project has been influenced by the Belgian born performance artist Francis Alÿs, who uses the practice of marking the ground to engage in projects which use both memory and remapping as symbols of both triumph and oppression in his walking practice. In *The Green Line* (2004) (Figure 2) Alÿs used a can of green household paint to create the work which is described by David Evans in *The Art of Walking: A Field Guide* (2012, p. 30) as paint dripped from a hole in the base of a can, to run in a line as a fifteen-mile walk around the city of Jerusalem. The line of green paint marked the line dividing Israel from Palestine and showed the area now controlled by the new state of Israel after the Arab-Israeli war in 1948. He thus uses traces in his walking performance as a way of remapping the city. This remapping is an act of reclaiming the landscape for those who have lived there rather than those who use it as a battleground. Alÿs also uses the practice of marking the ground to engage in projects which use both memory and remapping as symbols of both triumph and oppression.

Figure 2

My practice-based project involved the laying of *A Trail of Ash* (Figure 3, photographed during the walk) as a form of memorial, by remapping the landscape to acknowledge the journey of those ignored by traditional history in the same way that Alÿs memorialises the forgotten victims of conflict. As a mark of remembrance, ash was used as a transitory memorial on sections of the path (Appendix H.3) as a metaphorical reference to the burnt relics of the witches' bodies and a time-honoured symbol of remembrance.

Figure 3

The methodology of walking thus combines experience with active reflection to provide a new way of re-envisaging the past away from traditional information sources. Rather than a memorial rooted in sentiment, it instead creates a dynamic memorial allowing for new ways of seeing the past through the linking factor of the landscape. It also allows for the acknowledgement of experience on its own terms, particularly that of hardship, which has been focused on in relation to Hatoum.

2.4 Art Practice

The importance of the public display of art was considered when thinking about how to use experience to inform a collective rather than a merely personal memory. This section considers the theorists who address practice-based art as a methodology for informing collective knowledge, and analyses the techniques and importance of public display in communicating art.

This project has considered the value of public exhibition and the techniques used to re-visualise history for a wider audience. Patricia Leavy in *Method Meets Art: Arts-based Research Practice* (2009, p. 216), suggests that “[...] visual art may serve as a vehicle for transmitting ideology while it can as effectively be used to challenge, dislodge and transform outdated beliefs and stereotypes”. The emotive quality of visual art and particularly that with a strong experiential narrative developed by the artist is a powerful communication tool, capable of breaking prejudices on an emotional as well as academic level. Sullivan (2010, p. 196) suggests that art can allow for redefinition of a subject, as meaning can be “transcribed” “by presenting it as another image”. He also suggests that the visual medium is particularly powerful for this redefinition as it creates an immediate impact. The importance of how images are presented is explored by Gillian Rose in *Visual Methodologies* (2016, p. 23). She explores the critical approach to interpreting images, suggesting that “visual imagery is never innocent”, so it is important to consider the “[...] effect of its circulation and viewing”. My choice of laser cutting and sculpture as media were employed to discover a more innocent medium without associations of traditional representation, although I was aware that such associations are never absent.

Rose’s ideas (2016) of weighted imagery influenced my decision to move away from traditional portrayal of witchcraft, even in a reclamatory sense. However, the recognition that no imagery is innocent prompted me to move to sculpture as a medium that has a considered connotation with memorial. Associations with memorials thus replaced stereotypical associations in the presentation of my artwork. Rose also writes that the placing and circulation of an image has a relation to its interpretation and its impact, and thus is “[...] crucial in understanding how an image has certain effects, particularly when the ‘same’ image [...] can appear in different [...] places” (Rose, 2016, pp. 20–21). This became relevant to the work produced as an outcome in this research. The location where the work would be situated would have a direct influence on its meaning. Therefore, as Rose suggests, this was carefully considered in the contextual presentation of the work in both Trinity Arts Church and Lancaster

Castle, as discussed in the Chapter 8. However, the work of both Rose (2016) and Candy (2011) demonstrated to me the importance of understanding the mindset of the audience when attempting to communicate a re-envisaged history. Candy (2011, p. 38), suggests that the methodology of interactive arts, used as a research tool, should be explored in two interrelated ways. The practitioner must be able to implement the technologies needed in the production of the artwork and also to understand how an audience may respond to the work. This idea was vital in the creation of artwork intended to form a re-envisaged memory of history.

Public exhibitions were particularly important to my art practice as I was endeavouring to portray a personal experience of art and history in a way that would transform it into a collective knowledge, particularly those which were site-specific in relation to the witches, and invited audiences to engage with a new interpretation of the accused in relation to their trials and executions. Engagement with the public was used as a research tool to obtain primary data from the comments of the visitors attending the exhibitions and involved gathering information from curators on the portrayal of witches throughout history and the effect this has had on the personas of the Pendle Witches. This provoked an emotional engagement and insight from a new perspective, allowing engagement outside of traditional academic knowledge.

2.5 Walking as Method

Walking as a method involved retracing the fifty-one mile route (Appendix A, p. 175) which the Pendle Witches were compelled to take from Barrowford, where they were interrogated, to the court in Lancaster Castle where they were tried and condemned. The walk followed the journey the witches were believed to have taken; although this is unsubstantiated by any documentation, this is the shortest route between the two places and is thus considered to be the likeliest route. The walk allowed the collection of primary research through personal involvement and was divided into five achievable sections, which were walked on five different days; each walk was approximately ten miles. The journey was undertaken twice. The first walk gained a degree of familiarity with the landscape. It also contributed any knowledge gained from the interviews with local witches, local historians and Lancashire landowners, which allowed investigation in the months between the two walks. The second walk became an experience through which reflective memories emerged but also became a commemoration of the lives and memory of the witches. As the basis for conducting this research, walking provided a means of investigating the possible realities of these witches that contrasted with

the stereotyped portrayals which feature on stretches of the journey. The walk produced a dynamic investigation into understanding, disrupting and re-envisaging their portrayal.

The choice to perform the walk to Lancaster Castle, a journey which the witches were likely to have undertaken with all the physical difficulties it entailed, was an act of remembrance through art by performatively bringing the past into the present. The walk involved me, as both the researcher and the practitioner, performing an autobiographical narrative of the witches' hardship as a self-reflective journey. The act of choosing to perform this solitary and difficult walk, when the witches themselves did not have this choice, constituted an expression of empathy as set against the general will to forget the suffering imposed upon the accused. Performance is an inherently public idea and incorporating the results of my experience into further artwork was a means of publicising their memories in their own right. The research that informed this creative practice was subsumed into the experience of the walk, which came to define the experience of the witches as I understood it and my understanding of the witches' persecution. The experience of walking was the embodiment of a lived experience employed to access knowledge within the landscape which contrasted with previous conceptions and illuminated a new perspective in this historical past.

The relationship between discovery of primary information through experience and reflection contributed to the walk as a research practice for further artwork as well as a creative practice in itself. The walk formed a personal communication with the Pendle Witches by walking in their route through the Lancashire landscape and provided a basis for the information used in the articulation of this understanding through visual art. Reflections on the experience of performing the journey of the witches allowed me to consider the stereotyped preconceptions surrounding them and discover new ideas which would inform their re-envisaging. It was a journey that responds to and reflects on the persecution of the witches rather than being a representation of their journey to the gallows. In this research walking was investigated as an appropriate method of evaluating the impact of the present portrayal of the witches within the location where they lived. The portrayal of these witches remained the thread throughout the scope of the research to encourage new reflections and insights in the production of innovative artwork as an outcome of the project.

At the outset, the drawbacks of this method were considered, including the limitations and problems that may arise while walking alone. A mobile phone as a form of emergency

communication was important as there were often many miles between habitations. The privilege of being able to take safety precautions was a reminder of the vulnerability the Pendle Witches faced when they walked over the fells to Lancaster, and the duty that I therefore felt came with this privilege was to highlight the erased suffering of others. The other key drawback to this method was the impossibility of accessing the full hardship faced by the witches: although I put myself under physical duress, I could not access the mental duress caused by the knowledge of an impending execution, and thus knew that my performance could not realise the totality of their experience.

The portrayal of the Pendle Witches has remained central to this research, and walking was thus chosen as a method that both created a dynamic artistic memorial and was a form of research and reflection to engage with the witches' persecution as contrasted with their current image. It provided a biographical lens that engaged with the lives of the witches as having intrinsic importance.

2.6 Artistic Methods

This practice-based project, as well as the walk, concentrated on the artistic methods of burning and sculpture as non-traditional means of representing witches, which therefore escape association with stereotypes. Sculpture is a medium which invests those it portrays with a sense of importance, given its traditional use in memorials of "great men"; the portrayal of rural villagers from the 1600s in their own right, rather than as representative of an event, invests them with a radical sense of inherent significance. The art practice was initially explored by using the technical component of a laser machine. As a destructive, burning process the laser beam was used as a tool to interpret the vulnerability and persecution of the witches. The laser light beam cuts, burns and scars the chosen material to manipulate the chosen image. As there are no known images of the witches, several facial images of myself, in different guises, were utilised and burnt into the fabric as a way of making a connection between myself and the witches. This was intended to provide a face for the witches, who have previously been denied that representation, as well as emphasising that these accusations could have been faced by nearly anyone living in that time. It also recognised the biographical link drawn between me and the witches within the walk and highlights that experience as a means of understanding their persecution.

A burnt image (Figure 4, *Burnt Image*), of myself was transferred by laser imaging onto cotton, as a reference to the industry of Lancashire, and carried on a thumb stick (Figure 5, *Thumb Stick* photographed during the walk).

Laser cutting was chosen as an unorthodox art form which comes free of connotations, allowing me to focus on the chosen associations of burning with fragility. The image was transferred through burning onto white cotton rather than the traditional representations of witches all in black; this created an image designed to challenge and be diametrically opposed to traditional representation. The choice of burning to emphasise fragility was drawn from the emotional understanding of the witches' walk gained from performative experience.

The images were constantly adapted (Figure 6, *Modified Image*), according to the experiences and reflective processes during the creation of the artwork, which Candy (2011, p. 37), describes as “[...] the interplay between making and reflecting”. Burning was also chosen as a reference to the burning of the witches' bodies after their execution, often assumed to have been a gesture to prevent relics being used as a way of preserving their memory; burning, once used to silence the story of the witches, has thus been reclaimed as a means of ending their erasure.

Figure 6

Sculpture (Figure 7, *Sculpture*, photographed during the exhibition in Lancaster Castle 2018) was chosen as a second medium for the exhibitions commissioned by the Duchy of Lancaster in 2017 and 2018 in Lancaster Castle, where the witches were imprisoned, to mark the anniversary of the executions, as referenced in Chapter 8. These sculptures were large and free-standing, to make an impact in the exhibition space; they were human-sized burnt shrouds on a wooden frame, evoking the reality of the witches in their physical presence whilst also considering their deaths. This was particularly poignant within the site-specific exhibition space of Lancaster Castle and the existing jail.

Figure 7

The processes of burning, laser cutting, and sculpture were thus chosen to re-envision the witches in the light of the reflective experience of the walk, highlighting vulnerability as well as the biographical and experiential link between myself and the Pendle Witches. These practices were also used to accentuate the subversions of traditional artistic methods of representing the witches in black. White fabric was employed in the sculptures to convey a message of loss, used as a symbol of mourning in the seventeenth century. Until the second

and third quarters of the seventeenth century, not all bodies were buried in coffins, only shrouds as referenced in F. E. Baldwin (1926) *Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England*.

In the course of the research, new works were developed through the transformation of ideas, which evolved in parallel with experiences during the walk. These were shown in exhibitions and described throughout the thesis and in Chapter 8. The artworks were created with the intention of reaching and communicating with an audience through exhibitions. Audience participation and comments were a significant part and a tool for the research, as it would have little or no effect unless it could be afforded an exhibition space.

2.7 Interviews

As a primary method of investigation this research interviewed two contemporary witches (Appendices D & E). This assisted in acquiring knowledge about the lives of witches and their practices in modern day witchcraft, which was useful for personal background information. This was used for context to gain an appreciative insight into understanding this aspect of the research, which was important as I did not have a witchcraft background and was therefore unfamiliar with contemporary witchcraft and the stigma against witches. Interviews provided evidence that modern day witches still meet in small gatherings with the purpose of worshipping deities and to exchange knowledge and information. The witches interviewed informed me of their individual practices, which had been handed down by several generations and this was informative in promoting an understanding of their ancient crafts of spell making and healing, which still they perform. These also gave me an insight into contemporary witchcraft and how the modern-day witch identifies herself. They were chosen as interviewees in order to understand the prejudices that continues to surround witchcraft and how the traditional image of the witch can impact on their lives and practices. This helped me to gain an understanding of the continued relevance of the research and need to re-envisage the witch to influence the bias against them. It also enabled me to access knowledge passed down through the generations about traditional witchcraft practice, which I could then incorporate into my artwork.

The interview with the local landowner, Mr Nick Starkie (Appendix F) informed me of the continuing superstitions in Pendle and witchcraft in general, which he emphasised still remain in this area. He lives on and is the owner of the 6,500 acre Huntroyde estate and the area where

the Pendle Witches lived and is directly descended from the Starkie family of Huntroyde. His family are mentioned several times by Jonathan Lumby in *Those to Whom Evil is Done: Family Dynamics of The Pendle Witch Trials* (2002, pp. 62-68) in relation to the trials of the Pendle Witches. He related many tales and myths regarding these witches, which although unsubstantiated, formed the background to the many fictional stories which have developed about their lives. The interview with him reinforced the relevance of reclaiming the memory of the Pendle Witches in the context of this research. He described how the Pendle Witches are still remembered at Halloween but also as disrespected figures of fun in this area of Lancashire. His family have lived in Pendle for over five hundred years and he could thus provide similarly intergenerational knowledge in the same way as the modern witches. This primary method helped in the process of contextualising the research, as the interviewed participants were all personally involved in different areas of witchcraft. It ensured a complementary addition to the knowledge by providing biographical narratives and situational or contextual accounts.

All interview participants provided me with handed-down knowledge, which functioned as a link back to ideas of the past, which have not always been recorded. Flick (2014, p. 210) emphasises “the importance of creating a good atmosphere in the interview and an active focus when listening to the interviewee, thereby showing interest without intervening”. Whilst focusing on the research question, I emulated Flick in keeping intervention to a minimum to avoid the risk of manipulating responses; Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey in *The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text* (2003, p. 90) also stress the importance of this when choosing an interview technique. The interviews were thus conducted as face-to-face interactions in a semi-structured way for the participants to focus on their own life story or experiences in the world of witchcraft, without direct interference from myself as the interviewer. For an interview to be successful, Fontana and Frey also remind the interviewer of the importance of remembering when interviewing that “each individual has his or her social history and individual perspective on the world” (2003, p. 99). I was therefore careful not to make universal assumptions about the opinions expressed in interviews but instead regarded them as individual views to be valued on that basis.

The research was mindful of the ethical issues which surround interviews and a signed consent for their information to be used as part of this thesis was obtained from the interviewees. The direct interaction with the interviewees was a method of encouraging the opinions of others about the research topic. Specific questions led the interviews but allowed an uninterrupted

response to develop. All the interviews were arranged before meeting the interviewees and took place in the participants' own homes to enable a degree of informality to be established.

2.8 Photography as Documentation

Photography was used as a method of documenting and verifying my walk as well as communicating the performance of walking to an audience outside of its original occurrence. In my exhibitions I have used enlarged photographs in conjunction with the laser-cut images as a visual way chosen to display the work by adding a brief description about the accusations against the Pendle Witches. A sequence of photographs is considered as a visual diary and as quoted by Leavy (2009, p. 216) “[...] can occupy an elevated place in memory”. These photographs aided my memory of the walk in my later analysis of it, but in displaying them I intended them to form part of a collective memory and new understanding of the Pendle Witches as informed by my experience. Leavy notes that although they read independently from text or sound, visual images are “[...] powerful and lasting” (p. 216) in a society which increasingly uses visual imagery to disrupt outdated beliefs. Stella Baraklianou's chapter “Pasearse: Duration and the Act of Photographing” in the edited book *Bergson and the Art of Immanence* (2013) has been influential in my thesis. She combines the act of walking as an “[...] intellectual practice” with her descriptive concept of photography, not only as a record of reality but also as a distinctive means of capturing time.

The method of using photography was a means of recording my journey and providing evidence as an information gathering process. Specific places in the landscape were photographed to enrich the interpretation of the research and to be used in future exhibitions. The photography I used as part of my methods was a form of documentary way marking, as a guide which pulled together my thoughts of the last journey and the lost travels of the witches. Although captured digitally, the photographic images of my walk have not been falsified or subjected to any changes by the enhancement of Photoshop. The documentary nature of photography imbues it with an air of truth, which I used to lend authority to my walk as an alternative form of knowledge about the Pendle Witches.

In time, photographs can be reconstructed and reinterpreted with the risk of them becoming disconnected from the original narrative. Narrative contributes to the meaning of artwork,

helping an audience to be more engaged with the subject matter. It is therefore important given the proliferation of different narratives that photographs are not overly open to speculation. The interpretation of the photographs used in this project will depend on their presentation, as suggested by the oral historians and photography scholars Alexander Freund and Alistair Thomson in *Oral History and Photography* (2011, p, 5). They note that photographic images “[...] need stories to create meaning – or rather to imbue images with meaning” but they comment that it is always important to understand that different narratives can possibly be ascribed to images if they come without the investment of words. Therefore, it is important that any photographs used in exhibitions will be used to provide a clear narrative as envisaged by the practitioner. The photographs in this project formed a bridge as a discussion point between the experience of the walk and the audience. Drawing observers into a conversation through the photography has further widened collective knowledge through discussing their own knowledge and interpretations.

The use of documentary photography thus allowed audience engagement with the walk outside of its actual performance and allowed it to reflect upon my experiences and absorb them, as an understanding of the witches’ walk. Whilst engaging with other people’s interpretations of my photography, I nevertheless presented the photographs in a clear narrative that ran counter to traditional representations of the witches in order to provoke a more radical dialogue.

2.9 Journal as Reflective Practice

The journal allowed for spontaneous reflection on the walk, producing an ongoing narrative of visual evidence that unfolded throughout the journey. This record allowed me to bring the reflections from the walk into my academic and art practice, reinforcing the importance of the experience of the walk as a means of understanding.

The journal became a combination of thinking, listening and sensory perceptions that were documented, to evolve as an important reflective and disciplined strategy. The complexities of the journey were documented, and reflective thoughts noted when getting lost or not being able to discuss information with others. The journal had the advantage of being able to focus on specific places and record key moments on the route, as well as to evaluate comments, which facilitated an important reflective and disciplined strategy to log information. The importance of making notes provided an opportunity to narrate and foster awareness of the historical landscape which is recognised in *A Qualitative Exploration of the Wilderness Experience as a*

Source of Spiritual Inspiration by Laura M. Fredrickson & Dorothy H. Anderson (1999, p. 22) who state that to reinforce a person's relationship to "place" is individual and subjective, but also suggest that keeping a personal record of a journey whilst walking "[...] as a point of reference" will enable a person to form a response to a landscape. The journal aided my personal response to the landscape by making me confront my experiences with language as they were felt, making it easier to later translate them to writing. It was therefore used as a spontaneous way of helping to keep track of my thought process. These observational writings complemented the chapters of my thesis.

The use of a journal allowed me to reflect both during the practice and afterwards, to be used as a complementary thought processes referencing Schön's reflection-in and reflection-on-action (1983, pp. 308–9). The deliberate act of making notes slows the perception, according to Christopher Tilley and Wayne Bennett in *Body and Image: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology 2* (2008, p. 269), which allows for further reflection. Recording and highlighting the complexities of the journey enabled a concentration on specific places. This promoted an emotional response and helped to facilitate new experiences. Consideration was given to the sites of historical importance on the route, which offered the opportunity of being able to record observational details to be used as a framework for future reflection and as a supplement to the photographic records of place as an *aide-memoire* linking back to more personal thoughts. The journal was thus important as a spontaneous means of reflection that continued to produce dynamic thought after the end of the walk. It was also a linear record of a walk that took place in linear time, allowing me to remain connected to the experience of the journey when analysing it thematically. It also allowed me to consider and record valuable insights from the local community who recounted how the Pendle Witches are perceived in this locality.

Summary

This section has established the foundations of the project and considered the different processes which have been used to research a meaningful visual reinterpretation of the Pendle Witches. It also outlines how the combined methods have led to the production of practice-based research and demonstrated how walking and the importance of interviews have contributed to this practice-based research. It has considered the theory of walking and the theory of art exhibitions and has placed my work in the context of theorists and practitioners

in these areas. Documentation through photography and the practice of keeping a journal provided a tool for reference.

The next chapter describes the process of engaging with the landscape through the experience of walking as a way to promote knowledge. It considers the parts vulnerability, fear and loneliness played during the walk as a generative practice and reflective way to gain information for the production of innovative artwork to interpret the witches' persecution. It describes the spontaneity of walk and my connection to the landscape through traces of the witches within it and considers how this can relate to re-visualising their image. It explains how the paths, signage and mapping all contributed to the creation of contemporary art and describes the importance of walking as a mindful and reflective experience in its own right, which was valued as an experiential way to reconceptualise the Pendle Witches' lives.

Chapter 3 – Walking in the Landscape

3.1 Outline

This chapter focuses on the walking practice which was based on *The Lancashire Witches Walk Guide* (2013) as written by Ian Thornton-Bryar and John Sparshatt and was undertaken in five ten-mile sections. Re-tracing this walk (Figure 8, *Lancashire Map*), marked in red on the map, was instrumental in contributing to the development of this creative practice and each section of the walk formed a connection with the Pendle Witches through a personal engagement within the landscape. This was designed to bring not only a spatial but also a temporal link of reflection and experience to the project.

Figure 8

This chapter discusses the centrality of walking in the landscape to this practice-based thesis. Walking as an art practice was conceived of as a presentational rather than representational means of portraying the witches, by seeking to connect with the past and experience it in itself, rather than relying on a semiotic code. The walk was also conceived of as an art process and was undertaken to gain information which could be used in representational art, which functioned as a means of transmitting the experience of the witches' walk to others. This was aided by the remnants of seventeenth-century civilisation in the landscape as well as the remains of the path that the witches were likely to have taken, which functioned as a link to the past and a springboard to connect with the accused. The lack of signage along the route influenced my connection with the landscape and was integral to my spontaneous encounter

with my surroundings. Maps are a record of establishment power and my reconceptualisation of the act and importance of walking outside of a paradigm of utility made the subversion and the re-envisioning of maps (Appendix A) a part of my artwork.

3.2 The Walk as Art Practice

Mindful walking as a means of engaging the senses through seeing, smelling and feeling, and therefore creating a mental connection with my environment and my predecessors within it, forms the basis of walking as art practice. This practice focused on the experience of these spontaneous moments of contemplation as an interconnection between my physical presence and that of the witches. It was a physical way of exploring the research question and thus gaining an understanding which was grounded in experience of reality, bringing the lives of the witches closer. It allowed me as the performance artist to embody the narrative of the Pendle Witches through the thoughts and experiences gathered along my journey. This is verified by Solnit (2001, p. 5) who writes that “[...] walking is a bodily labour that captures nothing but thoughts, experiences and arrivals”, this encapsulated my feelings on walking as an art practice, as I strove to avoid analytic understanding of the witches in the moment and instead leave myself open to an holistic emotional understanding.

The author Robert Macfarlane in *The Old Ways* (2013, p. 105) makes the comment “[...] stories like paths relate in two senses: they recount, and they connect”. By walking along the path of the witches, even before the act of reimagining their journey, I was recounting the existence of the said journey and marking it into the landscape. This left a lasting impression on me, consolidating my thoughts on how we remember people. It allowed me to focus on memorial through linking to the past and recognising the existence of this punitive walk as a living action, highlighting the reality of those who have gone before me.

My understanding of the practice of walking was shaped by considering the relationship which different generations have to walking. I became mindful that until the early twentieth century women were denied the liberty of walking without a male escort and were often punished for the nonconformity of venturing into a public space (Solnit, 2001, p. 181). I came to view being able to walk unaccompanied and unfettered as a privilege. Using this privilege of independence to follow the punitive walk, and thus remember those who did not have the same power of choice in walking, became important and changed my attitude to walking. Conversely, my study of historical and modern witchcraft practices informed me of woodland as a secure place

for women to meet independently, as a secluded space where they could be protected from stigma. Zones on the margins of society could become places of power for those who lived in them, rather than their being normally perceived as danger zones.

The key themes of the walk as an art practice are vulnerability, loneliness, the fear of the unknown and the distortion of time. The overriding emotion I experienced throughout the journey was one of vulnerability. This was first expressed in the form of loneliness and a sense of apprehension. The witches would have lived in communities within their villages and, leaving their homes and families under coercion, they must have felt a desperate sense of loneliness and isolation. Travelling across the county would have instilled into them a fear of the unknown; this resonated with my journey through an area that was as unfamiliar to me, as it may have been to the Pendle Witches. Time was another constraint on my walk as this led to problems of stress regarding not being able to finish the ten-mile walk before darkness fell and the walk becoming dangerous. The witches would have been governed, like myself, by the same hours of daylight, but walking through unknown rural areas can lead to a distortion of time, especially when losing the intended path. Time was further distorted as I withdrew into internal reflection on the lives of the witches; it is likely that their sense of time would have been similarly drawn out as they would have been internally preoccupied with anxious reflection. The emotions that came to me during the performance of this walk were encapsulated by an overarching sense of vulnerability, which later evolved in my art practice.

3.3 Experience as Process

The writers Mark Dorrian and Gillian Rose in *Deterritorialisations: Revisioning Landscapes and Politics* (2003, p. 17), suggest landscapes are places which “[...] can often hold together past and present, a present and future, or all three together. They are often understood as repositories of the past, holding history in their contours and textures”. The past still felt very evident in the lonely conditions as I persevered with my walk over the Lancashire uplands. The sole path along the bleak fells provided a sense of the history of those who had walked along here and their similar experiences of isolation.

The physical act of walking along these paths across the fells became a way of imprinting sights and places in my memory and formed a narrative in my mind of what my predecessors who walked this way thought of these surroundings. This narrative is subjective as it is influenced by my experience of the walk, but this subjectivity is important as the walk was intended as a

means of accessing a subjective point of view of the witches. This connected subjectivity led me to create artwork that grounded both my experience and embedded the witches into the landscape (Figure 9, *Embedded Map*) by laser cutting an image of myself as a representative of a Pendle Witch into the maps (Appendix A) of each section of the walk.

Figure 9

Although the witches' presumed path had been used for many generations, it has now become overgrown with foliage in places; I constantly looked for any traces or undulations in the ground. Such traces are referred to in Macfarlane (2013, p. 48), as "[...] shadow sites, a relic trace of a path, earthwork, post hole or ditch" which only become apparent in certain weather conditions. The bright spring sunshine failed to offer me any assistance and nature had been allowed to retake possession of this hostile environment. Macfarlane's idea of the forgotten path as a "relic" makes its historicity more apparent, and therefore the path which disappeared (Figure 10, *Disappearing Path*, photographed during the walk) felt symbolic of the loss of public memory of the witches as people.

Figure 10

The experience of walking by myself allowed my entire body and my senses to form a link with this landscape and permitted me to connect to its history. This offered a spontaneous experience of reflective thinking, which I then recorded, firstly in a journal and then through creative practice, bringing the walk as a process to its conclusion. It allowed me to gather information outside of my own assumptions and previous learning, differing from those in usual public discourse.

The information gleaned from the experiential process of walking also allowed me an angle with which to compare and contrast previously gained information, both from primary and secondary sources. One such source, the contemporary witch, J. B. (Appendix E), informed me in her interview that woodland is a site where her own coven meets. She described how her witchcraft practice is still deeply entrenched in secrecy and how woodland can provide a secure place away from the public eye. She confirmed that woodlands, as places to practise her craft, should not only be considered as places which are ingrained in the witchcraft of the past but are very much part of contemporary witchcraft and that individual trees still play an important part in spell making. This connection with witchcraft today and the historical idea of covens in woods became an intrusion into my reflection and this interview combined with the walk allowed me to realise that the practice of using spells is not only the prerogative of past

societies. A forest is a place which could be said to contain secrets. It can hide surprises and identities, a place where you are cut off from approaching warning signs of people or the weather. A diverse collection of trees can generate secrets and mysterious plots or meditation and spiritual growth, which was confirmed in my interview with J.B (Appendix E). All of these meditations changed my emotional relationship with the forest, from one entirely of apprehension of the unknown, to one of a place that is also secure and private, which can provide a site of safety for those who were on the margins of society.

3.4 Traces of the Pendle Witches in the Landscape

Traces of the past can be found in the landscape and in ruined or derelict buildings, which are sometimes described as being haunted. These specific sites formed an important part of my walking experience. Passing the sites on foot was vital as it allowed time for spontaneous exploration on my route; this kind of experience could not have been achieved by any other means. Malkinholes (Figure 11, photographed during the walk) (previously named Malkin Tower) are the remains of an historical site running parallel to my path, which was a particularly important stimulus for re-envisaging the witches because it is thought by Clayton (2007, p. 10) to have been the home of the accused Elizabeth Southern, or as she is better known, Old Demdike. Although this is by no means proven and research is ongoing, John Clayton in *The Pendle Witch Fourth Centenary Handbook; History and Archeology Fact and Fiction* (2012, p. 144) describes this building outside the village of Barley, as possibly the secret meeting place of those accused of witchcraft and the place where they held their last sabbat (or meeting) the day before their interrogation on Good Friday, April 10th, 1612. The meeting at this house became significant in the accusations against them in their trials (Poole, 2002, p.2). One of the many charges against the Pendle Witches was the fact that they had met here to take part in a witches' sabbat, it was alleged that they discussed witchcraft and a plot to blow up Lancaster Castle, according to the historian James Sharpe in the *Lancashire Witches in Historical Context* (2002, p. 2). However, for me it remains a poignant reminder and a silent witness to all the tales of its past and its original inhabitants, which are better conjured by the experience of the building than the existing academic literature surrounding the building. Walking past the house made it easy to look inside and try to identify any atmospheric sights or consider the ghosts of past inhabitants. I tried to reconstruct an image of the past as I approached the isolated building, but it is difficult to record the experience of entering an old building. The ghosts seem to lurk in the old walls and rotting overhead beams. The smells and textures of the numerous cobwebs in the corners of the damp floor can only be recorded by

experience. Tim Edensor in *Mundane haunting: Commuting through the phantasmagoric working class spaces of Manchester*, (2008, p. 327), states that if “[...] ghosts of place are present involuntary memories [can] emerge to rekindle the past through unexpected confrontations with sights, sounds, smells and atmosphere”. How I rationalise and perceive the world of the Pendle Witches can only be through the eyes of my imagination rather than personal memory, but it is not difficult to conceive how hard life would have been for the inhabitants of this isolated house. Such sights served as stimuli for my reconceptualisation of the witches.

Figure 11

Chuck (Charles) Orser Jr., research professor of archaeology from Vanderbilt University, spent six weeks in this area in 2018. He worked alongside the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership and other archaeologists to excavate an area around Barrowford in the hope of finding more evidence about the lives of the Pendle Witches and their supposed magic. I was fortunate enough to be invited to take part in this archaeological dig, but no conclusive evidence of the Pendle Witches has been found to date. The excavation revealed fragments of seventeenth-century ceramics, which brought a tangible reality to the existence of the people living in the area. Although there was no confirmation that they were connected to the Pendle Witches, Orser remains optimistic and intends to continue this archaeological research in the future. Working on this primary research project allowed me to focus on the potentially empirical remnants of the witches’ lives within the landscape, which complemented my work in using empirical findings as stimuli for a more metaphysical understanding.

Travelling on foot was a way of overcoming the separation between body and landscape and of developing a relationship between the two, which is endorsed by Tilley and Bennett (2008, p. 271), who state that walking, for it to be successful, should be a phenomenological experience. The ancient rural paths helped to link the phenomenal to the noumenal memory prompts of the past. Edensor (2008, p. 315), discussing the buildings which he passes on his regular commute, he states that traces of habits and old routines “[...] pervade everyday space and can be etched into its material fabric”. He draws attention to the everyday remnants of the past, which we can take for granted but add to the formation of memory if more attention is paid to them through observation (p. 314). Although he discusses the urban cultural practices and the traces that are left behind in a city, this also applies to the rural landscape which I passed through, where ancient pathways and abandoned buildings summon up stories about the lives and myths of those who once lived and walked this way. The traces of the past, which

linger along these paths, are a reminder of diminished memories and the forgotten knowledge of its history but remain a testament to the path's significance.

Other examples of the traces of the witches remaining in the local landscape were given in my interview with N.S.(Appendix F) whose family has owned the local Huntroyde Estate for several hundred years. In a pre-arranged meeting with him in the nearby village of Pendleton, he drew my attention to *The Keep* (Figure 12, photographed during the walk), a small house in the village next to Pendleton Church. He explained that there was a possibility that the Pendle Witches could have stayed the night in this building on their way to Lancaster. The design of the house was unusual, as he explained that originally, the building had no doors or windows on the ground floor. The only access to the inside of the building was through a hatch via an external staircase. The name "keep" might be a significant indication of this small building's medieval past. It lies eighteen miles northwest from Barrowford and could have provided the ideal secure overnight resting place for the accused. As no documentation exists to verify this fact, it may simply be an inaccurate local myth. Nevertheless, the fact that such a myth persists speaks to the enduring nature of the story of the Pendle Witches in this part of Lancashire. He also recounted some of the stories that surround the witches, which have been passed down through his family's association and ownership of this estate, for the last four hundred years.

Figure 13

A similar myth was recounted by a local resident who suggested that the witches were possibly imprisoned for the night in *Clitheroe Castle* (Figure 13, photographed during the walk) on their way to Lancaster jail. It was difficult to imagine Clitheroe four hundred years ago, but the castle would have been the dominant feature in the town. While this is only supposition and without supporting evidence, this sort of information formed part of the process of viewing the witches' journey from the perspective of their experience of it rather than as a documented event. By entering the keep of the Castle, I was able to imagine their imprisonment on a more personal level.

Figure 14

My Journal (Figure 14) reflected the lived experiences on my walk and became a contemplative record of the parts of the landscape that continue to evoke the Pendle Witches. Remembering the details of the important landmarks highlighted my personal interaction with the past and the present. It became a reminder in providing me with site-specific memories and

allowed me the space to record spontaneous reflections and then later take a step back to view them through a more analytical lens.

3.5 Signage

Way markers provide a crucial function when walking, especially across the uninhabited fells, where the pathways have disappeared through lack of use. Engaging, navigating and recording a remote landscape has become a part of many art practices. The land artist Nancy Holt, as part of her art practice, documents the circular orange way markers in her work *Trail Markers* (1969) (Figure 15). She made these as a guide for walkers who cross some of the remote areas of Dartmoor.

Figure 15

The photographic recordings in her work draw attention to the intervention of man in the landscape, according to Rachel Adams in *Wanderlust: Actions, Traces, Journeys, 1967–2017* (2017, p. 224). This work culminated in a grid of twenty photographic images inviting the viewer to search each picture for the orange circle markers painted on a rock or a fencepost across the moors. The orange signs fail to give any directional indications; therefore, the walker must scan the landscape to find the next symbol.

My fifty-one-mile route undertaken as art process and practice followed the entire way marked route suggested by *Lancashire Witches Walk Guide* (2013). In practice, however, while the early part of the walk was well marked, as the walk became more distanced from civilization, the way markers were no longer evident. The lack of signage changed my experience of the landscape from following the route and thus following an interpretation of the landscape laid out for me by others, to being forced to engage with the hostile landscape on its own terms and to understand it. This act of solo navigation, much like that in Holt's work, became symbolic of my rejection of preconceived notions of the Pendle Witches, whilst also informing an art practice of engaging with the landscape in the moment, spontaneously and experientially.

3.6 Mapping

My route follows the old paths, which have been generated by centuries of local access between the rural village communities. All these villages are marked on the historical *Countie Pallatine Map of Lancaster* (Figure 16) dated 1610. I found it hard to imagine how the journey would have been navigated 400 years ago. [Further maps of the walk are in Appendix A].

Figure 16

Only villages, rivers and prominent hills are marked on the 1610 map; no roads or pathways are shown. Contemporary maps recorded journeys and experiences into their fabric, as the map in Figure 16 shows in its illustrative drawings. The invention of grid maps replaced these existing rudimentary maps and became more informatively comprehensive and less symbolic. Macfarlane *The Wild Places* (2007, p. 142) explains that old maps, which originally “[...] plotted a route”, also told a story. With the passage of time we have eliminated the old way of travelling through the landscape by not telling the stories that were integrated within the land. My use of a large-scale grid map, although efficient in its information and geographical knowledge, failed to supply “[...] the worth of a map as a story” as referenced by Macfarlane (2007, p. 143).

The patterns of paths that cross the landscape are signs of active physical engagement between communities and are described by Ingold (2007, p. 103.) as a “[...] meshwork of habitation”. This allows a meditative appreciation of how they have developed through histories and imaginations; how paths were created is often underappreciated. They have been modified through several generations, changing with human activity from being vital connections linking rural villages to being places of relaxation for walkers and wayfarers. They can, therefore, hold multiple meanings, both consciously and subconsciously, for those who travel along them.

The artwork seen in Chapter 3.3 (Figure 9), formed part of a five-part series of works (Figures 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, *Series of Works*) designed to embed the witches within the map of the landscape. Historically, maps have marked out sites of importance to establish culture and have thus declared a spatial hierarchy on the area, rather than recording a paths history of use and thus its users. This artwork emphasised those whose passage through these spaces have been erased from maps by laser cutting a representative image of myself over a map of each section of the walk, deliberately undermining the structural hierarchies displayed in traditional maps. A photograph of my reference map combines with a burnt laser representation of myself, to establish a connection between the two elements of my research. These have been developed into a series to represent each of the five sections of my journey. It became important to unite the landscape I witnessed with the eleven Pendle Witches who travelled this way. This process etches them into this landscape to establish a connection between the act of walking and persecution the Pendle Witches endured. The facial features have been almost burnt away to produce an unsettling image of a haunted woman who might have caught sight of death. This

work seeks to explore how traces in the landscape and the path of the witches' journey to the gallows can be imprinted into our minds.

Although a grid map played an important part in my walk, it failed to reveal the many layers of history that are steeped within the cartographic image. The image of the accused walking along these paths somehow captures the essence of vulnerability and this continues to haunt me as I recall this long, lonely journey taken by the accused. These interweaving paths form lines of human connection and have helped to define our landscape. Solnit (2001, p. 276) explains “[...] the way walking reshapes the world by mapping it, treading paths into it, encountering it; the way each act reflects and reinvents the culture in which it takes place”. There is no doubt that the different paths I walked along had distinctive characteristics and caused me to reflect on those which provided a sensation of calm and others which generated a profound sense of unease. This sensation was not from any fear of walking alone but an intuitive feeling, which was inexplicable. This unpredictable experience gave each path its own set of qualities. Some of these paths presented physical challenges and others influenced a deeper response and offered a significant impact on their historical past. It was only by walking that I could notice this crucial difference and engage with the environment, either through reality or my unconscious imagination.

Figure 22

The straight track towards the fells (Figure 22, *Path to the Fells*, photographed during the walk), provided an inspiration and an influence in creating a symbolic artwork (Figure 23, *Symbolic Path*, photographed in the exhibition space).

Figure 23

This exhibit conveyed the hardship of the fifty-one mile walk and terminated at a group of laser cut representations of the Pendle Witches embedded in ash (Figure 24, *Burnt Faces*, photographed in the exhibition space). The path was created from paper and gradually burnt along its edges, becoming smaller as it reached the burnt facial images of myself in different guises.

Figure 24

The paper path symbolised the witches' walk without the markers of Barrowford or Lancaster Castle at the beginning or end; it marked an intrinsic connection to the personal presence of the

witches in the landscape, focusing on the human element of the path, rather than its utility in bringing the accused to trial.

Throughout my journey I laid a *Trail of Ash* (Figure 25, photographed during the walk), as a form of memorial along the walked path. Ash is a medium associated with memorial, as explained in detail in Chapter 6 of this thesis, which brought an element of pathos to the work. Where the previous artwork of the paper path merely emphasised the importance of the actual presence of the witches in the landscape, the use of ash upon the path highlighted that this journey was leading to the witches' demise. The former artwork memorialises the witches' existence, the latter their suffering. This also illustrates the hardship that was inherent in the walk and may have contributed to the death of Elizabeth Southern in Lancaster Castle before her trial. It acknowledges the walk as a process that was designed to break the bodies and spirits of the accused, and the trail of ash testifies to this walk as an act of bodily violence, an act inflicted without care for the witches' lives.

Summary

The walk, as reflective and mindful art practice, was a re-envisagement of the Pendle Witches in the form of contemporary art. In experiencing the landscape on its own terms, I abandoned the barrier of analytic thought in favour of spontaneous engagement with the same landscape that the witches walked through to connect across time through a shared sensory experience. The choice of the act of walking was vital to redress art practice as it enabled me to reconceptualise the witches in a living act rather than only memorialise their deaths, which is the only part of their lives generally addressed in historical discourse.

The walk contributed to the production of innovative artwork as a means of accessing a potential perspective of the witches; my connection during the walk to their feelings of vulnerability and fragility became the core themes of later artwork, as I tried to put forward a representation of the witches as I had understood them to be experientially. This understanding was enhanced by the fact that the landscape of their walk has changed very little over the last four hundred years, meaning that traces of the world they would have known remained as stimuli for reflection and creation. The lack of signage on the route further forced my engagement with the landscape on its own terms, rather than simply following a route, prompting a clearer understanding of the walk as the witches would have known it as well as a greater opportunity for spontaneous engagement and reflection-in-action.

This chapter also focuses on maps as a means of connecting the witches to the modern-day landscape as well as subverting traditional hierarchies of importance. The image of myself as the artist was representative of the Pendle Witches through the experiential link of the walk, which was laser cut onto modern Ordnance Survey maps (Appendix A) to demonstrate the presence of the witches' history in the landscape. My work was used to deconstruct the traditional information depicted within the Ordnance Survey map, which normally delineates zones of historical power such as Lancaster Castle; this created a memorial that re-appropriated the landscape in the image of those who lived within it. It emphasised that the history of the witches is as important to the modern-day landscape, as is the history of their persecutors.

The next chapter will explore the representation of the witches through both visual form and narrative and explores how these have enhanced the modern-day perceptions of witches. It investigates the influence of traditional interpretations rooted in historical representation, which have created a perspective on witchcraft determined by the artists, the consequence of which has been transformative and at the forefront of creating the image of the stereotyped witch as we see her today. The poetry of Carol Ann Duffy 'The Lancashire Witches' (Appendix C) written as a memorial and an interpretative strategy in relaying her own interpretation of the witches and their craft has been investigated. Her poetic tercets are used to conceptualise the personae of those accused of witchcraft and the next chapter considers her influence in defining the memory of the Pendle Witches. The utilisation of art as a means of perpetuating memory and how time can change the perception of memory is investigated through considering the work of Christian Boltanski. My own experimental artwork is also explored through the process of laser cutting as a way of conveying fading memories through visual images.

Chapter Four – The Representation of Witches

4.1 Outline

This section analyses the critical role that art has played in developing the popular perception and image of the witch in European art in the late Middle Ages and investigates its chronological development. It then goes on to consider the influence artists still have in envisaging the witch today and the part contemporary memorials have played in constructing the personae of the Pendle Witches.

4.2 Historical Representation

An investigation of early modern scholarship suggests that the representation of the witch may have developed from Greco-Roman interpretations, according to Elizabeth Ann Pollard in *Witch-crafting In Roman Literature and Art: New Thoughts On An Old Image* (2008, p. 121). She suggests that because of the “[...] wide-ranging formats” the exact connection with the sculptures and images of this time still calls for debate.

The visual representation of a witch riding on a broomstick has become possibly the most familiar and influential portrayal in the iconography of witchcraft since the fifteenth century, according to Allison Meier in her article *The First Known Depiction of a Witch on a Broomstick* (2016). The majority of those accused of witchcraft were women; therefore, the sweeping broom became symbolically associated with their domesticity and connected to female sexuality as a phallic symbol. The use of a broom as a flying instrument subverts the traditional domestic image of the woman; instead of her labour being tied to the patriarchal family unit, she uses it as a means of spatial and emotional independence. The same is true of the broom as a means of sexual gratification, allowing women to experience sexual pleasure divorced from reproductive labour.

The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Arts exhibition in 2013 entitled *Witches and Wicked Bodies* curated by the writer Professor Deanna Petherbridge, highlighted the visual interpretations and extreme ways in which witches have been explored by artists. This exhibition focused on European artistic representation of witchcraft from the fifteenth century to the present day. The deputy director of the Scottish National Gallery, Patricia Allerston, suggests in her preface to this exhibition guide (2013, p. 10) that the witch-hunts of the early 1600s, when 85% of those accused of witchcraft were women, could have helped to form the

stereotype of the female witch in representational art. According to Allerston (p. 11), these artworks present examples of how the image of the witch was “[...] being continually adapted, re-worked, appropriated and subverted according to the interests of each generation”. This exhibition, which later in the year moved to the British Museum, London, explored themes and the visual ideas of artists. These varied from the witch portrayed as the classical enchantress Circe to figures of witches depicted as deserving condemnation for being a threat to patriarchal control. These artistic images depicted witches as old and evil or as young, nude seductresses but almost always as women.

Charles Zika, in *The Appearance of Witchcraft: Print and Visual Culture in Sixteenth Century Europe* (2007, p. 1), writes that “[...] in the first half of the fifteenth century, the witch appeared as a newly defined figure on the cultural landscape of Europe”. He contrasts the image of the evil witch with the prior understanding of users of magic as a varied group, some using magic for love, fertility and healing and others using it to harm their communities. The image of the witch created in the fifteenth century became that of someone aligned with the Devil, and also became increasingly gendered. The concept of the witch was developed into someone who stood as a threat to church and state. Professors Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters, the editors of *Witchcraft in Europe, 1400–1700: A Documentary History* (2001, p. 4), consider that the first known pictorial illustration of the witch was painted in the margins of a manuscript created by the influential French poet Martin Le Franc’s *Les Champion des Dames* (1451) (Figure 26), held in the Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Paris.

Figure 26

This illustration depicts two members of the Waldensian cult of the thirteenth century who were executed as heretics. The use of a broomstick by both women demonstrates the subversion outlined above, focusing on and stigmatising the independence of these women as something inherently supernatural and demonic. The broomstick has become an ongoing identifiable part of the image and iconography of the witch. According to Dylan Thuras in *Sex, Drugs and Broomsticks: The Origins of the Iconic Witch* (2014), the first written reference to a witch riding on a broomstick was from the confession, under torture, of a suspected male witch Guillaume Edelin of Saint Germain-en-Laye near Paris in 1453, but this artwork from 1451 suggests that it was already a well-established motif of witchcraft.

The representation of witches flying on broomsticks is recognised in many pictorial woodcuts used as printing blocks in the seventeenth century. The woodcut *The Wonders of The Invisible World* (1689) (Figure 27), created by Mathers was featured in *The History of Witches and Wizards* (1720) and used in the eighteenth-century printed pamphlet about the Pendle Witches. This image continues the iconography of the broomstick, but now incorporates an image of the Devil. There is a clear development from the previous image in the demonisation of the woman's body; where previously broomsticks were the only signifiers of witchcraft, this is now seen in the women's faces, which became caricatured with a pointed nose and chin. It is important to note that this image is already gendered; the women's bodies are much more caricatured than that of the man in the top right of the woodcut. The pointed noses and chins join with the hat as symbolic of the Other in society; they can be linked to contemporary representations of Jewish people, who were similarly considered outcasts and depicted as such. This idea of marginalisation is compounded by the distance in the woodcut between the witches, who are in secluded countryside, and the house, which is symbolic of the civilisation they leave behind. This imagery is typical of artistic representations of the time and its influence can be seen in similar modern-day imagery.

Figure 27

These early images were not created to be figures of fantasy, as they are in today's popular image of the witch; they were perceived as real people and contained an underlying moral or hidden message of the dangers of witchcraft, created and often used by the Church and state to keep the population on the path of righteousness. The familiar image of the witch as a woman can be seen to be a reflection on this time in history when life was dominated by patriarchal attitudes in both society and cultural activity and the independence of women was seen as a threat and thus demonised. These portrayals of the witch set a precedent in their depictions, which remains the accepted visual approach to witchcraft today.

In the late fifteenth century, the preserve of creative art was dominated by male artists, who usually visualised the witch as a woman and focused on witches' engagement with the Devil and the ability they had to create harm. However, Helmut G. Koesnigberger, George L. Mosse and G. Q. Bowler put forward the suggestion in *Europe in the Sixteenth Century* (1968, p. 401), that "[...] England in the early sixteenth century had no surviving tradition in painting and sculpture comparable with that of Germany and the Netherlands" therefore the imagery of witches became heavily influenced by European artists including Hans Balding Grien, Henry

Fuseli and Francisco de Goya y Lucietes who utilised their fascination with the perceived lives of witches to create many compelling visual images as seen in Albrecht Dürer's *Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat* (c.1500) (Figure 28).

Figure 28

According to Petherbridge (2013, p. 42), this print "[...] influenced centuries of witch art". The work expresses a danger, which is inherent in the body of the witch, as seen in the previous woodcut (Figure, 27, p.70) and can be linked to this image; in this engraving not only does the witch possess the typical features of a hag, but she is unclothed and has wild, unkempt hair, both emphasising the world's inability to constrain her and her body. The witch's unruly behaviour is highlighted by the fabric in the image, showing a separation between the nude body and its societal limitations. This bodily independence is demonised in ugliness, suggesting its threat to society. Although the witch is gendered as female, her muscularity suggests an androgynous body shape, again showing her refusal to submit to norms of femininity and suggesting that her body an essential threat. She rides backwards on a goat as a contemporary symbol of anti-Christianity as the goat was "an embodiment of the Devil" (Petherbridge, 2013, p. 42). The storm in the top left-hand corner of the picture ties the witch into contemporary accusations of witchcraft, as witches were frequently accused of causing storms or other unexplained natural phenomena. The winged cherubs are trying to restrain the flying goat but also reference the contemporary myth that witches ate babies, linking this etching into the mythological landscape of the time. The development from the 1451 marginalia, to Dürer's etching in fewer than fifty years, demonstrates the increasing intensity of witchcraft imagery in this period; although modern-day interpretations are no longer as virulent, many of the themes of Dürer's artwork remain.

According to Thomas (1971, p. 542), it was only "[...] after the invention of printing that witchcraft stood revealed as the greatest crime of all". The ability to distribute these artists' portrayals and spread them throughout Europe from the early sixteenth century helped to define the modern perception of the witch as we imagine her today. These sixteenth-century engravings and paintings by European artists have sustained a continuing interest in portraying witches through artistic representation, which according to Zika (2007, p. 17) have continued to "[...] influence a broader public's understanding of witchcraft". Petherbridge (2013, p. 14), suggests the spread of these misogynistic images "[...] was directly linked to the print revolution [...] with shocking or titillating images of witchcraft".

Linda Hults in *The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe* (2005, p. 16) uses her iconographic analysis of the images created by the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists Dürer, Grien, Francken, De Gheyn, Rosa, and Goya to suggest that their portrayal of witches was created as a muse to heighten the “[...] status of the male artist in the early modern period”. She considers their artistic interpretations of a witch with a “[...] grotesque female body and the discourse of witchcraft is convincing and successful”, claiming these images were often “intended for small private groups of learned men, functioned like dirty jokes” (p. 96). The sixteenth-century engravings and paintings by European artists have sustained a continuing interest in portraying them through artistic representation, which according to Zika (2007, p. 17), have remained to “[...] influence a broader public’s understanding of witchcraft”.

In the early modern period, artists’ impressions promoted a message of witches and their connection to evil deeds, which endured over several centuries. However, these artistic representations changed in the nineteenth century at a time when the public stopped believing in the dangers of superstition and witchcraft practices. Instead of the impressions promoting a message of witches and their connection with evil deeds, this image changed to one which was intended to communicate that witches’ eroticised female bodies were a threat to the patriarchal order of that time.

Figure 29

Romantic backdrops and female mysticism combined to inspire nineteenth-century artists, and the witch was portrayed as an alluring, desirable young woman who with her enigmatic power was a threat to men. The painting of *The Witches’ Sabbath* (1880) (Figure 29), by Luis Richardo Falero was a direct contrast to the old and ugly witch, and until the early twentieth century, the witch was usually naked. Although the witch is presented as a sexually alluring woman, many of the traits of Dürer’s work prevail here. The witch is still nude, and her hair is loose and unrestrained, suggesting once again the danger of a body that refuses to be controlled. This danger is emphasised by the redness of her hair, which parallels the torch she wields in the picture; the flames of her hair are more powerful than those of the weapon, suggesting once again the inherent danger in her body. The bat is a link to the night and thus to danger, and the full moon, which lights her body is symbolic of femininity and the menstrual cycle but also madness through its connection to mood. This visualisation may be challenged by modern practitioners as being a form of misogyny.

Another key influence on the artistic representation of the witch has been from the inspiration of the three witches in Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* (Shakespeare, 1603, IV.i.14), which still looms large in the public's imagination. This portrayal through narrative has inspired many artists, including Henry Fuseli's painting of *Macbeth, Banquo and the Witches* (ca.1793–4) (Figure 30), to focus on images which sensationalise the malefic nature of witches' supposed activities. The theatrical portrayal of the witches in *Macbeth* is usually of women with some physical disability or peculiarity. These features were constructed to inform the audience that their deformed bodies were created by the Devil.

Figure 30

This image still recognises patriarchal power by creating a dominant male figure. The witches still maintain their alluring pose, with outstretched arms as a temptation to man, but their facial features remain exaggerated as in the earlier portrayals of witches. This personification through artistic representation propounds the supposed threat they pose in corrupting patriarchal order.

Caricaturists have later used and developed these exaggerated chins and noses in their portrayals to produce “[...] versions of this popular image” (Petherbridge, 2013, p. 95). It is clear that these historical artistic representations have influenced today's interpretation of witches, which have developed from this distorted representation in the nineteenth century. Although the images of witches have endured in their many forms over several centuries, the tone of these artistic representations changed at a time when witchcraft became fictionalised in public discourse. Although this thesis recognises that witchcraft has been subjected to long and exhaustive analytical interpretations, the image of the witch continues to be elaborated and artists continue to focus on the most sensational and imagined activities of their lives.

4.3 Modern Interpretation

Artists are still fascinated by the potent symbolic images of the witch but with the rise of feminism in the twentieth century these portrayals have been contested as misogynistic depictions of the witch as a form of female discrimination, according to Petherbridge (2013, p. 111). A renewed interest in Hallowe'en changed the image of the witch once again to one with a similarity to the woodcut image (Figure 27, p. 70). The witch is always depicted as a woman, but she has become a stereotyped figure of fun influenced by the commercialism of film, theatre and consumerism.

The representation of the witch, once regarded as a masculine province, has now become re-envisaged by women. At the beginning of the twentieth century, women started to take more control of their lives and the underlying sense of passivity in their representation was forcefully challenged. However, it is still important to note that the mainstream image of the witch in modern culture is not one created by feminist artists but remains as a commercially motivated caricature. She remains an enigmatic figure for contemporary female artists Kiki Smith and Cindy Sherman, who have used their facial images to subvert the notion of an idealised female. Smith, in *Out of the Woods* (2002) (Figure 31) and Sherman, in *Untitled No. 151* (1985) (Figure 32), focus on the fantasised, supernatural woman as a basis for their transformative portrayals of witches. They continue to change the image of the witch to pursue her as a woman with powerful independence and both artists often choose to characterise the witch as one on the margins of society as a consistent theme that runs throughout their work.

The artist Paula Rego often returns to the subject of folklore and her image of *Straw Burning* from the *Pendle Witches* series (1996) (Figure 33) was inspired by the Yorkshire-born Blake Morrison's poem also published in *A Discoverie of Witches* (Morrison, 2012).

Figure 33

In his poem, published as an illustrated book by Rego (1996), Morrison describes the characters of the witches and Rego used this as her inspiration to create a sexualised image of the witch as an older woman as described by Petherbridge, (2013, p. 125). She possibly depicts this witch as a bride of the Devil about to be engulfed in flames and surrounded by the mythological satanic symbols of witchcraft. Rego often uses her skilled draughtsmanship to interpret fairy and folk tales with images which confront abuses of power. Marina Warner in *Forms of Enchantment: Writings on Art and Artists* (2018) suggests that although Rego is a most "[...] powerful storyteller" (p. 25) her work considers human feelings and frailty, which are "above all mysterious in what they face, in what they say" (p. 24). This contemporary portrayal from the *Pendle Witches* series (1996) by Rego promotes a message of intrigue by using witchcraft symbols as her response to the text. As an artist she illustrates that superstition and magic should not only be considered as the preserve of the past; as Warner (2018, p. 19) comments, Rego often gives "[...] fear a face" by exploring tensions in the lives of women and helps to maintain the public's fascination with witches. Rego's work in reclaiming the depiction of

witchcraft retains the element of mystery central to patriarchal depictions rather than humanising the witch as a vulnerable woman.

My work identifies with women who use self-representation to present a concept for those without a voice. Using the construct of being both behind and in front of the camera, this laser-cut image (Figure 34, *Laser-cut Image*) questions fragility as a representation of the Pendle Witches. The facial image is partially destroyed to achieve a metaphoric interpretation of the loss of identity through destruction to create a pre-established narrative. This symbolic portrayal of a witch's persecution contributes to an interpretation of their persecuted history. It presents an image of loss of identity, and eyes which are blind to the way they have been portrayed by their persecutors. The power and symbolic meaning of this work are evidenced in the haunting image which embodies the melancholy of being misrepresented by today's society.

Figure 34

Rose (2016, p. 2) considers the difference between “vision” and “visuality;” on the one hand, it is how we physically see, and on the other, how artwork is constructed. She claims that visual images are the way that “[...] many now interact with the world” (p. 3). The artwork in Figure 34, therefore, asks the audience to question the persecution of the Pendle Witches through its construction by considering the vulnerability of the burnt image. Traditionally, artwork around witches has focused on emblems of sorcery and ritualistic practice, failing to engage the participating spectators with their mundane lives and their unjust persecution. In using the lived experience of walking in the footsteps of the Pendle Witches, I created a paradox between my journey and the creation of my artwork, which is born from their death.

4.4 Local Representation

My walk through the landscape to Lancaster reinforced a connection to the Pendle Witches through the many visual portrayals of stereotypical witches on my journey. The witches have now come to be represented by stereotyped images (Figure 35, *Stereotyped Image*, photographed during the walk), of a woman dressed in black, with a pointed hat, riding on a broomstick and often with a cat.

Figure 35

This reconstructed portrayal has become a well-established representation of all witches, including the Pendle Witches, and continues to promote their imagined supernatural personae.

It is an image used to engage the public's curiosity in witchcraft and to sensationalise the story of these witches' persecution. The creation of this visual interpretation has provided a cultural heritage for the people in this area to connect with and capitalise on this inherited history. The area of Pendle is described by Joanne Pearson in *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories* (2002, p. 196) as "[...] the witchcraft capital of England" but the images which are used to promote the story of these witches can belie their lives and persecution. These portrayals persist in keeping their memory alive in the imagination of the public, but the distinction between fact and fiction can become ambiguous when a story has been narrated over four hundred years. Contemporary knowledge has failed to change the steadfast creation of this *Fantatised Persona* (Figure 36, photographed during the walk), which was evident on the *Signposting* (Figure 37, photographed during the walk) and *Way Markers* (Figure 38, photographed during the walk), directing me through the villages and towards Lancaster.

Figure 38

Although this is an image, which is useful in promoting the commercial enterprises of the area, it is also accepted as a recognised image on the signage and way markers, it fails to recognise the Pendle Witches as persecuted people. These local images could be considered to have a direct connection to the visual codes created in classical painting and the witch-hunting manuals, as noted earlier in section 4.2 of this chapter.

My journey led to many interactions and conversations with strangers, which allowed an insight into local history, imparting interesting information about local hearsay, local knowledge and giving rise to discussions; these helped me to make a connection with historical references and landmarks. A local resident informed me of the strange natural phenomenon of the visual image of a *Witch in the Snow* (n.d.) (Figure 39) frequently appearing when it melts on Pendle Hill. Even if this image in the snow is only an imagined pattern, it is a phenomenon that once again points to the preoccupation with witches in this area. The striking similarity between the silhouetted image in the snow and the silhouettes on the route with the hat and broomstick show the power of this image in local imagination.

Figure 39

Although W.T.J. Mitchell in *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (2005, p. 1) states that “[...] visual images have replaced words as the dominant mode of expression in our time” it could be expected that with the dawn of the twenty-first century and increasing availability of information, the Pendle Witches’ portrayal could be investigated with greater discernment and impartiality, yet this has not been the case. Instead, their visual interpretation continues to be portrayed through imagery which erases the persecution they suffered.

Although the history books do not record any details of the Pendle Witches' lives, only their trials and executions, many fictitious stories and myths about them have been used as a framework in contemporary literature. Their imagined stories still portray a history of intrigue and superstition, which have become embedded as myths. The authors Jeanette Winterson in *The Daylight Gate* (2012), Robert Neill in *Mist Over Pendle* (1951) and many famous playwrights have helped in constructing the characters and influencing the visual images of the Pendle Witches.

4.5 Memorials

The connection between history and how the Pendle Witches have been perceived through memorials has shaped the public’s interaction with them. The witches’ lives are remembered through visual interpretations and through narrative. How we remember people as we pass places and memorials every day in our daily routines is considered by Tim Edensor (2008, p. 25). He states that the past “[...] is everywhere”. The witches are remembered on this pathway from Barrowford to Lancaster, which is not only evidenced through the visual images of them but with poetry on ten cast-iron way markers placed as memorials at intervals beside the 51-mile path. Each marker recognises the life of one of the executed with an embossed tercet (Appendix C) written by the Poet Laureate (2009–2019) Carol Ann Duffy in 2012 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the Pendle Witches’ executions. The tercets were commissioned by Lancashire Green Close Studios in conjunction with Lancashire County Council Environmental Community and developed in collaboration with the authors of *The Lancashire Witches Walk* (2013).

Duffy states, when asked to write her tercets about the Pendle Witches, that she “was struck by the echoes of under-privilege and hostility to the poor, the outsider, the desperate, which are audible still” as recorded by Martin Wainwright in *The Guardian* (2012). Duffy’s *First Tercet (1)* and *First Tercet (2)* (Figures 40 & 41, photographed during the walk) (Appendix C) inform

the reader of the biblical text “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live”, a quote from Exodus 22:20 in the King James Bible, 1611, as a reference to the role which the Reformation and religious upheaval of the seventeenth century played in the persecution of those considered to be witches. The Bible was an influential controlling power, and according to the historian Brian Levack in Helen Parish’s *Superstition and Magic in Early Modern Europe* (2015, p. 366), long after the trials of the Pendle Witches it remained the authority and source of the belief that witchcraft existed.

Figure 41

Although Poole (2002, p. 2) states in his introduction that the accusations of witchcraft were mostly against poor peasant people and were often fuelled by suspicions and “[...] enmeshed in local feuds and rivalries”, which Duffy refers to in her stanzas (Appendix C). She also uses phrases in other tercets to describe the contemporary perception of the witches as “old” and “of evil faith”. Her poetry on the way markers places a reenvisioning of the witches firmly into the landscape, putting popular ideas of crones and witchcraft in the context of ‘superstition’ and ‘ignorance’, undermining traditional perceptions. Their position along the walk as an anniversary memorial, give them a sense of authority in their reenvisioning. This inspired me to work with the staff at Lancaster Castle on a series of anniversary memorial artworks. The tercets (Appendix C) will always be an unexpected visible memory and memorial at the side of the paths, but they can be taken for granted and walkers can fail to understand their significance. Each tercet is placed separately and without the context of the wider poem it is possible to read such concluding remarks as ‘in the murk of Pendle Hill, a crone’ [tercet 2] as definitive rather than contemporary beliefs which are undermined throughout the context of the poem. This is poignant in showing the importance of full context for understanding and suggesting that current views of witchcraft are only partially informed, but in practice becomes difficult given the improbability of visitors following the 51-mile route and observing every tercet.

Edensor (2008) also points out that mundane spaces are “[...] haunted by overlapping histories, memories and fragments of the past that are both unsettling and affirming, scary and comforting, unexpected and familiar” (p. 314). Memorials are a way of remembering the suffering of others and allowing empathy, but they can also remind us of the tragedies that continue and be a crucial reflection of social and religious injustice. Sam Wineburg in *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past*

(2001, p. 249) suggests that “[...] not only do details of historical events become less vivid as time passes” but “[...] decisions by novelists and filmmakers tell one story” “[...] and can often leave out other relevant elements of the past”. Duffy subverts the assumptions based on myths and old superstitions to relay her own ideas of the witches’ visual images and personae, associating the Pendle Witches with ideas of victimhood.

Unfortunately, the Pendle Witches are usually remembered with a degree of mythological fascination rather than as human beings. Different ways in which stories of the past can be handed down and related to future generations are subjective but the impact of Potts’s documentation (1613) of the witches’ trials four hundred years ago continues to have a resonance in how they are both remembered and portrayed.

Alice Nutter is the only Pendle Witch to have retained a special place in the memory of the Pendle community. She was described by Potts (1613) at her trial as ‘[...] a rich woman [of] great estate and [with] children of good hope’ according to Goodier (2014, p. 72), which set her apart from the other defendants and recognised her as a committed Catholic and a martyr to her faith. Witches were often portrayed as poor, illiterate peasants, but this was not the case with Nutter, as Goodier (2014, p. 72) considers she may have been considered worthier of status because of her wealth and states that because of this “[...] she was not easy to overlook and hurry through the courts as the rest might have been” and as she stayed silent during her trial she remains an enigmatic figure. She is remembered by a sculptural representation placed near to her house in the village of Roughlee. The signage in the village (Figure 42, *Signage*, photographed during the walk), however, leaves the traveller in no doubt that they remain in “Pendle Witch country”.

Nutter’s wealth and status in the community have afforded her a statue of remembrance, which has been denied to the other Pendle Witches. The local sculptor, David Palmer, created a steel and brass statue of Nutter (Figure 43, *Alice Nutter*, photographed during the walk) which was unveiled in 2012. His interpretation is not of the stereotypical or mythical witch, but as a woman of her status and generation, forgetting the evil personification assigned to her by the courts. The sculpture assigned to her is a stark contrast to the very different imagery of the witches on the signage and way markers along my journey.

Figure 43

David Collins in *The Sunday Times* (2018, p. 8) reports that the members of the Catholic Knights of Saint Columba have recently campaigned to have her name cleared, as they support the supposition that she was guilty of “[...] nothing more than practising [her] faith”. He also quotes that the Catholic Church “[...] may seek to rehabilitate Nutter by declaring her blessed or venerable.” Although historians find it impossible to be completely accurate about her character analysis, Goodier (2014, pp. 74–75) suggests that Nutter became attracted to witchcraft not to gain wealth, as the poor might have done, but to be able to use it as a form of revenge towards her social inferiors, or perhaps to protect a Catholic priest. Goodier does, however, point out that these suppositions are difficult to substantiate (p. 76). The difficulty arises in the discussion of how to separate truth from fiction and why Nutter has been chosen to be the only Pendle Witch to be offered exoneration by the Catholic Church. The witches who have not been remembered through a sculptural memorial have not only been dismissed by accusers for a belief which they found difficult to substantiate, but also dismissed through a contemporary representation of them.

The experience of walking in the footsteps of those accused of witchcraft gave me a primary and perceptual engagement with this local image and how the village of Roughlee has formed an important physical attachment to the life of Nutter. This statue, with its chained figure, was an important feature on my walk as it gave some recognition of the witches’ detention. By placing his work in the context of artistic memorials, Palmer has provided his audience with a specific lens through which to view Nutter, as one whose death was unjust, but not in line with his audience’s experience of other recognised stereotyped artwork. While this is a recognisable step away from the other representations seen elsewhere in the area, to commemorate Nutter alone belies the number of people persecuted in the name of witchcraft, particularly those of lower social status than Nutter. She has become the well-known and respectable face of the Pendle Witches, an image that does not allow for the reality of persecution, usually directed towards the poorest and, therefore, the most vulnerable.

There is a small memorial reduced to a date of the witches’ execution and a list of their names recognises that the witches “[...] suffered through prejudice and intolerance”. The brass *Memorial Plaque* (Figure 44, photographed on the walk) is placed in front of the Golden Lion pub on Moor Lane in Lancaster. Pearson (2002, p. 198, provides the information of the tradition

that the condemned be allowed one last drink here before their long climb to their execution on Gallows Hill. The plaque and the supposed record of the pub's history is a reminder to today's tourists of the Pendle Witches, although Goodier (2014, p. 92) states that there is no proof that this tradition was in place at this time or even that the alehouse existed in 1612.

4.6 Alternative Representations

The French artist Christian Boltanski uses memory and memorials as a recurrent theme in his creative process. His work explores life, death, and memory concerning historical contexts and the people who are victims of circumstance, often using skeletons or skulls, cut out figures or photographs, as an artistic representation of memory. It highlights the remembrance of people and details of the events which have led up to their memorials. The Australian performance maker Rebecca Caines in *Christian Boltanski: Representation and the Performance of Memory* (2004) comments on the focus of his work, the difficulties of remembrance and how it relates to historical facts. She notes that to emphasise the difference between past and present, Boltanski employs a careful use of light and shade as a representation of transience, where everyday objects or photographs can be used as a trace of their existence. The difficulty of articulating memory, Caines suggests, cannot be shown in the present without 'contemporary conceptualisation' (p. 4). She also points out that memories can be unstable recollections and nostalgic interpretations to reinvent the events but also a reminder of what "[...] humanity is capable of" (p. 4). Boltanski's themes, fixating the relationship of death and memory, are ongoing and some of this work alludes to how we remember the Holocaust. When he was asked to create a monument to the Holocaust in 1994 for an American museum, Caines (2004, p. 5) states that Boltanski refused, as his memorial would be represented by using fragile material, such as paper, therefore it would need to be constantly renewed. He considered that the physical act of rebuilding would be a constant "[...] reminder to keep remembering" the Holocaust victims (p. 5). Historical events and our memories of them "[...] can never be an unfiltered document of the past" (p. 5); we have to adapt to our own preconceptions of loss by creating lasting memories, however fragile. Dianne McGurran writing in *Afterimage Becoming Mythical: Existence and Representation in the Work of Christian Boltanski* (2010 p.9) considers how Boltanski uses photographic representation as a role for memory and its association with the truth. She suggests that his images can be considered a reinvention of the past but are not always reinterpretations of reality; they rely on the viewer's interpretation. With these, she suggests that he tries to bring the "[...] past into the present, heaping at the feet of the viewer tangible remnants of a life and the people who lived it" (p. 10). Boltanski uses

layers of fragile fabric in *La Transversée de la Vie* (2015) (Figure 45) to explore his interest in the uniqueness of people, their personal histories and in examining how their fragility can make them disappear.

Figure 45

Boltanski's use of a delicate medium as a means of interpreting vulnerability is the thematic chain of representation, which has influenced my representation of the Pendle Witches as defenceless people. This work has been achieved through the artistic experience of using digital manipulation and laser cutting and helps to create a new identity for them via trauma and memory. The laser-cut images (Figure 46, *Laser Images*) are used to weave together these two elements by creating forms of gradually receding images burnt into thin, delicate paper. This series of portraits portray the gradual fading of memory through time. The disappearing physical traces are a reminder of lost life and lost memory. Through this process, new light is thrown on the witches as people in their own right and it conveys how the aesthetic can address and redress their story.

Figure 46

The image of the witch can be recalled and emerge from an involuntary memory handed down through ingrained stereotyped images, which are challenging to erase and may never completely disappear. However, creative re-evaluation of history is a constant process based on the work of individuals seeking to deconstruct the status quo. The evaluation of my work was gained through personal experience, which gave a new perspective and a different perception of how the Pendle Witches can be perceived. Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981, p. 15) states when discussing the stories that are handed down through tradition that the past is inaccessible and in "[...] ancient literature it is memory and not knowledge that serves as a source of power for the creative impulse". He also comments that this is "[...] inaccessible to our personal experience and does not permit an individual personal point of view or evaluation" (p. 16). However, this project suggests that collective thinking can be reassessed through art practice to re-envision an historical event in the light of contemporary understanding.

Summary

This chapter draws attention to the fascination that some artists have with the image of the witch. It suggests that a stereotyped image of the Pendle Witches, which is used as a commercial motif in this part of Lancashire, has developed from artists' imaginative portrayals.

It suggests that this image was developed when not only society but also art practice was dominated by men, who associated women with witchcraft. It explores how art, literature and theatre have contributed to creating the image of the witch today. It concludes that the boundary between historical truths and fictionalisation has led to the distortion of images of the Pendle Witches from people who were often poor, harmless and leading mundane lives to one of malevolence. My own art practice explored a way of interpreting the accused through the technique of laser burning and using this to inform the public of their persecution in a public exhibition. I reflected on how a stereotypical image has become so integrated into this area and throughout parts of my journey. It continues as a visual code to inhabit the landscape in the present, rather than restore an historical account of their lives.

The next chapter explores the beliefs and actions of those engaged in superstitions and magical practices. It looks at positive and negative influences which preoccupied communities in the seventeenth century in trying to make sense of their world and to control their destinies and the belief in the power of natural materials to offer protection against witches. The image of the witch has been influenced by her portrayal in children's fairy stories and the depiction of witches living apart from society in woodland. It examines how the concept these tales continue to have on the interpretation of the witch and witchcraft in contemporary imagery. The information from interviews with two modern witches is also referenced. It also describes my exploratory practice-based representations of the Pendle Witches placed in a site-specific woodland setting.

Chapter 5 – Superstitions and Witchcraft Practices

5.1 Outline

The word witch is synonymous with superstition, spells and divination and the primary object of this section of the thesis is to consider the various magical beliefs which were prevalent in the seventeenth century. It explores how these concepts have become inextricably linked to the Pendle Witches' personae. It considers folk beliefs with the aim of demonstrating how these have become interwoven into the concept of witchcraft practice and the perception of the Pendle Witches' ability to cause harm.

Part of my journey took me through the ancient area known as the Pendle Forest and this chapter explores the concept of witches living in the seclusion of woodland and how this image has become a dominant figure of superstition and malevolence in many fairy tales. The portrayal and perception of a witch as a mistrusted woman is now embedded in these stories through interpretative artistry and narratives. This chapter has considered how this image has been projected through mythological stories and films to influence the public's perception of the witch. Carol Ann Duffy's poetry (Appendix C) on way markers is also investigated. Her references to the symbolic power of the crow and pierced dolls questions the suspicions of magical and harmful practices which were prevalent in early modern communities.

5.2 Early Modern Superstition

In early modern Britain, the church fulfilled a significant role; superstition combined with religion was the focal point of everyday life. The influence of the supernatural, employing spells, was expected to be automatically successful, whereas the use of prayer would only be successful if God granted it and, therefore, not guaranteed; this became the essential difference between magic and prayers (Thomas, 1971, p. 46). The initial indictments against the Pendle Witches were conceived through superstition, as stated in the Contextual Review of this thesis. Alizon Device had supposedly bewitched John Lawe, which started a chain of events leading to the execution of the Pendle Witches. The supposed spell cast by Device, because it had an immediate effect on Lawe, was perceived by him to have been induced by witchcraft and "[...] worked automatically" (Thomas, 1971, p. 46), because its' effect was immediate.

Many traditional practices and beliefs of the seventeenth century were originally based or constructed on religious convictions, and superstitious practices have evolved over centuries

from our pagan ancestors handed down in rural communities from family to family, usually by the women. This is endorsed by Joyce Froome in *Wicked Enchantments: A History of the Pendle Witches and their Magic* (2010, p.1). She indicates there is a belief that Pendle Witches and their families “[...] openly practiced magic”, as a practical way in dealing with problems they were unable to understand. Thomas (1971, p. 748) suggests there has been little advance in the understanding seemingly trivial events became associated with superstitions. In the Catholic stronghold of Lancashire, saints’ holy relics and prayers played an important part in popular superstitions. However, the medieval Catholic Church supplied a reservoir of power, which was perceived to help all kinds of ills, reinforced by its own propaganda. The Reformation outlawed the widely held beliefs in the supernatural or any affiliation to magical cures that were customary in rural communities. James I reinforced this when he adopted the continental judicial process in 1604, which considered witchcraft as a diabolic threat to social order as Stephen Pumfrey describes in *Potts, Plots and Politics: James I’s Daemonologie and Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches*. (2002, pp. 27–28). This new amended English statute (Appendix B) combined with the more intolerant Protestant religion, sought to distinguish religion from a belief in magical powers; those who held on to these beliefs were considered to be witches. If they continued to help their communities in this way they were thought to be in league with the Devil, according to Pumfrey (2002, p. 28).

Myths, superstitions and magical practices developed from beliefs in the manipulation of hidden powers and therefore made connections with the natural environment. The Pendle Witches lived in a time when 80% of people dwelt in rural communities (Thomas, 1971, p. 4), and there was a preoccupation with observing nature and natural phenomena. Fabricated beliefs and supernatural encounters were central to rural communities trying to find explanations for the misfortunes that befell the population; they were considered invaluable factors in making sense of practical connections to everyday life. The lack of medical knowledge led many seventeenth-century communities to look for help from the supernatural or herbalists in the face of diseases or disasters. The art of foreseeing the future, to help in coping with illness and fear, therefore, became part of the preserve of those perceived to be witches. Robert Trubshaw in *Exploring Folklore* (2002, p. 99) comments on the natural elements and plant lore, which were the basis of wide-ranging “[...] traditional beliefs in their communities” saying that “[...] many believed in their curative properties”. The concepts of mystery and superstitious practices have remained prevalent in the portrayal of the witches, who were believed to share the combined resources of pagan beliefs and Catholicism in producing herbal healing practices in

a time when, as Clayton states (2007, p. 160), “[...] they were born and bred into an age of superstition and belief in the power of nature”. Using nature and magical practice as curative measures were mostly the preserve of women, which gave them a degree of power in their disadvantaged world but according to Kirsteen Macpherson Bardell in *Beyond Pendle: The ‘Lost’ Lancashire Witches* (2002, p. 107) there was no mention of healing or medicinal herbs in the trials of the Pendle Witches. The beneficial use of herbs at that time would have been crucial and inseparable from the lives of people. Macpherson Bardell (p.107) considers the important part that witches played in the community has now been neglected and perception of the witches now only focuses on their malicious practices. She states this has provided a “[...] narrow and distorted picture” of witchcraft. The public mood at the time of the Pendle Witch trials perhaps failed to consider the traditional folk medicines, midwifery and curative remedies which they used and although they would have been ill-equipped to deal with complex illnesses, they provided a service to their communities. Macpherson Bardell (2002, p. 107) suggests the male medical establishment at the time directed “[...] an attack on female healing” when men were considered superior to women, although there is no evidence from the court records which connects the use of herbs or healing to the Pendle Witches. The indictments from hearsay and suspicions against the witches were of causing death or illness through bewitching, but Potts’ accounts of their trials make no mention of how these were inflicted. The historian Euan Cameron in *For Reasoned Faith or Embattled Creed? Religion for the People in Early Modern Europe* (2015, p. 34) agrees there are substantial records confirming that early modern European people did rely on these practices.

Witches not only helped their neighbours with spells and other enchantments but there was a belief that witches could control the elements, which triggered aggression in communities, characteristically in times of crisis (Macpherson Bardell, 202, p. 109). This once again fed into how witches have become perceived as troublemakers and contrivers of mischief and women engaged in healing using traditional herbal remedies have become viewed as ‘witches’ as a result of suspicion in their practices. The fictional accounts of the Pendle Witches have overridden and affected the few documentary records that exist about their lives, which mainly describe the accusations against them and their executions, but the charges (often only based on their suspicious practices) have remained steadfast through the stereotyped images (Figure 48, *Stereotyped Witches*) identified throughout my walk on pages 89, 90 and 91 and in my journal (Appendix H 4).

Many tangible examples of the strong tradition of superstitious practices have been found in the area of Pendle with numerous objects concealed within the fabric of houses as counter-magical practices to keep the inhabitants safe from witches. They were regarded as a defence against maleficent practice in the precarious world of mis-understood detrimental harm. Identical *Written Charms* (Figure 47) along with horseshoes, dead cats and human shoes in the seventeenth century were placed in the walls of barns and buildings. Clayton, (2012, p. 25) describes ‘witch bottles’ being found behind fireplaces in the Pendle district of Lancashire to protect the house owner from witchcraft. He also comments that “[...] if injury [to a witch] was the intended outcome then the bottle would be filled with human hair, nail pairings, bent nails and copper pins” (Clayton, 2007, p. 217).

Figure 47

A great many superstitions and myths also grew up around frogs and toads, with their supposed association with the Devil. At a time when the *witch craze* (Levack, 1995, 607) was sweeping across Europe, the most feared spells were likely to involve toad’s venom according to Parish (2015, p. 190). The researcher into witchcraft, George Knowles, in *Animals and Witchcraft: Frogs and Toads* (n.d.), states that wearing the jewelled “toad stone,” which grows in the head of toads, was common in the Middle Ages as a preventative measure against poisoning if worn as an amulet ring or necklace. Toads were also famously one of the ingredients in the witches’ cauldron in Shakespeare’s play *Macbeth* (1603, IV. i) In the seventeenth century, they were known by demonologists or witch-hunters as witches’ familiars. Witches allegedly used them in satanic rituals and spells to make themselves invisible or used their secretions to make a flying ointment. Thomas (1971, p. 11) writes that in 1603 a preacher recommended all sorts of amulets, including dried toads, as a preventative to the threat of the plague. The plague was a real danger to the population and a great deal of energy was spent in finding some means of preventing any panic amid deep-seated fears of illness. Toads were thought to be used in maleficent spells by witches and were also as a protection against witches; they are thus caught up in an oppositional conflict. My artwork has rejected this concept of the witch and moves more towards an understanding of the witch as a victim rather than aggressor.

There is evidence that toads were tangible objects thought to provide magical powers in this area of Pendle. My interview with N.S. as a local landowner (Appendix F, p. 184) revealed his discovery of a small box in the chimney of his house in Pendleton. This contained a small *Mummified Toad* (Figure 48) and a tiny *Prayer Book or Bible* (Figure 49) (the scale of the small book is shown against a penny and were photographed at the landowners house). The

tiny pages have disintegrated within its leather cover; there is no way of knowing if this was a Catholic relic, hidden from the Protestant Reformists, or a book of spells used by the resident witch. His family considers these objects and their association with the witchcraft of the area to be a substantial part of their house's history, playing a role in linking its past to the present.

Figure 49

The use of magical artefacts in the seventeenth century was reinforced in the exhibition *Spellbound: Magic, Ritual and Witchcraft* at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (2018–19). Many of the exhibits displayed are objects which had been found secreted within the fabric of old houses, only revealed during excavations or demolition. Shoes, bones and written spells, as well as iron items, were all thought to have protective qualities (*Spellbound Exhibition Catalogue*, 2018–19, pp. 67–95). Most of these items were considered by the curators as evidence of counter-magic against the suspicion that witches could cause harm in the community. This exhibition only focused on the harmful magical practices of witches. It considered the persecution of witches outside of its remit, therefore failing to acknowledge the stigma which has become attached to them through these superstitious practices.

In the seventeenth century, as a means of controlling events which the public failed to understand, theologians who wanted to promote their teachings, had to accept that both prayer and charms were to be encouraged. Turner in *Beautiful Necessity: The Art and Meaning of Women's Altars* (1999, p. 19), suggests that the spiritual autonomy gained from the Catholic interpretive understanding of the Virgin Mary became crucial in women's interconnectedness and reliance of these Catholic and Pagan shared resources. As Lancashire was traditionally a stronghold of Catholicism in the seventeenth century (Poole, 2002, p. 31) these traditions combined to influence women who used healing and divination in their rural communities, and many became known as witches. In this time of patriarchal power, this, therefore, gave these women their own secretive powers by joining the practice of herbal healing with blessings. Historically the result of male ideologies encouraged women "[...] to keep or invigorate old practices alongside the new" (Turner, 1999, p. 19). Witches were not always identified as malicious figures of fun as are they are today; they were often valued as people who played a part in the complex world of the seventeenth century (Macpherson Bardell, 2002 p.106), and is a viewpoint which this thesis seeks to endorse.

Superstition and magical practices were prevalent around this time and a black cat maintains its connection with the witch in numerous portrayals of them (Figure 50, *Artistic Interpretation*, photographed during the walk) in artistry around the area of Pendle.

Figure 50

During the early modern period there was a belief that if a black cat (dead or alive) was placed within the walls of a house, it would protect the inhabitants from the evil power of a witch. Black cats, with their mystical symbolism, were associated with evil, cunning and being a danger to the soul and body. According to Fanny Syufy in *Black Cats, Witches and Beliefs - About Black Cats* (2017), they have played a major role for centuries in folklore, superstition, and mythology. Cats were once believed to be witches' familiars, a term referring to an animal that had magical powers and was a servant to a witch, because they are nocturnal, they were considered to have an affiliation to evil and the supernatural. The contemporary image of the Pendle Witch with a black cat has been influenced by this superstition.

The evidence of concealing objects became poignant when my journey took me past the remains of a supposed *Witches' Cottage* (Figure 51) unearthed in 2011 (Ravenscroft, 2011) and the discovery of a mummified cat placed within the wall of the house. This practice is described by Froome (2010, p. 161) who suggests there is substantial evidence and many examples which support the belief in this superstitious practice, and suggest that the spirit of a mummified cat would offer protection to the food supplies in the house from destructive vermin.

Figure 51

This was a superstitious practice, along with the concealment of shoes and other objects, as a precaution against evil spirits or to keep its inhabitants safe has survived for many centuries and evidence of this was displayed in the *Spellbound* 2018 exhibition and described by Owen Davies and Ceri Houlbrook in the exhibition catalogue *Concealed and Revealed* (2018, pp. 67-95). A recent survey revealed a pair of shoes hidden in one of the walls of Lancaster Castle (Goodier, 2014, p. 106) possibly as a protection against witchcraft as the Pendle Witches were imprisoned in the Castle jail from the spring of 1612 until the circuit judge arrived to preside over the court in August. This underground dungeon (Figure 52, *Lancaster Dungeon*, photographed at the end of the walk) still exists and remains an evocative and haunting building.

Figure 52

Superstition, both real and imagined, was deeply embedded in seventeenth-century society and was recognised on the west tower of St Mary's Church, Newchurch, as I walked through the village. Sculpted into the church wall, is the locally named *Eye of God* (Figure 53, photographed during the walk), which was possibly there to remind those going to church that they were being 'observed' or created as a protective amulet for the church against witchcraft.

Figure 53

Although the significance of this unusual structure remains unknown, intriguing and unique in the area, the "evil eye" is one of the strongest symbolic images of magical thinking and superstition and a powerful image of retribution or protection against evil forces. Rosemary Guiley, the writer on spirituality in *The Encyclopaedia of Witches, Witchcraft and Wicca* (1999, p. 115) states that the amulet symbol of an eye has been used universally throughout history and is often found on walls or tombs as a protection against evil spirits. This symbol of an eye returning its stare to the viewer, was thought to have the capacity to both prevent harm and undo any harm already done (Froome, 2010, p. 52). This sculpture on the wall of the church evokes another example of superstition and a reminder that, after four hundred years, evidence of the myths and beliefs of this time are still ingrained within the Pendle villages.

The villages I walked through are still bounded by large tracts of the countryside, and my journey passed hedgerows intertwined with belladonna (*atropa belladonna*) or deadly nightshade, one of the best-known plants in mythology because of its close association to cures and death potions. It was a supposed way of communicating with the spirits of the underworld. The folklore herbalist Mackenzie Sage-Wright in *A Magical Herbal Lesson about Belladonna* (2017) notes that it was possibly an ingredient of "flying ointment" used by witches to make them fly on their broomsticks but she states it is more probable that it would have been used by ancient shamans to induce a trance. Clive Harper writing in *Folklore Journal on The Witches' Flying Ointment* (1977, p. 1) states that he has examined the ingredients of the flying ointment recipes and the alkaloids contained in deadly nightshade which have psychotropic effects leading to delusions. This plant grows naturally in the hedges of the English countryside and is regarded in Christian folklore as toxic and loved by the Devil. Myths state it was guarded by him for the entire year. The only day it could be collected, without inflicting his wrath, was on May Eve when he would be called away to the witches' sabbats, according to Sage-Wright (2017). These beliefs in the flying ability of witches have contributed to the portrayal of the

Pendle Witches and as stated in Chapter 4, have retained their place in the historic representation of all witches.

The significance of many magical beliefs and superstitions has been lost through a lack of research, which Macpherson Bardell (2002, p. 106) states is detrimental to how we perceive witchcraft today. She suggests that only focusing on “[...] malicious witchcraft” gives us “a very narrow image of popular beliefs in magic at this time”. Cynthia Eller in *The Myth of Matriarch Prehistory: Why the Past Won't Give Women a Future* (2000, p. 35), states that “women were not named witches because they worshipped a goddess in a circle in the woods or because they made herbal charms, women were named witches because they refused to submit to demeaning and limiting roles.” Therefore, there is a disconnect between little-understood actual magical practices of the seventeenth century and those who were persecuted as witches.

5.3 Local Superstition

Local superstitions and many old customs have survived, but with the barrier of time, it has become almost impossible to discover the contexts of their origins and how they became grounded as widespread practices. The Pendle Witches are still connected to superstitions and the magical practices in this area of Lancashire, and this was endorsed by many of the inhabitants I met along my journey. I was informed by a passerby that some parents, because of superstitions, refused to allow their children to be involved in the local Witchcraft Commemoration Project of 2012, confirming that there remains in this area an inherent fear of witchcraft practice. Poole (2002, p. 196), when describing the effect of the Pendle Witches states “[...] the old association of witches with the devil continues for Christians living in Lancashire,” which he refers to as “[...] the Devil's domain”. He suggests that in the past there have been strategies to “[...] cleanse it from the evil created by local witches” (p. 196). The popular imagination and contemporary fear of witches and witchcraft still underpin the cultural, social and imagined approaches of these local communities. There is evidence that some of these practices continue as *Horseshoes* (Figure 54, photographed during the walk) are nailed onto walls, doors and houses, and white lines are painted across front doorsteps, which remain as a reminder of the thought that they could repel a witch from centering the house (Clayton, 2012, p. 25). Walking was an indication throughout my journey that these beliefs remain as folk customs in rural Lancashire.

Figure 54

This walk through the English countryside was essentially an experience of reflection with profound spiritual meaning, one where the simple act of its performance had unforeseen interactions and encounters with many strangers. These discussions with passers-by helped to unite my walk with people in this community, rather than being a distraction, and led to interesting dialogues.

I reflected on all the half-forgotten experiences that are lost in the underlying soil when travelling on foot. It was a way of overcoming the speculations of all the superstitious practices and the people who walked this way before me. To develop a relationship between the two, Tilley and Bennett (2008, p. 271), state that walking “[...] for it to be successful” should be a phenomenological experience. This played a significant part in the focus of my journey as it allowed me to engage with the many different phenomena that I encountered on the tracks. The ancient rural paths helped to link the phenomenal to the noumenal memory prompts of the past. Edensor (2008, p. 315), discussing the buildings which he passes on his regular commute, states that traces of habits and old routines “[...] pervade everyday space and can be etched into its material fabric”, and he draws attention to the everyday remnants of the past which we can take for granted but add to the formation of memory if more attention is paid to them through observation (p. 314). Although he discusses the urban cultural practices and the traces that are left behind in a city, this also applied to the rural landscape which I passed through, where ancient pathways and abandoned buildings summon up stories and superstitions about the lives and myths of those who once lived and walked this way. The traces of the past which linger along these paths are a reminder of diminished memories and forgotten knowledge of history and remain testament to the path’s significance.

Many of these interactions with the public were recorded in *My Journal* (Figure 55). I also made reflective notes allowing me to confront the images which valued the representation of superstitious practices over historical events. These traditions will always evolve through time and depictions of past events seemed only to be effective now if they can serve this community. The memory of events can be forgotten in time and is never prosaic, but during my walk I reflected on the many superstitions and their heritage which are still maintained throughout Pendle. [Examples of these are in my journal Appendix H.4].

5.4 Fairy Stories and Woodland

This thesis also suggests that traditional fairy stories have had an impact on the image of the witch as a superstitious character. The path through the Pendle Forest and the silence in the woods conveyed a mysterious and secretive power, which led me to reflect on the influence of these stories. The backdrop of the wood as the home of a witch stems, from childhood memories and the collections of folk and fairy stories documented in 1812 by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and retold in *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* (2016). The witch is usually portrayed in these tales as an ugly, old woman who lived a secret, solitary life apart from society and in many stories she was conveyed as a dominant figure of evil and mystery. The Western classical interpretations of fairy tales usually hold associations with the witch that are inseparable from superstitions. In the seventeenth century witches were regarded as nonconforming people, who were ostracised by society, but this rejection may have been based on the foundation of them living apart from their intolerant communities.

The formulaic, pictorial illustrations in fairy tales of the witch cut off from society have become universal, and she is easily identified by the visual code of a mysterious old woman dressed in black, so as not to need any explanation of her character. Fairy stories supported the visual image created by the artists of early modern Europe, portraying the witch as a woman who was both feared and hated, rather than the nineteenth-century portrayal of an eroticised, young woman.

Preceding generations, who are responsible for handing down these myths and fairy stories, have imparted a heightened awareness of personal vulnerability in woodland, which conveys a concept of mystery and secrecy. The Cambridge lecturer Dr Hester Lees-Jeffries (2018) suggests when discussing *The Faerie Queene* [Edmund Spenser, 1590–6] that the forest in fairy tales is a “[...] moral landscape” that forms a dynamic part of the narrative, rather than the passivity suggested by the word “setting,” playing a role in actualising ideas of darkness and secrecy as well as actively trapping protagonists. Narratives imposed from childhood influence views of the forest as a place of seclusion and somewhere where witches would have met. In trying to reclaim images of the forest for the witches, I am still inevitably bound by the traditions with which I was brought up. Thus, for me, within the forest, both time and place

seemed to generate a strong, unexplained sense of presence but the disconcerting silence combined with the shadows of the powerful, tall, straight trees appeared to make this an ideal, secret place where underprivileged witches might have met.

Writers of fairy tales have influenced and reinforced a concept in which the witch plays a pivotal role and has a fundamental impact on these stories, where good is promoted over evil. This association stems in part from childhood memories and the collections of folk and fairy stories where an isolated woodland setting often forms a backdrop to the home of a witch and the witch in the classic fairy tale usually dies. Sheldon Cashdan in *The Witch Must Die* (1999, p. 18) describes the image of a witch in these tales as “[...] a representation of psychological forces operating in the child’s psyche.” She stresses that fairy tales are “[...] about women and the important part they play in the child’s emerging sense of self” (p. 29) and according to Cashdan “[...] she must die because she embodies the sinful part of self” (p. 30). However, the more traditional view of the fairy story is as a “cautionary tale” locating the witch inside the child’s psyche at an early age as a symbolic solitary woman relegated to the margins of society.

The premise of being lost in woodland has become inextricably linked to the themes and morals of many fairy tales. These stories were originally passed down through oral tradition, but with time they progressed to become literary texts as a marketable commodity. The commercial transition from the oral to the written text by the nineteenth-century collectors of fairy tales continued to cement the depiction of the witch in descriptions and illustrations to enhance the story and to influence the way the reader imagined the characters. The brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm collected the original folk tales in the nineteenth century, and their recounting of these tales is now regarded as the authoritative version of fairy stories for children. They usually portrayed a witch in their stories who functioned as a sorceress or anti-Christian figure. The wicked witch is often a leading character in the story whose evil traits are not immediately revealed. This deception is often the core theme of the storyline. In most European traditions the persona of the witch is perceived as a wicked woman. This portrayal can become deeply embedded in the imagination, as an image developed in childhood through the retelling of these tales. The witch remains a compelling and powerful figure through the proliferation of narratives of violence and superstition. These narratives have been told and retold to subsequent generations, maintaining this identity of the witch, who creates deliberate, demonic acts of harm by magical means.

The artist Arthur Rackham continued to shape this portrayal of the visual image of the witch in the fairy tale book *The Ingoldsby Legends of Mirth and Marvels* by Thomas Ingoldsby (1907) with such illustrations (p.26) as *There's an Old Woman who Lives on Tappinton Moor* (Figure 56) which were cultivated for the upper-class children of the Western world. This could have been a way of using social difference as a cultural demarcation, as witches and witchcraft were usually connected to the lower disadvantaged classes. This led to a reflection on the portrayal of Alice Nutter, (as described in Chapter 3, p. 89) because she was described as a “rich woman of great estate” (Goodier, 2014 p. 72) and considered to be in a different social class from the other Pendle Witches. This could be why she was afforded a statue of her own and is the only witch the Catholic faith are trying to reclaim in their attempt to quash her conviction. Nutter is the only one of the Pendle Witches who seems not to fit the class-based image of the marginalised witch; this continuing perception of witches as women from lower-class backgrounds is reflected in her preferential commemorative treatment.

Figure 56

Although the historical context and origin of the fairy tale has been lost and is no longer relevant, the character and artistic portrayal of the witch has now been firmly established in Western European culture. This has become a part of secular mythology, expressing the witch as a symbol of power and persecution that continues to be promoted and repeated in the mass media in innovative ways throughout all forms of creative practice. This motif has been exaggerated in many contemporary films, such as *The Wizard of Oz* (LeRoy, 1939) and the show *Wicked* (Mantello, 2003) and has been polarised by Disney through stories and cinema to make them synonymous with fantasy, thus creating difficulty in communicating an accurate understanding of the persecution of all witches, including the Pendle Witches. Filmmakers often continue to identify with this depictions of witches based on the images from fifteenth-century artists and continue to endorse this portrayal.

Hansel and Gretel is one of the most well-known fairy tales and an example of where the compelling character of a wicked witch is the main antagonist. In a production of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* by the Royal Opera House in London (December 2018) the story was set in the twentieth century and was described in an article by the critic Hugh Canning (Sunday Times 9th December 2018, p. 29) as displaying “[...] dark undertones” and “[...] abject poverty with disturbing historical resonances”. The role of the witch in this opera is said to have been “[...] softened by Humperdinck and his librettist,” but it is acknowledged that the

production aims to frighten, though not terrify its younger audience, striking a balance between “[...] horror, humour and entertainment”. This demonstrates a traditional fairy tale dynamic with the witch being a source of both fear and fun; her position in the narrative has gone unquestioned. This portrayal is traditional in illustrations of this fairy tale, such as the depiction of *Hansel and Gretel* (n.d.) (Figure 57), by the artist Rima Staines.

Figure 57

This portrays the witch as having a unique power of malevolence and being a tangible threat to children and society. The portrayal of the witch through these different media continues to implant imagery from children’s fairy tales and has led to the witch being depicted as a harmful threat to society. This is often accepted as being a true reflection of the persona of all those accused of witchcraft, and there remains a challenge in trying to portray the Pendle Witches within their historical context as persecuted victims.

5.5 The Practice of Modern Witches

Contemporary witches interviewed, as part of this investigation, support the use of magical practices in their everyday use of witchcraft, using their influence and the autonomous power of women through the survival of the ancient traditions of folk magic, which continues to be passed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. Both G. M. (Appendix D) and J. B. (Appendix E), as modern-day witches, still practice healing and cast spells and continue to rely on the properties of trees, plants, herbs and holy wells (Figure 58, *Village Well*, photographed during the walk).

Figure 58

Water is a unifying link between witchcraft practice and magical healing. This symbolic prophetic element for healing and purifying in the seventeenth century has now become modified in the rituals of contemporary witchcraft. My interview with two contemporary witches (Appendix D, p. 178 and Appendix E, p. 181) revealed that this element forms a continual elemental bridge between modern and ancient witchcraft. The religious tradition of using the divine power of well water in its role as a natural healer is also an important cleansing element to sanctify a contemporary witch’s own sacred temple. G. M. (Appendix D) explained that offerings to the deity of the well are not given in the hope of gaining favour or to placate the Goddess, but as a way of using the spiritual power of the well to access its curative properties. She states that pagan practices are still re-enacted today as a neo-pagan movement. This religious practice is polytheistic and connects people to their pre-monotheistic indigenous

roots, with water playing one of the key elements in connecting their spiritual path with earthly divination. G. M. (Appendix D) confirms that modern witches, who believe in many gods and goddesses, perform rituals that can give them a greater in-depth study of the myths that bring them closer to those gods; this gives impact to their magical and spiritual practices. Water is essentially a feminine element, with its nurturing and life-giving characteristics. G. M. (Appendix D) also states that witches today seek to understand and reinstate lost values and to reconnect with the past and communicate with their deities. This is not only for their own development but also for the communities and the world as a whole.

The ritualistic practice of blessings and polytheistic worship of today's witches can be traced back to the religious practices of their pagan ancestors. The sacred symbolic tools they use are central to the witches' connection with a spirit or deity to provide an intimate engagement of guidance, help and protection (Appendix D). The witch today, according to G. M., abandons the notion of persecution, torture and violence suffered by the witches of early modern society; she acknowledges the mystery, empowerment and the seductive allure of her ancient forbears as the only traits with which she wishes to be identified. This attitude is supported by Pearson (2002, p. 193) in her suggestion that the public have been "[...] fed mis-information" about early modern European witchcraft and modern day witches wish to reclaim the witch as "[...] good and wise". Purkiss in *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (1996, p. 17.), also suggests that the seventeenth-century witch had her own power as a wise, spiritual woman, as well as the perceived violence given to her by her persecutors. Today, the ancient witch is regarded not as the autonomous woman which she may have striven to be under the dominant patriarchal society in the seventeenth century, but is portrayed as a mythical figure.

The magical healing power of water is still instrumental as an important symbol with a set of powerful religious values, according to Chamberlain, in *Troubled Waters: Religion, Ethics and the Global Water Crisis* (2008, p. 49). This is reinforced by the High Priestess G. M. (Appendix D), who still uses her local well in her own witchcraft practice to heal or to ask for help from her deity Saint Bridget. She seeks assistance from the curative properties of a well by tying fabric or hair, which has been in contact with the sick person, to the branches of a rag tree and she asks that the malady is transferred to the well water as a healing process. This symbolic expulsion of an illness is an emotional transfer from subject to object. As a magical practice it can be dismissed as simply the superstition of country people, but the

curative stories that have been linked to ancient wells continue to sustain narratives about their religious and spiritual healing powers. As I passed many village wells on my journey, I recreated a *Rag Tree* (Figure, 59, photographed during the walk) as a temporary tribute to the Pendle Witches

Figure 59

Wells would also have been perceived to possess miraculous powers and be dedicated to a pagan deity before the advent of Christianity, according to James Rattue (1995) in *The Living Stream: Holy Wells in Historical Context*. He also states that holy wells “[...] feed the modern world’s aching need to retreat to a mythical and timeless past” (p. 1) and they remain rooted in the Lancashire landscape as concepts of superstitious practice and magical centres in the landscape according to J.B. (Appendix E, p. 118). Water, magical powers and the art of foreseeing the inexplicable, which are still practised in contemporary witchcraft by both the witches interviewed (in Appendix D and Appendix E) have a history in many ancient cultures. This study of divine science or divination, as a means by which communities seek to communicate with and seek the will of their gods, is used today in modern witchcraft (Appendix D). This all-encompassing term for many practices is how luck, the future and the potential fate of a person can be foretold with various techniques. Peter Struck in *Divination and Human Nature: A Cognitive History of Intuition in Classical Antiquity* (2016, p.6.) suggests there is an intertwining of ‘magic and divination’, which thrived as a part of an occult practice in the seventeenth century. The people who used this practice became known as cunning folk. However, Thomas (1971, p. 5) comments that because many rural people were often uneducated, hardly any records were kept at this time and therefore little detailed information survives about their beliefs in divination. He also suggests that most of the people within these communities shared this same conviction, so trust and confidence in these beliefs preoccupied them when trying to understand and make sense of the misfortunes that befell them.

The central deity of witchcraft today is a Mother Goddess (in contrast to male hierarchical gods) and contemporary witches see their religious practice as being free from the restrictions of organised religion. J. B. (Appendix E) states that all contemporary witchcraft seeks to create a practice that is free from any patriarchal control. However, Purkiss (2005, p. 40) comments that they still “remain tied to an historical narrative, which is inescapable as a male fantasy about what femininity should be”. This huge worldwide spiritual movement abhors hierarchical

structures, which seek to dominate the disempowerment of humanity. An essential characteristic, which is central to all pagan beliefs, is the channelling of the forces of nature and the importance of women to the coven. The High Priestess is a representative of the Goddess who identifies with Mother Earth. There is absolute secrecy and trust within covens and each coven will generally have its own way of working. There is a lack of research into the practice of magical beliefs and herbal cures by witches in the seventeenth century, which Macpherson Bardell (2002, p. 106) states is detrimental as there is only a focus on “malicious witchcraft” giving us “a very narrow image of popular beliefs in magic at this time”. Eller (2000, p. 35) states that “women were not named witches because they worshipped a goddess in a circle in the woods or because they made herbal charms, women were named witches because they refused to submit to demeaning and limiting roles”. Therefore, there is a disconnect between little-understood actual practices of the seventeenth century and the women who were persecuted.

GM (appendix D) stated that witchcraft practices are many and various in their traditions and worship of pantheons they all weave magic. Superstition, the belief in bewitching and curses are an important part of contemporary witchcraft practice and are evident from my interviews with that J. B. (Appendix E) regards crows as guardians of modern-day witchcraft, explaining that the crow is the protector of her local village well (Figure 60, *Witches' Well*, photographed during my interview) as a sign from her spiritual goddess. Crows are symbols of mystery and power to witches and, according to J. B., they are harbingers of change in our spiritual growth to teach us that the world can offer more than we can physically see. They are the most intelligent of all birds and she states that they have a sacred power to help in releasing the past by restoring balance and harmony in life. The superstitions which have grown up around crows have developed from the birds' perceived cunning and with independent traits. These birds, however, had multiple meanings to the people of seventeenth-century England. Rooks and crows were believed to possess the power of divination and were thought to provide important signs of warning, bad luck and death. They were assumed to be messengers from the gods, and it was believed that witches could ‘shapeshift’ from human to animal (Trubshaw, 2002 p. 101) at will, with their supernatural powers transforming them into crows, to fly away and escape capture.

Figure 60

Crows continue to be portrayed in legends and folklore relating to witchcraft and employed in Duffy's tercet (Appendix C) on the *Third Way Marker* (Figures 61 and 62, photographed during

the walk). She references “[...] the curse of crow and rook” on Alizon’s memorial, referencing the speculation over these witches’ magical powers. Her poem alludes to the continuing deep-rooted preoccupation with superstitions. Rather than reclaiming the crow as a guardian, as it is sometimes viewed in modern witchcraft, according to J.B. (Appendix E), Duffy has drawn on contemporary fears by using the symbol of the ‘curse of crow and rook’ as a malicious rumour spread by the community through ‘ill-will’ (Appendix C).

Figure 62

Duffy uses her fourth tercet (Appendix C) (*Fourth Tercet*, Figure 63, photographed during the walk) dedicated to Isobel Roby, to remind us of the superstition of placing nails or pins within an effigy of someone you wish to harm, mentioning “the sharp pins in the little dolls of death”. Although there is no evidence to suppose that she used this harmful magic practice, there was a common belief in the seventeenth century, by those who believed in superstition and witchcraft, that this could cause injury or death. This idea is described by Malcolm Gaskill in *The Fear and Loathing of Witches* (2018, p. 20) as a practice which “[...] looms large in the folklore of witchcraft”. The Museum of Witchcraft in Boscastle has an example of an *Effigy Doll* (Figure 64) and many examples were exhibits displayed in the Ashmolean Museum’s exhibition *Spellbound* (2018–19). Duffy’s (Appendix C) reference to the use of effigies by the Pendle witches is unsubstantiated, but this seems to be deliberate as the accusations, referenced in her poetry, carry the suggestion of rumour rather than fact, as she writes ‘the things we fear/Darken and form’ (tercet 5,) (Appendix C) to explain how public perception of the Pendle Witches led to their trials rather, than actions on the part of the witches themselves.

Figure 64

She uses her poetry to dislocate fact from fiction and has concentrated on the supposed magical practices of witches in general, rather than the specific facts relating to Alizon Device or the Pendle Witches as a collective. Her tercets remain charged with symbolic meanings in their interpretation of the event which she commemorates.

5.6 Art Practice

The understanding gained during the walk played a significant role in reenvisioning the witches in contemporary art. It allowed me to reconceptualise the witches from their own potential perspectives by using lonely, isolated woodland as a site-specific setting for my work (Figure 65, *Woodland Location*, photographed as part of my research).

Figure 65

Instead of the dark, sinister traditional space, the work was located in bright daylight with new spring growth in the woods to promote a sense of hope that the public might rethink the way the Pendle Witches are depicted. The location of any artwork has a significant bearing on initiating an understanding of its meaning and being able to generate a response from an audience. A woodland, therefore, seemed an appropriate venue to use as a backdrop in which to hang my ethereal figures as a representation of the Pendle Witches. These life-sized pieces were constructed from a framework of Lancashire cotton, burnt around the edges, surrounding a laser-cut facial image of myself (Figure 66, *Ethereal Figure*). The addition of facial features instead of the usual silhouetted image of a witch gave the artwork a personal identity.

Figure 66

The work endeavours to contradict the traditional image of the witch isolated in dark mysterious woodland, with which an audience would be familiar, and thus call into question their predisposed ideas about witchcraft. It was created to humanise the accused and focuses on the victimisation of the Pendle Witches, rather than their perceived maleficent practices. It moves away from black as the traditional colour with which to portray the image of the witch: a colour of the night and symbolic of the unseen and the mysterious and its association with the Devil. The white fabric reinforces the artworks diversion from the conventional way of portraying witches and the work conveys through its colour a symbolic reference to mourning, often used by the Catholic faith.

Jesse Jones, the Irish artist and filmmaker, also uses white fabric in her installation and video *Tremble, Tremble* (Figure 67), for the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017 and references witchcraft to form a continuation of the effect modern gender politics had on women in the 20th century. Her work is inspired by the thinker and activist Silvia Federici's work *Witches, Witch Hunting and Women* (2018), which explores historical exclusion and the inequalities faced by women (Dunne, 2018). Jones's artwork uses the narrative of the text of the fifteenth-century manuscript *Malleus Maleficarum* (The Hammer of Witches) (Mackay, 2009) a book compiled in Germany

by James Sprenger and Heinrich Sprenger as an instructional tool on how to prosecute women for being witches; this was spoken backwards in her film, referencing the chaotic role inversion played in anti-Christian worship.

Figure 67

My artwork is in contrast to the publicity used by Lancashire Holidays to promote the Hallowe'en celebrations on Pendle Hill. Their advertisement utilises the silhouetted image of the witch (Corbis, 2015) (Figure 68, *The Pendle Witch Advertisement*), to encourage tourists to the area by using a sinister picture of mystery and suspicion. The dead branches of the trees lean towards the black silhouetted form of the witch with her pointed hat and broomstick and present an image that promotes her as a negative, destructive force within the landscape, rather than as a woman who used the elements within her environment to heal her neighbours. Once again, the portrayal of the witch, formulated by sixteenth and seventeenth century artists, has endured through images that present the witch as having the potential for evil intent.

Figure 68

The only basis we have for understanding superstitions, which led to the oppression of those considered to be witches, is to recognise the social context of the actions in the culture of that time. The contemporary ethics of social and religious justice for the underprivileged or powerless had far-reaching consequences upon their lives in seventeenth-century England.

Summary

This chapter has put forward the proposal that superstitious magical practices are embedded within the perceived character of the witch and continue to play a role in their personae. Because of this detrimental connection, as well as the lack of concrete evidence about the Pendle Witches lives, after investigation I have created imagery which favours of a more sympathetic appreciation of them as women.

This part of the study accepts that the supernatural powers of the witch are no longer a part of any mainstream belief by the public. However, many of the magical practices prevalent during the seventeenth century remain today and connect the modern-day witch to her own practices. The lack of documented evidence about the practices of their daily lives of the Pendle Witches'

makes it difficult to ascertain their place in the local community, but magical beliefs, although widely used in the seventeenth century and crucial to witchcraft practice have become detrimental in the understanding of how they are perceived today.

The next chapter explores fire and burning and its connection to witchcraft as an element of this practice. It considers the part ash has played in the memorialisation of the Pendle Witches on the walk and how fire can be used in regeneration. Fire in the production of innovative artwork to interpret the witches' persecution through the burning technology of laser cutting is explained, as is how other artists have used fire in art both as a symbolic connection to the danger of the witch and also the creative link to an unseen spiritual world.

Chapter 6 – Fire and Burning

6.1 Outline

The object of this section is to consider how ash, fire and burning have maintained their historical links with witchcraft. The creation of a trace of ash through the landscape as part of my art practice is explained. This chapter looks at innovative artwork produced by contemporary artists who use fire as a symbolic and transformative medium to convey ideas of spirituality. The significance of fire in the ritualistic practices of modern witches in connecting to the spirit world is also considered. The practice-based artwork created for this research project, through the burning process of a laser machine, is put forward in this chapter, which is used as a metaphorical process in the interpretation of the Pendle Witches to disrupt their stereotyped image.

6.2 Ash

Fire has always been associated with witches through their association with cauldrons, and in Europe witches were often burnt to death, which was deemed “[...] an appropriate punishment for the heresy and the crime of witchcraft” (Petherbridge, 2013, p. 13). However, there are no records in England of witches being burnt at the stake, as was the custom in the European persecution of witches. According to Clayton (2012, p. 148), the bodies of the Pendle Witches would have been thrown into an open pit near to the gallows after their execution. Their bodies would then have been burnt; ash would have been their only remains. Their ashes would have been absorbed into the landscape, leaving them without any relics or memorials.

As a tribute to the witches, ash became a symbol of mortality and mourning for me by scattering it to create a memorial path. The path formed a commemoration of the witches’ deaths as a visual signifier in the landscape and represented a connection to them within their own environment. The line of ash as a residue, or scattering, was connected to its historical and religious significance to form a link to both death and memorials. The ash used during the walk was collected from an ash tree that had dieback disease. The life had been drained from the tree, therefore after being burnt the remaining ash became a symbolic material and an element which brought pathos to the project. Marking the ground with this trail of ash was not only symbolic in its reference to rejuvenating their memory through a performative act, but as the trace of ash dissolved into the earth, it became a symbol of loss. The erasure and transition from the surface of the earth into the soil was a reminder of disappearance and a metaphor to unite the present with the past and the witches’ forgotten history. The animate was transformed

into the inanimate and was a performative act that gave authenticity to the project through experience. Photographic documentation was used to record the ash path created throughout the journey. [Examples are referenced in Appendix H.3].

The reiteration of stories is constantly negotiated between the relationship of how historians or writers retell stories and the how the stories relate to social memory. Solnit (2006, p. 136) suggests that “[...] over time a story or memory loses its power”. My own trail of ash, as a memorial, has also lost any power it might have had, as it was quickly absorbed into the soil and itself will fail to be a lasting memory. It will only be recalled through my photographic documentation.

Richard Wilson in *The Pilot's Thumb* (2002, p. 130), refers to “pious Catholics” [...] “came back to the gallows” to “[...] scrape up ashes where the bowels [of English martyrs] had been burnt” as evidence of their martyrdom. The ash formed a link to connect the living with the dead in the seventeenth century is highlighted as a practice of the devout. It is a possibility that the witches would have held Catholic beliefs as Lancashire remained a stronghold of Catholicism during the Reformation (Pumfrey, 2002, p. 31). The act of collecting any relics, with its association to martyrdom, became a form of Catholic resistance to the Reformation. Although there is no evidence that this was part of the execution process of the Pendle Witches, ashes have always formed a tangible link with the dead in many religions.

Figure 69

The photographs, as well as recording the process of laying a trail of ash (Figure 69, *Ash*, photographed during the walk) were valuable to convey the visual sensations of places and spaces within the landscape. According to John Collier in *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method* (1967, p. 5), “[...] photographs are precise records of material reality”. However, the context and symbolic representation contained within them, if they are deprived of a vocabulary of description, lose their significance. These photographs portraying the trail of ash are therefore used in exhibitions in conjunction with the other artworks pertaining to this practice-based thesis and this therefore connects their relevance to the walk.

6.3 Burning and the Coffin Road

A large section of my journey crossed the lonely and exposed *Lancashire Fells* (Figure 70, photographed during the walk) and was possibly the easiest part of my journey to navigate with

its long, winding path, as many of these ancient ways were drovers' roads or pilgrim paths and remain easy to follow.

Figure 70

The paths now bear no witness to their original functions and have lost their ties and connections to past stories. On the day of my walk, there were no travellers on this ten-mile section of the track across the moors, from Saltergate to the Crook o' Lune (Appendix A), which was originally a packhorse trail known locally as the salt-coffin road. According to N. S. (Appendix F), the path would have been used as a route to transport the valuable commodity of salt from the Lancashire seaports to the inland towns, and on return journeys, coffins made from the wood of Pendle Forest would have been transported back to the coastal towns. Travelling along this pathway was a reminder to me of this connection with death, as those who were perceived to be witches or thought of as being in league with the Devil would not have had a coffin or have been buried in consecrated land. The coffin was a status symbol: until the second and third quarters of the seventeenth century, not all bodies were buried in coffins, only shrouds. The Pendle Witches' persecutors intended that little trace of them would remain after their executions. It is presumed that the Pendle Witches' bodies were unceremoniously burnt after being hanged. This influenced my practice and the use of laser cutting as an art process, as it symbolised how those perceived to be subversive were denied a memorial through a grave,

6.4 The Power of Fire

Fire can unleash a powerful destructive force, but it also has the ability to be the instigator of new life. Heather at the side of the moorland is periodically burnt to produce new growth, which then unifies with the landscape as it fuses with the earth and consequently is reabsorbed into nature. Fire has a shared symbolic meaning in many of the earliest religions; it was thought it had a mysterious elemental force with a powerful transformative quality. In its negative form, fire is also the precursor of destruction and death, consuming, spreading and leaving a void in its wake. It is also a method of destruction with its strong affinity to the obliteration of identities.

Of all the natural phenomena, burning and its association with fire can be used both as vengeance or punishment, and as a destructive weapon directed against others. Fire was a

notable aspect of magical belief in the seventeenth century and was used as a protective mark against destruction by burning. Making a deliberate burn mark with a candle flame, taper or rushlight was a form of symbolic protection against fire, according to Tim Easton in *Church Apotropaic Symbols and Marks Of Piety, Material Religion* (2015). Evidence of this is found on the inside of many church doors, barns and agricultural buildings. It also has multiple interpretations as spirituality, transformation and purification with different symbolic meanings in diverse cultures and religions.

The high priestess G. M. (Appendix D) states that fire is important to her coven. She “[...] works a lot with the [this] element” and stated that “[...] a flame is used in the morning in our homes and when we have prayers and we tend the fire for twelve hours as part of the ritual. Fire is not used for remembrance; it is used to honour the elements and the goddesses”. As part of her witchcraft practice, she explains that “fire exists in each person as the spark of life, which can be destructive but, in its consuming, can pave the way for new life; even in destruction there is life. Things have to be torn down and burnt in order for new growth and transformation to take place”.

Fire is now a sacred tool in witchcraft practice but no longer has an association with a cauldron or burning of witches as heretics. It is seen as a focal point of energy by Turner (1999, p. 33) stating that its healing, together with other sacred tools on a witch’s altar, joins in forming a reminder “that all of the earth is sacred”. Fire, in the form of candles, is often used to petition favours from a goddess and are seen by contemporary witches as a way to connect to a divine power by using a physical form of engagement. This light is a universal concept and process in the exchange of energies between the priestess and her goddess, with the smoke conveying a message from the visible on earth to the invisible Divine (Turner, 1999, p. 132).

6.5 Laser Cutting

The practice of contemporary witches who use candles as a positive link with which to connect to the spiritual world has influenced my art practice. Current contemporary portrayals of the Pendle Witches shield us from representations of persecution and death by only actualising fictitious visual images of the witches’ lives and supposed practices. Throughout this practice-based project, laser cutting has been central to the artwork to articulate vulnerability. It creates a testimony to the spectre of death through an imaginary reconstruction of those who died due to being misunderstood and marginalised. The burning of the laser cutter offers a portrayal of

compassion (Figure 71, *Empathy*), and gives a ghostly haunting quality to the image by leaving the fading marks of the face as an emblem of persecution. This ephemeral image with its membranous shroud around the face alludes to a symbolic way lost memory can be represented. The veiled image conceals and portrays the lost identity of the victim and burning is a representation of the intolerance faced by the Pendle Witches. The black background contrasts with white Lancashire cotton as a symbolic gesture against the usual image in the representation of witchcraft.

Figure 71

Utilising the effect of burning to reference violence is a way of affirming and strengthening the witches' identities in this pragmatic art practice. Burnt images are transmitters of pain and suffering and a testimony to the spectre of death. They portray a sensory experience and provide an aesthetic function in this work but can never make sense of the atrocities of the seventeenth-century *witch craze* (Levack, (1995, p. 607). Burning as an art practice aims to explore the possibilities of increasing knowledge and change the boundaries of what is acceptable in the representation of the witches by abandoning any traditional representations. It moves away from the familiar to create reconfigurations, which are exemplars of oppression. Fire can be a universal language that transcends cultural references. The role of the work is to consider emerging innovations as a means to reconstruct the image of the Pendle Witches as a communicative art form. This could be contested as Sullivan (2010, p. 72) considers “[...] where the meaning is embodied by the artist and [can be] reinterpreted by the viewer” but I suggest this can be overcome by placing the work in site-specific locations so as not to lose its significance, as described in the outcomes of this thesis in Chapter 8.

Figure 72

A laser beam modifies my own image through burning as the determining feature of this work (Figure 72, *Images Modified by A Laser*), to express a critical approach of reality rather than one influenced by previous artists who have depicted all witches including the Pendle Witches.[Further examples are referenced in Appendix H.2].

The themes of the history, identity and memory of the Pendle Witches have been explored as a means of investigating burnt images to represent vulnerability. Divisive violence depicted in art can generate either indifference or compassion and this is a genre which can cross the boundaries of time and cultures. Magali Compan in *Visualizing Violence in Francophone Cultures* (2015, p. 161) states “humanitarian imagery can [...] offer incontrovertible evidence

of violence endured by distant others” (p. 160) but he also suggests that some viewers can gain a “[...] voyeuristic pleasure” in seeing images of suffering (p. 161). However, conveying meaning must be supported by knowledge for the signification of an image to be understood and affect the understanding of the work in making a reconnection with its representational function. Rose (2016, p. 2) considers the difference between “vision” and “visuality;” on the one hand, it is how we physically see, and on the other how artwork is constructed. She claims that visual images are the ways that “[...] many now interact with the world” (p. 3). This artwork, therefore, asks the audience to question the persecution of the Pendle Witches through the construction of this work, by considering the vulnerability of the burnt images, whereas traditionally, the artwork around witches has focused on emblems of sorcery and ritualistic practice.

The European practice of burning witches and heretics also applied to the destruction of books. One of the first documentation of book burnings occurred as a response to Paul’s fear of Judaic law against the practice of witchcraft (Acts 19:18 and 19). Spells or books pertaining to pagan magical practices were considered dangerous or subversive to the security of Christian belief. This act of burning was an “[...] important basis for [maintaining] the internal order of the state” according to Harold Drake in *Violence in Late Antiquity: Perceptions and Practices* (2006, p. 354). Anyone in possession of these books, which were thought to contain evil and harmful magic, was subjected to vengeance, hostility and violence. Burning books was therefore considered a legitimate way of advancing religious or political aims.

As an interpretation of this destructive practice, I created a ninety-one-page book (Figure 73, *Ninety-one Page Book*). Each page of the book was a symbolic representation of the ninety-one days the Pendle Witches were incarcerated in Lancaster Castle, awaiting the arrival of the circuit judge. The pages were burnt one by one until gradually the last page was destroyed. The book was inscribed with a burnt laser-cut inscription of each of the names of the accused and these were also hand-written on the burnt pages throughout the book. It was inscribed on the cover page with a symbolic, laser cut five-star pentagram often used in witchcraft practice.

Figure 73

6.6 Burning in the Practice of Other Artists

Luis Richardo Falero depicted the witch holding a flaming torch in his painting of *The Witches' Sabbath* (1880) (Figure 29, in chapter 4.2), which could be interpreted as a signifier of danger. A cauldron is also an iconic tool in the centre of J. W. Waterhouse's painting *The Magic Circle* (1886) (Figure 74). The witch uses her wand to create a protective circle of fire around herself, but the cauldron remains the focal point of the artwork as a strong message of both power and danger. Shakespeare also uses the cauldron over a fire in the fourth act of *Macbeth* (Shakespeare, 1603, IV.i.10-11) as a symbol of the witches' evil through concocting mysterious spells.

Figure 74

Fire is integral to the universal and ancient practice of burning incense and candles in front of a deity, in Christian and pagan worship. The smoke is carried upwards as a signifier towards the Divine in an exchange of energy, thus communicating the visible to the invisible. It is symbolic in producing regeneration and the purification of the spirit. As a concept, fire is used by artists as a means of pursuing spirituality, emotions and religious experience in their work. In her retrospective book considering the work of the artist Ana Mendieta, Stephanie Rosenthal in *Traces: Ana Mendieta* (2013) describes Mendieta's series of works entitled *Siluetas* (1973–1978) (Untitled, Figure 75), in which she explores the connection of both presence and absence by using her own silhouette in the landscape. Mendieta regards the earth as the Mother Goddess. In her work, she uses her passion for religious ritual as a way of exploring prejudice and violence against marginalised minorities. In this multi-disciplinary work of performance, body art and photography she positions the traced outline of her own body as a silhouette within the landscape and sets it alight. Her work is documented through colour photography.

Figure 75

Rosenthal (2013) explains how Mendieta's work seeks to unite the feminine with the earth, to become an extension of nature as an act of primeval belief, which connects her preoccupations with ritual, burial and death. She combines memory with history in using her own body shape to associate her work with the spiritual image of the Goddess; her raised hands are a pre-Christian gesture of prayer. By physically embedding her body shape into the landscape, her own figure has fused with nature to become a signature of her work. Mendieta's work has a resonance with my own interpretation of persecution by using my own image (Figure 76, *My Own Image*), and the element of fire, through laser burning, as a destructive force. [Examples of my laser cutting are in Appendix H.2].

Figure 76

Using her own body and elementary materials, such as blood, fire, earth, and water, Mendieta created transitory pieces, which combine rituals with the metaphors of life, death, rebirth, and spiritual transformation. Her disembodied ‘earth body’ sculptures were private, meditative ceremonies in nature documented in the form of slides and films. From them, she developed the *Siluetas*, a series of works relating to the silhouette of the female body, created within the elements, as a way of uniting herself to the elements. An uncertain mythology runs throughout Mendieta’s oeuvre, a feeling at once primal, pagan and feminine. *Siluetas* are as universal as they are specific, metaphors for the relationship between the body and nature. They recording the unavoidable human impact upon the natural world, which are shallow and brief in geological terms, but beautiful and inescapable, nevertheless.

Fire as a medium with which to engage in mysticism is utilised by Bill Viola, the American video artist, in his creative art installations. Ziad Elmarsafy in *Adapting Sufism to Video Art: Bill Viola and the Sacred* (2008, p. 141) states that Viola “[...] explores the sacred via manifestations of the Divine in the world, framing his work from religious and mystical writings”. Elmarsafy considers the relationship of Viola’s work to Sufism (the belief of an Islamic religious group who live a simple life seeking to become united with God). The artist uses art to explore the individual human condition by using a solitary human figure struggling in the elements “[...] often linking his work across multiple religions” (Elmarsafy, 2008, p. 141). Fire is a metaphorical medium in his work, linking the human and divine world by using actors to portray emotion in his high-resolution videos. These are projected onto large plasma screens. Viola looks for a response to his re-enactments and pursues the idea of mortality through his art practice. He uses all the elements as forces of nature in his installations, which are charged with metaphorical and religious imagery. Christopher Townsend in *The Art of Bill Viola* (2004, p. 94), comments that Viola’s “work is not about death but a place beyond death”. He used fire in his commission in 2014 for St Paul’s Cathedral entitled *Fire* (2014) (Figure 77).

This still image is from one of the four videos of *Earth, Air, Fire, Water*, exhibited together in St Paul’s Cathedral, as *Martyrs*, showing representations of the elements as a violent symbolic interpretation of the victim’s spiritual transition from life to death. The video are displayed as repeating loop, enabling the viewer to observe the alternate engulfing of fire and return of life as a metaphor for the transformative power of fire as both destroyer and healer.

The soul and the human spirit are amongst the fundamental concerns of Viola's work. His choice of a Christian place of worship, as the venue for this permanent exhibition, inspired me to exhibit my work in Trinity Arts Church, Leeds (Figure 23, *Symbolic Path*), as Christianity was a central force behind martyrdom and the persecution of witches. Fire, with its varied symbolic significance, can help to shift our understanding of those damaged by persecution. Just as Viola uses it to generate compassion for those who died for their faith through martyrdom, images burnt through a laser practice can stimulate ideas of empathy and suffering. Fire in artistic practice creates an affinity between loss and the representation of vulnerability. The role and function of portraying persecution in art practice is not only to document but to convey information, inspire new thoughts and produce a response through a visual portrayal. My own practice continues to be inspired by the quality of fire as a medium for cyclical regrowth. It seeks to regenerate of the Pendle Witches through burning and resurrecting their image.

My Journal (Figure 78) became an important part of recollecting my thoughts and documenting visual images during each day's walk. The sights and sounds on the fells helped me to understand the power of the witches' story and the hardship they endured walking through this landscape. It also encouraged me to reflect on the path, which was embedded with hundreds of footprints of all those who walked this way before me on this challenging journey. [Examples of the journal are in Appendix H.1].

Figure 78

Summary

This chapter has examined the symbolic nature of fire and burning and explained its association with the traditional image of the witch. It describes the use of scattering ash as a time-honoured way to honour the dead in a place that was significant not only during the witches' lives but also in their impending deaths. The use of fire in the practice of witches who use it as one of the four elements in their spiritual practices has been explained. It has put forward examples of artists who use fire as a transformative process in their creative practice and has described the role of burning in my own artwork as a symbolic method of portraying the Pendle Witches.

The following chapter goes on to discuss the experience of silence and solitude through walking across the Lancashire fells and considers how remaining silent can be used as a tool

for inner reflection. It explains the need for silence, solitude in contemporary witchcraft practice and how it has been bound to secrecy in depicting the image of the witch away from society. Artists who engage with silence while employing walking as part of their art practice are referenced and this chapter goes on to consider the role silence plays in reflecting loss and showing respect at memorials. It will also examine how loss can be portrayed through art practice.

Chapter 7 Silence and Solitude

7.1 Outline

This section examines how witches have relied on silence and solitude in their practices to avoid being ostracised by their communities, and also considers how silence can also be used as an instrument of oppression. It looks at the importance of silence and solitude during the walk over the isolated Lancashire fells as a means of reflective inspiration. The following chapter explains how silence can be re-examined through interpretive art to produce an alternative interpretation of the silencing of the witches. Walking formed a connection through reflection to the lives of the Pendle Witches, therefore bringing a deeper context and meaning to more accurately portraying them through practice-based art. It also considers other artists who use silence as part of their creative work.

7.2 Silence in Witchcraft Practice

The image of a witch has become, in its current representation, one who lives in silence and solitude away from society in privacy to perform rituals and cast spells. My investigation into the silence faced by all witches, including the Pendle Witches, has drawn me to conclude that their image is one which necessitated a life of secrecy through silence. This is a silence that is sought after rather than imposed and often been associated with concealment and confidentiality, creating separation through silence as a protection against potential conflict. This silence is considered by Sissela Bok in *Secrets: The Ethics of Concealment and Revelation* (1982, p. 7) “[...] as the first defence of secrets”.

There is a bond that exists between the experience of isolation and the spiritual world of witchcraft. However, the Pendle Witches’ silence was imposed through persecution in contrast to the silence of the contemporary witches interviewed (Appendix D and Appendix E). They both agreed that, although they are extreme in the diversity of their own practices, their covens have a commonality of privacy and solitude. In the seclusion of their covens, there remains the

silence of absolute secrecy. Within that silence and privacy, they both look to the spirit world by worshipping the Mother Goddess as their principal deity, and they regard the natural world as being a very significant part of their ritualistic practice. The witches interviewed for this project, although the rituals were performed in the privacy and solitude of their own covens, stated the knowledge of their rituals and spell casting had been handed down from other local witches, thereby breaking the traditional silence of secrecy but also maintaining secrecy within their group.

7.3 The Solitude of the Walk

Approximately one-third of my journey crossed the bleak, silent and uninhabited Lancashire uplands, which have remained unchanged for hundreds of years, as depicted in *The Fells* (Figure 79, photographed during the walk).

Figure 79

The fells are a wilderness, often seen as places of insecurity and areas symbolically aligned to danger, and their silent landscapes devoid of communities can invoke a feeling of fear. There is a heightened feeling of the unpredictable, which changes with the context and time of a person's experience when walking in a hostile environment. These rural and wild expanses of the countryside are sometimes established as evil places to be feared and tamed. Therefore, the silence across this Lancashire landscape full of hollows, gullies and crags would have been likely to have instilled fear in seventeenth-century travellers who journeyed over the fells. Sara Maitland, in *A Book of Silence* (2008, p. 178), suggests there is a primal fear in parts of the landscape where there is an absence of sound and a "[...] fear of the silent shadows of menace [...] a dense silence [she] could not see". The silence on the fells can be a balance between a positive experience and one of loneliness, although when combined with solitude, they can be conducive to reflection depending on the surroundings and capabilities of the walker. Walking in solitude across the seemingly empty space of the silent moors made it possible to consider the erased voices of the Pendle Witches and their unheard protestations. I continue to carry the responsibility of trying to represent the suffering of the accused, although I fear they might always remain silenced and erased victims. Walking in silence can be considered oppressive and sinister or remind us of the long silence of death. Given that the witches would have been aware that they were facing the penalty of death, silence takes a more powerful contemplative function in the context of the walk, as well reflecting on the ultimate silence of death. This is a silence that is absolute, and I wondered if the witches would have travelled contemplating their

own deaths and descend into the depths of silence. This presents an image which is impossible to imagine as walking across wide-open spaces is now associated with freedom and pleasure.

Walking approximately seventeen miles over the fells instilled a reclusive silence formed from being utterly alone and cut off from all communication with the outside world. There was an overwhelming sense of separation experienced by the haunting silence of the moors, where the wildlife within them has learnt to live in silence to avoid danger. This contrasts with the silence of apprehension, which must have been experienced by the Pendle Witches when crossing this hostile landscape. As I walked further west, there was the realisation that this wild terrain would never have offered any shelter to travellers in the form of trees or rock formations. The feeling of isolation was increased by exposure to the harsh elements and the feeling of separation from other human beings. Although the fells generated a haunting sensation of spatial loneliness and isolation, they offered through their eerie silence a unifying link to the Pendle Witches, whose isolation would have been from society. The difference between spatial and social isolation notwithstanding, my walk was a chosen and a self-imposed solitary walk combined with a silence that made me more aware of place and the Pendle Witches ingrained in this landscape.

How I encountered and experienced the silence of the landscape reflected on how my walk had a direct and immediate connection to its past inhabitants. The cultures, beliefs, and histories of the past impinged on the present through this symbolic walk and the imagined journey of the witches crossing this landscape. This path across the fells seemed to be haunted by my imaginings of trauma and history but I attempted to engage with the fear and despair of getting lost. The writers Dorrian and Rose (2003, p. 17), suggest that landscapes are places which “[...] can often hold together a past and present, a present and future, or all three together. They are often understood as repositories of the past, holding history in their contours and textures”. This presented a feeling of loss, which I was able to communicate through my artwork. There are no documents relating to the Pendle Witches’ journey, so their thoughts cannot be articulated except through imagination, and the creative exchange of vision through art and trying to evaluate their experience is subjective.

In the last decades, there has been a growing interest in walking in silence as a creative art practice. This is primary to the work of land artist Richard Long, who seeks to create an unbroken connection to the past (Solnit, 2001, p. 272). He considers walking alone in silence as a metaphor for life and embraces the contemporary idea as a performance, according to

William Malpas in *The Art of Richard Long* (2005, p. 287). *A Line Made by Walking* (1967) (Figure 80) was Richard Long's first major work in which he repeatedly walked the same straight line, thereby marking his own path across a field. The flattened grass made by this continual action represented the solitary reworking of a natural material, which in time was reclaimed by nature and left a minimal impact on the environment. Long documented and preserved his artistic performance through photography. Malpas (2005, p. 287) comments on Long's performative art stating that it is never possible for the viewer "[...] to experience the real subject of the art, which is the walk", concluding that this must be derived from the viewer's own experiences. Long, quoted in Malpas (2005, p. 338) states "[...] a walk can often be the means of stripping away many things; it can be that the spectacular embodiment of the Zen idea of here and now [...] to be alone for a few days in a wilderness is the simplest, best way to be in a one-to-one relationship with a place". Long's path in *A Line Made by Walking* (1967) does not lead to a specific place. Macfarlane (2013, p. 17) suggests that Long's walk makes footmarks in the landscape but not a footpath but adds that the duty of a path is to connect places to each other and that if they fail to do this they quickly disappear, become overgrown and eventually lost. Therefore, Long's experience, like my own walking practice, although completed in silence, cannot be appreciated in a gallery space; the solitude of the experience can never be fully interpreted.

Figure 80

Rebecca Solnit in *Wanderlust* (2001, p. 271.) describes Long's works as uninhabited and left to viewers to express an opinion in their own imagination, also stating that "Long likes places where nothing seems to have broken the connection to the ancient past, so buildings, people and other traces of the present or recent past rarely appear" (p. 272). The practice of walking as an art form has been developed by many artists, but my own walk varies from Long's performances as my walk follows a specific path and the traces along it are relevant to my research process in making strong connections and unifying links with the past. Although this thesis agrees with him that walking as an art practice can only be experienced by the artist, it posits that the experience of a walk can convey information, which has been gained through the practice.

The experience of isolation on the walk provided an insight into the fragile line between life and death and left me completely dependent on my own resilience. However, silence also offered beneficial experiences of reflection and contemplation when walking alone. Maitland (2008, p. 32) suggests that "[...] a journey into silence in extreme terrains has been important

to a number of creative thinkers”. The silence and solitude of the fells were challenging and thought-provoking, providing a physical space in which to re-envisage the image of the Pendle Witches.

My Journal (Figure 81) was a visual and reflective record of my journey. It represented a collection of powerful and lasting images, which were readily available in recalling time and place. The documentation through note taking was a valuable tool to record the embodied experience of my walk as practice and process. [Examples of my journal in Appendix H.4].

Figure 81

7.4 The Silence of the Oppressed.

The silence of the witches’ journey to Lancaster would have been a different kind of silence from my own; their silence would have been one based on fear. Sherah Wells in *Luce Irigaray: Teaching* (2008, p. 27) describes this kind of silence as being “[...] a weapon of oppression, imposed upon the weak”. The witches were victimised and faced social isolation; the accusations against them forced them to the periphery of society. As Goodier (2014, p. 51) explains, they would not have had the privilege of a defence counsel at their trials and no voice of authority to represent them in the Witchcraft Trials. Goodier (2014, (p. 51) suggests that after leaving Lancaster jail, where they had been incarcerated for almost three months, “[...] the Pendle defendants were left to face their ordeal alone”. The accused were those who were alienated and outcast by their communities (Poole, 2002, p.5); their voices would have been devalued by their accusers.

Alice Nutter is documented by the court as remaining silent at her trial (Clayton, 2007, p. 241), which marked her out from the other witches and their protestations of innocence or admissions of guilt. Her silence is specifically recorded by Thomas Potts in the court proceedings, which became a barrier to her defence and a preserve of her power of not divulging any information to the court. This silence was the protector of private, innermost thoughts and emotions; one theory of her refusal to defend herself was that she was protecting her Catholic friends. Her silence was from choice, perhaps as a form of secrecy or uncertainty about her fate. However, Clayton (2007, p. 241) puts forward as the explanation for her silence that she possibly suffered from “[...] age related dementia”. Clayton’s claim here is unfounded and denies Nutter’s autonomy in choosing to be silent if she was protecting her friends, faith or way of life.

The Pendle Witches, who were accused of dealing in supernatural and maleficent practices, became prime targets to be ostracised by their neighbours. In *Ostracism: The Power of Silence* (2001, p. 23), Kipling D. Williams states that “[...] ostracism is powered by silence, inextricably tied to the absence of explanations – strengthening its power over its targets”. They were alienated as a way to punish or control their behaviour by physically and socially excluding them for what was perceived as being deviant from the rest of society. They were considered as a threat by not conforming; this punitive measure of excluding the witches kept them apart from society in jail and ultimately in death. This image continues to feed into the perception of the witch today, as one who lives apart from society, living in a secret, silent world fuelled by suspicion.

The Pendle Witches’ voices were silenced, but not to speak out against their victimisation is to condone it if we cannot remind the public of their persecution and disrupt the fantasised image apportioned to them. The oppression and persecution of the witches through silence led to the creation of the image, *Silenced* (Figure 82), which is a representation of loss of identification. The placing of a strong hand over the face is charged with a symbolic meaning of power. This photographic image hides despair by depersonalising a face, which cannot speak. The face is a powerful promoter of feelings and this representation of silence removes any notion of being able to appreciate emotions.

Figure 82

7.5 The Silence of Loss

Loss can be marked with a moment’s silence to express an absence, often responded to by mourning, and it is a common trope in addressing violence or atrocities. Silence expressed as a feeling of loss may be interpreted as bearing the pain of others through their experience. Remaining silent rather than being engaged in language communicates a respect for the dead.

The only tangible memorials to the Pendle Witches along the walk were Duffy’s tercets. In her tenth and last poem (Figure 83, *Last Poem to the Witches*, photographed during the walk), she writes “no grave/only future tourists who might grieve” (Appendix C).

Figure 83

This tercet, along with the other nine on my walk, is a way in which the memory of the individual Pendle Witch has been consigned to history and a record of their persecution

transmitted to future generations. Historically, witchcraft has often been represented as a combination of fact and fiction and there have been many retellings of the stories of the Pendle Witches combined with visual images of how they are remembered. Duffy reinforces this portrayal with her imaginative words; the word 'grieve' suggests a powerful compassion with the witches and the final line references the importance of keeping the memory of the witches' current. The short beats in the tercet of 'rough rope', 'short drop' never actually mention death, but culminate in the idea of current grief, which suggests that it is only now that attitudes are changing, and that history is able to remember the witches as victims. This is a poignant reminder at this point of the walk as to the importance of art as a memorial to those silenced by history.

The tercets (Appendix C) are silent and often rather neglected memorials, and I reflected on how their resilience on the edge of the exposed moorland (Figure 84, *Exposed Moorland*, photographed during the walk) contrasted with the frailty and vulnerability of those to whom they are dedicated. Most of the tercets can only be found by walking this route and are therefore not easily accessible to the general public. They are however important in the context of the walk as they relay Duffy's message as the tercets are progressively read along the walk there is a realisation that Duffy herself is looking to alter public perception of the witches as they follow the witches' journey.

Figure 84

Memory becomes less vivid with the passage of time and is constantly being either forgotten or reshaped by each generation as social concepts change. Duffy's memorial suggests that no one grieved for the Pendle Witches when they were hanged on Lancaster Moor. During the silence of the walk, I was able to associate myself with the witches and address thoughts of their mortality, fears and their anxieties.

In his art practice, to mark the anniversary of his father's death, Carl Lavery engaged with walking as an act of commemoration. In his work, *Mourning Walk* (2004), he searched for places where his performance would link the collective memories of his father's life. This act of walking, which Lavery describes in his autobiographical text in stated in Mock (2009, p. 35), was an attempt to recapture and rediscover the past. He describes this as "[...] hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond reach of intellect, in some hidden object ... of which we have no inkling". He comments on the Celtic belief of the souls of the dead being held "[...]"

captive in some inferior being” (p. 35) until we recognise them and break the spell to overcome their death. He explains that his walk connects the need to deal with “[...] the notions of enchantment, reverie and healing” (p. 42) and in common with myself and other artists, he captures the physical evidence of his autobiographical walk with photographic images. My trail of ash, as explained in Chapter 6, is the consistent act on my walk, which marks my own silent link to the witches (Figure 85, *Silent Link*, photographed during the walk). [Other examples in Appendix H.3].

Figure 85

It was an essential part of my research that this journey was spent in quiet solitude to intensify the understanding of loss and remembrance. It was an experience that gave me a spiritual insight, free from disturbances to promote creative thinking and allowed me to make a strong connection with the long silence of death. My own mortality in this solitude came into question, which gave me the spiritual insight to respond and reflect on my journey. The Pendle Witches probably anticipated the fate that awaited them in Lancaster. Their deaths on the scaffold would not have been received with the silence of respect but possibly as a spectacle (Goodier, 2014, p.92) for huge crowds, possibly gripped in silence or fear of accusations against them as individuals and their own vulnerability.

The silence of loss has also been commemorated in the artwork displayed in Lancaster Castle as a memorial to the lost lives of these women, referenced in the outcomes in Chapter 8. The artwork depicts aspects of humanity, including physical shape, without a voice. The intention behind these memorial pieces is that the public will stand silently to reflect on the lives and deaths of these witches.

7.6 Silence in Art Practice

The silence I experienced was a chosen contemplative silence as I was afforded the privilege of complete independence on my walk. I was constantly looking for ghosts of the past, but the secrets that are forever concealed along the paths over the fells will never be evidenced or recovered and I had to abandon any verifiable facts in favour of emotional understanding.

I contemplated the interweaving of past and present as I considered trying to reshape the memory of the Pendle Witches. This led to increased awareness and encouraged my creative ideas. Tim Ingold suggests in *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*

(2013, p. 7) that the interweaving of past and present can lead to a line of thought, which in turn produces an experimental line of inquiry and “[...] in the sense of prising an opening and following where it leads” can open new and unexpected perceptions. Silence was a state of mind in which I was free to be lost in reflection, without interruption. Without the intrusion of noise, this part of my walk permitted me to consider the established popular attitude of how the accused are remembered in a history that continues to inhabit this space. The Pendle Witches have now become a tourist phenomenon, which is difficult to challenge. In this silence, away from where their suffering has been commodified, the absence of everyday noise brought me closer to understanding the sensation of losing the boundaries of time.

Silence and pain are difficult to represent as referential signifiers in art practice; capturing their true essence is a challenging concept. However, the walk in silence and solitude inspired visual artwork as a retrieval of the Pendle Witches’ past by fusing it with the present. In addressing their silenced voices through creative practice, the bodily evidence of the violation can be removed, and the image created can be blurred or faded as the memory of the violence becomes lost. This laser-cut image (Figure 86, *Silent*) has been stripped down to the minimum of burnt marks. [Further images are referenced in Appendix H.2].

Figure 86

The monochromatic portrayal moves away from the multiple meanings of colour in an artwork. It suggests a spiritual humility that melts into the surface as a simplistic symbolism of silence. The void around the facial features promotes a sombre reverence and restful image, free from any dynamic energy, but engages the viewers with eye contact to either challenge or invite their opinions of how the silencing of the witches can be perceived. This can stimulate indifference or contemplation towards the image, which appears trapped and frozen in time. The facial features have been lost to produce an unsettling image of a haunted woman who might have caught sight of her death. Through the process of creating art, I hope to enable it to be a source of knowledge, which makes visible the silenced voices through the creative deconstruction of imagery, which appears to both fade and re-appear and be subjected to loss. An image, devoid of gesture and seeking to capture the silence of the oppressed, can offer a different way of thinking about the Pendle Witches, removing them from the usual portrayal, which ceases to perpetuate their humanisation.

The artist Janet Cardiff uses her walking practice in *The Missing Voice (case study b)* (1999) to walk through urban streets recording her scripted journey. She communicates her experience

by describing the people and sounds she passes on her route; the power of the walk exists in the listener's own perception of Cardiff's experience. The audio-walks as installations require headphones within a gallery space to listen to her meditations on missing people as she recounts and imparts her experience to the listener. She follows imagined people who are invisible on her walk and their portrayals are created in the mind of the listener, who becomes a silent bystander. Cardiff's walk was a journey using fictional characters by narrating an imaginary story of intrigue and mystery, which contrasts with my walk in silence. The imagined characters she describes are fictional people and her recording communicates their invented journeys. My own work explored how to recognise the reality of the Pendle Witches and their walk and how to give a voice to those who will always remain voiceless. Instead of articulating the missing voices of the witches, I have represented them. However, my representation by following their walk was to convey emotional understanding without erasing the historical oppression of silence to which they were subjected.

The silent fells gave me time to reflect in *My Journal* (Figure 87) on the peace and solitude of the moors. It seemed important to document my reflective thinking. This provided an overwhelming sense of thought-provoking interpretations when I considered this historical event and how society, but not the landscape, has changed over four hundred years. I recorded my thoughts through notes and later added photographs and sketches as a way of remembering how I had perceived my journey. I reflected on the phenomenal experience of crossing the fells by myself and wondered if the witches would have been allowed a rest after this gruelling part of their walk. The notes in my journal allowed me to consider the resilience the witches must have had on their fifty-one-mile journey. [Examples of my journal in Appendix H.4].

Figure 87

Summary

This chapter has put forward the different ways in which silence can be conceptualised according to the role it plays within specific social conditions. Solitude is considered to play an important role in witchcraft practice, which has contributed to the image of the witch as she is perceived today. This portrayal still promotes the Pendle Witches as suspicious characters living away from society. There is a complexity in the distinction between being silenced as a method of control and using silence as a reflective way to increase personal experience in re-evaluating the witches' image through an interpretive paradigm. It has also explored the part

memorials play in social and cultural experiences and their implications in how people are remembered by society. Therefore, this chapter has evaluated how silence as loss, or an unspoken response, can be used as a representative format in symbolising the Pendle Witches in art practice.

The following chapter describes the techniques used to re-envisage the Pendle Witches and thereby achieve the aim of this research. It explains the methods used to disrupt the well-established symbolic motifs which now continue to represent them. It also describes where the work was exhibited, and the data received from the public through comments made by them in the visitors book (Appendix G.2).

Chapter 8. The Re-envisaging of the Pendle Witches.

This chapter describes the process of re-envisaging the present-day images of the Pendle Witches through art practice and also details the public exhibitions where this work was presented over the period of the research.

The re-envisaging of the witches through this art practice has primarily used laser cutting technology with its burning technique as a symbolic way of refocusing on the vulnerability of the witches, thus challenging the conventional way they are represented. The laser cut images are produced from photographic facial portrayals of myself in the context of the witch, which highlights the individual within history, whilst providing a greater sense of reality and sustained emotional connection. As a female artist I was able to form a poignant connection to the witches, as nine of the eleven Pendle Witches were women. This contemporary artwork has disrupted past attitudes by re-kindling an awareness of those who have been muted in historiography and is a reminder to an audience that any innocent person could have been accused of witchcraft in the seventeenth century, resulting in persecution and ultimately the death penalty. The ephemeral, photographic portrayals of myself were laser cut into white, Lancashire cotton, as a connection to the Lancashire background of the Pendle Witches and their continued presence in, and association with, the Pendle area of Lancashire. As an effective, visual statement white fabric moves away from the traditional colour of black, with its hidden meanings of menace and danger. White fabric also underpins the suggestion of innocence and vulnerability to elicit sympathy and an emotional link through its fragility. It shifts the perspective from the witches' caricatured images to the form of silent shrouds, created with their individual facial characteristics to emphasise their individuality.

Figure 88

The images in *My Facial Images* (Figure 88) are a symbolic way of communicating this individuality to oppose the usual visual portrayals of the witches constructed as inanimate, black silhouettes (noted in Chapter Four in figures 35,36 and 37). This adds compassion, pathos and humanity to the works, focussing on the idea of a diminishing memory of past events, which has been lost over the centuries. Examples of laser cut images are shown throughout the separate chapters of this thesis in Figures 9, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 34, 65, 66, 76 and also in Appendix H.2. The finished work was shown in five solo and three joint exhibitions throughout

the period of this research. The most significant location for these representations to be exhibited was in the prison where the witches were held within Lancaster Castle. These exhibits were commissioned by the Duchy of Lancaster (owners of the castle) in 2016 (Figure 91) and in 2017 (Figure 94) and 2018 (Figure 95) when new exhibits in the form of sculptural figures were commissioned. The other venues which hosted my exhibitions were Galleria di Civica, Trento, Italy, Trinity Arts Leeds, Leeds College of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University and Ann Street Gallery, Newburgh, New York State. Talks and gallery talks were undertaken in Manchester Metropolitan University, Brighton College, Leeds Arts University, Glasgow University and at other local groups. A visitors book (Appendix G.2) was employed at each of the exhibitions to obtain data from the public. The comments and conversations recorded in the book reinforced the reality that the Pendle Witches had been often misrepresented through myths and artistic portrayals and therefore supported the necessity to re-envisage their portrayal through the premise of the research.

Exhibitions

2015-- *Tic Tac* (Figure 89). A Joint Exhibition- Trento, Italy

Figure 89

The work exhibited in Trento (Figure 89) was motivated by the persecution of witches throughout Europe and facilitated at the invitation of Leeds Arts University during the first year of my Ph.D. studies at the University of Huddersfield. One week was spent in Trento, Italy for research prior to the exhibition and the resulting outcome was exhibited in Galleria di Civica, Trento on 1st March 2016 (Figure 89). This laser cut work was placed on the floor to represent the victimisation of witches and also made the image take up an area that could not be ignored within the gallery space, refusing to allow the continued erasure of the traumatic history of the persecution of witches. The rosary was a reminder that this was sanctioned by the Catholic Church.

Figure 90

The exhibition in Trinity Church, Leeds (Figure 90) although not site-specific, as a church location reclaims the sacred religious space and the significance of the Church's refusal to allow the Pendle Witches a burial in consecrated ground. As this is a recognised art space in Leeds city centre the exhibition was visited by over fifty people. The creation of this symbolic, fragile paper path, which was burnt at the sides, draws a reference to the witches' walk to the

gallows. Data was collected informally from the visitors and also via the comments in the visitors' book (Appendix G.2) to determine the influence and impact this exhibition had in informing the public about the reality and suffering of these witches. The majority of the visitors admitted that they had never appreciated that they had been unjustly persecuted. The exhibition stimulated conversations and a recognition by the public in the importance of re-envisaging the witches.

2016-- *Provoking Discourse*. A joint exhibition at Manchester Metropolitan University.

A one-day exhibition in conjunction with the University's symposium on *Provoking Discourse*. The conference judges' comments and the feedback from the University concluded that there had been considerable engagement with the exhibition and the talk provided a formal, clear and concise presentation about a subject which has often been misrepresented.

2016-- *Justice* (Figure 91). A two-day solo exhibition in Lancaster Castle.

Figure 91

The dungeons of Lancaster Castle were the site-specific location for my exhibition *Justice* (Figure 91) which situated the work as a memorial on the anniversary of the witches' trials in the castle and subsequent executions. This highlighted the original function of the historic castle, as a courthouse and jail, to make the event feel more immediate and poignant across time. The part Lancaster Castle played in the history of the witches was emphasised by the work's deliberate similarity to burial shrouds, which were burnt around the edges symbolising the witches' vulnerability and deaths. The shrouds referenced the symbolic burial of bodies, as a burial fabric was usual in the seventeenth century, thus avoiding the expense of a coffin according to Tim Lambert, in *A Brief History of Funerals* (n.d.).

The work was hung from the interior walls of the Well Tower, the Pendle Witches' prison, and the ethereal faces were individualised with laser-cut images to evoke frailty, markedly differing from the conventional portrayals of the Pendle Witches already displayed around Lancaster Castle and in their gift shop. My visitors' book (Appendix G.2) is a testament to the questions and reactions I received from the several hundred visitors attending this exhibition each day (as documented by the administrator of the castle), which gave me the opportunity to engage with the public, discuss my work and explain the significance of re-envisaging the Pendle Witches. The many interactions with the public reinforced the historical significance of the exhibition within Lancaster Castle and encouraged many of them to reconsider how the Pendle Witches are represented.

2017-- *The Witches Walk* (Figure 92). A four week, solo exhibition and gallery talk at Leeds Arts University.

Figure 92

The exhibits in *The Witches Walk* (Figure 92) were situated in an exhibition gallery space in Leeds Arts University, away from a site-specific location. Although it was difficult to link this to the history of the Pendle Witches this was done by means of a gallery talk. The opening of the exhibition was followed by a conversation with a panel within the exhibition, consisting of Dr Stella Baraklianou, Dr Juliet MacDonald, Dr Catriona McCara and Karen Tobias Green (journalist and researcher at Leeds Arts University). A review of this exhibition and my talk was published in *Corridor8*, a platform for contemporary visual arts in the North of England, in which Tobias Green informed the readers that this exhibition had a “[...] stark but quietly accessible message” she also commented in her article “[...] Read’s treatment makes us reconsider what witching really is and reminds us these were real people. The intention may have been to eradicate them as far as possible from any history. But as we know history is a living thing. It may return to haunt us” (*The Witches Walk*, Tobias-Green, 2017). Harriet Sutcliffe, head of the careers, employment and enterprise department at Leeds Arts University, was so impressed with this talk as a research project, she asked for my permission for it to be featured in a film as part of a presentation for the publicity of the University. My visitors’ book records the comments and reflections of the many people who attended this exhibition over four weeks, with a large number of people commenting on the exhibition’s value in understanding more about the persecution of these witches (Appendix G.2).

2017—*Victim or Target* (Figure 93). Part of a joint exhibition *Mythology* Ann Street Gallery, Newburgh, New York State, USA.

Figure 93

The exhibits *Victim or Target* (Figure 93) were submitted and selected for the international exhibition *Mythology*, which ran from 8th April to 6th May 2017 and included an advertised gallery talk. This allowed me to focus on the religious, political and social culture of England in the seventeenth century, leading to the persecution of the Pendle Witches. The audience particularly engaged and concentrated their interest in the parallels with the Salem Witchcraft trials, making links, which were not originally intended, but suggested that this re-envisioning of the witch is a pan-western need to which this artwork has contributed.

2017 *Witches Weekend 2017* (Figures 94 and 95). A two-day solo exhibition in Lancaster Castle.

- Figure 94

The exhibits for *The Witches Weekend* (Figure 94) were commissioned by the Duchy of Lancaster to embody the witches and portray them as life-like figures rather than merely as veiled corpses. The ragged, charred drapery was designed to invoke a message of misery, resulting in imprisonment and the gallows at the end of their walk. White Lancashire cotton accentuates the subversion of traditional artistic methods of representing the witches in black and in this approach was employed in the sculptures to convey a message of loss, as white was often a symbol of mourning and martyrdom in the seventeenth century according to Andrea Brady in *English Funerary Elegy in the 17th Century: Laws of Mourning* (2006, p. 97). The *Witches Weekend* exhibition drew over 1,500 people (as recorded by the Castle administrator) over August 19th and 20th 2017, providing significant audience engagement (Appendix G.2) with which to promote the concept of these re-envisaged depictions and memorials. The sculptural embodiment of the witches by inhering this historic space was a way to disrupt it as a place of power and use it for memorialising these historic victims and re-awaken a public interest in their story.

2018-- *Witches Weekend Festival 2018* (Figure 96). A two-day solo exhibition at Lancaster Castle.

Figure 95

These sculptural memorials (Figure 95) were created for *Witches Weekend Festival*, which again drew several hundred visitors to the castle over two days. Each of the sculptures carried the name of one of the witches and supported one of Duffy's tercets (Appendix C) on their shoulders, as a link to her re-imagining the witches as victims of circumstance. This provided a clear message, challenging the audience's pre-conceived concepts about the witches. Lancaster Castle, as a site specific exhibition space, provided a more meaningful experience for the visitors than indoor gallery spaces.

Debbie Garritty, the head of communications for the Duchy of Lancaster, considered these three annual exhibitions in Lancaster Castle to be so effective that she has developed this idea into an ongoing *Witches Weekend Festival*. In appreciation of my inspiration in starting this event in 2016 and continuing in it 2017 and 2018, she wrote thanking me for my “[...] incredible artistry, which has been a key element in the success of the *Witches Weekend Festival*” (Appendix G.1). She suggested that my work “[...] provided a visual focal point for the entire event and” and has grown “[...] so popular and so powerful that no one who attended the Festival will forget”. In recognition of my exhibitions, she added that staging an event, which was “[...] historically accurate, thought provoking and educational” has awakened a response to public interest in the Pendle Witches.

The location where the artwork was exhibited had a marked influence on its interpretation. The visual images and the responses from visitors were important for it to be negotiated and understood within this site-specific location, forming a definite connection between place and subject. This generated thought-provoking experiences, conversations and comments from the many hundreds of visitors who came to the exhibitions. From primary data collected for the research through the feedback and analysis from the visitors and comments in the visitors’ book it was evident that the majority of them considered the artwork was informative, thought provoking and original. The technique of laser cutting was commented on by a sizable majority of the visitors who said that by re-envisaging the witches it gave them an insight into their persecution, which they had not previously recognised.

During these exhibitions over three thousand visitors viewed my work. My visitors’ book (Appendix G.2) recorded evidence of the feedback, interest and previous lack of knowledge held by many people regarding information about these witches. In analysing the response gained from the public, it was clear that by offering a new interpretation of the witches’ lives and deaths, the public could engage with their unjust persecution and the exhibitions provided knowledge, which had previously been excluded from any information provided by the castle. This method of providing a new conceptual framework shed a different light on any existing assumptions by the public about the witches. These exhibitions confirmed that in the light of contemporary understanding, historical events can be re-interpreted through images in art practice if they are placed in positions where they can be seen and discussed. The artwork was a powerful method of stimulating the re-evaluation of the witches and re-envisaging them to add knowledge and thereby fulfil the aim of this research.

Conclusion

The aim of this research has been to re-envisage the Pendle Witches through contemporary art practice in the light of knowledge that recognises them as people who were persecuted. As an investigative process, it has examined the influences which have contributed to the accepted visual code, which the Pendle Witches have inherited and has re-envisaged them through a performative understanding of their existence, rather than through a mythologised portrayal. This project has explored how the witch has become a figure with an identity shaped and fashioned through her supposed malicious practices, which underpins why her image in the twenty first century should now be re-envisaged.

The objectives explored in achieving the aim of this research have been; to identify and critically analyse why and how the caricatured images of witches have developed; to walk in the footsteps of the witches as an experiential process; to evaluate primary information obtained from interviews with modern day witches and local people; to develop laser cutting techniques (as a method of re-envisaging the witches and utilising the finished artwork in public exhibitions; and to analyse the information gained in the exhibitions from the curators and the visitors' book.

This study recognises that the encoded interpretations of witches in narratives and folk tales became established alongside artistic traditions, which have played an important role in the visual representations inherited by the Pendle Witches. It has investigated and identified many misconceptions surrounding them, which have developed over several centuries, not only in visual art but also in films and literature.

Walking was used as a method to fulfil the research objective and inform the project by using experience to form a common link with the witches within the Pendle area. The journey followed footsteps the witches took, over four hundred years ago, to the gallows and allowed an investigation into the prevalence of their inherited image within the landscape they once inhabited. It acknowledged the witches' existence, underlined by my own activity, in contrast to their static, historical stereotyped images. This formed a connection through time and place by offering an atemporal link and established the significance of the study by combining the cultural and historical background of the witches with my own personal reflections. As an

objective, the walk has contributed to the aim of re-envisaging the Pendle Witches for the twenty-first century by focusing on how they are perceived and portrayed within their own environment. Photography and a journal were employed during the walk to record spontaneous visual evidence and reflective thoughts.

Formal interviews with contemporary witches provided background context to inform the project of the practices used by modern-day witches and how they are both perceived and visualised by the public in the present day. Not being a witch myself I had no previous knowledge of contemporary witches and their craft, therefore as a method this objective provided contextual information to unite historical images of the witch with the way they are regarded today. It was evident from the witches interviewed for this thesis that persecution, in the name of witchcraft, no longer forms a connection or is relevant to their own contemporary practices. Interviews with local people and a landowner added weight to the project. These verified that many superstitions surrounding these witches and their lives are still widespread in Pendle and supported evidence that there is little motivation to modify their enduring stereotyped images. As an objective this reinforced the relevance of the research question and substantiated the significance of this study.

This research adds to the growing number of studies which redress the impact of condemnatory portrayals. Visual images have increasingly become an influential way of interacting with the public as communicative means of conveying knowledge. Laser cutting was therefore used as a method to re-envisage the witches to articulate their vulnerability and to portray compassion. The witches physical features, with which they have become inextricably linked, were re-envisaged using my own photographic image for the basis of the artwork. This became distorted and partially burnt with a laser cutter as a way to disconnect with and abandon traditional presentations. The work connected to the locality, where the Pendle Witches lived, by using Lancashire cotton as the ground medium for the images.

As an objective of the research the resulting artwork was presented in public exhibitions in Trento (Italy), Leeds Trinity Arts and Manchester Metropolitan University. Other exhibitions were held in Ann Street Gallery, Newburgh (USA) and Leeds University of Arts, which were both followed with gallery talks and conversations with academic panels discussing my artwork and the importance of art as a means of contributing to knowledge. Three further exhibitions were held within the grounds and dungeons of Lancaster Castle, where the witches were incarcerated. As this was a site specific exhibition space it proved to be the most effective

and relevant way of interacting with the public, rather than an unrelated art gallery, which would fail to have any context. Several hundred people visited these exhibitions and many of them contributed to my visitors' book. The comments and observations from the exhibition curators, and the remarks in the book, were used as a tool for the research. The findings confirmed that the majority of the visitors had little or no knowledge about the persecution of the witches. A significant number of them verified that this artwork provided a powerful way of disrupting any previous historic or contemporary portrayals of the witches, as well as helping to remove the public's preconceived ideas of them. It revealed that this art had a powerful and distinctive role to play in contributing to a new understanding in the lives and persecution of the Pendle Witches, which many people had previously not known or had misunderstood.

This thesis complements and identifies with the literature of Macpherson Bardell (2002) who comments on the distorted image of the witches, which Potts (the clerk of the court) helped to create during their trials. She suggests there was little, or no information presented about their lives and Potts failed to produce any evidence of the beneficial magic the Pendle Witches used in helping their communities. She explains the popular belief in witchcraft and its value to society at that time is an area of study which has been neglected. Pumphrey (2002) concentrates on the social tensions and economic problems of the Pendle area at the time of the witch trials, suggesting that witchcraft played a part in these difficulties, with their magical powers acting for both good and evil. Owen (2007) and Pearson (2002) both recognise that Wiccans and modern day healers can sometimes claim a link with their predecessors but propose that today their power resides in the individual witch herself. This project supports these authors and suggests that the majority of the populace today has disregarded the importance of the help that witches provided in their localities. However, this research has been more focused on the victimisation of these people in the early modern period and the unjust accusations against them, regardless of whether they were in fact witches as their current portrayals suggest.

History can learn from images and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606) is dominated by the image and portrayals of the witch, which Wilson (2020) argues promoted witchcraft beliefs and malicious witchcraft practices. The three witches in Shakespeare's play have remained a potent visual representation of all witches. Many fairy stories noted in Rackham (1907), and the images used in the portrayal of witches, have continued to reinforce their malicious practices and create an unconscious fear of witches. This research complements and supports Purkiss

(2005) who has explored how the image of the witch has been influenced and reshaped by stories and stage productions, which have influenced historians, literature and artists.

This project both adds to the research of Zika (2007) and Meier (2016) who have demonstrated a connection between the visual language of art and the influence of cultural history in developing the image of witches in a way which has remained steadfast. The woodcuts by Mathers (*The Wonders of the Invisible World* -1689) and the painting by Durer (*Witch Riding Backwards on a Goat*-c.1500) are examples of artists whose ideologies have contributed to the maleficent image of the witch with her ability to do harm, attributing this to her association with the Devil. This century has seen historians become interested in image-based historiography and the influence it has had on the perception of witches. Several attempts have been made by artists such as Rego in *The Pendle Witch Series* (1996) and Sherman in *Untitled No. 151* (1985) to explore the image of the witch but they fail to draw attention to the persecution witches endured and focus on the sensational aspects of witches' activities or use images to create stereotypical caricatures. This is unlike Jones's installation *Tremble, Tremble* (2017) who uses art to refocus on the victimisation of witches, by subverting the emphasis of evil. Carol Ann Duffy (Poet Laureate, 2009-2019) has contributed to how we understand the past by writing ten descriptive tercets about the persecution of the Pendle Witches. These are placed beside the footpaths which follow the witches' journey to the gallows and prompt the walkers who follow this path to Lancaster to consider how they might regard these witches with more empathy. My art engages with Jones and Duffy, who use installations and poetry to reflect on how oppression and persecution can be re-interpreted through creative practice.

My research has added to knowledge by re-envisaging the Pendle Witches through contemporary art, which has combined the ideology of compassion for the victims, as a strategy to disrupt their present images. It has put forward the premise that the portrayal of the witches has been influenced by public perception, rather than by the actions of the witches themselves. The inherited symbolic motif used to portray them fails to value them as people who played a part in the complex world of the seventeenth century. The creation of these newly defined portrayals complements a growing interest in overturning stereotyped images. Engaging with the public through the display of the work in exhibitions confirmed that this visual disruption of the Pendle Witches' image has influenced public perceptions. The art gives currency to the recognised vulnerability of the Pendle Witches by reclaiming their image to portray their

victimhood. It memorialises them as individuals and continues to influence public opinion through ongoing exhibitions.

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