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**The Everyday Always Happens to
Someone Else: An attempt at
practising an endotic-based art**

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Ph.D
University of Edinburgh
2016

I declare that:

This thesis was composed by me and is my own work

It has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification

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2016

The Everyday Always Happens to Someone Else: An attempt at practising an endotic-based art

This thesis is an account of my three sites-in-endotics, each project resulting in a participatory artwork: *Thaw* (2012), *Northern Venetians* (2013) and *The Recollective* (2015). I base these projects upon the writings of Georges Perec (1936-82).

Perec saw endotics as a form of quotidian studies characterised by an internal perspective: everyday situations should be described from the vantage point of those already immersed in them, not from the position of an outsider. Hence the participatory character of these works. Through these projects, the participants explore their spatial practices as they engage in a collective writing.

In this thesis I write my own spatial practice, describing my construction of the frameworks that enable the participants to tell their stories. My methodology outlines the theoretical and practical approaches I adopt, and explains my reasons for doing so. My literature review contextualises them. My case studies offer a reflective account of my practice based research. I conclude by returning to the potential usefulness of an endotic approach.

Research Questions

What are the ways in which I can use Perec's endotic writings to construct a participatory art practice exploring everyday situations?

Can we talk of participants as being the meaningful co-authors of an artwork?

How do multilayered narratives portray the participants' spatial practices?

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NOTES ON THE TEXT

Writing is a visual medium and many of the works I discuss have a strong visual element. Occasionally, some of the material quoted simply looked wrong in single spacing, and in those cases typographical arrangement won out over academic regulation. Therefore, in section 3.1 the Perec quote at the top of page 50 has been rendered in 1.5 spacing, as have the poems and conceptual works in Section 3.5 (the other quotations there are given in 1.0).

The fonts used in this thesis are Bookman Old Style and Courier New. The text is unjustified except for the Venice collage in my *Northern Venetians* case study.

Bracketed numbers are used throughout to direct the reader to relevant sections elsewhere in the thesis: these are numbered as they are listed in the contents page, e.g. (6.4.2) indicates the section on concrete poetry. Titles of works are not italicised in headings.

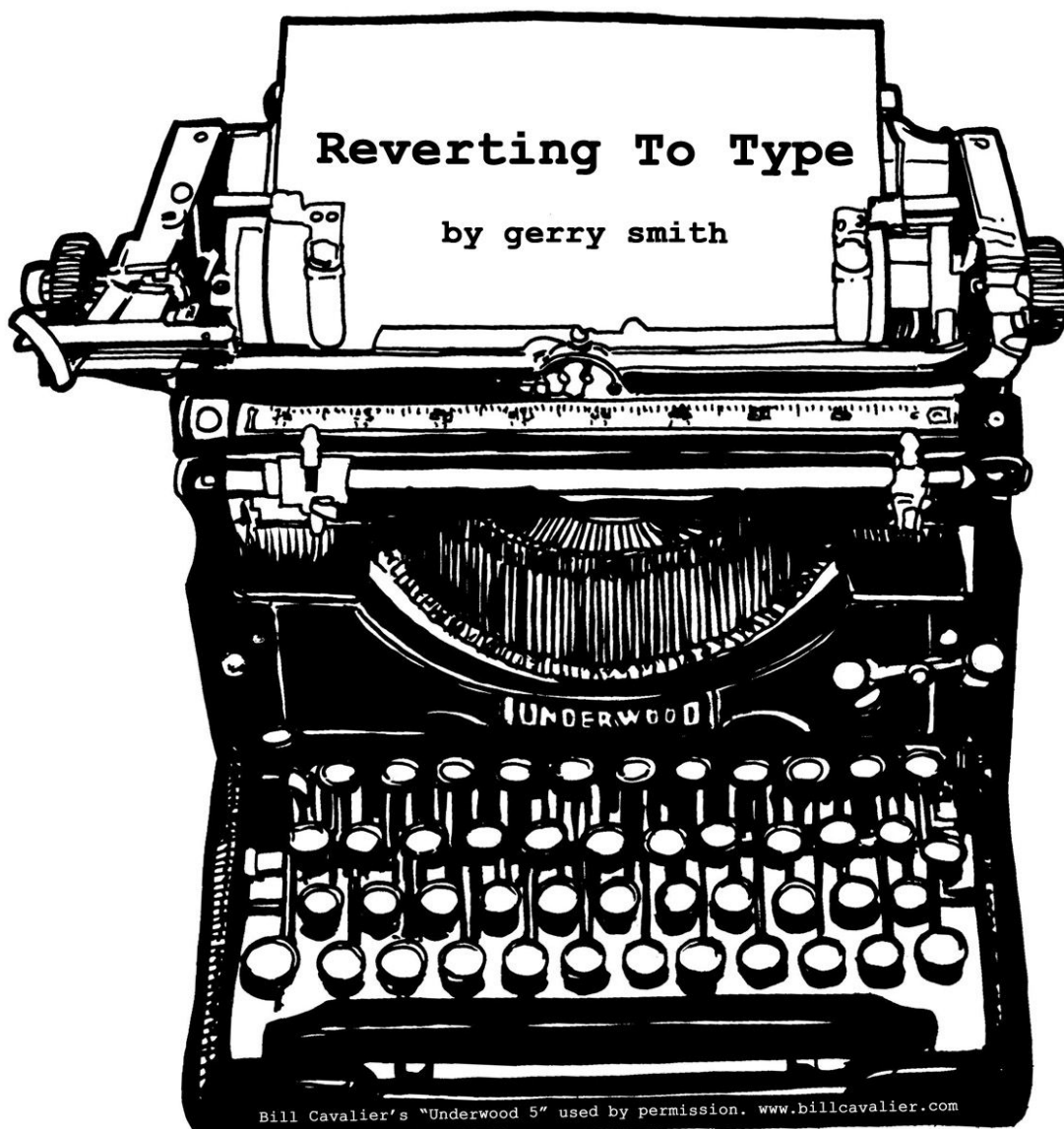
All images are captioned and state artist/writer/creator, date, and (in italics) title where known. When required, information on media and location is also given.

They are indicated, in text, by a bracketed number, e.g. **(Figure 1)**. As many of the images are works of visual writing, the bracketed number is often followed by a standard reference indicating its source, e.g. **(Figure 16)** (Higgins, 1987, p. 48).

I have sought to avoid widows and orphans, although a small number remain.

Likewise I have tried to keep gaps in the text – mainly arising from computerised footnotes – to the bare minimum (although in section 1.5 there is a deliberate use of blank space).

There are other peculiarities throughout my thesis and these are explained in footnotes when they make their first appearance.



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Figure 1 G. Smith (2015) *Exhibition Leaflet*.

Preamble

1

Jack of all trades, master of none (Fergusson and Law, 2000, p. 124)

I am an intermedia artist, a contemporary ‘Jack of all trades’: a boundary worker who chooses not to specialise in one thing, nor the other. Throughout my academic studies I have adopted a transdisciplinary approach. I continue to do so in this thesis which is an account of my attempt to establish an endotic art practice based upon the writings of Georges Perec.

‘Jack of all trades’ is often used in a derogatory manner, but originally the phrase praised the practicality of the generalist. In the course of my research I draw upon many disciplines, none of which I claim specialist knowledge. Instead I have a curiosity and determination to approach ground already covered by others, in order to establish trails of my own.

My research is characterised by a transdisciplinary approach. In my projects, I establish experimental spaces which deliberately bring several disciplines into play with one another. Most are from the humanities and the social sciences, e.g. sociology, anthropology, literature, music and the visual arts are some of the disciplines present within *Thaw* (the first of the projects through which I attempt to establish my endotic arts practice). Even before I begin the practical work for my projects significant disciplinary interactions are evident. Within my research literature for *Thaw*, many interdisciplines are already present, e.g. socio-physiology approaches towards literature (Littau) or anthropological artforms (Sculpture Chicago’s *Culture in Action*). The *sites-in-endotics* that I establish are intended to take this process of ‘crossing-over’ much further. My research concerns *the*

everyday and, as a subject that cuts across many fields of study, it requires an approach which can do likewise.

My contribution to the production of knowledge emerges from the problematisation of the theories and practices in play within my sites-in-endotics. New perspectives are created here - generated by the interaction of disciplines and methods - as theory and practice are re-contextualised by the other approaches at play. These projects are propelled by the potential that emerges from such re-contextualisation.

An example of this problematisation of practice is the circumstances surrounding my introduction of the *Northern Venetians* project. Initially, I establish two sites, those for *Thaw* and *The Recollective*. I work on both projects concurrently (although *Thaw* takes prominence when its field study begins). As a result of this parallel research process, the projects become interconnected, and feedback loops form which come to influence the development of both sites. In contrast, *Northern Venetians* results from the juxtaposition of theoretical and practical issues; it is a direct response to the problems which emerge during my making of *Thaw*. As part of my modified ethnography, I extend *Thaw's* writing field to address issues related to the use of ethnographic monograph (2.3). Despite this, I come to realise that significant scope remains for an authorial imposition of meaning post-production and I begin to doubt the effectiveness of the extended writing field. Furthermore, as I work on another project alongside *Thaw*, I realise that I am neglecting the artist's role as participant in my endotic projects. I set up my two projects and examine participation by focusing on the roles played by a specific group and the audience (2.2), but find that I am telling only part of the story: a comprehensive account is required, one examining the roles played by all the participants, including the artist. *Northern Venetians* is introduced as a means of resolving both issues: using a generative process to restrict the scope of authorial intervention; and by focusing

on the artist as collaborator. Thus, my attempt to resolve issues emerging within *Thaw* results in another site and the new lines of enquiry pursued within it.

2

I believe rather that I discover – that I prove – the direction I am moving in by moving (Perec, 1999, p. 142)

Each of my endotic projects is intended to produce a participatory artwork which explores everyday situations through storytelling. The resulting artworks depict my participants' spatial practices through the use of multilayered narratives; offering pluralistic portrayals which acknowledge both similarities and differences within environments in which many, often conflicting, discourses are present.

The writing of my thesis is an organic process. I begin with no set idea for a thesis structure, only the inclination that it should be appropriate to its subject matter. Much later I decide that it ought to reflect, as well as reflect on, my projects. Hence I come to mirror my participants' storytelling by offering an account of my own spatial practice. In doing so, I adopt a narrative approach which is appropriate for depicting the journey undertaken. Consequently, I eschew a structure which is common to much academic writing, whereby an argument progresses in a linear fashion, through a series of summative statements, accompanied and elaborated on by supportive material. In this thesis, there is no straightforward pathway, clearly signposted, which leads to my conclusions. Instead, I write in a manner evoking the transdisciplinary character of my research process. That research involves moving through many fields, covering considerable ground and following several paths. I pick up on trails and wander off along routes which often double back onto or cross over those already taken, tracing and retracing steps wherever they go.

In the process I tell stories of how events unfold within my projects. These stories are about the research process itself and are more concerned with the journeys undertaken, than with any final destination. Through my stories I offer the reader insights into my creative process, and the resulting artworks. To situate the reader in the midst of it all, I employ a continuous present tense throughout, as I narrate these events as if they are happening here and now.

My thesis structure is relatively straightforward. The introduction is followed by my methodology chapter and the literature review. Then comes the case studies of the projects, and some further reflections before my concluding remarks. However, much of the thesis is actually an extended literature review: my review of the literature is already underway in my Introduction and Methodology chapter and after my actual Literature Review (3.1-3.6) it continues throughout the case studies.

Meanwhile, the analytical necessity to step back, to take stock and assess what is happening on the ground, remains. In my three case studies, instead of giving an account of the various lines of development across these three projects, I choose to focus on different aspects and themes within each one (2.2). My emphasis on storytelling, therefore, is counterbalanced by the structural composition adopted for those case studies.

However, one consequence of this structure is that it suggests a simple sequential development, i.e. that the research, development and exhibition of Project One is then followed, on its completion, by Project Two and so on. This is somewhat misleading as the process is actually very different, with the initial research into both *Thaw* and *The Recollective* beginning, more or less, at the same time. Given the impression arising from the sequential character of this structure, it is

important to note that these projects co-exist and significantly over-lap with one another, being connected by a series of feedback loops (as noted above).

My seventh chapter is 'A Final Meandering' in which I offer further reflection on the content of my research. That title indicates the course of much of the narrative of my thesis, as I often follow a particular line to find where it leads me. My approach to research involves making new connections between seemingly disparate themes and works. In order to recreate a sense of this process in my writing, I sometimes choose to jump from one subject to another to convey this movement across disciplinary boundaries. Occasionally, a train of thought is left hanging somewhere, only for me to return to it much later on, sometimes in relation to a different matter. There are certainly loose threads strewn around the case studies, but the subsequent chapters allow ample opportunity to gather these together. My meandering also echoes the practices and theories depicted, as there is a peripatetic strain drifting throughout my projects, e.g. the browsing element in *Thaw*, the "pedestrian speech acts" (de Certeau, 1988, p. 98) of the everyday spatial practices of city life, and the fluidity of the *Northern Venetians* interface.

3

What speaks to us, seemingly, is always the big event, the untoward, the extra-ordinary: the front page splash, the banner headlines. (Perec, 1999, p. 209)

Some remarks on my research methodology are required before I go any further:

When I write of *the endotic* I mean the everyday, but it is an everyday which is seen from the perspective of those who normally inhabit a particular situation or environment, i.e. it is the everyday as seen from an insider's perspective.

The infraordinary is a particular part of the endotic: Perec used this term to refer to those elements of everyday life that are so commonplace, so taken for granted that they are no longer noticed. The infraordinary is there, but it is effectively invisible. Perec's endotic projects have something of the reclamation yard about them, since they are concerned with the recovery of a 'once known' and its redundant meanings which are now buried just below the surface of everyday life. And because they are just below there is also the potential for that almost forgotten knowledge to resurface. Perec classified his writings on the everyday as sociological (1999, p. 141), but it is a historical sociology in which the contemporary world is viewed in relation to the recent past.

In *The Recollective* I employ a technological regression which combines elements of *ostranenie* and remediation. *Ostranenie* are defamiliarisation techniques presenting common objects/situations in an unfamiliar or strange manner. These are intended to create a critical distance between the viewer and the observed object/situation. Examples of *ostranenie* are found in Perec's writings, as well as in the later writings of Kaprow (see below). *Remediation* is a process which Bolter and Grusin describe as "the representation of one medium in another" (1999, p. 45). I comment on this process throughout my thesis, e.g. in 'A Final Meandering' I discuss it in relation to visual and non-visual languages.

Endotics is the critical study of everyday life proposed by Perec, which he developed in a number of projects from the early 1970s onwards. However, it remained very much his personal project, having little existence outside of the articles and works he wrote at that time. Therefore, in attempting to create an endotic art practice, I have to reconstruct a body of endotic theory to base it upon.¹ In addition to Perec's

¹ I write ~~reconstruction~~ when I begin this thesis, as the word seems inadequate without the scoring through: it seems to me that what I am trying to do with Perec's endotics is neither construction nor reconstruction, but something which lies between.

writings, I also draw upon works by those contemporaries who can be described as fellow travellers, such as Allan Kaprow and Pauline Oliveros, as well as his compatriots Henri Lefebvre, Roland Barthes and Michel de Certeau. I construct my endotics during the course of my research. In this thesis, where necessary, I maintain a clear distinction between my version of endotics and Perec's original writings.

Perec called for the creation of an endotics during a formative period for French quotidian studies. Today, research into the everyday is nearly as commonplace as its subject matter. This provides me with some motivation for positing a return to Perec's endotics, as it seems that now might be an appropriate time to retrace some of those steps that were taken, perhaps looking for the motivation behind them as well as seeing where they led to. I write of a return to Perec, and such 'returns' - e.g. to Freud, to Marx, to the avant-garde practices of the dadas - assume the original theory or practice has a relevance for contemporary events, and that theory/practice is viewed in the light of subsequent developments. Its insight is thus given hindsight. As such the 'return' offers a dual perspective: the 'now' is seen from 'then', and vice-versa.²

The *Sites-in-endotics* are the projects through which I seek to establish my endotic art practice. These experimental spaces are made up of both the physical places in which they are located and the practices which occur there. Amongst the latter, I include the research process itself as these sites are intended to function as testing grounds for the theories employed within them (hence the extended literature review I mention above). Through these sites I begin to explore my three primary themes. The first is that of *participation* and I examine the ways that participatory

² Therefore, the real object of enquiry is likely to be neither 'now' or 'then', but what has happened in the interim: e.g. asking "how did we get to here" begs the question of what alternative courses or outcomes were possible.

artforms can be used to explore the everyday. The second is *social practice*, represented primarily through the artworks in which the participants tell their stories. The third theme concerns the role *memory* plays in the construction of social identity.

Most of the approaches I use are chosen not through any personal preference, but because there is evidence of them being employed in Perec's endotic writings. I select most of them after my initial research readings and use some throughout all of my research e.g. deep reading, *ostranenie*. Others I use for specific projects, e.g. human geography in *Northern Venetians*, and ethnography in the *Thaw* project. Furthermore, some appear later in the process, adopted or developed in response to conditions on the ground, e.g. my own nascent media archaeology.³ I also employ a few methods which are not sourced from Perec's writings, primarily the participatory artforms which I use as a means of accessing insider perspectives of a particular space.⁴

³ In the course of my research I develop a media archaeological approach. There is an anticipation of such approaches in Perec's comment on the astonishment experienced by Jules Verne and his contemporaries when faced with technological developments (Perec, p. 210) (it is a comment that I often return to, and I take the unusual step of quoting the passage on both pages 44 and 146). I write 'anticipation' because, as a body of thought and practice, media archaeology did not exist then. My own media archaeology arises from my practice in the field, through use of particular technologies and research into the issues that surround them. It is similar to my endotics for I construct it from theoretical writings which can be said to be in sympathy with one another: my analysis draws upon Zielinski's 'variantology' and the literary criticism/media theory of writers such as Littau, Kittler and Hayles (3.4).

Oddly enough, Perec's comment on Verne it is one of the few occasions that he is mistaken for it is 'we', looking back, who are astonished. Verne and his contemporaries operated within complex discursive networks which had emergent possibilities. When we look at these events, we de-contextualise that world by singling out particular moments as significant (to us) and isolate people and their actions from the frameworks of meaning which surrounded them. When we look back seeking their 'astonishment', we simplify the people who have made our world possible: it is akin to suggesting that we are astonished by the technological developments of our own time.

⁴ Although there are certainly traces of *the participatory* in Perec's works, e.g. *Je me souviens* with its exploration of collective remembering (8).

The concept of endotics is problematic, at least in relation to an individual practitioner. Individual artists can write of their own experience, and also observe and record their thoughts on others. However, it is somewhat presumptuous to claim the right to write for a social group, i.e. to write of 'we' or 'ourselves'. Perec's writing was idiosyncratic, but through it he sought the means which would enable 'us' to "speak of what is, of what we are" (1999, p. 210), but, as noted above, endotics remained his own personal project. Perhaps, to take that project beyond Perec himself, more collective forms of expression are required. This is partly the reasoning behind my use of participatory forms as a means of accessing insider perspectives.

4

In a network of lines that intersect (Calvino, 1982, p. 7)

The initial stage of establishing my sites is an intense period of research, consisting of four categories of reading material. First, there is Perec's endotic writing. From my initial reading I select the approaches that I use in my projects. I then continue to read them, using an iterative process of deep reading whereby I constantly return to Perec writings, relating them to my research literature and the practical developments of my sites.

The second category is the background literature. Composed mainly of works on the everyday (e.g. Highmore, 2002a; Moran, 2005), this includes the writings of his French contemporaries (e.g. de Certeau, 1988). There are also texts addressing art and everyday life (e.g. Foster, 1996; Johnstone, 2008; Sheringham, 2006) as well as works of an endotic character or those in sympathy with Perec writings, (e.g. Maspero, 1994; Ernaux, 1996; Phillips, 2000). Works of memory studies are also included, (e.g. Augé, 2004; Rossington and Whitehead, 2008; Whitehead, 2009) as

is literature on research methods (e.g. Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Oliveros, 2003; Licht, 2007).⁵

My third category of reading relates specifically to the *Thaw* project. Here, areas of concern include participation (e.g. Kaprow, 2003; Sandford, 1994), site based art (e.g. Kwon, 2004) and the consumption of books (e.g. Littau, 2006). The fourth and final category is the literature relating to *The Recollective*, the project I intend to start on the completion of *Thaw* (e.g. Kittler, 1999; Hayles, 1999).

Before going any further, it is necessary to note an earlier occlusion: endotics is a form of quotidian studies, yet I offer no definition of ‘the everyday’. Nor do I attempt to do so at any point. Instead, I choose to bracket-off the category, taking it as a given, and use it as the stage upon which a number of disciplines, themes and practices are brought into play with one another.

Problems soon arise from this bracketing-off. Prominent amongst them is a discursive field centred on the relationship between art and everyday life - a meta-discourse looming over much of my research (the issue is directly addressed in the literature review). Operating within this particular discursive field there are some who perceive a separation between these spheres of activity, including those who see the activities of the avant-garde as an attempt to resolve this separation (3.3). Confronted with the meta-discourse of art and everyday life, my range of concern with participation widens to include not only the forms of participation present, but also consideration of the discourses shaping them. This meta-discourse is relevant because artists often use participation as a means of engaging with the everyday (myself included). Likewise, it is also relevant to artistic uses of both ethnography and appropriated materials.

⁵ The last two of these texts concern music or sound art. My research makes significant use of music and audio material: in written accounts, non-written forms are easily neglected or downplayed.

Among the first problems to emerge are those resulting from interactions between participatory practice and anthropological approaches. My examination of new genre ethnographic art practice (4.2) brings to light issues arising from the unquestioned borrowing of methods from another discipline (e.g. the importation of underlying assumptions), and the misuse of such methods (e.g. a surface-level ethnography practised without an ethnographer's reflexivity). These issues are embedded in the wider discourse on art and everyday life.

There is also the incongruity between anthropology and Perec's concept of endotics. Perec was influenced by anthropological theories. Furthermore, the beginnings of endotics lie in his work for the *Cause Commune* journal; its stated aim being to:

grasp at the root and question the ideas and beliefs on which the workings of our "civilisations" and "culture" are based, and to undertake an anthropology of contemporary mankind (Bellos, 1995, p. 492)

However, Perec's emphasis on an approach focused on ourselves is at odds with anthropology's focus on the other, and as my project progresses I come to define endotics in opposition to that focus on alterity.

Problems also arise out of how I set up the projects. Initially focusing on the production of material (by, respectively, *Thaw's* booksellers and *The Recollective's* audience) I inadvertently set up a binary opposition within my projects. In doing so, I effectively deny *Thaw's* audience the active role I assign to its counterpart in *The Recollective*, thus creating a contrast between passive consumption and active production. This is not only simplistic, but, as demonstrated by my discussion of the audience and the audient (4.9), it is also plainly wrong. In a similar manner, by initially focusing on the booksellers and the audience, I neglect my role as a participant in these projects (4.7).

Throughout my research projects I am concerned with questions of definition, including who is given the power to define in a particular context and what are the consequences of accepting a particular designation? Amongst the various topics I find myself considering are: the attribution of meaning to particular behaviour or actions, and not to others; the perceived separation between art and everyday life; and how one language form is assumed to be innate whilst another is considered to be socially constructed. The potential imposition of authorial meaning in the ethnographic monograph is another case in point. I am well aware of this issue and *Thaw's* poly-vocalism is an attempt to resolve it (2.3), but my doubts on the matter remain beyond the completion of that project (7.2.1).

From these examples, it is clear that the interaction between approaches, and between theory and practice, is seldom a smooth process. My use of a classic model of participation based upon Kaprow's writings is further evidence of this friction (4.9). His focus is on the consumption side of the artwork, i.e. with the perceived passivity of the audience, and how this could be resolved through their active participation in the work. My focus is on the production side, i.e. with the active participation of the booksellers in the making of the sound installations. Both Kaprow and I explore participation, but different forms of participation and for different ends. The model ultimately proves unsuitable for my installations. However, its failure – the discrepancies between model and practical conditions on the ground – brings my attention to the consumers of these installations, leading me to distinguish the audience from the audience (4.9). This focus on how the work is received will lead to the emergence of a more fluid interpretation of production and consumption.

Over the course of *Thaw* I move from an ambivalent acceptance of digital technologies, where my use of them is a means of collating and representing

information, to an active engagement with them, exploring what they can bring to the development of the project; I begin to use technology to analyse, and represent, the issues that are emerging. Responding to the background literature, I use my *Noise* animation (Smith, 2011) (4.7) to explore the implications of Shannon's definition of signal (Hayles, 1999, pp.18-20). In response to conditions on the ground, I construct collages from visual static in 'The Artist as Ethnographer' 1 & 2 (Smith, 2012b, 1.8 and 2.9) (4.6.3). Whilst they emerge from the editing process, these 'Ethnographer' pieces respond to my fieldwork. In *On Editing A Sound Piece* ⁶ (Appendix 1) I reflect on the differences between visual and non-visual media. Unlike the previous pieces, this work is not a response to a pre-existing issue or problem, but the problem itself emerges from the process of making the work. Whilst being by-products of my research process, these smaller works are also examples of electronic literature, a field of practice and study that I become aware of during the course of this project. My *Thaw* e-book (Smith, 2012a) is the first work I knowingly make as an electronic literature piece; my response to the booksellers' stories concerning digital and analogue media, and the threat posed by e-books (4.7).

The new perspective I acquire from the field of electronic literature (5.2) results in another shift where I come to view my projects not only as participatory works, but also as exercises in collective writing. This results in technology becoming an object of investigation - as writing technologies - as well as a means of investigation. This emphasis on writing brings about yet another shift as my own spatial practice itself becomes a subject for investigation and the object of this thesis.⁷

⁶ This is one of the works included in the *Reverting To Type* exhibition (6.1). Like many others, it was omitted from the case study due to spatial constraints.

⁷ My role as curator and participant in *thetextisthetext* also plays a significant role in this shift: evidence of external factors shaping developments within of my sites.

Practice drives theoretical progress within my sites, as much as theory drives their practical development. A case in point is my use of ostranenie. In *Thaw* I use defamiliarisation techniques to affect the audience, whereas in *The Recollective* those methods are part of the critical research process itself. The shift from the former use to the latter emerges with the making of *Noise* and the *Thaw* e-book. Another example is the way in which the process of working at my desktop alerts me to remediation and the part it plays in establishing current forms of computer use (4.7). I then use that remediation process analytically in the making of my *Thaw* e-book. This leads to my use of a combination of ostranenie and remediation in the technological regression in *The Recollective*. Furthermore, my contemplation of the save icon (4.7) marks a shift relating to my third theme, as questions regarding memory morph into a concern with writing practices and technologies in relation to social identity.

The use of technology becomes an important part of my media archaeological approach which emerges in response to conditions on the ground. My reading of research literature also shapes this media archaeology, notably the works of Kittler and Hayles read in preparation for *The Recollective*. Littau's (2006) socio-physiological approach to literature also informs its development. Whilst it plays a minor part in *Thaw*, this media archaeology becomes more significant as my other projects progress.

This preliminary excursion into my endotic projects focuses on my first case study. However, *Thaw* is a starting point, one of many in this particular research process. My other projects have their own subject matter, their own literature, and these are approached through different methods. However, there are shared elements and continuities: there is interaction between my projects, as well as within them.

Many of the themes and issues I pursue in *Northern Venetians* and *The Recollective* emerge from within the *Thaw* project. Amongst these are: in the *Northern Venetians* case study, the opposition of production and consumption receives further scrutiny in a discussion of de Certeau's concept of productive consumption (this, in turn, has consequences for the interpretation of participatory works); the discussion of the digital threat to books combined with an extended literary field leads to further examinations of electronic literature and the impact of writing technologies on social identities; and finally the interconnectedness of analogue and digital media is explored in *The Recollective*. As I have outlined above, in the *Thaw* project there are also important shifts in perspective which shape the development of the subsequent projects.

Yet, how I interpret *Thaw* is also affected by those other projects. My research for *The Recollective* informs many of the smaller works that I use to think through *Thaw's* issues. In the case of *Northern Venetians*, with the benefit of a hindsight informed by de Certeau's writings, I come to terms with my doubts concerning the extension of *Thaw's* writing field. These endotic projects are not isolated entities, but part of an ongoing and interconnected research process. However, in that process, *Thaw* sets the tone for what is to follow.

5

(...) (Perec, 1989, p. 61)

Finally, some thoughts on the spaces that my endotic works are exhibited in, and how these – and other spaces – might impact upon their reception by its audience. First of all, *Thaw* is concerned with a specific everyday environment, that of 'the bookshop' (represented by the four premises in which the installations are located). In *Northern Venetians* two very different kinds of space are addressed: 'the city' and

‘the web’, where the composite city is located. Both projects are site-based works. Unlike them, *The Recollective* is concerned not with a particular space but with an object, a writing machine, brought into the gallery space.

There is a strong correlation between place and space in *Thaw*, with the spatial practices evident in each bookshop being a major influence on the content of the sound sculptures. If installed elsewhere, even in another bookshop, the site specific character of the work would be lost.

Realising these installations requires compromises and some of these have consequences for the potential reception of *Thaw*. When the main installation is restricted to one location in each shop, the browser version (4.8) allows me to retain an element of customers being able to hear these works as they move through the shop. However, this mobility is secured with the loss of the ability of these sounds to catch their audience unaware (accessed via QR codes, these sound-pieces have to be manually activated). Furthermore, the site-specificity is potentially weakened as the work can be accessed from anywhere if the customer/audience saves the links from the QR codes. The *Thaw* e-book also breaks the work’s site-specificity, but it does so in a logically coherent manner as it is not unusual for a book to be taken out of a bookshop! The main impact on how these sound-sculptures are received, however, comes down to the audience’s state of awareness on hearing them.

Unlike *Thaw*, the other two works are not restricted to a particular environment. *Northern Venetians* can be viewed anywhere that has a computer with online access. As a constantly moving interactive space, it is designed to enable the audience/reader to move through it as they choose (5.4). As for *The Recollective*, I make it as a gallery piece, and show it in an exhibition space alongside other artworks (some displayed on the wall, some using computers). Here, there is no

ambiguity about the audience: it is one which is aware of itself as such. However, the work itself can be viewed anywhere with a sufficient number of computers and a projector. Indeed, when installing the work for a portfolio presentation I set it up in a university computer room. This is more in keeping with my earliest thoughts on the piece, and this environmental intervention displays a site-specificity more akin to the *Thaw* project (perhaps, it also raises the possibility of catching an audience unaware of itself). Alongside this intervention, two computers are given over to the *Northern Venetians* webpage, whilst another two are running the *Thaw* e-book.

What did the indigenous person say to the postmodern anthropologist?

“Can we talk about me for a change?”

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Overview:

Prologue

Three Endotic Projects

Perec and the French Quotidian

I Remember... Past Practice and Personal Motivations

The Everyday Always Happens to Someone Else

Approaches to What?

Approached from Where?

1.1 Prologue

In 1973, in ‘Approaches to What?’ (1999, pp. 209-211) – hereafter ‘Approaches’ - Georges Perec proposed endotics as the critical study of the infraordinary: the common occurrences and everyday relations that tend to go by unnoticed “as if it carried within it neither questions nor answers, as if it weren’t the bearer of any information” (1999, p. 210). Perec deemed the everyday worthy of attention, and questioned “what seems so much a matter of course that we’ve forgotten its origins” (1999, p. 210). ‘Approaches’ is a starting point for a project that was cut short by his death in 1982. Since then, his ideas have influenced others who have tried to incorporate them into their own disciplines.⁸ However, I believe that something has been lost in the absence of an endotics *per se*. With this in mind, I return to Perec’s endotics. The endotic is the everyday, but Perec’s neologism suggests that it is an everyday seen from an indigenous perspective. I use the term ‘endotics’ to describe an approach towards the quotidian which portrays everyday situations from the perspective of those who are already immersed in them. This insider perspective distinguishes endotics from the anthropological approaches that Perec was familiar with (4.2).

⁸ Some examples are the social history of Joe Moran (2005; 2010), and the proximate anthropology of Marc Augé (2002; 2008).

Between 2010 and 2015 I create a body of artwork incorporating participatory works into an endotic research process: establishing three sites-in-endotics, I use art projects as a means of gathering information on, whilst drawing attention to, everyday environments. The resulting artworks can be described as electronic literature,⁹ and all share a concern with memory and its role in the production of shared social meanings.

This thesis complements that body of work, being an account of my practice-based research process. In it I contextualise these projects and offer a critical reflection on my creative process, showing practical and theoretical research interacting in a process of reciprocal development. I situate Perec's writings within a tradition of critical thought concerned with the quotidian. I examine the relationship between art and everyday life, and the development of participatory artworks, focusing on the connections between memory and writing technologies.

1.2 Three Endotic Projects

I develop participatory works, believing I can use them as an innovative means of information gathering. In each project, my participants play a significant role in the generation of material. My site-in-endotics are experimental spaces, acting both as scene and workshop. The three projects are:

01)¹⁰ *Thaw*, in which a period of field observation in four Edinburgh bookshops is followed by audio recorded interviews with staff members. These recordings provide the base material for a series of installations at the bookshops, each specific to its location. In addition there is the browser version¹¹ and an e-book.

⁹ The Electronic Literature Organization defines electronic literature as "works with an important literary aspect that takes advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the stand-alone or networked computer" (Electronic Literature Organization, n.d.). See also Hayles, 2008 (4.7).

¹⁰ Key to numbering: 01 = 1, 10 = 2, 11 = 3, 100 = 4, 101 = 5, 110 = 6 and so on.

¹¹ This uses QR codes, accessed through smart-phones.

10) *Northern Venetians*, a work of collaborative writing, depicts the city of Northern Venice through the stories of its inhabitants, past and present. This city does not sit in any one physical location, but is a composite of many places: all the Northern Venetians live, or have lived in, places known as *The Venice of the North*. This work interrogates a spatial metaphor, and explores the online space in which it is composed.

11) *The Recollective* is an interactive piece using a regressed technology, i.e. computers reprogrammed to function like typewriters. In this work, audience inputs are projected into a gallery space, and these are then manipulated by a computer program. The work offers two representations of how memory operates, as well as a representation of an evolving computer consciousness.

A correspondence exists in *Thaw* between the bookshops as place and as space, but there is a marked separation in the other projects: *Northern Venetians* occupies no physical place as its construction and exhibition occurs online, and *The Recollective* is a gallery exhibition, its subject matter imported or brought into that place.

The space of *Northern Venetians* is that of the city. The city is inseparable from the everyday. Our conceptions of the everyday are closely associated with the growth of modern cities. This site investigates the city as a series of spatial relations. Moreover, this work – via its means of construction – explores another everyday space, that of the Web.

The space explored in *The Recollective* is memory and our writing technologies, and the relationship between them. Memory is a spatial practice, as demonstrated by the use of place systems in mnemonics since the *Ad Herennium* of Roman times. Whitehead notes “a strong affiliation between memory and place, for place is ‘well

suites to contain memories – to hold and preserve’, while memory is itself ‘a place wherein the past can revive and survive’ ” (2009, p. 10).

These experimental spaces are the subject of my three case studies, outlined in my methodology chapter.

1.3 Perec and the French Quotidian

Sometime in 1946 the French Philosopher Henri Lefebvre discovered the quotidian. (Johnstone, 2008, p. 42)

Perec was a French author and, from 1967, member of OuLiPo:¹² a research group that began as a subcommittee of the College of Pataphysics. The College, which consisted mainly of former surrealists, sought to develop Alfred Jarry’s “science of imaginary solutions” and concerned itself with “the particular, the exceptional and the accidental” (James, 2009, p. 233). Founded in 1960, the OuLiPo investigated the literary use of mathematical structures, and later the production of texts under strict constraints. Whereas the pataphysicians had seen the clinamen as a “force that produces chaos” (James, 2009, p. 143) the OuLiPo redeveloped it as “a deviation from the strict consequences of a restriction” (Mathews and Brotchie, 2005, p.126).¹³ This was important to Perec as the use of “the spatial clinamen was absolutely fundamental” (Bellos, 1995, p. 599) to his most famous work, *Life A User’s Manual* (1988). The idea of endotics partly came out of Perec’s filmic collaboration with Bernard Queysanne (Bellos, 1995, pp. 519-522), and endotic ideas are found in many of his Oulipian works.

Michael Sheringham (2006) considers Perec amongst the most prominent French

¹² The acronym for ‘Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle’, i.e the Workshop for Potential Literature.

¹³ This deviation is “often justified on aesthetic grounds... [but] the exceptional freedom afforded by a clinamen can only be taken on the condition that the original rule is still possible... the clinamen can only be used if it isn’t needed” (Mathews and Brotchie, 2005, p. 126).

Quotidian writers, alongside Lefebvre, Barthes and de Certeau.¹⁴ He argues that these writers are of interest not because they offer a homogeneous body of thought (they do not), but because the evolution of their ideas between 1960 and 1980 “fed into and drew upon each of the others and... made this a vital period in the emergence of the everyday as a paradigm” (Sheringham, 2006, p. 9). In France there is a critical concern with the everyday that can be traced back to Baudelaire. However, Ross notes Lefebvre’s importance in proclaiming the everyday a category worthy of theoretical attention: after the publication of *The Critique of Everyday Life* (1946) social theorists increasingly turned their attention towards the everyday (Highmore, 2002b; Johnstone, 2008; Sheringham, 2006; Ross, 1997). It was a key moment, and soon the post-war France of “the 1950s and 1960s [was] awash in a kind of sociological fascination... with the transformed rhythms and accoutrements of daily lived experience” (Ross, 2008, p. 43).

Perec was indebted to Lefebvre, and acknowledged that “[the] sociological: how to look at the everyday” was one of “the four modes of interrogation” which informed his work (1999, p. 141). His endotic works included detailed observations of everyday events, objects or situations (Bellos, 1995; Perec, 1999; Perec, 2010; Sheringham, 2006). Through his constant comparisons and inquisitiveness, he sought to question “the common things” (Perec, 1999: p. 210).

1.4 I Remember... Past Practice and Personal Motivations

In my practice I often use analytical scores, fragments of texts providing the basis for an improvisation as a jumping-off point, a means of entry into a subject. These texts have to catch my attention in some way – through imagery or inherent contradiction – and I choose them because I have the feeling that there is something that warrants further investigation. I use these scores as a means of

¹⁴ When referring collectively to these writers, I borrow from Kristen Ross and use her term French Quotidian (Johnstone, 2008, pp. 42-47).

thinking through the matter. This is evident in the *Thaw* installations, derived from extracts of Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (1955, pp. 566-570). Here, the score brought me straight to the role that memory plays in our construction of meaning.

I am attempting to write this in a continuous present tense, a device designed to create the impression that you are reading of these events as they are happening, or as near as possible to it.

Admittedly, there are exceptions, such as this section and the literature review (sometimes strict adherence to such conceits is simply absurd).

This continuous pretence is somewhat restrictive, so I use a form of interjection which allows me to add further comments. These interjections are written in Courier New (bold) and come in from the right hand side of the page.¹⁵

My interjections are often from another time: comments from further on in the process or from a vantage point perhaps at odds with the main text. Alternatively, they may be personal recollections that have some relevance to matters at hand.¹⁶

My work is often constraints-based, and in this I have been influenced by Perec and other members of the OuLiPo. I came across Perec's work at the start of the 1990s, when his books started to become available in English translations.¹⁷ I was already primed for this, being familiar with the work of Italo Calvino (a fellow OuLiPo writer) and Gilbert Adair's *Myths and Memories*.¹⁸

Perec's *Life A User's Manual* (1988) quoted Calvino on the back cover: "One of the most singular literary personalities in the world" (Auster, 1987). I admired Calvino's

¹⁵ Footnotes within interjections follow the same formatting.

¹⁶ My interjections are based upon Jaques Roubaud's use of interpolations and bifurcations in *The Great Fire Of London* (2006).

¹⁷ The first English translation of Perec's *Les Choses. Une histoire des années 60* (Things: A story of the Sixties) was by Helen Lane for Grove Press in the USA. Perec's books remained unpublished in Britain until David Bellos' translation of *Life A User's Manual* in 1987.

¹⁸ The 'Memories' section of Adair's book offers an English language take on Perec's *Je me souviens* (*I Remember*). 'Myths' is a pastiche of Roland Barthes' *Mythologies*.

work, so this was bound to catch my attention.¹⁹ On reading the Paul Klee quote which opens Perec's *preamble*, I knew I would buy the book. After the next novel, I realised that I had already encountered Perec's writing before, through Adair's homage. I then began to explore the work of other OuLiPo writers. When I started my art practice in the mid 1990s, I quickly adopted a constraints-based approach.

Other formative influences have been the Fluxus movement, Tom Phillips²⁰ and Ian Hamilton Finlay. From 2008, I explored the use of reductive forms, including my own variant of punctuation poetry: a response to the reductive poetry proposed by François Le Lionnais in his *Exercises of Potential Literature* (1961) (Mathews & Brotchie, 2005, pp. 177-178). These pieces drew upon the work of Finlay and Yoko Ono. At that time I began to develop my *instruction pieces*, and through these I introduced an endotic approach into my practice. I also became increasingly concerned with how the audience responds to artworks; resulting in my development of a 'mundane literalism', intended to obfuscate the literal meaning of the work. These artworks deliberately confronted the viewer in order to counter their passive consumption. They also prepared the ground for my current research.

Personal experience played an important role in the development of these projects.

My previous art practice has been concerned with the construction of personal identities, and my shift towards an interest in collective and shared identities is a logical progression. Furthermore, as I had often used the personal library as a

¹⁹ I happened to have the book in my hand at the time because I worked in a bookshop and was unpacking a delivery of stock.

²⁰ In 'The Street' Perec describes *Lieux* (spaces), a time capsule project focused on twelve Parisian locations which he hoped would provide "the record of a threefold experience of ageing: of the places themselves, of my memories, and of writing" (1999, p. 56). The project was later abandoned. Tom Phillips' photographic project *20 Sites n Years* bears a remarkable similarity to this work, at least in its depiction of place. His website states "20 South London sites photographed annually, in order, at the same time of day. Project commenced in 1973, and all photos cover all years through to the present" (Phillips, 2016). Also, if I were to select works displaying an endotic sensibility, Phillips' *The Postcard Century* (2000) would be amongst them, alongside Martin Parr's boring postcard collections (2001; 2004).

metaphor for the self, this had some bearing upon my choice of location for *Thaw*: bookshops extend the theme into a more public sphere.²¹ Bookshops also seemed apt, given the literary source of *Thaw*'s score, i.e. the Rabelais' extracts. However, the most important factor was my period of employment in a bookshop in the late 1980s and early 90s, giving me some understanding of, and familiarity with, those environments. I return to this (5.6) in relation to Perec's *tentatives*²² and his need to feel "a sense of connection and participation" (Sheringham, 2006, p. 277).

Unlike many of the participants in my *Thaw* project, I was not "a bookish child" (Smith, 2012a, 3.7). I grew up surrounded by other media – initially television and radio, later, records and cassettes (I refer to these media throughout my artwork and in this thesis). The books that my family owned were mostly reference books and, likewise, the majority of my library is non-fiction. I am more likely to turn on the TV or radio than to turn to a book. When I do turn to paper-bound fiction, it tends to be because it offers me something different from a traditional narrative: the writing on my fiction shelves is largely experimental. My current interest in participatory works is partly explained by my appreciation of open²³ artworks which acknowledge the role played by the viewer, reader or listener.

The extent of my use of electronic media in these endotic projects is something that I do not anticipate at the start of my research. I certainly do not expect to make works of electronic literature (3.5; 4.7) being unaware of that term and considerable

²¹ Personal libraries are not mere storage systems, they are a means of display; they are seen as saying something about the person who has gathered together those particular books. Looking at someone's bookshelves is a bit like going through their record/tape/CD collection.

²² 'Tentatives' is the French word for 'attempts'.

²³ Umberto Eco argues that open works "in so far that they are *in movement* are characterised by the invitation to make the work together with the author" (1989, p. 21, italics in original). The poetics of such works "sets in motion a new cycle of relations between the artist and his audience, a new mechanics of aesthetic perception, a different status for the artistic product in contemporary society... In short it installs a new relationship between the *contemplation* and the *utilization* of a work of art" (Eco, 1989, pp. 22-23, italics in original).

body of work to which it refers (Hayles et al, 2006; Borràs et al, 2011; Engberg, Memmott and Prater, 2012). I also admit to some ambivalence towards computers, and initially approach these projects viewing the technologies involved as a necessary evil – something to be dealt with in realising the works. I do not anticipate developing a positive and critical engagement with those technologies. This engagement emerges from the projects as a result of the practical research process itself.

This focus on memory is a new feature of my work.²⁴ A few years ago, during conversations with my mother, I noticed that she had begun to conflate people and events whilst recounting well known family stories. With hindsight, this was the first sign of her deteriorating mental capacity. This is an important source for my endotic projects: it did not bring them into being, as outlines of *The Recollective* and *Northern Venetians* were sketched out long before this. However, I have little doubt that my mother's mental state influenced my shift towards the role memory plays in our ideas of self: it certainly provided unwanted insights into how memory functions.

Finally, to conclude this section, some words on the quotidian. Johnstone notes:

Contemporary Art is saturated with references to the everyday. Since the mid-1990s... [numerous events] have attested to the widespread appeal of the quotidian to curators and artists alike. Coupled with this is the persistent presence of the term and its affiliates in reviews, articles and essays, in which everyday life attains the status of a global art-world touchstone. (2008, p. 12)

Initially, I was not fascinated by the everyday and felt no great need to delve deeper into it in any systematic way. I knew of Perec's endotics and it was interesting in a sort of sociological fashion, but I was more interested in his use of constraints, the

²⁴ The exception being 'Away Wae Thi Burdies' (Smith, 2009: pp. 21-30) in which I describe personal incidents involving birds. In the context of the paragraph above, that work was written in response to a family crisis which had just passed.

experiments with form. Studying the everyday is something that I have come to, through an interest in the formation of shared identities. I did not deliberately set out to pursue quotidian studies: everyday life was something that I just took for granted, as many of us tend to.

1.5 The Everyday Always Happens to Someone Else

The initial part of my title - *The Everyday Always Happens to Someone Else* - refers to the result of impromptu enquiries I make amongst friends and colleagues as I begin my research: I simply ask them for their opinions on everyday life. Not surprisingly, almost without fail, they mention the boring and mundane, the humdrum activities of ordinary existence. What catches me unawares is a general belief that it is something that they are not part of, for they all seem to be leading exciting and interesting lives: everyday life is something that happens to other people. Now, maybe I am an oddity, but it never seems that way with me. Yes, I too have exciting and extraordinary moments, moments when inspiration strikes, an idea falls from the sky and lands on my laptop; an almost finished artwork, sitting there waiting to be brushed up and presented to the world. However, those are just moments, very few and far between. Furthermore, they tend to come after hours, days, possibly weeks of working away at the boring stuff, the mundane activities that get edited out in the re-telling. As Chuck Close said, "Inspiration is for amateurs. The rest of us just show up and get to work" (CBS News, 2016).

Sometimes, however, the thing left out is what we are looking for...

1.6 Approaches to What?

Perec's sociological approach is most evident in 'Approaches', the founding text of endotics. "What speaks to us seemingly is the big event, the untoward, the extraordinary" (1999, p. 209): with this Perec opens a polemic against newspapers and

their fascination with the extraordinary. His argument against the depreciation of the ordinary, the everyday, is Lefebvrian in tone. He concludes with the assertion that “the daily papers talk of everything but the daily” (Perec 1999, p. 209): our lived experience is what is left out of the account. This lived experience, this essential, is what matters for Perec, and he now addresses it:

How should we take account of, question, describe what happens every day and recurs every day: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infraordinary, the background noise, the habitual? (1999, p. 210)

Habituated to the habitual, our daily life is lived in a disembodied existence: “We sleep through our lives in a dreamless sleep. But where is our life? Where is our body? Where is our space?” (1999, p. 210). He asks how we are to speak of the common things and how we can make them speak for us:

What’s needed perhaps is finally to found our own anthropology, one that will speak about us, will look in ourselves for what for so long we’ve been pillaging from others. Not the exotic anymore, but the endotic. (1999, p. 210)

Having acknowledged the difficulties of critically approaching the invisibility of the ordinary, Perec briefly outlines how we might begin to interrogate the everyday - “barely indicative of a method” - before asserting the importance of such a project to our understanding of ourselves (1999, p. 211).

Perec also introduces his concept of the infraordinary which is:

first and foremost the opposite of the extraordinary, of that which immediately leaps to our attention. It does not entirely correspond to the ordinary, rather, as the prefix suggests, to what lies hidden beneath the surface of ordinariness. (James, 2009, p. 138)

For me, endotics is akin to an archaeological or psychoanalytical approach: it involves a lot of digging, unearthing layers of hidden meanings. David Bellos²⁵ detects the influence of Mauss upon Perec’s endotics, and describes it as “tantamount to reinventing anthropology” (1995, p. 521). Reflecting on this, I

²⁵ Bellos is Perec’s biographer.

question whether endotics is another anthropology of ourselves (4.2).²⁶ Finally, Perec's approach to the everyday offers me some pointers for how I proceed in my own endotic research.

1.7 Approached from Where?

In choosing how I approach my sites-in-endotics, I take my lead from Perec's sociological texts. My use of a modified ethnographic approach in *Thaw* is based upon both a deep reading of 'Approaches' and Perec's adoption of field observation in many of his endotic *tentatives*, e.g. *An Attempt at Exhausting A Place in Paris* (Perec, 2010). The geographical approach of Perec's 'The World' (1999, p. 77-79) in 'Species of Spaces' (1999, pp. 1-96) feeds into the story telling of *Northern Venetians*, as well as de Certeau's writing on the city. Finally, 'Reading: A Socio-physiological Outline' (1999, pp. 174-185) points towards the embodied practices discussed in relation to writing machines.

In my literature and art review, I contextualise these writings on the quotidian. I also examine the relationship between art and everyday life, and what can be described as the avant-garde project to fuse the two together. Since the 1950s there has been an increasing interest in this relationship (Foster, 1996; Johnstone, 2008) echoing the social critique of the quotidian. I also address the "ethnographic turn" (Foster, 1996, pp. 171-204) in recent practice as artists borrow from anthropology and make increased use of ethnographic methods. In my case study of *Thaw*, I return in more detail to both the relationship between art and the everyday, and the ethnographic turn.

Part of my discussion of art and everyday life focuses on the development of participatory artforms as a contribution to the avant-garde project. Later, in my

²⁶ I first came across the term 'anthropology of ourselves' used in relation to the Mass Observation project. I use it to describe any anthropological approach where researchers are studying communities in their own countries.

case studies, I look at different forms of participation: collaborations between artists and individuals or groups; collaborations between artists; and artworks involving audience participation. I question just how participatory are these artworks, and to what extent can we describe participants as the co-authors?

My case studies refer to a number of works which are experimental in form, many of these using writing schemes. Usually, this is to show how they relate to critical writings, e.g. how, when viewed from the perspective of de Certeau's writings, the use of appropriated texts become tactical movements within a rented space.

Reference is made to demonstrate how artworks can be used within a critical research process, e. g. my use of a computer animation to explore the connection between Shannon's definition of signal - thus, also, "the 'not' signal" (Hayles, 1999, p. 63) - and Perec's interest in the background noise (4.7).

I also discuss works of electronic literature. In relation to *The Recollective*, I look at related material such as concrete poetry (Goldsmith, 2011, pp. 34-62), and codeworks, non-computer works imitative of computers (Funkhouser, 2007, pp. 257-264). I look at process pieces as both *Northern Venetians* and *The Recollective* are examples of such generative works. Furthermore, I discuss how the production of the *Thaw* e-book brought me to a critical use of the remediation process; my use of the jump-cut as a generative tactic in *Northern Venetians*, and the critical use of a regressed technology in *The Recollective*.

Both memory and what is written - and how - has an important bearing on the formation of the subject. In Case Study 3 I draw upon Frow's 'Toute la mémoire du monde: Repetition and Forgetting' (1997, pp. 218-246) which distinguishes between storage/retrieval and narrative based models. Likewise, I discuss texts which examine writers' interactions with writing technologies, including Littau's (2006) work on reading as a historically contingent and embodied process, and Hayles'

writings on the posthuman (1999) and technogenesis (2012). I also consider the work of Kittler; his *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1999) as an important influence on *The Recollective*, contributing to an increasing media archaeological approach in my practice.

My penultimate chapter offers some final reflections on: the book as object; participatory artforms; and remediation and language. In Chapter 8, in relation to my participatory projects and practice I conclude by returning, once more, to Perec's endotics.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

Overview:

Approaches to Writing

Approaches to Practice

The Modified Ethnography

Deep Readings

Media Archaeology

2.1 Approaches to Writing

The eye, becoming slowly accustomed to the dark, could end up making out beneath the layer of fine grey dust heteroclite remains coming from each of the Gratiolets: the base and posts of an Empire bed, hickorywood skis having lost their spring a long time ago... an old Underwood typewriter of the celebrated Four Million model, which was held to be, in its time, and owing to its automatic tabulator, one of the most sophisticated objects every made, and on which François Gratiolet began to type his invoices when he decided he had to modernise his accounting system. (Perec, 1988, p. 155)

Perec's endotic writings provide the theoretical foundation for my sites-in-endotics: informing my practice and suggesting approaches for participatory works. From these base texts I can extract an idea, a method or a tactic, before introducing material from elsewhere and seeing how they relate to one another. I subject all these texts to intense repeat readings (2.4).

In 'Approaches', Perec appears to call for the "found[ing of] our own anthropology" (1999, p. 210) and my adoption of ethnographic methods for *Thaw* is partly based upon this call. He also proposes an intense questioning of the quotidian, similar to the 'deep reading' approach which I adopt. Furthermore, in the passage on Jules Verne and his readers (Perec, 1999: p. 210) there is also a suggestion of a proto-media archaeology (Case Studies 1 and 3).

I find Perec's other texts just as useful. His thoughts on the reader as participant can be found in interviews (e.g. Perec, 1999, pp. 127-133; O'Brien, 2009, pp. 94-101). It is often overlooked that *Je me souviens* is a participatory work as blank pages are included for readers' own recollections. The human geography element of

my *Northern Venetians* project is based upon Perec's approach in 'The World' (1999, pp. 77-79). His understanding of the body and reading practice in 'Reading: A Socio-physiological Outline' (Perec, 1999, pp. 174-185) also prompts my investigation of writing technologies and technogenesis (6.5).

Other pertinent texts are those which reference computers: 'Die Maschine' (O'Brien, 2009, pp. 33-93) and *The Art and Craft of Approaching Your Head of Department to Submit a Request for a Raise* (Perec, 2011). An object of personal importance to Perec was his "Four Million" typewriter (actually the ubiquitous Underwood 5) and I investigate typewriters – and computers – in relation to the interface of writing technologies and their users (Case Study 3).

I use these works alongside other theoretical writings. Texts by Frow, de Certeau and Kaprow concerned with memory, spatial writing practice and participation respectively provide the thematic framework to my case studies. Using Kaprow's early writings as a classical model of participation for my *Thaw* project, in Case Study 1 I begin a discussion on participatory artforms. For *Northern Venetians* I adopt a spatial approach to the city and, in Case Study 2, examine this work in the light of de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988). His 'Walking the City' (1988, pp. 91-110) is a major influence on my attempt to write the city. In Case Study 3, I look at *The Recollective* in the light of Frow's 'Toute la memoire du monde: Repetition and Forgetting' (1997, pp. 218-246), focusing on his typology of memory classification.

2.2 Approaches to Practice

For this PhD research I create my first full scale participatory works, in which my participants play a generative role. This collectively generated material enables me to shift my critical focus away from the construction of personal identity towards that of shared social identities. My endotic projects are also sites for exploring

participatory approaches and theoretical writings through practice: testing theories to see whether they can cope with conditions on the ground.

My approach to this research is different from my normal approach (1.4) as I start from a complete text – Perec’s ‘Approaches’ – instead of fragments. I subject this to a deep reading following its various leads, re-tracing my steps often tracking back over well-trodden paths. However, I am not only going into the text, but making links to others as I build upon it, expanding it by adding more texts. More lines branch out and overlap with one another, and following these lines I become more aware of the intersections along these routes.

There are also the conditions on the ground, the developments arising from the sites in which all the participants are making these works. A series of feedback loops are being established as Perec’s writing, the theoretical texts, site-based practice, all come together.

I use these sites to examine participatory art, principally focusing on a different kind of participation in each case study. In *Thaw*, I focus on collaboration with a specific group, i.e. the booksellers from each of the shops. In *Northern Venetians*, my concern is with the collaborations between artists and writers. Finally, with *The Recollective*, the form involves audience participation, i.e. those attending *Reverting To Type* (2015). However, I do not intend to suggest that there is only one kind of participation involved in each of the works under discussion.

My sites-in-endotics are there to allow for the interrogation of the idea of the everyday, to help investigate environments and situations, to help us think through the everyday by questioning it. In all of these projects the participants play a major role in the production of material for the final artwork.

Early critiques of the quotidian excluded the workplace from the everyday. Lefebvre described the workplace as a specialised structured activity, whereas the everyday is “what is left over” (Highmore, 2002b, p. 3). Bookshops attract me because they are workplaces (commercial premises) as well as sites of leisure, an interesting space because the two worlds are brought together. In addition, based on my impromptu research, some people do not regard them as everyday places: supermarkets belong to the everyday, but bookshops apparently do not. Likewise, one of my participants questioned whether second-hand bookshops were common places, simply because there were not many of them left anymore. This brings us to the perception that bookshops are under threat in the modern world, discussed in Case Study 1 (4.4).

I locate my *Northern Venetians* project online because I want to focus on the city not as place, but space. It is an example of de Certeau’s “practiced place” (1988, pp. 91-130), made up of the network of social relations within a given geographical location. The stories of Northern Venice interrogate a spatial metaphor, offering insights into what these spaces mean to the people who constitute them. Exhibiting the work online emphasizes the focus on spatiality as it helps loosen the connections to any particular geographical location (apart from the referent of Venice, whose presence here is mythical rather than physical).

With *The Recollective* I am concerned with the participants and the experience that they bring to this environment. It is also an opportunity to focus attention onto a common object, the personal computer, and the ways people use it. Here, the gallery space provides not only a public arena, but also a controlled environment in which information can be gathered and manipulated as part of a live event.

2.3 The Modified Ethnography

In 'Approaches' Perec appears to suggest that it is time to create a new anthropology, one that investigates our own culture rather than the cultures of others: Bellos (1995, p. 521) comments that this would constitute a reinvention of anthropology. Given Perec's anthropological interests, it seems appropriate for me to use ethnographic methods. Traditional ethnography requires a lengthy period of field observation, in which the ethnographer seeks to immerse themselves in the daily activities of their environment. The researcher adopts a reflexive approach showing an awareness of their own presence within the field, and the effect of that presence on the events. Extensive field notes are taken. Finally, the ethnographer produces a monograph, the written account of the field study. The note taking is the gathering of material to be used in the writing up of the monograph.²⁷

In *Thaw* I adopt a reflexive approach and undertake a field study. However, my research process differs significantly from a traditional ethnographic approach. Firstly due to time constraints my field observation takes place over the six to eight weeks prior to interviewing the booksellers, and is spread over a number of locations. This is considerably shorter than what would normally be expected, but here a familiarity with similar environments acts as a corrective.

The second modification is that I replace the ethnographic monograph with a polyvocal account of the bookshops. Ethnography is "inescapably a textual enterprise" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 239) and the process of writing-up is seen as a defining feature. Through the ethnographic monograph the researcher constructs their account of the social world. However, the monograph also often assumes an omniscient authority:

²⁷ The ethnographer's production of the monograph could be described as a sculptural process, with their notes being the material that they shape into form.

The author/ethnographer has implicitly claimed a position of omniscience and the authority to speak unequivocally of and for the people in question. Whatever the give-and-take of fieldwork itself, the ethnography has imposed a single, dominant and infallible format. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 253)

Therefore, instead of the traditional monograph, *Thaw* offers ethnography in an expanded writing field: a poly-vocal representation, one allowing the participants to give their own accounts. *Thaw* tells stories: it tells of Rabelais' tale, the booksellers' stories, and my re-use of the booksellers' words; it tells stories of bookshops as physical and social spaces; and it shows how these stories interact. *Thaw's* participants are aware of their part within the artwork, and a feedback loop is created where multiple strands interplay with one-another.

The project is an exercise in meta-storytelling. In forwarding this poly-vocal account, I shift the production of meaning away from an external observer towards the fieldwork participants, displaying a multitude of meanings rather than a single voice imposing its interpretation of events.

My final modification follows on from this decision to offer a poly-vocal account. As I am not producing a monograph, I forego extensive note taking. The material for making the sound-pieces comes not from my field observations, but from the audio recordings of the interviews I conduct with the booksellers. The period of field study becomes one of assessing the booksellers' environments and gathering information to bring to the interviews. I opt for brief field notes, almost bullet points. I use these as an *aide memoir* for the interviews, something I can draw upon if there is a lull in the proceedings (a useful reserve for someone who has never interviewed anyone before).

Despite the inclusion of checks and balances within the *Thaw* project, the editing process gives me ample opportunity to significantly shape the meanings of my

participants' words.²⁸ Whilst not entirely unexpected, this does present something of a challenge for remaining projects: could an alternative approach limit the possibilities of post-production impositions of meaning? One possible solution is to remove myself at an earlier stage in the creative process, which can be done by creating a process piece – or generative artwork – in which participants are given a score and left to act upon it as they see fit (5.2). *Northern Venetians* and *The Recollective* are examples of such generative artworks.

2.4 Deep Readings

Hearing represents the primary sensory perception – hearing happens involuntarily. Listening... is a voluntary process that produces culture through training and experience. All cultures develop through modes of listening.

Deep Listening is listening in every possible way to everything possible to hear, regardless of what you are doing. (Oliveros, 2010, p. 73)

How can we approach the everyday, how can we question something that becomes invisible to us due to our over familiarity? I respond to this by turning to Pauline Oliveros' method of "deep listening" (2010, p. 73), an intense listening process which includes paying attention to "the sounds of daily life, of nature, or of one's own thoughts as well as musical sounds" (2010, p. 73). It involves the listener tuning in to their environment. Oliveros cultivated listening as a practice, one closely related to Pécoc's approach towards the quotidian. Furthermore, she argues that if we "listen to so-called 'background noise', we better perceive our relationship to place – all sound provides us with information and forges connections" (Oliveros, 2010, p. 6).

"Question your tea spoons" (1999, p. 210): this assertion sums up Pécoc's approach to the quotidian - take nothing for granted, interrogate everything. Question "bricks, concrete, glass, our table manners, our tools, the way we spend our time,

²⁸ Participants were regularly consulted and given the right to veto any track that they did not want included.

our rhythms”, asking “How? Where? When? Why?” (Perec, 1999, p. 210). This requires looking at the ordinary as if coming across it for the first time. In an interview with Kaye Mortley, Perec says that he tries to act like “a Martian going through a city, going through something he doesn’t know what it is and describes it only by little pieces of what’s going on” (O’Brien, 2009, p. 99). Perec’s approach to the everyday, in its intense observation, is remarkably similar to the attention that Oliveros pays to the sounds that surround her.

My deep reading method involves repeatedly subjecting practical developments *in-situ* - and the written texts related to them - to an intense scrutiny. In doing so, I look at how various elements interact with one another. As this also includes the ‘Approaches’ article, it can also be a strangely circular process as I am using a deep reading process on a text advocating a deep reading process.

2.5 Media Archaeology

When the IBM 1401 was taken out of service in 1971, it wasn't simply thrown away like an old refrigerator, but was given a little farewell ceremony, almost a funeral, when its melodies were played for one last time. This "performance" was documented on tape along with recordings of the sound of the machine in operation. (Jóhannsson, 2006: Data p. 1)

My method of technological regression comes to play a significant critical and creative function in *The Recollective*. This method combines a remediation process with the use of ostranenie.

Given the invisibility of the quotidian, I am faced with the problem of how to draw audience attention to everyday situations. Early on in the *Thaw* project, I decide to use ostranenie, the tactic of “making strange” the artwork before the viewer (Hawkes, 1977, pp. 69-72). As I read Kaprow’s account of one of his experimental pieces (2003, pp. 236-237)

My intention is to read his articles on the Happenings.
However, as he is a good writer, I find myself carrying on
into his later writings.

it occurs to me that using some form of distantiation technique is the simplest solution. My use of such methods develops over the course of this research becoming more analytical in *Northern Venetians* and *The Recollective*.

This use of ostranenie is close to Perec's own practice, as he made use of similar techniques. He was well aware of the difficulties involved in critically engaging with the quotidian (1.6) and in 'Species of Spaces' he is thinking his way through that engagement. For example, in 'The Street' (Perec, 1999, pp. 46-56) he chides himself for "only noting the untoward... the opposite is what you should be doing" (Perec, 1999, p. 53) before suggesting that he:

Carry on
Until the scene becomes improbable
until you have the impression, for the briefest of moments, that you are in a strange town or, better still, until you can no longer understand what is happening, until the whole place becomes strange, and you no longer even know that this is what is called a town, a street, buildings, pavements...
(Perec, 1999, p. 53, ellipsis in original)

This is the 'Martian in a city' approach which he mentions in his interview with Mortley, a straightforward process of defamiliarisation. Whilst Kaprow uses it to influence the person encountered, Perec turns the technique upon himself to create a separation – a distance – between him and environment he is observing.

Whilst working on *Thaw*, I become interested in the remediation process. Bolter and Grusin state that all media are interdependent "continually commenting on, reproducing, and replacing each other" (2000, p. 55). They argue that "the goal of remediation is to refashion or rehabilitate other media" describing the "double logic of remediation... [as the] contradictory imperatives of immediacy and hypermediacy" (Bolter and Grusin, 2000, pp. 55-56). Throughout my endotic

projects, I use remediated forms as part of a critical commentary. Focusing on the element of hypermediacy, I make works which refashion forms in light of the information gathered. I use *Noise* (Smith, 2011) as a means of exploring connections between apparently disparate elements of my research - i.e. the 'background noise' of everyday life and computer noise, both of which are composed of so-called meaningless information. *Noise* is also a concrete poem which borrows from other media – particularly animation and computer language which is its base material. This work is actually about the remediation process itself. New media appropriate elements of existing forms and the computer often progresses partly by referring to other media. All media feed off one another – old off new as much as new off old.

My technological regression uses elements of remediation and ostranenie. In my instruction pieces (1:4) I look at everyday objects and how we use them. I employ a simple transposition by taking everyday technologies and imposing upon them the conventions of use associated with earlier equivalents, e.g. 'How To Listen To Albums' (Smith, 2009, pp. 49-50). These pieces use ostranenie by drawing attention to habitual use of a technology and creating a distance between it and its use. These instruction pieces are technological regression in embryonic form. The transposition of typewriter onto computer in *The Recollective* is intended to bring about a similar disruption.

However, there is a difference with works like *Noise* and the *Thaw* e-book. The latter develops in response to a comment about the desirability of the book as an object, and I use the remediated form to address the perceived lack in the e-book (its non-physicality or 'not-there-ness'). In the process of doing so, the remediated form becomes a critical tool that is used to explore the subject under discussion.

With *The Recollective* the potential of this critical use is combined with elements of ostranenie. The work's computer terminals become critically remediated forms as they are reprogrammed to function as typewriters – with all the restrictions that that entails – intending to make strange the relationship between user (audience member) and technology. However, the computer is also taken through a metaphorical regression, focusing on various stages of technological development. This regression allows me to visualise my way through those changes. My method is an analytical tool which allows me to pick up threads and follow them, in this case back beyond the typewriter itself and on to the people who use these technologies. I use one technology to help me uncover information about another.

“What is there under your wallpaper?” (Perec, 1999, p. 211): Perec's endotics involves excavation, the uncovering of layers. His concept of the infraordinary is not about the obvious, the common, the ordinary; it is about what *has become* the obvious, the common, the ordinary. The infraordinary corresponds to what lies beneath the surface of ordinariness, including the once extraordinary. Perec's endotics is concerned with the retrieval of the once was marvellous. In ‘Approaches’ Perec expresses the desire to:

rediscover something of the astonishment that Jules Verne or his readers may have felt faced with an apparatus capable of reproducing and transporting sounds. For that astonishment existed, along with thousands of others, and it's they which have moulded us. (Perec, 1999, p. 210)

The Recollective is a work of media archaeology and this is reflected in the case study of its construction. However, my account demonstrates that the media archaeological approach within my projects begins with *Noise* and the *Thaw* e-book. In my final case study, I use writings associated with media archaeology to examine our writing technologies and, alongside Frow's work on memory, its implications for how we make sense of our world.

I begin the final section of this chapter with a quotation from Jóhann Jóhannsson's notes concerning his *IBM 1401 A User's Manual* (2006). Aside from the obvious reference to Perec in the title, the subject of this work – Jóhann Gunnarsson's farewell to his computer – echoes that of Perec's *Sonate für ältere Schreibmaschine* (1974) in which he celebrates the retirement of the Underwood Four Million (Bellos, 1995, p. 262).²⁹ In my study of *The Recollective* I am using an object – the regressed computer-cum-typewriter – to analyse human interaction with writing technologies.

²⁹ This piece was part of *Konzertstück für Sprecher und Orchester*, composed by Georges Perec, Phillipe Drogoz and Eugen Helmle, and broadcast on German radio in 1974: See Bellos, 1995, pp. 486-490.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview:

Perec's Endotic Writings

Perec and the Literature of the French Quotidian

Art and Everyday Life

Media Archaeology

Tactical Re-writing: appropriation and constraints

Music

3.1 Georges Perec's Endotic Writings

I have a confused sense that the books I've written are inscribed in, that they get their meaning from, a global image I have formed of literature... that for me lies beyond writing, it's a "why do I write" to which I can reply only by writing, by endlessly deferring that moment when I cease from writing and the image becomes visible, like a puzzle that has been inexorably completed. (Perec, 1999, p. 143)

Many of Perec's important endotic works are collected in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* and *Thoughts and Sorts* (published in English, in 1999 and 2009). The earlier collection contains 'Approaches' and *The Winter Journey*, the latter being a hypotext for *Northern Venetians* (5.8). Both collections provide most of the following material.

Perec had an idiosyncratic approach to writing, seeking to cover as many topics as possible whilst avoiding repetition. In 'Notes on What I'm Looking For' (Perec, 1999, pp. 141-143), he explains his versatility by likening himself to "a peasant cultivating several fields; in one he grows beetroot, in another lucerne, in a third maize"³⁰ (1999, p. 141). 'The Gnocchi of Autumn or An Answer to a Few Questions Concerning Myself'³¹ (Perec, 1999, pp. 119-125) was published a few months before 'Approaches'. Perec's comment that "One day I shall certainly have to start using

³⁰ In the English translation of *Je me souviens*, no.150 reads: "I remember I was astonished to learn that my first name meant 'worker of the soil'" (Perec, 2014, p. 47). For the linguistic history of 'Perec' and 'Szulewicz' (his mother's maiden name) see Bellos, 1995, pp. 3-7.

³¹ Sturrock notes that the title is a pun on "gnoti se auton" or 'know thyself' (Perec, 1999, p.119). This was inscribed on or near the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. Waterfield notes: "This maxim was a watch word for Socrates, who believed that philosophy begins and ends with self-investigation and the removal of character flaws, especially the illusionary impression of knowledge" (Plato, 2009, p. 79).

words to uncover what is real, to uncover my reality” (1999, p. 123) indicates that he was starting to formulate his approach to the everyday.

As part of his increasingly interdisciplinary approach, Perec (1999, pp. 174-185; 2009, pp. 87-102) draws attention to the unacknowledged physical processes underlying the act of reading. He seeks “the actual grasping of the message at an elementary level: at what happens when we read” (1999, p. 175) and suggests an ergological and socio-ecological approach to reading, i.e. its “physiology, muscular movements” and “spatio-temporal environment” (Perec, 2009, p. 88). His first definitive statement – “Reading is done with the eyes” (Perec 2009, p. 89) – is qualified with a footnote³² pointing out that the blind read with their fingers and some people do not read but are read to. Both knowledgeable and humorous,³³ this article highlights the tendency within literary studies to disregard the body of the reader, and is closely related to a point made by Littau:

When literary historians therefore approach the ‘thousands of possible relations’ a reader has to a text they rarely take into account... materiality. This is because for literary theorists both the text and the reader are abstractions. For cultural historians, by contrast, texts are embedded in objects and reading is a concrete bodily act. By bringing together these distinct lines of enquiry... it is possible to see how material production impinges on meaning production. (2006, p. 2)

Works such as ‘Two Hundred and Forty-three Postcards in Real Colour’ (Perec, 1999, pp. 222-239) and ‘81 Easy-Cook Recipes for Beginners’ (Perec, 2009, pp. 69-85) apparently depict real examples of everyday artefacts. However, these are fictitious constraint based constructions.

Perec employed a ‘willed objectivity’ (Sturrock, 1999, p. xiv) in his attempts to exhaust a given subject or place. In the most well-known of these, *An Attempt At*

³² In ‘The Page’ (1999, p. 11), in a footnote, Perec states: “I am very fond of footnotes at the bottom of the page, even if I don’t have anything in particular to clarify there” (Perec, 1999, p. 11). Perec’s footnotes are seldom irrelevant.

³³ For example: “Not only the blind have trouble reading. The one armed also have problems: they cannot turn the pages” (Perec, 2009, p. 93).

Exhausting A Place In Paris (2010), he spent a weekend at the Place Saint-Sulpice attempting to record “what happens when nothing happens” (Perec, 2010, p. ix). One of the most unusual *tentatives* is his ‘Attempt at an Inventory of the Liquids and Solid Food-stuffs Ingurgitated by Me in the Course of the Year Nineteen Hundred and Seventy-Four’ (Perec, 1999, pp. 244-247).

In 2007 I attended a talk by Harry Mathews, at WordPower Books in Edinburgh. Afterwards, he spoke about the general sense of astonishment caused by this piece. He also said that he had himself tried it out, and it was soon evident that Perec must have given up on this project fairly quickly, possibly after a couple of months or so. Stuart Kelly notes “Perec did not complete several other projects: his inventory of everything he ate in a year, *Beds I Have Slept In*, the script of an adventurous movie involving 5,000 Kirghiz horsemen” (2010: p. 373). Perec’s *tentatives* were simply attempts to do something: sometimes successful, sometimes not. Furthermore, many seem futile from the beginning, almost as if failure is inbuilt.

Perec is concerned not so much with spaces in themselves, but with how people use them. In the foreword to ‘Species of Spaces’ (Perec, 1999, pp. 1-95) he begins to define these spaces as:

Not so much those infinite spaces... but spaces much closer at hand, in principle anyway... We live in space, in these spaces, these towns, this countryside, these corridors, these parks. (1999, p. 5)

There are “a whole lot of small bits of space” (Perec, 1999, pp. 6) which are historically contingent: over time spaces have “multiplied, been broken up and have diversified” (Perec, 1999, p. 6). Each chapter is themed around a particular space: starting with ‘The Page’, including spaces such as ‘The Bed’, ‘The Apartment’ and ‘The Street’,³⁴ before ending with ‘Europe’, ‘The World’ and ‘Space’.

³⁴ A subject much favoured by writers of the everyday. This chapter also contains an outline of Perec’s unfinished *Lieux* project (1999, pp. 55-56).

With 'The Page', he takes us straight into writing as a spatial practice, the process of putting words on to paper:

I write...

I write: I write...

I write: 'I write...'

I write that I write...

etc.

I write: I trace words on a page. (Perec, 1999, p. 9)

Later, in a more conventional format, he comments again on writing as both trace and tracing (Perec, 1999). In the final chapter, he describes writing as a remnant of a life:

To write: to try meticulously to retain something, to cause something to survive; to wrest a few precise scraps from the void as it grows, to leave somewhere a furrow, a trace, a mark or a few signs.(Perec, 1999, p. 92)

'Species of Spaces' contains many different kinds of writing: the typewriter poetry of 'The Page'; the poetic inventories of 'The Apartment'; the distantiation exercises of 'The Street'; and the geographical and autobiographical³⁵ elements that are present throughout. Perec viewed his writing as a direct outcome of these projects. What I take from Perec's endotic writings is not just what they have to tell us about the everyday, but also this concern for the process of writing itself.

3.2 Perec and the French Quotidian Writers

The Review of Contemporary Fiction produced an issue on Perec in spring 2009 including articles such as: the first English translation of 'The Machine', Perec's famous play for German radio (O'Brien, 2009, pp. 33-93); Adair's examination of his endotic approach (2009, pp. 176-188); Leak's article on Perec's appropriation of literary texts, and the influence of Barthes upon his writing (O'Brien, 2009, pp. 124-147); Magné's short analysis of Perec's use of constraints (O'Brien, 2009, pp. 193-

³⁵ Perec's writing on the process of writing is often bound to the autobiographical, e.g. 'I Was Born' (Perec, 1999, pp. 99-102).

209). A wide ranging account of Perec's use of constraints in relation to aleatory methods is given by James in her *Constraining Chance: Georges Perec and the Oulipo* (2009).

Michael Sheringham (2006) gives a comprehensive account of the main writers of the French Quotidian - Lefebvre, Barthes, Perec and de Certeau - stressing "the coherence of [their] intellectual tradition" (2006, p. 6). He examines them in the light of precursors such as Baudelaire, the dadas, Benjamin and the Surrealists, and in relation to each other. Sheringham argues that Perec was one of the central figures of the French Quotidian, and shows how his ideas have been taken up in subsequent writing on everyday life, e.g. Annie Ernaux's *Exteriors* (1996) and Francois Maspero's *Roissy Express* (1994).

In *Exteriors*, Ernaux portrays the quotidian through a series of chance encounters. She has described her book as "neither reportage nor a study of urban sociology, but an attempt to convey the reality of an epoch... through a series of snapshots reflecting the daily routine of a community" (Ernaux, 1996, p. 7). I found Ernaux's work to be an honest attempt to depict everyday life as she found it. *Roissy Express* is an ethnographic work, clearly influenced by Perec. In it, Maspero identifies his object of study – those former Parisians now displaced and living in the suburbs - and sets out the rules and conditions of his project, e.g. he and the photographer Anaik Frantz will stay in each of 38 locations along the route of the RER train line. He follows his self-imposed constraints until they reach the southern suburbs where he lives when his entries become shorter and his observational rigour diminishes as districts are skipped over or omitted. By doing so, Maspero separates himself, his friends and colleagues from those former Parisians that he identified with at the start of his project.

Ben Highmore (2002a) examines approaches to the study of everyday life in cultural theory. Alongside Lefebvre and de Certeau, Highmore also discusses Georges Simmel (2002a, pp. 33-44), the Surrealists and dissident surrealism (2002a, pp. 45-59), Walter Benjamin and *The Arcades Project*³⁶ (2002a, pp. 60-74) and the British Mass Observation project (2002a, pp. 75-112). Rather than framing these as a unitary tradition, he argues that these approaches are better seen as “a heterogeneous mix of divergent interests and different positions” (Highmore, 2002a, pp. 18). Such an analysis enlivens the idea of the everyday and, therefore, “makes it impossible to think of ‘modernity’ as a straightforward narrative” (Highmore, 2002a, p. 174).

3.3 Art and Everyday Life

Participation was one of the methods used by modern artists to address a perceived separation between art and everyday life. I use the term *the avant-garde project* to refer to artists’ attempts to bring together these two areas of life.

Peter Bürger (Lewer, 2006) offers a canonical critique of modern art as a bourgeois art which has failed to overcome this divide. He argues that art had become separated from social praxis and that this historical avant-garde, in attempting to resolve this issue, sought to negate art’s autonomy (Lewer, 2006). Bürger depicts this attempt as a glorious failure, and dismisses all subsequent attempts as, not only futile, but “an affirmation of autonomous art” (Foster, 1996, p. 11) because they transform the avant-garde into an art institution. In response, Hal Foster (1996, pp. 15-16) claims that Bürger takes the avant-garde’s pronouncements too literally and misses its crucial mimetic, utopian, performative, and rhetorical dimensions. Furthermore for “the most acute avant-garde artists... the aim is

³⁶ Benjamin’s *The Arcades Project* (2002) is not only valued for its contribution to the field of quotidian studies, but is also seen as an important precursor of media archaeology.

neither an abstract negation of art nor a romantic reconciliation with life but a perpetual testing of the conventions of both” (Foster, 1996, p. 16). Finally, Foster explains the recurrence of the avant-garde by comparing it to the unsuccessful repression of traumatic memories: “[it] develops in deferred action. Once repressed in part, the avant-garde did return, and it continues to return, but always from the future: such is its paradoxical temporality” (1996, p. 29).

Whilst useful, Foster’s account focuses on historical centres of art production and omits much, including developments within the peripheries of the art world.

Marjorie Perloff discusses such development in her writings on the *arrière garde* (2012, pp. 53-70), an artistic rear guard whose mission is to secure and consolidate, “to save that which is threatened” (2012, p. 53).

Participatory artforms - such as Kaprow’s work³⁷ - can be seen as an expression of this avant-garde project. Bishop (2006, pp. 10-17) provides a succinct account of the circumstances surrounding their development since the mid-20th century, stressing their social dimension and distinguishing them from merely interactive artforms. Bishop (2006, p. 10) argues that participatory works increasingly appropriated “*social forms as a way to bring art closer to everyday life*” (italics in original), anticipating many of the artistic developments of the 1990s.³⁸ However, “it was not until the eve of the sixties that a coherent and well theorized body of work emerges: Situationism in France, Happenings in the United States and Neo-Concretism in Brazil” (Bishop, 2006, pp. 15). Subsequent developments can be characterised as either coming from an “authored tradition” of provocations or a “de-authored lineage of... collective creativity” (Bishop, 2006, pp. 11). The

³⁷ Kaprow’s writings on participatory artforms are discussed in my first case study (4.9).

³⁸ Bishop notes the proliferation of such developments in participatory practices since the 1990s, echoing the expansion of social and artistic critiques on the everyday that took place in the same period.

motivation for participatory work tends to be a concern for “activation: authorship: community” (Bishop, 2006, p. 12).

Kwon (2004) discusses participatory works in her examination of site-specific art, including Sculpture Chicago’s *Culture in Action* (1993), a high-profile example of the dialogic works which have become increasingly common since the 1990s. New genre public artists, such as Suzanne Lacy, see the ownership of cultural representation enacted in such projects as “the basis for integration of art and everyday life and a powerful force toward social and political change” (Kwon, 2004, p. 107).

Culture in Action was a new genre public art project which focused on “the active participation of residents in diverse communities in the creation of artworks” and claimed to test “the territory of public interaction and participation” (Kwon, 2004, p. 100). Lacy, a participating artist, stated it demonstrated that “what exists in the space between public and art is an unknown relationship between artist and audience, a relationship that may itself be the artwork” (Kwon, 2004, p. 105).

Whilst Sculpture Chicago claimed these works arose out of an organic and dialogic process, it has emerged most of the conceptual frameworks were decided prior to community involvement:

[T]he overall structure, procedure, and goals of the projects, including their conceptualization, most often precede the engagement of any such community. (Kwon, 2004, p. 123)

Community groups were matched to the artists’ proposals, but for Grennan & Sperandio’s *We Got It!* and Ericson & Ziegler’s *Eminent Domain* the collaborative participation was reduced to the point where “the community partners... came to fill the pre-delineated blank spots within that framework” (Kwon, 2004, p. 123). According to Kwon, some participants have since accused Sculpture Chicago of exploitation. This critique raises the question of what constitutes active

participation: much of *Culture in Action* reduced participation to the provision of labour and the raw material upon which the artist worked.

In many projects, artists are increasingly being assigned, or assuming, a significant role in defining various social groups, particularly those seen as ‘problem’ or ‘disadvantaged’ communities. *Culture in Action* conferred the status of ‘enabler’ upon its artists: they were supposed to help the communities define themselves, which assumed that these communities were in need of definition, and that the residents were incapable of doing this for themselves. Furthermore, an essentialising reductionism was involved in this construction of the community, imposing on it a mythical unity (Kwon, 2004, p. 151). Marion Young argues that this problematic ideal community “privileges unity over difference, immediacy over mediation, sympathy over recognition of limits of one’s understanding of others from their point of view” (Kwon, 2004: p. 149).

In this fashion, *Culture in Action* set up a situation where the ownership of cultural representation was wrested away from participating communities and appropriated by outsiders in their attempt to integrate art and everyday life: the enabler status given to/claimed by the artists actually set them apart from their participating groups.

3.4 Media Archaeologies

Media archaeology rummages textual, visual, and auditory archives as well as collections of artefacts, emphasizing both the discursive and the material manifestation of culture. Its explorations move fluidly between disciplines, although it does not have a permanent home within any of them. Such “nomadicism”... [allows] it to roam across the landscape of the humanities and social sciences and occasionally leap into the arts. Media archaeology may – and perhaps it should – develop into a “travelling discipline”, to refer to an idea proposed by Mieke Bal. (Huhtamo and Parikka, 2011, p. 3)

Parikka (2012) offers a cartography of this travelling discipline by identifying the multiple origins of media archaeology, including Michel Foucault’s *Archaeology of*

Knowledge (2002), and the media theory of Friedrich Kittler. He also highlights the investigation of imaginary technologies (Parikka, 2012, pp. 41-62), including works on, or using, obsolete media. Media archaeology also incorporates ideas about imaginary media, interfacing media (intermediality) and noise and software systems (Huhtamo and Parikka, 2011).

In *Thaw* and *The Recollective I* I draw upon Littau's *Theories of Reading*. Written from a socio-physiological perspective, it significantly influences the development of my own media archaeological approach.

Littau offers a materialist account of reading, in which her central concern is the history of affect, and "its demise as a once valuable cultural and aesthetic category" (2006, p. 9). She identifies a "mentalist bias" (Littau, 2006, p. 10) in contemporary theory, and a new criticism "concerned [not] with what a text does to a reader, but what a text means, how it signifies" (Littau, 2006, p. 9). Littau is interested in whether readers are affected "sensually before we can respond intellectually" (2006, p. 6).

She also compares books and other media (e.g. film and computers) examining "the ways in which newer media differ from, but also remediate, [the] very conditions for consumption and reception" (Littau, 2006, p. 6). Littau also asks whether humans are in control of technology, citing Kittler's comments on typewriters' physical effects on writing and composition (2006, p. 6).

She is concerned with how readers have been perceived. Her writing on the pathology of reading is very informative: whilst Barthes argues that writing is that "oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost" (1977, p. 142), for Littau, severe bibliomania results in a similar loss in "the negation of the autonomy of the subject and, with it, the humanist ideal of rational

agency” (2006, p. 5). Too much reading is often seen as a bad thing: her historical accounts of moral panics – centred on both dangerous levels of consumption, and what was being consumed – show these to be the forerunners of similar attacks on later, emergent media.

I draw upon Kittler’s *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1999) throughout my third case study. Building upon his *Discourse Networks, 1800/1900* (1990), Kittler’s media analysis sees each titular technology corresponding, respectively, to Lacan’s registers of the real, the imaginary and the symbolic. Winthrop-Young and Wutz³⁹ (1999, p. xxiv) note that “the discourse network of 1800 depended upon writing as the sole, linear channel for processing and storing information”. Kittler examines the processes that ended this dominance:

Two of Edison’s developments - the phonograph and the kinoscope – broke the monopoly of writing, started a non-literary (but equally serial) data processing, established an industry of human engineering, and placed literature in the ecological niche which (and not by chance) Remington’s contemporaneous typewriter had conquered. (Kittler, 1999, p. xxv)

The result of these new technologies, Kittler argues, is that “the fabrication of so-called Man became possible. His essence escapes into apparatuses” (1999, p. 16).

In *Deep Time of the Media* (2008) Siegfried Zielinski’s offers a cyclical account in which past media developments often lie hidden, before being re-discovered at a later date. Such development occurs in bursts and often in different locations.⁴⁰ Zielinski’s approach is an unorthodox alternative to the “hegemonic linearity that demands that we should see time and history as straight lines that work towards improvement and something better” (Parikka, 2012, p. 12).

³⁹ In the translators’ introduction.

⁴⁰ Zielinski’s ‘variantology’/deep time reading (2008, p. 7) is based upon the palaeontology of Stephen Gould, which is also an influence upon Franco Morretti’s theory of distant reading.

Finally there is the work of N. Katherine Hayles. Writing of the development of electronic literature, she argues:

Much as the novel both gave voice to and helped create the liberal humanist subject in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, so contemporary electronic literature is both reflecting and enacting a new kind of subjectivity characterized by distributed cognition, networked agency that includes human and non human actors, and fluid boundaries dispersed over actual and virtual locations. (Hayles, 2008, p. 37)

Like Kittler, she analyses human-machine interactions. In *How We Became Posthuman* (Hayles, 1999) she highlights the erasure of embodiment within cybernetics, describing “how information lost its body, how the cyborg was created as a cultural icon and technological artefact, and how we became posthumans” (Hayles, 1999, p. 24). She also shows how conceptualisations of the posthuman are circulated through - and often contested in - literary fiction. Hayles contests the conceptualisation of information as an entity distinct from materiality and argues for an embodied virtuality (1999), developing the concept of technogenesis to explain how humanity evolved through an embodied interaction with the technologies in our environments (2012).

3.5 Tactical Re-writing: Appropriation and Constraints

I do not count my borrowings: I weigh them; if I had wanted them valued for their number I would have burdened myself with twice as many. (Montaigne, 2009, p. 22)

The concept of *anticipatory plagiarism* has an ontological status within the OuliPo, as it is used to describe the group’s identification of its predecessors:

The early years in particular were devoted mostly to articulating a lineage in which the group’s exploration could be inscribed, and to finding... “anticipatory plagiarists” – authors operating in an oulipian mode before there was such a thing as the Oulipo. (Levin Becker, 2012, p. 30)

This concept is a way of recognising that others have passed by before.

My concern here is with writing schemes. Using de Certeau's terminology (5.7), perhaps we should consider such schemes not as strategies, but as forms of tactical writing. To begin, I offer four examples from my current research practice:

001) In *Genome K Genomics: A short sequence from the genetic structure of "Three Men In A Boat"* (Reverting To Text, 2015)⁴¹ I take an extract from Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men In A Boat* (1994),⁴² rewriting it as a sequence composed only of the letters G, A, T and C (representing guanine, adenine, thymine and cytosine, the nucleobases of DNA).

010) In *Lost In Translation (thetextisthetext, 2011)* I take the following joke:

Q. What comes between fear and sex?

A. Funf!

And re-write it, using Google translate, so it becomes:

WAS KOMMT ZWISCHEN FURCHT UND GESCHLECHT? FIVE!

011) In *12 Haikuisations*⁴³ (*I Am Not A Poet, 2011*) I use this Oulipian form to produce short poetic works by taking the first and last line of a short story or novel, and joining them together:

Memory

Sometimes I forget why I came here, when it's still and cool like this. The curious thing is, I no longer care.⁴⁴

100) From *Northern Venetians*, Tom Jenks' 'I came to Northern Venice'⁴⁵ is composed of the results of internet searches. He explains:

⁴¹ This is a codework, a category of computer art which is discussed in Case Study 3 (6.4.4).

⁴² First published: 1889.

⁴³ All the haikuisations were lifted from books in the *Thaw* bookshops. It seemed appropriate to bleed them together.

⁴⁴ Haikuisation taken from 'Sweet memory will die' in A.L Kennedy's *Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains* (1993, pp. 52-61). Exhibited in *I Am Not A Poet* (2011).

My own personal history with Manchester is that I moved here in 2001, left in 2004 and came back in 2005. I've used found text to create three paragraphs around this theme. (Jenks, 2013)

Jenks story is a good example of the appropriation of online materials.

The use of appropriation is not new. Examples include: Cubist collage; the dada poems of Tristan Tzara; Max Ernst's collage novels; Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*; John Cage's *Writing through The Cantos*; William S. Burroughs' *Nova Trilogy*; The Situationists' detournements; Tom Phillips' *A Humument*; and the various re-writing⁴⁶ schemes of the OuLiPo.

In Sally Alatalo's *Unforseen Alliances* (2001) the titles of 1,878 romance novels are used to write poems:

A Treasure Worth Seeking

Lost love found

A stolen heart

A treasure worth seeking

Like no other

Surrender

Captive passions

Love Rules

Forever and beyond

In Claude Closky's *The First Thousand Numbers Classified in Alphabetical Order* (1989) the first thousand numbers are classified in alphabetical order:

Eight, eight hundred, eight hundred and eight, eight hundred and eighteen, eight hundred and eighty, eight hundred and eighty-eight, eight hundred

⁴⁵ In *Northern Venetians*, this text is displayed nine lines down on the right-hand side of the main webpage (Smith, 2013).

⁴⁶ Here, I am referring to those schemes which re-write a text, e.g. an N+7, which replaces each noun with the seventh noun after it from a given dictionary. I am not referring to writing schemes in which a constraint-based text is produced from scratch, e.g. the prisoners restriction, a form of lipogram which excludes letters which extend above or below the line (such as p or d).

and eighty-five, eight hundred and eighty-four, eight hundred and eighty-nine, eight hundred and eighty-one [and so on]. (Dworkin and Goldsmith, 2011, pp. 148)

Caroline Bergval's *VIA (48 Dante Variations)* (Poetry Foundation, 2015) lists various opening lines of, translations of, Dante's *Inferno*:

Along the journey of our life halfway / I found myself again in a dark wood...

At the midpoint in the journey of our life/ I found myself astray in a dark wood...

HALF over the wayfaring of our life/ Since missed the right way, through a night-dark-wood...

Halfway along the road we have to go/I found myself obscured in a great forest,...

Halfway along the journey of our life/I woke in wonder in a sunless wood. (Bergval, 2005)

In *thetextisthetext* exhibition many of the works use such methods, including: nick-e melville's Tipp-ex pieces (altered official letters and bills); Dorothy Alexander's ecopoetics (deconstructed newspaper article); and Alexander and Sargeant's *Patriothall Stanzas* (post-it-notes found in artists' studios in the building).

Marjorie Perloff, discussing contemporary writer's use of such methods, argues that:

Appropriation, citation, copying, reproduction – these have been central to the visual arts for decades: one thinks of Duchamp, whose entire oeuvre consists of “copies” and found materials; of Christian Boltanski, whose “artworks” treated photographs of his actual childhood classmates; or of the carefully staged auto-images of Cindy Sherman. (2012, p. 23)

This is reminiscent of de Certeau's account of productive consumption (5.7) with its “poaching in countless ways on the property of others” (de Certeau, 1988, p. xii).

Referring to OuLiPo works, Adelaide M. Russo argues that “the very way in which these texts are constituted, often using another text as a matrix or point of

departure for the Oulipian exercise, reflects an economy based on production through recycling” (Perloff, 2012, p. 84).

Likewise, the OuLiPo’s constraints-based approach is certainly analogous to de Certeau’s description of tactical manoeuvres within a rented space (perhaps it provides the model for the latter). However, “a constraint is a self chosen rule” (Perloff, 2012, p. 80), it is not externally imposed. Indeed, constraints are already imposed by pre-existing grammatical rules and structures: as Perloff notes, “it is the [Oulipian] constraint... that forces the poet to give up an illusory artistic freedom in favour of what Roubaud calls ‘the freedom of the difficulty mastered’ ” (Perloff, 2012, p. 81).⁴⁷ Finally, in outlining a “semiotics of tactics” de Certeau compares tactical behaviour to the figures and turns of rhetoric:

Whereas grammar watches over the propriety of terms, rhetorical alterations... point to the use of language by speakers in particular situations of ritual or actual linguistic combat. They are the indexes of consumption and the interplay of forces. (1988, p. 39)

In doing so he notes Freud’s use of rhetoric in the analysis of:

the forms taken by the return of the repressed within the field of an order: verbal economy and condensation, double meanings and misinterpretations, displacements and alliterations, multiple uses of the same material, etc. (de Certeau, 1988, p. 39)

This list of rhetorical devices reads like an excerpt from a user’s manual for the avant-garde (both historic and neo). It brings to mind Foster’s comparison of the recurrence of the avant-garde to the deferred action, brought about by an unsuccessful repression of traumatic memories (Foster, 1996, p. 29).

3.6. Music

Given that I am new to the making of sound installations, I decide that the best preparation for *Thaw* would be to read up on the subject whilst listening to

⁴⁷ Here, Perloff quotes from the introduction to *The Oulipo Compendium* (Brotchie and Mathews, 2005, p. 47).

numerous examples of sound works and art music: research by osmosis. It is probably the most enjoyable form of research I embark on, and the sounds play on in the background long after the books are laid aside. This section lists some of those works and explains their relevance to my projects.

Both *Northern Venetians* and *The Recollective* result from the use of generative processes, which I first become aware of in the late 1970s through listening to Brian Eno's *Discreet Music* (1975a). He opens his sleeve notes with:

Since I have always preferred making plans to executing them, I have gravitated towards situations and systems that, once set into operation, could create music with little or no intervention on my part.

That is to say, I tend towards the role of the planner and programmer, and then become an audience to the results. (Eno, 1975b)

My background playlist has more examples of such generative works. Amongst them is Steve Reich's *It's Gonna Rain* (1995),⁴⁸ the tape work from which he developed his phasing method, which I refer to in 'I Sat In Corners' (Smith, 2012a, 3.10). Bartholomäus Traubeck's *Years* (2011) is "a record player that plays slices of wood" (2011). The rings of a tree are analysed and mapped to a scale and the resulting data "serves as basis for a generative process that outputs piano music" (Traubeck, 2011). There is also *I Am Sitting In A Room* (Lucier, 1990)⁴⁹ in which "Lucier has noted the piece performed in different rooms produces different sounds: 'every room has it's (sic) own melody, hiding there until it is made audible'" (Licht 2007, p. 258). Lucier's work demonstrates the environmental effects upon music, and other works also exploit these, e.g. *Deep Listening* (Oliveros, Dempster and Panaiolis, 1989) was recorded in the Fort Worden Cistern, an underground reservoir with a natural reverberation period of 45 seconds.

⁴⁸ Recorded: 1965.

⁴⁹ First performed in 1969.

The music I listen to ranges from early musique concrète works by Pierre Schaeffer (2009),⁵⁰ through to contemporary forms such as glitch. The latter is electronic music which incorporates found material in the form of scratches, skips, and clicks using these glitches as percussion. As such, it is a form of appropriation (3.6). My playlist also includes a number of proto-glitch works: Oliveros' *A Little Noise in the System* (2003),⁵¹ a synthesizer and tape piece; Bill Nelson's *Sounding The Ritual Echo* (1989)⁵² is made of individual pieces produced on defective effects equipment (each machine having its own particular glitch); and, Christian Marclay's *His Master's Voice* (2005)⁵³ which is a sound collage produced on turntables playing mutilated vinyl records. Referring to his *Recycled Records* (1980-86), Marclay "likens the recycling of the records... to the 1980s trend of appropriation art" (Licht, 2007, p. 280).

My listening also includes John Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano* (1999),⁵⁴ where the instrument is inserted with screws and bolts to produce a more percussive sound. *4'33"* (2011),⁵⁵ Cage's so-called 'silent piece',⁵⁶ is also relevant for numerous reasons: it is a participatory work as the audience which provides most of the musical material (the ambient noise); it provides my model for *Rauschen* (Smith, 2015),⁵⁷ both in method and duration; and, in addressing ambient noise, Cage's work is a precursor of both Oliveros' deep listening (2.4) and Perec's focus on the infraordinary.

⁵⁰ Recorded: 1948.

⁵¹ Recorded: 1967.

⁵² First released: 1981.

⁵³ Recorded: 1982.

⁵⁴ Composed: 1946-48.

⁵⁵ My preferred version is the one on *The Roots of Drone* (2011).

⁵⁶ Cage was by no means the first person to write a silent piece. Amongst earlier composers to have done so is Alphonse Allais who published his *Funeral March for the Obsequies of a Great Deaf Man* in 1897. Allais is recognised by the OuLiPo as an anticipatory plagiarist (Brotchie and Mathews, 2005, p. 47).

⁵⁷ This electronic work - which takes the form of a QR code - was initially composed in 2012, but not exhibited until this version was included in *Reverting To Type* (2015).

Frank Bretschneider's *Kippschwingungen* (2012) is a work for subharchord,⁵⁸ an electronic instrument which was developed at the RFZ⁵⁹ in East Germany in the 1960s. This work can be seen as part of a wider exploration of obsolete or dead technologies⁶⁰ which is occurring amongst artists of a media archaeological bent:

Art of/from obsolescence: pieces and practice that use obsolescent materials and solutions to engage with emerging media culture – or just investigate the potentials in reusing and hacking electronic media. (Parikka, 2012, p. 139)

For me, exploring the issue of technological obsolescence is a factor in making the *Thaw* e-book, which in turn informs the development of *The Recollective*.

Finally, there are two works of particular relevance, both of them process pieces: Oliveros' *The Tuning Meditation* (2004) and Lucier's *I am sitting in a room* (1990).

Oliveros instructs the audience to sing long tones only (each one long breath). The first tone is their own contribution. The second is to be tuned to someone else's tone. Thereafter, they alternate between both options. The result is a sort of floating drone. *The Tuning Meditation* is not about hearing, but actually listening to the environment, actively paying attention to what is happening around and acting on it. It is a clear demonstration of what she later theorised as deep listening, and alerted me to the potential of that method (Oliveros, 2010).

Lucier's *I am sitting in a room* is an excellent illustration of technogenesis: it is both product and demonstration of the interaction between Lucier, the technology that he uses, and the environment in which both are situated. The piece simply consists of the execution of his score, which reads:

⁵⁸ A subharmonic sound generator (Anon, 2016).

⁵⁹ Research Centre of Radio and Television of Deutsche Post (East German Postal Service).

⁶⁰ Influential upon this tendency within media archaeology is the work of Bruce Sterling. In the *Dead Media Manifesto* (1995a), he calls for a "paleontological perspective... [in the] midst of the digital revolution". His *Dead Media Project* (Sterling, 1995b) is a participatory data base work which sets out to record "media that have died on the barbed wire of technological advance, media that didn't make it, martyred media, dead media".

I am sitting in a room different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice and I am going to play it back into the room again and again until the resonant frequencies of the room reinforce themselves so that any semblance of my speech, with perhaps the exception of rhythm, is destroyed. What you will hear, then, are the natural frequencies of the room articulated by speech. I regard this activity not so much as a demonstration of a physical fact, but, more as a way to smooth out any irregularities my speech might have. (Collins, 1990)

The score implicitly refers to Lucier's stutter, and so the work is a strong personal statement. As the piece develops: "only the rhythm of the words remains recognizable as the driving force behind a pattern of ringing tones" (Collins, 1990). Lucier's process does not erase the body but enhances it, for it is the 'rh-rh-rhythm' of his voice interplaying with machine and environment which produces, and comes through in, the music.

CHAPTER 4: THAW (CASE STUDY 1)

Overview:

An Approach of Sorts: *Thaw* as Site-in-Endotics

Anthropology and the Other

The Booksellers

Commonplaces: The Threat to Books and Bookshops

Thaw – An Outline

Notes on the Sound-Pieces: timeframe and initial pieces; narrative lines; the artist as ethnographer; and concrete tracks

Remediated Forms: *Noise* and the *Thaw* e-book

The Installations

Participation

4.1 An approach of sorts: Thaw as site-in-endotics

When they had all melted together we heard: Hin, hin, hin, hin, his, tick, tock, crack, brededin, brededac, frr, frrr, frrrr, bou, bou, bou, bou, bou, bou, bou, bou, tracc, tracc, trr, trrr, trrrrr, trrrrrr, on, on, on, on, on, ououououon, Gog, Magog and goodness knows what other barbarous sounds. (Rabelais, 1955, p. 569)

I base *Thaw* upon extracts from Rabelais' (1955, pp. 566-570) *Garagantua and Pantagruel*. Having strayed into Arctic waters, Pantagruel and his crew start to hear "snatches of sound... voices on the air" (1955, p. 567). The crew come to believe that these are the thawing remnants of old battles, the sounds having been frozen in the Arctic winter. This project is spread over four Edinburgh bookshops, with each installation specific to a particular bookshop.

Thaw is an experimental space. As I start work on the project I am gathering my thoughts on what constitutes an endotic research process, trying to construct a generalised endotics from an idea, or approach, which was very personal to Perec.

Much later, I realise that this is probably the reason why the concept of the infraordinary has been readily adopted by his followers, but the corresponding endotic method remains underdeveloped.

Constructing my version of endotics, I begin with Perec's declaration that its focus should be on ourselves, that it "will speak of what is, will look in ourselves for what for so long we have been pillaging from others" (1999, p. 210).

I am trying to clarify what differentiates endotics from other approaches to the everyday. In doing so, I turn to artists, such as Tom Phillips and Allan Kaprow, whose work has an affinity with Perec's. In particular, Kaprow's search for a life-like art shares many similarities with Perec's approach, and I decide to use his writings as a model to guide me in my construction of participatory works (4.9). I also find the comparison between Ernaux's *Exteriors* and Maspero's *Roissy Express* (3.2) to be useful. The former's snapshots of Parisian suburbs manages to be both detached and empathic, whilst the latter's account displays a failure of nerve when he reaches the suburbs with which he is most familiar. I categorise Maspero's work as an anthropology of the near for it has the air of the other observed, whereas Ernaux's fragments of life show a commonality with, a shared understanding of, those depicted. Ernaux later wrote that although she "sought to express reality as though through the eyes of a photographer" she realised "I have put a lot of myself into these texts" (1996, pp. 7-8) and summing up her collection she states:

It is other people – anonymous figures glimpsed in the subway or in waiting rooms – who revive our memory and reveal our true selves through the interest, the anger or the shame that they send *rippling* through us. (Ernaux, 1996, p. 8, italics in original)

Formulating my endotics, I begin to have doubts about the use of ethnographic methods. First, there are the power relations of the ethnographic monograph (2.3), and my extension of the writing field through *Thaw's* polyvocal account of the bookshops is an attempt to address this issue. However, I am more concerned about the theoretical baggage which I may bring over in borrowing methods from another field of study, and I discuss this in the following section.

4.2 Anthropology and the Other

The adoption of ethnographic methods outwith anthropology is not new, e.g. their use within sociology is relatively common, and so their use in other disciplines might be considered unproblematic. However, their underlying assumptions, particularly the focus upon alterity, are problematic when employed to produce a body of endotic studies.

In recent years artists have borrowed from anthropology, making increasing use of ethnographic methods, a situation Hal Foster has described as the “ethnographic turn” (Foster, 1996, p. 181). He examines this interaction between artists and anthropology, noting precedents in the dissident surrealism of Bataille and Leiris, and the *négritude* movement (Foster, 1996, p. 175). Furthermore, Foster identifies “the artist as ethnographer” (1996, p. 172) as a new paradigm within contemporary art, one in which ethnography is seen as the means to resolve problematic issues within contemporary art practice: among these apparent solutions are access to a radical alterity – and the transformative power associated with it (1996, p. 173).

However, Foster argues that the ethnographer paradigm not only “fails to reflect on its realist assumption” (1996, p. 174) but is often “compounded by a primitivist fantasy” (1996, p. 175). It can also result in the “idealisation of otherness... [which] may collapse not only different differences... but also different positions within each difference” (Foster, 1996, p. 179). Whilst acknowledging that “the application of new and old ethnographic method has illuminated much” (1996, p. 183), Foster urges caution in its use, citing the ethnographic project at the Unité d’Habitation in which members of the largely immigrant community had their personal artefacts “turned into anthropological exhibits” (Foster, 1996, p. 196). The *Project Unité* artists failed to “question the ethnographic authority, indeed the sociological condescension, involved in the facilitated self-representation” (Foster, 1996, p.

196). Foster sees this project as “typical of the quasi-anthropological scenario” (1996, p. 196) and argues:

Few principles of the ethnographic participant-observer are observed, let alone critiqued, and only limited engagement of the community is effected. Almost naturally the project strays from collaboration to self-fashioning, from a decentering of the artist as cultural authority to a remaking of the other in neo-primitivist guise. (Foster, 1996, pp. 196-197)

This is reminiscent of the accusations Kwon makes against Sculpture Chicago’s *Culture in Action* project.⁶¹

In ‘Approaches’, Perceq states that “perhaps [what is needed] is finally to found our own anthropology” (1999, p. 210), and there have been numerous attempts to create ‘homeland’ anthropologies, ones in which researchers focus not on a foreign people, but upon their own indigenous population. One of the most notable was the British Mass Observation project which Highmore (2002, pp. 81-85) notes was influenced by Bataille’s dissident surrealism. Marc Augé’s proximate anthropology is a post-Perceqian example. This raises the question of whether Perceq’s endotics is just another anthropology of ourselves.

I argue that it is not, and that it cannot be due to the place of otherness in anthropological research. Augé notes:

The question of the other is not just a theme that anthropology encounters from time to time; it is its sole intellectual object, the basis on which different fields of investigation may be defined. (Augé, 2008, p. 15)

Endotics is not anthropological because it approaches the everyday from a perspective of observing ourselves rather than the other. In recent years there has been a shift towards an “anthropology of the near” (Augé, 2008, p. 7), as well as a significant growth in artworks demonstrating an anthropological approach to our own communities. Since this ethnographic turn has been accompanied by an

⁶¹ Foster also comments on that project, but his criticism addresses the use of public arts programs as “public relations probes for the corporations and agencies that supported them (1996, p. 198).

increasing interest in the everyday, it could have led to a proliferation in practices of an endotic character - practices in which artists looked at themselves, exploring communities with whom they claim common interest. Instead, a 'new exotics' has developed in which artists have found an internal 'other'. Many artists have gone in search of new savages or new tribes, such as immigrant communities and disadvantaged groups closer to home. *Culture in Action* and *Project Unité* are examples of such an approach.

4.3 The Booksellers

A bookseller is defined as a dealer in books, and my participants include the proprietors of three second-hand or antiquarian bookshops. One of them published the *Scottish Book Collector* magazine (and *Textualities*, its online successor), whilst another was a journalist who opted for a change of career by taking over an antiquarian bookshop. The third owner worked in a nearby bookshop before setting up in business himself. He bought his premises from a near mythical figure in the Edinburgh book-scene: Bert Barrett, the previous owner of West Port Books, whose name and antics were mentioned by several of the booksellers.

However, my use of the term bookseller here is wider than this definition, since I also include the sales staff in these shops, which includes another seven participants. Three are staff in a national chain (the main academic bookseller in the city), whilst the others work in the smaller second-hand shops. Two of the seven have also worked in the voluntary sector (charity shops). Four are currently students (both postgraduates and undergraduates). Of the others, one is involved in the local art scene and describes himself as self-taught.

My final participant is somewhat anomalous; an ex-college lecturer, book collector and, I gather from our conversations, occasional *dealer in books*: he describes himself as "an unpaid member of staff" (Fenwick, 2011) and is often to be found

sitting chatting to staff in one of the participating bookshops. His contribution is a lengthy, informative and often amusing exposition of the history of Edinburgh second-hand bookshops, and the book trade in general. In ‘Thrill’ (Smith, 2012a, 2.11) he talks of “the thrill of the chase... of exercising your connoisseurship”,⁶² and in ‘Bert in the Background’ (Smith, 2012a, 2.2) his comments are combined with those of the owner of Edinburgh Books – formerly West Port Books – in order to give a flavour of these spaces.

4.4 Commonplaces: The Threat to Books and Bookshops

Just as the history of literature is deeply bound up with the evolution of book technology... the history of electronic literature is entwined with the evolution of digital computers as they shrank from the room sized IBM 1401 machine on which I first learned to program (sporting all of 4K of memory) to the networked machine on my desktop, thousands of times more powerful and able to access massive amounts of information from around the world. (Hayles, 2008, p. 2)

Speaking of second-hand bookshops, my anomalous participant stated that “Bookshops are not common places” (Smith, 2012a, 2.4). As Endotics is concerned with everyday situations, the following questions arise from my choice of these shops as sites of investigation. If they are not common places, then why examine them as if they were? If bookshops are in state of crisis, if their very existence is under threat, then how can they be suitable subject matter for endotic enquiry: crises are extraordinary situations, so how can I justify focusing on bookshops under such conditions?

My response to the first question is simply that bookshops are common, but they

⁶² Walter Benjamin, in ‘Unpacking My Library’, discusses book collecting: “The most profound enchantment for the collector is the locking of individual items within a magic circle in which they are fixed as the final thrill, the thrill of acquisition, passes over them. Everything remembered and thought, everything conscious, becomes the pedestal, the frame, the base, the lock of his property. The period, the region, the craftsmanship, the former ownership – for a true collector the whole background of an item adds up to a magic encyclopedia whose quintessence is the fate of his object” (1969, p. 60). He argues that “not only books but copies of books have their fates. And in this sense, the most important fate of a copy is its encounter with him, with his own collection... to a true collector, the acquisition of an old book is its rebirth” (Benjamin, 1969, p. 61).

are just not seen as such. Bookshops still remain very much part of the proverbial high street and one is as likely to come across a bookshop as other kinds of shop: within ten minutes of walking up my nearest main road, I come across two charity bookshops,⁶³ a second-hand book shop and a branch of a large book chain, whilst there is only one butchers shop and no ironmonger. Granted, these examples may not correspond to some idealised image of what a bookshop should be, but that is entirely different. Moreover, even if a book is purchased online, there is still a fair chance that it comes from a bookshop.⁶⁴

My bookseller's comment is indicative of a discourse of decline surrounding the topics of books and bookshops (my participant then goes on to note that second-hand shops in Edinburgh are in a reasonably good state of health, as those that were not did not make it through the last lean time).

But my response to the second question is that bookshops are in a near permanent state of crisis: no sooner does one threat pass, than they seem to meet another one. Crisis is the norm. When I worked in a bookshop, the threat was from the new national chains who were putting long established local shops out of business, as well as from the abandonment of the Net Book Agreement (mostly supported by the national chains). Those same national chains were then threatened by the supermarkets' decision to start selling bestsellers. Today, the threat is seen as coming largely from computers and the internet (alternative pastimes and online shopping). The book itself is seen as being challenged by the e-book (one of many topics of discussion in my interviews with the *Thaw* participants).

⁶³ And an abundance of charity shops, most of which have a selection of books of some sort.

⁶⁴ The reader's response to this will probably depend on whether they regard the bookshop department of Amazon as a bookshop. However, online sales have actually helped independent shops, as it makes it easier for them to match their books with potential customers. If anyone is under threat, it is the large chains who are increasingly used as window shopping sites for online purchases: one of the booksellers told me that a national chain – not participating here – refuse to show posters with QR codes as these are directing customers to online sales elsewhere.

I met the convert at a workshop in 2010.

He was an artist who had finally succumbed (his description) to using an e-reader. Exhibiting all the fervour of the proverbial, he declared the book dead. The e-book had won and anyone persisting with books was deluding themselves.

Taking issue with him, I found myself in the strange position of defending both the book and the computer against this new upstart technology...

The obsolescence of the traditional book is a discourse prevalent throughout my research period. In the face of competition from e-books, the format's demise appears imminent: its fate similar to that of vinyl records when faced with the CD format. However, if the e-book is to present a viable challenge to the book format, they have to be seen as an improvement on the one which already exists.

Books are portable, desktop computers are not. Laptops are portable, but even these are considerably bulkier than the average book. It is not until the arrival of tablet devices and e-readers, that there is a similar portability. Furthermore, books do not need to be recharged: the length of battery life with hand-held devices is initially an issue, but this problem is sufficiently resolved by the middle of the first decade of the 21st century. In addition, the storage space available allows the reader to carry a small library around with them in a device weighing less than the average paperback.

Another problem is the computer screen itself, which many readers find to be too distracting, or unreadable under certain conditions, such as bright sunlight. In response to this, forms of electronic paper are developed; display technologies mimicking the conditions of a traditional page, incorporated into devices (the Sony LibriéBR-1000 introduced this in 2004, and Amazon followed suit with the Kindle in 2007).

Perhaps the most important element in the growth of e-books is the emergence of a support structure, commercial interests large enough to create, and then maintain, the demand for e-books. For example, Amazon's online book sales give them enough commercial clout that they can encourage the publishing industry to make electronic versions of titles available.

As a result of such developments, there is a considerable growth in the market for e-books. Whether this constitutes a threat to the book is debateable. For example, at the time of writing, a major book chain has announced that it is no longer selling e-readers due to a lack of demand (Guardian, 2015a) whilst Amazon has just opened an off-line bookshop in Seattle (Guardian, 2015b). There are other reasons why the book format may not yet be finished. One is that books are bought, whilst e-books are effectively rented: e-books are licensed products, and a supplier can remove access to them. Another is that the book is a physical object. Yet another is that it is a normatively legitimate form (7.1.4).

The threat of new media is nothing new; television, radio and cinema have all been seen, at best, as detrimental to, or, at worst, the medium that would kill off books and reading (yet Littau also shows how the outcries against many new media are similar to those that were aimed against emerging book genres (2006, p. 4)). Even the book itself has threatened the book, with some seeing the arrival of the mass market paperback⁶⁵ bringing about the collapse of the book-trade.

All of this explains much about the staying power of books, and much more about what they have come to symbolise for certain people – a particular culture, and the possession and ownership of that culture. This means that threats to the book are seen as indicative of cultural decline. Bookshops still exist, despite all of these

⁶⁵ I am referring to the launch of Penguin Books in 1935, but the history of the paperback goes back to the mid-19th century and ranges from railway fiction to the penny dreadful.

perceived threats and, it appears, more people than ever before are actually reading the objects that they sell (whatever format they come in). Indeed, more often than not, concerns over the book are not focused on whether books are being read, but on who is doing the reading and what they are reading. With the book, as with the emergence of any new medium, a battle commences between those who see its potential and want to open this up to everyone, and those who want to restrict and control it.

4.5 Thaw – An Outline

In addition to the theoretical research for *Thaw*, my sites-in-endotics consist of a period of field work in the participating bookshops, the interviewing and audio recording of the staff, and the construction and exhibition of the sound-works.

The field work involves an eight week period of observation in all of the shops and recording the interviews with my participants. After asking them what their job entails, I usually let the booksellers direct the conversation.⁶⁶ If the conversation falters, I ask about something I have seen around the shop to re-start the process. Each participant signs a consent form which explains how I will use the material. Once the interviews are finished, I start constructing the sound pieces. The first edit removes my own voice. I then listen to the recordings repeatedly to categorise the themes present in each conversation and identify other elements that catch my ear. In the course of further editing the recordings are broken up into smaller fragments, which I listen to in relation to each other, still searching for recurring themes upon which to base each piece. I then re-assemble the fragments into tracks that are projected in the bookshops.

⁶⁶ On one occasion the bookseller insisted that they wouldn't go ahead with the interview unless it was a question and answer session. Unprepared for this and faced with the prospect of losing the interview, I agreed. This demonstrates that my participants were prepared to negotiate the terms on which they took part in these interviews.

4.6 Notes on the Sound-Pieces

The following sections offer some insight into the process of constructing the *Thaw* sound-pieces.

4.6.1 Timeframe and initial pieces

The interviews take place in May and June, 2011. Once I complete works for two exhibitions - *I Am Not A Poet* (2011) and *thetextisthetext* (2011), exhibited in August and October - I begin working on the first *Thaw* sound-pieces: 'Whatever Way That You Want' (Smith, 2012a, 1.10) and 'A Good Way With Words' (Smith, 2012a, 2.6). I use these as a trial run, familiarising myself with the Audacity software. Both pieces are single narrative lines: the former is about the book format and the latter concerns the bookseller's academic research.

'Whatever Way That You Want' has four sections, each comprising the same five fragments of text but arranged in a different order. The first section appears chaotic, but as the piece progresses things begin to fall into place. In the final section, the original order (i.e. from the interview) is restored. Here, my use of rough jump cuts is intended to draw attention to the construction of the sound-pieces.

In 'A Good Way With Words', the bookseller states that her PhD research is in "Sex magic in the Renaissance period" (Smith, 2012a, 2.6). Given the subject matter, I decide to make a reference to backward tapes, because of the demonic associations their use subsequently accrued.⁶⁷

These works are included in the first and third installations. Once completed, two months pass before I have the other material organised and ready for constructing

⁶⁷ The main section – from "also there are some really nice passages" to "what that means, really" (Smith, 2012a, 2.6) – is also a pure palindrome; when reversed, it sounds the same. The other fragments - the prelude and coda - provide its contextual frame.

the remaining pieces. Thereafter, one follows on from the other in a continuous process. In these works, the sound components vary from mere snippets of words, to clearly identifiable sentences. Most are constructed around narrative lines, the remainder are concrete works. The following sections discuss some examples of these (a full list of titles is given in Appendix 2).

4.6.2 Narrative lines

These sound-works tend to be built around a particular theme, e.g. 'Book Chase' (Smith, 2012a, 1.2) centres on customer services. They consist of one voice or several voices inter-cut. Occasionally two lines are played off each other, e.g. 'Bert In The Background' (Smith, 2012a, 2.2) where the story of setting up of Edinburgh Books is juxtaposed with stories about the previous owner of the shop.

The first installation is in Blackwell Bookshop, South Bridge, which is part of a chain of shops, selling academic and general books.⁶⁸ Here I use the narrative lines as a means of creating a general reflection on books and bookshops: mono- and multi-voiced narratives offering the booksellers' comments on books as medium and as object (Smith, 2012a, 1.10), and bookshops as workplaces (Smith, 2012a, 1.3 and 1.9).

The remaining locations are second-hand bookshops. Here discussions often centre on the character of the shops, and the difference between their clientele and those of the chains selling new books (Smith, 2012a, 2.7). Edinburgh Books is the largest of these and the premises had been those of West Port Books, a shop of legendary status amongst Edinburgh's second-hand bookshops. Situated just across the road is Main Point Books, a much smaller and very cluttered shop in which there is always the possibility of knocking over one of the many piles of books that further

⁶⁸ Until 2002 the premises had been those of the main branch of James Thin; bookseller, publisher and long standing Edinburgh institution.

reduce the floor-space. Most of the works from this site are composed from an interview with one of the business partners, so there is a noticeable coherence of voice in these pieces (the exceptions being 'It's A Small Bookshop' (Smith, 2012a, 3.1) which includes a German student who is working there as an intern). The Old Town Bookshop is an antiquarian and second-hand shop which also sells prints and maps, and occupies a fairly lucrative spot close to the Royal Mile. Here, the interviews are conducted on the shop-floor during opening hours, resulting in a very different feel to these pieces: they are more concrete works, containing ambient noise and interaction between booksellers and customers.

'From the Cutting Room Floor' (Smith, 2012a, 4.6) is included to acknowledge my presence as observer and interviewer and as such, it is related to 'The Artist as Ethnographer' 1 & 2 (Smith, 2012a, 1.8 and 2.9) (4.6.3). With the exception of some selected sound amplification, it is presented as it happened. The title refers to a pre-digital predecessor of this audio recording process. It is also metaphorical, referring to the non-act of removal: "Ah that's what editing suites are for" (Smith, 2012a, 4.6).

4.6.3 The artist as ethnographer

In *Thaw* I seek to counter my concern about the ethnographic monograph by offering a poly-vocal account of these bookshops (4.2). Constructing these sound-pieces I am aware of an apparent absence: my presence in these works remains unacknowledged. 'The Artist as Ethnographer' 1 & 2 (Smith, 2012a, 1.8 and 2.9) allow me to address this issue. Editing the audio recordings of interviews, I quickly become aware of the un-worded verbalisations - the 'erms, uhms and ahs' that people make when speaking, part of the noise that we unconsciously edit out when involved in conversation. However, unedited recordings catch those sounds and bring them to attention. Listening to these recordings I consider trying out a piece

composed of these sounds, but decide against it because it seems abusive of the trust that my interviewees have given me; besides, my own speech is littered with such verbalisations, so I feel that I could not justify doing this. It occurs to me, however, that I could gather together my own verbal static⁶⁹ and use this as a means of drawing attention to my non-presence: by constructing a piece from elements normally discarded in the editing process, I make explicit my presence as researcher.

Working on *Thaw* I continue to have concerns over an authorial imposition of meaning. I am not convinced that the extension of the writing field (4.1) is the solution to that problem, as there are opportunities in post-production to manipulate material should I choose. My response is to use a generative framework in *Northern Venetians* (5.3), an attempt to remove myself from the process at an early stage, before the participants begin to create its content.

4.6.4 Concrete tracks

With the concrete works I attend to the ambience of these spaces: creating atmospheres with the material, using the sounds themselves rather than the meaning of the words to tell these stories. Here, I often focus on a short phrase or ambient sound which I expand upon, e.g. the sound of books falling from a shelf in ‘Cardboard Tube’ (Smith, 2012a, 4.3). Sometimes there is recognisable dialogue, such as ‘Ebb and Flow’ (Smith, 2012a, 1.6) in which “[there are always] books to be doing or returns to be doing or orders to be doing” is run alongside “So...yeah the books on the shelves are constantly changing ebbing and flowing”: this plays a physical repetition off against a metaphorical one. Often, however, the concrete pieces are quite abstract in character, such as ‘Faster Faster’ (Smith, 2012a, 1.5)

⁶⁹ This is the term that Peter Turchi uses to describe these unworded vocalisations (2004, p. 186). I believe that his term is more appropriate, for it carries with it that suggestion of noise.

where the treated words become unrecognisable and begin to resemble music.⁷⁰ With this piece, the sentence “[it’s not like (named supermarket chain)...it’s not] push, push, push, get in, get out, come on, faster, faster, faster, more, more, more” is edited, repeated many times and speeded up (Smith, 2012a, 1.5). The stereo track is then split and realigned until I have created something which sounds like a mosquito gone manic.

In the Main Point installation there are four of these concrete tracks. The first is ‘I Sat in Corners’ (Smith, 2012a, 3.10): as I am editing I notice the verbal stumble around “my nose was always in a book”, and begin to play around with it. During the field work period, I notice that shop owner’s business partner is playing some of Steve Reich’s music.

**Music for 18 Musicians
(Ensemble Moderne rendition) if I remember correctly.**

So when editing this piece, I now improvise a ‘mock phasing’ to give it a Reichian feel.⁷¹ I set up an eight-track system. The first track has one comment split into two fragments, i.e. “I sat in corners reading books” and “I was always told/my nose was always in a book” (Smith, 2012a, 3.10). These fragments are repeated, but with a longer time interval between them. This track is then replicated and the time intervals increased. Then the same text once again with a longer time interval is added. This second track of six fragments forms the body of the following six tracks which differ from one-another only in duration as each interval increases as they go along the line and up in number. This means that the shortest is track 1 and the longest is track 8. I condense these down to stereo, and add a shortened version of the first fragment as its conclusion.

⁷⁰ In a manner not dissimilar to Lucier’s *I Am Sitting In A Room*.

⁷¹ Here, my main point of reference is Reich’s tape work ‘It’s Gonna Rain’ (1965), which is included in *Works: 1965-1995* (Reich, 1995).

The remaining concrete tracks in this installation are the ‘Morphic Resonance’ pieces (Smith, 2012a, 3.3, 3.5 and 3.8) which are no longer than 15 seconds in length. These are compressions of ‘Serendipity’, ‘Browsers’ and ‘Just So Everyday’ (Smith, 2012a, 3.3, 3.6 and 3.9). Each of the narrative tracks is divided into smaller tracks, which are then overdubbed. The title comes from Sheldrake’s theory of morphic resonance, mentioned in ‘Browsers’ (Smith, 2012a, 3.6). Sheldrake argues that there is a feedback mechanism between field and units, and that new forms will gravitate towards other forms with which they share a family resemblance. These pieces are a reference to the cluttered state in the shop (if new floor space were suddenly to appear, I feel that it would be filled immediately). Shortly after I complete the sound pieces, Main Point Books relocates to more spacious premises nearby and it is there that the installation takes place.

**I like to think of these pieces as functioning as a
record of the old shop.**

In addition, I produce a number of other works and these are discussed in the following section.

4.7 Remediated Forms: Noise and the Thaw E-book



Figure 2 Ruby Software (n.d.) *Save Icon*.

Whilst working on *Thaw*, I am also researching for *The Recollective* mostly reading about the development of computers and the construction of subjectivities. Sitting at my computer, looking at the desktop, it is hard not to notice how many non-digital forms are referenced – evidence of the remediation process identified by Bolter and Grusin (2000).⁷² However, it is the save icon that really catches my attention (**Figure 2**) (Ruby Software, n.d.), for here, by referring to its own kind the computer begins to tell a more immediate family history. I return to this point in 6.3.1.

**The process of remediation is also important
to the development of my technological regression
method, and thus central to *The Recollective*.**

In response, I begin to employ the concept of remediation in the small scale works that I am using to think through my research.

One issue is noise. In my initial research, I am reading Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman* where she notes "in information theoretic terms, no message is ever sent. What is sent is signal" (1999, p. 18). This is a result of Claude Shannon's abstraction of information from its material base, formalising it as mathematical function "with no dimensions, no materiality, and no necessary connection with meaning. It is a pattern, not a presence" (Hayles, 1999, p. 18). In response to Shannon's theory, John Stroud commented:

Mr Shannon is perfectly justified in being as arbitrary as he wishes... We who listen to him must always keep in mind that he has done so. Nothing that comes out of rigorous argument will be uncontaminated by the particular set of decisions that were made by him at the beginning, and it is rather dangerous at times to generalize. If we at any time relax our awareness of the way in which we originally defined the signal, we thereby

⁷² Computer software and devices are littered with references to other media: the pencil, paintbrush and eraser in your computer's graphic package, the page on your screen, the files you put into your folders, the e-mail in your mailbox, the e-books that you view on your tablet or notebook: the medium remediating others, inscribing those media into its own identity.

automatically call all of the remainder of the received message the 'not' signal or noise. (Hayles, 1999, p. 63)

Non-signal, information that is deemed to be meaningless, therefore becomes noise. Percec had used the term 'background noise' for those elements of everyday life that are usually dismissed as having no meaning, so I decide to explore this notion of noise through the remediated form of an animated concrete poem. *Noise* consists of binary code, a series of 0s and 1s laid out in 5 rows of 10. These digits begin to flip, 0s becoming 1s, 1s becoming 0s. As it continues, the digits not only flip, but their fonts also begin to change. Here, the flipping numerals represent a digital signal, whereas the changing font represents the meaning which is lost through exclusion from the original signal. *Noise* addresses questions of definition: who gets to define information as meaningful, and what are the consequences of such definitions e.g. what meaning is lost as a result of this abstraction, and what results from this omission?

I intend to exhibit *Noise* in *thetextisthetext* (2011), a show that I am working on both as a participating artist and a curator. It is an experimental space, one in which the artists and writers are encouraged to work in collaboration with another participant or with unfamiliar forms. Through my involvement in this exhibition, I realise that I have neglected to address the role of artist as participant. Seeking to rectify this omission, I add another site in which I can focus on the role of artist as collaborator: *Northern Venetians*.

Later, during a supervision meeting, I play the first two pieces of the *Thaw* project (4.6.1) and my *Noise* animation. In response, one of my supervisors mentions electronic literature because he feels these works fall within this field.

In the early 1990s

I had a flatmate who excitedly told me about new forms of computer literature and what they could do. Admitting that this was impressive, I did point out you could do much the same in a book.

I am unaware of electronic literature as an established field of practice and study and I decide to investigate. Hayles defines electronic literature as “literature that is ‘digital born,’ created and is meant to be performed in digital media” (2008, p. 160). This expansion of the field of literature offers me another perspective to view my endotic projects. Suddenly, the storytelling of *Thaw*’s sound pieces and *The Recollective*’s writing component move closer to one-another: there is now a link, whereas before I had seen none.

I also use a remediated form to respond to an issue raised by the *Thaw* interviews: the physicality of the book and recent proclamations of the form’s obsolescence.

The convert’s e-book reader was an object which had been designed to store and access electronic renditions of conventional books. It was stripped of many aspects of its *computerness*,⁷³ and imitated as many features of the conventional book as was feasible:

this hand held device was
an object in a state of denial.

If the convert had wanted to use it to access much of the electronic literature⁷⁴ online - perhaps, Nick Montford’s *Taroko Gorge*⁷⁵ - he would have been unable to do so. If the e-book had won, it was a very odd victory indeed.

At another supervision meeting, we discuss technological obsolescence,⁷⁶ and the same supervisor mentions that the ELMCIP Anthology will be made available in

⁷³Admittedly this is an awkward term, but I use it to refer to those characteristics that are intrinsic to computers. It is also historically contingent: a standard desktop would have been an appropriate example at the time of my encounter with the convert, but such a set-up will soon look like something from the Stone Age. I discuss aspects of this *computerness* in my third case study (6.1).

⁷⁴ This is partly because e-readers were designed to display electronic versions of conventional books, not to access works of electronic literature.

⁷⁵ Nick Montford’s *Taroko Gorge* (2009) was one of the latest works of electronic literature at that time.

⁷⁶ With computers, each iteration brings obsolescence; when a new version of a product is released the older version becomes technologically obsolete, even though it may function perfectly well (so, with the arrival of e-books, the book can be described as technologically obsolete). Functional obsolescence describes a state where a technology can no longer operate: generally computer motherboards no longer have floppy drive supports, so floppy discs are effectively a functionally obsolete form of information storage.

USB form.⁷⁷ Bringing this discussion together with a bookseller's comments on the 'object-ness' of the book, leads to my idea of making the *Thaw* e-book. I intend to give a copy of the sound-pieces, to all of *Thaw*'s participants, as a memento. Initially it is going to be on a CD, but most people now use newer forms of information storage. It now occurs to me that using a USB allows me to thank my participants, whilst commenting on various media formats. I decide to make an e-book (**Figure 3**), but one with a difference: a cloth covered paper-bound text (the electronic text is held in a USB, the casing of which is made from recycled paper).



Figure 3 G. Smith (2012) *Thaw* e-book.

4.8 The Installations

In May and June, 2012, I install *Thaw* in the bookshops: Blackwell Bookshop, South Bridge branch (30 & 31/5/12); Old Town Bookshop (1/6/12); Edinburgh

⁷⁷ After the introduction of flash cards, this is another technologically obsolete format.

Books (10/6/12); and Main Point Books (11/6/12) (**Figures 4 and 5**). In each, the sound projection takes place in one particular area of the bookshop. There is also a browser version using QR codes which can be accessed through a QR Reader on a smart-phone. The installations are accompanied by a blog and audience feedback website (Smith, 2012b) as well as the publication of an e-book which contains the audio pieces from all of the installations.



Figures 4 and 5 G. Smith (2012) *Thaw*, Sound Installations, Blackwell Bookshop (South Bridge) and Edinburgh Books, Edinburgh.

The sound projections are delivered through a conventional sound system with a trigger mechanism using webcam motion recognition: when someone walks into the frame the audio tracks start playing, and it stops when they leave the frame. The speakers are concealed in the book shelves and the camera placed opposite. This system is a compromise as I initially wanted the sound projection to be delivered via directional speakers creating audio hot-spots, outside of which no sound could be heard. However, the cost proves to be prohibitive. A continuous looped delivery

is also not feasible because it would create unacceptable noise pollution in the premises and would not have the element of surprise that I want, i.e. a sudden appearance of sounds around the customers. The motion sensor trigger proves to be a reasonable solution, and introduces a lo-fi element which runs throughout the projects.

An important element of *Thaw* is having people coming across the sounds as they browse in the bookshop. However, the cost and availability of equipment restricts me to one sound projection in each shop. So, I opt to use the QR codes as a substitute for multiple sound projections (**Figure 5**). Not only does this browser version allow me to extend the geographical range by distributing individual pieces around the shops, but it also extends its duration as the codes stay in place long after the main projections are gone. However, there are some drawbacks in its reduction of accessibility since not everyone has a smart-phone and not everyone who has a smart-phone knows how to use QR codes.

4.9 Participation

- 01) The performance of a Happening should take place over several widely spaced, sometimes moving and changing, locales.
- 10) Happenings should be performed once only.
- 11) Audiences should be eliminated entirely. (Sandford, 1994, p. 236; p. 238; p. 240)

Kaprow's writings are interesting as historical documents rather than as a guide to constructing a work like *Thaw*. Whilst *Thaw* and the Happenings are interventions into environments, they are quite different types of participatory works.⁷⁸ However, the differences highlighted by this comparison are useful.

⁷⁸ *Thaw* bears more resemblance to some of the Sculpture Chicago projects mentioned in my literature review.

Kaprow adds several caveats to the proclamations noted above. The first is that in the future when Happenings become an established artform, single locations may be used: “when we are used to a fluid space as painting has been for almost a century, we can return to concentrated areas, because then they will not be considered exclusive” (Sandford, 1994, p. 236). At that time, Kaprow believed that a “single performance space... resembles conventional theatre practice”⁷⁹ (Sandford, 1994, p. 236) and so it should be avoided. The second caveat concerned the uniqueness of the event, as he acknowledged that multiple performances had been given “ostensibly to accommodate larger attendances”, but he found “the practice inadequate” (Sandford, 1994, p. 239).

Kaprow sought the elimination of the audience through their integration into the work (Sandford, 1994, p. 240). In his view, the presence of an inactive group within a performance was “just dead space” (Sandford, 1994, p. 240). The members of this ‘non-audience’ should be “willing and committed participants” (Sandford, 1994, p. 240). Furthermore, whilst it was necessary for participants to have knowledge of the events, “professionalism is actually uncalled for” (Sandford, 1994, p. 241). Exceptions to this willing participation are those deemed “authentic parts of the environment” (Sandford, 1994, p. 241), such as the passerby who stops to look for a moment.

In comparison to the multiple locations of the Happenings, *Thaw* is site specific: each installation set in one location, its contents directly determined by that site.

Like the Happenings, the installations are ‘one off’ events, taking place over one or

⁷⁹ Throughout this piece, Kaprow is at pains to distinguish the Happenings from theatrical forms. This anti-theatricality may well be an attempt to legitimise a radically new form as ‘Art’ by reference to the artist’s discipline, i.e. painting. Throughout this article, Kaprow is determined that the Happenings should not be tainted by any suggestion of theatricality (even though he had mentioned their theatrical character in ‘Happenings in the New York Scene’ - “These events are essentially theater pieces” (Kaprow, 2003, p. 17) - and that one of his models for participation is the Greek Chorus).

two days (with the exception of the browser versions). Also, rather than live performances, these installations are technological interventions.

However, the most important differences relate to the forms of participation involved, and the ways in which the work is situated in relation to its audience. With *Thaw*, its main participants take part in a process that occurs before the artwork (i.e. the sound projection) is presented: the booksellers' participation produces the recorded material from which the sound-works are constructed. In addition to this generative participation, there is *Thaw's* other set of participants, the people in the shop around whom the sound-works are projected. This audience can be further split into those 'art-goers' who know about the installation, and my intended audience, the customers who do not. These groups are different from each other; the first is there in anticipation of an event, whereas the second experiences an unusual intervention into their routine activities. The latter group react to this intrusion in several ways: one person somewhat startled, turns on his heels and walks out of the shop, but most look around to locate where the sound is coming from, and many stay listening to two or three tracks before moving away.

Kaprow's participating non-audience is characterised by its awareness of itself, they know what is expected of them. With *Thaw*, my audience is initially unaware of itself as an audience. They are customers browsing in the shop, and they are unaware of this artwork until they are in its midst. I feel that the word 'audience' is inadequate in this context as it suggests they are there knowingly. Perhaps, a better term would be an *audient*, 'a hearer... a listener',⁸⁰ suggesting a shift from a passive hearing to an active listening. Appropriately enough, such a shift is experienced by Pantagruel's crew as they move from hearing the noises around them, to listening to them, coming to some understanding of them (4.1). My

⁸⁰ Here I alter the dictionary definition (*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 2002) by inserting suspension points to suggest a potentially transitory state from a passive to an active role.

potential audience is composed of Kaprow's "authentic parts of the environment" (Sandford, 1994, p. 241), only now it is they who are being directly addressed. My intervention aims to catch the attention of the audience and cause them to reflect on these spaces, the people working in them and what they have to say.

CHAPTER 5: NORTHERN VENETIANS (CASE STUDY 2)

Overview:

Introduction

Origins of *Northern Venetians*

Generation: The Framework

The Webpage

The Interrogation of the Spatial Metaphor

De Certeau: *The Practice of Everyday Life*

Writing the City

Machines for Text Production: Hypotexts for *Northern Venetians*

Afterwards: *Another Athens*

5.1 Introduction

In *Magnetic North*, Jonathan Meades comments:

From anywhere, but especially from here out on the sund, Hansastadt Stralsund has the most heartbreakingly beautiful skyline: is this The Venice of the North? ... Other Venices of the North are Bruges, Aalborg, Amsterdam, Birmingham, Manchester, the Maryhill area of Glasgow. (Episode 1, 2008)

First exhibited in October 2013, *Northern Venetians* is an online exhibition.⁸¹ A work of collaborative electronic literature, it depicts a city as seen by its inhabitants, past and present. As it is a composite of many places, the city does not sit in any one physical location: the Northern Venetians are all inhabitants of places which have been known as The Venice of the North.⁸²

5.2 Origins of Northern Venetians

The Maryhill area of Glasgow is a former burgh which was absorbed into the city in 1891. Its population of approximately 52,000 is predominantly working class. The area has been characterised by industrial decline. As a native of Maryhill, I am

⁸¹ Subsequently included in *Moving Words: An Exploration of Kinetic Poetry and Prose, 1984-2014* (Illuminations, University of Ireland, Maynooth (2014) and *Mix 3* conference and exhibition at Bath Spa University (2015).

⁸² I have chosen to use The Venice of the North throughout because it seems clear that it should be *The Venice* rather than *the Venice*. Of course, the same claim could be made for The North being used instead of the North or indeed the north (5.5). In response I can only state that I find my choice better on the eye.

aware that the comparison to Venice is not one that immediately springs to mind. However, Meades' comment generates a tension which prompts me to think about where I come from, and what it could possibly have in common with Venice. In response I write the following piece:

In Glasgow, nearby the secondary school that I attended, there was an old factory building. It was red brick, with a large chimney out of which a tree had somehow managed to grow and flourish. During the planned urban regeneration of the city it was decided that the factory should be demolished and the ground sold off. The local community opposed this plan and campaigned against it, as they were quite fond of their tree.

The building was demolished. As a concession to the locals a small raised soil bed was built, a few hundred yards away at the side of the main road. The tree, complete with a visible chimney stack, was transplanted into its new home. It was only a matter of weeks before it was pulled up by its roots. (Smith, 2009, p. 42)

But I continue to think about those other cities, and whether these places have something in common not only with Venice, but also with each other. From these thoughts my *Northern Venetians* project begins to emerge.

**These events happened some time ago.
I wrote my *Northern Venetian* piece in 2008.
Shortly afterwards, I was awarded a place on the MFA course
at Edinburgh College of Art...**

I introduce *Northern Venetians* as another site-in-endotics, inserted between *Thaw* and *The Recollective*. Unlike these projects, *Northern Venetians* has a pre-history: an abandoned previous attempt.

**At the ECA, it was my intention to work on this project.
Circumstances intervened, and I followed another course: as
it now stands, this work is a very different entity.**

My first reason for returning to *Northern Venetians* is simply that it is unfinished business. This project is one that I want to pursue further, due to its combination of the personal and the social. My current research somewhat unexpectedly gives me the opportunity to do so.

The second is that during the *Thaw* project I realise that I have neglected the artist's role as a participant in the creative process. This may result from a form of blindness: as an artist you are there in the work, in the thick of it, doing what needs to be done. Under such circumstances, rigorous self-reflection can easily fall by the wayside. Realisation of my omission partly comes from working on *thetextisthetext* (4.7). It also comes from working on *Thaw* itself, my focus on the participation process increases my awareness of my own role within the piece.

My final reason is that *Northern Venetians* affords me another experimental writing space. This is important because on the completion of *Thaw* it is clear to me that the exploration of collective writing is becoming a central feature of my endotic projects. *The Recollective* contains a collective writing element from its inception. In addition, I now see *Thaw* not only as sound installations, but as a writing project too. My change of outlook is partly the result of becoming aware of electronic literature, as a field of practice and research: it gives me another frame of reference, another perspective upon these projects.

5.3 Generation: The Framework

There are three stages in the construction of *Northern Venetians*, most of which overlap to some degree. The first largely consists of contacting potential contributors by email: pitching the work to possible participants, explaining what *Northern Venetians* is about. This includes establishing the guidelines for producing the texts:

01) All participants will be artists or writers who have been inhabitants of a city which has been known as The Venice of the North.

10) The composite city will be constructed from a series of short-form prose pieces (no longer than 3 paragraphs).

This is later changed to a limit of 500 words when John Kairns informs me that "paragraphs in Polish tend to be longer than paragraphs in contemporary English" (2013).

11) These stories will be based on personal experience. The writer will depict an event or situation which expresses something particular about their own Northern Venice.

The second stage is the composition and collection of texts: the latter, again, is done mostly through email. Having established the framework, the participants are free to interpret the remit as they see fit.⁸³ The outcome, in terms of content, is now out of my hands, as I do not edit the works.

This stage includes the creation of an online collaborative working platform. I intend this project to be an open work with the potential for different lines of development built into it, and the wiki provides space for that development.

Here, I was overly optimistic: participants used the wiki to check out what others had written, but that was all. It simply didn't work as a space in which people picked up on an idea and ran with it. Possible conclusions:

01) the wiki was badly executed - this is possible as there were access issues.

10) people were prepared to participate by contributing text - a creative and personal contribution - but they were not invested in the project in the way that I was: that would have required a further commitment of time and energy in something which simply was not their idea.⁸⁴

Finally, there is the on-line exhibition of the work, the website for display of the texts, discussed below.

⁸³ One participant suggested that his students use Northern Venetians as a writing exercise. Another participant got her mother to submit a text.

⁸⁴ Participants did contribute ideas, but chose to do so through personal contact via email.

The first emails are sent out mid April, 2013, and the project takes six months to complete.

5.4 The Webpage

Northern Venetians is a digital born work, an entirely electronic piece: most texts are composed on computer; participants are contacted through an extended e-mail chain; and it is designed for on-line exhibition. Furthermore, an on-line environment seems entirely appropriate for a space that does not physically exist - a representation of community structured around not one location, but a composite of many places which are determined by shared socio-geographical features.

As I am not a computer programmer, I construct the *Northern Venetians* website in collaboration with Scott Porter of Digital Engine. Scott is also responsible for the computer animation of *Noise*, as well as programming work in *Another Athens* (5.10) and *The Recollective*.

Our working relationship goes back ten years or so. During that time he has demonstrated a particular fondness for the old Director software, and that software has played a significant role in some of my most recent works. Had he been available, Scott would have worked on the *Thaw* project.

The idea behind *Northern Venetians* is a simple one, and from the beginning of the project I know that it is going to be an online exhibition consisting of animated texts. I consult Scott, give him a general outline of the webpage, and he assures me that it should be straightforward. For the most part, things go to plan. However, there is a significant problem as I have no idea of what the website will look like. I am uncertain about this because I have only recently started working in this field, and I do not have a template - stock images or examples - to draw from. I start researching online, going through works of electronic literature. It is a frustrating process, made harder because I am looking for something which I am hoping to recognise when I find it. Furthermore, accessing these works often means installing

more programs which are making my laptop wheeze and groan in pain. After months of searching, I find J.R. Carpenter's *Along The Briny Beach*⁸⁵ (2012), and I know straight away that I have my format. Carpenter's piece uses a simple ticker tape effect with direction reversal and speed control. I inform Scott, and he lifts the source code from Carpenter's work and adapts it. Now that I have the bricks, I can start building my city.

I do not want to include instructions for use, so we aim for an intuitive feel, keeping the website as straightforward as possible. For contextualisation, quotations are included in the homepage. The first is from Meades' *Magnetic North* (5.1). This is followed by an excerpt from the introduction to *Exteriors*:

I love the soft burbling of streams and the cherry trees in blossom. But I agree with Plato when he makes Socrates say that he has nothing to learn from trees, only from the men in the city. (Ernaux, 1996, p. 8)

Finally, an extract from *Species of Spaces*:

And with these, the sense of the world's concreteness, irreducible, immediate, tangible, of something clear and closer to us: of the world no longer as a journey having constantly to be remade... but as the rediscovery of a meaning, the perceiving that the earth is a form of writing, a *geography* of which we had forgotten that we ourselves are the authors. (Perec, 1999, p. 79, italics in original)

There are also two lines listing the Northern Venetians (the authors of the texts) and the *districts* of the city (those in bold show the cities from which we got participants). The title hyperlinks to the main page displaying the stories as a series of animated lines of text, intended to suggest the fluidity of the city. When the cursor is placed on a line, the text is highlighted by a change in colour. The line

⁸⁵ J.R. Carpenter's *Along the Briny Beach* quotes well known literary texts and adapts the source code of Nick Montfort's computer-generated text *Taroko Gorge*. Carpenter (2013) writes: "Janez Strehovec states: 'Such an intrinsic link to Montfort's poetry generator contributes to an understanding of the e-literature world in terms of a field that is becoming self-referential and autopoetical' ". The Strehovec quote is taken from *Remediating The Social* (Biggs, 2012, p.82).

can be moved backward or forwards by moving the cursor left or right. The closer the reader is to the edge of the text box, the faster the line will move. If placed in the centre, the line will stop moving. There is a scroll bar for moving the page up or down, since keeping the main text on one page makes it easier to add new stories to the existing texts. *Northern Venetians* is structured so that it can be moved through, so the reader can wander around the city. They can skip over the stories as if moving from one street to another. There is order, but also constant flux. If the reader wants to stop, there are still pages⁸⁶ with a traditional layout which can be accessed by clicking on the lines. Or they can just drift...

When first exhibited, the main page of *Northern Venetians* displays 34 texts (including 2 translations) from 25 participants. New texts are to be added when they become available.

5.5 Venice

When you see it in the distance for the first time, still veiled by the mist that makes the sun a white disc, you can't tell if the mirage is floating on the sea that you are crossing, when in fact it's on dry land; you can't be sure if the palaces and churches resting on the water might not really be fantastic rock formations.

Then the boat enters a wide canal. Windows, balconies and gardens dance in bright patches of colour that spread between the banks.

Alleys open up on either side, navigable by one small boat at a time, some of them so narrow that the roofs of the houses seem to touch, preventing the rays of the sun from filtering through. Perna has talked to me of churches, palaces, squares and brothels; but I wasn't expecting the miracle of waterways, the impressive number of boats of every kind and dimension that replace carriages, sedan chairs and horses. The city seems to be a stranger to the wheel, and to main streets crowded with traffic. It's an absurd construction that challenges all the laws of

⁸⁶ This page also allows translations to be added, if participants wish to do so.

architecture and seems almost to be floating on the sea, making Amsterdam and the Netherlands, dragged from the ocean by the tenacity of the northern people, fade into insignificance. (Blissett, 2004, p. 423)

The atmosphere of the city, the faintly rotten scent of swamp and sea, which had driven him to leave - in what deep, tender, almost painful draughts he breathed it in. How was it he had not known, had not thought, how much his heart was set upon it all! What this morning had been slight regret, some little doubt of his own wisdom, turned now to grief, to actual wretchedness, a mental agony so sharp it repeatedly brought tears to his eyes, while he questioned himself how he could have foreseen it. The hardest part, the part that more than once it seemed he could not bear, was the thought that he should never more see Venice again. Since now for the second time the place had made him ill, since for the second time he had had to flee for his life, he must henceforth regard it as a forbidden spot, to be forever shunned; senseless to try it again, after he had proved himself unfit. Yes, if he fled now, he felt that wounded pride must prevent his return to this spot where twice he had made actual bodily surrender. And this conflict between inclination and capacity all at once assumed, in this middle-aged man's mind, immense weight and importance; the physical defeat seemed a shameful thing, to be avoided at whatever cost; and he stood amazed at the ease with which on the day before he had yielded to it. (Mann, 1955, pp. 43-44)

In the sixteenth century, Venice became the most important trading centre for red.⁸⁷ While Venetian businessmen sent it on to the Middle East, to be used for carpets and fabrics, Venetian women demanded a reserve to be kept for their own use. In around 1700, according to Jan Morris in her book on *Venice*, there were just 2,508 nuns in that city and 11,654 prostitutes. No wonder there was a market for rouge. (Finlay, 2002, p. 164, italics in original)

⁸⁷ Cochineal.

ONCE did she hold the gorgeous East in fee;
And was the safeguard of the West: the worth
Of Venice did not fall below her birth,
Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty.
She was a maiden City, bright and free;
No guile seduced, no force could violate;
And, when she took unto herself a mate,
She must espouse the everlasting Sea.
And what if she had seen those glories fade,
Those titles vanish, and that strength decay;
Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
When her long life hath reach'd its final day:
Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade
Of that which once was great is pass'd away. (Bartleby.com, 2015)

Venice, 28 September 1549

Heresy is everywhere in Venice.

In the way women dress, with their breasts outside their clothes, and heels a span high beneath their shoes. In the thousand narrow alleyways, where forbidden doctrines are whispered. In the impossible foundations that support the city.

In Venice the Germans are everywhere too. There isn't a *calle*, a *campo* or a canal that doesn't know the sound of Luther's language.

Venice: the ideal terrain for pursuing a trail. (Blissett, 2004, p. 521, italics in original)

We climb aboard and sit in the back of the boat, next to one another. Throughout the ride we don't exchange a word. He says nothing more about my ID card; from now on he avoids any allusion to the situation.

I put on some lipstick and adjust the veil of my hat. He turns towards me, compliments me.

The boat docks. Preparations are underway for the carnival ball; in a few minutes the first firecrackers will go off. Stands have been erected for the orchestra, a costumed crowd invades Piazza San Marco.

We pass by, still silent.

Am I relieved, disappointed?

We arrive at the front of the Cafe Florian. He says that we must part. I try to photograph him; he holds his hand up to hide his face and cries, “No that’s against the rules.” (Calle, 2015, unnumbered page)

The experts are right, he thought. Venice is sinking. The whole city is slowly dying. One day the tourists will travel here by boat to peer down into the waters, and they will see pillars and columns and marble far, far beneath them, slime and mud uncovering for brief moments a lost underworld of stone. Their heels made a ringing sound on the pavement and the rain splashed from the gutterings above. A fine ending to an evening that had started with brave hope, with innocence. (du Maurier, 1973, p. 26)

Roussel’s work is, we think, a unique commemoration of his other journeys, not the ones he made in his visible life, but those that took place in the “secret topological system” in which he had buried the loss of his one and only object of love: Ascanio. The site of this topography is Venice.

Venice is not the only town to which Roussel never returned, but it is the only one he seems to have forbidden himself to speak of. The absence from his entire work of the city where “imagination and history are inexorably linked”, as Pasolo put it so aptly, is surprising in itself, and several other researchers have been intrigued by this. (Perec, 2008a, p. 79)

Memory's images, once they are fixed in words, are erased," Polo said. "Perhaps I am afraid of losing Venice all at once, if I speak of it, or perhaps, speaking of other cities, I have already lost it, little by little. (Calvino, 1979, p. 69)

5.6 The Interrogation of the Spatial Metaphor

Venice, that decaying heap of incomparable splendour, still stands as substantial evidence of man's ability to create something perfect out of chaos. (Bailey, 1975)

Space is a practiced place. (de Certeau, 1988, p. 117)

My *Northern Venetians* project begins with the juxtaposition of a spatial metaphor (The Venice of the North) and a given place (Maryhill). For me, it makes strange the place I grew up in, and with some incredulity, I discover previous unknowns. For example, in querying why there is a Murano Street in Maryhill, I find that the area had been a centre for glass making (both industrial and art glass). I am gaining a new perspective on a familiar place, and perhaps something else in common with inhabitants of those other places named by Meades.

The spatial metaphor The Venice of the North contains two main components: one referent is obviously Venice, but the other - the North - is also important. It is not simply a geographical description, for within it there is a whole series of beliefs and assumptions about the North: "thoughts of a harder place, a place of dearth: uplands, adverse weather, remoteness from cities... the intractable elements of climate, topography and humanity" (Davidson, 2005, p. 9). As Davidson points out, "everyone carries their own idea of north within them" (2005, p. 8).

Furthermore, mention of the North brings to mind its absent counterpart and binary opposite: the South. European elites see western civilisation as originating in the south: in ancient Greece (particularly Athens) and Rome, and the main centres of political power have often sought to emulate their ancient predecessors.

Venice. It is not the city, but the idea of Venice that concerns me here.

Canals are a feature of many of Venice's northern counterparts, and most of these places are transportation hubs. Almost all have had significant involvement in international trade. Many of these places happen to be, geographically, significantly distant from their country's political centre that they could aspire to become an alternative site of power (economic, political, cultural and military): as North is to South, so Venice is the alternative to Rome.

The juxtaposition of a known place (Maryhill) with a mythical space (the idea of Venice) produces a jump-cut: a short circuit creating a connection between two seemingly incongruous things, forcing me to look at them in a new light. With *Northern Venetians*, I incorporate that jump-cut into an analytical method whereby 'the connection' interrogates itself, the metaphor holds the seed of its own analysis. Northern Venice is depicted through individual stories, snapshots of the city as seen by its inhabitants, and it is through the accumulation of these stories that the reader begins to discover the city.

Here there is a similarity with Perec's approach to his endotic field work. He would search for something - an object or a name - to provide a point of connection.

Sheringham notes Perec's reflection on a failed *tentative*: "for the place to 'speak to him', he needed to feel a sense of connection and participation... the bearings that familiar itineraries or memories would have provided", if he couldn't find one "[t]he place was meaningless for him" (2009, p. 277). For a similar reason, I choose sites with which I have a personal connection, e.g. I worked in a bookshop, and I grew up in Maryhill. Perec's point of connection was a jump-cut from an unknown place to a known place, in order to better understand the unknown. The jump-cut in *Northern Venetians* differs as it moves in the other direction, so the known place becomes unknown and thus a new perspective is offered.

5.7 De Certeau: The Practice of Everyday Life

In reality, a rationalized, expansionist, centralized spectacular and clamorous production is confronted by an entirely different kind of production, called consumption... it shows itself not in its own products (where would it place them?) but in an art of using those imposed on it. (de Certeau, 1988, p. 31)

De Certeau sees his work as a complement to Foucault's early analysis of power structures (1988, p. 96). Whereas the latter focuses on mechanisms and procedures which discipline society, de Certeau concerns himself with the everyday practices which are the "multiform, resistance, tricky and stubborn procedures that elude discipline without being outside the field in which it is exercised" (1988, p. 96).

De Certeau argues that "everyday life invents itself by poaching in countless ways on the property of others" (1988: p. xii). His intention in *The Practice Of Everyday Life* is:

to make explicit the systems of operational combinations... which also compose a "culture," and to bring to light the models of actions characteristic of users whose status as the dominated element in society... is concealed by the euphemistic term "consumers". (de Certeau, 1988, p. xii)

In discussing "the technocratically constructed, written, and functionalised space in which consumers move about" (de Certeau, 1988, p. xviii), he distinguishes between two operational modes, *strategies* and *tactics*. A strategy is:

a calculus of force relationships [arising when] a subject of will and power can be isolated from an environment... [it] assumes a place can be circumscribed as proper (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it. (de Certeau, 1988, p. xix, italics in original)

In contrast, a tactic is:

a calculus which cannot count on a "proper" (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other... It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages... it must constantly manipulate events to turn them into "opportunities" (de Certeau, 1988, p. xix)

He argues that “many everyday practices are tactical in character” (de Certeau, 1988, p. xix) and part of a productive consumption in which people make use of what is at hand, characterised by:

its ruses, its fragmentation (the result of the circumstances), its poaching, its clandestine nature, its tireless but quiet activity, in short by its quasi-invisibility. (de Certeau, 1988, p. 31)

In its own way, this work offers a user’s manual of everyday practices. It is concerned with “the ‘ways of operating’ [constituting] the innumerable practices by which users reappropriate the space organized by sociocultural production” (de Certeau, 1988, p. xiv), and the formal structures of such practice. Everyday life occurs under conditions imposed upon the majority of us, and we live in spaces which we do not own, but rent out: living our lives under constraints which are not of our choosing. With productive space owned and controlled by the ruling classes, de Certeau sees a *poiesis* in everyday practices which is manifested not “through its own products, but rather through its *ways of using* the products imposed by a dominant economic order” (1988, p. xxiii, italics in original).

Discussing the tactical manoeuvres evident in everyday practices, he states that society is often “characterised by a cancerous growth of vision, measuring everything by its ability to show or be shown and transmitting communication into a visual journey” (de Certeau, 1988, p. xxi).⁸⁸ He argues:

The economy itself, transformed into a “semeiocracy”, encourages a hypertrophic development of reading... for the binary set of production-consumption, one would substitute its more general equivalent: writing-reading. (de Certeau, 1988, p. xxi)

Throughout his chapters on spatial practices, he builds upon this analogy of writing-reading with production-consumption. As his argument progresses, the distinctions between these binary oppositions begin to blur and the components begin to bleed into one-another.

⁸⁸ Here the non-visual can be seen as being written out of the picture, dismissed as noise.

Furthermore, de Certeau notes that “reading (an image or text)” is conventionally seen as constituting the “maximal development of the passivity assumed to characterize the consumer... a voyeur... in a ‘show biz society’ ” (1988, p. xxi). However, he counters this, arguing that reading “has all the characteristics of a silent production”: a playful and generative re-appropriation of material in which “a different world (the reader’s) slips into the author’s place” (de Certeau, 1988, p. xxi). This is an example of the *poiesis* mentioned above.

De Certeau begins ‘Walking in the City’ (1988, pp. 91-110) by describing the panorama of New York as seen from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center. He descends to street level, and describes the Brownian movement of everyday life. De Certeau’s chapter is a meditation on passing through the city streets where pedestrian movements construct the city: “they are not localised, it is rather they that spatialize” (1988, p. 97).

The panorama city is a “theoretical... simulacrum” created out of “utopian and urbanistic discourse”, which requires the adoption of an alienated perspective (de Certeau, 1988, pp. 93-4). It is associated with those who impose their will upon others, with those who set out to establish order. In contrast to this panopticism, he asserts the enunciative acts of those who rent the streets, their “pedestrian speech acts” are an appropriation of the spaces they inhabit, their activities characterised by “the present, the discrete, the phatic” (de Certeau, 1988, p. 98). Through their many practices they write an urban text, and through their “intersecting writings [they] compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces” (de Certeau, 1988, p. 93).

5.8 Writing the City

De Certeau describes the city as series of temporal operations, offering a glimpse of “the ordinary practitioners of a city... [as they] follow the thick and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being able to see it” (1988, p. 93). *Northern Venetians* is written in a similarly ‘blind’ manner as each participant writes without being aware of the contributions of others. Only through the accumulation of these stories – in their interaction with one-another – does the reader begin to discover the city, to see what it means to its inhabitants. In my endotic projects I seek to find new ways of approaching everyday environments, to look at them afresh as if seeing them for the first time. If the inhabitants write the city through their spatial practices, as de Certeau argues, then is it possible to analyse spatial practices by writing the city. If so, an interrogation of geographical metaphors may be a productive way of doing this. *Northern Venetians* is an attempt to do just that.

Furthermore, the layout of the main webpage is designed to produce a de-centred reading experience. This is my attempt to break the linear progression of the conventional written format, i.e. to stop the screen being read as a page, from left to right, from top to bottom, each story announced before being read from beginning to end. Rather than presenting the reader with such an ordered arrangement of stories – which could be likened to the distanced “voyeur-god” (de Certeau, 1988, p. 93) on the 110th floor of the World Trade Center – the animated lines of text give the reader a sense of being in amongst the storytelling, amidst the Brownian motion of these multiple shifting views of the city. The stories are presented untitled, since a title announces its content upfront, it begins to tell the reader what it is. I want the reader of *Northern Venetians* to come across a story as if it were a passerby encountered in the street. With the moving text, the reader is as likely to enter it halfway through as they are at the beginning: these lines are intended to catch the reader’s attention, as if they have overheard a conversation across a room (of

course, if they want to know more all they need to do is remain in that space for a while).

5.9 Machines for Text Production: Hypotexts for Northern Venetians

« [...] Des mois après, je revins sur la Lune et, cette fois, il y avait un air respirable et une ville comme une Venise du Nord. » (Smith, 2013a)⁸⁹

There is a rogue text in *Northern Venetians*, as *Venise du Nord sur la Lune* (Smith, 2013a) falls outwith my original constraint, since “la Lune” is certainly not one of those cities I initially list as a Venice of the North. However, a few months before my work is due to go online, I buy the new edition of the OuLiPo’s *Winter Journeys* (Perc & OuLiPo, 2013). It includes Frédéric Forte’s *The Journey of Dreams*,⁹⁰ which has the following footnote:

Months later, I went back to the Moon and, this time, the air was breathable and there was a town like Northern Venice. (Perc & OuLiPo, 2013, p. 185)

Acting upon the coincidence, I contact Forte and ask him to contribute a piece depicting his “Northern Venice” (Smith, 2013b).

Forte’s story concerns Calvino and Perc’s involvement with a metafictional series of novels. The text he submits for *Northern Venetians* takes the line from his original French version, and annotates it in a series of footnotes. On the webpage this text is split into two animated lines: one with the quote, the other with the annotations. I split the text in this way so that it is easier to cross reference (instead of scrolling one line backwards and forwards). The text is also accompanied by two English translations⁹¹ (each again, split in the same manner). This brings me back to the work of Calvino and Perc, and stories about the telling of stories. In Calvino’s *Invisible Cities* (1979), Marco Polo tells stories of the cities he

⁸⁹ Here, the text is shown without the footnote numbers which accompanied each word.

⁹⁰ First published in 2005.

⁹¹ I am most grateful to Sarah Hayden and Charlotte Desvages for their work in translating this piece.

has visited in Kublai Khan's empire, all of which turn out to be descriptions of Venice, Polo's home city. *Northern Venetians* takes stories from many different cities, bringing them together in the composite of Northern Venice. There is obviously a relation between *Invisible Cities* and *Northern Venetians*, an intertextual referencing. Initially, this is very useful when contacting possible participants, as I simply describe my project as a mirror image of *Invisible Cities*.

However, the main model for *Northern Venetians* is not *Invisible Cities*, but Perec's *The Winter Journey* and the stories which are part of its subsequent development. Perec's short story tells of Vincent Degrael and how he comes across a copy of Hugo Vernier's *The Winter Journey*. Vernier's book is a short quest fiction (a fifth of the book) followed by:

a long confession of an exacerbated lyricism, mixed in with poems, with enigmatic maxims, with blasphemous incantations. (Perec & OuLiPo, 2013, p. 14)

Degrael realises that Vernier's texts are the unacknowledged source of some of the greatest works of French literature. Before he can do anything about it, the Second World War intervenes and the book is lost. He spends the rest of his life in a futile search for the lost book.

After Perec's death, other members of the OuLiPo take up his tale of "anticipatory plagiarism" and use it as the basis of a series of short stories: or, citing Mikhail Gorliouk⁹² citing Calvino, "a hypernovel... a machine for multiplying stories" (Perec and OuLiPo, 2013, p. 175).

Earlier, I mention my use of analytical scores (1.4): fragments of texts used as the basis for constructing an artwork. *Northern Venetians* is an experiment in seeing whether such a score could be used to construct a work of collaborative writing: not the telling of one story (*Northern Venetian*) but the collective telling of stories

⁹² Pseudonym used by Jaques Jouet, OuLiPo member.

(*Northern Venetians*). With Perec's *The Winter Journey* as its model, *Northern Venetians* is intended to be a machine for the production of texts.

5.10 Afterwards: Another Athens

Shortly after its completion, I begin work on *Another Athens* (2014), an exhibition I co-curate with Mirja Koponen and nick-e melville. Like *Northern Venetians*, the exhibition explores a spatial metaphor and brings together contributions from artists and writers in different cities, this time, Edinburgh and Athens. Like its predecessor, it also depicts a composite city through a collection of stories and reflections. It is shown at Interview Room 11 (Edinburgh) and Snehta Gallery (Athens) in November and December, 2014.

I know Mirja Koponen through her curatorial role at Edinburgh's Total Kunst Gallery. She is the only participant in *Northern Venetians* whom I do not initially contact by email: she lives nearby me and, as she had studied in St. Petersburg, I ask her if she is interested in submitting a text. She contributes three stories.

Soon after, she contacts nick-e melville and I to discuss possible projects. One suggestion is developing *Northern Venetians* as a gallery show. As the Forest Centre+ is in Edinburgh, I suggest that we take the idea of interrogating a spatial metaphor and apply it to 'The Athens of the North'. Coincidentally, I also know someone working at Snehta,⁹³ raising the possibility of playing the two cities off one another. We then develop this into a series of works.

I decide to use *Another Athens* as research and development for *The Recollective*, particularly in relation to collecting and collaging live audience inputs. All of the works exhibited are titled *Another Athens* so, during their development, we give each piece a different tag: those tagged 'emergence' and 'memory bank' prove useful to my third site-in-endotics.

⁹³ An art gallery in Athens.

In 'emergence', the artists' and writers' texts are re-inscribed within the gallery space. They are projected onto a wall and, as the piece develops, a computer program creates a real time collage from this material, first using whole sentences at a time, and then sentences and sentence fragments. As we already have the base material, it is easier to manipulate these texts than those of *The Recollective*: we simply move between folders, some which have texts with a greater degree of fragmentation than others. Nevertheless, this is useful research. Insights into live audience inputs are gained from 'memory bank', an archive work which enables gallery goers to contribute their stories of 'Another Athens'.

CHAPTER 6: THE RECOLLECTIVE (CASE STUDY 3)

Overview:

Typewriters and Computers

Reverting To Type: The Recollective and the Technological Regression

The Recollective and Memory

The Writing Ball: pattern poetry; concrete poetry; typewriter poems; and, codeworks

Interface: Humans and their Technologies

6.1 Typewriters and Computers

Nietzsche's notion of inscription, which has degenerated into a poststructuralist catch-all metaphor, has validity only within the framework of the history of the typewriter. It designates the turning point at which communications technologies can no longer be related back to humans. Instead, the former have formed the latter. (Kittler, 1999, p. 211)

Reverting To Type opens on May 1st, 2015. The show includes *The Recollective* and *The Writing Ball*, two new works resulting from my third site-in-endotics. Both are discussed below.

The Recollective is an interactive work in which the audience is asked to enter information into a computer, reprogrammed to function like a manual typewriter. My idea partly comes from a once common remark about PCs being electronic typewriters with added memory capacity: actually a description of a word processor, but evocative to anyone who remembers the Amstrad computers of the 1990s.⁹⁴

In comparison with contemporary computers, using a typewriter is a very physical process: typing with a typewriter involves working a piece of heavy machinery.

Paper is manually inserted into the machine and turned into place on the platen.

The typist needs to make firm contact with each key to cause the typebar to jump

⁹⁴ The Amstrad PCW was advertised with a scrap heap of typewriters and the slogan "It's more of a word processor for less than most typewriters" (Tedlow and Jones, 2015, pp. 144-145).

forward. The striking head on the typebar then hits the inked ribbon which contacts with the paper to leave its imprint of a letter. The shift keys lift the basket or carriage, enabling each key to operate upper or lower case. The striking heads hit approximately the same spot:⁹⁵ space falls into place, as the page moves across the body of the machine, so that a new blank is presented to the ribbon. When the end of each line is reached, the page is physically moved to the starting position on the next line by manually operating the carriage return lever. When the page is finished another is inserted, until the task is finished.

I work on *The Recollective* with some disappointment, for I know that I am unable to replicate the physicality of the typing process. I can use commercially available software to suggest the sound of the typewriter keys, and a specialised font can visually suggest its inked typeset.⁹⁶ However, that physicality of typewriter use escapes me. I consider using a USB typewriter⁹⁷ which converts mechanical typewriters for use as a computer keyboard. This hybrid machine is very steampunk, but that is a problem: it has the physicality of a typewriter, but not the appearance of a normal standard PC. Steampunk re-imagines technologies as if they have been invented in an age outside of their own, e.g. a Victorian era computer is presented as something looking like a mechanical typewriter with a monitor attached. My intention is that the regressed technology should look like a normal computer, but not behave like one. The physical characteristics of my computer remain the same, but its functions are altered through re-programming: it looks like a duck and swims like a duck, but clucks like a chicken.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ The typographical irregularities of typewriters was first commented on in 'A Case of Identity' ((Doyle, 2006, pp. 469-483): "It is a curious thing... that a typewriter has really quite as much individuality as a man's handwriting" (Doyle, 2006, pp. 479). Kittler seems certain Holmes completed his monograph *On the Typewriter and Its Relationship to Crime* (1999, p. 206). Wonky typeset remained a part of crime fiction for some time.

⁹⁶ I use *Kingthings Typewriter* (Font Squirrel, 2009).

⁹⁷ See USB Typewriter (n.d.).

⁹⁸ See *Duck Test* (Anon, 2016).

I go to *Transmitted Live* (2013), the Nam June Paik exhibition at the Talbot Rice Gallery. On the top floor there is an array of old computer equipment. Prior to these machines, computers were the behemoths noted by Hayles (3.5),⁹⁹ but here is the beginning of the personal computer. I am faced with an almost pre-historic scene of computer parts from an age before the image of the desktop computer became established: the monitors resemble television screens, some attached to electric typewriter parts, whilst other components look like old hi-fi equipment housed in wooden casings.

Until the 1970s most household electrical equipment was housed in wooden cabinets (occasionally a radio might be in some form of plastic). I remember thinking that our first colour television - which had a plastic casing with a fake wood effect¹⁰⁰ - was very tacky indeed.

I use *computerness* (4.7) to refer to characteristics immediately recognisable as a computer, and it is this surface recognition that I play on in *The Recollective*.

I end this section on typewriters and computers by noting that both machines quickly came to share their names with their women operatives. Kittler opens 'Typewriter' with:

"Typewriter" is ambiguous. The word meant both typing machine and female typist: in the United States, a source of countless cartoons. (Typed letter of a bankrupt business man to his wife: "Dear Blanche, I have sold all my office furniture, chairs desks, etc. etc., and I am writing this letter under difficulties with my typewriter on my lap.") But the convergence of a profession, a machine, and a sex speaks the truth. (1999, p. 183)

⁹⁹ If people had personal experience of these machines, then they probably worked for a government department, a corporate business, or a large academic institution. General public awareness of these computers was likely to come from public information films or newsreels.

¹⁰⁰ Such fakery is, as Hayles notes, a skeuomorph: "a design feature that is no longer functional in itself but that refers back to a feature that was functional at an earlier time" (1999, p. 17). Skeuomorphs play into "a psychodynamic that finds the new more acceptable when it recalls the old that it is in the process of displacing and finds the traditional more comfortable when it is presented in a context that reminds us that we can escape from it into the new" (Hayles, 1999, p. 17).

With the typewriter the machine names the woman operative, whereas Light (1999) shows that with the computer, the woman operative names the machine:¹⁰¹ in *When Computers Were Women* she focuses on women's role in the development of ENIAC, America's first electronic computer, and their subsequent omission from the written history of computer science. Of ENIAC she writes:

Nearly two hundred young women, both civilian and military, worked on the project as human "computers," performing ballistic computations during the war. Six of them were selected to program a machine that, ironically, would take their name and replace them, a machine whose technical expertise would become vastly more celebrated than their own. (Light, 1999, p. 455)

6.2 Reverting To Type: The Recollective and the Technological Regression

Initially, the technological regression is a one stage process in which the computer appears to revert to a typewriter, its ancestral form. This entails reducing the operations available through the keyboard so that it functions like the QWERTY on an old Olivetti or Underwood. A typewriter soundtrack is provided by commercial software. The screen imitates a typed page. Once again I am working with Scott Porter (5.4). We discuss the font to be used, different coloured inks, end of line 'dings'¹⁰² and such like. The normal means of deleting/correcting material is replaced by a Tipp-ex function intended to frustrate the user: mistakes cannot be removed en masse, and have to be deleted letter by letter. The outward appearance of the regression is, in part, a gimmick, the hook to encourage audience participation. My main interest lies not here, but with the audience inputs as material. However, that regression is also designed to give the audience a jolt, to give them cause to think about the technologies that they use.

¹⁰¹ Kittler asserts that "Turing's mathematical definition of computability in 1936 gave future computers their name" (1999, p. 243). Whilst recognising that the typewriter gave its name to its female operatives, Kittler characteristically fails to notice a similar traffic, albeit one moving in the opposite direction, with computers. Whilst I agree with Winthrop – Young (2011, pp. 120-124) that he is not a technological determinist, Kittler does have a provocative tendency to understate, or even fail to mention, human input in relation to our technologies. For a historical account of human computers see Ifrah (2000, pp. 100-110).

¹⁰² That is, the small bell which indicated when the side lever had to be used.

Once entered, audience inputs are stored in the memory bank, and then randomly projected into the gallery space (**Figure 6**). Then the collage programme creates new memories to be projected alongside the others. The audience can directly access the content of the memory bank through a separate archive computer.

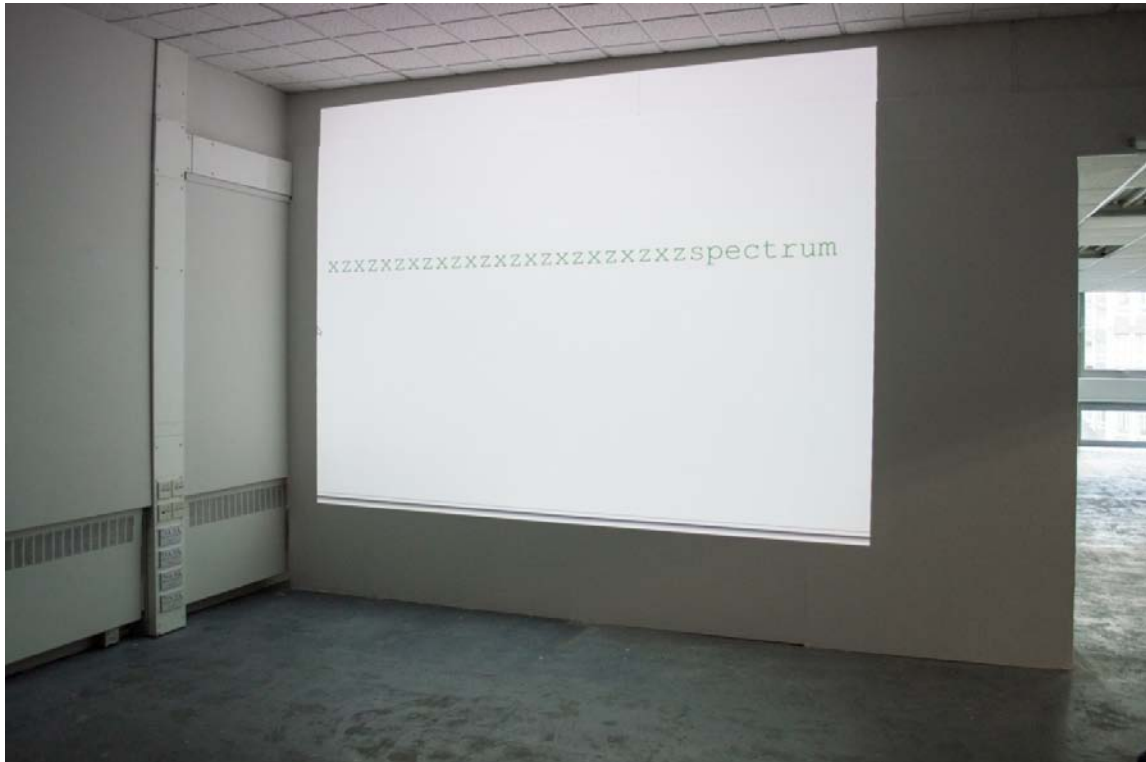


Figure 6 G. Smith (2015) *The Recollective*, Networked Computers and Projection, Interview Room 11, Edinburgh.

That is how I envisage *The Recollective* but much changes as we proceed. In my regular meetings with Scott, this work is proving to be a very fluid beast. He is easy to speak to, which makes the process much easier. He talks about computers in plain English, for he knows that my eyes will glaze over if he gets too geeky. We start off by discussing what I would like to do and what is feasible, and somewhere along the line our discussions take a detour, for we are both quite tangential conversationalists. Often this leads to topics which seem to have little to do with

computers or artworks.¹⁰³ However, when we loop back, the project has usually moved on significantly.

I decide to abandon the simple juxtaposition of computer and typewriter in favour of an expansion of the technological regression, focusing on different stages of development of these writing technologies. In part, this comes out of the process of translating one medium into another and resolving issues of representation. For example, how should we show paper moving along the typewriter? We intend to animate the 'page' so that it moves across the screen, but eventually decide against this mimetic approach. Instead we opt to have the screen reference another point in the development process: green letters on a black background which are intended to suggest a 90s Amstrad (**Figure 7**). This screen becomes a hybrid form in which the *Kingthings Typewriter* font mimics the inked product of the typewriter. This hybrid leads to a heated discussion with Scott, who is insistent that we use a computer font for an Amstrad type screen: seemingly I have crossed a line, offending his programmer's sensibilities with my suggestion. The *Typewriter* remains, but as a concession, a computer font is used for on-screen instructions (**Figure 8**).

We intend to add a third and fourth part to the regression. The third would be the inclusion of instructions/error messages in the form of window style pop-ups, referencing yet another developmental stage in home-computing. However, with the deadline for the exhibition fast approaching and technical difficulties mounting up elsewhere, I decide to omit it.

The fourth part is a spherical tag cloud based upon Malling-Hansen's writing machine for the blind (6.4) which takes the regression beyond the standard

¹⁰³ As for computers and artworks, I think it has been a reciprocal exchange: he knows a bit more about art, and I certainly know more about computers.

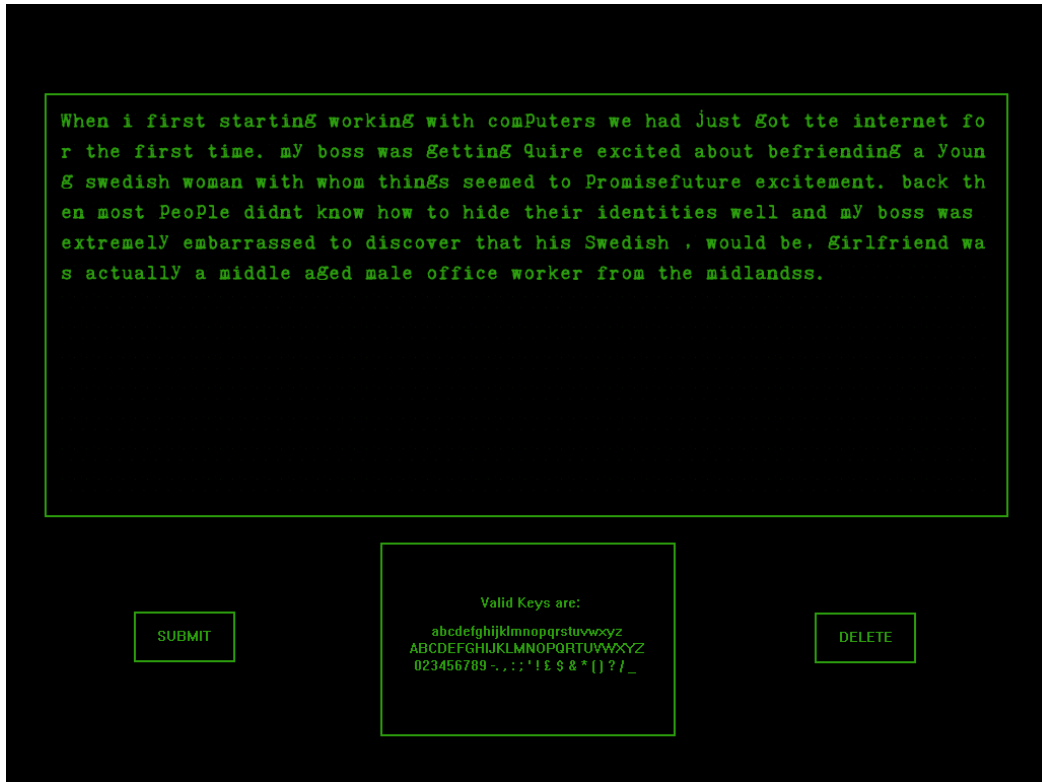


Figure 7 G. Smith (2015) *The Recollective* (Screen Image 1).

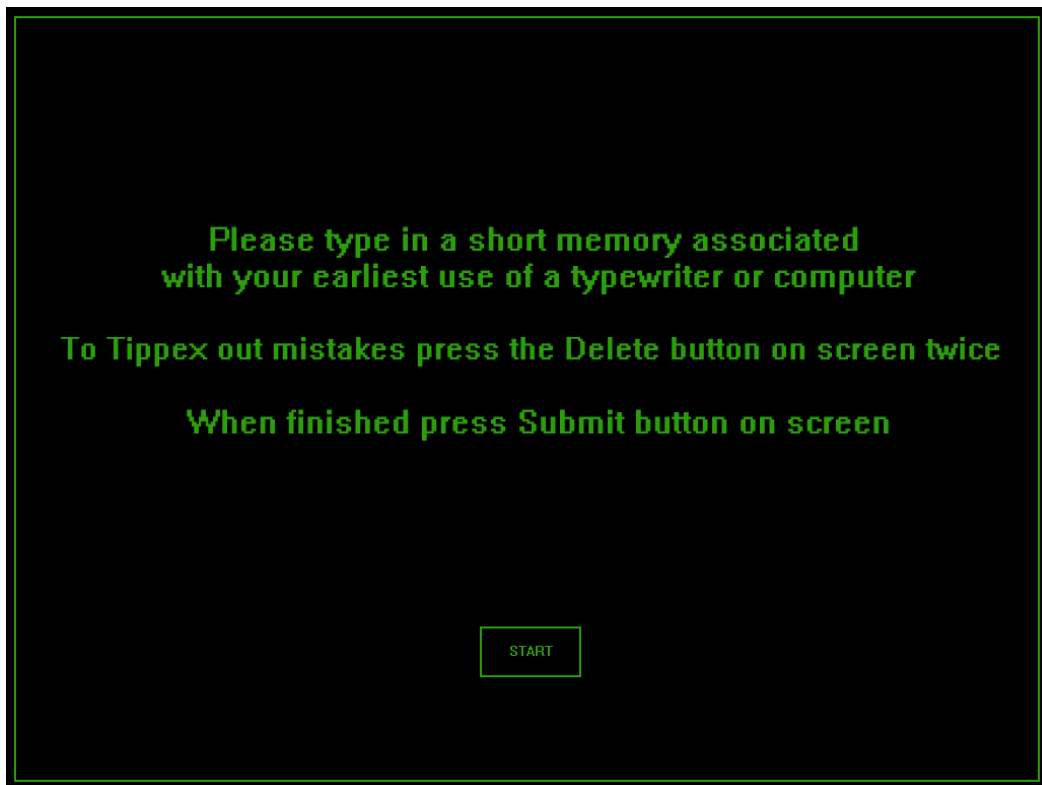


Figure 8 G. Smith (2015) *The Recollective* (Screen Image 2).

typewriter back to one of its prototypes.¹⁰⁴ This is initially intended as the interface for the archive computer. However, I opt instead to separate it off from *The Recollective* and create a separate but related work, *The Writing Ball*. This offers access to non-computer works which are the precursors of contemporary computer art and writing, e.g. typewriter poems and concrete poetry. My reasoning is that, with the projection displaying both the audience's memories and the new ones created by the computer program, the archive computer is simply showing redundant information. Furthermore, this new archive piece pursues an additional aspect – brought to my attention by the regression – in the literary forms connected to these machines.

Whilst *The Writing Ball* shows the expansion of the technological regression, I regret using it to replace the original archive computer. In retrospect, redundant information or not, having a directly accessible storehouse separate from the computer projection would probably have been the better option.

The expansion of the technological regression also results from developments in my previous endotic projects, an amalgamation of the remediation and distantiation techniques I have already used (2.6): an everyday technology made strange by a remediated form, much like *Thaw's* floating sound fragments making strange the bookshop environments. The technological regression, is a more investigative approach, one in which the remediated form is thought through - an approach which develops through pieces such as the *Noise* animation and the *Thaw* e-book. This process is also similar to the interrogation of the spatial metaphor undertaken in *Northern Venetians* (5.6).

The computer terminal becomes a critically remediated form. For me, the real benefit of the technological regression is its use as an analytical and compositional

¹⁰⁴ Many early typewriters were designed as aids for the blind (Kittler, 1999, p. 189).

tool. It helps me to visualise the various stages of the historical development of these writing machines. It enables me to pick up and follow the threads, taking me from thinking about the technologies to thinking about the people who use them.

6.3 The Recollective and Memory

During the Enlightenment and Romantic Periods, in relation to developing notions of the self, memory was re-conceptualised and it became part of a storytelling process through which individuals began to define who they are (Whitehead, 2009, pp. 50-83). *The Recollective* is intended to embody different conceptions of memory.

I draw upon John Frow's typology of memory, outlined in his *Repetition and Forgetting* (1997, pp. 218-246), in which he distinguishes between storage /retrieval models and textuality/narrative based models. Frow's conception of memory as a narrative producing technology - in which the past is written in the present - is an example of the latter.

The Recollective's memory bank is connected to another computer, the Reader, which randomly selects memories and projects them into the gallery space. So far, this corresponds to the storage/retrieval model. However, after a given time, the Reader begins to collage together the stored information, re-writing the material to create its own memories. This construction now corresponds to the textuality/narrative based model of memory. The collage process itself is not governed by grammatical rules, but is simply selected by a counter. Therefore, the results can be crude, but also, at times, entertaining. Indeed, the grammatical errors, the incoherence, the gaps that occur, are not an unplanned outcome: I want this work to suggest of a developing consciousness in the machine, its first stumbling words. In *My Mother Was a Computer*, N. Katherine Hayles (2005, pp. 197-199) notes that the ability to create narratives can be thought of as an essential element of consciousness.

At the opening night of *Reverting To Type* there are a few hitches, but ultimately things work out well. Due to technical problems, *The Recollective* is not operational at the start of the evening. However, we have arranged the physical layout of the exhibition so that it is effectively split into two sections: a well-lit area used for non-electronic pieces and some smaller computer works, and a darker space for *The Recollective*, *The Writing Ball* and other computer pieces. We usher the audience into the lit area for drinks and a live performance of one of the works. Once this is over, we take them through to the other area where *The Recollective* is now up and running.

The computer's collaging of inputs is sometimes crude and incoherent, which is not unexpected. Initially, it is also repetitive: at one point a single misspelled word - CORECTOR - runs across the screen for what seems like a long time. At other times, there almost seems to be a personality behind this repetition: a petulant reiteration asserts "I'm sad, my typewriter story disappeared" (Smith, 2015). Sadly, I know that this is not evidence of the computer failing to connect with its family history, but an audience member's typed response to her memory crashing in front of her. However, the repetitiveness recedes as more inputs are added.

I immediately recognise my partner's entry on the mention of the piles of computer print-outs that her parents used as scrap paper, as well as the computer that decided to die taking her essay along with it. I also identify some of Scott's inputs, for they have come up in discussion: our meetings, wondering off topic, often become storytelling sessions. Another audience memory reads: "not being allowed a zx spectrum. which helped put me off gaming for life. a happy ending" (Smith, 2015). Many of the computer's own memories have a happy ending.

Given the chance nature of our cut-up technique, the computer's memories appear more coherent than we have any right to expect. Furthermore, often they are

default font for programmers. Furthermore, I initially thought it mimicked a typewriter font. However, it was actually designed for electronic typewriters, but was never used. Until that is, it was adopted for use in early computers.

This piece is suggestive of a developing computer consciousness. As I watch the projection it occurs to me that the machine takes this 'false' typewriter font (*Trypewriter*), and not only translates it into a 'true' computer font, but one which also carries a trace of its antecedents.

This was not planned, but I think it is quite appropriate.

In Case Study One I note that the floppy disc of the computer's save icon catches my attention (4.7), for there the history of the computer is inscribed by reference to its memory function. During that research period, works by Hayles and Kittler also fuel my development of a media archaeological approach and influence the content of *The Writing Ball*.

6.4 The Writing Ball

The typewriter fuses composition and publication, causing an entirely new attitude to the written and printed word. (McLuhan, 2001, p. 283)

In 1865, Rasmus Malling-Hansen invented his writing ball as a communications aid for the blind. I come to know of it through Kittler's (1999) account of its impact upon Friedrich Nietzsche's writing. This "Cubist hedgehog" (Winthrop-Young, 2011, p. 72) is a very distinctive looking machine (**Figure 9**) (Anon, n.d.).

I am staying in Dublin at the home of John Kearns¹⁰⁷ where I come across a copy of *Gloup and Woup* (Cobbing, 1974). Inside are works by Tom Edmonds, and his box constructions are suggestive of a computer screen (**Figures 10 & 11**) (Cobbing, 1974, unnumbered).

¹⁰⁷ Kearns was participant in *Northern Venetians*: he also put me in contact with many of the project's Polish participants.



Figure 9 R. Malling-Hansen (n.d.) *Writing Ball*.

Viewing one of Edmonds' typed works (**Figure12**) (Cobbing, 1974, unnumbered) I think of the spherical tag cloud on Main Point Book's *Textualities*¹⁰⁸ website. Furthermore, simply because of the similarity of shape, the writing ball comes to mind. I see how these works - on paper and in sculptural form - have the potential to be developed on a computer screen. Given Edmonds' apparent anticipation of a spherical tag cloud, I decide to use one for accessing *The Recollective's* computer archive. My cloud will allude to the writing ball, its tags based on the keys of Malling Hansen's machine (**Figure13**).

¹⁰⁸ *Textualities* is Jennie Renton's online successor to the *Scottish Book Collector* magazine. When I first contacted Jennie, nick-e melville was doing a stint as guest editor, during which he showcased the work of a number of writers. I was offered, and accepted, one of the slots.

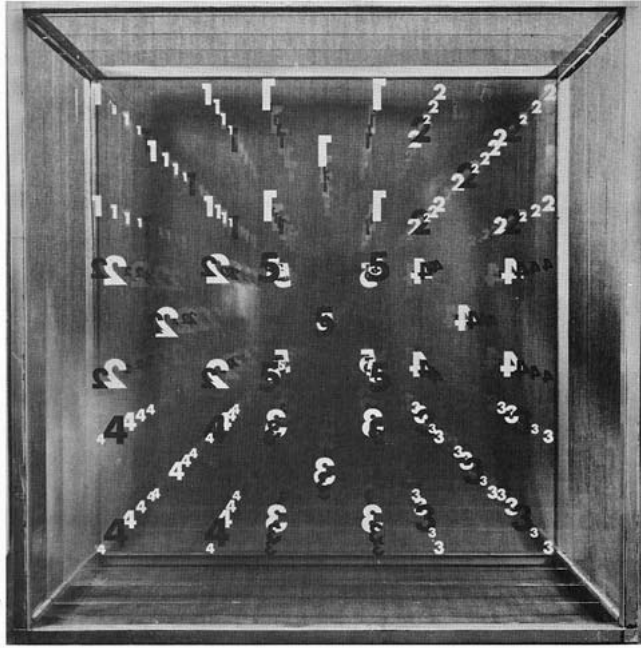


Figure 10 T. Edmonds (n.d.) *untitled box construction 1.*

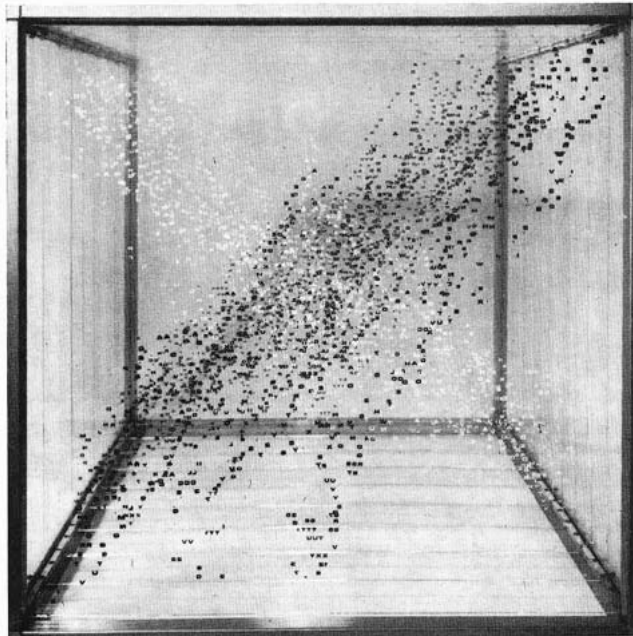


Figure 11 T. Edmonds (n.d.) *untitled box construction 2.*

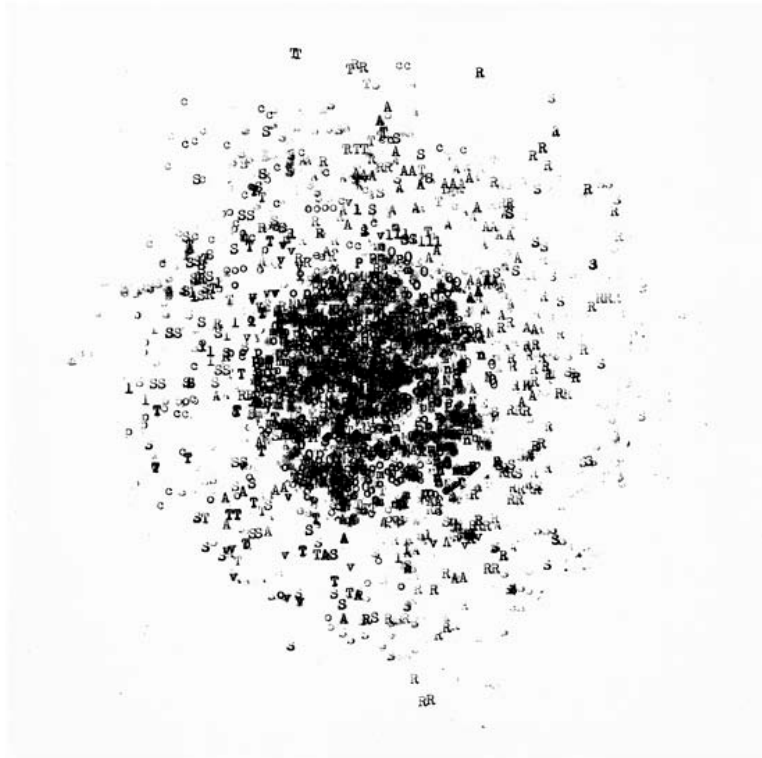


Figure 12 T. Edmonds (n.d.) *untitled typewriter poem*.

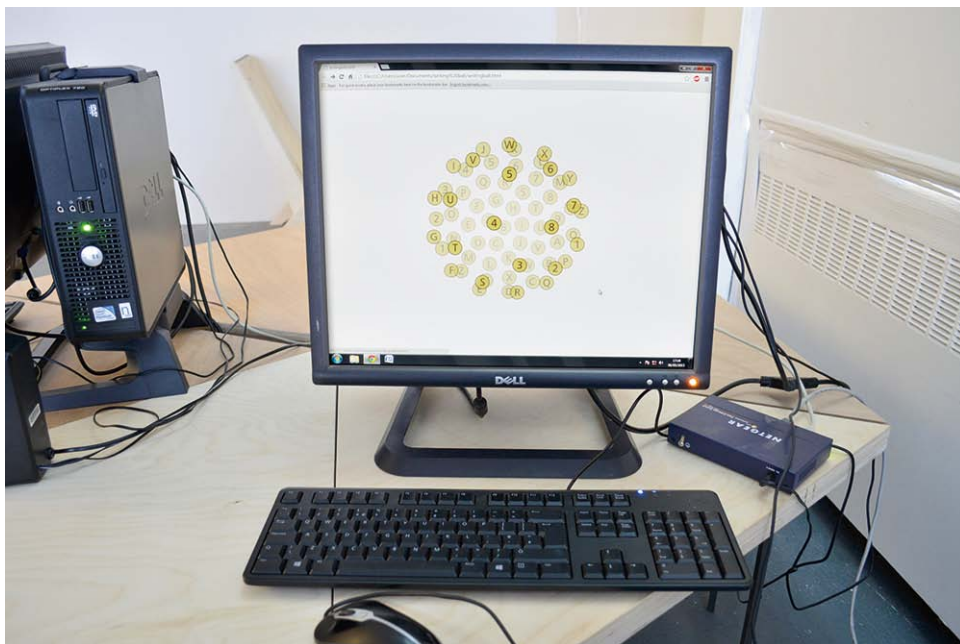


Figure 13 G. Smith (2015) *The Writing Ball*.

I include some of Edmonds' works in *The Writing Ball*, along with other pieces which are now seen as precursors of contemporary computer art and writing. Frustratingly, all are still images. I want to include some animations, e.g. bpNichol's *Fred and Ginger*,¹⁰⁹ where these names dance around each other; a version of Christopher Strachey's *Love Letter Generator* (the earliest computer work I know of), and the online translation of Raymond Queneau's *A Hundred Thousand Billion poems* (as an example of combinatorial literature). However, as we choose not to have internet links, all of these works have to be omitted.

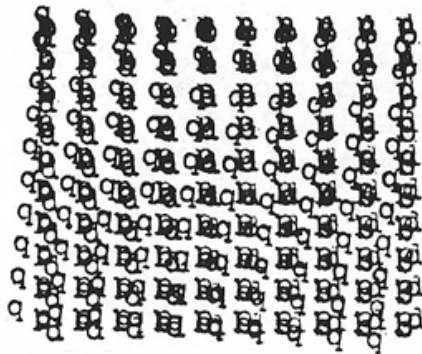


Figure 14 bpNichol (2002) *so much shit*.

¹⁰⁹ This work from 1984 looks simple some 32 years later: the programming for the piece, which could now be done in minutes using animation software, would no doubt have been a bit more complicated then.

a a a a a
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 a a a a a
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 t t t t t
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 r r r r r
 c c c c c
 a a a a a

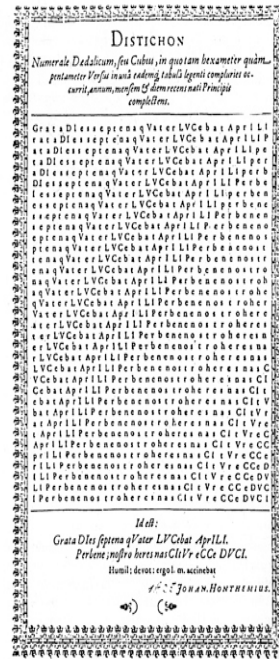


Figure 15 I. H. Finlay (1966) *Acrobats*.

Figure 16 J. Honthemius (1625) *untitled*.

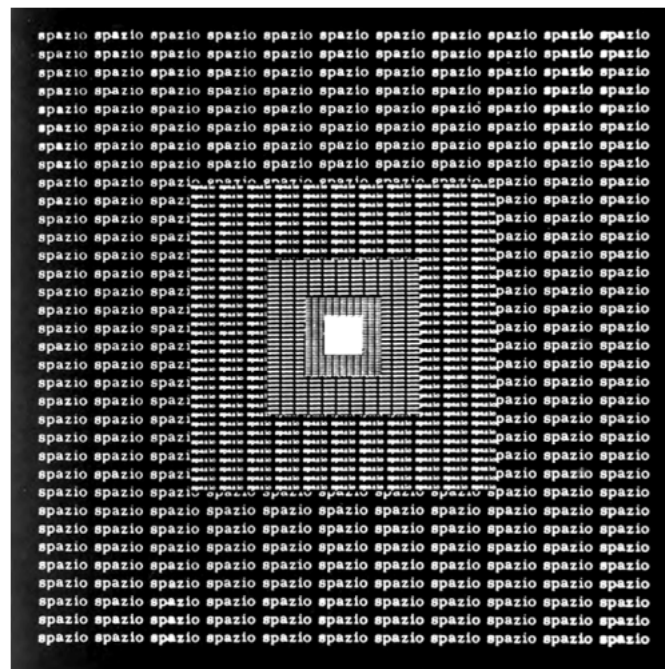


Figure 17 A. Lora-Totino (1966) *Spazio*.



Figure 18 R. Döhl (1965) *pattern poem with an elusive intruder*.

Most of the included works are examples of visual forms¹¹⁰ of writing. My choice is quite conservative since most are well known examples of their genre. The works I choose are often characterised by a strong sense of movement, e.g. bpNichol's *so much shit* (**Figure 14**) (bpNichol, 2002, unnumbered) or Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Acrobats* (**Figure 15**) (Williams, 2003, unnumbered). There is an op-art feel to some, not only the concrete works, but also the work of the 17th century pattern poet Johannes Thonhemius (**Figure 16**) (Higgins, 1987, p. 48). Others anticipate developments in computer graphics, e.g. Arrigo Lora-Totino's *Spazio* (**Figure 17**) (Riddell, 1975, p. 75), and some works have actually made the transition from one medium into another e.g. Reinhard Döhl's *pattern poem with an elusive intruder* (**Figure 18**) (Williams, 2003, unnumbered) which later moved from typographic image to computer animation.¹¹¹ I also include works concerning writing

¹¹⁰ Traditional forms of writing are also visual. I use the term visual form to refer to writing that in some way acknowledge that it is part of a visual medium.

¹¹¹ See: *Worm Applepie for Doehl* (n.d).

machines: amongst these, some computer haikus¹¹² (a form which Scott Porter brings to my attention), Nietzsche's writing ball poem, and Edwin Morgan's *Computer's First Christmas Card* (2000, p. 16). The following sections offer my reflections on the content of *The Writing Ball*.

6.4.1 Pattern poetry

The term pattern poetry dates from the 19th century, and was used retrospectively to categorise the various known forms of 'shaped poetry'. Higgins describes pattern poetry as "the story of an ongoing human wish to combine the visual and literary impulses, to tie together the experience of these two areas into an aesthetic whole" (1987, p. 3). He argues that pattern poetry does not have a historically specific point of origin, but, despite sometimes being critically disparaged, "runs throughout literary history, its forms existing alongside and interacting with the dominant literature of the day" (Higgins, 1987, p. 3). Higgins notes the earliest known works, including early Greek, Latin and Hebrew examples, and then documents pattern poems in various European languages. His account stops at the beginning of the last century, having described a heterogeneous tradition of works which are the precursors of 20th century concrete poetry.

He describes pattern poetry as "an attempt which recurs century after century to make the synthesis [of visual and literary impulses] in almost every Western literature and many Eastern ones" (Higgins, 1987, p. 3). This is reminiscent of Zielinski's (2008) deep time approach which sees improvements to media arising from historical recurrence as past media developments are re-discovered and new bursts of creativity result. Therefore, Higgins' "guide to an unknown literature" (1987, p. 1) is akin to a deep time of visual literature, and concrete poetry can be

¹¹² These are alternatives to conventional error messages. Three examples: *Yesterday it worked/Today it is not working/Windows is like that; You step in the stream/but the water has moved on/This page is not here*; and, *Windows NT crashed/I am the Blue Screen of Death/No one hears your screams* (ComputerErrorHaiku, 2013).

seen to result from a re-discovery of the literary potential of visual texts. In a similar vein, the OuLiPo's concept of anticipatory plagiarism also recognises cyclicity in literary production, as it is an acknowledgement that others have previously used methods which are now seen as new or experimental.

6.4.2 Concrete poetry

Whilst acknowledging the tradition of pattern poetry, Goldsmith (2011, p. 57) places concrete poetry's "modernist roots" firmly in Mallarme's *Un Coup de des* and its "opening up [of] the page as a material space". However, like pattern poetry before it, concrete poetry tended to be critically dismissed (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 57). Goldsmith notes that in its move away from traditional verse structure towards a focus on the emergence of abbreviated forms of language, concrete poetry mirrored developments in computing which was moving "from command line to icon" (2011, p. 59). For him, its importance lies not in relation to visual art forms, but its link to the "multi-media space of the [computer] screen" (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 58). He argues that its discourse helped to frame that of the web. Reflecting on the aims of the Noigandres group¹¹³, he notes:

When we read it, we see the graphical Web described nearly four decades ahead of its time: space ("blancs") and typographical devices such as substantive elements of composition... organic interpretations of time and space... atomization of words, physiognomical typography: expressionistic emphasis on space... the vision, rather than the praxis... direct speech, economy and functional architecture. (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 59)

In turn, the web has given concrete poetry a new lease of life: "what had been missing from concrete poetry was an appropriate environment in which it could flourish... And now it has found one" (Goldsmith, 2011, p. 59). Again, there are echoes of Zielinski's deep time approach, as developments in the field remain unrecognised until rediscovered at a later date under more favourable conditions.

¹¹³ A group of Brazilian concrete poets.

6.4.3 Typewriter poems

In 1714 Henry Mill, an engineer with the New River Water Co. in London, received his inconsequential British patent (no. 395)[for a writing machine]... The precision of this concept or premise, namely, to introduce Gutenberg's reproductive technology into textual production. (Kittler, 1999, p. 187)

Typewriters were designed to produce endless quantities of legible text, arranged in standard layouts, in as automatic a process as possible. In *The Writing Ball*, many of the typewriter poems demonstrate a deliberate misuse as part of the writers' manipulation of this technology, e.g. in the repositioning of the paper in order to create shapes¹¹⁴ or in building up of typeface upon typeface (**Figures 19 and 20**) (Finch, 1972, p. 29; Williams, 2003, unnumbered). An example of the complexity achievable by such means is Rosemarie Waldrop's *Camp Printing* (**Figures 21 & 22**) (1970, p. 4 and p. 19) in which a series of poems is distorted via an overlaying of type, which appears to have been produced in part through the movement of the page whilst typing: an impressive level of dexterity must have been required to execute these pieces. In a work like *Camp Printing* the typewriter, in effect, reverts back to a printing press as the process of typewriting becomes one of typesetting.

This creative misuse is by no means restricted to the typewriter, and a digital example is circuit bending, where the circuits of electronic devices are customised to create new instruments and sound generators. Circuit bending has its own 'pre-digital' equivalent in John Cage's use of prepared pianos.

¹¹⁴ For examples of Perec's use of "incremental indentation" see *Georges Perec: A Life in Words* (Bellos, 1995, pp. 260-262).

Blank page with faint, illegible text impressions, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the paper.

Figure 19 B. Cobbing (n.d) *A Love Poem*.



Figure 22 R. Waldrop (1970) *Camp Printing*.

6.4.4 Codeworks

C.T. Funkhouser (2007, p. 257) notes that the term codework is “used to describe productions that portray ‘the computer stirring into the text’ ” and that they operate through the appropriation “of computer language for uses outside of writing a program”. *The Writing Ball* contains one of the earliest examples, Kearns’ *Birth of God/uniVerse* (**Figure 23**) (Funkhouser, 2007, p. 258), which is a series of visual puns, “the poem – within itself – consists of information in multiple layers of surface and algorithmic language” (Funkhouser, 2007: p. 258). Of Morgan’s *The*

Computers First Birthday Card he writes “the first poem that I know of that repurposes computer language for creative purposes in print” (2007, p. 259). Morgan’s work (**Figure 24**) (Ondioline, 2012) is included in *The Writing Ball* because it illustrates a human tendency to anthropomorphise machines and other objects. It is also suggestive of a developing computer consciousness, and thus relevant to *The Recollective*. Morgan claimed that these poems “[draw] attention to some of the human/electronic relationships which will have to be investigated” (Funkhouser, 2007, p. 259).

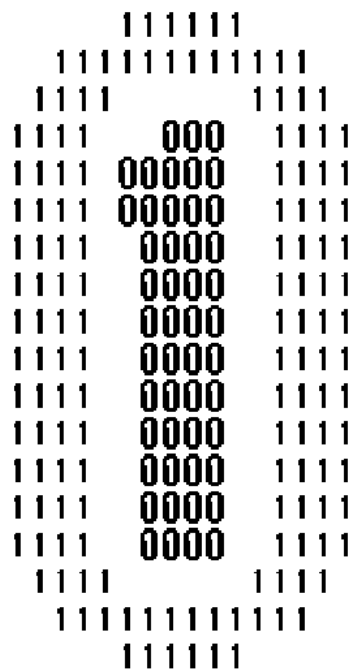


Figure 23 L. Kearns (1965) *Birth of God/uniVerse*.

jollymerry
hollyberry
jollyberry
merryholly
happyjolly
jollyjelly
jellybelly
bellymerry
hollyheppy
jollyMolly
marryJerry
merryHarry
hoppyBarry
heppyJarry
boppyheppy
berryjorry
jorryjolly
moppyjelly
Mollymerry
Jerryjolly
bellyboppy
jorryhoppy
hollymoppy
Barrymerry
Jarryhappy
happyboppy
boppyjolly
jollymerry
merrymerry
merrymerry
merryChris
ammerryasa
Chrimerry
asMERRYCHR
YSANTHEMUM

Figure 24 E. Morgan (1968) *Computers First Christmas Card*.

I also consider *The Art and Craft of Approaching Your Head of Department to Submit a Request for a Raise* (Perec, 2011) to be a codework, and extracts are included in my archive piece. This work was commissioned by the Computing Service of the Humanities Research Centre in Paris, which had decided to “challenge a writer to use a computer’s basic mode of operation as writing device” (Perec, 2011, p. xii). Perec’s story “proceeds by a set of programmed choices between different out-turns at each juncture” (2011, p. xiv) - essentially, each juncture is a binary switch. Perec

chose to write it as an apparently continuous sentence, entirely in lower case and without punctuation, apart from the concluding full stop. He did so in order to “simulate the speed and tireless repetitiveness of a computer” (Perec, 2011, p. xvi). His plot “is a pun, since the French word for a pay rise or increment (*augmentation*) also signifies ‘incrementation’, the procedure used by a computer to mark its path around an algorithm” (Bellos, 1995, p. 409). In *Raise*, man is not working with machines, he has become part of one.¹¹⁵

6.5 Interface: Humans and their Technologies

In trying to understand the complex interrelationships between people and the technologies that they use, Hayles (2012, p. 10) uses the concept of technogenesis – “the idea that humans and technics have coevolved together”. The following examples are indicative of a creative technogenesis:

001) In response to his increasing myopia, Nietzsche purchases a Malling-Hansen writing ball. His writing style changes, shifting from the rhetorical to aphoristic: “telegram style” as Kittler (1999, p. 200) puts it. Nietzsche is so taken by the writing machine, he writes a poem about it describing it as “a thing like me” (Kittler, 1999, p. 206). In a letter to a friend, he comments that “our writing tools are also working on our thoughts” (Kittler, 1999, p. 200).

010) Perec’s *Sonate für ältere Schreibmaschine* (1974) celebrates the retirement of the Underwood Four Million, the typewriter upon which he wrote his early works. It is replaced with a second-hand IBM golf-ball¹¹⁶ machine, the electric typewriter on which he will type *Life A User’s Manual*. In that book, the Four Million makes a

¹¹⁵ Given Perec’s grasp of the operating principles of computing, it is somewhat surprising that he felt intimidated by computers. In 1978 Perec left his job at the CNRS Laboratoire Associé to become a full-time writer. One of his main reasons for leaving – aside from feeling unappreciated – was that in order to continue his post he would have to re-train to handle computers (Bellos, 1995, pp. 266-267).

¹¹⁶ The IBM Selectric typewriter. The nickname refers to the rotating typeball which replaced the traditional basket of typebars. This golf-ball is itself an inversion of the writing ball: instead of the keys, it is the fonts which have a spherical arrangement.

brief re-appearance, sitting there amongst the unused bric-a-brac in the Gratiolets' cellar (Perec, 1988, p. 155).

011) In 1953, Pauline Oliveros is given a tape recorder as a birthday present. Trying out her machine, she realises that it has picked up sounds that she was unaware of whilst she was recording. This has a profound effect, leading to the development of her deep listening approach. She later writes “the microphone and tape recorder became extensions of my body and amplified my hearing... an essential tool in my development as a composer, performer, and improviser” (Oliveros, 2010, p. 123).

100) In 1964 Jóhann Gunnarsson is the chief maintenance engineer for the IBM 1401, one of the first computers to be imported into Iceland. Years later, speaking to his son, he recalls that “the computer was humanized by giving it a very human quality, the ability to ‘sing’” (Johannson, 2006: Data p. 2) and that the engineers and programmers quickly became attached to it. Gunnarsson, a keen musician, used the computer to make musical compositions; “a purpose for which this business machine was not at all designed” (Jóhannson, 2006: Data p. 1). In 1971, when the machine became obsolete it was not simply discarded, but “given a little farewell ceremony, almost a funeral, when its melodies were played for one last time” (Jóhannson, 2006: Data p. 1). Gunnarsson's recollections formed the basis of *IBM 1401 A User's Manual* (2006), a music/dance collaboration between Jóhann Jóhannsson and Erna Ómarsdóttir.¹¹⁷ Jóhannsson's music incorporated his father's recording of the computer.

101) Alvin Lucier sits in a room and records a piece of music constructed from the immediate environment, his own voice – reading a description of the process taking place – and two tape-recorders. He records his reading on one of the tape recorders.

¹¹⁷ Ómarsdóttir's father also worked for IBM.

When finished, he plays back the recording whilst recording it with the second tape-recorder. In turn, this recording is played whilst being recorded by the first recorder. And so on, back and forth between them, the piece progressing through each successive playback/recording. The room itself acts upon the recordings, as the build up of sonic frequencies cause a distortion picked up by each machine. The result is that Lucier's spoken text is transformed into a musical drone. The music is the sound of Lucier's voice, machines and environment merging into one. It seems that human/technology relationships will have to be investigated.

CHAPTER 7: A FINAL MEANDERING: FURTHER REFLECTIONS

Overview:

The Book as Object: my copy of *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*; the booksellers' books; reflections on the book as object; and, a comparison of storage technologies

Participation: the multi-vocal; the audience; participation and practice, and structured participation

Remediation and Language

7.1 The Book as Object

The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut... beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network. (Foucault, 2002, p. 26)

7.1.1 My copy of *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*

My copy of *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (SOSOP 1) (**Figure 25**) is a battered, dog-eared, Penguin Twentieth Century Classics (revised 1999 edition). On the back cover there is the same Calvino quote which alerted me to *Life A Users Manual*.¹¹⁸ I buy it, from a Dundee branch of James Thin, when it comes out. It is so battered because it is the most travelled of all my books: if I am going away for any length of time it is amongst the three or four books I take with me, and for short journeys it goes into my bag if I am not reading something else. As a collection of writings, the short bite sized chunks¹¹⁹ are suitable for bus and train journeys and I can read them over and over again.¹²⁰ It falls open at pages 180/181 ('Reading: A Socio-physiological Outline') and pages 208/209 (a blank page followed by the start of 'Approaches').

My other copy of *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (SOSOP 2) (**Figure 26**) is a Penguin Classics. On the back cover there is the "dreamless sleep" quote from 'Approaches' (1.6). As I begin my current research, I decide to replace my copy

¹¹⁸ Albeit a different translation, with "significant" replacing "singular" (1.4).

¹¹⁹ On bodily consumption/eating of books, see Littau (2006, pp. 40-42).

¹²⁰ Repeat reading is something I do not normally do – if I come back to a book, it tends to be after a considerable period of time.

(SOSOP 1) as I realise that this is going to be one journey too far. I buy my other copy online, through Amazon. The Penguin Twentieth Century Classics is retired to a permanent place on my bookshelves, and the Penguin Classics becomes the copy I use throughout my studies: it gets scribbled on in pencil,¹²¹ becomes well thumbed, dog-eared and almost as battered. Occasionally, it makes it into my bag, for short, mostly work related, journeys. It falls open at pages 125/126 and 127/8 (between 'Some of the Things I Really Must Do Before I Die' and 'The Work of Memory'). When the book lies open on a table, those pages stand up in a v shape: the glue is going, and the pages look as if they are about to fall out.

Inside their covers, the content of SOSOP 1 and 2 is almost identical. There are minor differences - such as the publishing information at the front and changes to the *Information on Penguin* at the back - but the main texts, Sturrock's translations and his Introduction, are the same. The page numbers are unaltered, as are the typeset and layout. SOSOP 2's cover describes the contents slightly differently, which might change a reader's perception of it, but basically it is the *same* book.

For me, however, it is not. These copies will always be associated with different activities: one predominantly with leisure, the other with work. Furthermore, because it is basically the same book, SOSOP 2 is always, physically, going to become a different book. My muscular memory of SOSOP 1 means that I move through SOSOP 2 differently: I already know where things are in it (a slide of the thumb finds page 209). My copy conditions my other copy: I do not start from scratch with the newer book, but continue on from where I left off with the older one. Change in the circumstances of my reading also shapes SOSOP 2, e.g. my

¹²¹ Flipping through my old copy I come across a small note in the margins, and think that this might have been another reason that I opted to get a new copy: I could foresee the scribbles that were going to cover it. However, a few flips more reveal a pencil scrawled note (unconnected to the books contents) and beneath it the trace of earlier markings. It seems that I was happy to use it as a makeshift notebook when required.

increased attention to articles which I passed over in the past. My other copy is always going to be a different book, it cannot be otherwise.

Every now and then, I go over to the bookshelves and flip through my copy of *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*.

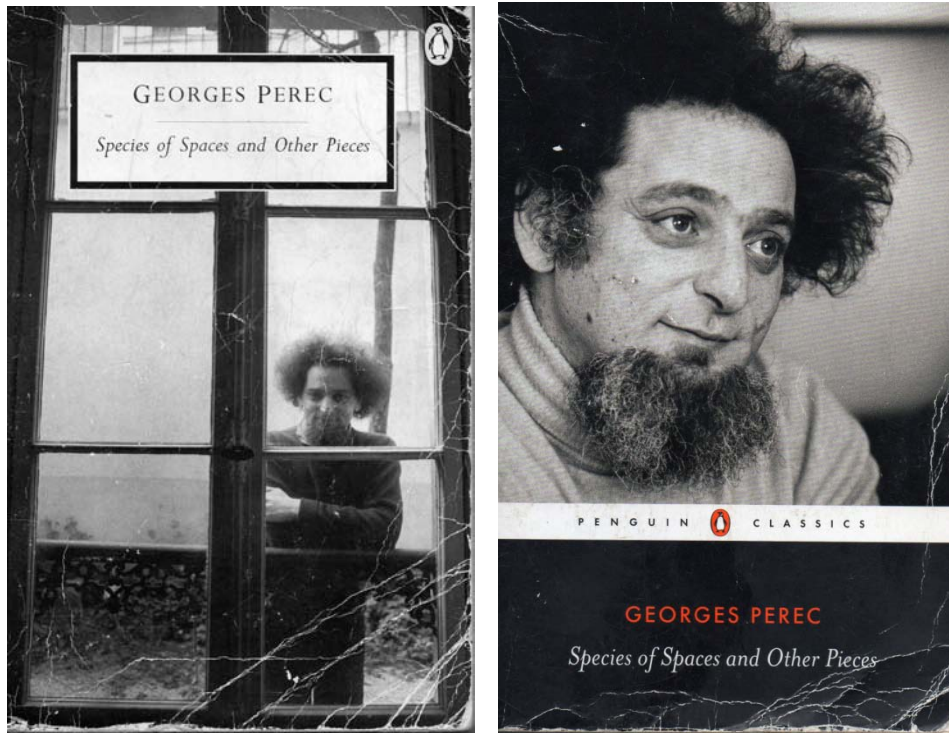


Figure 25 G. Smith (2016) *SOSOP 1*. **Figure 26** G. Smith (2016) *SOSOP 2*.

7.1.2 The booksellers' books

In 'A Collector Not' (Smith, 2012a, 2.1) I construct an exchange between two booksellers on the subject of book collecting. One talks about accumulating books, whilst another speaks of collecting of them.

The accumulator of books is concerned with their content, the information held within them: "especially with helpful footnotes, or an introduction by somebody brilliant" (Smith, 2012a, 2.1). At the end of the piece, speaking of her numerous editions of Milton's work, she pauses, laughs, and then says "so maybe I'm a collector of *Paradise Lost*" (Smith, 2012a, 2.1).

What matters for the book collector are the physical condition of a book and the circumstances of publication e.g. a signed first edition hardback. She has a signed first edition - “you don’t touch that” - which is “kept in a box wrapped up in bubble wrap” (Smith, 2012a, 2.1). Every now and then she takes it out and “looks at it” (Smith, 2012a, 2.1).

This opposition between content and form is somewhat artificial but not uncommon: I use it here only to focus on different attitudes towards *the book*.

Thaw is based in bookshops, so it is not surprising that *the book as an object* is a recurring subject of discussion. My e-book is, in part, a response to comments found in ‘Pod Specialised Bindings’, e.g. “the book is still an object that people like to have in their hands” (Smith, 2012a, 2.8). In that piece the participant also mention the re-cycling of old book bindings into covers for e-readers; “like a book/feel like an old Victorian bound edition” (Smith, 2012a, 2.8). This re-purposing of old books brings to mind video boxes that imitate old book bindings. A similar Frankensteinism is found in ‘Thrill’ (Smith, 2012a, 2.11), in the description of a marrying of parts – of book, and another book’s dust jacket – to produce a better, more valuable, whole. Finally, ‘At First The Idea It Felt Wrong’ (Smith, 2012a, 1.1) concerns reactions, including the bookseller’s, to the destruction of books: the pulping of books is a widespread activity, particularly by charity shops.¹²² Here, he speaks of the book “as being a special, sacred object... powerful things, because they are repositories of knowledge” (Smith, 2012a, 1.1).

¹²² It is also common elsewhere. Some publishers will take book covers as returns, leaving the bookshops to dispose of the books’ innards. Damaged books are similarly dealt with. This often means that staff members get some free reading material. I know I still have at least two uncovered books on my shelves (plastic book-jackets are handy things).

7.1.3 Reflections on the book as object

Thus no trace would remain of an operation which would have been, throughout a period of fifty years, the sole motivation and unique activity of its author. (Perec, 1988, p. 119)

There is something about the book as object which puzzles me, disconcerts me. In my previous two sections, the reading matter is not discussed: in 7.1.1 there is no meaningful difference in the contents of SOSOP 1 and SOSOP 2, and in 7.1.2 the contents of the books discussed are mostly ignored by the booksellers.¹²³ However, I now realise what irks me is an incongruity in the way that meaning is attached to these objects. There appear to be two very different mechanisms at play: one in which meaning associated with the object's use is added, the other which involves a displacement of meaning from one object to another.

For me the value of books lies mainly in their use, books are objects to be read, to be looked-up and re-read if required. During this reading process, the object itself may acquire additional associated meanings. In *My Copy of Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*,¹²⁴ I offer an account of reading as an embodied process, one which physically alters the book, and in which the book and the circumstances of its reading alter its reader. It also demonstrates how personal meaning becomes attached to these books.

¹²³ The exception being the last mentioned, which refers to books not as a physical objects, but as a medium for the information that it (potentially) contains. Whereas the previous examples could be said to empty out the book, here it is filled; a level of meaning is assigned to 'the book' that the content of no individual book could actually match.

¹²⁴ In 2015, as a Christmas present, a friend gives me a copy of *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. It is the Twentieth Century Classics. I leave it out on the table, as perhaps I will retire the Penguin Classics when I finish working on my thesis. Whilst going over what I have written, I pick it up and turn to page 210 to check on a quote (again) only to find myself looking at 'The Rue Vilin' instead of 'Approaches': the passage I am looking for is now on page 206. I turn to the publishing information, which tells me that it is the 1997 edition; I hold in my hands another copy (SOSOP 3) (**Figure 27**) (Perec, 1997), superficially resembling my copy of *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (SOSOP 1), but clearly different from that and my other copy (SOSOP 2), both of which contain the revised text. Shortly after this, a colleague tells me about Simon Morris' *Pigeon Reader* (2012) and I order a copy. Morris' book is a facsimile edition of Perec's book with a modification to 'Reading: A Socio-physiological Outline'. On first inspection the difference in the feel of the paper is really noticeable. As I look at the book (SOSOP 4) (**Figure 28**), I almost laugh; maybe I am a collector of *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*.

The fact that it is a book is irrelevant; it could be a record, an article of clothing, an old photograph. Nor does the memory have to be a strictly personal one, for it can be shared in a way which falls somewhere between the personal and collective experience.¹²⁵

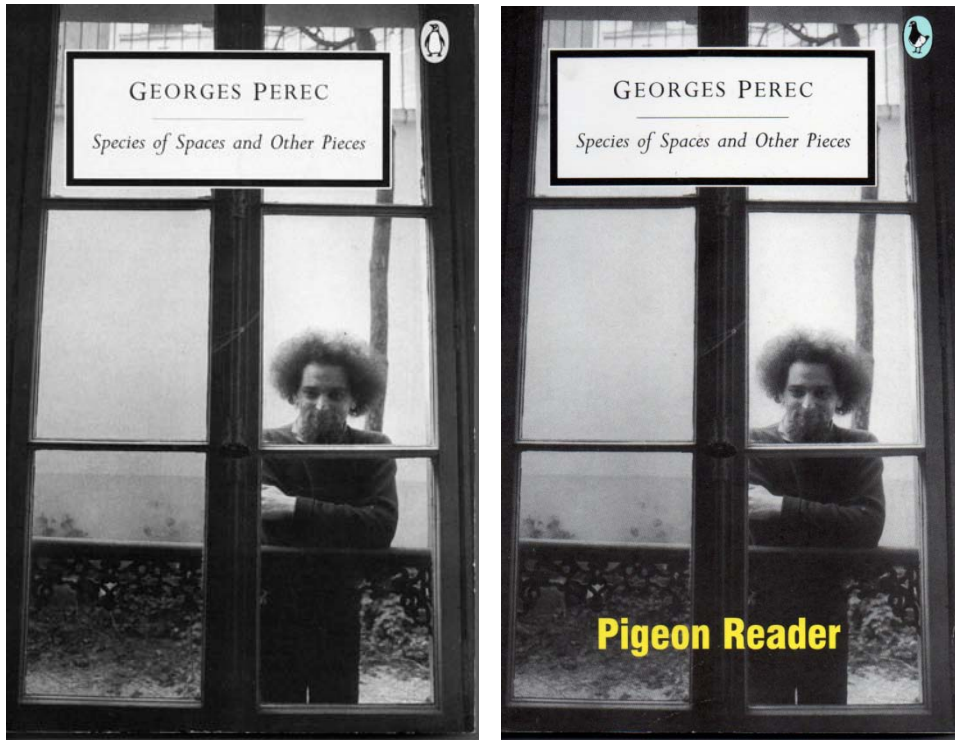


Figure 27 G. Smith (2016) *SOSOP 3*. **Figure 28** G. Smith (2016) *SOSOP 4*.

'The Booksellers' Books' discusses books as collectable objects. For book collectors,¹²⁶ the value of a book lies not in its use, but in its physical condition. A

¹²⁵ Recently I bought a second-hand copy of Liza Minnelli's *Liza With A "Z": a concert for television* (1972) (I remember watching it when first shown on British T.V. in the early 70s). The LP had been well looked after, with only an isolated faint crack here and there. However, 'Maybe This Time' emerged through a forest of cracks, surface noise caused by repeatedly dropping the stylus on to the disc. I felt an immediate connection with the previous owner; not through recognition of the lifting and dropping of the needle (that was common, almost everyone did that), but because I too would have done the same with this track.

¹²⁶ This image of book collectors is based upon stories told by the booksellers. Admittedly, other more nuanced accounts exist, e.g. Walter Benjamin's 'Unpacking My Library' (1999). Benjamin acknowledges the importance of the books contents, and also notes the personal meanings that can become attached to these books (like my copies of *SOSOP1-4*). However, he also separates using books from collecting, the latter concerned with the acquisition and possession of books. The collector's acquisition of a book brings them possession of its

book in pristine condition is treasured the most: the more signs there are that someone has actually read the book, the more its value depreciates. It seems that book collectors demand the absence of all traces of the use for which the object is intended, and in doing so seek the elimination of the reader.

There are exceptions to this ideal of an untouched book. One is the autographed copy (a signed 2nd edition, whatever its condition, will probably have a greater value than an unsigned 1st edition). Another is the rare book, the most common example being the first edition (the sale of a 1st edition in poor condition will tend to fetch more than a pristine 2nd edition). However, rarity does not necessarily bring value. An unknown author's book may be rare because it failed to sell, and then most of its copies are subsequently pulped: it is unlikely that such a book would be valuable, unless that author becomes famous when such a rarity can become very valuable indeed. These exceptions indicate what really motivates the book collector: the information inside the book is irrelevant as it can usually be found elsewhere. The referent lies outside the object itself. Usually, that referent is the figure of the author,¹²⁷ the apparent source of the book's content: the autographed copy has been in the author's hands and possession of a first edition suggests that the owner has an affinity or shared sensibility with the author (though, in reality, the owner may have only recently acquired a copy).

The book collector denies the book by finding its meaning in another place, in the person of the author. Similarly, making specialised bindings for e-readers denies the content within those appropriated book casings, although in this case it is not

associated history (like the collectors mentioned above, it provides a point of connection with the author, with its previous owners, etc). However, here there is an engagement with history, for these are objects that Benjamin interacts with; I cannot see him wanting to lock them away in a box, never to use them again (this is highly unlikely as the article is premised with his books being removed from boxes/returned after an period of enforced separation).

¹²⁷ It may also be that the book was the possession of somebody who is famous.

the text, but the media which delivers it, that is denied. This remediation may seek to legitimise the e-reader via the book, but it effectively displaces the texts within it, placing their origin back to the non-digital format, even though, in the case of contemporary books, that content is likely to have been electronically produced.

I mention above that there is something disconcerting about the book collector's approach to the book. I now know that my unease results from the situating of the book's meaning in another place (disassociating it from the object itself) combined with the attempt to erase all trace of the reader's interaction with the book.

7.1.4 A comparison of storage technologies

To rediscover something of the astonishment that Jules Verne or his readers may have felt faced with an apparatus capable of reproducing and transporting sounds. For that astonishment existed, along with thousands of others, and it's they which have moulded us. (Perec, 1999, p. 210)

Bookshops are seen to be under threat, and even the book itself is threatened by its electronic counterpart. Yet more people are reading books, and the book format appears to be holding its own against all contenders. I argue that the perceived threat to bookshops is indicative of wider fears of cultural decline (4.4).

One of the booksellers said that "You can pick up a book and read it in whatever way you want to" (Smith, 2012a, 1.10). As long as you are familiar with the language in which it is written, a book is fairly accessible. Often, this is not the case with electronic media: compatible hardware and software is required for accessing information. It might be useful to broaden my earlier approach (4.4) with a comparison between written word and recorded sound technologies.

Written records have existed for thousands of years (7.3), and in various formats. In Roman times, the codex - a collection of hand written manuscripts - emerged and remained the dominant format until the arrival of the printed book in 1455. Other formats have emerged, such as journals and pamphlets, but all are

recognisable as variations on the printed book. Until the e-book there was no significant change in format.

This is incorrect: "talking books" (audio books) have existed since the 1930s. These were initially intended, much like early typewriters, as aids for the blind. The concept of spoken word books is much older than its mechanical manifestation, for in the past, as Perec notes, people were often read to (1999, pp.175-176).

In 1877, Edison invented the phonograph cylinder: the first machine capable of playing recorded sound.¹²⁸ Since then there have been numerous technological innovations and format changes. Cylinders were superseded by discs, first shellac (78rpm) and then vinyl LPs and singles (33 and 45rpm). From the 1940s, reel-to-reel magnetic tape machines became commercially available, followed by 8-track cartridge and cassette tape players. Before the dominance of digital download and streaming, compact discs superseded both vinyl and tape. With each technology there are compatibility issues, e.g. you cannot play a CD on a record deck (for a start, the hole in the centre is way too big to fit on the spindle).

The printed book has been around some 422 years more than the oldest form of sound storage/playback. This may help to explain why the book is proving resistant to the threat from electronic media, for the longevity of the book format gives it a normative legitimisation: people feel that the book has always been there. In addition, the printed book is a stable format; the mechanics of it have remained the same. This is in marked contrast to sound storage media, characterised by a series of technical innovations, where it is expected that newer media will replace existing technologies. With sound storage technologies, change is the norm.

¹²⁸ The phonautograph (1855) recorded sound, but could not play the recordings.

7.2 Participation

At the request of the author a number of blank pages have been left at the end for readers to write their own “I remembers” which the reading of these ones will hopefully have inspired. (Perec, 2014: unnumbered)

7.2.1 The multi-vocal

In *Thaw* the booksellers generate material, which I then reshape as sound collages. During this project, I come to doubt whether my re-mediation of their stories is actually much of an advance on the ethnographer’s monograph. Here, I forget that *Thaw* is always intended as an interaction of different stories, as is evident from these excerpts from an early research methods presentation:

The research process will use ethnographic methods, but... deliver[s] a poly-vocal account of the booksellers’ environment. The intention is to shift the production of meaning away from the external observer towards field participants – to display a multitude of meanings rather than a single voice that is trying to impose its interpretation of events. (Smith, 2010)

and

the production of meaning in *Thaw* will be negotiated: meanings will arise out of the interplay between all participants; me, the booksellers, and the customers. (Smith, 2010)

Maybe the reason for my forgetfulness is that I now feel that I have too much of an influence in this negotiation. Or, perhaps, I come to realise that I want my participants to take a more active role in the shaping – in the writing - of their stories. It is not the modified ethnography which is at fault, for it delivers what I ask of it. It is simply that I realise I want something else from my participants and this research process: for these projects to produce works which are both multi-vocal and multi-authorial. *Thaw* and *The Recollective* are similar in that I mediate the participants’ material through collage (manually in the former, and by computer program in the latter). It is therefore possible that *The Recollective* may produce a similar work.¹²⁹ So, I introduce *Northern Venetians* as a generative

¹²⁹ The use of collage in each work is actually very different: random juxtapositions resulted from *The Recollective*’s mechanised process, whereas those in *Thaw* resulted from my own selection.

process in order to produce a multi-authorial work: a process which, once set into operation, will produce writing with little or no intervention on my part.

It is actually through my examination of de Certeau's writing (Case Study 2) that I regain some perspective, some composure, about *Thaw* (Case Study 1). I realise that I am isolating the booksellers, forgetting that their environments are not just places, but spaces: practiced places where meaning is formed through interactions within existing discourses, such as stories of characters within the Edinburgh book-trade (Smith, 2012a, 2.2 & 3.9). Those discourses shape the booksellers' tales, the booksellers re-mediating them in their re-telling. As de Certeau notes; "in spite of a persistent fiction, we never write on a blank page, but always one that has already been written on" (1988, p. 43). My re-mediation of the booksellers' stories is just another addition to an already extant body of meaning.

7.2.2 The audience

Omitted from the discussion above, but another participant nevertheless, is the audience. With *Thaw* I try to draw upon Kaprow's early writings to shape my approach to participation, but it is of little direct use. Kaprow perceived the audience to be a passive entity, which is why he sought its elimination through its incorporation within the work (4.7). For his participation to take place, the audience must be aware that they are there to take part in something, that they have a role to play. However, my intended audience is the shops' customers, who are unaware of themselves as being an audience: the work must first act upon them, before they can take part. This is why I use the term *audient* to describe an individual or group undergoing a shift from passive hearing to an active listening – an entering into an interpretative awareness of something.

My conception of the audience for *Northern Venetians* is somewhat different, resembling the reader of a book. My intention here is to encourage the reader to

play an active part in constructing the text that they are reading. I dispense with the traditional layout which allows significant authorial control over when information is made available, in favour of a decentred structure enabling the reader to move freely amongst the stories (5.7).¹³⁰

As for *The Recollective*, the audience is afforded a generative role, as contributions to the memory bank provide the material which the computer re-writes through its collage program. Their role becomes more active still, when audience members realise what the computer program is doing: some of them begin to add new inputs designed to produce humorous effects when collaged. Here, a feed-back loop is established and the process enters a stage where the computer is not simply re-writing audience inputs, but the audience is now writing along with the computer.¹³¹ If they were co-authors beforehand, they are now more so. Indeed there is some similarity with my idea of the audient, for this audience becomes aware of and interprets the computer's behaviour, and acts upon it.

My Rabelais extracts offer an image of the active reader. Initially Pantagruel's crew hear without understanding. It is only once they listen, that they begin to construct an explanation for, and an understanding of, their situation: they begin to create meaning. As for my endotic works, as these projects progress the audience is given increasing scope for engaging in a process of productive consumption (5.7).

¹³⁰ A reader could tackle a traditional book format in a similar manner, simply by flipping back and forth, dipping into it, but to do so is to read it against the grain. Some authors have explored formats which encourage such reading behaviour, e.g. Milorad Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars*, which I acknowledge here as yet another hypotext for *Northern Venetians*.

¹³¹ Whilst satisfying to note, this feedback loop is not extraordinary; it is just a more immediate and collective example of human/machine interactions which have happened time and time again, e.g. an example of a writer picking up on the effect of a machine is Enright's *The Typewriter Revolution* (Kittler, 1999, pp. 230-231) (Appendix 3, **Figure 31**).

7.2.3 Participation and practice

In forgetting the collective inquiry in which he is inscribed, in isolating the object of his discourse from its historical genesis, an “author” in effect denies his real situation... the setting aside of the subject-object relation or of the discourse-object relation is the abstraction that generates an illusion of “authorship.” It removes the traces of belonging to a network – traces that always compromise the author’s rights. (de Certeau, 1988, p. 44)

When Perec describes himself as a tiller of fields (1999, p. 141), he echoes Socrates and his “sensible farmer” of words (Plato, 2009, pp. 70-71).¹³² Just like everybody else, artists and writers operate within networks of meaning: we rent the space we live in, and make use of what does not belong to us (de Certeau, 1988).

In focusing on my participants and the character of their participation, I come to reflect on my own practice. I have already noted the roles played by Scott Porter (5.4, 6.2) and Mirja Koponen (5.10), but they are only a part of an extensive support network, of both institutional and non-institutional constituents, which I regularly draw upon (see Acknowledgements). In short, it is only because I can call on this network of contacts that I am able to make these works.

I come to question one of my original questions. I ask the extent to which we can, or should, regard participants as co-authors in an artwork. Instead, I should be asking whether we can meaningfully write of the individual authorship of a work. I write...

A similar state exists between my endotic works and other pieces; other artworks, other books. Works like *Thaw* and *Northern Venetians* are already embedded into a network of texts, as the former references Rabelais and the latter Calvino and Perec. Indeed, in both works, I use appropriated material as scores: building them upon the work of Rabelais and Meades, respectively.

¹³² This may be an unwitting reference, but given his allusion to knowing thyself in an earlier article I would suggest it is not.

Perhaps it is incorrect to write that these reference works outside of themselves, for their hypotexts are constituent; part of their makeup, almost – as it were – of the DNA structure. In addition, those related texts which inform the development of these works (Chapters 3-6) also need to be taken into account. My endotic works do not refer to other works, they are there alongside them as part of a network of intersecting lines.

I ask whether we can meaningfully write of the individual authorship of a work. I write and I trace words on a page that has already been written on.

7.2.4 Structured participation

Perec's writing is a starting point for my endotic projects. So too is my study of participatory artforms. I begin with some sketchy ideas for artworks, and set off prepared to develop these works under the guidance of Perec's writing. When I begin, I am under the impression that I am writing about participation. I use my three endotic projects to enable the participants to tell their stories about their everyday environments. In the process, I find that I come to examine myself and my own everyday space, focusing on my own practice as an artist, relating it to the work of my predecessors and contemporaries. I soon realise that I am writing about writing itself, both as an activity in a collective process and as metaphor for spatial practice.

However, what of the participatory forms I use to explore that practice?

Participatory works are not participatory because the viewer/reader/listener takes part in them, for this happens in all artworks: the audience is part of the creation of meaning. Participatory artworks are characterised by a deliberate structuring of audience involvement into the framework of the artwork itself, in acknowledging their participation, the artist seeks to increase or make use of it. Works of

structured participation explore the potential offered by the active involvement of the audience. However, in evaluating such explorations, the artists' motivations and the claims that they make for these works should always be taken into consideration (3.3).

7.3 Remediation and Language

Dialogue in fiction is not true to life... We strive to represent the voice, vocabulary, sentence structure, and speech rhythms of our characters and thus be "accurate" in our depiction, even as we edit out verbal static – those *ums* and *ers*, as well as mispronunciations and false starts – that, in life, as listeners, we edit out in order to focus on meaning. We also attend to matters of presentation that have no direct relationship to real conversation ... Of course we are free to depart from these conventions, but to do so is to draw the reader's attention to our "unnatural" presentation. (Turchi, 2004, pp. 186-187)

Pantagruel's crew are able to interpret the noises that they hear because they refer back to what they have already experienced and have knowledge of. Likewise, in my introduction I mention that I am primed for reading Perec's writing, as I have read similar works, the ground is prepared, and I read Perec through those works that I already know.

The remediation process identified by Bolter and Grusin (2000) works in a similar manner: we become accustomed to new media through reference to older media and the new is made familiar by its refashioning or replicating of existing media. In this, media are much like our machine technologies:

"In the beginning, railroad cars look like stagecoaches, autobuses like omnibuses, electric lights like gas chandeliers and the last like petroleum lamps." Léon Pierre-Quint, "Signification du cinéma," *L'Art cinématographique*, 2 (Paris, 1927), p.7. (Benjamin, 2002, p. 167)

Bolter and Grusin's concept is a response to emerging new media, but it is equally applicable to the understanding of all media forms. Even languages, written or spoken, are communications media, and, in Case Study 3, I comment on the spoken word being given a privileged status to the detriment of its written counterpart. This phonocentrism – which firmly roots the word in the body – has

paradoxically contributed to the emergence of a body of thought in which information is seen as a disembodied entity.

Phonocentrism is insidious because it is so deeply rooted in the languages we use (the word language is derived from *langue* which means tongue or speech). Even on the page, instead of writing or typing, we “speak” or “say” something. When Plato subordinates writing to the spoken word, he does so in writing. This is done through Socrates’ spoken words, apparently uttered during a dialogistic exchange. However, this Socrates is a character written by Plato: Ernaux writes “I agree with Plato when he makes Socrates say that he has nothing to learn from trees, only from the men in the city” (1996, p. 8).¹³³ Plato’s dialogic style is a remediation, writing pretending to be speech. Like other examples of remediation, it can be seen as trying to surpass the media that it is referencing, offering an improvement on the speech it mimics. We cannot be certain that Socrates ever uttered these words, as we only have Plato’s written account to suggest so.¹³⁴ Even if he did, his speech may have been littered with verbal static or forgetful lapses. Socrates (the character) does not have these problems because Plato has already decided what his lines are. Plato has taken time over the structure and content of his script, ensuring these words are delivered with the greatest effect.

Plato, via Socrates, has Thamous condemn writing. Now, it is important to note that spoken language predates alphabetic writing. Oral languages are generally thought to have originated 5000 years or so before written languages, with the earliest examples of writing attributed to the 6th Millennium BCE.¹³⁵ It is also

¹³³ See Plato, 2002, p. 7.

¹³⁴ Whilst “Socrates remains the chief speaker” of Plato’s middle period dialogues, David Bostock states that “one can now be quite confident that the views put into his mouth are Plato’s own views” (Honderich, 1995, p. 684).

¹³⁵ There are various examples of Neolithic writing, most of which are disputed. Sumerian Cuneiform is a product of the 4th Millennium BCE, with phonic correspondence evident by the 3rd Millennium BCE.

important to acknowledge that writing is not a form originating from the spoken word. Spoken and written languages are two separate types of media, they are distinct from one-another. Spoken languages are oral/aural forms. Written languages are visual, emerging from systems of pictorial representation. At some point(s) these media came into contact with one-another, and the interaction(s) between them influenced their subsequent development: visual and oral/aural media re-fashioned and reproduced one-another, e.g. the expansion of languages which resulted from written forms, or alphabetic systems based upon the phonemes of oral language.

As an artist who works with texts, I am still surprised that many people fail to recognise that writing is a visual media, and also that some people see writing as a technology, but somehow regard spoken language as innate. Visual languages have existed since people began drawing lines in the sand,¹³⁶ and there is as much hope of finding the remains of those lines as there is of finding the moment that a spoken language emerged amongst the first humans. Trying to do so is to miss the point, for it is like seeking the moment that music emerges from the spoken script of Lucier's *I Am Sitting In A Room*: that music originates not in Lucier's spoken words, but in his interaction with a tape recorder and the environment in which they operate.¹³⁷ It is the result of an ongoing process, there is no point of origin. There is no blank page.

¹³⁶ There are cave paintings which are 40,000 years old: for a very long time, humans have communicated with one another via visual media.

¹³⁷ Before the room is entered, even before Lucier begins to write his composition, that process is already underway.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

γνῶθι σεαυτόν ¹³⁸

Our individual lives belong to ourselves, they are private and full of personal meanings. In contrast, the everyday is a generalisation in which the personal is bracketed off, it is an impersonal – de-personalised – space. This may explain why many of my friends and colleagues spoke of the everyday as something which happened to other people (1.5). Discussing the everyday usually involves a certain amount of *othering*.

However, the everyday is also a major site of our shared experience in which we interact as public, social beings. Perec's endotics sought to make a connection between our individual lives and commonplace occurrences. Discussing *Je me souviens*, he spoke of it being in sympathy with its readers, so that his collection of recollections was:

a sort of appeal to... something that is shared. It is very different from autobiography... It's a book which starts off from a common memory, a collective memory. (Perec, 1999, p. 128)

His sympathetic remembering dissolved barriers between private and public space.

However, Perec's approach was idiosyncratic, which may explain why endotics remained very much a personal project. In trying to generalise from the specific - to formulate a method from his personal approach towards the everyday – there is the possibility that, like Perec himself, I too have built failure into these projects.

However, there is much potential in the vantage point he advocated, the everyday viewed from the position of those immersed in it. Given the insights which might be gained, I believe that it is at least worth the effort to examine that potential.

¹³⁸ Delphic maxim: *gnōthi seauton* (Know Thyself).

So, what have I achieved? I set out to practice an endotic based art, having no established model of what that might entail. I intended to make two artworks; one a series of sound installations, the other an interactive work using computers. Both would be participatory works investigating and drawing attention to the everyday: other than that, they have little in common. By the end of my research period, I have completed three participatory projects, all of which can be described as exercises in collective writing.

I write that I complete these projects, and by that I mean that I bring them to a successful resolution: I construct and install the *Thaw* sound-pieces, exhibit *The Recollective* at the *Reverting To Type* exhibition, and put *Northern Venetians* on continuous display online.

For me, *Thaw* has finality about it, once installed it is done and there can be no further development of it.¹³⁹ The project seems to have its own time and space, determined by its participants. *Northern Venetians* is formally complete, but it is structured to accommodate the addition of new texts. *The Recollective* is very much Version 1.0 of a work in progress; not only will it be shown again, but various refinements can be made to improve upon the piece.

Thaw, the first of these projects causes me the greatest difficulty and if I were to start a similar project tomorrow, I would approach it in a different manner.

However, through it I learn much about working with participants, and this makes the second and third projects much more manageable. Indeed, it is through *Thaw* that I come to realise that my projects constitute a form of collective writing.

¹³⁹ Here, I am not suggesting that the information gathered could not be used in other ways: much could be used for new works, e.g. the material concerning the history of the book trade in Edinburgh. It is just that, if I choose to do so, it would be a separate, distinct project.

Northern Venetians and *The Recollective* are both generative works, and more suited to my way of working: here, my approach to participation is more detached, more at arm's length. Brian Eno mentions that with such works the artist's role becomes that of "the planner and programmer" (1975b), and I admit that this appeals to the [not so] inner control freak in me.

In these projects, my participants are the co-authors of these artworks which would not exist without them. Through them, the participants explore their spatial practices as they engage in a collective writing. It is the participants who provide the insider perspectives on these everyday environments. The frameworks that I establish give them the opportunity to tell the stories through which we can begin to see images of their spatial practices emerge.

In writing this thesis it makes no sense to me to try to interpret the content of these works since these are my participants' stories, and they are telling them. Instead, I write about how I construct the enabling frameworks for these projects: I examine the interaction of the practical and theoretical elements with which I form my endotics. Drawing upon de Certeau's work I begin to visualise everyday practices as a form of writing, and suggest that we could analyse spatial practices by writing the city. I also start to focus on writing as my own spatial practice. I begin, again, to ask questions of myself.

This thesis is my account of how I attempt to practice an endotic-based art. In it, I write my own spatial practice. I comment upon the theories and artworks that influence these projects, and in doing so I situate myself in relation to fellow travellers who have shaped or are shaping discourses we, as artists, inhabit. In this practice, I write.

APPENDIX 1

on editing a sound piece¹⁴⁰

WHEN YOU FIRST START EDITING When you first start editing you think it is going to be straightforward, you don't think that you are going to be faced with something that resembles early writing when you first started editing you think it is going to be straight for war dwri ting when you fir or waritin when yfir ststststarted it in outthink it is gontbe where people run words into each other and sentences are paused where there shouldn't be a pause and words are plus or minus a letter or two. You already know this as does everyone else, we listen to it all the time and it's not as if people haven't written it down on the page for us on many an occasion. Youth in kit is going to best ra ight for wardwitht allhewor dings fall wher ethey are posed supto bebecause you want it to be straightforward with all the words falling where they are supposed to be because it would make your life easier if they did just that ... AND THAT'S BEFORE WE GET STARTED ON THE UNWORDED VERBALISATION.

Figure 29 G. Smith (n.d.) *On Editing a Sound Piece*.

¹⁴⁰ Whilst editing the *Thaw* sound-pieces I was also taking notes, and out of my frustration with the editing process this improvised passage emerged (it is a simple cut and paste job). At the time, I did not note the date of composition (it was sometime late in 2011 or early 2012). Aside from being a distraction from the immediate task at hand, it provided the basis of a computerised animation which I included in the *Reverting To Type* exhibition.

APPENDIX 2

THE FIRST BOOKSHOP (Blackwell, South Bridge)

- 1 At First the Idea It Felt Wrong
- 2 Book Chase
- 3 Booksellers
- 4 Depressive Poetry Reading
- 5 Faster, Faster
- 6 Ebb And Flow
- 7 People Shop In Bookshops
- 8 The Artist As Ethnographer (1)
- 9 The Bookshop
- 10 Whatever Way That You Want

THE SECOND BOOKSHOP (Edinburgh Books)

- 1 A Collector Not
- 2 Bert in the Background
- 3 Pod
- 4 Not Commonplaces
- 5 A Siren Librarian
- 6 A Good Way with Words
- 7 The Transactional
- 8 Pod Specialised Bindings
- 9 The Artist As Ethnographer (2)
- 10 The Harvesting
- 11 Thrill
- 12 Vinyl

THE THIRD BOOKSHOP (Main Point Books)

- 1 It's A Small Bookshop
- 2 Morphic Resonance 1
- 3 Serendipity
- 4 Book Collector
- 5 Morphic Resonance 2
- 6 Browsers
- 7 Book Collector 2
- 8 Morphic Resonance 3
- 9 Just So Everyday
- 10 I Sat In Corners

THE FOURTH BOOKSHOP (Old Town Bookshop)

- 1 A Destination for the Tourists
- 2 A Few Gems
- 3 Cardboard Tube
- 4 Victoria Terrace
- 5 Make Sure That Doesn't Land On Your Head
- 6 From the Cutting Room Floor
- 7 Obscure Requests

Figure 30 G. Smith (2012) *Thaw e-book* (contents page)

APPENDIX 3

The Typewriter Revolution

The typeriter is crating
A revlootion in peotry
Pishing back the frontears
And apening up fresh feels
Unherd of by Done or Bleak

Mine is a Swetish Maid
Called FACIT
Others are OLIMPYA or ARUSTOCART
RAMINTONG or LOLITEVVI

TAB e or not TAB e
i.e. the ?
Tygirl tygirl burning bride
Y, this is L
Nor-my-outfit
Anywan can od it
U 2 can b a
Tepot

C! *** stares and /// strips
Cloaca nd + -
Farty-far keys to suckcess!
A banus of +% for all futre peots!!
LSD & \$\$\$

The tryewriter is cretin
A revultion in peotry
" "All nem r =" "
O how they £ away
@ UNDERWORDS and ALLIWETTIS
Without a.

FACIT cry I!!!

Figure 31 D.J. Enright (1920) *The Typewriter Revolution*.

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