

Moving-with contact: the near space in an expanded field of drawing

Gesa Helms, May 2021

Dissertation for Research as part of the Creative Arts pathway

I count 5449 words (+9%) (of main text, no TOC, no footnotes, no bibliography, no appendices). I also do not count the research objects and notes presented here nor quotations. The main body of course weaves around all of the above.

REMOVE:

Word count: 8986 (of main text, no footnotes, not bibliography, not appendix)

Case studies: 1550

Notebook: 275 (Four events) + 306 (Pretense) 284 (Do I want to) + 271 (findings) = 1136

FOLDERS: 540

Other quotes 203

Glossary: 108

= 5449 words (5k +/- 10%)

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Four events

I start with these early on. First one, then after my visit there are four. I don't understand what they may be; they seem precious, special, extraordinary. In this, they are fleeting and insubstantial, of small things. I spend time letting them fold onwards in different means.

I try to talk about them and I falter. Not just once, repeatedly, over months. I set up meetings to falter over these.

It shifts the afternoon in Daserí. I still falter but with what has happened the preceding day I become daring about the inconsequential things, or perhaps it is her company. We eat and we talk, we watch and we drive. Then we are silent.

For the first time I sense it is a thing. It hardly matters and nonetheless.

When I show him he says: you didn't erase it, you just hid it, obfuscated it. It still remains.

In the meantime I produce a definite thing, a three layer video movement. It is all that I have done before: it is scratchy, violent and confident. It has a heart too. Appropriately with a question mark, or should that be a semicolon.

Elsewhere, someone dies (while we saved a life before Daserí). The day of his death marks the day that I pick up something lost on a pavement on a cold night a few years before.

The conversation about it will conclude a few months later still, in an introduction, a meeting withheld, a space between us closed.

But, I shouldn't mix methods, muddle enquiries, so let me change adjustment again.

(yet, seriously, I was observed drowning at the top of the staircase)

(a no longer existing case study padlet)

A pretense (and some rules)

I wrote about a year ago a set of instructions to my Research dissertation, about the pretense of linearity. I sensed the 12-weeks of lockdown ahead, hoping for only 4 (until Easter was the Germans' unusually optimistic timeline).

I reread this now, while seeking the space of two register shifts that I didn't see coming, and realise that I anticipate them quite alright in my instructions:

Nonetheless, I would like to introduce a few rules for this dissertation:

1. it manages excess. Part of the enquiries into drawing/contact are abundant and inherently generative. They are small and inconsequential when taken on their own (at least sometimes) yet in toto accumulate to a distributed field that far exceeds 5000 words. There are appendixes, follow-up on questions and there are satellite objects.

2. it presents in conventional linearity something that is far less linear in practice. Yet, for a textual document the practice of 'reading on' still presents a key approach to temporality, not unlike other time-based work. I can add loops, side notes and references for- and backwards, and still: you will scroll

down or turn over. My theoretical contributions are for this presented as findings; my case studies are story-lets that open outwards (to other media, to existing or imaginary appendices).

3. it budes up against its edges, seeks to subvert and step into the sidelines (knowing fine well the sidelines are as much part of the construct as the core itself). In this, it is dissatisfied with the institutional requirements. It tries to laugh at them but also takes them rather serious in its attempt to find gaps and little fissures to disappear into, to retrieve something from elsewhere or test where the citation convention can be made to serve other purposes.

(11 March 2021, Facebook timeline, Friends, no Acquaintances, also Appendix A: The fantasy of linearity in a distributed field)

1. Introduction

This dissertation is animated by the concept of moving-with. I propose it as a development from Springgay & Truman's (2019) WalkingLab and their concept of walking-with within the wider field of walking arts. The material that forms drawing/contact is situated in as well as constitutive of an expanded field of drawing. In this however, it moves and it is not just the author or artist who moves nor the participants but matter does too, across and between different terrains and spaces. It transverses too different modalities and registers. The movement is performative (like a drift, or like a flaneuse does), yet, by shifting traditional terrains and moving towards concerns of networked presence and identities, it in part leaves 'walking' in its traditional sense behind. The material presented is keen to understand this moving across boundaries (of public, private; of analogue and digital) and does so as research practice, this text itself being part of such practice also.

This text is articulated, in the spirit of above's rules, by means of a series of different voices and positions. These are often demarcated by alignment and font type, some sneak in a little under cover. For an articulation of these different voices, please see Appendix B: Voices and positions in this document, and see further in blog post: [INSERT BLOG](#))

1.1.Aim and objectives

Practically, I set out to pursue this programme in a series of investigations:

Explore the potential of an expanded field of drawing to trace, map and record

- a. contact in quotidian and fleeting encounters with self and other (human and non-human);
- b. while utilising the body as a drawing tool to investigate presence, reach and resonance.

To ask with such a drawing/contact methodology more specifically:

- a. what forms of materialisations can be gained when starting with notions of fleetingness and the insignificant?
- b. what can an expanded field of drawing say about a relational practice between self and other, across human and non-human matter?

c. what can be gained from centring such drawing practice on contact?

All this is put to the purpose of developing via Practice as Research (also PaR) (a critical spatial register within an expanded field of drawing, exploring the concept of near space. This practice attends to site, reach and resonance and the notion of moving-with.

2. Contact (a literature review)

2.1 Contact: exploring the fleeting insignificance of encounter

Exploring contact and relationality in small, intimate, near spaces positions this project foremost within contemporary and near-contemporary feminist concerns: over a body politic, the personal, care and relationality. I will focus mainly on two aspects of this enquiry: an investigation into (the mutability of) matter, another one into performance.

The performativity within the act of drawing moves into focus how drawing as activity is presented, absented, archived, remembered and forgotten. If performance is centred on the body of the performer within a specific unfolding time frame - a presence, can we then be curious about the kinds of spaces this is productive of: relationally, sensorially and materially? That such spaces exist in the present time also indicates that they may be past or anticipated, have a memory, an excess as well as an absence. Jones & Heathfield's (2012) edited collection centres on these kinds of presences and absences created, asking also how these by implication draw in a whole range of other media - such as photography, writing, drawing, re-performance, video - to access the live performance positing an important concern regarding interdisciplinarity and shifts in form, register and media. In a previous essay, for Drawing 2, I took Joan Jonas's diverse and career-spanning artistic practice through performance, video and drawing as reference point to investigate an expanded field of drawing. Her work across these media is sensitive to chosen media and intersections as well as a continuous exploration of stage, screen, and the relationship between artwork, artist and audience. Based on her work *Draw without Looking* (2013), a performance devised for a Youtube livestream, I explored the role of ambiguity in the construction of site as well as in the relationship between artist, artwork and audience and drew out a number of strategies around performance, screen and transition to navigate an interdisciplinary expanded field of drawing (Helms 2018). This followed Derek Horton (2015, 1) interest in understanding ambiguity in drawing as an 'interpretative relationship between people and things or ideas (or representations of them)'.

The means in which these have been investigated in performance and video work of the 1960s onwards also investigate the materialities of such lived experiences and thus more recently lead towards concerns of a new materialism and a post-humanism. Moving and shifting are significant processes here of the unfolding of an event, a gesture, a relationship: what chain of actions takes place to co-create drawing, contact and thus space in these small-scale encounters?

FOLDER 2. Karen Barad writes: 'It is through specific intra-actions that phenomena come to matter – in both senses of the word... Boundaries do

not sit still [Barad 2009, 135]

[*FOLDER 1 keeps unfolding. The space between her and FOLDER 2 keeps multiplying*]

FOLDER 2 She writes, along with other materialist feminists: ‘Feeling, desiring and experiencing are not singular characteristics or capacities of human consciousness. Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers.’ [Barad 2012, 59]

(Orley & Hilevaara 2018, 5)

It is here that some of the contemporary theoretical articulations, originating with Deleuze and Guattari and being further articulated by Rosi Braidotti’s (2011) nomadism and others that concern the transversal, the translation become relevant for us to focus in on the micro processes at play when different and diverse surfaces, textures and subjects interact and are in contact with each other (see the following blog: [INSERT BLOG on transversalism](#) as well as 3.1 on methodological implications). Practically, this enquiry thus follows a series of movements and shifts across forms, sites and encounters (analogue and digitally) and seeks to examine closely the material processes at play in these movements. This writing meets that of Hilevaara & Orley’s (2018) edited collection who explore writing practices explicitly as artistic practice and situate these within contemporary explorations of rhizomatic practice and new materialisms (and in doing so also transgress disciplinary boundaries in ways fruitful for my own investigation). In fact, for this dissertation I have invited two folders and chorus from Orley & Hilevaara (2018) to fold this material onwards at various intervals, like above and like so:

FOLDER 1 [*still unfolding*] Let’s continue then [...] Karin Krauthausen describes a spatialized unfolding. She talks about the multi-dimensionality of the practice of writing and reading being facilitated by the bound book, made up of folded sheets of paper. The physical act of folding those pages [*FOLDER 1 unfolds and unfolds, slightly out of breath*] both enables linear, codified reading, yet simultaneously disrupts its continuity. The reader can choose to fold backwards, forwards, interweave and extract, as the fold becomes a trickster between dimensions.

(Orley & Hilevaara 2018, 3)

One of the first themes that emerged practically was a frustration not to find events and more significant forms of contact as research material had me turning my attention more closely to what I did have and how that quotidian nature of my observations and encounters indeed contained numerous forms and practices of contact to investigate more closely. In an early BoW tutorial, these were discussed as lint, the abundant fluff collected in a tumble drier. That these processes are hidden in such a manner in plain sight is of course widely discussed in attendant research literature (e.g. everyday historians; feminist theories of care etc.).

This means also that a shadow hovers over this project: it's the shadow of about ten months of this project which traced the fleetingness of my first enquiries, the insignificance of the small things I turned my interest towards and the difficulty of sustaining the kinds of encounters in near space that I was seeking. This absence, became through Kate Zambreno's (2019) *Appendix Project*, where Zambreno assembles the excess excised from her 10-years spanning writing of *Book of Mutter*, an opening towards the wider animation of the emerging body of work, sharpening scale (small), duration (brief), reach (inconsistent) to relevance (cosmic) and helped organise a glossary and a series of satellite objects (both for the body of work and the dissertation), see also Appendix D: A note on failure. They in turn eventually fed into the key series, *Herz/Stein* [Heart/Stone, also H/S] and research findings as well as animating this dissertation's own Glossary and Appendices.¹ These research forms thus explore excess, abundance and divergence for the Research module (BoW has other forms and processes to pursue this concern, such as inventories in different forms, redundancy and iteration), see, for a more detailed articulation of resonances and divergence between BoW and Research objects, Appendix C: Related objects between BoW and Research).

FOLDER 2 Being and indeed staying, beside a work (be it object or event) is a messy business. Such is our work.

FOLDER 1. And we fold so tidy. [*She keeps unfolding*]

FOLDER 2 Writing-beside involves, first and foremost, an attending to, a listening, a level of care.

FOLDER 1 A methodology that P.A. Skantze (drawing on the work of Sebald) calls a narrative of care. [Skantze 2013, 8]

(Orley & Hilevaara 2018, 9)

While in the context of the BoW immersiveness and the sensorial arose as thematic at regular intervals ([INSERT blog post here](#)), it is only when I encounter Laura Marks' work on sensuous theory that the concept for contact at a distance and in closeness becomes fully articulated. Marks draws on Deleuze & Guattari's desire machine and offers a material theory to explore the erotic within artistic media (in her case, as a film theorist, in film and video). I read her short section on the haptic and erotic one day in front of an early Spring meadow to a patchy zoom call with myself (Helms 2021, <https://vimeo.com/532817519>):

Life is served by the ability to come close, pull away, come close again. What is erotic is being able to become an object with and for the world, and to return to being a subject in

¹ There are two more shadows, the first the UK lockdown in Spring 2020; the second a family emergency and subsequent stay over that Brexitcovidwinter of 20/21 in rural Germany. The latter has folded into the spatial practice and site that is *Stromverteilen*, which presents the organising principle for the entire BoW. The former is somewhat addressed in this dissertation as ways in with touch has altered during contact restrictions. This is however only done to a small extent and only reflected upon in a single Appendix E: Not/touching the pandemic.

the world; to be able to trust someone or something to take you through this process; and to be trusted to do the same for others. (Marks 2002, xvi)

At the end of the third work cycle for BoW (autumn works, the ones submitted as BoW), care and maintenance had risen to the surface in practical terms: the transformer blankets needed attending to over the weeks of their exposure, the routine care and maintenance highlighting the matters of care and how these too were lint, abundant. This work is not further theorised or contextualised in this dissertation. Perhaps it is simple follow-on development of my enquiries into contact, touch, the body; it also complicates the Erotic, right? (see [BLOG POST for further discussion](#)).

2.2. Herz/Stein

Before finding Laura Marks's work, I encountered the process that I came to call *Herz/Stein* [Heart/Stone]. A social media emoji first, to denote visibility, presence and closure, it became the term and concept that I fed again and again back into the work and different enquiries: of closeness, of presence, of stasis, also of jealousy and envy. Animating the bind and the solidity of this stone heart became an interest throughout. For a previous draft of the dissertation I designated *Herz/Stein* not as fourth case study but as weaver's warp for the whole research, as a structuring device for drawing/contact. In this manner, I use the concept to explore different relational constructs and practices across the work, with contact marking relationship. First and foremost, it denotes a research process; its audiences are not the ones this initial contact and relational practice is overly concerned with. Instead, the relationship is between selves and others (human, non-human, one person or more).

Herz/Stein as enquiry animated most of the staircase site, it is the site in which I encountered it first, along a flight of stairs, in a nearby coffeeshop, in a pencil-drawn heart I placed in a corner. It closes eventually in a series of variation, see Appendix F Variations of a Dream. And yet, as this transcript from Research tutorial 3 shows, those who watch, those who get to see the work are similarly implicated:

Do I want people to care about it? How can they care about it? Discussing this further, it becomes clear that the tension I seek to articulate towards audience is between

Tenderly held -----uncomfortably close

*This insight is very helpful also for the writing process in getting closer to something and then resisting as a process of getting clearer about something (and I realise in writing this up that this is resonant with the peripheral vision experiments in BoW). This relationship is key and it hovers in the work, both for BoW and Research, it is in fact at the heart of drawing/contact: tenderly held to uncomfortably close is precisely the relationship that interests me. In the writing this also happens: you bring the reader close and then you push them away again, by breaking, shifting style, you can draw them in to the point that they think: maybe something is going to be revealed and then it isn't, it's withheld. Rachel mentions Svetlana Boym's (2017) *The Off-Modern*, which concerns architecture, touch and nostalgia. And while my work doesn't engage*

so much with nostalgia, it relates to it through interests in memory, desire, fantasy and longing. Nostalgia is one particular expression of this, but in the memory work and the fantasy there is a concern about the stuff that isn't here. Rachel raises again how close contact, when thinking about the two pebbles can mean that sometimes if you are reading or looking at something that isn't quite what you are doing, it still offers insights. Some of the photographs of that space and that surface... you are right, it is not nostalgia. I reply: there is a longing in there. Rachel: Yes.

2.3. Distance and closeness

This leaves the second substantive theme of the literature review to unpack: that of spatial practices, matter across distance and in closeness and the relational practices these are constructive of and constructed by.

FOLDER 2 [...] And it is also present in Jane Rendell's discussion –

CHORUS [*singing*] Jane Rendell! [*Calling*] Jane Rendell?

FOLDER 2 – of site-writing, a critical spatial practice that she developed which combines critical and creative writing modes, essay and text-based installations. She questions prepositional vocabulary in order to investigate how position informs relation, and so determines the terms of engagement between critic and artwork [Rendell 2010]. A shift in preposition –

CHORUS Shift. Under. Behind. On top. Beneath.

FOLDER 1 Alongside.

CHORUS To. To you.

(Orley & Hilevaara 2018, 7)

The geographical concept that I began to organise around is that of 'near space'. It is deliberately not personal space as it doesn't make attempts around ownership neither does it want to get drawn into debates around safe/r spaces at this moment. Nearness is subjective and context-dependent and it allows to focus on the edge, the boundary where something or someone hovers and perhaps has resonance or not. Burns & Kahn (2005, 13) investigating the extent and reach of site is useful here for articulating the intricacy of three different layers of site:

The first, most obvious one, is the area of control, easy to trace in the property lines designating legal metes and bounds. The second, encompassing forces that act upon a plot without being confined to it, can be called the area of influence. Third is the area of effect—the domains impacted following design action. These three territories overlap despite their different geographies and temporalities.

Concerning the subjectivity and agency of those who move-with, the work of Sara Ahmed (2006) attends to the phenomenology of inhabiting social space (if not site). Her Queer Phenomenology takes serious a queer (sexual) orientation and allows to

become familiar with ordinary objects (such as an office table), focusing in on positions, gestures orientation.² In doing so, she articulates powerfully how orientation, of being in and out of reach, turned this way or that, facilitates subject identity constructions.

Through the work of Stephanie Springgay and Sarah Truman (2018), as WalkingLab, on moving-with, the geographical focus is joined with new materialism and a non-human relationality. Their work in particular will serve as the methodological focus and is discussed in detail below.

The blog's research folder introduces a series of relevant writers as well as (visual) artists who explore, develop and inform similar concerns around distance, closeness and near space ([INSERT link to blog](#)). For the purpose of this dissertation, I would like to introduce Katrina Palmer's practice to orientate my own enquiries alongside the earlier introduced work by Joan Jonas.

Katrina Palmer's interdisciplinary practice on the Isle of Portland (*End Matter*, 2015a and 2015b) as well as *The Dark Object* (2010) offers works that are site-specific, audio-based, interdisciplinary and contain theory fiction. While *Dark Object* is a work based inside an art school where a single student must not create an object while locked in for the duration of his studies, the *Loss Adjusters* on the Isle of Portland take us through layered audio tours (and some visual and textual material) around a series of characters who are concerned with the absence and weight of quarried stone. In conversation with Doug Burton, she explicates

I use fictional tropes in the work and that runs through both the story and the elaborated environment, so the meanings of the objects are unstable and precarious, open to interpretation, revocable even.

I present found objects but they represent in a similar way to how real things are represented in fiction. They're real things but they're fictionalised. The status of the objects is deliberately unstable. (Katrina Palmer in Burton [2015, 52])

In the concept of near space I thus place site and practice into relationship: a notion of spatial practice that is haptic, practical, agentic (across humans and other matter) and that alludes to the myriad of relational combinations, at distance or near, that affect a site, a location (and thus e.g. avoid some of the pitfalls of the romanticism that sits in more geopoetic notions of place). I do want romance too, tbh, just not in a nostalgic version, and thus Marks's focus on touch in relation to the haptic and the erotic seems better suited.

FOLDER 2 *[quoting Michel Serres]* Then take the same handkerchief and crumple it, by putting it in your pocket. The two distant points suddenly are close, even superimposed.

FOLDER 1 Rigour, if we think about it though, is as much about folding outwards.

[She continues unfolding. The chorus, one by one, disappear into the cosmic planes that the handkerchief now occupies. FOLDER 2 is light years away] [..]

² see Helms (2019) in relation to my parallel project in Drawing 2.

VOICES OFF We find ourselves in outer space
[Everyone is present but suspended as and between celestial bodies, amidst the vast
unfolding, FOLDER 1 and 2 are still at work but nowhere to be seen. Slowly forms
emerge, like constellations, satellite clusters]

(Orley & Hilevaara 2018, 12)

3. Drawing (the methodology)

3.1. Moving-with as method

The dissertation itself presents as artistic practice. It does so by moving-with a series of routes through the body of work and its enquiries. It is interested in the pursuit of movements in which contact arises in fleeting encounters. It is also interested in the materials engaged within these encounters and the kinds of spaces they are productive of.

Against the backdrop of interdisciplinarity as contemporary form and impetus in an expanded field of drawing (Jonas 2004, Sawdon & Marshall eds 2015, Palmer 2015b) the interest of the methodology is to practically — through a body of work — explore an expanded field of drawing (the shorthand I employ for an interdisciplinary practice) around the substantive concerns of moving-with, near space and drawing/contact.

As mentioned above, Stephanie Springgay and Sara Truman (2019) develop their concept of walking-with in the context of new materialist and post-structuralist theory and practice. A key to this are Rosi Braidotti's (2006) transpositions that are 'playing the positivity of difference' (Springgay & Truman 2019, 52), emphasising the non-linear and nomadic. These transpositions explore 'regulated disassociation' of bonds which are usually assumed cohesive, allowing for a focus on intensities and movement rather than being. Their writing around sensory enquiry and affective intensities spells out the relevance of the sensorial and how this can be explored beyond immersion. This opens the possibility for fragments, distance and detachment and a moving into and out of closeness or distance, i.e. the moving-with that I mobilise Marks' erotic for in my work.

The practical textual means of this dissertation draw on auto-ethnographic forms of enquiry in the social sciences and place them in relation to performative practices (mainly of self-directed enquiry, less so other human participants, though a few feature), this is discussed as a PaR methodology.

The three case studies presented here each relate to specific sites and a series of performative enquiries. The first, *verge/weed* sets out at the edge of a path and its forms of growth; the second, *Dreaming the staircase*, explores an institutional staircase and its attendant sites and practices (observed, imagined); the third one, *Stromverteilen*, takes a transformer station on the edge between small village and

forest as starting point (and at the point of submission has become a fictional site taking in the entire BoW).³

The core practice of this project is the already introduced series entitled *Herz/Stein*. Rather than presenting it as a separate case study, its work is woven right throughout the material of the dissertation to explore its relevance not merely as findings of the research but also as impulse, impetus, failure and excess.

The case study narratives present and link each to an online presentation space (as padlets) at this moment. A more traditional analysis of findings is presented in the section ensuing the case studies. The approach taken for this consists of a review and analysis of sketchbooks and other materials and records (photos, loose sheets, FB posts, evernote notes) in which I recorded, reviewed and more intuitively explored the emerging materials, their salience, potential and omissions. I have included a section which collates attendant resources (as satellite objects) to draw out and forward the research materials beyond this current 5000 word limitation (see Resources and attendant satellite objects).

3.2. Practice as research

Robin Nelson (2013) explores ‘material’ thinking as an epistemology of arts praxis that moves between knowing that, what and how, emphasising that the substantive knowledge is underpinned by epistemological processes, a practice that informs, elucidates and shapes them.

Bolt (2004) ‘materialising practices’ intend to understand ‘the dynamics of the circulation of artistic products... which implies an ongoing performative engagement and productivity both at moments of production and consumption.’

Material thinking or materialising practices thus constitute a relationship between process and text (and not between image and text:

FOLDER 1 Boundaries do not sit still
[FOLDER 2 is miles away now, unfolding still. She is heard repeating ends of sentences like an echo] [..]

CHORUS Robin Nelson!

FOLDER 1 He has coined the term ‘complementary writing’.

CHORUS [whispering] Complementary!

FOLDER 1 To describe writing that works alongside practice, helping to articulate the research enquiry and afford new insights [Nelson 2013, 36]. Although he differentiates this kind of writing from practice, he does not suggest that they are mutually exclusive or that they need to be separated.

(Orley & Hilevaara 2018, 6)

³ *Four events*, with which this piece opens presented the very first case, initial enquiries and the concerns these raised for the articulation of research question, method and materials generated.

Having arrived at visual, creative art via a qualitative social science research degree and professional practice sees my creative methodologies being informed by such experience. Significant for this project is the extent to which cultural geographies have long engaged with research positionality, which in turn led also to practice-oriented methodologies as well as auto-ethnographies (see Högström & Helms 2019, Helms 2020, Helms 2019, Helms 2017).

4. Empirical: practicing site and site practice

4.1. verge/weed



*Object 1 audio narration of
verge/weed*

When does a series start? What marks its beginning?
Is it when I take the Bronica to the lochshore? When I load
the film? When I say: next time I will bring the Bronica? The
tenth time I stop and position the phone to take an
exposure? The first time? When the grasses begin to grow?
When the bindweed starts winding?

verge/weed starts. It becomes a thing. I take the rolls and have them processed,
one of them printed. I spend, much later, a day scanning. I make slideshows and
posts (here, there, and the draft folder).

I dream of instructions. Of people watching. He does, watch. Sometimes there is a
joke: step further, Gesa, just a little bit further still (into the verge, across, and
eventually to tumble into the loch).

Other views filter in, prints veer off, find photocopy paper, a larger printer. The
greenhouse. The bridge. Are they part of it? What is it? Is it staying on the path,
exceeding it, recording the growing season.

I depart. Live for a week on the other side of a bridge. Include the 700 mtrs walk
across it. I travel again and find ourselves passing underneath a bridge, another and
yet another.

I record more abundance. In close up, shield bugs nestle inside wild carrot flowers.
They also nestles with each other. I watch, even stare.

I return, record some more and do one of the journeys again. By now, the season
has changed, both here and there. The nettles are dying off the bindweed is
exalted. The garden offers apples and walnuts, and my dad as eager participant.
We finally perform, I record our veering, verging.

This record is merely remembered. It is written quickly. I may have omitted much. Will
I retrofit, trace the medium changes across, the turns taken and the positions
revisited.

<https://oca.padlet.org/gesa492645/wuvuilk2ntri>

4.2. Dreaming the staircase



*Object 2 audio narration of
Dreaming the staircase*

I told him quickly of this dream. It doesn't have an ending. I wake up before the ending, the destination. For weeks, months, I try and daydream a series of onwards developments. It is a desire dream. I don't reach my destination within it and yet: it is totally within reach.

One day isn't good. I depart, speechless, and exit, unplanned for, abruptly. I vaguely notice the interior construction that I am departing through. They walk overhead, I hear their voices. Outside I retrace my movement, my turns that have me exiting. I realise the movement is entirely congruous with the staircase movement in the dream itself. The dream starts with me doing the dishes, it follows with a suggestion, an invite, I fail to reach the invitation, or am I the one who gives up on it.

I look at the actual staircase closely. I walked it for years. I noticed its grandeur but generally wouldn't pay much attention. The turrets, on the other hand; the corridor, on my left hand; the occasional darkness. Once I begin to move-with the staircase, my body crosses effortlessly the edge between dreaming and waking. It is this movement that I trail, stalk until I can step effortlessly between one and the other, in the middle of that institution, while holding a conversation.

For months I return and observe, stand, watch; often talk or listen. I notice its participants, those who walk-with the staircase. I learn gossip. I find extra doors, hidden corners, the objects that make the staircase staircase.

Unexpectedly, just a couple of weeks in, my dream concludes. In practice. I find the two rooms that reside next to each other, the two fragments that suddenly relate to each other; and a movement ensues on the staircase that concludes both dream and desire.

The staircase, right at its top, has a Luke, or is it: die Luke, the hatch (I remain uncertain about its article, is its correlation to the living merely incidental?). I find it early and fantasise about its escape first. Intent to feed it back and to organise around it. In the end, I don't quite remember: do we? organise around it? or does it remain a fantasy.

A wooden door invites me to push. I never did until recently. Inside it smells chalky, I am waiting for the cicadas on the other side to reward my response to Ancient Greek's simple past.

In spite of its solidity, the staircase is movement. The principle animated. (not him, the Head, mind).

I try to squeeze it into a single post and a thirty minute conversation. Of course I fail, and yet I get another invitation which I follow suit.

The dream acquires a third act: a fantasy of its objects, me, the ones who view, walk and participate. It is, like the original, fun. We have fun.

Black heat / white heat. I stand and turn. Someone joins me: how can you bear that heat. Later, I take it to the picket and offer it as position, place to the one who complains about the cold. He smiles.

The filter for the staircase is dramatic cool. It mellows the gold decorations and pushes the contrast, I would say a little, it claims dramatically. Another site, further along the corridor owns vivid warm, doing so, it provides a step towards that forest that would eventually lead to the city of illusions. More commonsensically it leads to a filing cabinet.

We can, and once do, depart by flying down the far turret. At its base there is a plaster opening, beautifully peeled. Let me show you. We can quite possibly touch it, too.

<https://oca.padlet.org/gesa492645/2y2n9hxf9on>

4.3. Stromverteilen



Object 3 audio narration of Stromverteilen

I lean forward, hold my head in my hands and breathe out. I hear a woodpecker not far away, then another one further out. They found wood that resonates best for what is required. Am I listening to a call and response or a call out, a competition.

I hear the sound of earth being shovelled nearby, the engine sound of a small JCB too, there are vehicles moving far off, a dog barking. And then the birds. I know from sight they are mostly coal and blue tits, some sparrows. There is a blackbird.

I try to steady my breath, the heaviness in my stomach, try to stop the latter from rising up my gullet.

I don't quite succeed. I willed the nausea earlier on today too, considered it of the house, now I realise, as I sit here, on site yet to the side, a bit hidden by some ever-greenery, it as mine.

The Trafo is within touching distance. It seems solid and strangely otherworldly [otherwordly]. I see the firs, the opening of the road towards the paths, sun is on the meadow.

Yesterday I successfully trailed a lemon butterfly. It was the fifth I have seen this year and admired how they saunter zigzag-like to the woods. Or perhaps it was always the same one, having lived since the disappearance of the snow a month ago.

It played with my scarf, their hues almost identical.

But, the transformer. It is a desk these days, no longer parkour, or perhaps just of a different discipline. Here, now, to the side, I sense my discomfort concerning the publicness of this site for the past five, almost six months. I breathe out and sink deeper into the surface of the wooden table, sway a little more daring on the front legs of my chair.

He talks to his work as much as I talk to mine. I hear him muttering as he moves one plant after another.

This site was unintended. It shouldn't have happened, then it did.

I shuddered a little as the early joy gave way to the idea that this might be a eulogy. And then it turned further, wider, more resonant still across sound, scent, movement and sensation. And so it became dream-like too, a series of movements, paths, a choreography to myself, and over the months increasingly witnessed and engaged with by others.

I returned, and returned. Stretched site and myself, did one loop, another.

I hear a soft squeak. I recognise it and find the bird towards the top of the nearest fir next to the keyboard. A jay, a tender sound, this one, cat-purr-like. It seduces me plenty.

I lean back, the jay flies overhead, its blue feather glittering against the sun, I spy the white. A table is in the shade, the sun doesn't reach but somehow it feels that it radiates from the corner of the house effortlessly onto here. The fir needles sway, against the wind and the sky, patterning between here, the concrete block, the meadow behind.

I stand up, he drove away, I walk into the sun.

I falter a little at the enormity of the site to text requirement.

A feathery swirl is tumbling noisily downwards from the nearest fir. It disentangles and flies upwards again, two nuthatches. I gawp in wonder at their sex in flight and what I just witnessed.

Later I will remember that I cried those first ten minutes at the desk, in private, no one tugging on my attention and my heart moving skywards

Later still, as this continues to unfold, I climb ontop again and cross-legged, southward-facing, I paste and match format the transformer.

<https://oca.padlet.org/gesa492645/8vghdo2olqqwjib1>

5. Glossary

	distance	
	a/drift	
	contamination	
moving-with	diary	depth of field
reach/resonance	lint	instruction
near space		screen
		touch
	verge	parkour
	Herz/stein	satellite objects
	push	
	Im Walde	
	crow (shell)	
	Sorge	

Object 4 Glossary for drawing/contact

Note: A glossary introduces terms and concepts. Sometimes it tries to fix these, to stabilise them. Here, the glossary is discussed in the entire text, the glossary itself a piece of work as part of the research dissertation (like like other Research objects). Its four quadrants denote themes and processes: the proposed concepts of moving-with contact, its obstacles, the works that engage the obstacles and, lastly the methods by which this particular artistic practice conducted research.

6. Findings: drawing/contact

The findings present the methodological lens and process of investigating drawing/contact over a period of 30 months. Indicative of the PaR applied in this project, this segment from an earlier Research assignment submission demonstrates the meaning-making, reflecting and developing forward of the enquiry (and that only small parts of these processes discussed are part of the submitted BoW is indicative of the number of iterations and development processes employed).

The idea of nearness and proximity came also into focus in three further ways (which developed chronologically in this sequence):

a. *Herz/Stein The thin-papered book formats which developed out of two interests. Firstly, the visual see-through of my sketchbooks, the idea that material, notes in proximity to each other bleed and shine through. And, secondly, the hesitancy to make explicit some of the more intimate observations and events and to be curious if they can be narrated as flicker book (if not graphic novel) to make them present without explicating too much.*

b. *peripheral vision in close-up So much of traditional visual art is premised on the illusion of space that it creates. Here, crucially, distance is a key function: if we move too close to an object, the conventions of perspective expose themselves as the artificial thinking device that they are and we discover our eyes 'seeing' in rather different ways. I wanted to explore this by stepping in and close and trying to trace thereby myself amongst it (the distance denotes by the curves my peripheral vision produces).*

c. *Stepping into the verge: touching Eventually, I devised a series of small, solo, then 1:1 moving-with performances to record. Over a few days I stepped into the verge, walked towards and reached out to a single apple, then had my dad observe me doing the latter and us to pick some apples further out of reach still and lastly, a plan to walk across recently fallen walnuts turned the stepping out/ across into a horizontal reach of each of us dislodging walnuts.*

<https://close-open.net/2019/10/19/d-c-event-walnut-gravity-support/>

(Research Assignment 2, 24 October 2019)

This research builds on earlier work around the line and walking-with, and in fact a series of presentations and texts that bridged emerging drawing/contact and built on previous projects, the Line and the Gap. I put forward the idea that walking-with a line could be expanded further into an understanding of moving-with, a further reach of bodily movement beyond walking as well as beyond human agency. Thus is could trace register and media shifts. How these translations, if you let them ripple across different forms of media, are generative of new instances but also the difference from one to the other. What happens in this translation? How does the new thing bear resemblance of the former and it also opens out to somewhere else? Here, the PaR yields insights theoretically articulated around transversalism and nomadism and animate most of the artistic practice relevant to this dissertation.

What sensory registers are engaged? If it isn't merely walking but a wider range of kinetic activity, what happens to other senses? What is foregrounded, what steps back. Marks' (2002) work on the haptic offers a strong connection to such wider senses beyond the visual, her work also exploring smell.

I would like to send the reader on a series of routes through the enquiries before drawing out the concerns over reach, resonance and near space as findings from this project. These routes demonstrate how the methodology of exploring lint via a material and performative drawing/contact process offers insight into the utility of such methodology as well as into the substantive enquiries around a particular spatial practice.

6.1. Four routes (tracing back and forth while sitting atop a transformer station)

Contact, movement and distance in cyanotypes: I eventually cyanotype. I start with the mature walnut tree in my parents' garden, one coat, two coats, one side, two sides see a curtain emerging of 72 prints, 36 sheets of simple, disassembled sketchbook paper. Different light and wind conditions (along with different chemistry) deposit wind, pressure and as the October weeks pass, increasingly the decomposition of leaves into blue. I move from a single tree to the newly discovered expansive woods beyond the far village edge, better paper and longer duration. In mid-winter some sheets are left for days, record snow along with acidic soil. This later series, *Im Walde 14-23*, is at one point returned to the edge of the woods and in scale exceed all previous work.

As contact printing method, cyanotype is sensitive, notably once employed in low-light Northern hemisphere outdoor conditions around the winter solstice, and with objects that exceed its scale: how do you contact print a forest?

Eventually, a curtain acquires the potential to be a blanket.

Lines, transects, parkour and immersiveness: Lockdown #1 sees me losing not only my site, the staircase, but all routes and the commute that structure my days. I find a new one and for a time over summer it looks as if I may include a city-centre walking tour as part of drawing/contact. I shift location in September and in October find the transformer station, a fir to shelter under and over months this site expands. I have a new commute, through the village of my teenage years, out of the village, past the pool, up a slope. I walk this countless times, on many days thrice to and back. One day I pull myself up onto the transformer and write. This becomes a parkour: up, down, up and down. I record the insects alongside me. The site is far, ambitious, I walk it in my ambition, its reach shifting from day to day. Can you immerse yourself in the visuals of it? I doubt it. But perhaps other senses can come to my and your aid here? Depending on the wind, I smell burning birch wood, I may hear a drill, a dog, my clothes acquire fir resin, my clothes layer depending on task, temperature and temperament.

I settle at times on an early cartographic training tool: a transect. Should I?

I place two kaleidoscopic viewing devices into the shrubbery on the meadow edge, one facing skywards, one parallel.

Herz/Stein, binds and screens: the emoji heart mocked me, hurt. This series is the most obvious one and the most difficult one. The short note above on an early stage testifies to the wrong turns taken. When I take stones and bind them with sock yarn, or perhaps when I find the seaweed attaching so firmly to smooth stones on a January beach, it starts to animate. It's the animation that also resides in the staircase, a swirl back, forth, my stretched-out arm holding the stones and the binds in different configuration. I trace, I draw, I refuse to decorate either yarn nor bind. I place them to the side and a summer school process a few months later finds rubber bands having disintegrated, their bind no longer holding. I move, cut up, re-arrange and finally find a viewing device (a simple hole torn into a single sketchbook sheet, a tool discovered in a zoom call with Hamilton Perambulatory Unit (2020) a few weeks earlier) that offers distance, focus and a stage in which the

heart/bind can animate. I realise that the edge, the off-centre occluded sides as well as my hand that holds the string are important too.

Viewing devices, drawing machines, mobiles and swirls: these start early, with a phone app, then a curiosity of not looking, motorway routes underneath numerous bridge in high contrast. I forget, return to these with the torn-out sketchbook page (see above). Early too I fantasise about satellite objects for the dissertation and a disco ball for the staircase performance. I dream of Alexander Calder's mobiles. I make viewing devices to spy jays and Douglas fir tops along with a wooded horizon line. I purchase a pinhole camera to go wide, to undo the edge. I set up a drawing machine at the same time, the owner of the woods removes my twenty drawing implements and five days of recording, I start another one, this one a single branch. The children play with it, my dad calls it Gesa's typewriter when he visits on his own. I walk the slope up and down to catch its turning point on my wristband's GPS, I find a gesture on a time lapse, a burst and it seeks to mirror the geometry of a fir cone.

6.2. Reach and resonance in moving-with

It took a while to realise the significance of fleetingness to the forms of contact I was trying to investigate, and to realise that such fleetingness was accompanied by abundance, ubiquity, that in fact the quotidian nature of much feminist research over the past decades found expression too in the creative arts processes in which contact, touch, relationship was taking place and space. That these accumulate to become observable, researchable and practicable followed. That such accumulation offers insights into the forms of contact with an other. Such other is not primarily Spivak's (1988) post-colonial Other but an outside, a shadow, something not I, which can be dyadic, relational, not primarily abjected, Othered.

The research employed numerous means to consider screens, layers, sideway glances to explore the salience of contact, its resonance (and perhaps memory) and effectively reach. Here, the early interest in contact and touch quickly led to a similar interest in distance and absence of touch, to explore the point, the edge, where one ceases, starts, is barely there. There are an effective range of drawing tools and processes to facilitate such enquiry and to support an exploration into questions of site, reach, connection.

Moving-with offers a methodology to engage the human body, its senses and to turn it into an investigative tool, well beyond a drawing page, and the processes and series presented here and the BoW bear witness to this. Reach and resonance are thus concepts that arose during the enquiry and lead to a fuller exploration of the concept of near space.

6.3. Near space as critical spatial register

There exist different modalities to distance and closeness. Some of them are indexical: folding the sketchbook pages around the staircase bannister; *Herz/Stein* wrapping and folding, binding them, the stone seems to disappear. Here the direct touch alters and shifts and is significant as to what is object or event. Through the enquiries I have a sense of what happens when this becomes looser, when the

distance increases, how much resonance is carried up to what point and when it then recedes. At this stage I am glad to find and intrigued by the generosity and abundance of the research and how much was actually happening in contact.

The extent to which this has been researched over more than two years is significant. If I consider a number of early slide shows exploring travel routes, bridges to cross over and pass underneath and bus journeys in Northern Greece, these already explore such questions of reach, resonance, veiling along with questions of where and how contact happens (see [BLOG here](#)).

Deleuze & Guattari (1987) speak of 'smooth space' as the close-range spaces in which the haptic can take precedence, yet, as I remained somewhat hesitant to make this project more theoretical than it is, I am keeping the notion of near space, as the reach of one's arm's length (and just beyond), as space that is relational, marked by contact and touch, the haptic; along with a recognition that in order for it to be significant, the concept of distance is always also invoked.

It is here too that the contact restriction of the Covid-19 pandemic are significant, as a far larger part of this work has been realised under pandemic. The core of the work originated initially in encounters with another person (several different people, most fairly fleeting in duration, even though the people were generally close to me); with the pandemic these relational encounters disappeared and tangible objects, touch, and contact processes (wrapping, contact printing, rubbing etc) moved to the fore. These are similarly fleeting, slight. But that is one insight; the other has to do with the role of movement in negotiating either: walking a very obvious one, but many other forms of positioning closer, further, adjusting the distance. As such, I consider the negotiation of proximity, closeness and distance as key insight in this work, as moving-with a methodology to negotiate (and thus produce, shape, refuse too) near spaces and drawing/contact. That these happen in the interplay between self and other, between the visual and the haptic, opens up towards further research, further practice to explore the erotic.⁴

7. Conclusions

Like the site at the forest edge, *Stromverteilen*, this work is generative to a fault: how far does it reach and resonate? The 5000-words limitation proves hard to meet: I designate appendices, research quotes and eventually audio notes in which my creative writing takes a form beyond a limited word count. It feels only right to expand the work in such ways as the ubiquity and abundance of the subject matter is precisely what animates it – once it moved into view, into focus, seeing that initially it seemed stubbornly out of reach. Nonetheless, the focus of this dissertation suffices: it delineates a PaR enquiry that is at once informed by earlier creative arts projects as well as a social science research practice and that relates it to relevant art practices and a topic of significance. The latter shines and resonates in different ways: most clearly perhaps it is expressed by a colleague's recognition: Gesa, you don't talk about contact but about 'at arm's length', and she was right:

⁴ There also remains the issue of mobility. This PaR shifted to accommodate unexpectedly not just once but twice. That its methodology is so mobile comes unexpected. Mobile/mobile, see what I do here?

as much as the desire for closeness, for touch, there is demand for autonomy and control, tracing the boundary between these, the thresholds and slippages has led to numerous enquiries in an expansive BoW and a Research dissertation.

Concerning the rules around excess there is a further insight: the explicit focus on it allows for part-management, part-engagement: to provide a thinking space and a practical container to contain and hold, to provide openings and outlets, and perhaps also to consider excess as abundance and not simply too much?

This dissertation as well as the BoW bear witness to the routes pursued and honed in order to trace, map and record quotidian lint as well as exploring the potential of the (or specifically: my) body to act as starting point for such enquiry concerning presence, reach and resonance (see sections 6.2 and 6.3 above). Moreover, through Laura Marks's concept of the erotic it also speaks to the adjustments, the focusing in on, the re/directing of one's gaze and extending one's hand required for these to rise to the surface, become visible, become haptic. In this, this PaR sits firmly within the tradition of feminist scholarship and practice of pulling focus, of stepping in. Furthermore, the focus on Marks' Erotic enables an understanding that of site that is at once detached and intimate, it moves-with difference and thus allows forms of engagement that immersiveness elide as immediacy.

The materialisations that this enquiry engenders are numerous (see section 6.1): the padlets of lockdown walk images or absent sketchbooks are some; the various routes through the sites others. The dissertation soon begun to generate its own research objects, the glossary and appendix the first ones, then the case studies (while the BoW folded onwards to the empirical and then increasingly fictitious site of Stromverteilen). The PaR started slow with these first drawing/contact events (see the opening of the dissertation), it then acquired in Daseri a first more deliberate relational practice that folded into the staircase site and which was brought to an end with the first pandemic lockdown in mid-March 2020. Since then, and notably with the move towards northern Germany the relational practice became more strongly non-human and contact enquiries took place more traditionally with myself and various (contact) media. Contact as centre point helped in fact facilitate precisely this coming together of medium and practice as well as relational concept. Once my interlocutors had moved towards zoom meetings or sometimes illicit walks, I was glad about contact as focus as it allowed precisely this inclusion. It however also means that the quality and type of contact remained blurred, at a distance; the eventually submitted BoW in many ways far more physical and haptic than I had imagined.

8. A selective dictionary

Herz/Stein	Heart/Stone
Im Walde	In the woods/ forest (a street name)
Sorge	Care
Stromverteilen	Distributing electricity
Verteilen	To distribute
Strom	Electricity (literally: flow)
Trafo (short for Transformator)	Transformer (station)

9. Resources and attendant satellite objects

Essays, blog posts and public materials such as videos, padlets etc.

Research Objects

Research padlets

Verge/weed: <https://oca.padlet.org/gesa492645/wuvuilk2ntri>

Stromverteilen: <https://oca.padlet.org/gesa492645/8vgddo2olqqwjib1>

Dreaming the staircase:
<https://oca.padlet.org/gesa492645/2y2n9hxzf9on>

Research objects relating to the literature review

Fluff/Lint (section 2.1)

Herz/Stein (section 2.2)

Pinhole camera and orientation (section 2.3)

The haptic and the erotic (Laura Marks 2002)
<https://vimeo.com/532817519>

Glossary

Stromverteilen as digital portfolio

<https://oca.padlet.org/gesa492645/rthyyn7qr5iz1zak>

Critical reflections between BoW and Research

<https://close-open.net/category/critical-reflections/>

Research folder blog posts referenced in the dissertation

Relevant earlier posts, projects, publications

9.1. Other works relevant and/or cited

Charlotta Ruth Meta-Liveness,
<https://charlottaruth.com/paper/choreographic%20contingencies%20for%20on%20and%20offline>

Juliana Spahr thisconnectionofeveryonewithlungs; The Transformation

Bahnu Kapil, Ban en Banlieue, Schizophrene

Sophie Calle

Chris Kraus I love Dick,

Katrina Palmer (2010) The Dark Object

Katrina Palmer (2015) End Matter, <https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/end-matter/>

Joan Jonas (2013)

Joan Jonas I want to live in the country (and other romances), 1976

Georgina Starr Eddy and Whistle

Bethan Huws Lake Drawings

Gillian Wearing Dancing in Peckham

Sol LeWitt, <http://radicalart.info/concept/LeWitt/>

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Gordon Matta-Clark Intersect

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11. Appendix

11.1. Appendix A: The fantasy of linearity in a distributed field

This dissertation serves the purpose of a degree qualification component (40 credits at HE6), in this it has to address a series of objectives and its content is evaluated against a set of criteria to award it a mark. To allow me, the student and author, to progress to that mark, the coursebook offers, similar to other OCA courses a series of parts (five), each marked by a point of tutor contact, to arrive at a 5000 word essay in the appropriate structure and conventions.

At the same time it also is a document that marks the completion of more than ten years of (not very linear) engagement with the field of creative practice in a British Higher Education setting. This setting has changed much during those years, much to the better; and then it got a lot more expensive (as an English, fee-paying degree while I am as EU citizen a resident in Scotland where this degree would not cost me). But, to get back to the other purposes of the document (and you can sense, like I do, the pull to talk about the institutional framework governing this document's existence): it completes my desire, intent and insistence of acquiring an understanding of first painting, then fine arts, then visual arts, then something that sits more contemporary, more interdisciplinary and concern-oriented. Since my last HE5 module I have come to understand my practice as creative arts in an expanded field of drawing. It allows for much.

Additionally, at the start of this module I was concluding a fixed-term part-time teaching role in the discipline in which I undertook a PhD at the start of the millennium. As part of this I supervised eight undergraduate Honours dissertations, some of them employing approaches and questions not dissimilar to my own final year work.

This dissertation seeks to explore its substantive concerns in a form that is as much part of my creative practice as it has been part of my academic and professional skills for twenty years. In this it seeks to understand a written, textual form to perform, to present, to engage and participate in such practice of distributed drawing. It runs up against conventions and rules (like anything that is based in an institutional setting, or in fact is part of societal structures).

Nonetheless, I would like to introduce a few rules for this dissertation:

1. it manages excess. Part of the enquiries into drawing/contact are abundant and inherently generative. They are small and inconsequential when taken on their own (at least sometimes) yet in toto accumulate to a distributed field that far exceeds 5000 words. There are appendixes, follow-up on questions and there are satellite objects.
2. it presents in conventional linearity something that is far less linear in practice. Yet, for a textual document the practice of 'reading on' still presents a key approach to temporality, not unlike other time-based work. I can add loops, side notes and references for- and backwards, and still: you will scroll down or turn over. My theoretical contributions are for this presented as findings; my case studies are story-lets that open outwards (to other media, to existing or imaginary appendixes).
3. it budes up against its edges, seeks to subvert and step into the sidelines (knowing fine well the sidelines are as much part of the construct as the core itself). In this, it is dissatisfied with the institutional requirements. It tries to laugh at them

but also takes them rather serious in its attempt to find gaps and little fissures to disappear into, to retrieve something from elsewhere or test where the citation convention can be made to serve other purposes.

11.2. Appendix B: Voices and positions in this document

The FOLDERS 1 and 2 and their CHORUS (Emily Orley and Katja Hilevaara 2018)

The notetaker (of assignments, tutorial notes, online or offline)

Case study narratives

The geographer and social scientist (PhD, Glasgow 2003) (she knows how to do that academic stuff)

The daughter (always present, always watchful, transgressively loyal)

The lover (longing) (watches the birds, reaches her hand out, sometimes less futile than others; if all else fails, she edits her writing a little more)

The dreamer (is far more present than she lets on, generally)

The gossip (is fairly quiet, generally, in all this)

The art school student (aspiring) (would really like to get Garamond, even though it looks awfully dated in italics, somehow she knows better though)

11.3. Appendix C: Related objects between BoW and Research

A summary and exploration of key objects as they related across BoW and Research and how this relationship developed through lockdown 1 and shift to Germany; case study padlets and glossary as Research objects; the blankets/covers as theme that emerges practically within the methodology in the autumn works; how a final not/immersive 'drawing' for BoW is abandoned for BoW once I realise that it is spawning ever more PaR objects that speak to the methodology of this Research dissertation.

11.4. Appendix D: a note on failure

A failure note (aka Zambreno's Appendix Project:

Initial investigations in BoW led to focus in on two particularly processes for Part 3 of the module:

- What constitutes source material and subject matter for this project?(see the two blog posts from 28 July and 4 August on each)

<https://close-open.net/2019/08/04/tutorial-reflections-1-what-is-source-material/>

<https://close-open.net/2019/07/28/critical-reflection-modality-of-bow/>

- How are medium and material shifts achieved in these drawing/contact performances and events?

Following the investigation of what was source material I attended to my lens-based records and begun to read them as source material also, exploring them for a few short presentations along the ideas of contact/ moving-with and agency (human/non-human).

A series which begun half-articulated in June concerning the wild verges along a path and lochside location became articulated in a MF camera series to explore proximity, nearness and camera/viewer position in this context.

There are, roughly, two substantive themes in here:

- moving-with: edges, agency and transgressions

<https://close-open.net/2019/07/30/sketchbook-thisconnection-as-bridge/>

<https://close-open.net/2019/07/29/site-the-bridge-of-ag-achilleios/>

<https://close-open.net/2019/08/02/sketchbook-2-12-ko-loop-edit/>

- verge/weed (and a variety of investigations)

<https://close-open.net/2019/08/25/i-catch-late-and-early-sun-on-a-couple-of-rolls-each/>

In all this, there was still a sense of failure, or rather: a curiosity why the idea of intimacy and performance remained so difficult; and why in turn the subject matter seemed fleeting, small and inconsequential.

<https://close-open.net/2019/10/19/absence-in-drawing-contact/>

11.5. Appendix E: Not/touching the pandemic

The veranda as site where Covid enters this work in the last week of March 2021, at the point I find a private space to write.

It sat on the veranda that I had finally gained access to (tbh: it was only then that I asked, and of course it was offered). What the veranda offered me was pretty much off the scale: it offered spacetime magic, the transformer in touching distance and yet otherworldly, I was sitting behind greenery, no longer in public, the space above my head the airiest I had in over a year, the chair comfy, the table not quite as big as it would have been perfect, but then my library is only three books wide these days.

Then covid came. He arrives, I am about to grin widest to tell him of the joy I just had, but he isn't alone, a car arrives behind him. They talk, it is clearly not arranged, but the third car is. I know he is exhausted, his eye still sore. They talk on the road, I pack as I know they will head for the open space table setting. He smiles and asks if it was useful, I reply: oh yes, just a little short. He apologises: I chased them away twice already, I can't this time. They look at me from the garden gate, I don't look back, then I am off, as always, I can do the slinkiest unconcerned black cat disappearance act around here. I had discovered this secret path before, to the side of the house, down the elevation, across the grass and fence, then I am gone, I don't get anywhere near their interest. I am wood creature like in these moves, well used to hiding out of view, slinking away. I practiced it over the months, when people approach, he gives me a casual Ciao or a wave, barely noticeable, I ignore their stare like I ignored all other curious stares about who the woman was that always goes to the woods.

I walk off into the woods, find a stone heap, unpack my sketchbooks again, it's windy, not spacious, I am annoyed of having to relinquish the veranda. I return an hour later, they are still there. I walk past, he had gone inside before I arrived, I don't wave.

On Monday he tells me: you better stay back. My visit on Thursday has Covid. It takes me a few minutes to realise the visit is the ones I did not meet. The ones who never told him they both were coming (and thus exceeding the +1 from another household rule), the ones that sat close on a windstill evening on a shallow veranda, the ones that closed that one perfect writing space I had eventually found, the ones that enforced a 14 days quarantine rule, the ones that pushed the meeting between my dad, him and myself into weeks away. The ones for whom there was no energy spare. The ones that brought Covid closest to how it has been since Leigh's. It will most certainly be the British variant, it is almost always the British variant here now (while the UK newspaper talks of foreign variants that mustn't be brought, they ignore that it is their global export that heats the current European wave).

I have little in the way of how I talk about contact restrictions in my work; the work shows it: it barely features anyone but me in this, it features far more fantasy that it would have had it concluded a year ago. This will merely be an appendix of how I write under pandemic conditions, how the veranda was magical and is as so much else out of reach. He tested negative, so he may after all had sat back far enough (he always did before, always said no; here, he laughed apologetically to me that he couldn't, not this time).

11.6. Appendix F: Variations of a dream

First attempt

I use the back staircase that day. I fly down and hear her walking up. I wrote about this before. I am sure I have. I have drawn the event too. And wrote about it some more.

It became a thing.

Later, much later, I explicitly invite her into the project.

He tells me of her ghost on the green. He says: you observe well. That is what you have discovered.

But these are not the iterations I want to talk about.

The most recent one takes place at the perimeter. Three times. Each time so different. Each time lingers and my reactions remain so similar to the very first time. It takes me well into the morning hours before I realise: I am safe. This does not harm me.

Who is harmed though?

What by?

The hearts are stone-like.

I used stones before. Several years ago in a meeting in West Berlin. I see them clearly as I try to unpick a conflict that seems far bigger than us two. I discover the stones that seal off an opening, a cave. A secret and I stay out.

Here, now, the stones are red. They flutter initially. Then they stick. Become hard, unmovable and I retreat. They mark the end of a conversation, an exchange.

The beating hearts are different. This one is still. Solid. Fixed.

It rolls in front of an opening.

I invite her and eventually she appears. Blink and she is gone again.

A little later, she walks up the hill. Inside some orange barriers she trails behind. Her face seems like a threatening rain shower. I take she threatens me. Later, thinking about it, it seems more like an aftermath than a threat. In any case: we walk past each other, barely acknowledge the other.

Inbetween I notice much else. A hand reaching, an uncertain gaze while standing back, an arm tugging. I depart, not wanting any part.

I still don't want it.

I still don't want it.

I don't want.

I don't.

I want.

I

Still, she returns and lingers. In my dreams and on the street. Once in presence, often in absence.

I am haunted by her. What haunts us both?

I enter the building again, walk up where she walked up, my step is light. I hold a stone wrapped, heart-shape-like, as I ascend. My step is easy. Aimless, I move further, higher.

The ghost of the staircase is a princess. She wears black clothes and her long hair flows. They don't wrap her like the night though. They ruffle, billow, fill her with others, elsewheres, make her spine heavy as her heart, her gaze uncertain.

I ignore her hand. Next to me lies a daughter wrapped in silver silk.

We are all daughters of House.

It's the basement door that we both hear creaking in the distance, sometimes close.

The second dream is our dream of a basement. She seeks my hand. We mistake this for envy.

Variation 1

At some point in the night I remember a variation of the second dream. Let me try and recall.

The sensations around the shadow shape are so strong, they precede his hello, they move up the hill ahead of them and I get closest as I move past and behind her. Then I am gone. So is she.

I leave messages that day and then a couple of days later and then a few days later still.

I listen to them again and they themselves are dream-like. Did this happen? Now, ten days later (the dream in fact occurred on the day my friend self-isolated at her home, will I leave my quarantine along with her, I wonder).

It is all over the street, and in the bottom of my stomach. I met this feeling fifteen months ago and it ejected me for three, four months. Today, I trace it a bit further, find its source, its power, I still want to leave, it is still so strong. It breaks off all connection, all that I seemingly have learned.

Oh, yes. But the dream:

This morning I revisit the original dream of the staircase. She was there too, first when we met around the dishes, the vagueness of the arrangement (though I still remain uncertain who of us was vague). And then I moved onto the staircase. My usual route, the one I knew would lead to the office was closed (apparently: one-way traffic), I thought: oh well, I head further down then, it will take me there eventually. So I run on, fly in fact down the stairs. At a landing I met someone. I chat, get

distracted, realise the timing is unrealistic: I will need longer, or perhaps I will not go at all. I move on and the stairs disappear in a dark fog. I wake up.

Now, who did I meet and chat. I wonder if it was her all along. She was waiting on the way down for me.

Where is it that stairs ceased.

In the weeks following the dream I rebuild the staircase and explored its movements. It would lead me to the crossing of forest tracks where I know the Lillypond is based. I know the office is further to the left. But really, at the bottom of the stairs (I was intrigued, never concerned), I think there is the tarry oil basin of my early childhood. She was already near, much nearer than the gap.

She has been haunting the staircase all along.

Variation 3

isn't solely mine. It is the first thing I write today. I forgot entirely writing as I was walking.

It is his, when he says almost right at the end: you know, you seem to have found the moment in which the Herz/Stein started beating, pulsating. It was there in the wrapping, the hanging, the spinning and the plasticity of the rubber bands. This now allows the heart to become a living thing, not that stone that is rolled merely in front of a cave, to fix, to solidify.

11.7. Appendix G: Not/writing about

In a meeting in Winter, the first in that configuration, we discuss the theme of topical significance. I say how mine is insignificant, or rather: how I investigate things of insignificance. Someone says, I think you mean subtle. She continues that she has things she cares about deeply but would not go near for this work. I reply, you know, my work for several years has been about violence, often about sexual violence. It underpins much of what I do and this work too, and yet it appears nowhere.

This holds until it no longer holds. One afternoon, or rather, a few days later in the night, I realise what connects us, what connects and animates our moves up and down that flight of stairs. There it is, the sexualised violence in our families past and how we encounter it as small children, as daughters of the houses we were born into, alongside our caregivers' attempts to make good, to save us and themselves for all that was to come. No one needed to atone, not for her and not for me. It is not that connection that binds us to the violence: we never met the abuser.

There it is. The animating hinge that isn't named and is so common. It also allows us to move across, to touch the agency, the desire, the wilfulness. In my forties I will see a photograph, circa 1964 of my mother in class, laughing her head off, her arms sway wildly. I ask her, so, who are you. She, a little embarrassed, points to this young woman who could have been me on any photograph between 1986 and 1992.