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Emplacing, Re-Imaging and Transforming 'Missing' Life-Events:

**A Feminine Sublime Approach to the Creation of Socially Engaged Scenography
in Site-Specific Walking-Performance in Rural Landscapes**

Submitted for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Theatre Studies, LICA, Lancaster University in December 2016.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no
material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any
other University.

Signature.....

Louise Ann Wilson

Abstract

The aim of this practice-as-research project is to contribute to the emerging field of ‘socially engaged scenography’ through the creation of site-specific walking-performance pursued in tandem with theoretical inquiry giving particular emphasis to notions of pilgrimage for rites of passage. These notions are however, reframed and reworked through the lens of the concept of the feminine sublime, which allows me to work with notions of transformation in such a way that is non prescriptive and open-ended.

The practical elements of the thesis embraced two specifically designed site-specific landscape walking-performances. The underlying subject matter of those performances was biological childlessness-by-circumstance and the ‘missing’ life-event of biological motherhood. *The Gathering* (2014) revealed the day-to-day and seasonal workings of Hafod y Llan, an upland sheep farm in Snowdonia, Wales. It was evolved through an extended period of research at the farm. In the performance the reproductive cycles of the ewes became a metaphor for human fertility and infertility, biological and non-biological motherhood and other pathways to, and types of, mothering and parenting. *Warnscale: A Land Mark Walk Reflecting On Infertility and Childlessness (Warnscale)* (2015-on-going), is a self-guided walking-performance specific to the Warnscale fells in Cumbria that is mediated through a published multi-layered walking-guide/art-book and aimed at women who are biologically childless-by-circumstance.

This practice-as-research project proposes that by emplacing ‘missing’ life-events, for which traditional rites of passage or ceremonies do not exist, into a rural landscape scenographic-led walking-performance can enable participants to reflect upon, re-image and transform, even in the smallest of ways, their relation to and understanding of those ‘missing’ life-events. I argued that this ‘transformation’ is achieved through an applied use of the theoretical concept of the feminine sublime, which I interpreted and evolved into six scenographic principles. I then applied these six principles to the creation and performing of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*, which, I suggest, functioned/function as ‘socially engaged contemporary scenography’.

The six principles were developed through a close study of Dorothy Wordsworth’s (1771-1855) approach to, way of engaging with and writing about landscape (her ‘mode’) documented in her *Grasmere Journals* (1800-1803). This ‘mode’ can, I suggest, be understood and analysed through the concept of the feminine sublime and offers a counterpoint to the ‘masculine’ or ‘transcendent sublime’, which was dominant in the Early Romantic period in which she, and

some of her female contemporaries who also informed the principles, were writing. This ‘mode’ parallels my scenographic-led process. To be clear: the concept of the feminine sublime is not about the female gender but a sensibility that manifests as a way of engaging with, walking through, or dwelling in *and* observing the landscape.

My written thesis reveals that the performances had personal (for participants) and wider social effects in relation to the underlying subject matter of biological childlessness-by-circumstance. This is evidenced in the way they enabled individuals to transform positively their personal experiences of that ‘missing’ life-event and in their contribution to the growing networks of communication about this social issue, which carries the potential for social and cultural change, in matters relating to the underlying subject.

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Introduction: Mapping the Practice-as-Research Project

Components of this Practice-as-Research Project

This practice-as-research project comprises of the following components:

1. A 78,000 word written thesis entitled: *Emplacing, Re-Imaging and Transforming 'Missing' Life-Events: A feminine sublime approach to the creation of socially engaged scenography in site-specific walking-performance.*

This thesis frames the practice by offering contextual information (a combination of theoretical and historical frames), description of the method and practice, and a reflective analysis of the practice produced.

2. Two specifically designed site-specific walking-performances entitled: *The Gathering / Yr Helfa (The Gathering)* (2014) and *Warnscale: A Land Mark Walk Reflecting On In/fertility and Childlessness (Warnscale)* (2015-on-going).

3. A publication entitled *Warnscale: A Landmark Walk Reflecting on In/Fertility and Childlessness* written and created by Louise Ann Wilson and published by the Louise Ann Wilson Company Limited in May 2015 with ISBN: 978-0-9932664-0-9 (Wilson, 2015a: 81).

This publication is used by participants undertaking the walking-performance of *Warnscale* and is the object through which that walking-performance is mediated.

4. A **DVD of Supporting Material** documenting the practice created for this practice-as-research project – *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* – is insert inside the back cover of this written component of my thesis. This supporting material comprises the following:

Supporting Material (Documentation): *The Gathering and Warnscale*

The Gathering / Yr Helfa (The Gathering)

The supporting material for *The Gathering/Yr Helfa (The Gathering)* is designed to give the viewer a visual and textual insight into the primary research process and the walking-performance. It incorporates:

- *The Gathering* – Credits.
- *The Gathering* – Overview.
- *The Gathering* – Design: photos, storyboard and costume design drawings and route maps by Louise Ann Wilson.
- Primary/Site (Landscape) and Secondary/Subject (Animal Reproductive Cycles) Research.
- Gallery – The Performance with: extracts of the ‘Landscape Poems’ and the ‘12-month poem cycle’ written by Gillian Clarke for *The Gathering*. Copyright Gillian Clarke; Extracts from additional texts written by Louise Ann Wilson.
Production photographs by Lizzie Coombes (Copyright LAW Co) and Joe Fildes/NTW (Copyright NTW).
- Participant Responses.

See also: www.louiseannwilson.com/productions/thegathering

Warnscale: A Land Mark Walk Reflecting on In/Fertility and Childlessness (Warnscale)

The supporting material is designed to give the viewer a visual and textual insight into the three-tiered research process, the walking-performance and the book through which it is mediated. It incorporates:

- *Warnscale* – Credits.
- *Warnscale* – Overview.
- *Warnscale* – The Book
- Primary/Site (Landscape/Earth Science) Research.
- Secondary/Subject (Reproductive Science/Social) Research.
- Tertiary/Social (Participant) Research: Mapping Walks – Maps and Words.
- Gallery – Book Launch Walks & Exhibition 16 & 17 May 2015.
Photographs by Lizzie Coombes. Copyright LAW Co.
- Launch-Walks & Exhibition Participant Responses.

See also: www.louiseannwilson.com/productions/warnscale

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Practice-as-Research Project Questions

Primary Research Questions

The primary questions that I wanted to ask through this practice-as-research project are:

- How might site-specific walking-performance in rural landscapes function to enable individuals or groups to reflect upon, re-image and transform, even in the smallest of ways, their relation to a ‘missing’ life-event in the manner of a rite of passage or pilgrimage?
- How might I create performances that use rural landscape, walking and performance in such a way that those components become metaphors for, and bring new perspectives on, experiences of the underlying subject matter of biological childlessness-by-circumstance?
- How can different sorts of knowledge and information (science, social, local and lay, participant) be brought together and layered into the performance in such a way that these factors gain alternative meanings when placed in juxtaposition?

- How might the concept of the feminine sublime provide a methodological and theoretical model for scenographic-led walking-performance that seeks a transformative outcome?

Secondary Research Questions

As this practice-as-research project developed a series of secondary questions and concerns began to emerge. These questions reflected how, when creating *Warnscale*, I felt a need to work directly and explicitly with the underlying subject matter. The questions that emerged were:

- How could *Warnscale* engage participants who have direct experience of the underlying subject matter? Who are those participants? How do I engage them? How do they inform the creation of the *Warnscale*?
- How might *Warnscale* participants become the authors and performers of their own experience in such a way that is meaningful to them?
- How might *Warnscale* enable processes of transformation that are on-going after the event? How can the physical and metaphorical landscape of *Warnscale* can be re-visited physically or in the memory/imagination?
- How might *Warnscale* participants individually and collectively become acknowledged more positively in a broader social context in such a way that might lead to a change in how society organises itself around women's fertility, the family, careers, work and childcare?

Principle Aims of the Practice-as-Research Project

‘Transformation lies at the heart of all theories of sublimity’

The Material Sublime of Women Romantic Poets by John G. Pipkin (Pipkin, 1998: 599).

This practice-as-research project builds on more than twenty-years of professional experience as a scenographer and maker of site-specific walking-performance in rural landscapes. In 2007 I founded Louise Ann Wilson Company Ltd (LAW Co).¹ I am the artistic director of LAW Co and the creator of the performances the company produces.

As a scenographer working site-specifically, I drew the two walking-performances created for this research project, *into* and *out of* the rural landscapes in which they were created and performed. These walking-performances were entitled *The Gathering / Yr Helfa (The Gathering)* (2014) and *Warnscale: A Land Mark Walking-Performance Reflecting On In/fertility and Childlessness (Warnscale)* (2015). *Warnscale* is an on-going walking-performance that is mediated through a published book entitled *Warnscale: A Land Mark Walk Reflecting on In/Fertility and Childlessness (Warnscale)* written and designed by Louise Ann Wilson (Wilson, 2015a). Their creation allowed me to investigate and interrogate the research questions through the physical and embodied act of practice, as well as through this written thesis.

The Gathering and *Warnscale* were created, or ‘borne’, out of a rural landscape, its people and the history of that specific place through scenographic-led, site-specific processes. The creative process and outcomes of those performances reflects the scholar Christopher Baugh’s observations in the forthcoming chapter entitled ‘Devices and Wonder: Globalising

¹ See, <http://www.louiseannwilson.com>

² Baugh’s chapter is not yet published, but it forms part of Joslin McKinney and Scott Palmer’s book on expanded

Technologies in the Process of Scenography’² that site-specific performance ‘interrogates and ‘unfolds’ the biographies and autobiographies, both geographical and industrial, of their relationship with local communities – the term ‘unfolds’ is used by the theatre and performance scholar Deirdre Heddon in the book *Autobiography and Performance* to describe site-specific-performance making processes (Heddon, 2008: 90, Baugh, 2017: 22).

Most crucially perhaps, as this practice-as-research thesis explores, *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* evolved in the *context* of the underlying subject matter of biological childlessness-by-circumstance and the ‘missing’ life-event of biological motherhood, with the *social aim* of transforming participants’ relationship to that subject matter. It is, I suggest, this combination of factors: rural landscape, site-specificity, scenography, underlying subject matter and the social aim of transformation that makes the walking-performances created for this research project uniquely different to other site-specific walking-performances created in rural locations.³ In order to support this suggestion later in this chapter I contextualise the practice created for this research project in relation to other rural site-specific walking-performance and installation practice.

The way that *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* sought to uniquely used the combination of factors outlined above in order to reflect-upon and transform the underlying subject matter, positions them in the fields of site-specific and walking-performance created in rural landscapes, the evolving field of ‘socially engaged scenography’ and the associated fields of therapeutic landscapes and therapeutic mobilities. Through this practice-as-research project I am primarily seeking to contribute new insights to these fields as well as to the field of feminist performance. Chapter 1 of this thesis looks specifically at the evolution of my own site-specific performance making leading up to *Fissure*. It explores how that practice evolved from site-specific

² Baugh’s chapter is not yet published, but it forms part of Joslin McKinney and Scott Palmer’s book on expanded scenography due to be published in 2017.

³ All these terms and factors are explored more fully as this written thesis develops.

performance into socially engaged scenographic-led walking performance (in rural landscape) and to this practice-as-research project. There are many parts to this cross-disciplinary project that are not written about in this thesis because they are not my primary focus. These include the way that the practice interfaces with the fields of science and art, environmental science and ecology, social, cultural and psycho geography, map-making (GPS and physical), and autobiographical art and performance. However, in chapter 3, I do look at the work of other artists who are dealing with the underlying subject matter of biological childlessness-by-circumstance, many of whom work autobiographically.

The word scenography originates from the Greek ‘skēnēscene’ via the seventeenth century Latin word ‘skēnographia’. In his introduction to the chapter entitled ‘Space’ in the book *Performance Perspectives: A Critical Introduction* scenographer and scholar Scott Palmer locates the first use of the term ‘skēnographia’ (Palmer, 2011). In *Poetics* (350 BC), writes Palmer, Aristotle describes how the term was first used by Sophocles when he introduced scene painting into his theatre performance of by Aeschylus’s *The Oresteia* (Palmer, 2011: 52). To break the word down into component parts: the ‘skēno’ or ‘skēnē’ refers to ‘space’ or ‘scene’ and ‘graphia’ to the act of ‘writing’ or ‘drawing’. The term closely translates, writes Baugh in *Theatre, Performance and Technology: The Development and Transformation of Scenography*, as ‘drawing with the scene’ (Baugh, 2013: 240). Scenography he writes:

has become the principal dramaturgy of performance-making close to a direct translation of *scaena* and *graphos* ‘drawing with the scene’ – where all aspects of ‘the scene’ (scenic space, embodied actions, material, clothes, light and sound) may become materials laid out on the performance-makers palette (Baugh, 2013: 240).

In Ancient Greek theatre ‘scenes’ were ‘drawn’ (painted) onto 2-dimensional ‘skēnē’ and worked in tandem with the architecture of the theatre to create the 3-dimensional ‘world’ of the play. This ‘world’ was composed and constructed to be ‘made sense of’ from the viewpoint, or perspective, of the spectator. The human figure (the actor) became a means through which spectators could imaginatively enter the world of the play. The inter-play between the stage and

spectator remains a significant component in how scenography asks participants to ‘read’ and experience the ‘world’ from their individual viewpoint. The relevance of this in relation to the practice created for this research project will be explored later.

The development of scenography in Ancient Greece reflected an interest in illusion and perspective that would later become fundamental to a western way of seeing, constructing, and making sense of ‘the world’ from a single view-point as pursued in fine art painting, landscape and garden design, and architecture. Significant developments in techniques of perspective during the Renaissance period meant that painters were able to capture 3-dimensional ‘space’ and draw it onto a 2-dimensional surface. These advances in the use of perspective made it easier, notes Michael Kubovy in *The Psychology of Perspective and Renaissance Art*, to ‘stage [in a painting] elaborate group scenes in spatially complex fashion’ (Kubovy, 1986: 1).

In an *Introduction to Scenography*, authors Jocelyn McKinney and Phillip Butterworth, define scenography as ‘the seamless synthesis of space, text, research, actors, directors and spectators that contributes to an original creation’ (McKinney and Butterworth, 2009: 3). Their analysis articulates well the aims of my practice, as explored later in this thesis, when they describe how scenography is concerned with:

the manipulation and orchestration of environments for performance within and beyond theatre spaces and the way all the material aspects of performance work over time and in conjunction with other aspects of performance such as site, text and body (McKinney and Butterworth, 2009: 4).

By ‘socially engaged scenography’ I mean a form of scenographic-led performance that can function to enable participants to find new, or alternative, viewpoints or perspectives on a ‘missing’ life-event subject matter in such a way that is transformative. In so doing this practice-as-research project reflected, and sought to further, what Baugh in the chapter entitled ‘Scenography as Dramaturgy of Performance’, in the second edition of *Theatre, Performance and Technology: The Development and Transformation of Scenography* described as the ‘ever

greater questioning of the function and purpose of performance [that] has led the scenographer and scenography to seek to find new ways to engage and interact with audiences and with contemporary issues and concerns' (2013a: 104). Baugh coined the term 'socially engaged scenography' because he felt a phrase was 'needed' to reflect developments in the field of scenography⁴. Baugh discusses these developments in the essay entitled 'Scenography with Purpose: Activism and Intervention' in *The Disappearing Stage: Reflection on the 2011 Prague Quadrennial* edited by Arnold Aronson (Baugh, 2013: 223).

As explored in chapter 2 of this thesis, the three-day long site-specific walk in the Yorkshire Dales entitled *Fissure* that I created in 2011 was the performance that established the central concerns and aims of this practice-as-research project. These concerns and aims were to develop a methodological approach to the creation of 'socially engaged', scenographic-led site-specific walking-performance in rural landscape that might enable participants to reflect upon, re-image and transform their relationship to, and understanding of a 'missing' life-event for which traditional 'rites of passage' or ceremonies do not exist.

The term life-event refers to significant events that cause major change in a person's life. It describes both predictable *and* unpredictable stages of life and transitional moments such as birth, marriage, death, bereavement, parenthood, menopause and adoption. Rites of passage are performed to mark the transition from one phase of life to another. These transitions often involve a participant, or initiate, passing *into* and then *out of* a threshold or 'liminal space'. By 'missing' life-event I mean the absence of a hoped or planned for life-event and the 'missing' social status or role that might otherwise have occurred. This is an absence that can lead to an ongoing state of liminality. Ceremonies exist to mark births, naming-giving's, comings of age, marriage or civil partnerships, fatherhood and motherhood, promotion, retirement, and death. However, few ceremonies, rites, or rituals exist to mark life-events when something that is

⁴ Baugh's essay was a response to scenographic practice showcased at the Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space 2015.

wished, hoped, or planned for does not happen, such as childlessness-by-circumstance and not becoming a mother biologically. This, as explored later in this thesis, is the underlying subject matter of the practice-as-research project.

This project seeks to achieve its central concerns and aims of developing an approach to the creation of ‘socially engaged scenography’ through developing and applying, to the practice created for this research project, a series of six scenographic ‘feminine sublime’ principles.

These six principles are:

Principle 1: Autobiography and Giving a Voice to those on the Edges of Mainstream Dialogues;

Principle 2: Walking Beyond Knowledge – Merging with and Dwelling in Landscape;

Principle 3: Site-Specific Knowledge – Located/Lay, Expert and Social;

Principle 4: Observational Looking – Finding Alternative Viewpoints;

Principle 5: Valuing the Everyday – Wonderment and Defamiliarisation;

Principle 6: Walking, Landscape and Environmental Forces – Metaphor for Self.

This project proposes that by applying these principles, through emplacing a ‘missing’ ‘life-event’ into a rural landscape, a process of reflection, re-imaging and transformation can occur for participants. These principles offer a methodological approach that can be applied to a range of ‘missing’ life-event subject matters, as well as to scenographic-led performance making practice. Overall, this research project proposes that ‘socially engaged scenography’ can have personal (for participants) as well as social and cultural significance through its transformative potential.

Theoretical Underpinning: Dorothy Wordsworth and her Contemporaries, Early Romanticism, and the Feminine Sublime

These principles can be understood and analysed through the concept of the feminine sublime and were evolved through a close study of Dorothy Wordsworth's (1771-1855) approach to *and* way of engaging with landscape (her 'mode') recorded and described in her *Grasmere Journals* (1800-1803). The principles were also informed by the landscape writing of some of Dorothy Wordsworth's female contemporaries. The concept of the feminine sublime, as discussed later, offers a counterpoint to the 'masculine' or 'transcendent sublime', which was dominant in the Early Romantic period in which Dorothy Wordsworth and her contemporaries were writing. To be clear: the concept of the feminine sublime is not about the female gender but about a sensibility that manifests as a way of engaging with, walking through, or dwelling in *and* observing the landscape.

The female contemporaries of Dorothy Wordsworth's who informed my study and the six principles were: the writer-activists Mary Wollstonecraft, Anna Letitia Aikin (later Barbauld); Charlotte Smith who pioneered the use of autobiography, the solitary female figure and the use of the subjective, first person 'I'; Ann Radcliffe who used the landscape as a 'theatre' of constantly changing images, scenes and topographies; and Mary Tighe whose poetic female 'figures' did not seek to 'escape' the destructive effects of landscape but instead faced them.

Later in this chapter and in chapter 3 of this thesis, I explore how and why the practice of these women inspired the scenographic principles, and how I applied those principles to the two walking-performances specifically designed and created for this practice-as-research project.

The work of Dorothy Wordsworth and her contemporaries, which I consider can be understood through the concept of the feminine sublime, subverted dominant landscape discourses and

brought different perspectives and viewpoints to those of mainstream culture, art and politics. I have reclaimed and recovered these often under-valued women writers of the Early Romantic period – dominated by William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey – and their influence is woven into this research project. I felt that their work was relevant to contemporary performance practice today and my practice as a scenographer working in rural landscape as a place for transformation. Thus, I am exploring a tradition that is historical yet my work is contemporary. The material, observational, embodied and autobiographical approaches to landscape of these women writers seemed to be closely allied with my own scenographic-led creative processes. I sought to emulate the way that their walking and writing brought alternative, innovative perspectives and knowledge to the mainstream Early Romantic movement by bringing about similar alternative, innovative perspectives and knowledge to the underlying subject matter of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*.

As a scenographer I work with Early Romantic aesthetics as a compositional tool. This is reflected in my scenographic use of the landscape, the human figure, the picturesque frame, the viewing station, the symbolic use of walking and my use of epic and intimate scale. Because the aesthetics of Early Romanticism inform much of how Western viewers visually construct, appreciate and ‘read’ landscape, this deeply embedded underpinning means *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* worked with subject matters, imagery and activities that are challenging but within a form that is familiar and recognisable and therefore, it could be argued, secure. However, it is this same underpinning that allows the performances to challenge and subtly subvert the aesthetic ‘frame’ in order to engage participants with the underlying subject matter.

The transformative aims of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*, and the scenographic use of the landscape embedded within their creation sits at the heart of why this research project used and applied the theory of the feminine sublime *and* aesthetics associated with Early Romanticism. The feminine sublime was the theoretical concept that made sense for me as a scenographer and

performance maker and allowed participants who engaged with the performances to enter into transformative processes.

Historically, the concept of the transcendent (masculine) sublime (defined as an ungraspable, limitless, intellectual and spiritual experience that takes the person experiencing it beyond the material of the everyday) is linked to landscape and ‘nature’ (mountains, waterfalls and storms). The feminine sublime on the other hand, as this thesis explores more fully later, offers a different materially specific way of engaging with ‘missing’ life-events and allows them to be re-imaged and re-negotiated. Both the transcendent sublime and the feminine sublime will be explored more fully later.

The concept of the transcendent sublime was not only the dominant landscape aesthetic in the Early Romantic period but continues to dominate contemporary cultural, aesthetic and philosophical thinking, and a contemporary ‘canon’ of writing by philosophers and theorists such as Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1996), Derrida (1930-2004) and Jean-François Lyotard’s (1924-1988) is still used to articulate and analyse performance, theatre and visual art. For example, in publications such as *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, *The Postmodern Condition* Lyotard applies Kantian notions of the transcendent sublime to twentieth century avant-garde art and culture (Lyotard, 1991, Lyotard, 1984). In *Lessons on The Analytic of the Sublime* he argues that the transcendent sublime underpins the aesthetics and the themes of postmodernism and reflects the unstable, uncertain and incomprehensible postmodern world (Lyotard, 1994). Thus, as a maker of contemporary performance, this practice-as-research project seeks to redress this balance, past and present by bringing the concept of the feminine sublime, often articulated by women writers, artists and thinkers, to the ‘canon’.

I was not alone in the desire to redress this balance and to make the approach to the walking practice of women artist and writers more ‘more visible’. In their article entitled ‘Walking

Women: Interviews With Artists on the Move’ the theatre and performance scholars Deirdre Heddon and Cathy Turner describe how the ‘invisibility of women in what appears as a canon of walking is conspicuous’, adding ‘where they are included, it is often as an ‘exception’ to an unstated norm, represented by a single chapter in a book or even a footnote’ (Heddon and Turner, 2012: 225).

Heddon and Turner set out, in the article and in their subsequent work, to make the walking of women artists ‘more visible’ and to ‘re-think – or add to – the theories that relate to aesthetic walking practice’ (Heddon and Turner, 2010: 15, 21). To do this they interviewed a number of contemporary walking artists including Elspeth Owen, Emma Bush, Clare Qualmann and Gail Burton of the collective ‘Walk, Walk, Walk’, Misha Myers, Tamara Ashley, Simone Kenyon, Ana Laura Lopez de la Torre, Emma Bush, Sorrel Muggridge and Rachel Gomme (Heddon and Turner, 2010: 14). Heddon and Turner’s writing on walking, gender and space in the article ‘Walking Women: Shifting the Tales and Scales of Mobility’ discusses how theories and interpretation of the Romantics informs and shapes our current knowledge. They argue that the ‘re-iteration of a particular genealogy – or fraternity⁵ – generates an orthodoxy of walking, tending towards an implicitly masculine ideology’ and they reflect on how this ‘pre-eminence marginalises other types of walking practices and the insights they might prompt and explore, and how women artists walk in different ways to men’ (Heddon and Turner, 2012: 224)’.

The recent *Walking Women* symposium of walks, talks, screenings and events that took place in London (16-17 June 2016) and Edinburgh (11 July 2016) were curated by the artists/scholars Clare Qualmann and Amy Sharrocks with Heddon (and Turner as a contributor), as part of Utopia 2016. This symposium continued Heddon and Turner’s pursuit of ‘visibility’. As described in the *Walking Women* programme and on the website, whilst celebrating how, from ‘Sophie Calle to Marina Abramovic, Nancy Holt to Patti Smith, Michèle Bernstein to Janet

⁵ This fraternity continues on from Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey and includes Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Henry David Thoreau, Andre Breton and Guy Debord.

Cardiff, women across the arts have long used walking in their creative practice', the symposium also highlighted some issues (Qualmann and Sharrocks, 2016). Referring to artists, writers and academics working with walking practices, in what continues to be a male dominated genre, the following questions were posed: 'How do we re-write a canon? How do we re-balance the perception of art, artists, and the use of walking as a creative practice? Can we not only imagine a future in which gender bias and skewed vision is destroyed, but actively build the pathway there?' (Qualmann and Sharrocks, 2016). The symposium answered these questions by creating a 'space in which artists and creative practitioners could connect with one another and with new audiences for their work, generating debate, discussion and new knowledge, with the goal of raising the visibility of these practices' (Qualmann and Sharrocks, 2016). Present at the symposium was *The Walking Library for Women Walking* created by Heddon and performance-maker and scholar Misha Myers. This is an ongoing project that brings together walking and books. There was a specially created version of the library at the *Walking Women* symposium stocked solely with books relating to women and walking (Myers and Heddon, 2013).

It was however, another article by Heddon that led me research into, the walking and journal writing practice of Dorothy Wordsworth. In footnote 9 in 'Turning 40: 40 Turns' Heddon writes how Dorothy Wordsworth 'walked with William and Coleridge and with other friends in the Lake District' (Heddon, 2012: 70. 9). However, writes Heddon, despite ascending 'Scafell in 1818'⁶ and writing about her ascent⁷, Dorothy Wordsworth was, like other 'walking women', largely absent from the 'canon' of writing on walking which is male orientated (Heddon, 2012: 70).

⁶ Scafell Pike is a fell in The Lake District. Dorothy Wordsworth made the ascent with William Wordsworth and her walking companions Miss Barker, and Miss Barker's maid.

⁷ Dorothy Wordsworth wrote an account of her ascent of Scafell Pike in a letter to a friend William Johnson, a former curate of Grasmere. In 1822 William republished the letter with minor alterations in an appendix to his *Description of the Scenery of the Lakes*, where it appeared to be his own work. See page 170 of this thesis for more detail.

Practice Overview: The Practical Elements of this Practice-as-Research Project

The Gathering and *Warnscale* sought to engage participants intellectually, emotionally and physically in the manner of a pilgrimage, or a rite of passage, where the effort of the physical journey was fundamental to the process of re-imaging and transformation. Both performances involved an extended period of durational walking ‘designed’ to act as a metaphor that worked in relation to experiences associated with the underlying subject matter and symbolic meaning was derived from the physical act of walking. The performances used walking not only to mobilise participants but as part of their structure, form and symbolism. The performances also worked with symbolism and semiology associated with landscape. They did this by drawing on cultural, social and political significance that has been historically imposed on the landscape. This results in the landscape becoming a powerful symbol harnessed by the scenography.⁸ For this research project and the practice it created, landscapes associated with transition and liminality, often ‘in-between’ spaces or ‘thin spaces’ were of particular interest to me. For example: edge lands, borders, fault lines and fissures; cross roads or a divide in a path; crossing places such as a bridge or stepping stones; pools and lakes; mountain tops. When creating *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* I made a deliberate link between landscape liminality and the social liminality that can be caused by the ‘missing’ life-event of biological motherhood.

The Gathering and *Warnscale* were also informed by the way that pilgrimages move between sites chosen for their distinctive features such as a rock, a bridge or a spring and how these sites, write Coleman and Elsner in *Pilgrimage: Past and Present* gain significant ‘sacred’ meaning that intensifies as the pilgrimage ‘story’ progresses (Coleman and Elsner, 1995: 211-212). Whilst moving between sites, a pilgrimage often makes use of ascents and descents, glimpses of distant summits and of interior, enclosed, or labyrinthine spaces, such as caves, prayer-huts or crypts

⁸ These meanings depend however on perspective. For example, the meaning of landscape to a farmer is different from that of a fell walker, botanist or geologist.

and of light and dark. Another aspect of pilgrimage that informed the performances was the way in which they incorporate actions and rituals, words, images and objects.

Other writing relating to pilgrimage that has informed this practice-as-research project includes the following articles: 'Moving and Being Moved: More than walking and talking on pilgrimage walks in the Manx Landscape' by social and cultural geographer by Avril Maddrell which explores the processes of renewal that participants experiences, the therapeutic, restorative effects of landscape; embodied walking and the changing 'scenes' participants experience as they walk through the landscape and the links to the mobilities turn (Madrell, 2013: 1-15).

'Walking as Spiritual Practice: The Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela' by the geographer Sean Salvin which explores walking as a spiritual, embodied and 'thinking' practice that returns the walker to their senses; how pilgrimage journeys exist 'outside of time' and can produce a liminal experience; the role of *communitas*, and how pilgrims produce social meaning (Slavin, 2003: 1-18). 'Therapeutic Landscapes: An Evolving Theme' by the health and medical geographer Wil Gesler which explores the relationship between healing processes, landscape and symbolism and 'why certain places or situations are perceived to be therapeutic' (Gesler, 2005: 295). Another informative article by Gesler was 'Lourdes: Healing in Place of Pilgrimage' which explores the physical, mental and spiritual transformation associated with the 'religious pilgrimage tradition' (Gesler, 1996: 95).

The structure and form of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* borrowed from 'rites of passage' and pilgrimage. In creating these I applied concepts relating to threshold and liminal places, and, as I explore more fully later, incorporated the ethnographers Arnold Van Gennep's ritual processes of 'pre-liminal' (separation), 'liminal' (transition) and 'post-liminal' (re-integration) described in his book *The Rites of Passage* and later decvelopepd by the social anthropologist Viktor Turner in *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (Van Gennep, 1960: 20). Thus, this practice-as-research project also pursued a theoretical inquiry with a particular emphasis on the

transformative potential of pilgrimages *for* ‘rites of passage’, especially when created through an applied use of the concept of the ‘feminine sublime’. In a pilgrimage an individual or group makes a journey, through a specific landscape, to a given location, for a particular purpose or to mark a rite of passage from one life-phase to another. However, by working with an applied use of the concept of the feminine sublime, the transformative function of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* was open-ended. The reason for this was that, instead of marking a life-event transition that would lead to a new identity or social status, the concept of the feminine sublime allowed the walking-performances to create a ‘space’ which enabled participants to find alternative viewpoints on the underlying subject matter in such a way that was reflective and might affect either subtle *or* signification, and on-going transformation. This process of reviewing allowed participants to re-image their identity in relation to the underlying subject matter of the performances, to navigate out of the liminal state, and to move positively towards life-paths that might have been different to those they had hoped or planned for. It is for this reason – the possibility that the feminine sublime can enable tangible material transformation – that it became the theoretical concept sitting at the heart of this practice-as-research project.

The transformative effect of the feminine sublime is not, like that of the transcendent ‘masculine’ sublime, which is achieved by losing the self into a ‘higher’ metaphysical dimension through leaping-off’ or ‘escap[ing] from the confines of the material “world” in order to join, what scholar John G. Pipkin in *The Material Sublime Of Women Romantic Poets*, describes as a ‘higher spiritual or intellectual level, an idealized nature’ that has been subdued (Pipkin, 1998: 599). Instead, with the feminine sublime, transformation is achieved through becoming immersed in the immediate, the tangible and the material of the landscape and working with it, not as a place from which to escape or disappear but to ‘reappear’ – to themselves, a feminine sublime process that might enable re-imaging and transformation.

Working in this way with the immediate, the tangible and the material of landscape relates, I suggest, to Donna Haraway's theories of 'situated knowledge', which challenges essentialism and argues for a feminist epistemology that makes a social, cultural and political difference not by universalising but by finding voices and viewpoints that are different to the established ones. She is not however asking for a single universal perspective that brings a unifying 'image' but for a nuanced one made up of distinct points of view. For Haraway 'the only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular', to be located and materially specific (Haraway, 1988: 590). Haraway argues that the dominance of the visual in western culture has led to a sense of disembodiment and that 'we need to learn in our bodies' rather than 'transcending' them. She argues that this is about 'limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object'. 'Images', she writes, 'are not the product of escape and transcendence of limits' [achieved through the view from above or afar] 'but the joining of partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position [...] – of views from somewhere' (Haraway, 1988: 590). She suggests we 'Learn how to see from a different or another's point of view... seeing from the standpoints of the subjugated' and argues 'for seeing from *below* rather than *above*' which she regards as a male dominated, western way of seeing (Haraway, 1988: 583-585).

It is important to say that, the concept of the feminine sublime is not about the female gender but a sensibility that manifests as a way of engaging with and walking, or dwelling in *and* observing the landscape. By dwelling I mean spending time, being attentive to and becoming focussed on and immersed in the material (permanent and transitory) of the environment, and the self in it – in the context of the subject matter of the performance. This sort of immersion is a crucial aspect of my scenographic practice and the site-specific walking-performances created for this research project (especially *Warnscale*), both of which invited participants to dwell in, and contemplate the rural landscape in the context of the subject matter. By being immersed, participants can, I

suggest, enter more fully into the transformative nature of the performances and landscapes in which they are created.

The aim of this immersion is to expose participants up to the possibility of transformation by using the forces of: rural landscape, environmental forces, walking, dwelling, action and performance, object, text, image, sound and metaphors of different sorts.

In this respect the practice, as I will explore, created for this research project seeks to work in a manner similar to that of a rite of passage or pilgrimage. It does this by removing participants from their everyday surrounding and through the multiple layers of the walking-performance, immersing them in a carefully constructed ‘event’ that encompasses a range of elements. In *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* author Robert MacFarlane reflects on how:

We lack – we need – a term for those places where one experiences a ‘transition’ from a known landscape [...] [to] somewhere we feel and think significantly differently... I have for some time been imagining such transitions as ‘border crossings’ (MacFarlane, 2012: 78).

I suggest that scenographic-led walking-performance that emplaces a ‘missing’ life-event into a rural landscape can create a place or places for ‘transition’, or transformation, where participants can move metaphorically and physically from a known landscape into a landscape where they ‘feel and think significantly differently’, thus making the walking-performances ‘places’ of ‘transition’ and transformation.

Walking forms an active and structural part of the performances created for this research project. It enables movement through the landscapes of the performance, is used metaphorically and enables participants to ‘commune’, talk and share. However, it is important to say that walking, though an inextricable element of each performance is one of many, cross-disciplinary, components of the whole.

The Gathering / Yr Helfa (September 2014)

The Gathering / Yr Helfa, was a site-specific walking-performance revealing the day-to-day and seasonal workings of Hafod y Llan, an upland sheep farm located on the Mount Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa) in Snowdonia, Wales, UK which is managed by the National Trust.

The Gathering was produced by the National Theatre Wales (NTW) and supported by the National Trust with Migrations and Louise Ann Wilson Company Ltd (LAW Co).⁹ It was performed on the 12, 13 and 14 September 2014 to an audience of 200 participants per performance. The production was also streamed-live to and was available to view online for a month post the live performance through an online archive and attracted substantial local and national press coverage, this included: *The Guardian*¹⁰, *The Daily Telegraph*¹¹, *Wales Online*¹² and local press and radio coverage from the *Western Mail*, *BBC Radio Wales*, *Welsh Border Life*, *Aesthetica Magazine*, *North Wales Chronicle*, *Daily Post*, *Western Mail*, *The Stage*, *Caernarfon Herald*.

Responses to *The Gathering* were captured through emails received from participants and press reviews. These were and collated by the National Theatre Wales. I refer to this feedback when analyzing the outcomes and effects of *The Gathering* in chapter 3.

The Gathering explored how human and animal reproductive and life-processes are seemingly robust, when in fact they are fragile, impermanent and easily disturbed. It did this by revealing the reproductive cycles of the ewes, which became a metaphor for human fertility and infertility,

⁹ The Louise Ann Wilson Company Ltd (LAW Co) was set up in 2009 to produce the performance work of Louise Ann Wilson. It is a company limited by guarantee with a board of directors, company number: 06840658. See, <http://www.louiseannwilson.com>

¹⁰ See, <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/sep/15/the-gathering-review-national-theatre-wales-hafod-y-llan-snowdonia>.

¹¹ See, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/11095198/The-Gathering-National-Theatre-of-Wales-Snowdonia-review-ambitious.html>.

¹² See, <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/whats-on/whats-on-news/behind-the-scenes-look-national-theatre-wales-7732308>.

biological- and non-biological motherhood, and other pathways to, and types of, mothering and parenting.

The performance was evolved over a three-year period of observational study at the farm that included in-depth ‘primary/site’ (landscape/earth-science) research and ‘secondary/subject’ (animal-reproductive/social and historical) research. Engaging in these two different sorts of research meant the performance involved a large number of people with local and expert knowledge of the farm. This contributed to the range of social engagement that the performance achieved. This social engagement was furthered when participants, and some of these experts, took part in the live performance and also through the extensive media and press coverage that *The Gathering* received.

Hafod y Llan farm has 2000 Welsh Mountain sheep, ewes and lambs that divide into three flocks, one of which, the Snowdon Flock, grazes the foothills and summits of Snowdon. In September the flock is gathered ‘off the mountain’ and into the farm ‘centre’ for the sorting, checking and selling of the ‘draft’ ewes¹³. It is this annual gathering that led to the decision to stage the performance in the month of September. The climate of high rainfall and cold temperatures, steep topography, and thin soil are the three main factors that contribute to Hafod y Llan being what the shepherds described as a ‘true hill farm’.

The then National Poet for Wales Gillian Clarke¹⁴ wrote a series of site-specific landscape poems and a twelve-month poem cycle based on the life and reproductive cycles of the ewes, which I interspersed with factual texts spoken by the character of ‘The Boy’. Choreographer Nigel Stewart developed bespoke movement material and music consultant John Hardy sourced regional folk tunes and re-scored the traditional hymns that were played by the Deiniolen Brass

¹³ The length of time a single ewe might spend at Hafod y Llan farm is 4-5 years. She is then sold as a ‘full mouth’ ‘draft ewe’. When she leaves Hafod y Llan the ewe is fertile and will go on to produce healthy lambs on a lowland farm where conditions are less extreme.

¹⁴ Gillian Clarke was the third National Poet of Wales from 2008 to 2016.

Band. All these elements were then layered into the scenography and informed the production design and dramaturgy. A company that included the shepherds of Hafod y Llan and their dogs, two hundred sheep, six professional performers, the brass band, the children of Bedgellert Primary School, and a team of Mountain Leaders performed in the production.

The performance of *The Gathering* led a group of 200 participants on foot along a carefully mapped circuitous, 6-kilometre route that started in the Nantgwynant valley, close to the farm 'centre'. This route then progressed upwards into the mountain criss-crossing through a series of amphitheatre-like valleys to a derelict building in the abandoned Cwm Llan Slate Quarry. As they walked participants viewed a series of 'scenes', installations and 'real' farming activities. These were located in specific sites or else moved through the landscape alongside them. Following an extended 'scene' at the quarry, where the twelve-month poem cycle was performed, the participants returned back down through the valleys and into the farm 'centre', bringing with them 200 ewes that, as part of the performance, had been gathered off the mountain. On the farm, in smaller groups, the performance led participants through a series of enclosed or interior spaces including an old farmhouse, yards, sheep pens, barns and fields and then back to the starting place.

The scenographic-dramaturgy responded to the physical shape, history, practical uses, and atmosphere of the landscape and the farm centre buildings. Scenes and installations, including those that incorporated 'real' farming activities, were 'drawn into' the landscape at specific locations chosen for their visually-striking or symbolic features such as a boulder in a waterfall, a derelict shepherd's hut, an industrial scar on the mountainside, an empty farmhouse or a lambing barn. Each scenographic 'intervention' was drawn and composed using a combination of: human and animal performers; objects and materials of the place (wool, slate, hay, copper/brass, farm objects and carpet); choreographed movement; sung, spoken or written poetry; music and sound; photographic images; and film. These interventions also incorporated

six characters, or figures, each with a different scenographic-dramaturgical function. The figure of the 'Tramway-Walker' drew attention to the landscape as she traversed the 6-mile length of the valley; the character of 'The Boy' told month-by-month a series of 'facts and figures' about the ewes and the lambs; 'The Old Man' spoke of the mountain, death and renewal; The 'Two Shepherds' about seasonal changes; 'The Woman' about the breeding and fertility cycles of the ewes. The interventions were fragmented and visually-led. They were not explicit but open to interpretation and accumulated meaning over the 4-hour duration of the performance and in relation to each other. Later, one participant re-imagining the performance in his mind reflected on this accumulation when he wrote to say that '... various little scenes are connecting up and making a bigger and bigger picture' (*The Gathering* participant, September 2014).

Warnscale: A Land Mark Walk Reflecting On Infertility and Childlessness (Warnscale) (May 2015-on-going)

Warnscale: A Land Mark Walk Reflecting On Infertility and Childlessness (Warnscale) is an on-going and self-guided walking-performance that is site-specific to the Warnscale fells south of Buttermere Lake in Cumbria, England, UK. Mediated through a published multi-layered walking-guide/art-book, *Warnscale* is aimed at women who are biologically childless-by-circumstance.

Warnscale was produced by LAW Co with funding from ACE, Seed Bed Trust, The performance was launched on the 16 and 17 May 2015 with two guided walks of the walking-performances and an exhibition in Buttermere Village Hall. LAW Co recorded that the weekend attracted approximately 50 participants with 12 participants per walking performance and approximately 20-30 people visiting the exhibition.

Responses to *Warnscale* were captured through emails from participants that were received and collated by LAW Co and through questionnaires that were completed by launch-walk and

mapping-walk participants who were involved in the development and research of the project (see below and Chapter 3). This questionnaire asked respondents to reflect upon their experiences of the walking-performance and consider what, if any, affect it has had, or continues to have, on them. I refer to this feedback when analysing the outcomes and effects of *Warnscale* in Chapter 3. For a copy of the questionnaire see, Appendix 5: *Warnscale*, Mapping-Walk and Launch-Walk – Questionnaire (blank).

Louise Ann Wilson Company distributes the *Warnscale* book and it is sold through the company website. LAW Co records show that over 150 copies of the book have been gifted or sold and the on-going walking-performance is attracting growing numbers of participants.

Society offers no rituals or rites of passage through which women, who have ‘missed’ the life-event of biological motherhood, can be acknowledged and come to terms with that absence. *Warnscale*, however, offers imaginative and creative ways through which participants can engage with landscape in order to re-image and transition (even in the smallest and most open ended of ways) the liminality that this circumstance can cause. The walking-guide/art-book leads participants through the landscape and provides multiple-layers, non-prescriptive and metaphorical imagery, texts, and actions through which participants, whether walking alone, with a partner, friend or in a group, can assemble or construct meaning and create their own self-guided walking-performance. Others who are in sympathy with women in this circumstance and persons in comparable situations can also engage with the performance.

Warnscale primarily aims to offer imaginative and creative ways through which participants can engage with landscape and through it share and find alternative viewpoints on the experiences of biological childless-by-circumstance, a circumstance that can be experienced as liminal. It seeks to help them navigate towards the possibility of alternative life-paths that might be different to

those that had been hoped or planned for, having re-imaged themselves more positively, or differently.

The second aim of *Warnscale* was to create a performance that had an on-going effect and that participants, as individuals or as a collective-group might return home, post-performance, and effect change within their immediate circle of family and friends and then act as ‘an agent of change’.

The third aim of *Warnscale* was to raise awareness of the increase in the numbers of women experiencing biological childlessness-by-circumstance and the personal (for the individual) and social effects of this circumstance. The performance asks if it is time for a ‘cultural...social...rethink’¹⁵, about how society organises itself around female fertility. These processes of re-imaging and transformation embedded within the three aims described above, can, as discussed more fully later in this thesis, be understood and analysed through the concept of the feminine sublime.

Whilst working on *The Gathering* I was struck forcibly, due to my own feelings at the time, by the way in which the shepherds used the word ‘empty’ to describe a ewe that had not become pregnant and who was then sprayed with a black mark and ‘turned up’ the mountain. In Cumbria, such ewes are called ‘gelds’. By exploring how walking and landscape can be harnessed to create new metaphors for the experience of biological childlessness-by-circumstance *Warnscale* seeks to enable participants to envisage the possibility of alternative futures that are rich in significance and in so doing ‘fill the empty’. This thesis explores that the ‘filling’ process is likely to be one that is on-going and needs re-negotiating overtime. In her article ‘Grief Unconceived’ the writer Naomi Cummings asks ‘How do you come to terms with the acutely felt loss of something that has never been? ... the loss of hope of a child... an

¹⁵ Extract from *Warnscale* (the book): Station 8 – Summit Tarn (*vitrify*)

unconceived child where instead of a person an empty space presents itself'¹⁶ (Cumming, 1997: 1). *Warnscale* functions to form part of that discussion.

Working with the image of the empty womb, for the location of *Warnscale*, I looked for an empty room on a mountain, 'a place', writes Graham Usher in *Places of Enchantment: Meeting God in Landscapes*, 'traditionally associated with revelation, transition or inspiration' (Usher, 2012: 70)¹⁷. I soon discovered Warnscale Head Bothy and decided to locate the performance there. This semi-remote mountainous location provided, I hoped, participants with a 'space' and 'time' separate to their everyday routines that might, to quote Usher, have the 'capacity to reveal a world and self beyond our knowing' (Usher, 2012: 12). Once this location was secure, *Warnscale* was developed through an in-depth scenographic-led process of studying the landscape in which the bothy was situated. This 'primary/site' (landscape/earth-science) research involved conversations with people who had local knowledge of the place including farmers, geologists and conservationists, accompanied by a close study of the landscape writing of Dorothy Wordsworth found in her *Grasmere Journals* (see below).

The 'primary/site' research was combined with 'secondary/subject' research undertaken through observational work in fertility clinics and with experts including embryologists and surgeons as well as through conversations with sociologists and in/fertility focus groups. *Warnscale* was also developed through a third 'tertiary/social' tier of participant related research. This took the form of a series of mapping-walks with a 'focus group' of women who are biologically childless-by-circumstance and therefore had personal experiences of the underlying subject matter. Engaging these three different sorts of 'experts' contributed to the high level of social engagement that I consider that the performance achieved. This social engagement is furthered when participants

¹⁶ Extract from *Warnscale* (the book): 'Landmark/Station 2 – Wooden Bridge (*transition*)'.

¹⁷ Usher is making reference to and quoting from the United Nations' Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, which recognised the importance of mountains in people's lives.

undertake the completed walking-performance and through other on-going outcomes such as media and press coverage, exhibitions, talks and written articles.

Warnscale is divided into four distinct phases based on the *empty*, *waxing*, *full* and *waning* moon and can be undertaken as a whole or phase-by-phase on separate occasions. Each phase touches on themes and issues raised by biological childlessness-by-circumstance and the ritual phases that are found in rites of passage processes as defined by Van Gennep and described in his book *The Rites of Passage*. Van Gennep's model works with a series of 'transition' or 'threshold' phases defined as 'pre-liminal' (separation), 'liminal' (transition) and 'post-liminal' (re-integration). Van Gennep wrote that to 'cross a threshold is to unite oneself with a new world' (Van Gennep, 1960: 20). Later, in *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* the Turner expands on the transitional liminal-phase, which he identifies as being 'betwixt and between' whereby the person experiencing the rite of passage is neither one thing nor the other. They no longer belong to the society that they previously were part of but have not yet become reintegrated into that society with a 'new' identity and are in an ambiguous, unresolved state he terms as 'liminoid' (Turner, 1982: 32). Both of these models imply or assume some sense of completion. However, when re-worked through the concept of the feminine sublime, as they were in the practice created for this research project, they can be open ended.

In *Warnscale*, Phase One (*empty*) reflects the ritual phase of separation/pre-liminal with many participants arriving from afar and leaving their everyday life behind. In this phase, participants are invited to share their own story, express worries and fears that otherwise they may not dare to think or speak about, and acknowledge where they are at present. Phase Two (*waxing*) reflects the ritual phase of transition/liminal and takes participants deeper into the mountain and the performance. In this phase participants are invited to engage in quiet reflection, to experience the elemental forces around and within them, and find new ways of seeing that may lead to new ways of feeling. Phase Three (*full*) also reflects the ritual phase of transition/liminal but

challenges participants physically, questions their choices, and asks them to consider broader social, cultural and ethical questions around fertility and women's lives. Phase Four (*waning*) reflects the ritual phase of re-integration/post-liminal. This phase asks participants to consider future paths they might follow and which might involve them returning home having undertaken some level of transformation.

Within each phase there are a series of 'landmarks/stations' carefully selected for their physical, visual, and metaphorical resonance that act as places to 'dwell' in the landscape. There are thirteen landmarks/stations, each of which focuses on themes and issues raised by the underlying subject matter. These mark a threshold or point of transition where participants enter more deeply into another aspect of the performance. These landmarks/stations enable participants to engage with the landscape as a place of metaphor, reflection and transition and, like Dorothy Wordsworth, connect to the place and through it to themselves. Indeed, *Warnscale* works with an applied use of Dorothy Wordsworth's mode of walking, dwelling and noticing. In the book each landmark/station viewpoint is framed by extracts from her *Grasmere Journals*¹⁸. Within each landmark/station photographs and drawings 'captured' in the landscape are layered with: geographical, historical and biological maps; images and words distilled from the mapping-walks¹⁹ (see footnote); invitations to perform a series of actions; bio-medical and reflective texts and images about in/fertility and biological childlessness.

Unlike *The Gathering*, in *Warnscale* there are no 'designed' installations or 'scenes'. Instead, the landscape and its ever-changing seasons and weather, is both 'scene' and performer. Participants through walking, listening and noticing the landscape, in the framework of the underlying subject matter, also become the performer and part of the 'scene'.

¹⁸ One extract is from her *Alfoxden Journal* and another from a letter she wrote making an account of her ascent of Scafell Pike in 1818.

¹⁹ See Chapter 3, for more details and examples of the mapping-walk process and maps.

Underlying Subject Matter: Biological Childlessness-by-Circumstance and the ‘Missing’ Life-Event of Biological Motherhood

The underlying subject matter of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* is biological ‘childlessness-by-circumstance’²⁰, and the ‘missing’ life-event of biological motherhood. Thus, the practice created for this research project deals with a ‘real’ ‘missing’ life-event and seeks ‘real’ effects and outcomes. As discussed more fully later in this thesis, biological childlessness and its personal and social consequences is a subject matter that sits outside of mainstream dialogues and discourses and often remains under acknowledged or discussed. For some people experiencing the ‘missing’ life-event *and* identify of biological motherhood, this lack of social recognition compounds a sense of uncertain identity that can lead to isolation and an on-going state of liminality. As this thesis later suggests, this state of liminality might in fact be the thing that makes individuals who are experiencing painful or unresolved feelings associated with biological childlessness-by-circumstance particularly receptive to the nonverbal, visual, experiential and metaphorical qualities of the scenography that underpins *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*.

Furthermore, the way that the feminine sublime provided the concept through which the performances were created *and* the lens through which (via the scenography) each individual participant could view and engage with them was, I suggest, what enabled processes of transformation to occur. It was this concept that allowed participants to construct meaning that was particular and unique to them and led to the performances functioning as ‘socially engaged scenography’.

²⁰ The term childlessness-by-circumstance was first used by Jody Day the founder of *Gateway Women*, an online community for women experiencing childlessness-by-circumstance. This is the term that I will use predominantly in this thesis. See, <http://gateway-women.com> for more information. Other terms include ‘involuntary childlessness’ or ‘social infertility’. Day is the leading voice in the UK on issues surrounding involuntary childlessness and founder of the global friendship and support network *Gateway Women* as well as being author of the book *Living the Life Unexpected: 12 Weeks to Your Plan B for a Meaningful and Fulfilling Future Without Children*.

At this point, it is important to acknowledge that men too find themselves childless-by-circumstance. However in this practice-as-research project I made the decision to focus on women who are biologically childless-by-circumstance.

The scenographic-led creative process developed to create these two performances layered together three distinct, yet interwoven, tiers of research into: the site, the science of in/fertility and the social effects of biological childlessness-by-circumstance. This inter-disciplinary research was undertaken in close collaboration with experts from fields not usually associated with performance such as fertility scientists and people with lay knowledge and skills associated with the sites in which they were created. It was this complex three-tiered combination of research that I suggest, enabled the walking-performances to explore the complexities of the underlying subject matter, and the challenging experiences and emotions that the ‘missing’ life-event of biological motherhood can lead to –which are often difficult to put into words or articulate explicitly – but which can be explored scenographically. In the chapter 3.2 entitled ‘Scenographic Space and Place’²¹ in *Performance Perspectives: A Critical Introduction*, I identify ‘the scenographer as an artist with a unique set of creative, technical and collaborative skills and an inter-disciplinary approach to theatre and performance-making’ (Palmer, 2011: 74).

²² This practice-as-research project, as I will explore, has seen me develop my own scenographic skills and inter-disciplinary approaches, which are manifest in the six scenographic principles this project enabled me to evolve.

Many feminist writers, artists and philosophers, have of course explored the underlying subject matter of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* and the related subjects such as infertility and female biological and reproductive processes. Though this practice-as-research project was informed by feminism and feminist theory, feminism is not the subject matter of the thesis. It is important,

²¹ This chapter (3.2) evolved out of an interview conducted by Scott Palmer about my practice as a scenographer and my work with (and post) wilson+wilson. Chapter section 3.2 forms part of Chapter 3 entitled ‘Space’.

²² In *Theatre, performance and technology: The Development and Transformation of Scenography* (2013) Baugh cited this chapter as contributing ‘significantly to an appreciation of contemporary scenographic dramaturgy’ p, 223.

however, to acknowledge that by working with these subject matters, issues of essentialism arise that some dominant strands of feminist theory would challenge. It is the case then that the practical elements of this project are at times consciously essentialist in that they: ask participants to engage with the notion of a feminine sensibility and ways of viewing landscape, the self and society; refer to female reproductive, bodily and biological processes; discuss identity in relation to biological and non-biological motherhood, or the absence thereof. However, I recognise that the culturally specific discourses with which this research project engages are not universal. Furthermore, I am also aware that *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* were created from an autobiographical position and set of personal experiences, and I acknowledge that my ‘viewpoint’ is that of a white, north European, design-school educated, mid-forty year old woman. Thus, because the potential for this research project, and the two performances it created, tended towards essentialism, I sought to moderate that essentialism by framing this thesis with two feminist theoretical concepts that engage essentialism tactically and for a clear purpose and outcome. These two theoretical concepts do not underpin this whole thesis, which is mostly informed by ideas of the feminine sublime; however, it does work with an interpretive and applied use of them.

The first of these two theoretical concepts with which I engaged was the feminist philosopher Donna Haraway’s concept of ‘situated and embodied knowledge’²³ with particular reference to her term ‘modest witness’. In the article entitled ‘Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective’ in the book *The Gender and Science Reader*, Haraway describes how situated and embodied knowledge ‘provides an account’ not from anywhere but from a specific viewpoint or place, which she terms as ‘being located’ (Haraway, 1988: 581-586). Haraway argues for a feminist epistemology that makes a political difference not by universalising but by finding voices, and viewpoints, other than the established ones. This relates to ‘dualism’ and the concept of the transcendent sublime, the counterpoint of which, it

²³ Postmodernism makes a case for located knowledge (rather than universal ‘grand narrative’ and ‘general’ truths.

could be argued, is the feminine sublime and will be discussed in chapter 2. To be clear, I am using Haraway's theories and concepts as a means to talk about situated knowledge in a literal sense. Her term 'modest witness' provides a 'metaphor' with which to explore the physical and geographical 'located-ness' and site-specific form of the practice elements of this research project.

The second theoretical concept I engage is feminist critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of 'strategic essentialism'. This concept, referenced in *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*, recognises how a 'minority group acting on the basis of a shared identity' come together in solidarity for the purpose of social action (Buchanan, 2016).

Contextual Study: Situating the Practice-as-Research Project

In this section I will offer a contextual study which, although not exhaustive, sets out to discuss a number of tendencies (and theories) in the fields of site-specific and walking-performance and also to practice that engages with challenging life-event subject matters such as grief and illness. In order to do this I will pick out particular features of a number of works to consider the cross over between these fields and how my practice may be seen to relate to and/or may be understood as having been influenced by them yet stands apart. I suggest that it is the exact mix of individual elements, combined with my aesthetic and socially engaged scenographic perspective *and* the feminine sublime conceptual framework underpinning this research project, that are original to my practice. This mix of elements includes rural landscape, site-specificity, walking, scenography, underlying subject matter and the social aim of re-imaging and/or transformation.

I will examine some notions of site-specificity, firstly relating to performance, then with a focus on mobilities both in relation to performance and also to therapeutic landscapes and therapeutic

mobilities, and finally relating to social engagement. My focus then moves to consider the cross-over between site-specificity and land art with particular reference to land art that uses the physical, historical and cultural material of the site in which it is created. I will also pay attention to how working with landscape has, in different ways, used the device of the frame, the human figure and visual installation. This aspect of the study leads back to the work of the Early Romantic women practitioners to whom I refer earlier in this introduction. I will also review the need to reclaim and rediscover not just that lost ‘canon’ of women walkers from Dorothy Wordsworth and her contemporaries but others from that period to the present day. This study also considers the work of artists and writers that engages with challenging life-event subject matters.

In exploring the notion of site-specificity in her article ‘Site-Specific Performance and the Mobility Turn’ (2012) the performance scholar Fiona Wilkie refers to the ‘much cited dictum’ of artist Richard Serra who said ‘to move the work is to destroy it’ (Wilkie, 2012: 204). This quote from Serra is also cited in a number of other works that attempt to define the concept of site-specificity such as performance scholar Nick Kaye’s *Site Specific Art* (2000), and art historian Miwon Kwon’s *One Place After another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2004) (Kaye, 2000: 2, Kwon, 2004: 12). I argue that *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* are *genuinely* site-specific in the sense indicated by Serra, because they could not be moved from the sites in which they were created or performed elsewhere. In this respect these performances are aligned with work of companies such as Brif Gof and Wrights & Sites whose influential practice most clearly exemplifies this understanding of this concept.

Brif Gof’s visually striking, large-scale works brought together both environment and performance in such a way that revealed the properties of the site – past and present. In the book *Site Specific Performance* Mike Pearson, the scholar and a founder member of Brif Gof, discussing the interplay between the ‘site’ and the performance of *Gododdin* (1989), writes that

‘All that constitutes its *depth* – archaeological, cultural and psycho geographical. [...] are ever present and immediately operative’ (Pearson, 2010: 149).²⁴

In a way that compares to how Brif Gof’s works revealed the ‘*depth*’ of a site, Wrights & Sites, according to Field, described their practice as ‘performance specifically generated from or for one site’ (Field, 2008).²⁵ Our work, say Wrights & Sites, is ‘... intended to be porous; for others to read into it and connect from it and for the specificities and temporalities of sites to fracture, erode and distress it’ (Wrights-&-Sites, 2013). Site-specific works by Wrights & Sites include *Forest Drift* (2006) which explored ‘new walkways, overgrown tracks and desire paths’ in Haldon Forest Park, whilst one of the company’s ‘satellite projects’ by Simon Persighetti entitled *Passages* (2001) was created in response to Exeter’s underground passages (April 2001) and took the form of a ‘subterranean journey through the arteries of the city made in collaboration with historians and members of the public’ (Wrights-&-Sites, 2013).

Other well-documented examples of what Wrights & Sites would describe as ‘performance specifically generated from or for one site’ include the work of the sonic and walking-artist Janet Cardiff (created with the composer Richard Bures Miller), which as outlined in the book *Walk On: From Richard Long to Janet Cardiff – 40 Years of Walking*, ‘dramatize and make narratives [in order to] ghost what might have been’ in a site (Walk-On, 2013: 42-43).²⁶ Cardiff who is perhaps most well-known for the work *The Missing Voice (Case Study B)* (1999), an audio tour in Whitechapel London, that reflects on the ‘historical and present-day occupants of that corner of the city’ has also made works in response to rural sites (Cardiff and Bures-Miller, 1999). These include, the works *Forest: For A Thousand Years* (2012), *Taking Pictures* (2001) and *Jena Walk: Memory Field* (2006) which all engage, writes Cardiff, with the ‘history, narrative and memory’ associated with the rural locations in which they were created and ‘invite the

²⁴ Brif Gof was founded by Mike Pearson and Lis Hughes-Jones in 1981.

²⁵ See, <http://www.mis-guide.com/index.html>

²⁶ See, http://www.cardiffmiller.com/artworks/walks/missing_voice.html

stories of the place to merge with the stories that are personal to each walking participant'

(Cardiff and Bures-Miller, 2012, 2001, 2006).²⁷

These works in aesthetics and approach relate to and suggest parallels with my practice and that of Cardiff, Wrights & Sites and Brif Gof. For example, the way that Wrights & Sites and Cardiff connect, as explored later in this thesis, to the way that *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* drew from the site and left space for participants to derive their own meaning by making connections with their 'own' personal life-stories. They also have parallels that can be seen in the way that *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* were created in collaboration with locals and individuals, who had expert knowledges of the landscape, and of the underlying subject matter.

Other significant features of the site-specific performance of these companies and artists include: the way that the architecture and history of the site becomes a source of inspiration and leads to an interplay between time and space – past, present and future; the immersion of participants in the live experience which often combine art forms, whilst being visually striking as well as multi-sensory; how participants were often taken into hidden recesses of the site such as basements, attics and non-public areas.

These features can be seen in wilson+wilson's *House* (1998), which was created in two nineteenth-century terraced houses in the centre of Huddersfield and made 'thin' and 'porous' the distinction between time and space and *Mapping the Edge* (2001) which was inspired the city of Sheffield and its people – past and present (wilson+wilson, 1998) (wilson+wilson, 2001). They are also reflected in the site-specific work of the theatre designer and scenographer Geraldine Pilgrim, which has, I consider, particularly strong affinities with some aspect of my own practice such as our pictorial use of space, object, sound and the performer to create

²⁷ See, <http://www.cardiffmiller.com/artworks/walks/forest.html>;
<http://www.cardiffmiller.com/artworks/walks/takingpictures.html>;
<http://www.cardiffmiller.com/artworks/walks/jena.html>

‘scenes’ into which participants enter. For example, *Spa* (2003) took participants on a tour of the deserted Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital in Euston and, writes Pilgrim, layered ‘real stories’ with ‘imagined history of the hospital’ and *Hotel* (2000) created in the empty (1930s art deco) Midland Hotel, Morecambe, which, writes Pilgrim, was ‘inspired by the stunning architecture of the building, the faded memories of the hotel’s glorious past and the echoes of its former guests. Locked bedroom doors were opened to reveal dream-like images and hidden memories and the ballroom came alive again for one last day’ (Pilgrim, 2003, Pilgrim, 2000).²⁸ However, as explored later, there are also differences between Pilgrim’s work and my own, especially in the way my practice engaged with place, and people of a place not only in order to provide material for a performance but for specific (and transformative) outcomes in relation to the underlying subject matter, and in such a way that embeds those people as both performer and participant into the performance.

Attempts, begun by Brif Gof and Wrights & Sites, to define and find a language for site-specific performance has produced a growing body of publications by practitioners including Mike Pearson’s book entitled *Site-Specific Performance* which proposes methodologies, theories and studies of performance created in non-theatre locations and Cathy Turner’s article ‘Palimpsest or Potential Space? Finding a Vocabulary for Site-Specific Performance’, proposed a useful vocabulary with which to understand and describe sited performance (Pearson, 2010, Turner, 2004). However, the first scholar to identify both the increase in use of the term site-specific as well as in the number of artists and companies making sited-work was Wilkie in her article entitled ‘Mapping the Terrain: A Survey of Site-Specific Performance in Britain’ (Wilkie, 2002). The article was the result of a survey Wilkie undertook of site-specific performance companies between 2000-2001 in which she sets out to ask ‘Who is producing site-specific performance in Britain? Who sees it? Where do these performances occur, or, more particularly, ‘take place’? What tools are used to construct a performance of place? Why is the site-specific mode chosen?

²⁸ See, <http://www.geraldinepilgrim.com/past-projects/spa> and <http://www.geraldinepilgrim.com/past-projects/hotel>

And, crucially, how is it variously defined?' (Wilkie, 2002b: 140).²⁹ Wilkie's article 'Kinds of Place at Bore Place: Site-Specific Performance and the Rules of Spatial Behaviour', which followed her survey 'suggest some principles for approaching site-specific performance' (Wilkie, 2002a: 243).

The term 'site-specificity' itself however, has become much overused and contested. It is often applied to any type of theatre that is performed outside of a theatre building. As the writer and theatre maker Andy Field argues in *The Guardian* newspaper article entitled 'Site-specific theatre? Please Be More Specific', 'this term is now used to describe almost every show that isn't put on in a purpose-built auditorium. That's missing the point' (Field, 2008).³⁰ Field refers to how the companies Brif Gof (1981-1997) and Wrights & Sites³¹ first began to use the term site-specific in the early 1980s but that by the 1990's the term was becoming 'more vague' (Field, 2008). To remedy this and make clearer the distinctions between different types of sited work alternative definitions such as 'site-responsive', 'site-sympathetic' or 'site-generic' were used.

These definitions can, for example, be applied to the work of a number of companies including Punchdrunk, Dream Think Speak and the National Theatre Wales (NTW). The 'immersive' theatre works of the company Punchdrunk responded theatrically to architectural and physical features of the sites in which they are performed but not to their history or to the people and activities associated with them. Punchdrunk's *Masque of the Red Death* (2007-9)³² was a theatrical response to Battersea Old Town Hall that led audiences through a maze of 'staged' rooms, stairway and corridors and into, writes the company, 'a macabre world of mystery and

²⁹ Companies and artists included in Wilkie's survey included: Wrights & Sites, Grid Iron, Station House Opera, London Bubble, Pentabus, Welfare State International, Out of the Blue, Moving Being, Brif Gof, Knee High, Cotton Grass Theatre Company, Storm Theatre Company, Lone Twin, Bobby Baker, Kate Lawrence, Jude Kerr, Hester Reeves, IOU Theatre, Sue Palmer, Impossible Theatre, Emergency Exit Arts, Helena Goldwater, Bill Aitcheson, Rotozaza, Red Earth, Theatre Nomad, Walk the Plank, The Lion's Part, Sirens Crossing.

³⁰ See, <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2008/feb/06/sitespecifictheatrepleasebemore specific>

³¹ The founder members of Wrights & Sites are: Stephen Hodge, Simon Persighetti, Phil Smith and Cathy Turner.

³² See, <http://www.punchdrunk.org.uk/masque-of-the-red-death>

the supernatural’ and *Tunnel 228* (2009)³³ used a series of forgotten tunnels under Waterloo Station to theatrically ‘stage’ artworks by 23 contemporary artists including Janet Cardiff and Georges Bures (Punchdrunk, 2007-2009, 2009). Similarly, the company Dream Think Speak create site-responsive performances that are located but can also be transposed elsewhere. For example, *In The Beginning was the End* (2013) was a journey through the unseen spaces of King’s College London, *One Step Forward to Steps Back* (2008) took place in the hidden corners of Liverpool’s Anglican Museum and *Underground* (2005) was performed in the basement of the Theatre Royal Brighton before being restaged in an underground abattoir in Clerkenwell, London (Dream-Think-Speak, 2013, 2008, 2005).³⁴ In addition, a number of site-responsive performances produced by National Theatre Wales (NTW) were staged in dramatic locations. These include, a series of productions directed by Mike Pearson and Mike Brookes and designed by Simon Banham including *The Persians* (2010) which was staged in a ‘mock German village rarely seen by the public’ in the Breacon Beacons and *Coriolanus* (2012) which took place in a disused World War II aircraft hangar at RAF St Athan in the Vale of Glamorgan (NTW, 2010, NTW, 2012).³⁵

These works by Punchdrunk, Dream Think Speak and NTW reflected a gradual shift in sited performance work that was static, such as the early work of Brif Gof, to sited performance work that was mobile, such as the work of Wrights & Sites and Janet Cardiff. This work moved through a series of spaces or places and mobilised both the performance *and* the audience/participants. By 2012, in the article ‘Site-Specific Performance and the Mobility Turn’, Wilkie identified this mobilisation as a significant change in the field stating ‘one of the shifts in site-specific practice from performance that *inhabits* a place to performance that *moves* through spaces’ (Wilkie, 2012: 205). Wilkie is referencing her chapter entitled ‘The Production of “Site”: Site-Specific Theatre’ (2008) in the *Concise Companion to Contemporary British and Irish*

³³ See, <http://www.punchdrunk.org.uk/tunnel-228>

³⁴ See, <http://www.dreamthinkspeak.com>

³⁵ See, <https://www.nationaltheatrewales.org/thepersians>. Other performances by Pearson, Brookes and Banham with the NTW include *Coriolanus* (2012) and the *Iliad* (2015). See, <https://www.nationaltheatrewales.org/coriolanus> and <https://www.nationaltheatrewales.org/iliad>

Theatre edited by in Nadine Holdsworth and Mary Luckhurst (Wilkie, 2008: 87-106, 90). Her article (and chapter) reflected a move from site-specific performance that was 'static' to site-specific performance that was mobile. Referencing Kwon's book *One Place After another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Wilkie discusses how 'site-specificity used to imply something grounded and immobile but does no longer' (Wilkie, 2012: 204, Kwon, 2004: 11).

As evident in Wilkie's work certain notions relating to the activity of walking, flânerie, psychogeography, dérive (drifting) and Situationism developed by theorists such as Walter Benjamin, Guy Debord (and the Situationists movement), Michel De Certeau and Henri Lefebvre may be seen to have contributed to thinking and understanding of site and mobility.

In *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* spectators enter into, and walk through both the metaphorical and the physical landscape, making participants *and* the performance, mobile, yet located. However, as indicated in chapter 1, my early site-specific performance practice with wilson+wilson can be seen as contributing to this 'shift'.³⁶ Examples of the way that wilson+wilson mobilised performance *and* participant include *House* (1998), which took participants on foot from cellar to attic through two nineteenth-century terraced houses in the centre of Huddersfield (wilson+wilson, 1998). *News from the Seventh Floor* (2003), in which participants moved on foot and via lifts and staircases through Clements department store in Watford at night (wilson+wilson, 2003).³⁷ *Mulgrave* (2005), a four-mile journey into the heart of Mulgrave Woods on the North Yorkshire coast in which participants travelled on foot and by golf buggy (wilson+wilson, 2005). As they moved a series of 'scenes' unfolded around, or moved past, them.³⁸ *Mapping the Edge* (2001) took participants into the streets of Sheffield and led them on an epic journey across and through the city on foot, on a bus and on a tram to sites as

³⁶ See, <http://www.wilsonandwilson.org.uk>

³⁷ The performance led participants from the staff entrance at the rear of the building into basement store rooms and boiler rooms, across shop floors and into offices and boardrooms, up to dusty attics and over roof-top car parks from where a goods lift lowered them to street level and out onto the streets of Watford.

³⁸ Performers passed by on rickshaws, in Land Rovers, on golf buggies and riding a-top a life-size model of an elephant, pulled along on a trailer by a pick up truck.

varied as a 1960s graffiti covered underpass to a working boxing club, an area of post-industrial wasteland to the 1930s ballroom in the basement of Sheffield's City Hall. As they travelled through the city, accompanied at times by characters from the performance, the distinction between 'performed' and 'non-performed' places, people and activities became blurred (wilson+wilson, 2001).

A work that in some ways can be seen to parallel *Mapping The Edge*, can also be found in Forced Entertainment's *Nights in This City* (1995), which took the form of a guided tour of Sheffield with both the audience (their term) and performers on board a moving bus. The performance, writes the company, 'explored the different histories written in urban space — the official and the historical to the personal, the mythical and the imaginary' (Forced-Entertainment, 1995).³⁹ Forced Entertainment's exploration alternative histories compares to a series of performance works known as *Mis-Guides*, and the publication *Mis-Guides to Anywhere* (2006), by Wrights & Sites, which rather than telling participants 'where to go and what to see', gives them 'ways to see your city or environment that no one else has found yet' (Wrights-&-Sites, 2006).⁴⁰

The way that the performances discussed above engaged and mobilised the audience saw (wilson+wilson), like other companies who were mobilising their work, re-define audiences as participants. This term reflected the more equal, and less separated, relationship between the performance and participants who were not just physically but cognitively, sensorially and emotionally involved. The process of re/defining who or what the audience/participants are in relation to site-specific performance, particularly when the practice becomes socially engaged, is something that my practice, and that of others, continues to consider. This relationship was captured by the performance artist Adrian Howells, who, when describing his one-to-one performance practice, used the expression 'audience-participant'. For Howells the term, which

³⁹ See, <http://www.forcedentertainment.com/project/nights-in-this-city>

⁴⁰ See, <http://mis-guide.com/mg.html>

he discussed in the section entitled ‘Adrian Howells – The Epic in the Intimate’ in the book *Immersive Theatres* by the theatre scholar Josephine Machon, indicated ‘an equality in the dynamic between performer and audience’ (Machon, 2013: 261).

The interplay between place, people, performance and participant seen in my own practice, and that of others, marks a shift from performance ‘staged’ in a derelict, abandoned or hidden but ‘real’ location to site-specific performance that actively involves participants and communities in such a way the work is *for* and *about* them, and has a social (and perhaps a political) function. My own practice from wilson+wilson’s *Mapping The Edge* to the work created for this practice-as-research project has long been interested in this interplay and the potential for the performances I create to be socially engaged and serve a social function. That social function might, I suggest, be about recognising and giving-voice to people in relation to an underlying subject matter and for the purpose of transformation.

The way that sited-performance was often created in response to a place and to the people of that place (as individuals and community), and the way that it involves and immerses participants physically and intellectually has, in recent years, seen national theatre companies moving out of theatre buildings in order to make *and* perform work not just in ‘real’ places but with ‘real’ people and communities. For example, The National Theatre Wales (NTW), established 2010 under the artistic directorship of John McGrath, left the building based model of London’s National Theatre behind, taking, they write, inspiration from the ‘theatre without walls’ policy of the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS, 2013). Their aim was to ‘create theatre *rooted* in Wales’ whilst at the same time being mobile and they proposed an ‘itinerant national theatre, concerned with moving identities, moving practices and moving sites’ (NTW, 2013).

My own production of *The Gathering/Yr Helfa* (2014) produced by NTW demonstrated a shift in NTWs early work such as *The Persians* (2010), *Coriolanus/us* (2012) and *Mametz* (2014)⁴¹ that used sites such as woods, building and hangars as a sites for performance to site-specific performance that was borne from the site in which they were created and performed, and involved local people and communities in the creative and the performative process - making them, I suggest, socially engaged (NTW, 2014). Created on a hill-farm in Snowdonia in collaboration with the shepherds and the local people, many of whom performed in the final production, *The Gathering* reflected, I suggest, NTWs widening interest in working with artists whose practice was concerned not just with site but with specific local identities (NTW, 2011, 2014, Wilson, 2014).⁴² NTW approached me about making a performance when I was creating *Fissure* (2011) the 3-day long performance in the Yorkshire Dales, which was structurally and symbolically based on the Easter Trideum. In this respect, *Fissure* has affinities with NTW's 3-day long performance entitled *The Passion of Port Talbot* (2011) (*The Passion*), which was a co-production with the company Wildworks⁴³ and was co-directed by Bill Mitchell and Michael Sheen. Staged on the streets of Port Talbot the 'theatre event', as described by NTW,:

placed the Port Talbot community at its very heart. ... this riotous contemporary re-telling of the Passion story took place across the town, with the people of Port Talbot as its cast, crew and heros. Supported by over 1,000 community volunteers the production celebrated a town (NTW, 2011).

Huge numbers of local residents came out onto the street of the town to 'witness' *The Passion*, which told stories that celebrated the town of Port Talbot and its people. This 'telling' became, I suggest, transformative for the community and established a deeply-felt connection between the people, as contributors and participants, and the performance in such a way that blurred the line separating the two. Crucial to this blurring was that the community were involved in the processes of making *and* performing *The Passion* – a process that paralleled the extended period

⁴¹ *Mametz* was performed in ancient woodland in Monmouthshire, which represented Mametz Wood in France, in which, during the First Battle of the Somme in 1916, 4,000 of the 38th (Welsh) Division were killed or wounded. See, <https://www.nationaltheatrewales.org/mametz>

⁴² See, <https://www.nationaltheatrewales.org/gathering-yr-helfa> and <https://louisannwilson.com/projects/the-gathering>

⁴³ Founded by Bill Mitchell in 2005 the Cornish based company Wildworks make theatre with landscapes and people. See, <http://wildworks.biz>

of research that I undertook at the farm in order to create *The Gathering* and the way that the shepherds and other locals were involved in the performance. The underlying subject matter of both performances was the place and the people however, *The Gathering* used this material as a means through which to explore the underlying subject matter of non-biological motherhood and other pathways to, and types of, mothering and parenting. This meant *The Gathering* was socially engaged in two ways. Firstly in the way that it involved the farm in the performance and secondly in the way the way it worked with imagery, activities and metaphors of the farm, people and animals in the context of the underlying subject matter for the purpose of personal (for participants) and social re-imaging and transformation of experiences of biological childlessness, in/fertility and the missing life-event of biological mother hood.

Much of NTW's most recent work, and the performances it produced, have been developed through a series of 'Assemblies' that involved communities across Wales. For example, *The People's Platform: Merthyr* (2016), took place in a social club in the town of Merthyr Tydfil and, as described on their website, invited local people to join NTW for 'an evening of performance to celebrate our community. Hear our stories, questions and hopes for the future' (NTW, 2016).⁴⁴ These Assemblies led to *The Big Democracy Project* (2014 – 2016)⁴⁵, which considers 'how art and creativity can play a part in helping communities across Wales to re-engage with the democratic process' (NTW, 2014-16). The aim of the project was social and political in that it sought to 'make a real change to the lives of people in Wales and beyond and instigate action through art' (NTW, 2013).

NTW's physical, social and political mobilizing of theatre, art and community for the purpose of social and political engagement demonstrates another shift that this practice-as-research project also reflects. Namely, from site-specific performance created by arts practitioners to performance

⁴⁴ See, <https://www.nationaltheatrewales.org/peoples-platform-merthyr>

⁴⁵ See, <https://www.nationaltheatrewales.org/big-democracy-project>

created in collaboration with, by and about communities and participants. *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* are similarly interested in social, and even political, engagement (and transformation) but on a more personal, intimate scale, than that of NTW's local platforms and the country-wide democracy project, *and* with a specific underlying subject matter in mind – the personal and social effects of biological childlessness-by-circumstance. The performances however sought to do this by exploring practical ways of embedding the participants within the performance as 'makers' and interpreters of their own experiences. This can be seen in the three-tiered research process I pursued, which involved the combination of primary/site' research, 'secondary/subject' research and 'tertiary/social' participant related research that included the mapping-walks. This research process, and especially perhaps the 'tertiary/social' research, is, I suggest, 'democratising' and parallels NTW's aim of 'making a real change to the lives of people' and also 'instigate[s] action through art' (NTW, 2013).

The shift in my practice and that of others towards social engagement can be understood, I suggest, through the conceptual framework of 'mobilities' *and* how my practice (created in rural landscapes) seeks to re-image and transform 'missing' life-events can be understood through the lenses of therapeutic landscape and therapeutic mobilities.

In identifying a shift from performance that is 'static' to performance that moves through a site Wilkie's writing investigated the relationships between site-specific performance and the 'new mobilities paradigm' in social science developed by the sociologist John Urry in the book entitled *Mobilities* (Wilkie, 2012: 203, Urry, 2007: 18). Urry and Mimi Sheller first used the term 'mobilities turn', and, with Tim Edensor and Tim Creswell, are key researchers in the field of mobilities. The mobility turn (or transformation) in the social sciences began in the 1990s in response to the increasing realization of the historic and contemporary importance of movement on individuals and society.

The mobilising of site-specific performance can also, I suggest, be understood through the concepts of ‘therapeutic landscapes’ and the concept of ‘therapeutic mobilities’, which evolved out of the former. These concepts recognise the therapeutic, restorative and transformative potential of the seemingly simple act of walking. In the article entitled ‘Walking Together: The Embodied and Mobile Production of Therapeutic Landscape’ featured in the journal *Health and Place* the cultural geographer Karolina Doughty describes how ‘Walking together is found to have a significant impact on social interaction and embodied mobilities and supportive social interaction that transforms the countryside walkscape into a mobile therapeutic landscape and a site for shared therapeutic body work’ (Doughty, 2013: 140). In the article ‘Therapeutic Mobilities: Walking and ‘Steps’ to Wellbeing and Health’ featured in the journal *Health and Place*, health geographer Anthony Gatrell outlines three key ‘emplaced’ steps to ‘wellbeing’, selected from *The New Economic Foundation*. These are: ‘Be active – engage in physical activity; Connect – develop social connections with people; Take notice – be aware of one’s surrounding’ (Gatrell, 2012: 100, N.E.F., 2015). Gatrell then goes on to evolve these steps into three principle factors that are found in therapeutic mobilities:

- *activity*, that walking is restorative and can be ‘*affective*’ (the walker is affected by the landscape through which they walk) and ‘*effective* in maintaining health and wellbeing’;
- *sociability*, that the solitary walker often experiences walking as a ‘spiritual act’ and the communal walker as ‘energizing’;
- *context*, that walking is ‘shaped by the context within which it takes place’ and that in [turn walking shapes ‘contexts’ (Gatrell, 2012: 100-12).

The performances created for this research project both sought to engage walking and talking as a creative, therapeutic, conversational and performative tool in a fashion that could be related back to Gatrell’s three key features of and the transformative use of: the landscape and activity

(walking, actions, visual and sensory immersion); the social effects of communal or solitary walking; the context of the underlying subject matter.

The Gathering and *Warnscale* were created in such a way that invited companionable, or side-by-side, walking, sharing, talking and being alone in the landscape, whilst also being with others. Landscape is often experienced in an embodied and multi-sensory way often through walking, meandering, and dwelling in it. The act of walking, writes MacFarlane, referencing Lefebvre's notion of rhythm, becomes a way to know a place 'see a place' and 'ourselves' through the whole body and how the rhythm, action and effort of walking brings the walker into the present yet also allows them to make an internal journey into memory, imagination, feeling, being and knowing, adding:

I have long been fascinated by how people understand themselves using landscape, by the topographies of self we carry within us and by the maps we make with which to navigate these interior terrains. We think in metaphors drawn from place and sometimes those metaphors do not only adorn thought, but actively produce it. Landscape, to borrow Georges Eliot's phrase, can 'enlarge the imagined range for self to move in' (MacFarlane, 2012: 26).

In the article entitled 'Talking Whilst Walking: A Geographical Archaeology of Knowledge' the geographer Jon Anderson focuses on what he terms 'conversation in place' where, the lives of individuals can be understood through the geographical context of the walk in which they are participating (Anderson, 2004: 254). Anderson argues 'that "talking whilst walking" can harness place as an active trigger to prompt knowledge recollection and production' (Anderson, 2004: 254).

The article 'Turning 40: 40 Turns' by Heddon also discusses processes of walking and talking. She argues that both companionable 'side-by-side walking' *and* 'walking alone' allows the walker to communicate with others, or themselves, in such a way that can be 'contemplative or reflective' (Heddon, 2012: 69). 'Both landscape and self', writes Heddon, are 'in flux, engaged in a process of co-production' (Heddon, 2012: 69). Heddon's work can be seen in the context of

writing on walking and companionship, and walking and knowledge production by scholars such as the anthropologist Tim Ingold, the ethno-geographer Jo Lee Vergunst and the cultural geographers Hayden Lorimer and John Wylie and Tim Edensor, whose writing looks at types of immersive, embodied walking in relation to time and space.⁴⁶

In the field of practice (performance and walking) this thinking is reflected in the ‘walking as art’ practice of Simon Pope who was featured in the exhibition *Walk On: From Richard Long to Janet Cardiff – 40 Years of Walking* (June – Sept 2013) at the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland (June 2013), and in the related publication. Pope’s work explores themes of participation, dialogue, negotiation, togetherness and openness. In *A Common Third* (2010) he invited a single walker to join him in order to negotiate a route that neither knew in order to explore the ‘mental pathways taken as much as the literal ones’ and *The Memorial Walks* (2012) was a series of walks ‘exploring how walking together can be a model for dialogue’ (Walk-On, 2013: 105, Pope, 2013). As part of the region-wide *Walk On* season, the arts organisation Visual Arts in Rural Communities⁴⁷ (VARC) commissioned a number of artists to create and lead a weekend of workshops and walks under to project name *Walk On: Art Walking Northumberland* (12-14 July 2013).⁴⁸ One such commission was Simon Pope and Sarah Cullen’s *Figures in a Landscape* (2013), which, in order to explore how we ‘share’ the landscape with others, participating walkers ‘encounter’ one another whilst out walking, a dialogic process Pope and Cullen term as the ‘*fellowship of the hills*’ (Pope and Cullen, 2013).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See, Ingold’s books *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (2011) and *Lines: A Brief History* (2007); Ingold and Vergunst’s book *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot* (2008) edited by Ingold and Vergunst; Wylie and Edensor articles entitled ‘Walking in Rhythm: Place, Regulation, Style and the Flow of Experiences’ (2010) and ‘Walking in the British Countryside: Reflexivity, Embodied Practices and Ways to Escape’ (2000); Lorimer’s articles ‘Excursions – Telling Stories and Journeys’ (2014) co-written with the cultural geographer Hester Parr, and ‘Telling Small Stories: Spaces of Knowledge and the Practice of Geography’ (2003).

⁴⁷ VARC annually commissions an artist to undertake a twelve-month residency in order to develop new work in response to the rural landscape and its community in the remote part of Northumberland in which it is based.

⁴⁸ See, <http://varc.org.uk/projects/walk-on>. The *Walk On* season included an exhibition at the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland (June 2013), and a symposium, On Walking (28th – 29th June 2013), hosted by the University of Sunderland.

⁴⁹ See, <http://varc.org.uk/projects/walk-on-highgreen-figures-in-a-landscape>. Other commissions by *Walk On: Art Walking Northumberland* (12-14 July 2013) included: *Path of Least Resistance* by Tim Knowles; *Walking Mindfully; Coming to our Senses* by Gwennie Fraser; *Framing Landscapes* by Ingrid Pollard; *Infinity Walk* by Chris Drury, and an exhibition, which included documentation of *Forest* by Janet Cardiff and works by Brian Thompson, Atul Bhalla

As well as working with the effects of participants walking together in fellowship or ‘communitas’, *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* were created in such a way that worked with the effects of solitary walking and applied the ‘trope’ of the solitary (female) figure in the landscape (for both participant and performer). Both performances used this ‘trope’ as a means through which participants could place themselves into the landscape *and* connect to the underlying subject matter. My aim that the figure would become a symbolic representation of the isolation caused by involuntary childlessness and, by placing the figure in an expansive rural landscape, of the relationship between the person and the forces of ‘nature’ – human, animal and environmental. For example, in *The Gathering* the figure of ‘The Woman’ was designed to become a metaphor and a cypher for participants’ experiences of the underlying subject matter. My aim was that The Woman would bring alternative perspectives – a fresh pair of eyes – on the landscape of the performance and in so doing become a therapeutic tool for participants. *Warnscale*, which is primarily aimed at women, invited participants to undertake the walk as an individual (solitary) walker or else within a group but responding as an individual and used line drawings of a single female figure montaged into the pages of the book alongside a series of texts extracted from Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals about her solo walking.

In my applied use of the solitary female figure in the landscapes of Cumbrian and Snowdonia I am deliberately borrowing from an Early Romantic ‘trope’. However, instead of a male figure, as was predominantly the case in art and literature of that period, in my practice the figure is female (though in *The Gathering* I did use the solitary figure of male shepherd/s). I also use this ‘trope’ as a means by which to engage participants with the landscape, forces of ‘nature’ and the ‘missing’ life-event subject matter compares, I suggest, to how Dorothy Wordsworth and her contemporaries Radcliffe, Smith and Tighe use of the first person, autobiography, the metaphor of the solitary flower, and the female figure in relation to the landscape and environmental forces. Then in chapter 3, I consider how the artist Elena Brotherus also uses the trope of the

solitary female in her work, and how she and others such as the artists and writers Tabitha Moses and Naomi Cumming who, like Brotherus and myself are dealing with the underlying subject matter of biological childlessness-by-circumstance, are working autobiographically.

As I have indicated while my project engages with autobiography in creating a performance this is not my primary concern in my own research aims and methodology but there are number of publications that looks more fully at autobiography and performance including Heddon's *Autobiography and Performance* (2008), especially chapter 3: Place: The place of Self, which considered the relationship between autobiography and space through the framework of what Heddon refers to as 'autotopography' (Heddon, 2008: 90).

In the walking-work entitled *The Lovers: The Great Wall Walk* (1988) the performance artist Marina Abramovic can also be seen to work with the trope of the solitary 'figure' – the figure of herself (Ambramovic, 1988). The work involved Abramovic and her collaborator Ulay walking from opposite ends of the Great Wall of China with the aim of meeting in the middle where they would draw to an end their professional and personal relationship. *The Lovers: The Great Wall Walk* is documented through films and photographs, which show the solitary figure of Abramovic, dressed in a red coat, as a small figure within the epic scale of the landscape through which she is walking. While not directly influenced by the red-coated figure of Abramovic calls to mind the Tramway Walker in *The Gathering* who was, at times, similarly framed and dwarfed by the scale of the landscape through which she traversed. The way that *The Lovers: The Great Wall Walk*, as later described by Abramovic, was physically and emotionally challenging, and in the way that it had a known end point (the middle of the wall) and a known life-event 'ritual' purpose (the end of a relationship) means, I suggest, that the walk acted like a pilgrimage for a rite of passage. Concepts relating pilgrimage start to come into play in a lot of work when site specific performance becomes mobilised, especially on foot.

The walk therefore compares to the practice created for this research in a number of ways – its use of the solitary figure, the rite of passage for pilgrimage form it took, and how it deals with a life-event subject matter. However, it also differs because the subject matter of *The Lovers: The Great Wall Walk* despite being challenging and life changing is not uncommon, and though it is documented and made as public art, it was a self-contained act between two people. *The Gathering* and especially *Warnscale* worked with a missing, non-mainstream life-event, and sought/seeks personal *and* social transformation of that underlying subject matter.

Another artist whose practice uses the solitary female figure is that of the visual and walking artist Alison Lloyd. In works such as *Ewden Beck* (2015), *Camera Click and Run* (2014), *Step of Two* (2014) and *Marking the Contours* (2013) Lloyd walks, places, and photographs herself – as a solitary figure – into rural upland landscapes of Northern England (Lloyd, 2016). Some photographs echo paintings such as Caspar David Friedrich’s *The Wanderer Above the Mists*, this image often related to the transcendent or masculine sublime, but instead of a male figure, Lloyd’s female figure is on the move, blurred or seeming to fall out of the edge of the frame. In other photographs the figure is laid horizontally, half in and half out of the frame and is taken from a low perspective by Lloyd whilst she lies on the grass or heather. Lloyd’s photographs, which capture these alternative perspectives compare, I suggest, with how the practice created for this research project, sought to find alternative perspectives on the landscape. However, where my practice differs is that *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* seek these alternative perspectives as a means to re-image and transform the underlying subject matter.

Lloyd’s photos do however suggest the alternative viewpoints that Dorothy Wordsworth might have found when instead of standing in the landscape she ‘lay down on the grass’ or ‘in a ditch’, and that Charlotte Smith might have used when writing the immersive poem *Beachy Head* (Wordsworth, 1991: 92-93). Imagining these women lying down or sitting in the landscape inspired my own use of alternative viewpoints (physical and metaphorical). These imaginings

provided the basis for scenographic interventions in *The Gathering* such as the films showing a lamb fetus inside of the womb, and the way that *Warnscale* invites participants to lie on a rock or crouch down and look at the lichen growing on it through a magnifying glass. Later in this thesis, I discuss in more detail my use of Dorothy Wordsworth and Charlotte Smiths finding and use of alternative perspectives, and how and why *Warnscale* invites participants to seek similar ‘alternative’ viewpoints, both literal and metaphorical, through an applied use of the concept of the feminine sublime.

One of the ways that *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* sought ‘alternative’ viewpoints, both literal and metaphorical, was by incorporating a series of framing devices through which participants were invited to view and re-view the landscape. One such device was the way that the scenography that underpinned the composition of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* referenced and applied a series of Early Romantic aesthetics and concepts relating to the picturesque frame. These performances did this by incorporating a series of viewing stations and framing devices such as windows, binoculars or landscape features in order to frame or bring closer wide and expansive views or specific landscape features or activities.

My practice is site-specific walking-performance that uses installation in order to draw attention to and/or frame, specific landscape features for symbolic or metaphoric meaning in relation to the underlying subject matter. To do this, *The Gathering* created installations in the landscape, using material of the place and *Warnscale* drew participants’ attention to landscape features, as if they were installations. This compares, I suggest, to the installation work of the land artist⁵⁰

Michelle Stewart who was known for her pioneering use of the topography, history, materials

⁵⁰ As well as Early Romanticism and its engagement with landscape, another, perhaps not unrelated, movement that informs the scenography underpinning this practice-as-research project is Land Art. The movement, as outlined by the Whitworth Gallery in the on-line programme of the exhibition *Nancy Holt: Land Art, Sublime* (2013), ‘began in the late 1960s with artists in New York taking their work out of the gallery and into the landscape’ (Gallery, 2013). This echoes, I suggest, the way that theatre and performance has left the theatre building and auditorium behind and taken to found and site-specific spaces and places. The publication *Women Artists in the 20th and 21st Century* edited by the art historian Uta Grosenick describes how the Land Artists Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, Dennis Oppenheim and Robert Smithson, the maker of *Spiral Jetty* (1970), ‘left the constraints of the gallery behind and set out to make aesthetic statements out of doors’, where the ‘landscape served simultaneously as material for art and as a stage for huge-scale interventions’ (Grosenick, 2001: 228).

and stories of the sites in which they are created.⁵¹ For example, Stewart's *Niagara River Gorge Path Relocated* (1975) was a 460-foot paper scroll that she unfurled down the side of the gorge marking the place where the Niagara Falls had once flowed. Using pigments of earth from the site Stewart used a rubbing technique to mark the surface of the scroll with the texture of the rock beneath. A comparison can be made between the way Stewart's installation revealed landscape features and activities past and present in the practice created for this research project – the red carpeted 'Tram-way Incline', the poem *This Mountain has Secrets* inscribed in chalk on the face a massive slate boulder and the visual impact of 200 sheep flowing through a narrow gate in *The Gathering*.

A further similarity between my practice and Stewart's work can be seen in her use of materials of the site. Indeed, Stewart pioneered the use organic materials such as earth, wax, seeds and plants in her installations. Both *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* use materials of the place such as slate, fleeces of wool, carpet, red coloured woollen fabric, brass, sheep, flowers such as hawthorn and Violas, tarns, fells and summits, bothies, rain and rivers. These materials (either through installation interventions or by drawing attention to them as 'natural features') are used metaphorically and physically in order to reveal the place and its activities, topographies and histories. Where my practice differs to Stewart's that it used installations such as these within a performance and in the context of the underlying subject matter.

The Gathering and *Warnscale* sought personal (for participants) and social re-imaging and transformation of experiences of the underlying subject matter by finding alternative perspectives on both the landscape *and* the underlying subject matter and seeing those things with 'fresh eyes'. One way that the performances sought to find these alternative perspectives was by inviting participants to *see* the subject matter and the landscape through the eyes of those

⁵¹ Other comparable works that reveal the landscape include: Andy Goldsworthy's *Wall That Went For A Walk* (1989) and the *Sheep Fold Project* (1996-2003) which repaired a series of derelict cairns and sheep folds and works such as Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Running Fence* (1972-76), *Valley Curtain* (1970-72) and *The Floating Piers* (2016).

with intimate and expert knowledge of it such as shepherds, dogs, sheep, botanists, geologist, farmers and historians.

Other contemporary artists and writers whose works focuses on the rural landscape, activities and processes include the farmer David McCracken who, as part of the *Walk On: Art Walking Northumberland* art-walks, led a 'Farm Walk' at his farm Burdonside, Highgreen during which, writes McCracken, he pointed 'details that he looks for as a farmer as he walks his land' (McCracken, 2013).⁵² McCracken's familiarity with the landscape, achieved through daily walking, year after year, and close observation, means he notices things others would not. The walk enabled participants to 'see small details [in the land] through his eyes – changes in growth, habit, wildlife, weather, the condition of fences, lying water and the location of animals', all of which are 'crucial to the hill-farmer' (McCracken, 2013). Similarly, in the books entitled *A shepherd's Life: A Tale of the Lake District* (2015) and in *The Illustrated Herdwick Shepherd* (2015), the farmer James Rebanks documents and describes the annual activities, people and animals on his family's upland sheep farm in Matteredale, Cumbria (Rebanks, 2015a, Rebanks, 2015b). The extended research I undertake on site compares to the time photographer Kate Bellis spent documenting, through photographs, a Derbyshire hill farming community and shepherds in Northumberland. The time she spent led to a series of exhibitions and the publications *On The Edge* (2001) and *Gathering: Hill Farming: People, Animals and Landscape* (2005), a collaboration with sculptor Sally Matthews (Bellis and Matthews, 2005, Bellis, 2001). It is the knowledge of farmers like McCracken and Rebank that *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* worked with and Bellis's processes of observation and documentation of rural farming activities and communities parallels my own primary (landscape/earth-science) research process. However, my research process was undertaken for a purpose that extended beyond its own outcomes. To that end, the knowledge and documentation that I gathered through the primary research process was combine with 'secondary/subject' (animal-reproductive/social and historical) research and

⁵² See, <http://varc.org.uk/projects/walk-on-highgreen-farm-walk>

‘tertiary/social’ research and then, through my scenographic process, all three tiers were distilled into the performances – both of which had clear aims.

As well as working with local knowledge as a means by which to find alternative perspectives on the landscape *and* the underlying subject matter *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* also used installations, drawings, films and words to frame and re-frame *and* view and re-view the landscape and through it the underlying subject matter. A comparison can be drawn between my use of installation and the frame in these performances and some aspects of the installation work of the land artist Nancy Holt who is renowned for her large-scale sculptural works in the environment. This can be seen, for example, in *Warnscale*’s use of the frame to ‘capture’ the landscape *and* the body in a manner that I argue can be understood through the concept of the feminine sublime and Holt’s installation *Sun Tunnels* (1976) in which the expansive, transcendent sublime scale of the Utah Desert is captured in a series of four concrete tunnels laid out in an x-shape. In the book *Women Artists in the 20th and 21st Century*, Holt is quoted as saying that with *Sun Tunnels* she wanted to ‘bring the vast space of the desert back down to human scale’ (Grosenick, 2001: 228). Other works by Holt that used the frame in a way that might relate to the feminine sublime include *Views Through a Sand Dune* (1972) and *Stone Enclosure: Rock Rings* (1977-78). Holt’s work, like that of Stewart, Bellis, Lloyd and Abramovic, has strong parallels to aspects of my own practice however, in *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* my use of the frame was part of the scenography and was used within the design and structure of those performances. My aim was that they might re-image and transform the underlying subject matter in a manner that can be understood through the frame of the feminine sublime.

In his use of the material, physical topography and ever-changing phenomenon of a place/site *and* of the frame, the work of land artist Chris Drury has, I suggest, parallels to Holts, Stewarts and my own. His site-specific installation work entitled *Wave Chamber* (1996) is located in the

Kielder Water and Forest Park, Northumberland and works like a camera obscura. The installation consists of a 4-metre tall dry-stone hut, made with local material and shaped like a beehive, with a lens and mirror built into the top, angled at the reservoir. The rippling surface of the water is projected, via the mirror, onto the stone floor of the dark chamber inside the hut, which echoes with the sound of lapping water (Drury, 1996).⁵³ Drury's use of the camera-obscura frame as a focusing device for sound and image compares to James Turrell's *Cat Cairn: Kielder Skyspace* (2000), which uses a circular opening in the top a domed chamber through which to view and frame the ever-changing sky (Turrell, 2000).⁵⁴ This framing of the sky from beneath draws to mind the installation work *Track* (2011-ongoing) by the artist Graeme Miller's which invites participants to lie 'face-up' on a slow moving platform (pushed gently and quietly along a track) in order to find an alternative perspective on their environment by 'gazing upwards' into the tree canopy or sky as they glide along beneath it (Miller, 2011-2016).⁵⁵ There is parallel too, I suggest, to how in their work Lloyd, Smith, Dorothy Wordsworth and myself seeks out alternative perspective and viewpoints on the landscape and on environmental phenomenon, *and* also to Haraway's concept of 'situated knowledge', as discussed earlier, which recognises voices and viewpoints that are different to the established ones. In addition however, unlike the other practice identified here, *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* sought alternative perspective and viewpoints in order to re-image and transform the experiences of women who are biological childlessness-by-circumstance, a subject matter that is also ordinarily overlooked and sits on the edges of social and cultural discourse.

The walking-artist Ingrid Pollard has also used the frame in her work – the hand held frame of the Claude Glass – to capture and isolate landscape scenes, in order to re-view *and* subvert them.⁵⁶ In the walk *Framing Landscapes* (2013), created by Pollard as part of the *Walk On: Art Walking Northumberland* season, the programme accompanying the season describes how she

⁵³ See, <http://chrisdrury.co.uk/wave-chamber/>

⁵⁴ See, <http://jamesturrell.com/work/catcairn/>; <http://www.visitkielder.com/great-outdoors/cat-cairn-the-kielder-skyspace-james-turrell-2000>

⁵⁵ See, <http://www.artsadmin.co.uk/projects/track>

⁵⁶ See page 108-109 of this thesis for information on the Claude Glass.

‘explores and questions the romantic landscape idyll and subverts and challenges ‘representation, history and landscape with reference to race and difference’ (Pollard, 2013)⁵⁷. An earlier work by Pollard’s entitled *Wordsworth's Heritage* (1992) used an image of William Wordsworth, an ‘icon closely linked with the Lake District’, she writes, and juxtaposes it with photographs of a group of Afro-Caribbean walkers taken in the landscape of the Lake District. The aim of this work was to challenge the frame and subvert, ‘notions of the “Romantic” landscape and ideas of history and heritage’ (Pollard, 2013). Pollard’s use of the Early Romantic landscape aesthetics and the picturesque frame compares to my own practice. However, the social outcomes we aim to achieve are very different. Whereas Pollard used these techniques as a means to challenge ‘ideas of history and heritage’ in relation to ethnicity, *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* used them, and the six scenographic sublime principles inspired by the writing of Dorothy Wordsworth and her contemporaries, as a means to enable participants to enter into the performances and then subtly challenge and subvert the aesthetic ‘frame’ for the purposes of transformation in relation to the underlying subject matter (Pollard, 2013). As discussed earlier in this introduction, I recognise the potential for ‘essentialism’ to occur in this thesis, which is moderated through drawing on the concept of ‘strategic essentialism’. Furthermore, I am also aware of the cultural specificity of the notion of the feminine sublime.

The inspiration derived from Dorothy Wordsworth’s and her contemporaries’ ‘mode’ of walking and dwelling in landscape, and writing about it, that this project has drawn up has, I suggest, contributed to a process of reclaiming and rediscovering this group of Early Romantic women – a lost ‘canon’ – who, in their own time, due to the application of the concept of the transcendent sublime, marginalized from mainstream culture. This practice-as-research project has drawn parallels between their marginalization and the way that some women who are biologically childless-by-circumstance can experience marginalization from mainstream society today. The way that this project has rediscovered this lost ‘canon’ of Early Romantic women practitioners,

⁵⁷ See, <http://varc.org.uk/projects/walk-on-highgreen-framing-landscapes>

and applied their work to the practice created for this research project *and* the creation of the six feminine sublime principles, has I suggest, contributed to Heddon and Turner's aim, begun in their article 'Walking Women: Shifting the Tales and Scales of Mobility' and continued in their subsequent work, to make the walking of women artists 'more visible' (Heddon and Turner, 2010: 15, 21).

Whilst presenting her current practice and research at the *Walking Women* symposium in Edinburgh (11 July 2016) the co-curator Clare Qualmann⁵⁸ read a list of all the types of and reasons for walking practices, undertaken by women:

Walking as necessity, walking as a freedom, walking as independence, walking as exploring, walking as sharing, walking as a mode of transport, walking as enabling, walking as research, walking as activation, walking to connect past and present, walking to create shared space, walking as protest, walking as a testing of boundaries, walking as surveying, walking as resistance, walking as transgression, walking as disruption (Walking-Artists-Network, 2016: Qualmann).⁵⁹

Qualmann's list could just as easily have been applied to Dorothy Wordsworth and her contemporaries who were walking 200 years previously. A genealogical line can, I suggest, be drawn directly between those women and the walking women practitioners of today, many of whom were presented or were represented at the conference.⁶⁰ Two other walkers whose work spans some of the intervening years between the walking women of the Early Romantic period and the present, and which, I suggest, can be understood through the concept of the feminine sublime, are Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) whose practice I discuss more fully in chapter 2 of this thesis, and the walker and writer Nan Shepherd (1893-1981).

⁵⁸ Clare Qualmann with Gail Burton was a founder member of the company 'Walk Walk Walk'. See, <http://www.walkwalkwalk.org.uk>. She is a co-founder of and the Walking Artists Network (WAN) and with Clare Hind, the co-editor, of the book *Ways to Wander*. She is also the maker of walks such as *Perambulator*, an exploration of walking with a child and a pram.

⁵⁹ See, <http://www.walkingartistsnetwork.org>

⁶⁰ *Walking Women* contributors included: The Walking Reading Group: Lydia Ashman, Ania Bas and Simone Mair, Anna Birch, Lois Keidan, Kubra Khademi, Anna Minton and geographer Jo Norcup, Clare Qualmann, Amy Sharrocks, Jennie Savage, The Demolition Project, Lucy Furlong, Idit Nathan, Amira Hanafi, Rachel Gomme, Aileen Harvey, Maggie O'Neill, Lizzie Philps, Una Lee, Regina Sebald, Amy McKenny, Siobhan O'Neill, Zoe Benbow, Helen Clarke, Kate Corder, Karen Tobias-Green, Sian Gledhill, Göze Saner, Helen Spackman, Giulia Matera, Sonia Overall, Lesley Wood, Hilary Ramsden, Emma Rochester, Helen Stratford, Leone Dunlop, Jess Allen, Cathy Turner, Deidre Heddon, Alison Lloyd, Elspleth Owen, Louise Ann Wilson.

In the book *The Living Mountain: A Celebration of the Cairngorm Mountains of Scotland* *The Living Mountain* (2011) Shepherd records her walking journeys into the Cairngorm Mountains of Scotland. Her writing describes both the harshness and the beauty of the upland environment that she knows through immersive walking and dwelling in it. Writing in *The Old Ways: A Journey On Foot* about Shepherd's account of her immersive walking in *The Living Mountain*, the author Robert MacFarlane describes how Shepherd 'found herself walking not "up" but "into" the mountains' where she 'explores and records the rocks, rivers, creatures and hidden aspects of this remarkable landscape' (Shepherd, 2011, MacFarlane, 2012: 24). Shepherd herself wrote 'I have walked out of the body and into the mountain. I am a manifestation of its total life, as is the starry saxifrage or the white-winged ptarmigan' (Shepherd, 2011: 106). Resonant with this practice-as-research project, and as this passage indicates, is the way that Shepherd and the landscape merge in a manner that can be, I suggest, understood through the concept of the feminine sublime. This feminine sublime merging, can also, as I later explore, be seen in the observational walking of Dorothy Wordsworth and her contemporaries. Like them, as the following excerpt from *The Living Mountain* demonstrates, Shepherd would often lie in the landscape with an awareness to the physical, time and imagined scale of the mountain beneath her, whilst also noticing the sky above and the intricate, material detail of the elements that she sees around her:

So there I lie on the plateau, under me the central core of fire from which was thrust this grumbling grinding mass of plutonic rock, over me blue air, and between the fire of the rock and the fire of the sun, scree, soil and water, moss, grass, flower and tree, insect, bird and beast, wind, rain and snow – the total mountain (Shepherd, 2011: 105).⁶¹

Landscape, for Shepherd, was experienced not just through the ocular but in embodied and multi-sensory ways achieved through walking, touching, dwelling and observing of the environment. This process, I suggest, not only made the ordinary world extraordinary but led to a

⁶¹ The performer and walking artist Simone Kenyon in her work entitled *Walking In the Footsteps of Nan Shepherd* (2013) created, writes Kenyon, a 'long distance round walk looking at issues, plights and pleasures of women walking in wilderness' (Deveron Arts, Kenyon 2013). Produced by Deveron Arts, Kenyon's walk was 'inspired by the writing of Nan Shepherd – following in the footsteps of her sensibility' (Deveron Arts, Kenyon 2013). Kenyon's walk invited participants to sense the mountain through lying down and walking with their eyes shut.

revelatory, deeply felt and transformative experiences of the mountain *and* through it of herself. 'I am not out of myself, she writes, but in myself. I am' (Shepherd, 2011: 108).

The transformative potential of 'noticing' and studying the hidden, the small and the intimate, in the context of the underlying subject matter, was a feature of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*. As well as revealing the topographical features of the landscape, and the stories and histories held within them, in order to look more closely, and unflinchingly, at the microscopic or at the hidden features and processes that occur within the landscape or the human or animal body, *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* both used framing and re/viewing devices such as microscopes, geology eye lenses, photographs, filmed or recorded 'unseasonal' farming activities, and also 'live' activities. This close-up process of looking and studying compares to the way that the artist Lucy Lyons and the writer Kathleen Jamie created work that connects to biological processes and the 'natural world' by investigating interior landscapes of the human body that are ordinarily hidden. Their practice can, I suggest, like my own be understood through the concept of the feminine sublime *and* relates to the six scenographic sublime principles evolved through this research. In the journal article 'Pathologies: A Startling Tour of Our Body' Jamie, who is writing about her colon cancer, describes how when looking at the 'countryside of cells beneath a hospital microscope' what she saw revealed her 'own intimate, inner natural world, the body's weird shapes and forms' (Jamie, 2008: 37). Lyons who draws human anatomy, its disease and pathology in a talk that she gave at the *Walking The Line: Drawing in Other Terrains* (2013) symposium at the Peter Scott Gallery, Lancaster University, describes how she 'works in labs and dissection rooms rather than in a traditional studio setting' and draws things that are often 'unfamiliar and unrecognisable' (Lyons, 2013). She describes how 'the oncologist she worked with found the cancer she had drawn beautiful' (Lyons, 2013). Lyons also draws familiar objects that are 'taken for granted', treating them as 'unique and specific', a process that Bert O. States in the article 'Performance as Metaphor' might describe as rescuing them 'from their everyday inconspicuousness' (States, 1996: 12).

Lyon's and Jamie's' processes of close 'looking' and therefore 'seeing' cancerous body cells in a different, perhaps more positive way, is fundamental to the process of re-imaging and transformation that sits at the heart of this practice-as-research project. As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, this close-up looking and re-imaging serves to 'refigure' the familiar and can, I argue, be understood as a – feminine sublime – process of 'wonderment' and 'defamiliarisation' that leads to transformation. Though comparable, to my own practice, differences between Lyons' and Jamie's work include the medium through which others experience these deeply personal experiences. For Jamie this is writing and Lyons drawing – whereas my practice is experienced through scenographic-led performance that combines a multiplicity of cross-disciplinary forms including art, writing, performance, science, landscape, walking and animal and human processes. Another difference is that, although all three of us wanted to share personal experiences and invite others to re-think how people view, understand and experience the ill, ageing or infertile body the aim with *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* of re-imaging and transforming experiences of biological childlessness-by-circumstance through performance are perhaps made more explicit than in Lyons or Jamie's work. This clarity compares, I suggest, to the way in which a rite of passage or a pilgrimage has clear aims and outcomes.

Another artist whose practice deals with illness and is borne from personal experiences is the writer, artist and breast cancer survivor Claire Collison whose walking project *An Intimate Tour of Breasts* (2016) involves, writes Collison, a 'three-hour walk exploring the mythologies and commodification of breasts throughout history to the present day' (Qualmann and Sharrocks, 2016). The walk ends with Collison showing participants the scars left by her breast surgery. Also drawing on the effects of a medical condition, the artist Rhiannon Armstrong whose one-to-one performance *Public Self Care System* (2016) is a response to a 'neurological condition that forces her to lie down wherever she happens to be, and stay there until she is well enough to get up again' (Armstrong, 2016).⁶² Addressing her *Public Self Care System* participants, Armstrong

⁶² See, <http://rhiannonarmstrong.net/recent-work/public-selfcare-system>

says ‘Come with me to a place you may have seen, walked past, but never been to. We are going to lie down and have a rest: I will look out for you and look after you’ (Armstrong, 2016).⁶³ Armstrong’s looking ‘out for’ and ‘after’ the participant is, I consider, a key element of socially engaged practice, and especially practice that engages with challenging or in the case of my practice ‘missing’ life-event subject matters (Armstrong, 2016). In *Warnscale* a series of one-to-one or small group collaborations took place between me and a number of women. They took part in a series of mapping-walks because of their experiences of biological childless-by-circumstance. During these mapping-walks both the participant/s and I revealed intimate and deeply personal experiences in an environment of necessary mutual trust and care. Afterwards I remained in contact with each participant for a period of time in order to ensure they did not feel unsettled or over-exposed by the experience.

In her work, the artist and performance maker Ellie Harrison also explores, discusses and invites participants to share challenging life-event experiences. Harrison’s series of works entitled *The Grief Series* (2011-present) were created in response to personal and repeated experiences of bereavement. The series took the form of a sequence of seven separate performance works that, writes Harrison, use a ‘seven stage grief model from popular psychology as a starting point’ in order to ‘to create a space where notions of bereavement or grief can be discussed openly’ (Harrison, 2011-2016).⁶⁴ Part 2 of *The Grief Series* entitled *The Reservation* (2013-14) was a ‘one-to-one performance-installation’ made in collaboration with performance maker Jaye Kearney that took place in a room in the Wren’s Hotel, Leeds before touring nationally (Harrison and Kearney, 2012). Prompted by a photograph of a loved-one who has died that the participant has taken with them, the performance invites the participant, whilst sipping a glass of Port, to:

⁶³ In seeking to share the effects of her condition and the alternative perspectives on her environment that lying-down brings Armstrong’s work connects to the Empathy Museum’s exhibition entitled *A Mile in My Shoes* (2016). Curated by the theatre director Clare Patey *A Mile in My Shoes* invites participants to look at the world through someone else’s eyes by wearing their shoes and hearing their stories. Contributors of shoes, writes Pavey, range from a sewer worker to a sex worker [and] the stories cover different aspects of life, from loss and grief to hope and love and take the visitor on an empathetic as well as a physical journey (2016). See, <http://empathymuseum.com/#amileinmyshoes> and <http://www.artsadmin.co.uk/projects/empathy-museum>

⁶⁴ See, <http://griefseries.co.uk>

describe the person in the photo; share their last memory of them; describe a memorable occasion they spent together; say what this person meant to them. Harrison in return shares her own experiences of bereavement.

The Grief Series compares to my own production entitled *Fissure* (2011), which also sought to openly discuss experiences of illness, death and bereavement through the creation of a 3-day long scenographic-led walking-performance. This was the performance that established the central concerns of this practice-as-research project. Though our aims are similar, where *The Grief Series* differs from *Fissure*, *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* is in my physical and metaphorical use, as a scenographer, of a rural landscape, the act of walking and the combination of science and art as a means to enable participants to reflect upon, re-image and transform, even in the smallest of ways, their relation to and understanding of challenging or ‘missing’ life-events. Indeed, as this contextual study has sought to reveal, whilst practitioners have: worked in the fields of site-specific performance and have mobilised site-specific; created walking-art, installations and land-art in rural locations; developed work that engages with landscape mobilities and therapeutic mobilities; collaborated with landscape and science experts, and locals; engaged and subverted tropes and concepts relating to Early Romanticism; explored challenging life-event subject matters – none, I suggest, has used a socially engaged, scenographic-led, process to bring these elements together. In addition, this combination has not, I suggest, previously been brought together in the form of rural landscape-performance created through the application of the six scenographic principles that are underpinned by the concept of the feminine sublime, with the specific aim of emplacing, re-imaging and transforming the ‘missing’ life-event of biological. Finally, having researched the work of other artists who have explored childlessness-by-circumstance and the ‘missing’ life-event of biological motherhood in their practice (see Chapter 3 for details) this combination of elements has not, I suggest, been used before. In fact until recently this subject matter has received little attention.

Thesis Overview: Chapter-by-Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 explores the background to my performance-making practice and how that led to this practice-as-research project and the socially engaged contemporary scenography that seeks to emplace, re-image and transform ‘missing’ life-events it has created. The chapter begins by discussing wilson+wilson, makers of site-specific performance and installation, *and* my mainstream theatre design practice. It then moves to explore my work as Louse Ann Wilson Co (LAW Co) including *Fissure* (2011), the 3-day walking-performance in the form of a pilgrimage that traversed the physical landscape of the Yorkshire Dales and the metaphorical landscape of illness, death and bereavement. The performance was made in response to my sister’s illness and death from a brain tumour aged 29, and the grief at her loss.

The chapter focuses on that performance because it laid the groundwork and established the central concerns of this practice-as-research project. *Fissure* confirmed my creative interest in the transformative potential of walking, landscape and participation, where the participant becomes a pilgrim. The performance also developed the scenographic-dramaturgical strategies, including the cross-disciplinary creative methodologies that engaged ‘primary/site’ research and ‘secondary/subject’ research, which I then evolved further and applied to the creation and performing of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*.

Chapter 2 discusses and defines the theoretical concepts relating to pilgrimage, rites of passage and the feminine sublime that frame this practice-as-research project and how these concepts interface with *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*. Throughout, the chapter weaves and narrates examples that reference the applied use of the scenographic principles evolved from the feminine sublime used to create those performances.

The chapter begins by focussing on the concept of the feminine sublime historically with a specific focus to landscape aesthetics and social politics of the Early Romantic period. These include theories of the ‘picturesque’, the ‘beautiful’ and particularly the ‘transcendent sublime’, to which the feminine sublime offered a counterpoint. The chapter then explores the ways in which I considered that the writing and walking of Dorothy Wordsworth and her contemporaries could be understood and analysed through the conceptual framework of the feminine sublime and the ways in which their practice paralleled my own. I give examples of the aspects of their practice that informed the six scenographic ‘principles’ based on the feminine sublime, that once evolved, were applied to *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*.

The writing of each of these women, with Dorothy Wordsworth’s taking up a central position, demonstrates a relationship to landscape, and their place in it, achieved through a combination of in-situ embodied observations, in-depth knowledge, metaphor and the imagination that give-voice to an alternative feminine sublime way of looking at and being in the world that expressed their lived experiences and their concerns.

Having looked at artists and writers of the Early Romantic period Chapter 3 expands on the autobiographical underpinning of the underlying subject matter of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*. The chapter explores other contemporary artists and writers whose creative practice also works autobiographically with the subject matter of childlessness-by-circumstance. The practice of these artists can also, I suggest, be understood through the concept of the feminine sublime in terms of its sociocultural functions. In a way that was similar to my own intentions, by sharing and openly talking about their experiences these women artists wanted their practice to give voice to and communicate their experiences, raise awareness, recognise and counter isolation, build networks and make a case for social change – in relation to the underlying subject matter of biological childlessness-by-circumstance.

Chapter 3 analyses the effects of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* on participants. The chapter brings together the theoretical concepts, the performances, and the underlying subject matter in order to re-focus them within the field of ‘socially engaged contemporary scenography’. The chapter provides examples of participant feedback, which reveals how the performances had personal (for participants) and wider social effects in relation to childlessness-by-circumstance. This is evidenced in the way that the performances enabled individuals to transform positively their personal experiences of that ‘missing’ life-event. It can also be seen in the way the performances contribute to the growing networks of communication about this social issue which means they have the potential to inform social and cultural change.

Chapter 4 considers whether the scenographic principles evolved from the feminine sublime offer a methodological approach that can be applied to future site-specific, landscape walking-performance dealing with ‘missing’ life-events. The chapter considers: what practically and academically I have learnt through this practice-as-research project; what I would I do differently; whether this research project has contributed knowledge to the emerging field of ‘socially engaged contemporary scenography’ and if so, what that knowledge is.

Chapter 1 – Drawing the Scene: Evolving a Socially Engaged Scenography for ‘Missing’ Life-Events

Background: My scenographic practice pre-*Fissure*

Fissure (2011) was the performance that established the central concerns of this practice-as-research project. The performance was the product of my professional theatre design, scenography and site-specific performance practice combined with a challenging and traumatic event in my private life.

My visual and technical arts training in Theatre Design at Nottingham Trent University (NTU)⁶⁵ embedded an understanding of spatial and aesthetic composition and ‘scene making’ upon which my scenographic-led practice continues to draw. My study pursued two interests and established the distinct, yet inter-connected, routes that my professional practice then pursued. These were, the design of a set and costumes in response to a play text and a *theatre space* and the creation of immersive performances in ‘found spaces’. This work in found spaces was often devised in response to text such as poems, short stories or myths *and* the space and was visually-led and often performed without spoken dialogue. It led to an appreciation of how powerful and complex meaning can be made through ‘image-making’ in a specific place.

Influenced by my own site-responsive work and that of other theatre designers, such as Vicki Mortimer, whose designs often incorporated architectural features of the stage *and* auditorium, my theatre design practice in a *theatre space* often revealed hidden architectural features and removed seating in such a way that disturbed the divide between designated performance-space and auditorium. I worked with bodies, light and sound to design ‘stage pictures’ that were informed by classical, picturesque or postmodern rules of composition and perspective whilst

⁶⁵ The course was 3-Dimensional Design (Theatre), Nottingham Trent University 1990-1993.

also layering precise and intricately detailed information into objects and costumes that became resonant with meaning.

The productions I designed in *non-theatre* spaces allowed the audience to enter into the environment of the performance. These designs worked with the character of the site and moved towards installation art, often incorporating materials such as soil, salt, water or grass – in volume. My work, like that of other designers such as Rae Smith, whose background in fine art saw her moving from stage to installation design, reflected the way that theatre designers were looking to develop the art form by moving out of the theatre space and authoring their own work.

My design for theatre and non-theatre spaces alike still ascribed clearly defined ‘roles’ organised within established hierarchies that allied the play-script with the writer, the concept with the director, the design with the designer, the performance with the actor and the production with the audience. This meant that my role as designer, though instrumental, was limited and I wanted to evolve processes that dovetailed roles and integrated concept, image and word more equally. I was also questioning the limited role ‘traditional theatre’ afforded the audience. I wanted to create performance that engaged them physically, mentally and emotionally and in which they could ‘see’ something of their lives and where ‘ordinary’ places became the location for performance, and the people of those places its inspiration. These artistic concerns led to me co-found the site-specific performance company wilson+wilson with joint-artistic director Wils Wilson.⁶⁶ Our practice enabled me to bring together my experience of designing in both theatre and non-theatre spaces and saw my professional identity begin to shift from ‘theatre designer’ to ‘scenographer’.

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis in an *Introduction to Scenography* McKinney and Butterworth articulates well the aims of my practice with wilson+wilson when describing how

⁶⁶ See, <http://www.wilsonandwilson.org.uk>

scenography is concerned with ‘the manipulation and orchestration of environments for performance within and beyond theatre spaces’ (McKinney and Butterworth, 2009: 4).

wilson+wilson’s site-specific theatre was created outside of theatre hierarchies and buildings. This liberated us from structural and spatial limitations, and removed the divide between the performance and the audience. We challenged the notions of *what* theatre could be, the *form* it might take, and how it could use *space* and *place* in such a way that contributed to the development of ‘immersive theatre’ practices. We generated ‘new’ bespoke texts often working with poets, and re-dressed the imbalance between roles and art forms. We also redefined the *role* of the audience and pursued the physical, psychological and emotional possibilities that could occur when participant, performance and site come together. The way in which we did this reflects what authors Jane Collins and Andrew Nisbet in *Theatre and Performance Design: A Reader in Scenography* explore when they write that ‘stepping onto the stage changes the status of the viewer from audience to participant’ (Collins and Nisbet, 2012: 9). wilson+wilson however went beyond ‘inviting’ participants ‘onto the stage’. Instead we asked them to leave the theatre and auditorium behind altogether and walk ‘into’, thus becoming active in, the physical and material site of a performance. Butterworth and McKinney explore this ‘active’ role in an *Introduction to Scenography*, as does scenographer Pamela Howard who, in *What is Scenography?*, wrote:

Scenography is not simply concerned with creating and presenting images to an audience; it is concerned with audience reception and engagement, it is sensory as well as an intellectual experience, emotional as well as rational (Howard, 2002: 4).

wilson+wilson then went further still and made a direct link between location, participant and subject matter by placing the people connected to a site at the heart of the production.

When creating a performance we liken the process to that of ‘an archaeological dig’ because we excavated and revealed the layers of hidden and forgotten lives, histories and stories ‘held’ within a site. As I discuss in the chapter ‘Scenographic Space and Place’, the rich layers of ‘material’ that this process revealed were then developed through the filters of design, writing,

composition and dramaturgy to evolve cross-disciplinary, site-specific performances that were ‘borne out of’, and ‘bespoke’ to the people, buildings, towns, cities and landscapes in which, and about which, they were created (Wilson, 2011: 65). These performances were created in houses, across a city, through a coastal-wood, and in a department store. They led small numbers of participants on intimate journeys through those spaces often following non-linear, site-led narratives that were multi-faceted and often reversed or collapsed historical and present time.⁶⁷ After the production of *House* (1998), which led fifteen participants from cellar to attic in two nineteenth-century terraced houses in the centre of Huddersfield, one participant commented that it was ‘A new emotional experience – It opened parts of my mind and senses that other theatre (media) has never touched before’ (*House* participant, December 2014).

The creative process that we undertook to create performances such as *House* did not see us ‘parachute’ ourselves into a site. Instead, we spent time finding locations and then became embedded in them. Our in-depth research and development process took time and involved a large number of individuals, groups and organisations who extended a lot of goodwill to the production, which was fuelled by intrigue into what we were doing. The level to which people became involved demonstrated, I suggest, the strong and powerful feelings, the sense of belonging and identity, and the deep meaning that people ascribe to place. Their involvement also revealed the desire that people living in the locality have to share with others the ‘wonders’ of the *extra-ordinary/ordinary* place in which they live or work. We found that local people offered us practical support and the use of buildings, places and archives that were ordinarily inaccessible, derelict or private, and the loan of animals and objects including a school of goats, a life-size model elephant, and a tram. We also found that people connected to a site shared their personal and family memories and their community history and culture with us.

⁶⁷ Details on *House* (1998) and *Mapping the Edge* (2001) are found in the main body text. *News from the Seventh Floor* (2003), led 25 participants, after-hours, on foot into the boiler room, boardroom, lifts and shop floors of Clements department store in Watford. *Mulgrave* (2005) guided 55 participants on a four-mile journey on foot and golf buggy into the heart of Mulgrave Woods on the North Yorkshire coast and explored the tamed, untamed and untameable.

Each performance we created was specific to the site as were the many of the participants. This specificity happened because people involved in the creative process also attended the performance and local press attracted others. An audience survey for *House* showed that ‘due to the rootedness in a specific location and community’ the production ‘attracted audiences from outside the regular core arts audience’.⁶⁸ Whilst some participants were ‘drawn by the history, the art forms and the unusual and unique nature of the production’, others attended in order to revisit the place they had once inhabited. We regretted not anticipating that the performance would attract participants in this way. We realised, had we met them sooner in the creative process, their memories and stories could have been incorporated into the production. As a result, when developing our next production *Mapping the Edge* (2001) in Sheffield we decided to place the people and the city at the heart of the production. The performance took 33 participants out into the streets of Sheffield, which became the ‘stage’ for an epic-journey on foot, bus and tram to locations that included a boxing ring, a ballroom and a knife-maker’s workshop. We asked three writers to write a woman’s story inspired by a location/s in the city, the people of the city and Greek myth of Medea by Euripides.⁶⁹ Research into the city drew us to specific sites, these sites revealed particular stories, and these stories led us to meet and interview certain people of the city whose lives and memories were then distilled into the performance. The potential for site-specific performance to make a deep connection became increasingly apparent to me, as my comments in *Performance Perspective* illustrated:

... I have found that each place, regardless of how ordinary it might appear initially, is full of riches. I don’t use a space as a mere backdrop to the performance but rather environmentally, that is as an integral part of the performance itself. Within this dynamic environment, the audience can re-imagine the everyday and see the familiar afresh. My concern is to create relationships between space, performer and audience and to find ways of revealing, re-showing and re-enchanting a place by saying: ‘Look anew at what is here; witness the surface of things, and then look again and you will see something more profound about *this* place and perhaps about the world, and how we experience it, and our place within it (Wilson, 2011: 65).

⁶⁸ Hadley Creative Marketing carried out a survey at *House* on behalf of wilson+wilson.

⁶⁹ Bernardine Evaristo wrote Nadia, a refugee who journeyed to Sheffield from the Yemen in 1901 to join the father of her children Jamal, a boxer, and ended up in the workhouse. Alison Fell wrote Mildred, a WAAF who followed her lover, RAF officer Gerry, to Sheffield in 1941 and told of adventurous rendezvous by aeroplane, ballroom dancing and a murderous barrage balloon fire. Amanda Dalton wrote Maddy, a young pregnant woman dumped by her socially mobile knife-maker boyfriend whose tragic story set in contemporary Sheffield played out in streets and a police interview room.

However, for me there was a ‘gap’ or missing element between the performance and the participant. Not a physical, intellectual, emotional or imaginative ‘gap’ but a ‘gap’ around what the work could enable. This led me to begin to consider what social purpose or function site-specific performance could serve, and the role that walking and participation could play in that social function. In particular I wanted to explore how the act of walking, either as an individual or as part of group, might function socially and how the effort, duration and physical act of walking and dwelling might become part of the creative form and content of the practice created for this research project, and thus work metaphorically. It is important however to stress that the walking aspect of that practice would become one aspect of the many-layers informing the work that evolved. The ‘re-imagining of the everyday’ that the practice was achieving could, I believed, be harnessed and ‘worked’ with even more profoundly.

This belief was not only the product of creative enquiry but a belief in the power of scenography as an art form. It was also a belief that came in response to the challenges of personal life-event experience that I wanted to find a way of addressing. Throughout the period that I was co-creating the work of wilson+wilson, I experienced the five-year illness and death due to a brain tumour of my sister. The combination of these two factors (creative enquiry and life-event experience) marked a point of departure in my scenographic practice and led me to re-consider what I wanted to make performance *about* (the subject matter), the *function* and *purpose* I wanted it to serve, the *form* it might take, and the *effect* it could have on participants.

This enquiry marked a significant shift in the approach, objectives and form of my artistic practice that required me to develop my scenographic-dramaturgical strategies and creative methodologies.

Overview: *Fissure* (May 2011)

Fissure, reflected a personal need I felt to face my sister's death by understanding the mechanics of what had happened to her medically and to comprehend the physically and emotionally overwhelming effects of grief. My need, and the fact that a significant number of people participated, for 3-days, in the final performance revealed, I suggest, the lack of meaningful or adequate social ritual around death and mourning, particularly for someone whose death is at a young age. The image-led, multi-sensory scenography and dramaturgy of *Fissure* seemed particularly well suited to express that painful life-event, for which verbal expression was limited. In *Ways of Seeing*, the author John Berger considers the inadequacy of words to describe complex ideas and human experiences whereas 'image', he suggests 'could define our experiences more precisely in areas where words are inadequate' (Berger, 1972: 33).

That said, the production title of *Fissure* deliberately used a word that was rich in visual-imagery and held various meanings that reflected the similarities between features of the landscape and brain architecture, the processes of neurological function and dysfunction, whilst at the same time encapsulating the grief felt by the separation through death from a loved one:

fissure
an opening made by cracking, splitting, or separation

fissure
a chasm in the earth

fissure
a furrow on the surface of the brain
that which separates the hemispheres
splits the brain in two

fissure
a break a gap a rift a fracture

fissure
a cleft in rock

fissure
a long wound⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Poem entitled 'Fissure' by Elizabeth Burns and Louise Ann Wilson for *Fissure*. Unless otherwise stated all the poems for *Fissure* were written by Elizabeth Burns.

Fissure began with a grief-led impulse to walk across Yorkshire from sea to river-source, meeting members of my family en route as a way of reaching out and communicating with them. Gradually, and once producers Artevents commissioned the performance, this idea evolved into a large-scale public work that was framed as a pilgrimage.⁷¹ My aim was to design a site-specific walking-performance that created a space where the anxiety and fear caused by the diagnosis of a terminal illness and its implications could be expressed and explored *and* which had the effect of transforming the silence, isolation and emotional pain of this personal experience into a work of art. I wanted however for that work of art to resonate with others in ways that were meaningful for them. Constructing a performance in such a way that enabled my desire for participants to find their own meaning reflected Jane Bennett's *Reader Response Theory* which, suggests an art work should leave space for the 'reader' 'to assign meaning' (Bennett, 1990: 44). These meanings can be multiple, however, the carefully constructed scenographic-dramaturgy of *Fissure* 'guided' participants towards making meanings in relation to their own experiences of illness and bereavement. This echoed the way, as suggested by Eade and Sallnow in *Contesting The Sacred* and referenced by Coleman and Elsner in *Pilgrimage: Past and Present: Sacred Travel and Sacred Space in World Religion*, that 'pilgrimage sites have no meaning in themselves' but are 'articulated through the use of space, movement, image and object' (Coleman and Elsner, 1995: 209, Eade and Sallnow, 1991: 9-10). A pilgrim, they propose, brings their own meaning and interpretation to the pilgrimage site which 'acted as an empty vessel' into which is poured hopes, prayers and aspirations (Coleman and Elsner, 1995: 210).

Fissure was created and performed in the 'Karst' limestone landscape of the Yorkshire Dales, chosen because of family connections to that area and its distinctive topographical features. During the 3-day long duration of the performance participants made a journey by train and then on foot across the landscape, covering a forty-mile route that circumnavigated descended beneath and ascended the mountain of Ingleborough. Their physical journey through the

⁷¹See, *The Re-enchantment* by Art Events at <http://www.artevents.info/projects/current/the-re-enchantment/fissure> and <http://www.louiseannwilson.com/projects/fissure>

landscape also took participants on a symbolic journey through the metaphorical landscape of illness, death and grief. As they progressed participants experienced a series of interventions and installations in the landscape that combined dance, music, poetry, sound, neuro-science and earth-science. A local choir, an ensemble of hand bell ringers, a band of church bell ringers, a company of six professional singers and six professional female dancers, a team of cavers, a neuro-oncologist, a neuro-physicist and a geologist performed these interventions.

In planning the route for the performance I looked for a series of locations that visually and symbolically reflected the underlying subject matter: illness and death caused by a brain tumour, and grief. These locations included fissured scars and fault-lines in rocks, the glints and grykes of a limestone pavement, blasted quarries, massive Erratics split in half, steep ascents and cairns, the place where a river descended below ground and the places where it resurged, and a subterranean cave system. Each location choice was informed by neuro-scientific knowledge of the brain, its function and dysfunction, and the devastating physical effects of a brain tumour. The performance divided into six distinct phases. Each phase was underpinned by neurological knowledge, conversations with my sister's surgeon and oncologists, and personal memories of her illness, her death and the aftermath of grief.

Day One – Phase 1: 'Flying High; Death Enters Life; 24-Hour Neuro-Surgery', reflected how my sister was flying high in her life and career before suddenly, over-night, undergoing neuro-surgery. Day Two – Phase 2: 'Terminal Diagnosis & Medical Interventions', reflected the diagnosis and the treatment that my sister received. Phase 3: 'Gift of Time', reflected on how ground-breaking medical treatment gave her 'more time'. Phase 4: 'Disintegration, Loss of Function, The Fall', reflected the progress of her illness and how it affected motor function. Phase 5: 'Death & The Underworld', reflected my sister death and my family's grief.

Day Three – Phase 6: 'Resurgence/Resurrection', reflected on resurrection, renewal and living without her physical presence. 'Underworld' and resurrection myths such as Ariadne's Thread

also informed the route, structure and form of the performance. However, the liturgical shape of the Easter vigil (or Trideum) influenced the scenographic-dramaturgical composition of the performance most explicitly. For example the final stages of ‘Day One – Phase 1: Flying High; Death Enters Life; 24-Hour Neuro-Surgery’ of the performance was staged to echo a Last Supper scene which, as in the Trideum, foretold of the death and resurrection that is to come.

At Ribbleshead station after witnessing the solitary black-suited figure of death disembark from a train and sing ‘*One day You’ll Fall, And won’t get up again*’ participants walked to Ribbleshead Quarry, an abandoned limestone quarry gouged out of the land. As they approached, rising from within could be heard the booming sounds of neuro-surgery combined with sounds of stones being crushed (recorded at the working quarry nearby) and singing ‘*cut apart the body of the land / pluck out the precious limestone / [...] cut apart the body of the woman / pluck out the silent tumour*’. Below, in the centre of that massive space, was a table covered with a white cloth, tied down with red rope, into which was stitched in red-sutures, a map of the underground rivers running beneath the landscape. On the table were objects and motifs that would appear throughout the performance: a sheep’s skull and three egg-shell thin bird skulls, tiny shells laid open their bi-valves resembling butterfly wings, a slate hammer, black crow feathers, a knife, a loaf of bread split into two halves. Around the table, figures moved in patterns, amongst them three pairs of sisters. Is this a surgery or a last supper? Participants were guided down inside the quarry to pools, dams, waterfalls and isolated figures. Singing foretold of the repair and renewal that will eventually come, but not now: ‘*the body of the land begins to heal / water flows over it, things start to grow // willow grows here now and elder [...] primroses and violets // but this is not the body of the land / this is the body of a woman*’. A dark figure, death, watched from afar. Everyone scattered.

The death and darkness of the Trideum was reflected in the way that towards the end of Day 2 participants entered the darkness of Encombe Tunnel and Phase 5: ‘Death & The Underworld’.

From tiny speakers hidden in the walls of the tunnel the sound of slow, shallow breathing could be heard, ahead, framed by the light at the end of the tunnel was a solitary black-suited figure of death who sang *'her birth, her breath, her birth / then death arrives and takes away / her breath, her breath, her breath'*. They passed through and emerged at the other side where the church-bell tolled 29 times. From there they entered the subterranean depths of Ingleborough Cave which echoed with singing as figures disappeared, beyond reach, into the darkness *'to a place where there is only rock and water [...] where you cannot follow'*. Afterwards, participants left for an evening of silence and waiting.

The resurrection of the Trideum was marked on Day 3 – Sunday 22 May when, at dawn participants gathered in St. James's Church, Clapham and entered Phase 6: 'Resurgence / Resurrection'. Candles were lit, hand-bells rung and the words *'after the long night / the beginnings of dawn // after the cave-dark / the daylight // after the underworld / fresh air and sky // after the silence / the ringing of bells // after the heavy weight of grief / the lightness of her'* were sung. On foot, participants then began an ascent of Ingleborough Fell. As they walked dancers re-appeared from below ground. Re-surg-ing with the rivers they were 'resurrected' from their tomb and from death, to join the ascending walkers.

Drawing the Performance Into and Out Of the Landscape: Scenographic-Dramaturgy

In *Fissure* the landscape became a vast stage, a 'living canvas' 'onto' and 'out of' which were drawn a series of interventions and 'living' pictures or 'scenes', which emerged as step-by-step the performance and the participants moved through ever-changing topography of the landscape. These scenographic interventions provided 'layers of meaning' that saw the landscape become a 'site' of 'transformative' possibilities – a transition place rich in symbolic and metaphorical resonance and meaning. Working with landscape semiotics, meaning was 'drawn' *into* the

landscape using text, image, scene and *out of* the landscape using pre-existing cultural, historical and aesthetic associations.

As I discuss in the Chapter 3.2 entitled ‘Scenographic Space and Place in Chapter 3 entitled ‘Space’ in *Performance Perspectives*, *Fissure* did not use the landscape as a ‘backdrop to the performance’, but as a dynamic environmental force that was integral to, and inseparable from it (Palmer, 2011: 65). In this way, the performance reflected Baugh’s assertion that:

scenography has become the principal dramaturgy of performance-making...where all aspects of ‘the scene’ (scenic space, embodied actions, material, clothes, light and sound) may become materials laid out on the performance-makers palette (Baugh, 2013: 240).

In *Fissure*, this can be seen in my scenographic use of image, sound and movement to direct where I wanted participants to look or move and in my choice of viewing points that ‘pictorially’ framed a ‘scene’ with a tree, a rock, a river meander or a cave-mouth. These scenes encompassed panoramic views that revealed the scale and immensity of the landscape, and geological time, *or* focussed attention to a fissure in a rock or the sound of water flowing underground, and the passage of time. This encouraged the act of *looking at*, *listening to* and *noticing* the landscape in such a way that sensitized participants to the landscape through all their senses thus bringing the whole environment into ‘play’. This was an important aspect because my aim was to bring participants’ attention to the environment and through it to the underlying subject and to themselves in such a way that was physical, emotional and intellectual as well as sensory and embodied.

Evolving Cross-Disciplinary Methodologies: ‘Primary/Site’ and ‘Secondary/Subject’ Research

Fissure took over two years to create and was evolved with a core creative team and a number of neuro-science, earth science and social/health science experts including, my sister’s neuro-

oncologists and neuro-surgeon as well as a neuro-physicist, a health psychologist⁷², a geophysicist, a conservationist and a team of cavers. Working with these experts the performance was developed through an in depth research process that pursued two distinct strands of primary/site research (landscape/earth-science) and secondary/subject research (neuro-oncology/social-health). Both of these strands collected raw material that was later evolved by the creative team into the performance. This cross-disciplinary research process established the blueprint that I would go on to develop when creating the practice for this research project.

When creating *Fissure* the ‘primary/site’ research process involved an extended period of research in to that landscape. This research involved investigative walks and a series of fieldtrips with cavers, geologist and ecologists. Gradually, the landscape and the powerful geological and human processes, such as glaciation and quarrying, that had created it began to take on a symbolic significance that reflected the physical and emotional devastation of the underlying life-event.

The ‘secondary/subject’ research was concerned with the neurological and oncological medical science associated with my sister’s illness and the effects of grief. The neuro-oncology research involved studying the architectural structure and function of the brain: how a longitudinal fissure divides the brain-lobes; why the surface ‘gyri’ are folded; how synapses ‘fire’ and neurons communicate. It also however, involved the study of neurological dysfunction caused by a brain tumour. This research provided imagery, sound, data and text that informed the performance in a complex variety of ways including: the route and choice of key locations for interventions *and* the composition and design of installations and moving-imagistic ‘scenes’ which incorporated sound, dance, music, poetry and neuro-science material and emplaced it into the landscape.

⁷² Professor Sheila Payne is a health psychologist in the Division of Health Research at Lancaster University whose research focuses on palliative and end-of-life care for older people.

The collision of landscape and neurological science meant that in the performance the fissures of a lime stone pavement reflected the folded surface ‘gyri’ of the brain’s surface and a blasted quarry of the surgical removal of a brain tumour. However, in order to avoid direct comparison by combining neurological, artistic and landscape material in a literal or illustrative way, I incorporated the neurological science and earth science experts, involved in the research process, into the performance itself. The interventions they made took place in locations that suited a particular ‘phase’ of the performance. Each intervention added to the one that had come before it. As the performance progressed these accumulated and the metaphorical meanings they evoked became complex. This gradual accumulation and the carefully composed juxtaposition of interventions allowed participants to draw out their own ‘meaning’. In *Ways of Seeing* Berger comments that ‘The meaning of an image is changed according to what one sees immediately beside it or what comes immediately after it’ (Berger, 1972: 29).

Examples of this collision, juxtaposition can be seen in following description of Day 2 – Phase 2: ‘Terminal Diagnosis & Medical Interventions’ of the performance. The day began at the top-edge of Ribble Head Quarry where, standing next to a ‘Danger of Falling’ sign neuro-oncologist Professor Michael Brada, my sister’s neuro-oncologist, had met with the participants. Beneath them down in the blasted quarry a solitary figure, waist-high in a mound of bread, repeatedly picked up a loaf, split it in two, and placed each half onto one of two separate piles. Her actions referenced the breaking of communion bread. Brada addressed the gathered participants directly, describing how ‘Brain tumours grow when cells escape their normal mechanism that tells them to stop growing. Cells multiply, divide or survive longer than they should and develop properties make them travel and become as “bread in mould”’.

From the quarry, participants then walked for half an hour, across fields to Colt Park where inside a barn neuro-imager Professor Chris Clarke gave them a short lecture on neuro-tractographic images that ‘map the stream-lines and pathways of the brain-water’ and are used

by the neuro-surgeon when operating on a tumour.⁷³ From Colt Park, participants then progressed further until they arrived at Long Churn Cave where they gathered at the gaping entrance. The glooping sound of water from within gradually became louder until a figure emerged and pulled herself out of the watery tunnel before being embraced by a second figure waiting for her. She then crawled back underground. This intervention was designed to reference tractographic pathways, the Magnetic Resonance Imaging scanner (MRI), and the effort and exhausting affects of treatment. The figure above ground traced the underground progress of the one below, glimpsed through fissures in the rock. A choir sang:

now begins the lengthy crawl
a struggle a rough crawl
grade II astrocytoma
monotonous crawling
5 days every 28 days
[...] the way forward is impassable
12 monthly cycles
a complex of crawls

the terminal sump
a black void beckons
there is no sign of any way on⁷⁴

Then, geologist Dr. Mike Kelly described how ‘Caves are formed by water seeping and flowing through the bedding planes and vertical joints of the rock’. Participants responded positively to the juxtapositions of landscape, science and art. One participant spoke of ‘the mix of lectures, song, music, dance and landscape – interweaving, interlinking, making connections’ saying, ‘I know those places very well but now will see them all very differently’. Another described how they ‘had never thought of the similarities between the brain and landscape before – that was a fascinating connection’. A third remarked on how the ‘integration of geological features and the body, [was] made real through the intervention of the experts’. Furthermore, the following quote suggests that the layered form of the production gave one participant ‘permission to think about myself and to feel my own profound sadness’:

This would have been too intense if it had been a conventional play – the space provided by the music, the pauses and the walking across the three days was an invaluable part of

⁷³ Words spoken by Chris Clarke in *Fissure*.

⁷⁴ The words for this poem came from my sister’s treatment notes.

the experience and allowed me to reflect on, and digest it. The beauty was nurturing, the company stimulating and supportive, the music and dance powerful, the use of the landscape and architecture fascinating – and beyond words. I'm a person who usually expresses myself in a strictly factual style, I feel the event helped unleash in me different ways of expressing my experience – thank you for that (*Fissure* participant, May 2011).

Driven by my personal desire to transform my grief into a manageable set of feelings *Fissure* sought 'real' and tangible effects and outcomes. In making the performance, I believed that by not being afraid to look closely, in forensic detail, at that painful experience it could be 'seen' differently. *Fissure looked at* and grappled with human processes and their effects on the body, and the lack of control we have over them. *Fissure noticed* how powerful earth processes and forces are at once destructive but can also bring about change and renewal, an alignment that was reflective and revelatory. *Fissure* did not remove participants from the material of the landscape or the body but made them more 'alive' to it. The performance valued the familiar, encouraged and guided participants to 'look' closely at things and then 'look' again, in order to see 'afresh' the 'world' and themselves in it.

Creative Collaboration: Core Artistic Team

When creating *Fissure* conversations between me and the writer Elizabeth Burns took place over many months. During this time I shared memories of my sister, her life and personality, experiences relating her illness and death, and my sense of loss and grief. Gradually these intimate, personal sharings resulted in a series of poems written by Burns that the composer Jocelyn Pook later developed into a song cycle. An example of the how the writing used the landscape to reflect the underlying subject matter can be seen in the way that on Day Two participants passed through a gate and entered the landscape of Borrins Moor. This gate marked a threshold from the anxiety and exhaustion caused by chemotherapy and drug treatment and took us from Phase 2: 'Terminal Diagnosis & Medical Interventions' into Phase 3: 'Gift of Time'. Here participants rested for a while in a meadow of spring flowers adjacent to a limestone pavement. Skylarks swooped and called in the sky above. An ecologist was waiting there. He

described the communities of wildflowers that grew in the fissures and the glints and grykes of the rock. A sung poem paralleled glacial and human time *‘a landscape carved and moulded / through billions of years / and the briefness of her life // but here’s the precious gift of time / of more days to live her life on earth...’* The singer handed each participant a sweet smelling bunch of thyme – the same variety found growing in the meadows through which they were walking. From here, the route weaved through bobbing cotton grass at Sulber Nick, where a choir sang: *‘Let Her Remember a Place Like This [...] Though the pathways in her brain will disappear / Let Her remember [...]’*.

The composer also created scores using sounds collected in ‘secondary’ research locations such as in a nearby working limestone quarry and an operating theatre during neuro surgery. These sounds were manipulated and combined with each other and were then emplaced ‘on-site’ into the physical landscape. They could be heard echoing in a disused quarry at Ribble Head, from within a fissured-boulder at Norber Erratics or the seeping from the dark walls of Endcombe Tunnel in Clapham village. This methodology of collecting from one source or location and emplacing it in another was also seen in the work of choreographer Nigel Stewart. Stewart, for example, sourced material in the pitch darkness of a cave system at Long Churn and also in response to Burn’s poetry for that site. He then developed that raw material into choreographic phrases, performed by a solitary ‘figure’, that were adapted to fit the particular physical features of a boulder at Norber Erratics where they were performed. Norber Erratics is a field of massive boulders each one fissured in half. This intervention marked the beginning of ‘Phase 4: ‘Disintegration, Loss of Function, The Fall’, which reflected and expressed the fissuring of my sister’s physical movement caused by the loss of motor function.

Before they entered this field of boulders, neuro-oncologist Mike Brada spoke again to participants to explain that ‘tumour cells are on a path of evolution [...] and progress into more aggressive tumours. This change is almost inevitable’. However, he added, ‘this is a person – a

sister, a daughter, a friend that we are talking about'. Participants then climbed over a stile and walked towards the solitary figure, whose movements traced the fissured Erratic on which she was standing. Coming from within the boulder, the sound of neuro-surgery and quarrying were layered to create the scraping, gouging, scouring sounds that 'ghosted' the massive and powerful glacial movement that once carried and deposited these rocks. A long fissure that ran the length of the rock held a line of red sheep wool, a material found here on site that referenced the red ropes used by cave divers and the red threads, or sutures, used by the neuro-surgeon to stitch damaged brain tissue, bone and flesh together. A figure leapt, balanced, climbed and held on, but she was fissuring.



Figure i – *Fissure*. Robin Procter's Scar.
Performer: Jennifer Essex. Photographer: Bethany Clarke.

From Norber Erratics participants progressed to Robin Procter's Scar, a massive cliff-like fault-line⁷⁵ which loomed above them. Here, a 'figure' held her body horizontally to the face of a rock. The broken hawthorn tree to her left was bound and held together with red rope. Her movement

⁷⁵ Robin Procter's Scar sits on the North Craven Fault.

was ‘gone’ and the sung words ‘*One day You’ll Fall / And won’t get up again*’ hung in the still air.

Participant: Passenger, Walker, Pilgrim

As well as affecting them emotionally and intellectually *Fissure* intervened on the body, breath and senses of the participant through the effects of environmental forces such as wind, rain, sunshine, and darkness, as well as through the ‘social’ forces of other participants made through conversation, listening and sharing of stories.

Echoing a pilgrimage, the durational and immersive structure of *Fissure* and the challenge and effort of the physical act of walking, the terrain, and the effects of weather formed a crucial part of the experience and provided their own layers of metaphor. After the performance, one participant remarked on the physical effort and duration that the performance required when writing:

I loved the way the piece tested my body's limits and on that climb on day three I could not help wondering what it must be like to be so ill that your body is tested to the limit and to the end (*Fissure* participant, May 2011).



Figure ii – *Fissure*, participants.
Photographer: Bethany Clarke.

Another aspect of the performance that related to a pilgrimage was its participatory nature and the companionship, solidarity and community that developed amongst participants as it progressed. This, I suggest, compares to the processes of ‘communitas’ that can occur in pilgrimages where a strong sense of solidarity and bonding develops among a group of people who together experience a transitional process of separation, liminality and reintegration.

The 12-mile train journey from Settle station to Ribbleshead station with which the performance began, brought together 80 individual-participants who had travelled from both within and outside of the UK. Most of the participants did not know each other and no one knew where they would be travelling to or what they would experience. Later, one participant remarked ‘No one knew what to expect but all had surrendered, for three days, to the all of it. So what we had in common that May afternoon was being there’. Participants did however know the underlying subject matter of the production. Later it became clear that many had chosen to participate because of past, present or future experiences of terminal illness or death and grief, as the response below revealed:

I [...] have been excitedly attempting to describe to my friends something you really had to be there for... I know we all brought our own experiences of love and grief – for me my ex-partner died of cancer a year ago; it would have been her birthday last weekend and I couldn't have imagined a better way to celebrate that anniversary (*Fissure* participant, May 2011).

Another participant remarked how ‘this hike in the Yorkshire Dales became a pilgrimage through death and bereavement’. For many, ‘arrival’ at the performance ‘site’ followed a long journey. In pilgrimage terms this arrival marked the first of Van Gennep’s ritual thresholds defined as ‘pre-liminal/separation’. The preparation, travel and submission to the three-day performance that *Fissure* participants made related to Coleman and Elsner’s suggestion that a pilgrimage is ‘made up of organised travel... construction of temporary communities and the sacrifice of time and effort’ (Coleman and Elsner, 1995: 205). Typically, a pilgrim leaves behind the daily demands, conventions and ‘social structures’ of their everyday lives, including their social status and identity, and enters a special *time* and *place* described by Coleman and Elsner

as being ‘set apart from the mundane’ where a temporary ‘social’ death occurs (Coleman and Elsner, 1995: 199). Stripped of their identity the pilgrim is then able to image ‘new’ or different identities, a process that is potentially transformative. In *From Ritual to Theatre* Turner called this a temporary state of ‘anti-structure’ of which liminality and *communitas* are both components (Turner, 1982: 44). The way that this liminal state promotes feelings of social togetherness brings people together who would not ordinarily ‘meet’. This was seen in *Fissure* where strangers bonded as a group of participants/pilgrims. The effects of this *communitas*, as stated by the *Anthropology Database*, are that ‘people stand together "outside" society, and society is strengthened by this’ (AnthroBase.com, 2015). This strengthening process parallels, I suggest, Spivak’s concept of strategic essentialism, which, as outlined in *A Dictionary of Critical Theory* recognises how a ‘minority group acting on the basis of a shared identity’ come together (strategically) in solidarity for the purpose of social action (Buchanan, 2016). It is this potential for social action and change, through solidarity and *communitas* that the practice created for this research project seeks to harness.

Whilst on the train, sung poetry identified the landscape that the train was passing-by and through which the ‘passengers’ would later walk: ‘*Three Peaks High Above The Railway / Pen-y-Ghent, Ingleborough, Whernside [...] scars and moors and fells and the three peaks high above the railway: Whernside Ingleborough Pen-y-Ghent*’.⁷⁶ The singers then introduced the symbolic ‘figures’ at the centre the production as they sang about ‘*[...] two sisters balanced / two halves of one whole / sun and moon / earth and sky / two sisters balanced / 2 halves of one whole*’. This communal train journey brought the participants’ focus to the landscape and made them present to themselves, each other and the subject matter. It also marked a shift to the second ritual threshold described by Van Gennep as ‘liminal/transitional’. During the 3-day progress of *Fissure* participants came together as a supportive social group (in ‘*communitas*’) during which moments of silence and of conversation were underscored by a shared orientation toward the

⁷⁶ Unless otherwise stated, Elizabeth Burns wrote all *Fissure* poems.

subject matter. They moved from being stranger, to passenger, to participant, to pilgrim, each making their journey through the performance separately but together. Later one wrote that ‘community was being developed through the walking’. Another participant commented on ‘the sustaining atmosphere and the development of being in a group’ and someone else spoke of how ‘Unexpected and particularly enjoyable [were] the number of interesting and inspiring conversations [they] had with fellow participants’ (*Fissure* participants, May 2011).

This merging of participants with each other, landscape and performance reflects Edith Turner’s description of the effects of *communitas*. In the book *Communitas: The Anthropology of Collective Joy*, Turner describes how through *communitas* individuals ‘may find themselves “in the zone” or “in the flow” experiencing a merging of action and awareness’ where ‘life is expanded and full of meaning... we are in a different dimension of human experience’ (Turner, 2012: 43 ; 50).

In the final ‘act’ of *Fissure* each participant was given a ‘gift’ to take home. This gift was a small white-box containing a fragile pink-white cockleshell (a bi-valve) gathered from the sands at Fleetwood, the place to which the rivers they had followed over the 3-days of the performance ran. It was also a symbol of the ‘Karst’ limestone landscape through which they had walked. That landscape, once a seabed, was formed by the lithification of bones and shells of sea creatures. The gift reflected the way in which Coleman and Elsner observe that a pilgrim often returns home with the ‘souvenirs and narratives of the pilgrim adventure’, adding that objects such as ‘relics, talismans and amulets help the pilgrim to re-construct the sacred journey in the imagination’ and thus, once home, act as a memory prompt (Coleman and Elsner, 1995: 6). The presenting of the gift marked the end of the production but the beginning of Van Gennep’s third ritual threshold described as ‘post-liminal/re-integration’. Some participants lingered quietly to talk and be still, not quite ready to leave. Others left in small groups with new friends whilst some departed alone, as they had arrived. For many, as their reflections later revealed, their long journeys home gave them time to reflect before returning to their ‘normal’ life. Many left

‘changed’ with a different perspective on life and death and fresh ways of seeing and experiencing inner and outer landscapes. This, I suggest, echoed the way that pilgrims return home and ‘view’ themselves, their communities, and their everyday environment afresh. This process is described by Victor Turner ‘Death And The Dead In Pilgrimage Process’, a chapter in the book *Blazing The Trail: Way Marks in the Exploration of Symbols* edited by the anthropologist, Edith Turner, and referenced by Coleman and Elsner, as going to a ‘far place to understand a familiar place better’ (Coleman and Elsner, 1995: 206, Turner, 1992: 35).

Analysis: Outcomes and Effects of *Fissure* Leading to this Practice-as-Research Project

There were a number of elements of the scenographic-dramaturgical strategy evolved through the making of *Fissure* that, I consider, were key in achieving the reflective and transformative outcomes that participants experienced. These included: the removal of a linear narrative and the foregrounding of a visual ‘image-based’ performance language; the process of ‘primary/site’ research and ‘secondary/subject’ research that involved *looking* and *noticing*, and which asked participants to do the same; the coalition of performance, installation, landscape, science and participant in the context of a ‘real’ underlying life-event subject matter.

Having an underlying subject matter in this way, meant that the performance did not exist in the abstract. The way that it used image, metaphor and juxtaposition to ‘talk’ about illness and bereavement was for many participants deeply engaging and, as their responses suggest, helped their own grieving processes. The exploration of neurological processes and human bodily ‘forces of nature’ through the metaphor of walking, landscape and environment also became a powerful means of exploration and communication.⁷⁷ Thus in the performance, the rural

⁷⁷ When creating the performance entitled *Ghost Bird* (September 2012) a few years after *Fissure*, I experimented further with my use of non-verbal and image-based scenography and pursued my metaphorical use of landscape, human body and the effects of manmade and environmental ‘forces’ of nature. *Ghost Bird* was a silent walking-performance and live-art installation site-specific to the Langden Valley in the Trough of Bowland, Lancashire. Referring to the ghostly grey feathers of the male hen harrier and their increasing absence, due to persecution, the work became a means of reflecting on the journey taken 400 years earlier over the Bowland Fells to Lancaster

landscape through which participants walk became a particularly powerful means of exploration because the ‘natural’ forces that physically created it, and continually transform it (over millennia or annually) can become a metaphor for, and a means to reflect upon and ‘talk about’, human ‘natural/biological’ forces and life-event processes. In so doing the physical act of walking and noticing processes and forces of change and transformation became a means through which emotional and cognitive transformation, in relation to the underlying subject matter, might be reflected upon and (potentially) transformed. It is these ‘forces of nature’ that I wanted the research to pursue and exploit further.

Another important element was the way the performance engaged participants actively, cognitively and emotionally, in the manner of pilgrimage. This not only seemed to deepen the multi-sensory effect it had on them but also led to the development of social connections between participants who were previously strangers. Indeed the cross-disciplinary nature of the performance combined with the physically challenging, yet companionable walking *and* the seriousness of the subject matter brought people together and led to *communitas* that, for some, continued beyond the performance. This is important because it meant that the performance continue to have an effect ‘after the event’ and might, therefore have become a positive, creative and potentially transformative point of reference for participants. A point of reference that could perhaps enable them to discuss and manage processes of loss and grief (past, present and future) differently, and in such a way that might be beneficial to their, and to other’s, sense of well-being. Thus, participants through having been personally affected by the performance might themselves have affected social change when they returned home and shared their experience of *Fissure* more broadly. This transformative aspect of *Fissure* was the main element that I wanted to pursue more fully in the practice created for this research project. Having developed, during and post the performance, an altered perspective towards the underlying subject matter, I wanted to ask whether, and if so how, participants might become agents for personal and social change

in relation to the underlying subject matter of a walking-performance? These elements map onto Gatrell's 'emplaced steps to wellbeing' and also on to concepts relating to pilgrimage for rites of passage which I will discuss in more detail later.

Feedback from participants in *Fissure* revealed that, when walking the *physical* landscape of a walking-performance they were also walking an *interior* landscape of memory and imagination. This internal walking-process enabled them, it seemed, to make new internal pathways of meaning that took them to 'places' that one participant said she 'never thought possible', adding:

Fissure has haunted me. As we walked across this place, I found myself shaken by its vastness and velocity [...]. My sense of scale of the landscape completely shifted when I began to learn more about the mapping and function, or rather dysfunction, of the brain. This was punctuated by bells, song, wind, cries, conversation, exchange, memories [...]. And loss. How loss can seep into every part of you and the landscape. [...] How walking through this 'place' can lead you somewhere, ever so different from where you began [...] arriving somewhere you never thought possible (*Fissure* participant, May 2011).

The way that *Fissure* enabled this participant to be 'led' somewhere 'ever so different' from where they 'began' demonstrated, I suggest, how the performance evolved a form that functioned as a means by which they could reflect upon and articulate the effects of death, illness and bereavement. The combined responses of the participants made me aware of the socially engaged and transformative potential for scenographic-led walking-performance created specifically for a group of participants in relation to an underlying life-event matter for which traditional ceremonies, or rites of passage, do not exist.

Making the Case: Socially Engaged Contemporary Scenography

My evolving scenographic-led practice corresponded with Baugh's analysis of the way that contemporary scenography 'brings us close to early forms of Western and non-Western theatre and performance [which] served the needs of an occasion of some significance' and:

served useful cultural functions within the social, religious and political life, and places and spaces of performance (architecture and scenography) were determined by the nature of both the occasion and the relationship that existed between performers and their audiences (Baugh, 2013; 242).

The socially engaged nature of *Fissure* situated that performance, and my practice, in Baugh's evolving field of socially engaged contemporary scenography. Indeed *Fissure* in particular, and my practice more generally, informed that emerging field which, writes Baugh, has expanded far beyond the 'accepted understanding of scenography as being primarily about the creation of the "mise en scene" (which, writes Palmer, literally means that which is 'placed on stage') for the staging of a play' into a type of 'applied art practice that is finding new ways to engage and interact with audiences' (Baugh, 2013: 224, Palmer, 2011: 86).

The transformative function and purpose of my evolving practice represented, I suggest, a form of 'utopian performance' as discussed by feminist theatre scholar Jill Dolan in her essay 'Performance, Utopia, and the "Utopian Performative"' which proposes that 'performance might provide us with experiences of utopia' (Dolan, 2001: 455). Dolan believes that 'people are drawn to attend live theatre and performance for [...] emotional, spiritual, or communitarian reasons' and that:

Audiences are compelled to gather with others, to see people perform live, hoping, perhaps, for moments of transformation that might let them reconsider and change the world outside the theatre, from macro to micro arrangements. Perhaps part of the desire to attend theatre and performance is to reach for something better, for new ideas about how to be and how to be with each other (Dolan, 2001: 455).

Dolan's thinking reverberates with the way that my practice sought to invite participants to see the 'world', and themselves in it, afresh in such a way that 'refigures the familiar'. Her pedagogical approach uses 'performance as a tool for making the world better', and to 'use performance to incite people to profound responses that shake their consciousness of themselves in the world' adding that she goes:

to the theatre and performance to hear stories that order, for a moment, my incoherent longings, that engage the complexity of personal and cultural relationships, and that critique the assumptions of a social system I find sorely lacking. I want a lot from theatre and performance (Dolan, 2001: 456).

There is a sociocultural drive behind Dolan's belief that performance brings 'insight, compassion' and transformation that 'contributes to the making of culture' (Dolan, 2001: 455).

My aim now was to further develop this transformative process *and* the socially engaged scenographic strategies that I began to evolve when creating *Fissure*. To do that I set out to explore, through the creation of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*, the extent to which scenographic-led practice could enable participants to find new or alternative perspectives on the ‘missing’ life-event of biological childlessness-by-circumstance. This ‘missing’ life-event subject matter, as explored in Chapter 2, had a personal (autobiographical), as well as, a social significance. Central to my exploration would be the way that *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* might embed and incorporate embodied and performative walking *and* dwelling *and* how landscape through its physical, psychological, and metaphorical effects might enable a participant’s relationship to, and experiences of, biological childlessness-by-circumstance and the ‘missing’ life-event of biological motherhood, in such a way might be transformative. To that end, I set out to work more fully with an applied use of concepts and processes relating to pilgrimage undertaken for a rite of passage but re-worked them through the concept of the feminine sublime. This thesis explores how I approached this exploration and demonstrates and substantiates the outcomes.

Chapter 2 – The Feminine Sublime: A Theory Developed Out Of Practice

The feminine sublime is a theoretical framework or concept that, I argue, can be evidenced in the practice of certain women artists and writers (historic and contemporary) that I have studied through the course of this practice-as-research project. The main historical focus of this study, as explored in this chapter, has been the landscape writing of Dorothy Wordsworth (1771-1855) and *her* contemporaries. Chapter 3 discusses my practice and that of a number of *my* contemporaries who explore through their art the underlying subject matter of biological childlessness-by-circumstance. All of this practice can, I suggest, be understood and analysed through the concept of the feminine sublime. However, it was the writing of Dorothy Wordsworth and her contemporaries that gave me both a theoretical and conceptual framework for this research project *and* a practical and methodological way of approaching *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*. This study has also been influenced by the work of historians who have written about Dorothy Wordsworth and theorists who have written about the feminine sublime.

Dorothy Wordsworth's writing informed my decision to locate *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* in upland landscapes of Cumbria and Snowdonia. This particularly applied to *Warnscale*, which is located in the 'Lake District', a rural area in Cumbria, North West England about which Dorothy Wordsworth wrote in her *Grasmere Journals*. It is these journals, written when she was living at Dove Cottage (then Town End) in Grasmere, Cumbria that I worked with when creating *Warnscale*. Indeed, I transposed extracts from the *Grasmere Journals* and re-located into the landscape of *Warnscale* (near Buttermere Lake, Cumbria) by including them in the production of *Warnscale* and the book through which it is mediated. Dorothy Wordsworth began writing the *Grasmere Journals* on 14 May 1800, four months after she and her brother William Wordsworth moved to Town End in Grasmere. She walked the landscape around Town End on a daily basis and from there, regularly walked further into the fells of the 'Lake District'. Their move to Grasmere followed soon after a year spent living in Alfoxden in Somerset as close neighbours of

Samuel Taylor Coleridge during which time Dorothy Wordsworth wrote the *Alfoxden Journal* (1798). Her *Grasmere Journals* were the primary source that I studied in order to investigate how the concept of the feminine sublime could be used to understand and analyse Dorothy Wordsworth's embodied, multi-sensory and materially-specific approach to landscape, experienced through the act of walking and dwelling.

Dorothy Wordsworth's journals reveal a deep and profound engagement with landscape and are works of art in their own right. The journals, whilst 'borrowing' from along the continuum of the beautiful, the picturesque and the transcendent sublime, were unique, highly distinctive and radical. This uniqueness resided in *how* Dorothy Wordsworth *walked* in, *engaged* with, and *observed* landscape and her everyday environment. She did so in an embodied, multi-sensory and materially specific manner, that I consider can be understood through the feminine sublime

Furthermore, the manner with which Dorothy Wordsworth *encountered* and *noticed* the "common-place" enabled her to see afresh "everyday" objects, people and experiences that were ordinarily overlooked, or on the edges of social and cultural discourse; a process I suggest that 'refigured the familiar' and might have transformed her own, and her reader's, view and perception of the 'things' they are *encountering* and *noticing*. The underlying subject matter of the performances created for this research project was biological childlessness-by-circumstance. This is a subject matter that is also ordinarily overlooked and sits on the edges of social and cultural discourse. By looking at it through the performances my intention was to echo Dorothy Wordsworth's attentive *noticing*. In this way I hoped to bring a common place but overlooked subject matter to wider attention, in order to see it afresh, raise awareness and transform the effects of it; effects for example, which include liminality, isolation and grief.

Her *Grasmere Journals* proved both inspiring and influential and they became a tool through which I would reflect on my past and current practice. Through them Dorothy Wordsworth

offered me way of thinking about landscape. I soon discovered that the manner in which she engaged with landscape had remarkably strong parallels to my own scenographic-led creative processes. In the light of that revelation I began to draft a series of scenographic principles drawn from my study of her, and some of her contemporaries' approaches to, and writing about, landscape. I then applied these six scenographic principles to the creation of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*.

Because I am aware of the issues of 'essentialism' it seems important to state that this thesis situates Dorothy Wordsworth, and her contemporaries, as historical figures. I acknowledge and am aware that she wrote from a particular social, cultural, historical, aesthetic and gender perspective associated with the 'Early Romantic' period in which she was writing, and which this chapter explores.

As indicated in the introduction, the concept of the feminine sublime does not relate to the female gender but to a 'sensibility' that manifests as a way of being in (dwelling), looking at, noticing and encountering the 'landscape' and ourselves within it – in relation to a 'missing' life-event. Although I evolved a series of six scenographic principles and methodologies that I applied to the creation of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*, it is the case that in general the feminine sublime is not a 'method' but a concept.

Also, I argue that, because *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* became a means for me to consider how these performances might have the effect of transformation, it is important to note that the concept of the feminine sublime can, as I will explore later, allow for a transformative effect. To that end, because the aim, or function, of the performances was to enable the participant to experience transformation around the subject matter of biological childlessness-by-circumstance, other sorts of essentialism relating to 'sacred', 'spiritual' or 'metaphysical' transformation may shadow my discussion and thesis.

Early Romanticism, the Landscape and Perspective

Before looking more closely at the concept of the feminine sublime and *how* it manifests in the landscape writing of Dorothy Wordsworth, and her contemporaries, I will consider how and why their writing was not only influenced and shaped by the movement that became known as Early Romanticism but also how they subverted dominant ‘landscape’ theories of the time, many of which persist today. I will then consider how and why Early Romanticism was important to this practice-as-research project.

Early Romanticism (1785-1815) was the movement through which William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey would forever change Western, and especially British, perceptions of, and relationships to, landscape.⁷⁸ Collectively known as The Lakes’ Poets (with the term Romanticism coming retrospectively), I add William Wordsworth’s sister Dorothy Wordsworth to that group. Though not equally written into the historical narrative of the Early Romantic movement Dorothy Wordsworth is now becoming recognised as a figure instrumental in its development. Her creative influence on William Wordsworth (and Coleridge), in particular around the 1800s, was significant. William Wordsworth acknowledged this in the poem *The Sparrows Nest* (1801) when he writes that ‘... She gave me eyes, She gave me ears; And humble cares, and delicate fears...’ (Wordsworth, 1851: 183).

In *Romanticism: An Anthology* English literature scholar Duncan Wu recognises how her ‘close, detailed observations of the natural world were the inspiration for much of her brother’s poetry’ (Wu, 1994: 432). This is something I explore more fully later in this thesis. The *Lyrical Ballads* was a volume of poems co-authored by Coleridge and William Wordsworth. This volume, as well as Dorothy Wordsworth’s *Alfoxden Journal*, was the product of the time Coleridge, William and Dorothy Wordsworth spent in Alfoxden, Somerset. As a group they

⁷⁸ William Blake was regarded as an Early Romantic but his poetry does not focus on the landscape and rural environment so he is not included in this group. The Later Romantics included Byron, Keats and Shelley.

experimented with aesthetic and expressive techniques that were evolved out of physical, experiential and sensory observations of the landscape. William Wordsworth added a “Preface” to the 2nd edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* published in 1800 which was regarded as a manifesto for the Early Romantic movement. The “Preface”, says Wordsworth scholar Sally Bushell in *William Wordsworth: Poetry, Places People*⁷⁹, outlines how a poet should ‘speak to the “common” man and for those without a voice; how that poet should adopt everyday language; and tell about ordinary people in ‘low’, ‘rustic’ life; this should demonstrate a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’ (Bainbridge, 2015: online). These characteristics rooted the movement in concepts and attitudes to landscape such as the picturesque, the transcendent sublime and the beautiful, and took landscape and ‘nature’ writing into new realms.

Landscape: From Painted Scene to Land Framed for Viewing and Comprehension

The definition of ‘landscape’ originated from the sixteenth century Dutch term for a landscape painting ‘land-skap’, and meant a pictorial representation of land or scenery in a painting. This definition indicates that the term ‘landscape’ was originally used to describe two-dimensional ‘landscape-art’. Only later was the term used to describe a body of physical land, landscape features, countryside or a view or vista of natural scenery rather than a painted representation.

As described by the art historian Malcolm Andrews in the chapter ‘Meaning, Mapping and Making of Landscape’ in *The Architectural Review*, in the seventeenth century the lexicographer and writer Thomas Blount, in his dictionary entitled *Glossographia Nova* (1656 or 1670)⁸⁰ defined the word ‘Landskip’ as an ‘expression’ of the ‘Land, Hills, Woods, Castles, valleys,

⁷⁹ Professor Sally Bushell, Professor Simon Bainbridge, Professor Sharon Ruston and Kate Ingle from the Department of English and Creative Writing at Lancaster University with Jeff Cowton at the Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere wrote the on-line course entitled *William Wordsworth Poetry, Places People* (2015). See, <https://www.mooc-list.com/course/william-wordsworth-poetry-people-and-place-futurelearn?static=true>

⁸⁰ The full title is *Glossographia Nova Or, A Dictionary Interpreting The Hard Words Of Whatsoever Language, Now Used In Our Refined English Tongue* (1656 or 1670).

Rivers and Cities as far as may be shewed in our Horizon' (Andrews, 2004: 81, Blount, 1707).

This reflects how at that time 'landscape was not the main subject matter (the 'body' or 'argument') of a painting, instead it provided the 'backdrop' or the 'setting' for the main subject matter (Andrews: 81). Not before the early seventeenth century, writes Andrews, was landscape being 'drawn for its own sake' rather than being automatically relegated to a 'by-work' (Andrews, 1999: 7).

Overtime, as discussed by Andrews in *Landscape and Western Art*, a landscape meant a 'good view' of a stretch of countryside, while art was what 'happened to that landscape when translated into a painted image' (Andrews, 1999: 3). He develops this by suggesting that we carry 'culturally prefabricated mental templates [of a 'good' landscape] with us wherever we go and what we see and reflect upon is continually adjusted to these templates so that a landscape [real or painted] is what a viewer has selected from the land, edited and modified' (Andrews, 1999: 4). Landscape is, writes Andrews 'land framed for viewing... nature mediated by culture, land organised and reduced to the point where the human eye can comprehend its breadth and depth within one frame or short scan' (Andrews, 1999: 4). Thus a landscape has become a cultural construct tamed for viewing by a literal frame or a mental template – an object that is out-side of and separate, or 'other' to, the viewer. Thus, in order to perceive of and gain a perspective on this separate 'other' there must be a perception of 'self', an 'I', a viewer with an individual 'point of view' and an awareness of the relationship between themselves and the object (landscape) they are viewing.

In *Site-Specific Performance*, Mike Pearson reflects on the cultural shaping of landscape about which he writes:

at once a piece of land, a scene, a way of looking, a vista, a thing seen, a form of representation: nature, culture and imagination within a spatial manifold, landscape is mediated land, land that has been aesthetically processed. It is land that has arranged itself, or been arranged by the artists' vision (Pearson, 2010: 93).

As a scenographer I 'arrange' landscape by 'drawing the scene' or 'stage-picture' into and out of it. I also use scenographic dramaturgy to interpret the landscape and assign meaning to it, drawing on the meaning already embedded within. I use composition and perspective (working with the templates I and participants carry), to frame, view and contain the landscape and the people or characters, installations and animals within it. I consider that this process has much in common with the 'picturesque'. To that end the picturesque offers me a visual system that viewers (participants) are familiar with, consciously or subconsciously. By working within this known and understood system my scenography might at first appear familiar but it can also disturb the frame. It does this by placing elements inside the frame that might not ordinarily be framed picturesquely, looked at reverentially, or in close up. An example would be the lining of the womb and lichen on a rock or the film of a skinning of a dead lamb projected onto wool sacks hanging in a barn in a form reminiscent of a church altar piece. It also does this by placing elements inside the frame that are not ordinarily placed together such as woollen fleeces filling the inside of a room in an empty house, ultrasound scans of sheep foetus being projected in triptych form in a stable, or images of a frozen tarn on the same page as images and facts and figures relating to cryopreservation of embryos. The scenography also disturbs the picturesque frame by running 'scenes' made of image, sound, word, action, science and landscape in an unexpected order, out of their normal context, or by revealing things that are ordinarily hidden or forgotten in the past. It does this in order to create 'new' or different meaning. Crucially, when constructing and designing *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* my scenography used and mis-used these framing devices as a means to emplace and reflect upon the underlying subject. In Chapter 3, I explore in more detail how these performance worked with these picturesque framing, and un-framing, processes.

The term 'Picturesque' was brought into 'common usage', by William Gilpin in *An Essay on Prints* published in 1768 and in which, writes Rebecca Solnit author of *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, he defined the picturesque as 'that kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture'

(Solnit, 2006: 96). His writings taught ‘people to look at landscapes as pictures, know what to look for and how to frame it in their mind’s eye, the key features being ‘repose’, ‘quietness’ and ‘harmony’” (Solnit, 2001: 96, Gilpin, 1792: xii). It is, I suggest, these same ‘teachings’ that the scenographic-led practice created for this research project also engages. Consciously or pre-consciously perhaps, participants ‘know’ Gilpin’s picturesque language, which has been passed down through Western art and cultural aesthetics. This, I argue, means that when I borrow from that language participants feel a sense of understanding and security because to an extent they are experiencing a ‘familiar’ and ‘safe’ aesthetic experience. The scenography however, as discussed earlier and more fully later in his thesis, then, through a series of juxtapositions, seeks challenges and upsets that picturesque frame of understanding so that the content of the frame can be experienced afresh, re-imaged and transformed.

Working in response to the location that he was studying, Gilpin was interested in the viewer (artist or observer) capturing their impression or study of a landscape scene as a ‘sketched idea’ that was ‘not wrought into a whole’ (Gilpin, 1792: xiil). This sketching process reflected the speed with which an artist working ‘en plein air’ needed to work, and indeed reflects the speed with which I sketched and photographed when undertaking the primary research for the performances created for this research project. Later, in *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape*, published in 1792, Gilpin developed his theory further and defined a picturesque landscape as one where the textures and forms should be ‘rough’, ‘intricate’, ‘varied’, or ‘broken’. Compositionally he argued that a picturesque view or painting worked as a unified whole with a dark ‘foreground’, brighter ‘middle ground’ and a lighter, less distinct, ‘distant ground’ (Gilpin, 1972: 6, 20-21: 81-84).

In order to create a landscape aesthetic that was fathomable yet still inspired feeling, Gilpin’s picturesque brought together and combined aspects from the ‘transcendent sublime’ such as vastness, magnitude, and intimations of power with ‘the beautiful’ and its emphasis on

smoothness, regularity *and* order. A ‘correctly’ picturesque scene required a single viewpoint and the use of compositional rules relating to form, texture and framing ‘borrowed’ from landscape painting. This aspect of Gilpin’s theory relates to the way that *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* did not only aim to set up a series of viewing points in the landscape from where to ‘witness’ a scene, but also to ‘orchestrate’ *how* participants experienced that ‘view’.

Gilpin’s teaching asked the viewer to use their imagination in order to *feel* the effect of the scene they were observing and the impression it made on them. The viewer would then capture that impression either in their memory or with a few strokes of a paintbrush in a sketchbook or words written in a journal, a process that created a felt picture or scene that was unique to them. This approach also influenced the practice created for this research project, as did Gilpin’s explorations of the use of the frame to create ‘moving-pictures’ or ‘living-pictures’. These influences can be seen in the way that my scenographic-led practice draws a scene in the landscapes, using framing and compositional devices, that participant’s observe visually and feel physically, sensorially and emotionally as they move through the landscape in which the performances are created.

Whilst touring the English countryside writing guidebooks, Gilpin mediated views of the landscape through two different sorts of framing device. The window frame of the carriage in which he travelled and the containing frame of the Claude glass, described by the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A Museum) as a ‘convex tinted mirror which was supposed to help artists produce works of art similar to those of artist Claude Lorraine’ (V&AMuseum, 2011). Rather than looking at the landscape directly in *Remarks on Forest Scenery* Gilpin described how he observed a reflection of the landscape he was viewing in the glass, which acted as frame. This frame allowed him to experience the ‘scenery’ he was passing through as a series of miniaturised moving pictures, which he describes in the following way:

A succession of high-coloured pictures is continually gliding before the eye. They are like the visions of the imagination: or brilliant landscape of a dream. Form, and colours, in brightest array, fleet before us (Andrews, 1999: 116, Gilpin, 1794: 2nd edition 110).

The Claude Glass also became widely used by tourists. In the Early Romantic period non-labouring classes considered landscapes such as the Lake District or Snowdonia, as too terrifying and alarming to venture into, especially on foot. Framing and containing them, or viewing them through a Claude Glass or the window of coach limits the scope of what otherwise seemed limitless and unfathomable. Framing the landscape in this way makes manageable a landscape that otherwise might overwhelm. My own use of the frame works in a similar, parallel way. I literally use the frame (a window, the walls of a barn, the sides of a valley, a moon cut in book page or the aperture of a magnifying glass) to contain an image, to focus in on it, or to create a physical view or view point. These views might be anticipated by participants or be unexpected and the frame serves to contain and then sometimes to challenge. Both *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* however, work with a non-literal meta-frame. Indeed, the performances are themselves a framing device. They frame the underlying subject matter of biological childlessness-by-circumstance and the missing life-event of biological motherhood. This framing, constructed during the performances, enables the performances to deal with a challenging subject matter. They, like the window of a coach, give a means to view, image and re-image from a safe place (by limiting the scope) what otherwise seems, and is experienced as, limitless and unfathomable.

Another framing device that informed the practice created for this research project was the ‘viewing station’, a concept developed by Thomas West in his *Travel Guide to the Lakes* first published in 1778 and which outlines, in careful detail, where to climb to in order to gain an ‘astonishing view’ (West, 1789: 94). An early example of a ‘viewing station’ is the summerhouse at Rydal Hall near Grasmere in Cumbria built in 1694. It was a deliberately designed interior location (station) from which a carefully constructed ‘picturesque’ waterfall scene could be viewed and, writes architect Paul Groult in the online article entitled ‘The

Summerhouse at Rydal Hall', was 'much visited in the 18th century during the fashionable tours of the Lake District' (Grout, 2013): online. The path to the station winds its way through deciduous woodland and, writes Grout:

As he approaches, the viewer listens to the noise of the water growing louder [though] his view is blocked [by the summer house]. Once inside, and when the door has been closed, the shutters on the large window were throw back and there, perfectly framed was a view of the tree-shaped falls, the pool in the foreground, and above, in the background, a glimpse of the little rustic stone bridge crossing the upper stream all ideally proportioned to its frame (Grout, 2013).

In *The Works of Thomas Gray, with Memoirs of His Life Writings* (1825) Gray's biographer William Mason described the theatricality of this experience in the following way:

Here nature has performed everything in little that she usually executes on her largest scale; and on that account, like a miniature painter, seems to have finished every part of it in a studied manner [...] has its picturesque meaning [...] and the darkest-coloured stone, produces an effect of light and shadow beautiful beyond description. This theatrical scene might be painted as large as the original, on canvas not bigger than those which are usually dropped in the Opera-House (Gray, 1825: volume, II 337).

The parallel between the summerhouse viewing experiences and traditional 'stage' or 'scenic' design and the theatre experience is strong. The anticipatory (sonic, visual and physical) approach to the 'building' followed by the revelation of the previously hidden scenic-picture provides a dramatic 'reveal'. From within, the dark interior of the 'viewing chamber' acts like an auditorium and the window frames the view in a way that is similar to a proscenium arch framing a lit stage-picture. The viewer becomes audience, physically participating in their experience and the landscape becomes a living, sensory 'scene' constructed using rules of composition and perspective to guide the eye and the gaze.

The carriage-window framing a view of the landscape; the artist composing a picture (2-dimensionally in a painting or 3-dimensionally in-situ); and the stage designer framing a scene all work with the picturesque. My scenographic-dramaturgy also works with all three of these framing devices. How I do this can be seen in the way that *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* invited participants to move from 'scene to scene' through a landscape of ever-changing 'images'; used the landscape to frame and reveal and animate a scene; directed the gaze using scale, perspective

and sound; worked with stations and viewing places; harnessed landscape forces to create dynamic multi-sensory experiences to which participants bring their own perspective, imagination and feelings.

Un-framing Landscape: The Transcendent Sublime

A counterpoint to the framed composure of the picturesque landscape is the ‘sublime’ or the ‘transcendent sublime’ landscape as I will refer to it. Un-framed, un-composed and limitless, this type of landscape was considered to be beyond reach and comprehension. It represented an un-graspable physical ‘object’ that affected a psychological state of terror or else a metaphysical or spiritual experience of something – an otherness – that lay beyond the physical matter of the everyday.

The Early Romantic Period saw rapidly evolving discourses on the transcendent sublime, which reflected and influenced social, political and cultural change. This was in part due to an increased sense of the individual self that, comments literary historian Professor Simon Bainbridge in *William Wordsworth: Poetry, People and Place*, ‘had a political basis in the French Revolution, which asked for all men and women to be regarded as equal’ (Bainbridge, 2015).

Drawing on Longinus’s definition of the sublime in his highly influential treatise *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, published in 1757 the philosopher Edmund Burke (1729-1797) defined the (transcendent) sublime as an ‘unknowable source of power way beyond our control that range from the might to the miniscule’ (Burke, 2008). The reasons that landscape and ‘nature’ became associated with the transcendent sublime can be traced to Burke’s treatise. This was due, writes Bainbridge in *Romanticism : A Sourcebook*, to the way Burke categorised ‘objects’, and the ‘psychological effects they produced’ in the person experiencing them, as either sublime or beautiful

(Bainbridge, 2008: 176, Burke, 2008: 36 ; 53). Beautiful objects were, writes Bainbridge drawing on Burke, 'defined by qualities such as smallness, smoothness, roundness and delicacy and promoted feelings of wellbeing, relaxation and love, whilst sublime objects were defined by qualities such as vastness, darkness, obscurity, infinity (to which I add solitude and silence) and promoted feelings of admiration, astonishment, pain and terror' (Bainbridge, 2008: 176, Burke, 2008: 100-5 ; 53-55, 66-67). Burke's thinking was also informed by the work of the essayist, poet and playwright Joseph Addison (1672-1719) who writing in *The Spectator*, in 1712, identified the sublime as being experienced when a viewer, audience, or a reader witnessed an event and imagined themselves into that situation *but* from a position of safety.

For Burke, writes Bainbridge, the sublime was experienced as 'that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror' causing the 'mind' to be so overwhelmed and 'entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other' (Bainbridge, 2008: 176, Burke, 2008: 100-5 ; 53-55, 66-67). This overwhelming bewilderment of the senses caused by the sublime occurs, it is suggested, when the mind, whilst desiring to find a 'familiar form' with which to comprehend an experience or object, is unable to do so because that experience or object lacks a graspable form and becomes impossible to frame, fathom or apprehend.

The Masculine Gendering of the Transcendent Sublime

Burke would go on to identify the beautiful as a feminine aesthetic mode or a 'sensibility'. 'Sensibility' was considered a 'natural' feminine state to be cultivated in women and their behaviour. Allied, writes Bainbridge, to 'ideas about the self was the growth of the so-called 'cult of sensibility' which exerted a powerful influence on the art and the literature of the Romantic period. During the 18 C., a refined sensibility became increasingly prized and was often associated with femininity and women's writing' (Bainbridge, 2008:149-150, Burke, 2008:36 ; 53).

Burke's feminine aesthetic mode or a 'sensitivity' was 'exemplified', writes Andrews, 'in the female form and feminine behaviour and the "sublime" as a masculine aesthetic mode that could be experienced through nature and landscape' (Andrews, 1999: 133). Typically, these landscapes featured grand and 'un-scalable mountains, wind-swept passes, gorges with waterfalls disappearing into the dark-depths below, unbounded vistas of sky with rolling thunder clouds and deep fathomless oceans' (Andrews, 1999: 133).

Transcendent sublime experiences 'achieved' through the landscape were considered to be so awe-inspiring that they defied forms of representation, language or definition that, writes Andrews, 'measure up to the scale of the experience' (Andrews, 1999: 142). This is significant in relation to this research project because the 'missing' life-event subject matter that the practice deals with can be complex, uncertain and painful in such a way that means it can also defy representation, language and definition. However, I argue that the scenographic form of the practice created for this research project and its use of the visual, action and performance, distilled words, the scientific, the biological and the landscape allows something else – a transformative experience – to occur.

When describing how the streets of Huddersfield continue to evoke for him deeply felt memories of Wilson+Wilson's production *House*, Scott Palmer references Yi-Fu Tuan who in *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* wrote that 'intimate experiences lie buried in our innermost being so that not only do we lack the words to give them form but often we are not even aware of them' (Tuan, 1977: 136, Palmer, 2011: 80). Palmer's interest is in the 'sensual and emotional dimensions of space' that *House* ignited, and the site of *House* still evokes for him (Palmer, 2011: 80). I suggest that it was the multi-sensory scenography of *House* and its evocative use of spoken word, sound, image performance and space that caused Palmer, and other participants, as previously discussed in Chapter 1, to have such powerful emotional and intellectual memorable experience that would transform the 'site', and the participant, long after

the event. Similarly, the scenography of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* brought landscape, artistic intervention and subject matter together in order to create a 'form' that could give expression to the underlying 'missing' life-event experience that, for some, 'lacked words' and modes of expression.

Returning to the Early Romantic period, an example of the challenges of describing a transcendent sublime landscapes experience in words, is described by the writer Thomas Gray, when walking in the Alps in 1739. Gray recorded in a letter how the mountainous scenery astonished him 'beyond expression' with 'certain scenes that would awe an atheist into belief' (Andrews, 1999: 130, Gray, 1925: 44-45). His companion Horace Walpole in a letter recording the same experience declared 'we stayed there two hours... wished for a painters, wished to be poets' (Andrews, 1999: 130, Walpole, 1966: 27). Walpole's comment opens up the suggestion that artists *might* in distilled word and image be able to capture something of the experience. An example of this is the way in which the overwhelming expanse and scale of the landscape and how it affects a spiritual experience is made visual in Friedrich's painting *Wanderer Above The Mist* (1817-19). His painting both illustrate and affect a transcendent experience that, through the imagination, take the 'viewer' beyond the materiality of the physical into the 'metaphysical'. The painting depicts a male figure standing on the summit of a mountain surveying the expansive landscape, similar to the one described above, before him. The solitary male figure, often seen on a mountain top or facing powerful forces of nature is a Romantic trope.

The semiotics of the 'figure', his relationship to the landscape and his attire would have been recognisable to the viewer who, through him, could have a transcendent landscape experience. William Wordsworth reflects on the need for an elevated perspective in his poem *To the Same*, which describes how 'changes in visual perception achieved by ascending [a mountain] can alter the individual's relationship with the world he or she has risen above'. For William Wordsworth, writes Bainbridge in 'Romantic Writers and Mountaineering' in the journal *Romanticism*, climbing high gained him 'insight rather than far sight' (Bainbridge, 2012: 7).

The transcendent sublime for William Wordsworth, like many of his contemporaries, became a source of creative power. Simon Bainbridge author of the *Wordsworth Walks*, a guided three-mile walk around Rydal and Grasmere Lakes, which, writes Bainbridge ‘use the landscape, the poet’s work and a series of practical exercise to provide a framework in which participants can reflect on their own development, values and plans for the future (Bainbridge, 2013a).⁸¹ In the pamphlet that accompanies the walk entitled ‘Wordsworth Walk: Was it for This...? Reflection, Vision and Critical Collaboration, A Wordsworthian Walk and Talk in Three Parts Including ‘Reflections On My Life’s Journey’, Bainbridge describes how William Wordsworth’s autobiographical poem *The Prelude* demonstrates the ‘positive power and shaping influence of key moments in his life, which he called ‘spots in time’ (Bainbridge, 2013b). ‘... these spots in time are moments of fear’, writes Bainbridge, by which Wordsworth means ‘the sublime: the terrifying, the difficult, the challenging’ which Wordsworth described as a “darkness” – call it solitude, or “blank desertion” (Bainbridge, 2013b). Most crucially perhaps in terms of this research project, Bainbridge describes how these spots were for William Wordsworth a ‘vital and positive process’ that had a ‘restorative, nourishing and repairing affect’ (Bainbridge, 2013b). In a *Wordsworth Walk* participants, writes Bainbridge, are invited to enter Rydal Cave where, in the dark, the aim is to ‘recreate a mental state of “darkness” and “blank desertion”, and a sense of being cut off from the world of familiar things in order to reflect on *spots in time* in their own lives’ (Bainbridge, 2013a). This is similar to the way in which *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* aimed to deal with the physical and emotional effects of a ‘missing’ life-event that is difficult to grasp or apprehend and that society does not have the ceremonies and rituals to mark. It also parallels the way in which the performances used/use walking-performance and landscape to ‘affect’ physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual transformation in participants.

⁸¹ ‘Wordsworth Walks’ offer a unique developmental experience, suitable for individuals, companies and organisations. The walks enable participants to explore three main ideas: 1) To reflect on what have been the major influences in their personal / and or professional lives; 2) To examine their own sense of ‘Vision’; 3) To consider how best to work with others.

The boundless ‘transcendent sublime’ landscapes defined in Burke and Kant’s philosophy could not be physically, or psychologically appropriated, attained or transcended *except* through the powers of thought and reason, and these were considered ‘masculine’ characteristics possessed by men but not by women. Thus, writes Andrews, the masculine or transcendent sublime became ‘associated with the experience of surrender to a superior power’ (Andrews, 1999: 132) Carl Gustav Carus, a contemporary of Caspar David Friedrich, described this ‘surrender’ in the following excerpt from his *Nine Letters on Landscape Painting* (composed between 1815 and 1824):

Stand then upon the summit of a mountain, and gaze over the long rows of hills. Observe the passage of streams and all the magnificence that opens up before your eyes; and what feeling grips you? It is a silent devotion within you. You lose yourself in boundless space, your whole being experiences a silent cleansing and clarification, your I vanishes, you are nothing, God is everything (Koerner, 1990: 194, Andrews, 1999: 143).

The passage from the letter describes how the experience of a sublime landscape effect the viewer who becomes lost – his ‘I’ ‘vanished’ – into its ‘meta-physical dimensions’ and experience the imminence of god in the universe. There are clear parallels between Carus’s description and Friedrich’s painting entitled *Wanderer Above The Mist*, which shows a man looking outwards into, or surveying, a sublime landscape similar to the one described above.

There is a powerful relationship between the self, the transcendent sublime and gender. For the ‘I’ to vanish there has to be an ‘I’ in the first place and, because objects (nature, matter and landscape) that evoked the transcendent sublime were assigned a female gender, women *became* associated with those objects – the unattainable ‘other’, the ‘object’, but not the ‘subject’. This objectification denied women access to the ‘subjective’ experience of the transcendent sublime, which was open only to men.

The effect of placing people gendered female outside of the mainstream and of universal structures links to Jacques’s theory of the phallus, the entity which in psychoanalytical thinking, as described by Lacan in *The Signification of the Phalllus*, means that ‘the man has the symbolic

phallus, which is the “signifier of the desire of the Other” [the object] but the woman does not’ (Lacan, 1958, Evans, 1996: 141-142) Thus, ‘the place assigned women by Lacan is one of absence and “otherness” and by lacking the penis which signifies phallic power in patriarchal society and provides a speaking position for the male-child, women lack access to the symbolic order that structures language and meaning, means that, in Lacan’s view, those gendered female are destined, as discussed Chadwick in *Women, Art, and Society*, to be spoken about rather than ‘speak’ (Chadwick, 2002: 13).

Through this disturbance in subjectivity, I am aligning the sublime with the ‘abject’ and its implications with the liminal. The ‘state’ of abjection can be used to describe groups who are marginalised and on the edges of ‘mainstream’ society. As I discuss more full later in this thesis the practice created for this research project seeks to express and transform the socially isolating and liminal effects of the ‘missing’ life-event of biological motherhood *and* give voice to women experiencing it, who can find themselves on the peripheries of society and culture. Liminal experiences caused by biological childless-by-circumstance are, I argue, comparable to and share attributes with a state of abjection.

In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* the philosopher Julia Kristeva describes abjection as ‘what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect border, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. [...]’ (Kristeva, 1982: 4). Kristeva’s concept of the abject’s relationship to the disturbing of identity links also to the notion of the postmodern sublime as foregrounded in Lyotard’s philosophical thinking. See especially, Jean-Francois Lyotard’s *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* (Lyotard, 1994). See also, Lyotard’s *Philosophy, Politics and the Sublime* ed. Hugh J. Silverman (Lyotard, 2002). Kristeva’s ‘abject’ state compares to what philosopher Luce Irigaray in *Speculum of the Other Woman* describes as the ‘excluded middle’ (a term derived from Aristotle), a state of non-existence – or of a possible

existence found 'in the betweenness that occur in being' or in the 'voids' (Irigaray, 1985: 17 ; 165-166). Sarah K. Donovan in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* comments that Irigaray argues:

since ancient times, mothers have been associated with nature and unthinking matter. Further, Irigaray believes that all women have historically been associated with the role of "mother" such that, whether or not a woman is a mother, her identity is always defined according to that role. This is in contrast to men who are associated with culture and subjectivity (Donovan, 2016).

In *Outside Belonging* philosopher Elspleth Probyn works with the notion of 'outside belonging' as a 'theoretical term and as a lived reality' that seeks to push back 'against' categorisation and 'the rush to place differences as absolute' (Probyn, 1996: 8-9). Probyn furthers the term 'outside belonging' when she identifies a state of 'being' that she describes as *beyond* belonging and identity where individuals might never 'really and truly belong' and in which 'stability' and 'sanctity' of belonging are 'forever past' (Probyn, 1996: 8).

In *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764) and *Critique of Judgement* (1790) the philosopher Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) writings on the transcendent sublime took Burke's theories further. In *Moment: The Rise of the Critical Watchman* author Jon Thompson quotes Kant who theorises the 'aesthetic sublime' in Book Two of the *Critique of Judgement*, in the following way:

The beautiful in nature is a question of the form of the object, and this consists in limitation, whereas the sublime is found in an object even devoid of form, so far as it immediately involves or else by its presence provokes, a representation of limitlessness (Kant, 1951, Thompson, 1999: 22).

For Kant, summarises Thompson, the 'experience of 'beauty' is an experience of the 'measurable', while 'sublimity is an experience of magnitude without limit' (Thompson, 1999: 22). In *The Sublime, Terror and Human Difference* feminist philosopher and scholar Christine Battersby argues that Kant takes the gendering of the transcendent sublime and the denials it accord women, as subject, further when he asserts 'women should show nothing else than a beautiful nature... charm and beauty are positive virtues for women... but the sublime is ruled

out' (Kant, 1951: 78, Battersby, 2007: 8). Kant is categorically disallowing female participation in the transcendent sublime.

Later, writes Battersby, Kant 'linked personhood and moral autonomy to the sublime and in so doing denied and excluded women from "universal" reason, taste, freedom, and personhood' (Battersby, 2007: 7-9). It is clear then that the cultural, social and political implications of the dualism (female object and male subject; mind and body; physical and meta-physical; material and spiritual/intellectual) caused by the gendering of the transcendent sublime are extensive and far-reaching. These dualisms reflect Renee Descartes' concept of dualism (known as Cartesian Dualism) and his attempts, in the seventeenth century, to separate as completely different substances the immaterial mind and the material body. In *Refiguring Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* Elizabeth Grosz describes how Cartesian 'dualisms of western culture ranks, and privileges, one term over its suppressed, subordinate and negative counterpart' so that the 'mind/body correlation' (that we see in the transcendent sublime) 'distinguishes the mind *over* the body, sense *over* sensibility, outside *over* inside, self *over* other, [and] transcendence *over* immanence...' (Grosz, 1994: 3). We are still not beyond theses binaries, which linger in our culture, however my feminine sublime informed 'scenography' can provide a means, I suggest, to reunite divided and unequal counterparts. It does so by not denying or separating the material, the emotional and intellectual into binary opposites. Instead it places seemingly disparate elements together in order to understand them differently and from non-mainstream perspectives.

Prehistoric and ancient cultures gendered nature's life-giving forces as feminine and worshipped them through female deities and goddesses. However, a fundamental change in this association occurred during the Age of Enlightenment when the desire to study, classify and gain dominion over nature required it to be: separated from god and brought 'down-to-earth'. This process of separation and bringing-down to earth involved 'nature' being ascribed a female gender and called 'Mother Nature', a process which, Carolyn Merchant in the chapter entitled 'Dominion

Over Nature' in the book *The Gender and Science Reader*, 'degraded' both nature and 'women' (Merchant, 2000: 68-81). This 'degrading' bound women to nature in two ways: through their material (fertile) 'mothering' bodies and, through their aestheticised (feminised) 'nature', both of which deny the fleshy, complex, materiality of all nature and the human experience. It is this loss, deprivation and separation from raw nature, writes Battersby, that the Burkean 'framework of the beautiful' (Battersby, 2007: 8) imposed on women and the feminine sublime seeks to reclaim.

Re-Drawing and Re-Imaging Landscape: The Feminine Sublime

The inequality and gender division embodied in the concept transcendent sublime that evolved in the Early Romantic period had the social and cultural effect of silencing and excluding the female perspective and women's voices from mainstream politics, economics, and culture.

In her critique of the feminine sublime *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Women's Fiction* the feminist scholar Barbara Claire Freeman writes that the 'role gender plays in the articulation of the theory of the sublime' excludes female experience (Freeman, 1995: 3). It is her conviction that, 'another account of the sublime lies hidden and is repressed by the metaphysical theories of the [transcendent] sublime' (Freeman, 1995: 3). Freeman argues that women writers have responded to and redefined an alternative materially specific 'sublime' – the 'feminine sublime'. The concept of the feminine sublime offers a counterpoint to the transcendent sublime that does not need to determine the 'wholeness' of an object but can cope with its ambiguity whilst, at the same time, re-uniting matter with mind, sense with sensibility, inside with outside, and self with other.

According to the historian Elizabeth Fay 'male romantic writers took the masculine tradition of the sublime to be proof of their visionary gift' whereas female writers were held to be 'unfit for

the sublime'. Thus, writes Fay, the sublime is, a 'male achievement gained through women as female objects, or through female nature, [was] closed off to women writers' (Fay, 1998: 15). This portrayal of women as being 'incapable of real thought, imagination, and vision' disinclined many from trying their hand at writing about 'the sublime', and those that did 'were mocked by their male contemporaries' (Fay, 1998: 14). Despite this, a significant number of female writers refused to accept and challenged the limited roles, identities and access to 'the divine' that the 'male' gendered transcendent sublime afforded them. Wishing instead, writes Chadwick, to 'assume the role of speaking subject rather than accept that of object' they sought to shift the boundaries of what they could think, say, do, and write (Chadwick, 2002: 13). They did this by working with traditional, and acceptable, forms of writing already open to them such as journal, letter and poetic writing and by pursuing, and leading the way, in emerging forms such as novel, political, travel and nature writing. This meant, not only did they 'remake' the traditional forms but they also constructed radically new ones that had a unique voice, language, and perspective that can be understood, I suggest, through, and as exemplars of, the concept of the feminine sublime.⁸²

⁸² The roots of the concept of the feminine sublime could be argued to trace back to Dionysius Longinus. Longinus was the First Century Athenian who wrote the first surviving treatise on the concept of the sublime entitled *Peri us Hypous (On the Sublime)*. His inclusion and analysis of the poetic writings the early sixth century B.C. writer Sappho of Lesbos (610-570 BC) in this first treatise as an supreme example of poetic 'sublime' intensity means that writing that can arguably be understood through the conceptual framework of the feminine sublime in form, content and effect actually forms part of blueprint of Longinus's 'blueprint'. It is probable that Longinus's interpretation reflected the prevailing masculine perspective on gender.

The long-term implications of this might be, as discussed by scholar Battersby in *The Sublime, Terror, and Human Difference*, that Longinus established a interpretative reading of the poem that, whilst identifying it as sublime, does not in fact understand or not articulate its feminine sublime qualities (Battersby, 2007:15).

The Athenian society that evolved (post Sappho) saw the emergence of democracy and with it the creation of the new gender role 'Woman' which saw, writes feminist theatre scholar Sue Ellen Case in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, the 'privileging of the masculine gender and oppression of the feminine one' (Case,1990: 9). This led to the 'abjection' – which literally means 'being cast out' - of women who, writes Kristeva, became situated 'outside the symbolic order of mainstream culture' (Kristeva, 1982: 15). This might reflect how, by the time that Longinus was writing Athenian democratic society had brought its citizens, their bodies and behaviour under state-control. It considered expressions of the types of powerful 'female' emotions written about by Sappho in poems such as *Ode to Jealousy* centuries earlier were now uncontainable and dangerously excessive, uncontrollable, over-emotional and 'Barbaric'. Women became marginalised and their lives, writes the theatre scholar David Wiles in *Greek Theatre Performance*, became 'limited to the domestic realm whilst rituals and ceremonies were managed by the state' (Wiles, 2000: 67-68). This radical and fundamental change had occurred in the years between Sappho writing *Phaninetai Moi* and its inclusion in *On the Sublime Ancient Greece*⁸². Athenian democracy saw the 'banishment of women and the female voice from public life', and along with it the rise of order over chaos, reason over emotion and men over women (Wiles, 2000: 66). There emerged instead a 'new',

Dorothy Wordsworth's Contemporaries: Shifting the Boundaries

In the late eighteenth century a number of women writers including Dorothy Wordsworth's and her contemporaries such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Charlotte Smith, Ann Radcliffe and later, Mary Tighe sought new creative modes and discourses that 'gave-voice' to their 'personal' lived experiences and shifted the boundaries by which they refused to be contained. In so doing they evolved culture, art and a social politics that can be understood through the concept of the feminine sublime.

In *Vindication Of The Rights Of Men, In A Letter To The Right Honourable Edmund Burke*⁸³ (1790) writer and activist Mary Wollstonecraft expressed her 'contempt' and 'indignation' towards Burke's gendered definition of the transcendent sublime and the way it denied women but enabled men as 'capable' subjects to have access to the universe and god (Wollstonecraft, 1790). Wollstonecraft, writes Battersby, 'raged against the ways in which the sublime was often explicitly, and nearly always implicitly, gendered as male' (Battersby, 2007: 8). Written in response to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* which was published a few weeks earlier and to his well established *Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* Wollstonecraft redefined the 'sublime' and the 'beautiful' and made a direct challenge to Burke, and his gendered view of women, when she wrote:

You may have convinced [women] that littleness and weakness are the very essence of beauty; and that the Supreme Being, in giving women beauty in the most super eminent degree, seemed to command them, by the powerful voice of Nature, not to cultivate the moral virtues that might chance to excite respect, and interfere with the pleasing sensations they were created to inspire (Wollstonecraft, 1790).

tamed and controlled, Athenian 'Woman' who was given an injunction to live, and behave, writes Wiles, in accordance with 'that nature that you have' (Wiles, 2000: 69). This taming and 'naturing' of women might have informed Longinus's description Sappho's poem. It is also reminiscent of the way that the aesthetic of the 'beautiful' was used by Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant in the Early Romantics to define women; 'tame' and control their lives; and see them as intellectually, emotionally and spiritually incapable of the transcendent sublime *because of their 'nature' and 'sensibility'*.

⁸³ Wollstonecraft was responding to Burke's *Revolution in France*, published in 1790 and *The Sublime and Beautiful*, published in 1757. This preceded *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* published in 1792.

In this excerpt, Wollstonecraft challenges the masculine sublime, which enabled men as ‘proper and capable subjects’ spiritual access to the universe, via the transcendent sublime, but not women because they cannot be the ‘subject’ and cannot stand before god. She also rejects the behaviours that it imposed, wanting instead the same rights as men to travel and to explore landscapes as a subjective experience.

Another challenger to Burke’s position was the poet, essayist and critic Anna Laetitia Aikin (later Barbauld) who argued that women were as capable as men of accessing the soul-elevating and mind-awakening transcendent sublime. In an essay published in 1773 entitled ‘On the Pleasures Derived from Objects of Terror’ Barbauld proposes that fiction offered a different sort of sublime (the feminine sublime) that engaged and expanded the reader’s imagination through ‘surprise from new and wonderful objects’ which ‘awaken the mind’ and ‘elevated the soul’ (Barbauld, 1773).

The nature of these sudden ‘awakenings’ was, I suggest, reminiscent of William Wordsworth’s ‘spots of time’ (Aiken, 2004: 226). Moments of de-familiarisation that forced him to see the world differently. They are similar to revelatory experience that Virginia Woolf would later describe in the autobiographical essay ‘A Sketch From The Past’⁸⁴ as ‘moments of being’ (Woolf, 1978:84). These ‘moments of being’ are experienced as sudden and revelatory ‘violent shock[s]’, sometimes horror, that are counterpoints to what Woolf referred to as ‘non-being’ that she writes ‘punctuate the cotton wool of daily life [that] render one *blind* to the particular and the common place’ (Woolf, 1978: 81-82). For Woolf, many ‘moments of being’ occurred whilst out walking and she often ‘found’ them in the ‘natural’ material of her environment, for example in the grey-green creases of bark on a tree, the life force of a budding plant, a puddle on a path, the ribbed pattern on shells, the lined face of an old woman (Woolf, 1978: 82-87). Other ‘moments’ were caused by the fleeting effects of phenomena such as moonlight on water, the ‘lurid light of

⁸⁴ *A Sketch From The Past* (1938) was one of five essays printed posthumously in the book *Moments of Being*.

a hail storm' or a 'distinct' sound (Woolf, 1978: 84). For Woolf, the philosophical effect was that the 'whole world' became a 'work of art' but these moments also made her aware of her own impotence in the face of forces of 'nature' (Woolf, 1978:84).

Barbauld's poems often feature a female figure. She does not diminish this 'figure' to a fertile body, associated with 'mother- nature' and 'mother-hood' but instead expand it as a person capable of knowledge, understanding and insight achieved through mind and body. Like other women writers of the Early Romantic period she was interested in seeing, feeling and describing her environment (biological, geological, topographical, planetary and domestic) for what it was, in a way that was materially specific, rather than as a tool through which to achieve the 'transcendent sublime'. Instead, they harnessed the landscape and everyday objects, often using metaphor and visual imagery, as a means to express the reality of their lived-experience. Many looked towards and faced natural forces: decay, death, illness, anxiety and powerlessness, using them to reflect on unequal marriage, multiple child loss, illness and uncertainty. They did not seek the transcendent sublime in objects that were far-beyond and out of reach but instead *encountered, found* and *noticed* a sense of wonderment in the objects, processes and activities that were close to hand i.e. the commonplace, the everyday and the domestic. This can be seen in the 'pre-transcendent' themes of their subject matter and the attention they paid to the small, the intricate and the intimate. For example, the poetry of Mary Tighe draws parallels between personal experience and natural landscape. In much of her poetry Tighe's female 'character' or 'figure' do not seek to escape the destructive effects of landscape but faced them and, writes Pipkin, 'draws her identity from her continued endurance of time and nature instead of escaping them through sublime transcendence (Pipkin, 1998: 614). In her poem, *Written in Scarborough* the 'figure' featured in the poem, whilst listening to the '*far off sound of the sullen oceans roar*', narrates how:

I think upon the scenes my life has known;
On days of sorrow, and some hours of joy;
Both which alike time could so soon destroy!
[...]

As on the beach new waves for ever roll
[...]
I, like worn sand, exposed remain
To each new storm which frets the angry main

(Tighe, 2015: 12 ; lines 5-7).

The Gathering and *Warnscale* used/uses the material landscape as a place in which to re-appear. Participants become their own subject and connect to their own material, intellectual and emotional body and ‘self’, personal experiences and stories relating to in/fertility. By focussing participants’ attention to the dynamic, often uncontrollable, forces of the landscape, the performances became/become a means by which to find a deeper understanding of the physical and emotional reality and effects of the ‘missing’ life-event subject matter. In *Warnscale* participants are invited to face the landscape and through it to face and acknowledge their circumstance.

For example, in *Warnscale* at ‘Landmark/Station 1 – Bracken Yew (*mire*)’ participants’ attention is drawn to the ‘fertility’ of the landscape, flora and fauna as seen in the bracken and the ewes. ‘Landmark/Station 2 – Wooden Bridge (*transition*)’ uses the metaphor of the water flowing off the fell, under the bridge and out into the lake to prompt a reflection on time, fertility and hope of becoming a biological parent all running out. Crossing the bridge however marks a point of transition and participants walk more deeply into the physical mountain, which, like their circumstance looms dark, steep and intimidating before them. At ‘Landmark/Station 3 – Warnscale Head Bothy (*riven*)’, a series of juxtapositions explore the precarious fragility of fertility and the reality of the fertility treatments *and* how alienating, physically intrusive and distressing undergoing treatment can be. At ‘Landmark/Station 4 – Great Round Howe (*hope*)’ a rock, located in a wide-open boggy area with standing pools of rainwater, that represents the unbounded nature of ‘hoping against hope’ for fertility treatment to be successful and the feelings of desolation when it fails. ‘Landmark/Station 5 – Black Beck Tarn (*waiting*)’ emplaces both the protracted 10-day wait for the results of treatment (a pregnancy test), the uncertainty of

which is reflected in the black depths of the tarn and the hidden oligotrophic and single cellular life forms it supports. It aligns these with the desire of those undergoing treatment to reclaim their body from ‘medical’ intervention and re-gain a sense of self.



Figure iii – Warnscale, ‘Landmark/Station 5 – Black Beck Tarn (*waiting*)’. Oligotrophic and single cellular life forms.

‘Landmark/Station 6 – Innominate Tarn (*heaf*)’ reflects on the ‘liminal’, ‘outside belonging’ and ‘void’ effects of a negative pregnancy test and the questions that outcome raises about what to do, or not do, next – ‘further treatment, donor eggs, nothing, adopt?’. ‘Landmark/Station 7 – Haystacks Summit (*geld*)’ uses the spiny, sharp, rocky hardness of the summit ridge as a metaphor for the hard questions about breaking out of treatment cycles, but it also recognised the need for letting-go and grieving before recovery can happen. ‘Landmark/Station 8 – Summit Tarn (*vitriify*)’ uses images of the frozen tarn and frozen embryos and eggs to raise awareness of the need for a ‘cultural...social...rethink’ around women’s fertility. ‘Landmark/Station 9 – Dubs Hut (*metamorphosis*)’ uses the geological ‘metamorphic’ processes of the rock to highlight the possibility of metamorphosis and transformation. ‘Landmark/Station 10 – Warnscale Beck & Cairns (*landmark*)’ works with the downward gravity and flow of the landscape, water and stone to shift participants’ attention to finding routes ‘off the mountain’ and uses actual pathways as metaphors to identify different life-paths and futures outside of biological motherhood. ‘Landmark/Station 11 – Hawthorn Bower (*heart*)’ reflects on the need for courage and invites participants to think about renewed, but different, hope. ‘Landmark/Station 12 – Solitary Viola (*solitary*)’: reflects feelings of isolation and lack of community; asks questions about identity and

about challenging social norms; sees the possibility for different sorts of ‘families’ and communities. ‘Landmark/Station 13 – Dying Woods (*regeneration*)’ reflects on family-lines ending/dying out, but is attentive to the ‘renewal, resurrection, rebirth’ taking place in landscape and self.

Women writing in the Early Romantic period expressed and ‘gave voice to’ their own lives, often, as I explore later, through the use of metaphor. Writing from female perspectives their work provided a viewpoint on everyday life, and experiences, that were different in form (letter, journals, novels) and subject matter (the domestic, marriage, children, grief, sexual desire and death) to the dominant male ‘voices’ of mainstream culture, art and politics. Many women began to write autobiographically often ‘speaking’ in the first person ‘I’ or through a ‘narrator’ or a ‘character’. Their writing challenged what type of experiences were socially acceptable and normative to write about and through it they achieved a sense of identity, a ‘selfhood’ perhaps, that the transcendent sublime sought to deny them.

The writer Charlotte Smith, writing in the 1790s created, it could be argued, the blueprint for landscape and ‘nature’ writing that was later applied by William Wordsworth and Coleridge *Lyrical Ballads*, and the manifesto for the Early Romantic movement. It is well documented that Smith’s first collection of poetry entitled *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784) greatly influenced Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads*, which were published in 1798 and revised, with an additional prelude, in 1800. In her *Grasmere Journal* Dorothy Wordsworth references William Wordsworth reading Smith’s *Elegiac Sonnets*. The sonnets were influential in form, structure and content which included descriptive renderings of specific landscape and topography, weather, season, people including shepherds, ‘nature’ including birds, flowers and the moon elements which she often harnessed as metaphors for human experience. It could be argued therefore, that Smith’s writing (and the feminine sublime), which I consider can be understood through the concept of the feminine sublime, resides at the heart of ‘nature’ and landscape writing – a form traditionally

associated with, and thought to be defined by, male writers and artists. In *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*, editor Stuart Curran introduces Smith as the writer who ‘shaped patterns of thought and influenced the conventions of style of many of the mainstream poets of her time, particularly William Wordsworth’s whose ‘nature’ writing and poetry evolved directly out of Smith’s’⁸⁵ (Smith, 1993: xix). She was, he argues, ‘the first poet in England whom in retrospect we could call Romantic’; however her fate was to ‘encourage the creativity of other poets and become herself, by the second half of the nineteenth century, largely forgotten’ (Smith, 1993: xix).

Much of Smith’s writing used the device of the first person ‘I’ or a female ‘figure’ who acted as the eyes and ears of the reader. Though not uncommon at the time Smith led the way in autobiographical writing by dramatizing her own life in her poetry. She wrote about her experiences of child loss, poverty and gender inequality. It could be argued that her writing reflected not only her own lived experiences but also lived experiences that might have been recognisable or common to her readership. In doing this, writes the literary historian Jacqueline M. Labbe observes in *Charlotte Smith: Romanticism, Poetry, and the Culture of Gender*, Smith’s ‘figure/s’ ‘make the body visible’ and represents different aspects of herself and/or ‘the selves available to women’ (Labbe, 2003: 3). She argues that ‘Smith does not simply enact or represent the pressures attendant on being a woman writer in the Romantic period she exploits them [...] and writes poetry that relies on her readers seeing and reading her as a woman, in a variety of culturally recognisable roles’ (Labbe, 2003: 3). Using this figure, Smith, suggests Pipkin, ‘embraces the physical forces of the natural world in order to draw from them an expanded sense of selfhood’ (Pipkin, 1998: 610-12). In so doing, she creates a female subjective self-hood that is awake to, and located in, the material reality of her environment *and*, without fear, reveals the hard ‘facts’ and ‘effects’ of everyday existence and experiences from a female perspective.

⁸⁵ It is widely acknowledged that Smith’s *Elegiac Poems* also influenced Dorothy Wordsworth.

The way that Smith and other women writers used autobiography and the employment of the first person 'I' to define a sense of selfhood and to give alternative perspectives and viewpoints on their lived experience parallels not only my own use of autobiography, as discussed later, but also relates to the social and cultural (feminine sublime) aims and intentions of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*. These aims and intention are to: enable women/participants experiencing the missing life-event of biological motherhood to engage with landscape and through it share and find alternative viewpoints on their experiences and circumstance; consider other pathways to, and types of, mothering and parenting; re-image themselves and then act as 'an agent of change' (domestically or in wider society); raise awareness on the subject matter; challenge how society organises around female fertility.

In the performances created for this research project one of my strategies for achieving these aims and intentions was/is my use of the trope of the solitary figure to locate and emplace both 'character' and participant in the landscape and at the heart of the performance. In *The Gathering* this can be seen in my placing of the solitary female figure of The Woman in the landscape. My aim was that in these location she became representative (an embodiment) of the isolating effects of involuntary childlessness and emblematic of the challenges a single person faces in relation to the powerful, and often uncontrollable, environmental and biological forces of the human body, 'nature' and landscape. The figure also became a metaphor for human fertility and infertility, biological- and non-biological motherhood *and* other pathways to, and types of, mothering and parenting. She embodied human-female-animal experiences of in/fertility ranging from pregnancy, motherhood, miscarriage, adoption, and genetic or age-related infertility/barrenness. In the performance, the different locations in the landscape in which I placed the figure of The Woman were deliberately chosen for their epic scale (and geological time-frame) in relation to her 'human' scale (and life-span). For example, at Cwm Llan Slate Quarry, where sharp-edged shards of slate were heaped up in mounds, the solitary figure of The Woman stood dwarfed by the mountainous landscape around her and the distant peak of Snowdon.

Dressed in a woollen coat the colour and shape of which echoed the ‘copper-ruffed’ fleeces of the ewes, above her a black raven hung in the expansive sky and around her flocked the ‘empty’ ewes for which she was a metaphor. Scenographically, I was deliberately drawing on and working with the semiotics landscape-trope of the solitary figure standing in an epic landscape and was anticipating that she became a cypher for participants and that they would ‘view’ the landscape and ‘see’ the ‘story’ of the performance through her eyes.



Figure iv –*The Gathering*, the solitary figure of ‘The Woman’ at Cwm Llan Slate Quarry.
Performer: Ffion Dafis. Photographer: Lizzie Coombes.

In *Warnscale* my use of the solitary figure, ‘I’, is seen in the way in which each participant performs a personal ‘bespoke’ version of the performance and how the book incorporates line drawings of mapping-walk⁸⁶ participants as an ‘any woman’ figure walking or dwelling in the landscape. It can also be seen in my use of the ‘walking’ figure, manifest through the words of Dorothy Wordsworth. In ‘Track – v *I walked*’, the book invites participant to ‘JUST WALK’. Alongside a series of line drawings of solitary figures walking the landscape run all the lines in

⁸⁶ The mapping-walk process is explored in detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals* that begin with the words '*I walked*': '*I walked as long as I could... I walked thro' the town... I walked to the foot of the lake... I walked back resolving to go again in the evening... I walked... I walked to the lake side in the morning... I walked up to the waterfalls... I walked with them...[...]*' (Wordsworth, 1991: 1-7).

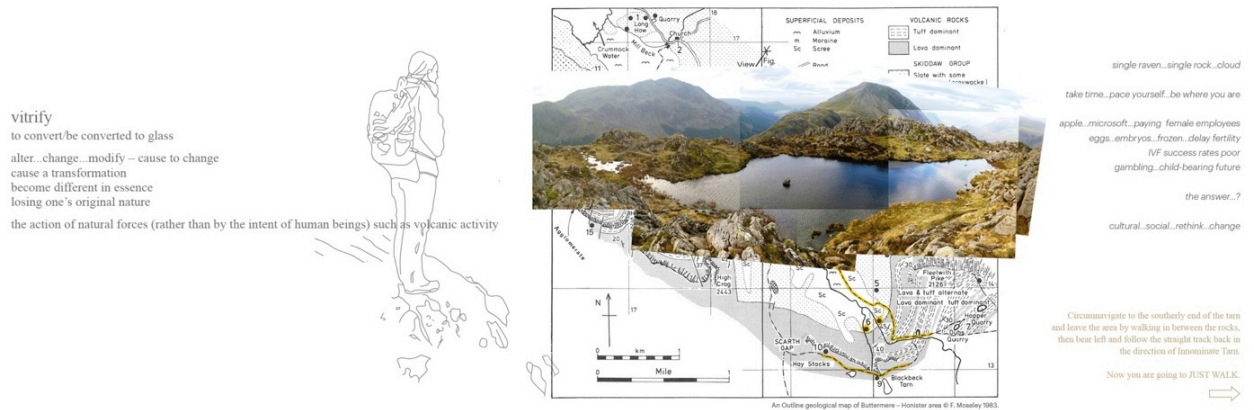


Figure v – *Warnscale*, solitary figure drawn into the landscape at 'Landmark/Station 8 - Summit Tarn (*vitrify*).
Drawn by Louise Ann Wilson.

The opening line '*On thy stupendous summit, rock sublime!*' of Smith's poem *Beachy Head*, published posthumously in 1807, establishes a vastness and sense of epic height and scale reminiscent of the 'transcendent sublime' that is experienced, once again, by a solitary female 'figure'. However, the solitary female figure from whose perspective we are looking, is lying on the '*grassy summit*' and soon notices the '*minute detail*' and '*fantastic shapes*' of the sea creatures whose shells and fossils '*make*' the limestone cliff on which she reclines. Through them she takes us from the present material moment into a contemplation of immeasurable geological time: '*fantastic shapes / Of bivalves, and inwreathed volutes*' (Smith, 1993: 232). Then, pre-empting Darwinian⁸⁷ evolutionary thinking, she asks:

Or did this range of chalky mountains, once
Form a vast bason, where Ocean waves
Swell'd fathomless? What time these fossil shells
(Smith, 1993: 232-233)

⁸⁷ *On Beachy Head* was published two years before Charles Darwin was born (1809), and fifty-one years before "On the Origin of Species" was published in 1859.

The way that Smith locates the ‘female’ figure on the chalky landscape of a cliff means that through the figure she can poetically and scientifically contemplate both human and geological time. This placing of fleeting and epic time in the same frame paralleled my use and placing of the female figure (character or participant) in the metamorphic slate landscapes of Snowdonia and Cumbria in *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*. These ‘placings’ were deliberate and became a means by which to draw attention to: the briefness of a single human life, the diminishing effects of time on human (female) ovarian reserve and fertility, and the way that a family line (name or genetics) can end if the life-event of biological motherhood is ‘missing’. My aim however was not to dwell in the desolation of these time-based material realities and nor is it to deny how they impact people, but to contemplate and measure them next to other less fathomable and less immediate time frames. I did that in order to bring alternative perspectives on the underlying subject matter to bear. I did that with care and empathy in order to point towards ways of viewing that subject matter with a different sense of time and reality. I did that so that, in time, participants might be able re-image different futures and different selves to those that were once, in a past or present time, hoped or planned for.

Gradually, as the poem *Beachy Head* develops, the ‘figure’ merges with the landscape, which through observation and knowledge of it, she has become immersed in. This leads to a multi-sensory engagement, through mind and body, with the material of the physical world and a dematerialising of the physical and a merging with ‘natural’ forces. Smith’s careful and detailed observations of the landscape, as we will see in excerpt from *Beachy Head*, demonstrates ‘scientific’ enquiry that precedes, but alludes to, Darwinian evolutionary principles; knowledge of geology and natural sciences; and a local understanding of the place achieved through time spent in-situ:

Ah! Hills so early loved! In fancy till
I breathe your keen air; and still beheld those wildly spreading views
.... And still observing objects more minute,
Wondering remark the strange and foreign forms
Of sea-shells; with place calcareous soil
Mingled, and seeming of resembling substance.
(Smith, 1993: 233)

In the footnotes she remembers walking in this place long ago ‘Among the crumbling chalk’ where she ‘often found shells, some in a fossil state. ... The appearance of sea-shells so far from the sea excited my surprise, though I knew nothing then of natural history....’ (Smith, 1993: 233). Smith’s poems are known for their botanically informed and observational descriptions of flowers as seen in this excerpt from *Beachy Head*:

...dew fills the silver bindweed’s cups
I love to trace the brooks whose humid banks
Nourish the harebell, and the freckled pagil ...
the wood sorrel, with its light thin leaves,
Heart-shaped, and triply folded; and its root
Creeping like beaded coral...’
(Smith, 1993: 231).

The figurative language that Smith uses in the poem to describe the flowers, the habitats in which they grow and their distinctive features suggests a knowledge and understanding of them and how they grow that comes through studying them in their environment. Indeed the poem describes how she (the narrator who we might suppose to be Smith) remembers how she loved to ‘trace the brooks’ and it seems she moved in and with the flow of the landscapes and the water noticing the flora growing in river banks as she walked. Labbe describes Smith as ‘peripatetic’, and writes that her ‘poetic self is always outdoors, always unhoused’ (Labbe, 2003: 143).

Smiths ‘peripatetic’, observational and materially specific approach (and writing) is of significant to the practice created for this research project because my own creative methodology *and* the way participants experience the performances also involved on-site (site-specific) field-study undertaken through immersive walking, and dwelling, in the landscape from which, and in which, the performances were created and performed.

Smith however was not always in a position to write from time spent outdoors ‘on-site’. The *Elegiac Sonnets* were written in debtor’s prison, where she lived for seven months with her husband, and later, after she had left him she wrote, as described by William Cowper and

referenced by Curran, 'chain'd to her desk like a slave to his oar, with no other means of subsistence for herself and her numerous children' (Curran, 1993: ixi).⁸⁸

From this desk Smith remembered and reimagined the places about which she wrote perhaps, I suggest, re-walking back through them in her mind's eye. Her poems therefore take the manner of a walk as she takes us slowly, looking around as we go, through a landscape, as seen through the eyes and experiences of the 'figures' in her poems who notices, and values, the detail of things around her and in so doing 'creates an experience that 'values the particular' (Labbe, 2003: 144).

Warnscale incorporated a series of 'Viewing Points' overlooking expansive landscape vistas, and invites the use of binoculars to frame and bring distant fells and people walking them 'closer'. For example, in the book at 'View Point i – Warnscale Bottom' a line drawing of the skyline detailing crags, gills, gullies, becks, ridges and tracks serves to invite participants to study the fell more closely through the naked-eye or binoculars. Geological facts add to this reading and combine with Dorothy Wordsworth's words to deepen our perception and help us look *and* listen even more closely '*Every tooth & every edge of Rock was visible... the hill seemed perpendicular from the darkness below it*' (Wordsworth, 1991: 141). At 'View Point iii – Still Point' words from Dorothy Wordsworth resonant of the un-bounded transcendent sublime, suggest participants sit and '*feast upon the prospect...so extensive that the mind is afraid to calculate the bounds*' (Wordsworth, 1991: 147)⁸⁹. However, a line drawing of the view draws attention to the detailed patterns made by walls, rivers, woodland and path. A solitary figure drawn into the scene is attentively listening and looking, the aim is that she, the 'figure', encourages participants to do the same. Words from the mapping-walks offer participants yet another layer and mode of engagement and serve to draw attention to, and point out, certain

⁸⁸ Smith, writes Curran, was born into 'a world of genteel elegance, her youth was lavishly situated between her father's London townhouse and Sussex estates, and indulged with what then passed for a girl's education', A disastrous marriage however, was to have a major impact on her life and her writing, and she is an 'early example' of a woman who, through choice and circumstance, 'sought to support herself by writing', p. ixi.

⁸⁹ This extract is from Dorothy Wordsworth's *Alfoxden Journal*.

landscape features that might resonate as they had for the mapping-walker who had ‘mapped’ her feelings and experiences to this place:

be here...present...in the moment
rain...blown across...stripy curtains
barren...scree...slopes
ghost trees...isolation...loneliness
bent over...dwarfed...finding a way to live

My aim in using a distillation of words from the mapping-walk, line-drawings of the landscape and the human figure and Dorothy Wordsworth’s *Grasmere Journal* layered with maps and factual information about the physical landscape and reproductive biology is to offer participants a variety of modes and means with which to notice, ‘read’ and experience the landscape. Each participant way of noticing, reading and experiencing ascribes these distilled elements with a uniquely personal metaphorical and perhaps narrative meaning in the context of the underlying subject matter that is uniquely personal. By processing the challenges, traumas and sorrows of biological childlessness in this way – through narrative, metaphor and the material – the landscape of the Warnscale fells, as explored in chapter 3, became, for some participants, a much needed place of reflection and transformation.

Locating them in time and space Smith often opened a poem with the date, season and year. Her careful and detailed observations of the landscape and ‘nature’ demonstrated her educated understanding of geology and natural sciences that she combined with a deeply felt embodied-knowledge of the local landscape achieved through time-spent in-situ. In the poem *Flora*, which follows a cycle through the seasons, the reader follows the ‘figure’ who walks through the changing habitats of numerous flowers describing each, in their environment, poetically but with precise observational detail. Smith’s parallel footnotes incorporate definitions from Cowper’s⁹⁰

⁹⁰ William Cowper (1731-1800) had a major influence on 18 Century nature poetry when he began writing about everyday ‘lives’ and ‘scenes’ in a rural landscape and is known to have influenced Dorothy Wordsworth, as discussed by Pamela Woof in *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals* on page 285.

botanical surveys or Linnaean classifications⁹¹, and she combines poetic and botanical description:

... Lichen tough: or bear, as silver bright,
Lunaris's pearly circlet, firm and light.

Footnote:

Lichen. Lichen. Of these many have the form of shield when in fructification.
Lunaria. *Lunaria annua*. Moon wort, usually called Honesty (Smith, 1993: 281).

Many of the poems in Smith's first collection entitled *Elegiac Sonnets* take the form of a walk and were written to instruct the reader to look around and *notice* the detail of their environment as they imaginatively moved through the changing geography, habitat and season of a poem and her writing, as discussed above, comments Labbe 'values the particular' (Labbe, 2003: 143-4). This parallels how both *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* were/are site-specific performances that invite/ed and direct/ed participant to *notice/d* the detail of their environment, take the form of a walk, follow/ed a route deliberately selected for its changing topography, and were created through creative processes that 'valued the particulars' of that landscape.

Writing in the late 1700s, and considered one of the most influential novelists of her time, Ann Radcliffe was known for her pioneering use of the landscape as a 'theatre' of constantly changing images, scenes and topographies into which her stories were plotted and through which her characters journeyed. According to editor E. J. Clery in her introduction to Radcliffe's novel *The Italian* (1797), Radcliffe evolved her semi-fictional, theatrical landscapes from an imaginative montage drawn from 'travel literature, topographical art and her own invention' (Radcliffe, 1981: ix). These imaginings that were also informed by theories of the picturesque and the landscape painting of the painter Claude Lorraine that she contrasted with theories of the transcendent sublime and the landscape paintings of painters such as Salvatore Rosa and Giovanni Battista Piranesi.

⁹¹ Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) in *Systema Naturae* first published in 1753 classified animals and plants through a scientific system of classification called binomial nomenclature or Linnaean Taxonomy.

The storyboarding process through which I evolved the scenography for *The Gathering*⁹² involved a distilling and re-imagining process, similar to Radcliffe's theatricalising and fictionalising process. My process involved me 'cutting up' photographs and sketches of the landscape to which I added archival photos. I then reassembled them to produce fragmented montaged-images that left space for me to 'draw' performers, installations and participants into them.

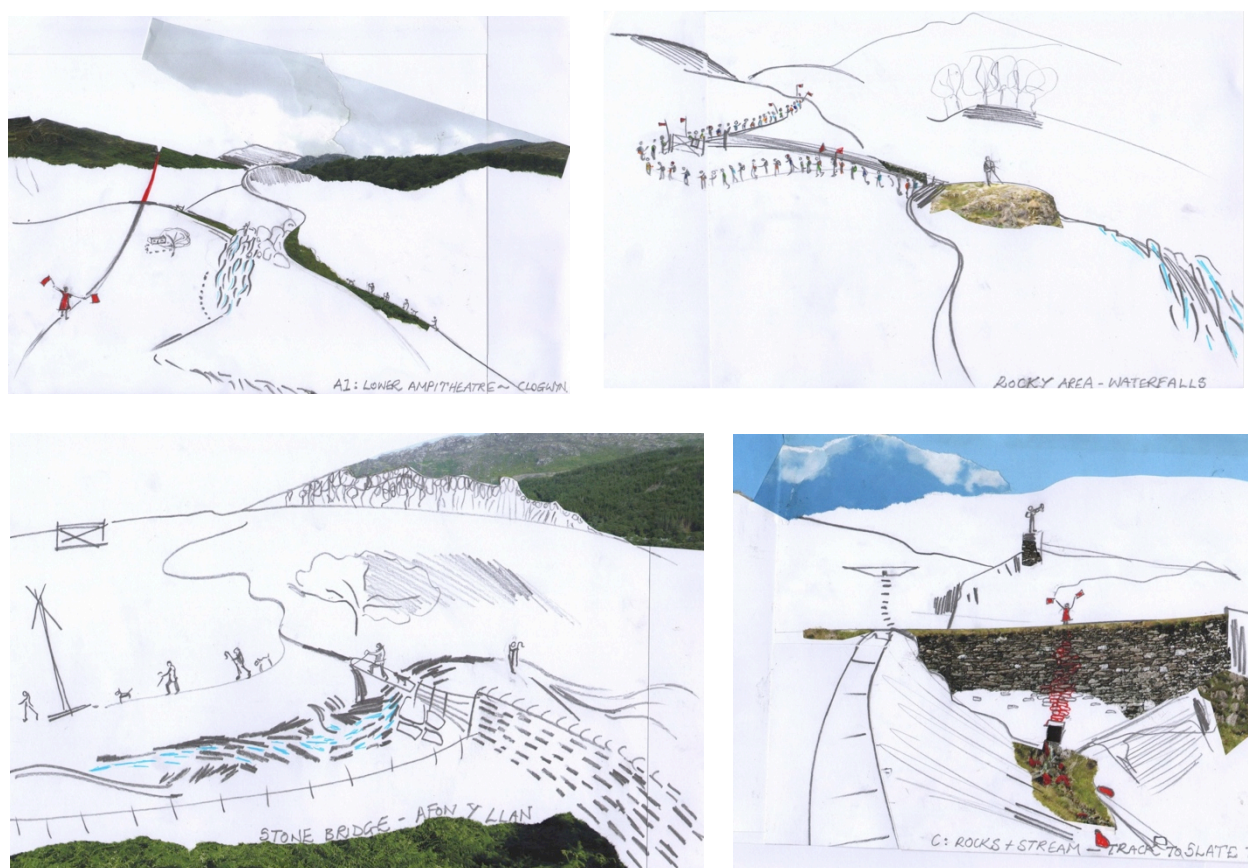


Figure vi – *The Gathering*, storyboards: Lower Amphitheatre (Clogwyn), rocky area by Afon y Llan waterfalls, stone bridge at waterfalls, old tramway track.
Drawn by Louise Ann Wilson.

Working with the material of the place I metaphorically 'drew' the performance (and my scenographic ideas) out of the landscape (its topography, activities, history). Then, working with a montage of materials of the place such as wool, carpet, slate, brass, shepherds, sheep, dogs, historical figures *and* using rules of composition to frame the landscape (scene by scene) I literally 'drew' scenographic and land-inspired images and scenes back into the landscape.

⁹² See supporting material for more examples.

These rules are, like Radcliffe's written compositions and stories, informed by picturesque and the transcendent sublime landscape theories. In addition, I applied my own evolving scenographic principles developed out of theories of the feminine sublime, some of which were influenced by Radcliffe. This can be seen in my use of film, sound, action, performance and installation to reveal and dramatize the hidden, invisible or challenging aspect of the underlying subject matter as explored through the reproductive and life-cycles of the ewes. Only as I work, do I discover how to animate and perform the landscape and where, and how, installations and scenes will be created. This storyboarding process is significant because these scenes and images were site-specific and when realised served to perform, theatricalise and make into art the actual physical landscape, activities and also participants – who became part of the scene. Indeed, in *The Gathering* the visual presence and movement through the landscape of the 200 participants were literally drawn into the storyboards and embedded in the scenography.

In a way that parallels my use of compositional rules and theories relating to landscape, the storyboarding processes and scenographic dramaturgy, design and concept that informed the *Warnscale* was similar to that of *The Gathering*. In addition, the way that the book (and the walk it mediates) uses landscape, performative actions, framing and magnifying devices juxtaposition, metaphor and the female figure reflects the materially specific and located way that *Warnscale*, like *The Gathering*, uses the feminine sublime as a compositional, creative, and transformative tool. In the book through which *Warnscale* is mediated, my fieldwork sketches done in the landscape and the fertility clinics are montaged and layered with maps, texts and photos into carefully composed images to create landmarks/station that become scenes. These scenes only become animated by each individual participant or group of participants who, with the book as guide, 'self-perform' their own bespoke walking-performance. In the book I use a drawing of a solitary female 'figure' or a group of female 'figures'. My aim is that these 'figures', which are only ever seen from behind and act as an 'any woman', served to encourage participant to place themselves in the situation of that 'figure' and through them enter into the walking-performance.

In this way the pages of the book act like a series of storyboards that guide and score the *Warnscale* for the participant.⁹³

Radcliffe's female 'characters', the heroines of her stories, often journey through landscape 'scenes' of ever-changing topography, geology, botany, season, time of day and atmosphere. Perhaps influenced by Gilpin's 'picturesque' writing Radcliffe often framed a view onto the landscape through a carriage window or from within a room.

In *The Gathering*, the way that performance was designed to move participants (alongside characters, shepherds and sheep) through the landscape and different topographies compares to the way that Radcliffe's female 'characters', often journey through landscape 'scenes' that were ever changing.⁹⁴ In *The Gathering* these topographies included deciduous woodland, boggy moorland, glacial valleys, abandoned slate quarries, and lowland pastures. The route that the performance followed and the scenographic interventions and installations it 'visited' as it progressed through the landscape were designed to draw attention to the contours and shape of the fells. Added to this, the physical movement of the participants themselves served to reveal the criss-cross pattern of paths, tracks, walls and the 'lost' remnants of the copper and slate industries. In these different ways the scenography referenced the way in which pilgrimage routes often move circuitously, in and through the landscape, visits 'stations' enroute and, like Radcliffe, *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* also do, uses far off views of destinations to draw the performance, and the participants onwards.

Distinct landscape features such as the high sides of the tramway cutting, the window of the derelict quarry and the steep sided valley of Afon Y Llan waterfalls, were also used to 'frame' a far-off destination on the mountainside or a bird's-eye view down over a valley or to bring focus to a figure/s or a 'scene'. Other scenographic interventions including the movement, the shouts

⁹³ See the website and the *Warnscale* book for details and examples.

⁹⁴ See route map in the supporting information for *The Gathering*.

and whistles of the shepherds as they gathered 200 ewes off the mountain, the sound of brass instruments⁹⁵ all serve to draw attention to, and animate the landscape.



Figure vii – *The Gathering*, ‘Tramway Incline’ (Clogwyn).
Performer: Kate Lawrence. Photographer: Joe Fildes (NTW).

One such use of scenography to draw attention to the scale, history and patterning of the landscape occurred at the near vertical ‘Tramway Incline’, which was carpeted red, to make it visible from miles around. In the performance this incline was ascended, and descended, by the female figure of the ‘Tramway-Walker’ who, over the duration of the performance traversed the 6-mile length of the valley by following the linear route of this abandoned tramway, which was once used to transport slate away from the now derelict quarry at the top of the valley. The ‘Tramway-Walker’s route up the valley, and the red flags she carried, ‘ghosted’ the route of the

⁹⁵ The Deiniolen Band is a traditional slate quarry band rooted in the industrial landscape of Snowdonia. Their brass instruments, made from a composite of copper and nickel which linked them to the copper mines at Hafod Y Llan, were blown by band members in such a way that produced bleat-like notes reminiscent of a ewe calling her lambs that morphed into ‘Cymeric hymns’ once played on the mountain. On September 13th 1892 William Gladstone opened the Watkin Path, which leads to the summit of Snowdon, and made a speech from a boulder now known as the Gladstone Rock on which a plaque describes how ‘The multitudes sang Cymeric hymns’. Archival research showed these hymns included Bryn Calfaria, Llanfair and Rhys-Y-Groes, which were the tunes played by the Deiniolen Band during *The Gathering*.

man who in 1885, writes local historian Gwynant Roberts in the book entitled *Nantgwynant and its Traditions*, ‘with a red flag walked in front [of the slate train] to warn that a fire horse was coming’ (Roberts, 2010: 83). Her ascent and descent of the ‘Tramway Incline’ on a rope and pulley system also referenced the weight system which was used to lower and raise the slate trucks; my choice of carpet as a material referenced the coarse ‘kempy’ wool that protects the Welsh Mountain breed of sheep from the driving rain and harsh conditions of the mountain and is used to make carpets.

The way that that site-specific ‘Tramway Incline’ installations performed and animated the landscape was reminiscent of Radcliffe’s use of the landscape as a ‘theatre’ of constantly changing images, scenes and topographies into which her stories were plotted and through which her characters journeyed.⁹⁶ In *The Gathering* performers and participants alike journeyed through the landscape (and the farm buildings). The images and scenes they experienced were carefully plotted and designed – through scenographic dramaturgy – to animate the landscape and the farm. This theatrical-animation however was constructed in the context of the ‘story’ of the ewes, which became a theatrical metaphor for human fertility and infertility, biological and non-biological motherhood and other pathways to, and types of, mothering and parenting. My aim with all the installations was that they should be read through the frame of the underlying subject matter, as I explore more fully later. Thus, the figure of the ‘Tramway-Walker’ ascending and descending the red-carpeted incline, took on a meaning and resonance that without that frame would be lost. A narrative however is not imposed. Instead, like the ‘figure’ in the landscape used by Radcliffe, the ‘Tramway Walker’ is symbolic. She does not speak but her walking serves to draw attention to scars and tracks reddened with carpet like an open wound flowing with blood. Scars that would otherwise be obscured by time and hidden in plain sight, like the human narratives of infertility underscoring *The Gathering* and revealed through the ewes.

⁹⁶ There is a link between the site-specific installations in *The Gathering* such as the ‘Tramway Incline’ and the site-specific installation works of a number of the ‘land-artists’ discussed earlier in this thesis.

Typically, however, Radcliffe's 'character's' view of an overwhelming transcendent sublime scene would be re-framed from a less overwhelming perspective that allowed the character to literally, and metaphorically, 'review' the landscape and themselves in it. In this way, Radcliffe used landscape as a metaphor to reflect the circumstance of her female characters and bring about changes to their mood, state of mind and perspective on their situation. In *A Feminist Introduction to Romanticism* Elizabeth Fay argues that through her writing Radcliffe brings us face to face with the 'dread of bodily decay and other horrific aspects of the natural world' (Fay, 1998: 127). The following extract from *The Italian* describes the gloomy, wild forest of thickly-woven oak and gigantic chestnut trees through which Ellena, the novel's central character travels, 'imprisoned' in a carriage:

... Lofty pinnacles ... rose over the shores, and cliffs of naked marble of such gigantic proportions, that they were awful even at a distance, obtruded themselves far into the waves, breasting their eternal fury. ... as far as the eye could reach appeared pointed mountains, darkened with forest, rising ridge over ridge in many successions. Ellena, as she surveyed this wild scenery, felt as if she was going into eternal banishment from society (Radcliffe, 1981: 208-209).

Later, when looking out of the window of the small chamber which is '*suspended, as in the air, above vast, vertical precipices of granite that she looks down on with a dreadful pleasure*' she sees the horizon and the landscape spread below and to her left a '*dreadful pass*' which her carriage had previously traversed, and a river:

rolled with impetuous force, fretting and foaming amidst the dark rocks descends [with] thundering strength into the abyss, throwing its misty clouds of spray high in the air, and seeming to claim the sole empire of this solitary wild (Radcliffe, 1981: 89-90 ; 63).

From here Ellena can view the full scale of the mountains rising above the waterfalls which from below she had experienced as '*more terrific than the pencil could describe, or language can express*' but which, from this vantage-point, are now diminished, their '*thunder murmured at a distance*'. This refreshed view physically elevated her mind and gave her '*strength to bear, with equanimity, the persecutions that might await her... and the sufferings of this world!*' (Radcliffe, 1981: 90). Radcliffe's literal use of the mind elevating, and strength giving capacity of a 'refreshed view' view informed the practice created for this research project.

For example, in *Warnscale* the circuitous route of the performance incorporates views of locations and tracks along which, and towards which, participants are progressing. It also includes views of locations we had already visited and paths we had trodden, seen from a different vantage point. The performance uses ascents and descents, flow and gravity, glimpses of distant summits as well as interiors and invites us to notice the effort of walking and the distance travelled both literally and metaphorically. Referencing how the picturesque frames the landscape aesthetics, *Warnscale* incorporates a series of viewing stations that frame wide and expansive views. For example, the bothy at ‘Landmark/Station 3 – Warnscale Head Bothy’ has a small window that frames, in a picturesque manner, the view back down to the lake and across the valley up which participants have just walked.



Figure viii – Warnscale, ‘Landmark/Station 3 – Warnscale Head Bothy (riven)’.

When entering the bothy sounds from outside are hushed and the window frames an unexpected view back down the valley. The theatricality of this framed view is a surprise and is reminiscent of the viewing station at Rydal Hall, in which the shutters of the summerhouse are opened to reveal the framed and carefully constructed ‘picturesque’ waterfall scene (see pages 109-110).

In *Warnscale*, the framed view afforded by Warnscale Head Bothy was carefully constructed, or at least, I conjecture, carefully selected, by the quarry men who built the bothy in 1750 (see the

book *Warnscale* for details). In *Warnscale*, the bothy becomes place of shelter. Distilled

mapping-walk words describe the bothy as a:

*A room with a view
A place of stories
Alone...solitude...safety
landscape...framed...picture...perspective...lake*

In this place of shelter, participants are invited to sit at the window and look at the view that it frames looking back down over the steep and winding path that they ascended in order to reach the bothy. This framing becomes a means by which participants are literally and metaphorically invited to view, and review, their 'walk (physical and emotional) to this place'. They are also invited to 'write an entry in the journal relating to the experience of childlessness'. In this invitation, the walking-performance frames the view through the window in the context of the underlying subject matter. In the book images and photographs taken in IVF clinics are combined with factual texts recounting: the words spoken by the surgeon and embryologist during egg-collection surgery; the 25-day IVF process (drugs, injections, scans, egg-collection, embryo grading and transfers followed 16-days of waiting for pregnancy test results); how the number of IVF cycles increases year on year yet success rates remain constant at around 25%. In addition, words from mapping-walks relating to the challenges of infertility and fertility treatment:

*urine...weeing...nun....fertility drugs
ultrasound...drugs...hormones...injections
egg-collection...surgery...walking down hill
more difficult than expected
shock...body and emotion

managing body's processes in nature
asking a lot of your body
belief in something working...rolling a dice...chance

man-made room....egg-collection room...science-made babies*

My aim of this re-viewing process of both the landscape through the window frame *and* the frame of the underlying subject matter is that *Warnscale* participants might gain an altered perspective of their circumstance, one that might enable them to begin a process of re-imagining

and transformation. This re-imaging and transformative process is reminiscent of Radcliffe's heroine, Ellena, who re-views the landscape from a different vantage point giving her the '*strength to bear*' and, using her mind, 'elevate' herself beyond her circumstance. This feminine sublime mind 'elevating' process is also reminiscent of the way that Barbauld uses the female 'figures' to engage and expand the reader's imagination in such a way that is mind awakening and thus transformative.

After the bothy, the walking-performance enters Phase Two (*waxing*). Participants walk onwards and upwards 'into the mountain', and, I suggest, more deeply into the transformative process.

In summary, the feminine sublime aspects of the writing of Dorothy Wordsworth's contemporaries that informed the six scenographic principles, which were then applied to *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* were as follows: the writer-activists Mary Wollstonecraft and Anna Letitia Aikin (later Barbauld) arguing that women were as capable as men of accessing the mind-awakening transcendent sublime (denied them by Burke and Kant); Charlotte Smith's pioneering use of autobiography, the solitary female figure and subjective 'I', and whose landscape poetry provided the blueprint for William, Coleridge, and the unaccredited Dorothy's *Lyrical Ballads*; Ann Radcliffe's use of the landscape as a 'theatre' of constantly changing images, scenes and topographies; Mary Tighe's development of poetic female 'figures' which did not seek to 'escape' the destructive effects of landscape but faced them. Also influential was the way in which many of these women writers engaged with local knowledge and cultural history and their observations of the 'natural world' were often underpinned with science. They often: used time frames ranging from the geological to the human, and found new and different viewpoints and perspectives in the landscape and their metaphorical use of the physical and destructive forces and processes of landscape to express the self as subject. Their descriptive use of ever-changing visually and aurally evocative 'living' pictures through which their characters move

and their use of composition, perspectives, sound and movement, frame a 'view' or 'scene' or focus attention that shifts from the boundless to the small.

The writing and approaches to landscape of these women writers of the Early Romantic period were important to this practice-as-research project because of their creative use of the elements of landscape, environmental forces and the human (female) 'figure' to express, explore and give-voice to their own personal lives and circumstances, in such a way that was materially specific *and* transformative. It was the materially specific *and* transformative outcomes that their writing achieved which, in my view, means it can be understood through the framework of the feminine sublime. Most crucially perhaps, their creative use of the elements of landscape, environmental forces and the human (female) 'figure' (actual and metaphorical) as a means through which to give voice to their non-mainstream lives and experiences paralleled my own creative use of these same creative elements. I, like them, used these elements, in order to express and transform the socially isolating and liminal effects of the 'missing' life-event of biological motherhood *and* give voice to women experiencing it, who can find themselves on the peripheries of society and culture. Thus, Wollstonecraft, Barbauld, Smith, Radcliffe and Tighe offered me a language, a form of expression and a way of viewing the 'world' that firstly paralleled and then enabled me to develop my own scenographic-led processes and a series of six scenographic principles. These six scenographic principles I applied to the practice created for this research project in order to find out if, and then how, socially engaged scenography in site-specific performance could achieve feminine sublime (transformative) outcomes.

However, the writer whose transformative, feminine sublime approach to landscape most informed these six scenographic principles and the socially engaged scenographic-led practice created for this research project, was Dorothy Wordsworth. Thus, I will now walk in the feminine sublime footsteps of Dorothy Wordsworth, demonstrating as I do so how she

influenced and informed these six principles and how I applied them in *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*.

Walking in the Feminine Sublime Footsteps of Dorothy Wordsworth

‘through the sublime artists can refigure the familiar’

Landscape and Western Art, Malcolm Andrews (Andrews, 1999: 129).

Dorothy Wordsworth’s *Grasmere Journals* show her immense ability to observe visually and bodily and then translate her observations into ‘images’ made with words. Indeed, William Wordsworth ‘singles out’ Dorothy Wordsworth’s ‘exquisite regard for common things’ and Coleridge, in a letter written to his publisher in 1797⁹⁷, described how her ‘eye is watchful in [its] minutest observation of nature’ (Coleridge, 1797). In the chapter entitled ‘William Wordsworth’ in *Recollections of The Lakes and The Lake Poets*, the poet Thomas De Quincey remarked on the ‘bewitching effect of her writing’ which captured ‘something that struck her eye, in the clouds, or in colouring, or in accidents of light and shade, of form of combinations of form’ (De Quincey, 2013: 207).

Her ‘image-making’ though, was not only full of sights but also of sound and noise, tactile sensation and kinetic bodily feeling and an awareness of changes in temperature, weather, season, emotion and mood. They were dynamic, non-static and overflowing with different sorts of motion: Dorothy’s own motion as she moves in and through the landscape, walking for hours and miles, skidding on ice, crawling on all fours, lying in ditches, swinging on gates, and scrambling up glens searching for fungi or a waterfall, or the motion of the landscape as it moves, shifts and changes around her, as clouds gather and streak the sky, as drenching rain falls, flowers spring forth, trees stir in the wind or fall in a storm, as the moon waxes, crows fly

⁹⁷ Letter to publisher Joseph Cottle written whilst at Stowey 3-17 July 1797.

over head, and the darkness of night falls. In her essay entitle ‘Dorothy Wordsworth’ in the book the *Common Reader (Second Series)* the author Virginia Woolf encapsulates the way that Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal writing ‘unfurls in the mind and opens up a whole landscape before us, that the plain statement proves to be aimed so directly at the object that if we look exactly along the line that it points we shall see precisely what she saw’ (Woolf, 1944: 127).

For Dorothy Wordsworth there appeared to be a process of healing in noticing the broken, decayed or ruined. In her walking and writing, she dealt with bodily processes of change and transformation and renewal. Pain and suffering were part of this. The vibrancy of her writing and the way that it reveals her aliveness to the ever-changing, mutating, weathering, growing and dying landscape and the environment around her demonstrates, I suggest, that she was highly attuned and sensitive to her surroundings – human, non-human, physical and transient. It seems that walking enabled her to get close-up to and immersed in her surrounding and see and feel her experienced of it before processing these experiences in her journals. Walking, as I will explore, also seemed to be restorative, regenerative, creative and therapeutic act that Dorothy Wordsworth ‘performed’ in a particular landscape and social context. Through walking, she entered the landscape and through the landscape, she connected to herself.

Principle 1: Autobiography and Giving a Voice to Those on the Edges of Mainstream Dialogues

Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal ‘accounts’ of ‘nature’ struggling to survive were, I suggest, metaphors for herself, and perhaps for other men and women she saw struggling to survive. Often she identifies, and perhaps identified with solitary flowers, such as the columbine she described seeing on Tuesday 1st June 1802:

The Columbine growing upon the Rocks, here & there a solitary plant – sheltered & shaded by the tufts * & bowers of trees it is graceful slender creature, a female seeking retirement & growing freest & most graceful where it is most alone. I observed that the more shaded plants were always the tallest (Wordsworth, 1991: 103).

Warnscale works with a similar botanical metaphor and reflects the way in which this performance. For example, ‘Landmark/Station 12 – Solitary Viola (*solitary*)’ participants are invited to notice the violas growing in the gaps between the stones they are walking in and amongst. Dorothy Wordsworth’s words draw their attention to the solitary nature of these flowers ‘struggling but surviving in cradles in rocks’. But, one solitary viola, and then another, begins to make a ‘family’.

The Gathering, engaged earth and biological scientific processes, ranging from botany and geology to human and animal ageing and reproductive processes. These brought different sorts of ‘struggles’ to survive into the same frame.

The way in which Dorothy Wordsworth *encountered* and *noticed* the ‘common-place’ enabled her to see afresh ‘everyday’ objects, people and experiences that were ordinarily overlooked, or on the edges of social and cultural discourses. Her writing witnessed and gave voice to other women she met whilst walking the fells: hill-guides, vagrants, beggars and widows like the Cockermouth traveller, the soldier’s wife, and the woman and her half-starved children described in her journals:

Friday 10th Oct [1800]. She is very healthy, travels over the mountains these thirty years. She does not mind the storms if she can keep her goods dry (Wordsworth, 1991: 25).

Saturday 28th November [1801]. ... we met a soldier & his wife, he with a child in his arms, she carrying a bundle & his gun (Wordsworth, 1991: 43).

Tuesday 4th May [1802]. On the Rays we met a woman with 2 little girls one in her arms the other about 4 years old walking by her side, a pretty little thing, but half starved (Wordsworth, 1991: 95).

The way that Dorothy Wordsworth’s writing witnessed and gave voice to other women walking the fells relates to the way in which Haraway’s concept of ‘situated knowledge’ harnesses and recognises voices and viewpoints that are different to the established ones.

In my early forties, due to circumstantial factors it became increasingly likely that I would not become a biological parent. I wanted to find a way to properly come to terms with my situation

and then to redefine myself beyond that ‘missing’ identity and the ‘lack’ of being something – a biological mother. I also became aware that growing numbers of women were in a comparable situation and I wanted to not only give-voice to my experience but also create a performance that enabled them to give a voice to theirs.

Society offers no rituals or rites of passage through which women, who have ‘missed’ the life-event of biological motherhood, can be acknowledged and come to terms with that absence. Biological childlessness, its reasons and consequences sit outside mainstream dialogues and discourses and often remains under acknowledged. This can, for some people, myself included, lead to the sense loss and an uncertain identity that manifests in isolation and an on-going state of liminality. *Warnscale* offers imaginative and creative ways through which participants can begin to move through, and transform, this liminality.

I explore the biographical aspect of the practice and the underlying subject matter more fully in chapter 3.

Principle 2: Walking Beyond Knowledge – Merging with and Dwelling in Landscape

Dorothy Wordsworth walked familiar local routes and long-distances that took her miles *from* home or *to* home. Indeed her arrival into Grasmere with William Wordsworth to set up a new home at Town End, which she described as ‘our pilgrimage together’, entailed a three-day, 80-mile walk from Yorkshire and established, as Sally Bushell in *William Wordsworth: Poetry, People, Place* comments, walking as a ‘major symbolic activity for them...’ (Bainbridge, 2015). Alone, or with others, Dorothy Wordsworth walked day *and* night, in all seasons and in challenging and strenuous weather conditions, which often, as this description of returning home from Keswick on a December morning reveals, meant getting soaked to the skin:

We struggled with wind & often rested as we went along – A hail shower met us before we reached the Tarn & the way was often difficult over the snow but at the Tarn the view

closed in – we saw nothing but mists & snow at first the ice on the Tarn below us, cracked & split yet without water, a dull grey white: we lost our path & could see the Tarn no longer. ... we were afraid of being bewildered in the mist till the Darkness should overtake us ... There was no footmark upon the snow either of man or beast. [...] it was dark before we reached home. [...] My inside was sore with the cold (Wordsworth, 1991: 54-55).

In *Warnscale* the effort and duration of the walk, over uneven, steep and rough terrain, to reach the summit becomes a metaphor for the arduousness of IVF treatment, the uncertainty of biological childlessness and the need for awareness and social change around fertility.

At 'Landmark /Station 7 – Haystack Summit (geld)', participants are invited 'consider the arduous physical and emotional effort it has taken to reach this place (literally and metaphorically), and the cycles we might be trapped in'. Words from Dorothy Wordsworth frame the participants arrival '*on the summit [...] which we gained after much toil...*' and serve to focus our attention to the atmosphere and feel of the location, then to the far view and finally to what is close to hand. The book then directs attention to the subject matter with texts that reflect on how 'There are well-trodden routes into IVF' yet the 'routes out of treatment are more obscure'. Participants are invited to '*listen* to our breathing and heart beat' and 'consider the arduous physical and emotional effort it has taken to reach this place (literally and metaphorically), and the cycles we might be trapped in'.

In the context of her time, walking outside the bounds of a garden or an enclosed space was unusual not only for women, but for the middle and upper classes in general. Dorothy Wordsworth's walking challenged social norms. It can be considered not just as radical but transgressive – and as such was socially and culturally political. This is one of reasons that she provided inspiration for this socially engaged scenographic-led research project concerned with issues in relation to women's lived experiences. *Warnscale* also uses walking as a performance form through which to reveal and challenge social norms around biological 'motherhood'. That there is seemingly a growing need for art projects such as *Warnscale* reflects, I suggest, how the norms around biological motherhood signify that those experiencing involuntary biological childlessness find themselves on the edges of society and not fulfilling the social norm of

motherhood.⁹⁸ It does this by making direct reference to the social norms around biological ‘motherhood’ through its use of reflective texts. An example of how biologically childless women find themselves on the fringes of society was reflected in a talk given by Jody Day, the founder of Gateway Women, at the South Bank Centre’s *Women of the World Festival* (2014) entitled ‘Creating a Meaningful and Fulfilling Life Without Children’. In her presentation, Day described how she found ‘the burden of her own inner world as someone who had not become a mother was so intolerable there were days that I really wasn’t interested in carrying on with [life]’ (Day, 2014). She also talked about the ‘shame’ and ‘social prejudices’ associated with childlessness, citing how Julia Gillard, the Australian Prime Minister was vilified in the press and accused of being ‘deliberately barren’ (Day, 2014).

‘Landmark/Station 1 – Bracken Yew (*mire*)’ a patterned image of yellow rusting bracken is layered with an extract from Gender and Women’s Studies scholar Charis M. Thomas’s writing in the chapter entitled ‘Fertile Ground: Feminists Theorize Infertility’ in the book *Infertility around the Globe: New Thinking on Childlessness, Gender, and Reproductive Technologies*. Thomas’s words read ‘Involuntary childlessness is recognised as one of the greatest forms of unhappiness and loss a woman might endure. The connection between motherhood and women’s identity can intensify this suffering’ (Thomas, 2002: 52). Then at ‘Landmark/Station 12 – Solitary Violas (*solitary*)’ a reflective text by the sociologist Karen Throsby extracted from the book *When IVF Fails: Feminism, Infertility and the Negotiation of Normality* reads ‘Normative femininity is bound up with motherhood... those ‘outside belonging’ can experience a sense of solitary isolation’ (Throsby, 2004: 171).

When Dorothy Wordsworth’s was living at Alfoxden, her aunt had written ‘in horror’, remarks Elizabeth Gunn in *A Passion for the Particular: Dorothy Wordsworth A Portrait*, to ‘denounce her habit of “rambling about the country on foot” and worse “travelling not by coach [but] hiking

⁹⁸ Chapter 3 discusses the growing number of artists who are making work that explore the subject matter of infertility and involuntary childlessness.

across England with no fitter protector than her brother” (Gunn, 1981: 1). Her walking and desire to be in the open air was considered by both her neighbours (particularly when she was living at Alfoxden) and her contemporaries to be ‘off-beat and eccentric’, particularly for a woman, writes Frances Wilson in *The Ballad of Dorothy Wordsworth* (Wilson, 2008: 196). Writing retrospectively in *Recollections of the Lake Poets* (1838), one of her contemporaries, Thomas De Quincey, remembered how when he met her in 1807, her weathered face was ‘of Egyptian Brown, rarely seen in a woman of English birth’ (Gunn, 1981: 2-3, De Quincey, 1961: 97). She was described, writes Gunn, as looking and behaving like a vagabond and her appearance being like a ‘beggar or a pedlar...not a woman of her class’ (Gunn, 1981: 3). Perhaps however, Dorothy Wordsworth would not have appeared so strange to the many working, homeless or travelling women that she met once in Grasmere and where she regularly walked the lanes and fells. She was proud of her walking and wrote in an entry on Sunday 19th May 1800 that whilst walking round the lake to Ambleside that evening:

... I was overtaken by 2 Cumberland people on the other side of Rydale who complimented me upon my walking. They were going to sell cloth, & odd things which they make themselves in Hawkshead (Wordsworth, 1991: 3).

Dorothy Wordsworth was an adventurous walker and in order to explore would quite literally ‘beat new tracks’ to find a new route or path, a waterfall, a specific plant, or a viewing place that offered an alternative scene or perspective. In *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* Solnit reflects on the character of Elizabeth Bennett in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. Bennett, having taken a solitary three-mile walk across fields, arrived at her destination with muddied skirts, like Dorothy Wordsworth before her, was considered to be ‘walking beyond the bounds of propriety for her class’ (Solnit, 2001: 98). She had, writes Solnit, ‘turned the idyll of the gentle walk into something utilitarian through which she was:

free to think: walking articulates both physical and mental freedom. ... Walking then has become an expressive medium; socially and spatially the widest latitude available to women contained within social strictures it exerts body and imagination. Through walking consciousness and landscape have merged, so Elizabeth has literally gone beyond her own knowledge into new possibilities (Solnit, 2001: 101).

Bennett's *and* Wordsworth's walking relates to the aims of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* to enable participants to transition beyond their 'knowledge' and imagine different future possibilities.

Warnscale invites participants to walk beyond their 'knowledge' and imagine different life paths and perspectives. Walking for Dorothy Wordsworth, and *Warnscale* participants, became a way of seeing, feeling and processing emotions. It becomes a restorative, regenerative, creative and therapeutic act 'performed' in a particular landscape and social context.

Dorothy Wordsworth physically and imaginatively became absorbed in and affected by her environment. Through her bodily responses to it and her feelings for it, she lost a sense of time and space, above and below, and inside and outside:

Sunday 20th June 1802. We lay upon the sloping Turf. Earth & sky were so lovely that they melted our hearts. The sky to the north was of chastened yet rich yellow fading into pale blue & streaked & scattered over with steady islands of purple melting away into shades of pink. It made my heart almost feel like a vision to me (Wordsworth, 1991: 112).

This merging with landscape reflects Fay's suggestion that the feminine sublime allows for 'an unstable and discontinuous relation between the self and the world in which there is at once an engagement with the material of the world, the body, and "nature" and, at the same time, a merging with 'natural' forces' (Fay, 1998: 10-11).

Dorothy Wordsworth's journals reveal that in solitude she often walked, rambled, sauntered, clambered, crawled and sat. Physical activity and the speed and rhythm of her walking and dwelling gave her time alone and enabled her, it seems, to think, feel and notice in such a way that was fully absorbing and which, as this excerpt reveals, she did not want to have interrupted:

Monday 12th [April 1802]. Thomas Wilkinson came with me to Barton, & questioned me like a catechizer all the way, every question was like the snapping of a little thread about my heart I was so full of thoughts of my half-read letter & other things. I was glad when

he left me. Then I had time to look at the moon while I was thinking over my own thoughts (Wordsworth, 1991: 84).

It seems, from studying her journals, that the process of walking and being in a rural landscape gave Dorothy Wordsworth time and space to think through and process complex feelings and emotions in such a way, I suggest, that was therapeutic. Writers such as Gunn suggest that she ‘looked and wrote to find release and exercise control’ and I speculated that she might have had a physical and emotional need not only to walk but also to articulate the material experience of the walk and the thoughts, feelings and multi-sensory ‘images’ they bring. (Gunn, 1981: 5). This extract from her journal written on Thursday 18 March 1802 shows the need she has of walking, whatever the weather, season or time of day, and this creative relationship between walking, thinking, feeling, which I suggest, could be interpreted as therapeutic:

A very fine morning the Sun shone but it was far colder than yesterday. [...] ... – so I ate a Beef-steak thinking it would strengthen me so it did, & I went off – I had a very pleasant walk. (Wordsworth, 1991: 80).

Writing about later that same day, she described how ‘it was a grave evening – there was something in the air that compelled me to serious thought – the hills were large, closed in by the sky. ... the moon was overcast’ (Wordsworth, 1991: 80-81). The overcast moon and hills closed in by sky seem, I suggest, to echo and/or inspire her own interior – ‘closed in’ – feeling and thinking process. She goes to write that the play of light on Ryedale Lake and the surrounding fells evokes a sense that this everyday and familiar place ‘must be a holy place’ (Wordsworth, 1991: 81). This response can be understood as a feminine sublime, materially located transformative experience of the landscape. Dorothy Wordsworth then describes how she:

had many many exquisite feelings when I sat this lowly Building in the waters among dark & lofty hills, with that bright soft light upon it – it made me more than half a poet (Wordsworth, 1991: 81).

As I discuss later in Chapter 3 of this thesis, the way that Dorothy Wordsworth’s feelings and thoughts were echoed and inspired by the landscape informed the mapping-walk aims and methodology deployed to create *Warnscale*. Participants both responded to and emplaced, through drawing maps, writing texts and talking with me, their thoughts and feelings about the

landscape, which became a metaphor for and a way of sharing their experiences of biological childhood. After the walk participant then drew word and image maps of these responses, a process that was, I suggest, akin to Dorothy Wordsworth's post-walk journal writing. These mapping and writing processes can be understood as feminine sublime processes that for her and mapping-walkers alike (as I evidence later) can be considered to be creative, therapeutic and transformative.

Dorothy Wordsworth's intense physical and metaphysical engagement with the 'external' physical landscape brought her a profound and visceral connection to the material of her physical body and her psychological interior landscape. In the BBC Radio 4 broadcast entitled *The Living Mountain* the author Robert MacFarlane comments that for 'Dorothy Wordsworth walking was a special kind of seeing' adding that 'when we walk we imagine our own interior landscape', which he described as a 'heart-land or in-land' (MacFarlane, 2014).

The way in which Dorothy Wordsworth used word-made images to capture and translate her multi-sensory experiences of landscape compares, I suggest, with the way that *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* used scenographic-made images to capture my, and my collaborators', multi-sensory experiences of landscape and to translate these to participants. These complex 'capturings' can, I suggest, be understood through philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theory of phenomenology, outlined in *Phenomenology of Perception*, in which he considers the way that:

encounters with the world are made up from multiple perspectives in terms of what is seen, heard, felt, sensed, imagined, anticipated and remembered... these various perspectives inform one another (Merleau-Ponty, 1974: vii-ix).

If, when walking, we 'imagine our own interior landscape' I suggest that when, in a site-specific walking-performance, participants walk with a theme or underlying subject matter in mind, they can re-configure and re-image the landscape (exterior and interior) and through that re-imagining affect their relationship to the subject matter. The deep level of embodied, sensory and

intellectual immersion into the landscape (and subject matter) that participants experienced occurred, I suggest, because *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* were also created through a scenographic process that involved immersive field-work that *encountered* and *noticed* daily, seasonal and annual processes and patterns in the landscape that were in sympathy with the subject matter. Crucially, all my three-tiers of research related back to the subject matter. That was the lens through which I *looked*, and through which participants would also look.

Sometimes Dorothy Wordsworth walked in order to talk with friends. In *Recollections of the Lake Poets* Thomas De Quincy noted that those she walked with felt heard, and he described her as an ‘exceedingly sympathetic, always profound walking’ companion who ‘made all that one could tell her, and that one could describe [...] reverberate’ through the answering and echoing movement of her sympathising attention (Levin, 1987: 237, De Quincey, 1961). Dorothy Wordsworth’s companionable walking and ability to hear and give space to others to talk, share, feel heard and be reflected back to themselves was important with regard to both the making and performing of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* and their use of walking and talking as a creative, therapeutic, conversational and performative tool.

The performances can be understood through the frame of therapeutic landscapes and mobilities. Doughty recognises that this sort of ‘shared movement can produce supportive social spaces that are experienced as restorative’ (Doughty, 2013: 140). In *The Gathering*, the 4-hour duration of the performance *actively* engaged participants and required them to make a commitment of time and effort. The multi-sensory scenographic-dramaturgy asked them to *take notice* within the subject matter *context*, and the communality of the performance asked them to walk with each other and make *connections* through *sociability* and interaction brought about by shared walking, talking and exchange, as evidenced later in this thesis.

This meant that the performance was experienced not just visually but through multi-sensory artistic processes that involved participants walking into the landscape of the performance and ‘seeing’ and ‘experiencing’ farming activities, people, animals and the landscape of Hafod y Llan farm through the lens of the underlying subject matter and thus afresh, or differently, as evidenced later in this thesis.

Warnscale also uses walking and talking as a creative, therapeutic, conversational and performative tool. It allows for companionable, or side-by-side, walking, sharing, talking and being alone in the landscape, with others. For one participant the performance showed her that she is ‘not alone, and it was good to be able to both literally and metaphorically walk the same path’ alongside others.

This reflects how landscape is often experienced in an embodied and multi-sensory way often through walking, meandering, and dwelling in it.

Principle 3: Site-Specific Knowledge – Located/Lay, Expert and Social

The located nature of Dorothy Wordsworth’s observations can be understood through a literal application of Donna Haraway’s term ‘modest witness’ which argues for a viewpoint that is located, ‘a view from somewhere’ and one that ‘provides an account’. The application of this term enabled me to consider how Dorothy Wordsworth’s observations were ‘located’ and how she was a ‘modest witness’, as seen in her unobtrusive observations. Her journals were part creative writing, part diary, part documentation and part field-study. Most entries began with the date and time, the weather, her location and her activity. Her outdoor study reflected the fashion for artists and writers to work ‘en plein air’ which, writes Suzanne Stewart in *The Eye It Cannot Choose But See: Dorothy Wordsworth, John Constable, and the Plein-Air Sketch*, ‘became a rigorous almost scientific form of fieldwork earnestly pursued in order to study first-hand the

diversity of natural phenomena and the ephemeral appearances of landscape' (Stewart, 2011: 408). It also reflected Gilpin's, Constable's and later Ruskin's observational and scientific focus on a 'narrower pictorial scope: the tree trunk, a single flower, a river bank, a cloud, or accidental affects of light and shape' (Stewart, 2011: 408). Dorothy Wordsworth's writing, observes Stewart, was 'intensely visual', noting the 'precision' with which she 'records natural phenomena' and how she 'consistently blends scientific brevity with artistic sensitivity [which] arises from patient, prolonged experiences in the open air' and through 'careful observance' (Stewart, 2011: 414-415). Adding that 'unlike other poets' such as Coleridge or William Wordsworth, 'her aim was to do so without ideas, personality, or metaphysical speculation' but, in order to 'keep the visible scene' (Stewart, 2011: 417, Woof, 1988: 61).⁹⁹

Literary scholar William Snyder in *Mother Nature's Other Natures: Landscape in Women's Writing, 1770–1830* describes how Dorothy Wordsworth, 'like a painter, experimented with perspective whilst she presents Nature as a source of sensuous enjoyment, a kind of open air gallery, usually creating brief depictions that draw out the uniqueness of objects or perceptions' (Snyder, 2001: 146). In *William And Dorothy Wordsworth: All in Each Other*, scholar Lucy Newlands describes how her writing 'experiments with vivid notational prose style, catching the transitory effects of weather and light...', and was:

a repository of distilled images, precisely located in time and place and associated with feeling, ... a commonplace book... . Some are written in the present tense, suggesting they were outdoor sketches, others review the day's happenings. Dorothy Wordsworth's language is notable for its plainness of diction, its sensual clarity, and its eye-on-the-object naturalism (Newlands, 2013: 54).

Dorothy Wordsworth, writes historian and scholar Pamela Woof in *Dorothy Wordsworth, Writer*, 'sets down simply and faithfully what she sees' however, the way she notices the common place and values 'ordinary things' makes us, the reader, 'see the world with fresh eyes' (Woof, 1988: 20 ; 37).

⁹⁹ Stewart references Pamela Woof 's comments on Dorothy Wordsworth in the book entitled *Dorothy Wordsworth, Writer*.

Dorothy Wordsworth also studied the skilled lay knowledge and working lives of local people such as shepherds '*salving sheep*' or labourers working in the fields:

Friday 16th April (Good Friday) 1802. The people were at work ploughing, harrowing & sowing – Lasses spreading dung, a dogs barking now & then, cocks crowing, birds twittering [...]. We then went on, passed two sisters at work, *they first passed us*, one with two pitch forks in her hand. The other had a spade. We had some talk with them (Wordsworth, 1991: 87).

In *The Gathering*, in order to investigate the landscape, I walked old sheep tracks, shepherds' paths and miners' and quarry men's routes. Gradually overtime these routes and the environment worked their way into my visual and body-memory and I began to know the landscape in detail: what track led where; which tracks the sheep habitually followed and where they congregated; where the effort of walking became harder as the path rose more steeply; where a view closed down or suddenly opened up. Research into the industrial copper mining and slate quarrying history of Hafod y Llan helped me *notice* and make sense of the scars, remnants and ruins visible in the landscape and provided rich layers of 'secondary' site-research. I also walked with the shepherds and their dogs in order to gather sheep and to see, and experience, the landscape through their eyes. Eyes that *noticed* that the season was changing, the ewes were empty and the cloud would clear by eleven. Their *looking* revealed how the topography was carved and scarred by processes of time, weather, people, animal and industry. Following-in their footsteps to 'gather' the flock, I trod paths that led into the deeper 'animal' part of the mountain. I *noticed* the skill with which they worked and *observed* how, leaning on their crook, they stood on a promontory, always in the same place, whistling, calling and shouting instructions to their dogs or else lay in the grass or perched on a rock 'waiting' for the sheep to collect. Joining them through *physical* immersion and assertion brought me to a different, embodied, understanding of the landscape.

In *The Prelude* (1805) William Wordsworth's poem *Snowdon* recounted the night walk he took, guided by a shepherd with his dog, 'to see the sun / Rise, from the top of Snowdon':

[...] We came, and roused the shepherd who attends

The adventurous stranger's steps, a trusty guide;
Then, cheered by short refreshment, sallied forth. [...]

The shepherd's lurcher, who, among the crags,
Had to his joy unearthed a hedgehog, teased
His coiled-up prey with barkings turbulent. [...]

(Wordsworth, 1995: 511-12 ; lines 8-10, 22-24)

The shepherds who were my guides and the calls and whistles with which they communicated with their dogs, the paths they trod and systems with which they 'swept' the mountain of sheep would, I am sure, have been recognisable to the shepherd who guided William Wordsworth. Like their sheep, these generations of men and women have an embodied knowledge and memory of the landscape described in Welsh as 'cynffin'. This knowledge relates to the embodied environmental, landscape and self-knowledge Dorothy Wordsworth acquired through her daily walking and journal-making. When creating *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*, my aim was that through the walking-performances (and their carefully constructed use of scenographic-dramaturgy) participants would, like Dorothy Wordsworth (and the shepherds), *see*, and *pay attention* to the landscape and landscape processes, from the perspective of the people with an imitate knowledge of the place.

Close-up looking, the product of which Dorothy Wordsworth logged (in words) in her journals, echoes my intentions with *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* that participants *see*, and *pay attention* to the landscape through the eyes of those with intimate and expert knowledge of the place. However, in *The Gathering* (and *Warnscale*) additional frames, provided by the scenographic dramaturgy, invited participant to *see* and *pay attention* to the landscape, farmers, and ewes in relation to the underlying subject matter and the with the aims of re-imaging and transforming their experiences of biological childlessness, in/fertility and the missing life-event of biological mother hood. With that in mind, when creating both performances my 'field work' and the way I captured 'raw' material in sketchbooks, notebooks, photographs, film and sound recordings is, I suggest, comparable to the way that Dorothy Wordsworth used her journals as a tool to 'provide an account' of her experiences in landscape.

The 3-year long period of immersive fieldwork at Hafod y Llan undertaken to create *The Gathering* enabled me to spend time with the shepherds who shared their embodied lay/expert knowledge of the farm and animal processes. I observed their activities closely and recorded, or ‘made an account of’ them, through drawing, note-taking, photography, film, and sound recording. In this way I ‘captured’ day-to-day, monthly, seasonal and annual activities that only happen once in an annual cycle.

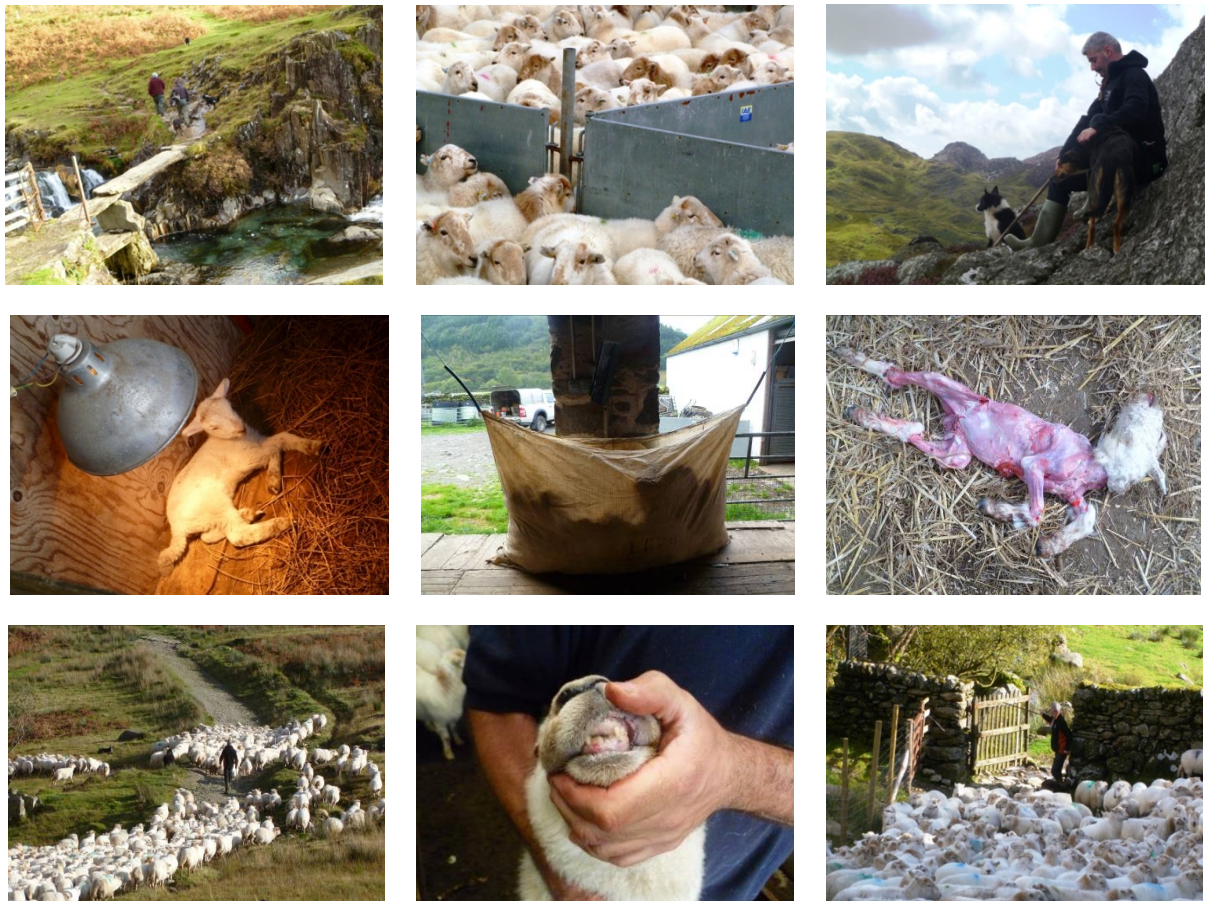


Figure ix – *The Gathering*, ‘Primary/Site’ (Landscape/Earth-science) Research at Hafod y Llan farm.
Photographer: Louise Ann Wilson.

On the mountain, I ‘captured’ streams bubbling, rivers flowing, dogs barking, crows calling, ice melting, water seeping, shepherds gathering, sheep converging through gates or leaping a river. Whilst at the farm centre I ‘captured’ pregnant ewes being scanned by ultra-sound and sprayed for pregnancy, ewes suckling an adopted lamb and motherless lambs crying for milk. The shepherds showed me how they: cut the lamb’s ears with splits and notches that identified them as belonging to the Snowdon flock; checked the hinds, wool, bone structure, feet, udders and

teeth of the ewes; and, in July, sheared 1,000 sheep and through a series of tucks, rolled each fleece into a ball of raw wool.

My particular focus however, was on processes that related to the reproductive and intergenerational life cycles of the ewes and their flock. I *noticed* and logged: (i) Cycles of cynefin, the inter-generational memory and knowledge of the mountain passed on from mother to lamb. (ii) Cycles within cycles such as ‘Estrus’ (ovulation) and gestation cycles. (iii) Breeding cycles such as tupping, scanning, birthing and weaning. (iv) Annual cycle of activities such as gathering, marking, shepherding, sorting, injecting, shearing, selling and slaughtering. I *noticed* and logged how cycles were broken by still-births and barren ewes were marked as ‘empty’. I also *noticed* cycles of repair such as the adoption of lambs by surrogate ewes. Many of these activities were ‘performed’ in the final production either live or through film incorporated into an installation and they provided material from which writing, choreography, installations and scenography was evolved.

The Gathering was further informed by research with historians *and* local residents with inter-generational memories of the farm and archival research that showed the farm, its people and their activities. This in depth research ensured that the performance was site-specific, borne out of Hafod y Llan and performable there and nowhere else and is, I argue, the central and defining feature of site-specific performance. To that end *The Gathering* layered human stories of the place with the farming activities and worked with the landscape and the farm buildings in ways that drew on their past and present usage. This embedded the performance – and the underlying subject matter that it sought to explore – in the place making sure not to impose that underlying subject matter onto the place, people or animals. It did this by working with the ‘real’ narrative of the ewes cycles, the stories of the men and women of the farm past and present, and the material fabric: buildings, fields, machinery, people and animal of the landscapes of the farm.

When creating *Warnscale* my making methodology involved an 18-month long period during which I undertook three-tiers of interrelated and interwoven research. ‘Primary/site’ research into the landscape around Warnscale Head Bothy involved monthly site visits during which I: sketched, photographed and recorded my observations; made note of the bodily and environmental effects of seasonal changes; searched for routes and distinctive landmark features; held meetings and conversations with experts who had lay or specialist knowledge of the farming, geology, botany, land management and slate mining. My aim was that participants would, like Dorothy Wordsworth, *see* the landscape and landscape processes, from the perspective of these people. ‘Secondary/subject’ research involved: observational work in fertility clinics that incorporated drawing, sound recording and photographing of the embryologists working processes; studies of human reproduction charts, maps, drawings and graphs; consultations with fertility specialists and sociologists. ‘Tertiary/social’ research involved a series of mapping-walks with women experiencing biological childlessness-by-circumstance and, as explored more fully in Chapter 3, reflected the development of my performance-making methodology and my aim that subject matter, landscape, reproductive science, walking and participant were integrated.

Dorothy Wordsworth’s ‘power’, writes Gunn, was to ‘*see* a leaf, not to ask its meaning, not to ask why is the world as it is, but simply to look at a leaf or at life and find this sufficient – extraordinary, ordinary, meaningful in itself’ (Gunn, 1981: 4). Her unembellished ‘objective, clear and distilled’ way of looking at and describing landscape, people and animals means she sees things, writes Gunn, ‘all for themselves’ (Gunn, 1981: 4).

As a practitioner who works in landscape and seeks to notice and record the detail of it ‘for what it is’, I respond to and feel a kindred understanding for the way in which Dorothy Wordsworth attempts to honour what is in front of her and record it accurately and scientifically. In doing this she gives the object being observed its own space. Rather than imposing meaning on it, she

leaves space for the reader to ‘see’ the thing she is describing (in words) and perhaps, if moved to, make meaning. She is careful, writes Gunn, to ‘minimize words and feelings’ in her descriptions and in so doing leaves ‘us to make what we can’ of what she is describing (Gunn, 1981: 4). Woof also comments on Dorothy Wordsworth’s ability to ‘see into the life of things’ but points out how her writing did not always present a complete picture but ‘fragments and miniature scenes’ thereby leaving them unfixed. The life, writes Woof, ‘is in the impression’ (Woof, 1988: 39 ; 37).

However, there is a contradiction here because Dorothy Wordsworth also projects her feeling onto landscape, ‘reading’ and framing it through the lens of her emotions as well as the aesthetics of her time. Similarly, whilst *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* both resist explaining or prescribing an exact meaning, the scenographic-dramaturgy does nonetheless encourage meaning to be made by choosing and framing key aspects of the landscape in the context of the subject matter. This process serves to leave space for participants to draw on life-experiences, imagination and feelings in order to derive connections that are unique to them. Like Wordsworth’s word-made images the scenography often does this through a series of juxtapositions that place fragments of material, not ordinarily placed in close proximity. This process liberates the separate components from ‘ordinary’ meaning so that new/different meaning can be discovered. For example, in *The Gathering* the ‘scenes’ performed by The Woman were situated in locations carefully selected for their topography and physical or emotional resonance. They incorporated materials and objects (all found of site) such as rolled fleeces of wool, a cream and a black woollen coat, an empty suitcase, a heavy rock taken from the riverbed and the ewes themselves. Each installation represented one of three ‘modes’, *filling*, *emptying* and *grieving*, that related to a different aspect of in/fertility or stages in the annual reproductive cycle.

At 'Hafod y Llan Uchaf', The Woman was 'filling' the derelict cottage with rolled up fleeces of wool until it is overflowing, symbolising fertility? Desire for a child? Pregnancy? Each fleece an ovum? An embryo? A foetus? She gently and inwardly sang *'The womb's warm room / where the lamb grows in its cradle' . // In the blood-lit cave / life becomes lamb, / limbs budding in the warm dark // a force unstoppable / as the river / in the mountain's womb'*. This shepherd's summer dwelling, chosen because it represented family past and present, the future and hope, a home once built but now lost, symbolised the 'mode' of 'filling' and represented pregnancy and the desire for a child.

At Afon Llan waterfalls, The Woman's coat, clothes and boots were neatly folded and sat on the riverbank. Wearing a pale coloured slip, she was stranded on a rock in the middle of the churning water. Around her fleeces of wool unravelled and spilled into the water which flowed past and away. The 'mode' of this location, echoed in the flow of the water and the downward gravity of its force, was 'emptying'. What was this we see? A miscarriage? A stillbirth? A suicide? Grief? Just audible above the rage of the water she sang: *'Is this birth, or death? / How can I lick this corpse to life, // ... // It is mine, this death in birth?'*

At 'Le Ty Hafod y Llan', the 'Old Farm House', once lived in by generations of shepherds and their families but now falling into dereliction, the mode was 'grieving' and symbolised age related in/fertility. This scene was based on the story of Lily Williams, an elderly widow, having to leave Hafod y Llan forever. Inside the house photos show the once neat living room with chairs, rag rug, polished fireplace and brass candlesticks on the mantelpiece. Now that room was empty and the fireplace broken. Rolls of woollen fleece covered the floor and mounded up into the corners. The Woman, standing amongst them, wore a 'black' coat, which echoed the black mark given to the empty ewes. At her feet was a suitcase. Like the 'draft' ewes being sold at market, she was leaving the mountain, the farm and the house, never to return. In a lamenting voice, full of grief she sang:

*The womb clenches like a heart
against the void as they wait
weighted, for a journey’.*

*Branded barren. Empty.
Hollow on the holy hill,
without foetus, without future.*

*She must leave the mountain,
the end of her line,
the last cord cut’.*



Figure x – *The Gathering*, Le Ty Hafod y Llan’, the ‘Old Farm House’.
Performer: Ffion Dafis. Photographer: Lizzie Coombes.

In *Warnscale*, meaning can be drawn from the juxtaposition and layering of geological, historical and botanical data and images (drawings, maps and photos) *with* bio-medical and in/fertility information (factual and reflective). A word associated with that place that describes both the landscape and the human condition takes metaphorical significance. For example, at ‘Landmark/Station 3 – Warnscale Head Bothy’ the word ‘*riven*’: ‘to rend or tear apart; to cleave or split asunder; to become split; break or distress the spirit’ takes on multiple meanings. One participant said the ‘definitions of words, e.g. riven, wait etc. [...] made [her] think differently

about their common usage and identify with other meanings that I don't usually consider' (Warnscale participant, LE).

As well as the physical landscape, Dorothy Wordsworth also made 'an account' of the meetings she had with people who were ordinarily overlooked or on the edges of social and cultural discourses. She spoke with, studied and listened to local people and those she met whilst out walking. These included a soldier with his wife and child, the letter carrier, a ferry boatman and his companion, an old man with many children, a little girl from Coniston, a tall beggar woman, a woman and children from Whitehaven, a widow with good clothes and an old soldier whose family were dead in Jamaica.¹⁰⁰ She notes in detail how they looked, dressed, moved and what they were doing and wrote verbatim what they said and how they said it. My use of archival material, photographs, stories and anecdotes parallel Dorothy Wordsworth's observations of people and their activities. What people wear and look like, the manner and action with which perform activities, move, sit or stand and the words or sounds they use informed the scenographic-dramaturgy of the performance but also the design, choreography, writing and sound or music composition. My reason for doing this was to ensure that the performance and the underlying subject matter that I wanted to explore when creating *The Gathering* was not imposed into the landscape of Hafod y Llan farm but that all the elements of the performance were site-specifically borne from the place in which it was created and performed.

In *The Gathering*, for example, the actions of the shepherds at work informed the choreography and their words and activities informed the writing. The Williams family, who farmed at Hafod y Llan for many generations and whose stories spoke of powerful bonds between them, the farm and the landscape informed the casting of the 'characters' and their 'costumes'. A series of photos from the farm archive were mounted on fence posts and installed, in the place where they were once taken, in the landscape and on the farm were held up and shown by the children form

¹⁰⁰ This list draws from the Index pages (312-313) of Pamela Woof's *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals*.

the local Bedgellert Primary school had the effect of bringing the past to the present, collapsing time and ‘ghosting’ into the present moment buildings, people and activities from the past. I did this in order to reveal the layers of history and knowledge held with the farm and the landscape. This knowledge was, for many decades, passed on through the generations and parallels, I suggest, that way the ewes at Hafod y Llan pass the knowledge of the landscape to their lambs through the process of ‘cynefin’. My choice to invite the local primary school children, many who are from farming families, to hold and show participants the archive photographs deliberately brought together those to whom the future ‘knowledge’ of the landscape (and sheep farming) might be entrusted, with the past.

My decision to reveal and work with layers of history, family and memory also explored the underlying subject matter and pointed to family bloodlines ending. Lily Williams whose family farmed at Hafod y Llan for many generations, but who had to leave the farm, never to return, when it was sold, inspired the figure of The Woman. Her black coat and the heavy weight she carried reflected the black mark that the empty ewes were given and the ‘weight’ of infertility, biological childlessness, and the ending of family blood lines, histories and stories.

Principle 4: Observational Looking – Finding Alternative Viewpoints

Dorothy Wordsworth’s close observational study was underpinned by knowledge learnt from botanical reference books and surveys. Some of her journal entries show her testing her knowledge by naming, listing and describing the seasonal trees, plants and flowers. An entry written on 14 May 1800 suggests how the slow, immersive nature of her walking enabled her to notice and record a variety of flowers, the way they grow, the habitats they grow in and their smell:

The wood rich in flowers. A beautiful, palish yellow flower, that looked thick round & double, & smelt very sweet – I suppose it was a ranunculus – Crowfoot, the grassy-leaved Rabbit-toothed white flower, strawberries, Geranium – scentless violet, anemone

two kinds, orchises, primroses. The hackberry very beautiful as a low shrub. The crab coming out (Wordsworth, 1991: 1).

In order to notice and experience these flowers, many of which are small and grow in shady hidden corners, in such great detail, she must have been taking her time and walking slowly and deliberately, perhaps crouching to seek them out or to get a closer look.

Dorothy Wordsworth's ability to look closely can also be seen in her written account, in the form of a letter, of an excursion to the summit of Scafell Pike, published by her biographer Ernest De Selincourt in *Dorothy Wordsworth: A Biography*. This excursion in 1818 afforded her a view of the landscape, which few men other than shepherds and guides, and even fewer women, would have experienced. Her account reveals that initially her attention was to the landscape stretching into the far distance but soon shifts to the sensory and visual effects of the fast changing weather and then to the close-up detail of the flowers, plants and stones that are near to hand.

On the summit of the Pike which we gained after much toil... The stillness seemed to be not of this world. [...] the den of Ennerdale at our feet – a gulf immeasurable ... and the Sea beyond... the air changed to cold, and we saw the tiny vapours swelled with mighty masses of cloud which came boiling over the mountains... huge blocks & stones which cover the summit... like Skeletons or bones of the earth not wanted at the creation, & there left to be covered with never-dying lichens, which the clouds and dews nourish; and adorn with clouds of vivid and exquisite beauty, and endless variety. No gems or flowers can surpass in colouring the beauty of some of these masses of stone which no human eye beholds, except the shepherd or traveller be led thither by curiosity; and how seldom must this happen (De Sélincourt, 1933: 367).

The way that Dorothy Wordsworth literally changed her perspective and physical viewpoint by lying down to look at or listen to trees, light, birds, water and sheep from an alternative angle brought a more acute and deep-felt engagement:

Thursday 29th April 1802. William and I lay in the trench under the fence – he with his eyes shut & listening to the waterfalls & the Birds. There was no one waterfall above another – it was a sound of waters in the air – the voice of the air. [...]. As I lay down on the grass, I observed the glittering silver line on the ridges of the Back of the sheep. Owing to their situation respecting the Sun – which made them look beautiful but with something of strangeness, like animals of another kind – as if belonging to a more splendid world (Wordsworth, 1991: 92-93).

Warnscale works directly with an applied use of Dorothy Wordsworth's embodied mode of noticing and merging with landscape which engages the participants in different ways of seeing and feeling the landscape and themselves in it. In the book selected extracts from the *Grasmere*

Journals frame the performance and invite multi-sensory modes of walking and dwelling that are visual, sonic, haptic, emotional, intellectual and kinetic. These give participants a variety of means by which to physically and imaginatively enter the landscape and the performance and literally and metaphorically seek out *new* ways of *looking* and viewing that *may* lead to *new* ways of thinking and ‘being’.

A series of actions, also informed by Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals, invite participants to find alternative perspectives through sitting and lying down or looking closely at an object through a geology eyeglass. Using journal extracts, *Warnscale* also invites similar multi-sensory modes of walking and dwelling that give participants a variety of ways in which to physically and imaginatively enter the landscape and literally and metaphorically seek out *new* ways of *looking* and viewing that *may* lead to *new* ways of thinking about and finding alternative perspectives on the underlying subject matter.



Figure xi – *Warnscale*, geology eyeglass and bracken.
Photographer Lizzie Coombes.

For example, at ‘Landmark/Station 4 – Great Round Howe (*hope*)’ participants are invited to dwell in, and contemplate, the landscape. The book picks up on Dorothy Wordsworth’s words, ‘*sate down up a rock seat...feasting with the silence... lingering long looking into the vale*’¹⁰¹, by inviting participants to ‘find a lichen-covered boulder to sit on... contemplate the vales, pools and expansive sky [and] use the geology lens to look at the mosses and lichen growing symbiotically on the rock on which they are sitting’. A line drawing of an embryologist working at a magnifying glass sits next to information about the landscape.

Another example can be found at ‘Landmark/Station 5 – Black Beck Tarn (*wait*)’. Dorothy Wordsworth’s words encourage participants to become absorbed in landscape by listening to it and watching the play of light, and wind on the tarn: ‘*We amused ourselves for a long time in watching the breezes...brushing the surface...growing more delicate... thinner... paler... until they died away*’ (Wordsworth, 1991: 61). Then, participants are invited to ‘step into the water and feel the sensation of it, listen to the rhythm of its movement, climb the rocky outcrop and change [their] perspective’. My aim is that by framing the landscape so that it can be re-viewed in the context of the underlying subject matter, it becomes a place of metaphor, reflection and transition.

Principle 5: Valuing the Everyday – Wonderment and Defamiliarisation

The ‘transformative’ capacity of Dorothy Wordsworth’s feminine sublime approach to landscape comes, I suggest, from her aliveness to her environment and the way she could *see* and *find* the feminine sublime – a form of ‘wonderment’ – in the human and non-human material of the everyday. The sun glittering on the wool of a sheep, the light moving over water, the movement of the planets or a birch tree in the wind:

Tuesday 24th [November 1801]. ... at the distance perhaps of 50 yards from our favourite Birch tree it was yielding to the gusty wind with all its tender twigs, the sun shone upon it

¹⁰¹ Extract from *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals*, pages 60-61.

& it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower – it was a tree in shape with stem & branches but it was like a Spirit of the water – The sun went in & it resumed its purplish appearance [...]. The other birch trees that were near it looked bright & cheerful – but it was a Creature by its own self among them (Wordsworth, 1991: 40).

This feminine sublime ‘wonderment’ serves to ‘refigure’ the familiar. It parallels, I suggest, William Wordsworth’s ‘spot in time’ and Woolf’s ‘moments of being’. It can also be understood through the concept of ‘defamiliarisation’, an artistic technique, writes the *New World Encyclopaedia*, of seeing ‘common things in an unfamiliar or strange way in order to enhance perception of the familiar’ (newworldencyclopedia, 2008). The term ‘defamiliarisation’ or ‘estrangement’ literally means ‘making it strange’ and was first used in 1917 by the Russian literary theorist and formalist Viktor Shklovskii. In a chapter entitled *Art as Technique*¹⁰², Shklovskii discusses how art (literature), through a process of ‘pricking the conscience’, defamiliarises objects that otherwise, due to ‘habitualisation’, we no longer *see* as unique (Lemon, 1965: 12 ; 13). His theory explores the different ways in which artistic processes and techniques bring about ‘defamiliarisation’ in order to stimulate fresh perception. These include: ‘seeing things out of their normal context’; making things appear ‘strange and wonderful’; describing an object as if ‘seeing it for the first time’ (Lemon, 1965: 13). He also describes a process of ‘psychological parallelism’ where, for example, ‘harmony is described in a disharmonious context’, the purpose of which is to ‘transfer the usual perception of an object into the sphere of new perception’ (Lemon, 1965: 21). This is similar to the way in which the visually led-scenographic performances created for this research project found wonderment in the materiality and material processes of the landscape and the body, and how this wonderment, which I describe as feminine sublime, became a tool with which to alter a participant’s perception of those things, which became revelatory. The transformative effects of this process of looking is expressed by Maaïke Bleeker in *Visuality in Theatre: The Locus Of Looking* who writes ‘seeing appears to alter the thing seen and to transform the one seeing’ (Bleeker, 2008: 2).

¹⁰² *Art as Technique* forms the first chapter in Shklovskii’s *Theory of Prose* published in 1925.

In *The Gathering* the shepherds sheared, sorted and checked the ewes ready for selling. This activity which, combined with films of other out-of-season activities such as lambing and scanning, brought the material reality of the ewes' processes up-close to participants. One scene, in the semi-darkness of the 'Lambing Barn', worked explicitly with the feminine sublime, wonderment and defamiliarisation. As the description below shows, it did this by showing a film Arwyn Owen, the farm manager, adopting a lamb to a surrogate mother-ewe. This is an activity that is commonplace at Hafod y Llan Farm but rarely seen to those outside of the farming community. Making this process 'visible' revealed the skill of the shepherd and showed in close-up detail the skinning and dressing process. The film was installed in an installation in the Lambing Barn that was designed scenographically to be reminiscent of a church and altar. The feminine sublime was found in the way the scenography made familiar an unfamiliar and rarely seen but commonplace activity, which, for those unused to witnessing it might be challenging to view. The aim of the scenographic (feminine sublime) frame given to the adopting film by the church altar installation in the Lambing Barn was to make the skinning and adopting activity beautiful *and* wonderful. However, having once made familiar the unfamiliar my intention was that this scenographic 'frame' would then serve to defamiliarise the skinning and adopting 'scene' because the scene was not being experienced in isolation but in the context of all the scenes that has come before and of the underlying subject matter. This context afforded the installation 'other' layers of meaning and resonance in relation to in/fertility and different sorts of mothering including adoption. The following is a description of the the Lambing Barn adoption scene:

The floor of the barn was covered in a layer of sweet-smelling hay. The length of the space and apex of the roof is reminiscent of a church. Gaps in the wooden walls filtered beams of sunlight and the murmurs of suckling lambs and swallows recorded here in the spring could be heard. At the far end of the barn three empty wool sacks were suspended from a beam. Beneath each was a sheep-shearing bench on which lambing related objects (milking bottles, gloves, a knife) were

placed, as if on an altar. On the sacks, a triptych of film showed a shepherd taking the corpse of a dead lamb away from its mother-ewe. He then inserted a knife into its woollen coat and through a series of cuts peeled the fleece away from the dead lambs pink sinewy-body. The tongue of the skinned lamb lolled out of its open mouth and the marble-like lines of blood vessels on the inside of the freshly skinned fleece were strangely beautiful. Then, the shepherd scooped up a live orphaned-lamb and, dressing it like a child who was being put into a woollen jumper, pulled the newly-skinned fleece over its back legs, front legs, and head. Once dressed the lamb is placed in with the grieving mother-ewe who recognised the smell of her own dead-lamb held in fleece this 'new' lamb now wears. Then the ewe licked her 'new' lamb. Finally, with the help of the shepherd who gently but firmly guided the lamb to the mother-ewe's milk-full udders, it suckled. Within half an hour, they had accepted each other and the adoption was complete.

As discussed more fully later, the re-imaging of material in the Lambing Barn scene through complex inter-connected processes of familiarisation, defamiliarisation and wonderment, in the context of the whole, sits at the heart of the feminine sublime scenographic process of transformation. The way that the Lambing Barn scene re-contextualised and juxtaposed material in such a way that defamiliarised and layered it with meaning in relation to the underlying subject matter could be seen in other 'scenes' that evolved out of my primary research. The way that I observed and filmed how the ewes, having being 'tupped' in November, were scanned for pregnancy during the second week in February, 3 months into their 5-month gestation. An ultrasound camera showed a grey-pixelated image of the foetus inside the womb and the ewe was coloured-marked to show that she was carrying a single foetus, twins or triplets. A black coloured mark showed an 'empty' or barren ewe, which was then, put 'back on the mountain'. I edited these films into a triptych, which in the performance was projected onto two peat-cutting shovels, and a rusted metal drum hanging from a beam in a stable. Beneath each object was a milking stool on which sat the skull of a ram, with curled horns.

Warnscale found wonderment in the materiality and material processes of the landscape and the body in order to alter a participant's perception of those things, in such a way that became revelatory, when viewed in the relation to the underlying subject matter. It did this by revealing 'interior' processes that are ordinarily 'invisible' or rarely seen in close-up and invites participants to do the same.

Responding to the research on site and in fertility clinics *Warnscale* worked directly with ways and scales of looking, which informed the scenography and the design of the book, which is packaged with a geology hand lens and invites participants to walk with binocular. These ways of looking included: A window frames a view in the manner of a picturesque. The powerful microscopes used by: embryologists to grade human oocytes, sperm and embryos and the womb lining (endometrium) 'thickening' in preparation for the implantation of an oocyte then 'emptying' when it hasn't; by environmental biologists to study the micro fauna of a tarn; the geology lens used in the field to study: A geological lens reveals the detail of a volcanic rock and the structure of the lichen growing on it or the sori on the underside of a fern leaf; binoculars used by walkers to bring the distant landscape closer. In the book, photographs and images make visible these various life forms and processes that would otherwise remain unseen *or* invisible to the naked eye. What these ways of looking do not reveal however, is the longing for a child. However when layered with text, action and image they do reveal that longing.

In the book, photographs and images make visible these various life forms and processes that would otherwise remain unseen *or* invisible to the naked eye. The circular view-finder of a microscope and a geology lens is echoed in, and informed the decision to use a series of thirteen waxing and waning 'moon-cuts' to frame each landmark/station. The naming of these frames as 'moon-cuts' also reflects Dorothy Wordsworth evocative writing about the moon (not included in the book), the association with lunar and human menstrual cycles monthly and how they mark time, hope and loss. These moon-cut serve to focuses attention to the photos of a landscape

feature that sits on the page beneath and compare, I suggest, to ‘spots in time’ or a ‘moment of being’ and act as triggers that make metaphorical-associations. What these different ways of looking do not reveal however, is the longing for a child. However when layered with text, action and image they do reveal that longing.

Principle 6: Walking, Landscape and Environmental Forces – Metaphor for Self

The way that Dorothy Wordsworth recorded places using their ‘real’ names: Churn Milk Force, Helm Crag and Loughrigg Tarn or their ‘folk’ names: White Moss or Brothers’ Wood, also located and situated her writing and observations. Along with her companions (she had a close circle of friends and fellow poets in Grasmere), she named ‘ordinary’ landscape features and objects such as: Sara’s Gate, John’s Grove, Lane upon the Turf and Mary’[s] Point¹⁰³. This process gave those features deeper significance. These locations marked places where memorable incidents had taken place, favourite walking routes, sitting places or viewing places (or stations), such as the one described by Dorothy Wordsworth in this excerpt from her journal:

Friday 16th April [1802] Good Friday. ... delighted with what I saw – the water under the boughs of the bare old trees, the simplicity of the mountains & the exquisite beauty of the path. [...] – I hung over the gate, & thought I could have stayed for ever (Wordsworth, 1991: 86-87).

This naming process caused, writes Bainbridge, these places to become ‘personal landmarks in the landscape’ (Bainbridge, 2015). Choosing a location, as this excerpt from a letter by William Wordsworth written to Mary Hutchinson on the 29 April 1801 and included in *The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, 1787-1805*, had to be made by the person for whom and about whom it was being named, and once chosen it was marked with a bespoke ‘cypher’:

You will recollect that there is a gate just across the road, directly opposite the firgrove, this gate was always a favourite station of ours: we love it far more now on Saras [sic] account. You know it commands a beautiful prospect Sara carved her cypher upon one of its bars and we call it her gate. We will find another place for your cypher, but you must

¹⁰³ Sara’s Gate was named after Sarah Hutchinson, Johns Grove was named after John Wordsworth and Mary’[s] Point was named after Mary Hutchinson. William Wordsworth wrote a collection of poems called *Poems on the Naming of Places*, first published in the 1800 version of *Lyrical Ballads*.

come and fix upon the place yourself (Bainbridge, 2015, Wordsworth and Wordsworth, 1935: 332-333).

The group were ‘marking the landscape... naming the landscape... writing about the landscapes’ comments Kate Ingle in *William Wordsworth: Poetry, People and Place*, adding that ‘for Dorothy Wordsworth these names are particularly important because she uses them in a very specific way to recollect feelings and friendships... so the names are as important as the places... [and served to] strengthen her bonds [with the place] and her group’ (Bainbridge, 2015). With her circle, she created a shared identity through walking, talking, dwelling and writing in the landscape, which made its mark on them and which, as described above, they collectively marked, mapped and named. Newlands describes how the act of putting a seat at Windy Brow was ‘a threshold gift – that is a gift that attends times of passage or moments of great change – [with] ... a poem, a place, and an object commemorating feelings for a place’ (Newlands, 2013: 119). This is similar to how the practice elements of this research project mapped and named fields, gates, rivers, fells, crags, gullies and lakes and also identified significant locations, landmarks or objects in the landscape. For example, a gate onto the mountain, a circular sheepfold, a flock of ewes, a cleft in a rock, a cairn, a dark tarn, a solitary viola or the shelter of a hawthorn bush became symbolic places and powerful metaphors of the ‘missing’ life-event of biological motherhood. In addition, in *Warnscale*, the mapping-walk process emplaced difficult thoughts, feeling and experiences into the landscape and the book acts as trigger for these. In the book, such places were named or characterised through a particular feature or because of something that had resonated, was discussed or shared in that place. They also informed the actions and activities such as stepping into the water of a tarn, lying on a particular rock, ‘making home’ under a hawthorn tree, getting hats blown off at a particularly windy corner or eating ginger bread and sipping tea in a certain place. For one mapping-walk participant a group of solitary violas became significant and led to the naming and locating of ‘Landmark/Station 12 – Solitary Violas (*solitary*)’:

The solitary violets in the book and the tarn were memorable parts of my first walk. In my memory I thought I had named them solitary violets...I found them poignant [...]. In my later walk they had gone (*Warnscale* participant, PG).

This landmark/station reflects how the isolation caused by ‘childlessness-by-circumstance’ can be compounded by social norms around motherhood. Guided by the book participants are invited to notice the purple violas growing in the gaps between the stones they are walking in and amongst. Dorothy Wordsworth’s words draw their attention to the solitary nature of these flowers ‘struggling but surviving in cradles in rocks’. A botanical drawing showing the formation of the flower’s seed pods, is layered with Throsby reflective text (as discussed earlier) that reads ‘Normative femininity is bound up with motherhood... those ‘outside belonging’ can experience a sense of solitary isolation’ (Throsby, 2004: 171). Sits next to the definition of the word solitary ‘separate... saddened by isolation... not part of a group or cluster’ and alongside extracts from the mapping-walks:

isolation
family of single violas
serendipitous growth
self reliant...emotionally self-sufficient
friends and people who understand

In her journal entries Dorothy Wordsworth rarely referred to herself directly, instead, she used complex layers of imagery, sounds and words in response to particular locations in the landscape and these places then held symbolic significance and meaning for her. Many of these locations are identifiable as ‘threshold’ or ‘liminal’ places such as gates, edges of water, a solitary boulder or else were sheltered ‘holding’ places such as a wood or a ditch in which she would lie. For example, on the 14 May 1800 [Wednesday], Dorothy Wordsworth’s brothers William and John ‘set off into Yorkshire after dinner at ½ past 2 o’clock [...]. I left them’, she writes, ‘at the turning of the Low-wood bay under the trees. My heart was so full that I could hardly speak to W when I gave him a farewell kiss’. Distressed, she sits for ‘a long time upon a stone at the margin of the lake, & and after a flood of tears’ her ‘heart’ she writes ‘was easier’ (Wordsworth, 1991:1). Following this episode, the way she described the look, feel and sound of the environment seemed to be influenced by her mood and the lake became a mirror to her feelings:

The lake looked to me I knew not why dull and melancholy, the weltering on the shores seemed a heavy sound. I walked as long as I could amongst the stones on the shore. Sate down very often, tho-it was cold (Wordsworth, 1991: 1).

Despite the cold temperature, Dorothy Wordsworth remained outside for more time, not ready to leave this transitional mood and place until she had processed her emotional turmoil. Does her noticing of the seasonal renewal of the landscape help her recover her sense of self or does a shift in her mood mean that she now experiences it differently to the way she did earlier?

Eventually, a shift takes place in her and before returning home she '*resolved to write a journal of the time till W & J return, & I set about keeping my resolve because I will not quarrel with myself, & because I shall give Wm Pleasure by it when he comes home again*' (Wordsworth, 1991: 1). Another occasion when the landscape reflected her feelings was seen in an entry that described a walk to Ambleside in the '*hope of a letter*'. She writes how Rydale Lake was '*very beautiful with spear-shaped streaks of polished steel*' however, when there are '*No letters!*' she became solemn and wrote how she:

had been very melancholy in my walk back. I had many of my saddest thoughts & I could not keep the tears within me. But when I came to Grasmere I felt that it did me good X (Wordsworth, 1991: 2-3).

It seems that walking in solitude provided Dorothy Wordsworth with a means to release, process and manage complex thoughts and feelings. Sometimes however, her mood was affected and altered *by* the landscape and a particular view, or the weather, the season, the time of day and the people or animals she met.

Dorothy Wordsworth's journals also show an acute awareness of the fragility of life and the overwhelming forces of the 'natural world' and how these can cause 'random acts of destruction' (Pipkin, 1998: 599). She described trees being uprooted and thrown over in a storm, hungry skeleton-like deer and starving children. She acknowledged the physical and emotional effects on people's faces and bodies of: time passing, illness, poverty and loss, often in close-up detail, as this 'account' of meeting a leech gatherer demonstrates:

Friday 3rd October [1800]. ... met an old man almost double, he had on a coat thrown over his shoulder above his waistcoat & coat.[...] He had a Dark eyes & a long nose – his trade

was to gather leeches but now leeches are scarce & he has not strength for it – He lived by begging... He had been hurt in driving a cart his body driven over his skull fractured... (Wordsworth, 1991: 24)

Dorothy Wordsworth experienced the effects of ageing first-hand when for example, aged thirty-nine and close to losing all her teeth, she writes '*My tooth broke today. They will soon be gone. Let that pass, I shall be beloved – I want no more*' (Wordsworth, 1991: 103).¹⁰⁴ That she did not shrink from acknowledging the effects of these material forces and processes demonstrated that, like other women writers of the time, she evolved out of the beautiful-picturesque-sublime, a feminine sublime that, writes Snyder:

invites a valuing of 'barren, decayed, broken, or encrusted objects that counters imagery presenting Nature as beautiful and fecund... it accepts parts of Nature as broken, ambiguous, ruined or barren – not simply Beautiful, not simply powerful, ... (Snyder, 2001: 144)

In *The Gathering*, examples of my applied use of the feminine sublime show how I worked with material forces and landscape *and* biological processes. These can be seen in the way in which the performance revealed fragility and impermanence. An example of this is my use of how the life-and reproductive cycles of the ewes combines with imagery and words relating to human loss and time passing.

In *Warnscale* the effects of ageing on female (human) fertility are considered at 'Landmark/Station 2 – Wooden Bridge (*transition*)' where, in the book, images of water running off the fell and out to the lake are layered with reflections on 'time' and fertility 'running out', and with it the hope of becoming a biological parent. Factual information details how 'Advanced maternal age is increasingly a cause of social infertility' with 'the number of women over forty who are without children being double what it was a generation ago' (Day, 2014). Overleaf a graph shows how with an increase in age, ovarian reserves diminish rapidly leading to decreased fertility. Then at 'Landmark/Station 3 – Warnscale Head Bothy (*riven*)' a series of visual and textual juxtapositions layer the desire to make a home, the processes of ageing and the precarious

¹⁰⁴ Tooth decay was common in the 1800s. By the time she was forty Dorothy Wordsworth had had her remaining teeth pulled out and wore false teeth.

fragility of fertility and fertility treatment. My metaphorical use of earth and landscape processes can also be located in the 'Dying Wood' at 'Landmark/Station 13 where a plantation of dead and dying non-native Scots Pine trees are gradually falling.

At 'Landmark/Station 10 – Warnscale Beck & Cairns' in the book, Dorothy Wordsworth's words act as both a metaphor, reflecting the need for change and metamorphosis, and an instruction. Along the track that the participant is walking, a series of cairns literally and symbolically way-mark their route '*We made our way out with difficulty guided by a heap of stones...*' (Wordsworth, 1991: 57). A half 'moon-cut' frames a glimpse of the photograph below – stone and slate – a 'spot in time', a 'moment of being'. Over the page a photo of a 'pyramid of rough stone'¹⁰⁵ – a cairn, is revealed. On the opposite page a drawing of a hand, taken from an embryologist's glove, gestures participants to follow the cairns. Overleaf a photo of water caught in rock that is suggestive of a needle inserted in an oocyte or into stomach flesh (where fertility drugs are injected), is montaged across the page. This is layered with the text 'Acceptance of childlessness may be achieved at a particular time, and yet needs to be re-enacted when new markers of loss are found' (Cumming, 1997: 5).¹⁰⁶ Actions invite participants to move with the 'flow of the water, gravity and stone' (no longer against it), to 'acknowledge our powerlessness to control the forces of nature within and around', and 'consider the future-life paths we might follow and the alternative stories we might live'. In the landscape the walker can now re-view from a different perspective locations such as Warnscale Head Bothy, the now distant summit of Haystacks and the 'Zigzag Track'. In the book, the definition of the word *landmark* as 'a turning point, a watershed...an event marking a unique or important historical change...' ¹⁰⁷ sits next to words from the mapping-walks:

*uncertainty...which direction?
choosing life path...luck...belief
you are on the right track*

¹⁰⁵ Excerpt of *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of a *cairn*, see landmark/station 10 in *Warnscale* book.

¹⁰⁶ This quote is from *Grief Unconceived* by Naomi Cumming.

¹⁰⁷ Excerpt of *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of a *landmark*, see 'Landmark/Station 10 – Warnscale Beck & Cairn (*landmark*)' in the *Warnscale* book.

*each tumbling stone finds place...rest...as it must
accumulation...stones...people like us*

fertility is cruel

Dorothy Wordsworth also wrote about the weather and its physical power, changeability and effects on the body. She describes how it blew her over, drenched her to the skin and had the power to end life as seen in this 'account' of three deaths, due to exposure on a mountain pass that she herself had just crossed '*in the night*':

Willy told us of 3 men who were once lost crossing that way at night, they had carried a lantern with them – the lantern went out at the Tarn & they all perished. Willy had seen their cloaks drying at the public house in Patterdale the day before their funeral (Wordsworth, 1991: 63-65).

However, like death, she also recognised that life is 'close at hand' and both are acknowledged and valued. She *noticed* things thriving and surviving against the odds or despite cold or wind: a delicate flower growing by a single root or a bird singing out of season or rebuilding a broken nest that had taken weeks to build. Her poem *Floating Island At Hawkshead, An Incident in the Scheme of Nature* (composed in 1832 and published in 1842) describes the power of nature to destroy whilst recognising this destruction as part of a bigger process:

Once I did see a slip of earth,
By throbbing waves long undermined,
Loosed from its hold; – how no one knew...

...Nature, though we mark her not,
Will take away – may cease to give.

... – the Isle is passed away
Buried beneath the glittering Lake!

Yet these lost fragments shall remain,
To fertilize some other ground.

(Levin, 1987: 199-200. Lines 5-5, 19-20, 24-25, 23-28)

Both *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* work with processes of destruction and repair. In *The Gathering* this was seen in the way, for example, that in the 'Lambing Barn' broken cycles were mended through cycles of repair, such as the adoption of a lamb by a surrogate ewe.

In *Warnscale* this can be seen in the way that at ‘View Point iii – Still Point’ the performance, which can be undertaken in any weather conditions or season¹⁰⁸, invites participants to ‘feel the bodily experience of today’s weather (wind, rain or sun) and at ‘Landmark/Station 13 – Dying Woods (*regeneration*)’. Here, in the book, words from Dorothy Wordsworth refer to ‘*the falling wood*’ and then to her attendance at the funeral of someone who has ‘*no kindred, no children*’ and by which she is profoundly affected. However, her sorrow and grief means that she then experienced the landscape as ‘*divinely beautiful as I never saw it [before]*’ and in so doing makes the reader aware that something else is happening/possible, even in the most challenging of circumstance, or perhaps because of them (Wordsworth, 1991: 20). Dorothy Wordsworth’s words are layered with a photo of the dying trees in the heart of the wood next to which a ‘factual text’ tells us that that the managed waterlogging (causing the trees to die) is in fact designed to return the landscape of Warnscale Bottom back to the native woodland of alder and willow which it once was. Actions invite us to ‘enter the heart of the wood...look for signs of renewal *and* live the life unimagined...on the other side of nothing...of resurrection’. The word *regeneration* ‘renewal...resurrection...rebirth’ sits next to extracts from the mapping-walks:

end of the path...family line stops
Dorothy Wordsworth...writing...many generations
many grandmothers...dying out

feeling better...hope for future...whatever it is
different futures...identity...new self

In the end, both practice-as-research projects are about a struggle to survive in the ‘modern’ world. Struggle for Dorothy Wordsworth was particular to her circumstance and historical moment. The sorts of struggle with which *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* engage relate to individuals or groups who find themselves on the periphery of mainstream normative culture and for whom there is no accepted pattern for processing the effects of the ‘missing’ life-event of biological motherhood, and the on-going state of liminality that childlessness-by-circumstance can lead to. The performances were not about survival in a literal sense, though I acknowledge

¹⁰⁸ The book advises participants to dress for the weather, make sure they are properly equipped, check the local and mountain weather forecasts before setting out, and be ready for rapidly changing weather conditions.

for some, the lack of biological motherhood might, in some form or other, involve a struggle for survival. Instead, they are about: how to live; how to transform unresolved feelings; how to gain a sense of self and identity as well as community and continuity; how to find perspective and alternative paths; how to transition the liminality of their experience. With both performances I wanted to *look*, *account* and *report-back* from the edge lands, the shady corners, the voids, liminal spaces and the places of desolation and isolation.

Chapter 3 – Returning to Socially Engaged Scenography: How the Feminine Sublime Transforms the Experience of ‘Missing’ Life-Events

‘People these days aren’t afraid of talking about sex, psychological problems, alcohol and drugs, but for some reason involuntary childlessness is very much a taboo topic’.

Elina Brotherus in *Home Truth: Photography and Motherhood* (Bright, 2013: 90)

This chapter expands on the autobiographical underpinning of the underlying subject matter of *The Gathering* and *Warnscale*. Having looked at women writers of the Early Romantic period, this chapter begins by considering the work of artists and writers who are my own contemporaries and whose practice explores the subject matter of childlessness-by-circumstance. I have especially selected artists whose practice can, I suggest, can be understood through the conceptual lens of the feminine sublime and the six scenographic principles developed in this thesis. Then, having in Chapter 2 explored *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* in relation to these scenographic principles in this chapter, I evidence and analyse the effects of both performances on participants in relation to the underlying subject matter and consider how and in what ways they are situated in, and contribute to the evolving field of ‘socially engaged scenography’.

Underlying Thematic: Autobiography and Other Artists

As encompassed by scenographic principle 1 ‘autobiography and giving-voice to those on the edges of mainstream dialogue’ is a feature of the concept of the feminine sublime that my practice, and that of some of my contemporaries dealing with the subject of biological childlessness-by-circumstance, works with. Due to circumstantial factors including career choices, relationships and age, in my early forties it became increasingly clear to me that I had left becoming a biological parent too late. In the hope of rectifying this situation I made an attempt at In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) that had a less than 5% chance of success but when it

failed I realised that I would have to accept that biological motherhood was not a 'role' I would have. The IVF process and its negative outcome was isolating and led me to experience feelings of grief and the sense of being 'outside belonging' from certain societal groups and part of myself. I wanted to find a way to properly come to terms with my situation and then to redefine myself beyond that 'missing' identity and the 'lack' of being something – a biological mother. I became aware that growing numbers of women were in a comparable circumstance and I wanted to not only give-voice to my experience but also reach out to others. Like me, many other women were or are navigating the challenging terrain of the largely un-mapped landscape of childlessness-by-circumstance. I acknowledge that large numbers of women positively identify themselves as 'childfree'. I also acknowledge that although my practice-as-research projects focus on the experiences that some women have of childlessness-by-circumstance, men can experience the same complex emotions when faced with biological childlessness.

There were three main reasons that I chose to focus my practice on 'women's' experiences of in/fertility and lack of biological motherhood. The first was because of the way society offers no rituals or 'rites of passage' through which women who have 'missed' the life-event of biological motherhood can be acknowledged and can come to terms with that absence. Because of that, some find themselves in a 'liminal' and unresolved place without a clear sense of identity or future path relating to motherhood. The second was in response to the mis-match between the *rise* in the age at which many women plan to conceive and the *decrease* in ovarian reserve and egg quality caused by aging. These contradictory factors have led to growing numbers of women experiencing childlessness-by-circumstance with '1 in 5 women in the UK', writes Day, having 'turned forty-five without having children' (Day, 2014). Day adds that 'although it is estimated that 10% of women without children have chosen not to be mothers ('childfree') and 10% are childless due to infertility or other medical reasons, the remaining 80% are childless-by-circumstance and [find] themselves 'living a life [they] never planned for, and for which no one has a roadmap!' (Day, 2014). The third reason was in response to the way that feelings of

isolation, liminality and abjection, associated with childlessness-by-circumstance, can be compounded by the normalised social and cultural identification of women in the role of biological (pregnant, birthing and breast-feeding) mother. Childlessness-by-circumstance, writes sociologist Karen Throsby in *When IVF Fails: Feminism, Infertility and the Negotiation of Normality*, is an under acknowledged, ‘non-normative’ state and one that for social, cultural and economic reasons increasing numbers of women are experiencing and managing the implications of (Throsby, 2004:163).

For many women childlessness-by-circumstance can be experienced as an on-going state of ‘liminality’ where they are unable to enter the life-stage of biological motherhood and yet also unable to let go of the deeply held desire to become a parent and instead consider alternative life-paths. Many women get caught in cycles of IVF, do not have the ‘right’ life circumstances, or are unable to consider or conceive of a future without biological children. This, compounded by social and cultural expectation, can lead to feelings of abjection and leaves them ‘outside of belonging’. Throsby is drawing on Probyn’s concepts of liminality when she describes how the failure of IVF leads to an ‘on-going in-betweeness’ that is compounded by the way that ‘Parenthood particularly, motherhood is seen as a normative state’ and its absence places these women ‘outside the norm’ (Throsby, 2004: 171). Throsby, whilst recognising the ‘Difficulties in assimilating a different identity’ that these women often experience, suggests none the less that to ‘move out of this liminal state there is a need for a new life path’, a suggestion that both chimed with and informed this project (Throsby, 2004: 162). These feelings and the sense of physical and emotional ‘emptiness’ are similar, I suggest, to a state of abjection, and abjection can be understood as a state that parallels the ungraspable and unfathomable effects of the transcendent sublime, and its limitations. I consider this to be the case because when confronted with feelings of emptiness the grand aspirations of the transcendent sublime are unable to transform the sense of emptiness and abjection whereas the feminine sublime can move us out of

a state of liminality or abjection by focussing on the immediate, the material, the personal and the autobiographical.

The way *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* confronted in/fertility and childlessness-by-circumstance, like *Fissure*, challenged a sensitive subject matter head on (particularly in *Warnscale*). My aim in revealing and drawing on personal experiences of this underlying subject matter, in order to affect wider sociocultural change, was similar, I suggest, to that way that Dorothy Wordsworth, and her contemporaries, used autobiography to reflect on, re-write and challenge their position in society.

In the essay entitled 'Grief Unconceived' Cumming's reflects on how through her writing she was 'making peace with a nature beyond my control' and 'seeing herself in a new way' through a process of 're-imagining' herself in relation to involuntary childlessness through the 'symbolic act' of writing (Cumming, 1997: 15-16). Cumming was one of the earliest writers to document her experiences of unsuccessful fertility treatment and narrate the grief of involuntary childlessness. By undertaking and then publically sharing the experience of fertility treatment, she wrote that she would make the 'experience valuable, by writing of it afterwards, even though it failed' adding that 'if others have to go through this and suffer, then I will too... and write of it' (Cumming, 1997: 12). Cumming's process of re-imagining herself described in the article directly informed the ambitions of this practice-as-research project to em-place, re-image and transition 'missing' life-events. The process also echoes the way that other individual writers and artists have sought to find their way through their experiences of childlessness-by-circumstance, fertility treatment, or issues of infertility. These include the poet Gerrie Fellows in the collection of poems entitled *Window for A Small Blue Child* and Julia Copus in a series of poems and personal testimony entitled *Ghost* in the collection *The World's Two Smallest Humans* who wrote about their experiences of IVF (Fellows, 2007, Copus, 2012: 50-52). The graphic illustrator Paula J. Knight deals with childlessness caused by mis-carriage in her comic-novel

Heredity from the collection *X Utero (A Cluster of Comics)*. The comics were, she writes, ‘a way to process the knowledge that, not having had children and not having siblings, family traits will die out with me’ and that her ‘hope in sharing them was that they might help a little to lift the shroud of silence that surrounds miscarriage’ (Moses, 2010).

In the visual art work *Island of Blood and Longing* Tabitha Moses created a map of islands, reminiscent of renaissance charts showing un-tracted lands, using the menstrual-miscarriage blood that she lost in the ‘days and weeks following the loss of a much-wanted pregnancy’ (Knight, 2013). Making this map, writes Moses, was a ‘way of extracting beauty and meaning from the product of a horrific and disorientating experience. The stains of lost blood became islands which, in turn, became a chart to help me find my way’ (Moses, 2010). Other works by Moses including *Investment* and *Invitro I & II* incorporate objects, imagery and artefacts from her own, and other women’s, IVF processes. A recent exhibition of Moses’s work exploring themes such as IVF, egg donation, adoption and identity hoped to ‘open up a dialogue about fertility treatment, creating a space for reflection on a subject that can so often have an isolating and disorientating effect’¹⁰⁹ (Moses, 2014).

A series of photographs entitled ‘Annunciation’ document the photographer Elina Brotherus’s attempts over a five-year long period to conceive through IVF treatment. She writes about this in *Home Truth: Photography and Motherhood* saying, ‘I’m showing this series of photographs to give visibility to those whose treatments lead nowhere’ (Bright, 2013: 90). Unsure if she will ever be able to ‘speak’ about her involuntary childlessness because of the deep sadness she feels about it, Brotherus instead shares her experiences through ‘pictures’ which, she says, are her way of ‘discussing the matter’ (Bright, 2013: 90). In the photos *Annunciation, 2009; Annunciation #3, 2010; Annunciation #7, Day of the Annunciation, 2011; Annunciation #11, 2011* a solitary figure seated at a table cradles her womb area; holds a white lily (symbolic of the purity of the Virgin Mary); gazes at a tumbler of water; injects fertility drugs into her torso. The room in which she

¹⁰⁹ This comment was in the introduction of the exhibition catalogue and was written by Jenny Porter, Project Manager at Metal, Liverpool. The exhibition was entitled *Investment* and took place at Metal, Liverpool in 2014.

sits is viewed through the frame of an arched doorway and in so doing makes reference to Renaissance paintings of *The Annunciation* by artists such as Fra Angelico (c.1450) and Vecellio Tiziano (1535). Susan Bright, the editor of *Home Truths*, describes Brotherus's photos as an 'ironic homage to the enduring symbolism and strength of Christian iconography. From the Renaissance on, Annunciation paintings have represented the moment that Mary was told by the Angel Gabriel that she was to give birth to the Son of God' (Bright, 2013: 88).

A series of three triptychs in *The Gathering*, particularly the ones in the Lambing Barn (skinning) and the Hydro Room (scanning), draw on the same imagery and traditions in their use of the frame and the metaphorical use of artefacts. A later photo in the series such as *Annunciation #31 Helsinki 04.03.2013*, created after treatment had failed, Brotherus, face strained, looks directly out of the picture at the viewer. She writes:

When treatment is unsuccessful, it's not exaggerated to say that it feels like mourning someone who dies. The loss is very concrete. Not only does one lose a possible child, one also loses a whole future life as a family (Bright, 2013: 90).

The final photo *Annunciation #32, The End*, 2013, locates the solitary figure of Brotherus looking out over an expansive un-trodden, snow-covered landscape. Like the path she is on, 'IVF fulfilling her hope for a child has come to an end and the photo reflects this. It also suggests how forces of "nature" are beyond control and the physical and emotional "emptiness" of the subject' (Bright, 2013: 93). This photo is reminiscent of Friedrich's *Wanderer Above The Mists* in its use of the solitary figure (discussed earlier in this thesis) – a trope established in the Early Romantic period and seen in art as well as in the feminine sublime writing of Dorothy Wordsworth and her contemporaries. The way that Brotherus re-images the solitary figure into the domestic realm and the landscape can also be seen in my own practice, for example in the Old Farm House in *The Gathering* and the use of the solitary figure in both productions.

As explored above many of these artists articulate a desire to reach out to their viewer or reader through revealing and publically exposing a hugely personal set of experiences. However, much of this work highlights and places the artist's experience as the central driving-force of the work,

which is then responded to by the viewer or reader in isolation. Similarly to many of the writers and artists mentioned above, I wanted to work with own my experiences and through that process reach out to others. However, in contrast to these practitioners the performances created for this research project sought ‘social engagement’ through group or individual participation as well as wider public forums.

Impact of the Practice-as-Research Projects

Analysis: Outcomes and Effects of *The Gathering*

In *The Gathering* the missing life-event of biological motherhood was explored on a hill farm in Snowdonia and used the annual and reproductive cycles of the ewes as a metaphor. My aim and intention was that the performance became a means through which conversations about human fertility and infertility might open up. However my focus was not just on broken fertility cycles caused by infertility or age but mended cycles, such as that of the ‘adoption scene’ in the ‘Lambing Barn’. My aim in this scene was that it might act as a prompt to open up thoughts towards, awareness of, other pathways to, and types of biological and non-biological mothering and parenting such as fostering and adoption. When filming the footage for this scene I deliberately took notice of, and filmed, a male shepherd helping the lamb to suckle its adopted mother-ewe. For me, the mother-ewe and the shepherd represented a ‘different’ sort of ‘mothering’ that I hoped might prompt thoughts towards new types of family with gender-unspecific roles that are not limited to, or contingent on biological relationship but can include non- biological relationship.

My scenography created a series of triptychs and religious icons that referenced Renaissance altarpieces and paintings that represent women as mother such as ‘The Annunciation’, ‘The Nativity’ and the ‘Virgin Mary’ with the ‘Christ Child’. My intention was to create an alternative

nativity scene where the shepherd and the mother-ewe stood in for the 'Virgin Mary' and the adopted lamb for the 'Christ Child'. Through them, I indirectly referenced 'The Annunciation' and reflected on the parallels between the immaculate concept and scientific intervention through fertility treatment in humans and artificial insemination in animals. These were parallels, I suggest, that the feminine sublime could 'hold' in the same space/frame and in so doing the 'Lambing Barn' scene became open to interpretation and meaning could be derived, or conjured, by each participant as the following response suggests:

The Gathering continues to invade my everyday with constant flashbacks to our time on that mountain... Things come into my head all of the time ... the barn. The triptych. The straw. Was it the lamb of God we were witnessing in that footage? Not sure (*The Gathering* participant, September 2014).

Another participant responded to the way in which the image-making of the scenography left space for interpretation that went beyond words and was difficult to pin down:

It was a wonderful experience and I've spent 48 hours trying to find the right words of appreciation. I can't, I keep welling up as all the amazing images come to mind and my vocabulary doesn't match them (*The Gathering* participant, September 2014).

The scene in the 'Lambing Barn' and its use of the triptych of films demonstrated one of the ways in which the performance engaged participants with the 'realities' of farm and the flock by literally bringing them close-up to the ewes. For many participants the processes of a sheep farm remain unfamiliar and distant. The triptych of 'scanning' films in the Hydro Room, showing the ewes being internally scanned by ultra-sound and marked for pregnancy, also brought the ewes' processes closer. Another way in which the performance brought participants into close proximity to the ewes was when on the farm they gathered around a sheep pen and the shepherds showed them the ewe's teeth, udders, feet and hinds and how they checked and 'aged' them. This process led to those ewes who are 'too old' to remain on the farm being sold as 'draft ewes' to lowland farms. A sound recording of the auctioneer, captured at the sheep sale at Dolgellau Market, could be heard emanating from a trailer and that stood empty having just returned from taking this year's draft ewes to market. Added to this the 12-month cycle of poetry and factual texts spoken by The Boy did not shy away from facing the life and death processes within a

ewe's life-cycle. Clarke worked directly from my substantial research notes, films and photographs. Her initial writing for the performance was broad in its interests and I asked her to focus on the life and fertility cycles of the ewes in order to make the writing genuinely site-specific to the mountain, the farm and the flock, and in no-way generic. As discussed earlier this site-specificity is a crucial and defining feature of the practice created for this research project. Working directly from the site of Hafod y Llan, gave *The Gathering* a physical and geographical 'located-ness'. The 'situated knowledge' that informed every element of the performance rooted it to the place and ensured what Haraway would describe as a 'view for somewhere' (Haraway, 1988: 590).

To ensure this located-ness, I logged a 'typical' cycle of a single ewe's reproductive life over a seven-year span at Hafod y Llan. I also logged all the annual fertility related activities of a single ewe's life-cycle. Farm manager Arwyn Owen checked all this material ensuring it was site-specific and used the correct language, phrases and terminology. The Boy's factual texts enabled me to complete any gaps in the 12-month cycle of poetry describing more scientifically the reproductive processes of the ewes in a way that the poetic voices of characters such as The Woman and The Old Man could not allow for. Ensuring this site-specific process, the choreographer Nigel Stewart also worked from my photos and films and on-site, in response to shepherding activities and actions such as birthing lambs, gathering and handling the ewes and the ultra-sound scanning. In addition, I made Clarke and Stewart aware of the personal (autobiographical) origins of the underlying subject matter of the performance in order to ensure an open and creative process and achieve the text and imagery I required. Music consultant John Hardy and his team worked with archival material and the sounds I had recorded over the research period. In the end, the full 'poem cycle', performed at Cwm Llan Slate Quarry and The Boy's texts did reveal the ewes' reproductive cycles and when woven into scenes and installations brought participants up close to the ewes and looked 'head-on' at their processes.

Responding to this ‘head-on’ looking, Lyn Gardner of *The Guardian* newspaper described *The Gathering* as:

an intervention in a landscape yet it grows organically from its setting, using what is there – the abandoned dwellings and slate, the waterfalls and rocks – to tell a story of passing time, ancient ways of working, extraordinary fecundity and renewal, but also bitter barrenness. It’s lyrical but unsentimental, bloody and brutal. It makes the mountain sing. *The Guardian*, Lyn Gardner 15 September 2014 (Gardner, 2014).¹¹⁰

My use of the ewes as a metaphor and my selective choice of other site-specific stories for images, scenes and installations made it clear that the piece was concerned with and addressed issues of in/fertility, reproductive and ageing processes and different types of motherhood and family outside of the biological. However, the types and level of meaning that participants could make, I suggest, depended on their own circumstances and life-experiences. For one participant as a person experiencing childlessness-by-circumstance, the meaning was very clear and potent when she described how *The Gathering* ‘showed me my own pain head-on but disguised as the ewes fate!!!’. This participant ‘got’ the underlying theme because of her personal perspective. Others without that perspective perhaps focussed more broadly on the landscape and the scenographic interventions. One participant wrote:

As it crosses my mind, various little scenes are connecting up and making a bigger and bigger picture. I absolutely love it, great value too, been round the route 4 times in my head. Felt that the whole area was laid out like it was long ago so that you could come along now and put on this piece of work. Inch perfect. Praise for the set designer. The music, the band, the school kids, connections with the past, connections with the future, all on a working farm (*The Gathering* participant, September 2014).

Another described how the performance she saw was ‘one of the most lovely, amazing, emotive days of my life’, whilst another described how they ‘thoroughly enjoyed the whole day and left to go back to [their] world with very positive and lasting impressions’, adding:

What a great experience it was to be part of *The Gathering*. ... As well as being educational, I certainly learned a lot about sheep farming, it was an all-round provocative, immersive and sensory experience; the powerful and passionate acting performances; the shepherds working the dogs and the dogs working the sheep; the melancholy music from the band reverberating around the mountains; the many visual installations on the way up and down; the red scar on the tramway; the surrogate sheep

¹¹⁰ For full review see: http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/sep/15/the-gathering-review-national-theatre-wales-hafod-y-llan-snowdonia?CMP=twl_gu&utm_source=Sign-Up.to&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=10773-326240-News+Issue+58

video; the sheep shearing; I could go on.... and of course the weather was perfect (*The Gathering* participant, September 2014).

Lyn Gardner also responded to the way the scenographic layering of landscapes, installation, text and performer made her notice the landscape, past and present, and at different scales. Her response recognises, I suggest, the way in which the feminine sublime informed is embedded within the performance when she wrote that:

This is a piece, makes you look and listen hard – to the unaccompanied voice of a boy singing, to Gillian Clarke’s poetic script, to the red woollen tramway that runs down the mountain like a scar. But it also makes you pay attention to what has always been there and will remain long after we are gone: the fall of water, the moss creeping across tumbled stones, the dark, secretive peaks against an endless sky. *The Guardian*, 15 September 2014 (Gardner, 2014).

One participant, who described herself as a ‘farm girl, wrote that the performance was ‘Very special indeed’, in the way was it showed ‘Our ordinary lives [...] as a piece of art’ (*The Gathering* participant, September 2014). This response reflected, I suggest, how the performance worked with the scenographic principle of ‘paying attention’ to the commonplace and to those on the edges of social and cultural discourses as seen in the feminine sublime writing of Dorothy Wordsworth. ‘Paying attention’ to the landscapes in which they were created is, I argue, a key factor in how *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* became socially engaged. This can be seen in the way that the performances studied and revealed two geographically remote, and perhaps undervalued and underestimated, upland landscapes in Snowdonia and Cumbria, focussing on the animal *and* human processes and activities associated with these two very particular landscapes.

In the case of *Warnscale* the ‘primary/site’ research undertaken to develop the performance engaged a significant number of individuals with local ‘situated’ knowledge of the Warnscale fells from Gatesgarth to Haystacks. These included rangers at The National Trust, the families at Gatesgarth Farm and Honister Slate Quarry, members of The Bothy Association, botanists and conservationist at Natural England, a geologist, a mountain leader, a local historical society

(Lorton & Derwent Fells History Society) and Wordsworth experts at Lancaster University and The Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere.

The Gathering was site-specific to the landscape surrounding Hafod y Llan farm, which stretches from the Nant Gwynant valley to the foothills of Snowdon and takes in views of surrounding valleys and mountains. The ‘primary/site’ research and development of the performance engaged a significant number of individuals with local ‘situated’ knowledge such as the shepherds, conservationists at The National Trust, former residents of the farm, local historians and archivists and mountain leaders and guides. Their situated knowledge was seen in the way that the performance worked with animal and human ‘cynefin’. Whilst the performance got so far with its deep use of landscape, participants were less embedded and integral to the piece than I would have liked. Their participation was less direct and immersive than I know, from past experience, can be achieved when working on a smaller more intimate scale. Furthermore, *The Gathering* was aimed at a wide range of participants reached through NTW, LAW Co and other partners’ mailings list and through local and national press and marketing campaigns. It was not ‘sold’ in such a way that foregrounded the underlying subject matter nor was it aimed at participants experiencing biological childlessness-by-circumstance. For these reasons and because the performance had to appeal broadly to participants, when creating *The Gathering* I was less able to deal explicitly or directly with the underlying subject matter. This does not lessen the experience of those who did participate but were issues that I wanted to consider as I took the practice-as-research forward.

When proposing and developing *The Gathering* I did not discuss or make explicit the underlying subject matter with NTW. Their remit required productions, particularly high profile ones with a significant number of partners such as *The Gathering*, to attract and be made accessible to a large number and broad range of participants. Making the subject matter explicit could have limited that number and range. The performance itself was not framed, marketed or promoted with

direct reference to the theme of childlessness-by-circumstance¹¹¹ and most participants did not take part with an awareness of the underlying thematic. I suspect that direct reference would have led to some participants deciding that the performance was not for them.

Having created a large-scale performance that dealt indirectly with the subject matter and was aimed at a broad group of participants (audience) I wanted to identify how walking and landscape could work directly and explicitly with the underlying subject matter *and* engage specific, subject related, participants. This involved a rethinking of the performance element and the way in which the underlying subject matter, landscape, reproductive science, walking and participant were integrated. It also involved a development in my performance making methodology and led me to develop a performance form (the use of the book) I had not used before.

Thus, in contrast to *The Gathering*, *Warnscale* is small-scale, intimate and involves no artistic interventions in the landscape. Instead, the landscape and its ever-changing seasons and weather is both ‘scene’ and performer *and* participants through walking, listening and noticing the landscape, in the framework of the underlying subject matter, are themselves the performer and part of the ‘scene’.

Analysis: Outcomes and Effects of *Warnscale*

Though *The Gathering* had embedded within it issues of in/fertility and biological childlessness and alternative forms of motherhood I wanted to create a performance that went deeper into, and worked more directly, with the subject matter of biological childlessness-by-circumstance. In short, I felt it was necessary to ‘nail to the mast’ my artistic conviction that socially engaged

¹¹¹ The publicity flyer for *The Gathering* said ‘Join National Theatre Wales for a remarkable journey on foot through installation and performances, inspired by this iconic location, its day-to-day workings, its history and its peoples’. My programme notes did refer to the theme of in/fertility but not explicitly to the subject matter of childlessness-by-circumstance.

contemporary scenography, in the form of landscape walking-performance, is a type of arts practice that is particularly suited to deal with 'missing' life-events and can have a transformative effect on participants. To do that I felt I needed to create a performance that dealt directly with in/fertility and biological childless-by-circumstance and in so doing face and acknowledge the physical and emotional effects of that 'missing' life-event. I also wanted to aim the performance directly and explicitly at women who were/are dealing with that circumstance. The performance that evolved was *Warnscale*. For one such participant the way in which *Warnscale* did that was later expressed when she wrote how the performance:

made the cold abstract hard fact of not having biological children into something lived, real, a ritual almost that did have some spiritual significance for me, which is hard to articulate (perhaps the connection with others, perhaps the being in nature). [...]. It doesn't make the sadness go away, but it's good to have marked the fact of my childlessness by doing something like this. There is a lack of public ritual to mark childlessness and this walk was a very practical, doable thing, which helped to address that (*Warnscale* participant, RGi).

I also wanted the performance to work in such a way that when participants returned to their everyday lives they might act, as Coleman and Elsner describe, as 'an agent of change by spreading new ideas gleaned on the journey' which, prompts the pilgrim 'to view their domestic environment in a novel way' (Coleman and Elsner, 1995: 206). This 'returning' process of agency is similar, I suggest, to the domestic, everyday-transformative nature of the feminine sublime. For the success of the performance I decided that participant numbers needed to be small and that participants should be aware of the underlying thematic and transformative function of the performance. It should act as a rite of passage that enabled them to pass through the liminal state by imaging alternative life-paths and identities. For some that transformation might be significant and immediate, whilst for others it might lead to small changes or incremental shifts that occur after the performance and over a period of time. This rite of passage could be re-visited physically, in the memory or in the imagination. In addition, I wanted the performance: to raise public and media awareness about age related infertility and the social effects and implications of increased numbers of women experiencing childlessness-by-

circumstance; to contribute to debates and dialogues about the way society organises itself around women's fertility, the family, careers and childcare.

One *Warnscale* participant said she feels 'angry that the level of awareness of the fall off of a woman's fertility after 30/ 35 years was not better known 10, 15 or 20 years ago'. Adding, 'I think it has a higher profile now... freezing eggs might have been an option if I had known about it' (*Warnscale* participant, LE). My aim was that the performance could communicate these social and cultural issues and carry the potential for social and cultural change that can make a difference politically.

During the development of *Warnscale* Wanda Georgiades from CARE Fertility Group¹¹² stressed the social importance of it when she wrote:

Louise has highlighted this very sensitive and overlooked area of life. If her project draws attention and empathy then it may also give comfort and hope to those couples who look for a way to mark their journey and come to terms with the future. It is important to give a voice to people facing a life without a child – particularly as our society ages, and the age of motherhood rises then we should address and help to discuss the issue of failed fertility treatment as well as celebrating the success (Wanda Georgiades, July 2013).

Similarly, sociologist Dr. Celia Roberts of Lancaster University, an advisor on the project wrote:

Louise Ann Wilson's project deals with an issue of great social importance: infertility and related decision-making. As a sociologist working in this area I feel that there is insufficient understanding of the everyday experience of infertility and of how couples and women make decisions about moving into or out of engaging with fertility treatment and/or deciding to become parents in other ways. Although some support organisations exist, offering face-to-face and online support for people in these circumstances, there are few opportunities to explore the feelings and concerns that arise in collective ways. Clinics certainly offer no such resources, nor do adoption agencies (indeed, the latter expect prospective adopters to have 'come to terms' with infertility before applying to be considered as an adopter). Most cultural representations of infertility, including self help books, are oriented towards eventual 'success' (giving birth to a child), failing to deal with the fact that the vast majority (around 80%) of those engaging with reproductive technologies will not have this experience. There is, one could argue, a cultural vacuum, or embedded silence around the failure of reproductive technologies to address infertility. Wilson's [walking-book] will address this vacuum, creating valuable new opportunities

¹¹² CARE Fertility Group Limited is a Centre for Assisted Reproduction with clinics nationwide. See, <http://www.carefertility.com/loc-manchester/care-fertility-sc0/page-care-fertility>

for collective exploration of these difficult issues (Dr. Celia Roberts, Lancaster University)¹¹³.

The way that *Warnscale* worked with the durational effort of walking as a metaphor for the arduousness of IVF treatment, infertility and the physical, emotional and psychological effects of childlessness-by-circumstance was reflected on by various participants. For example, one mapping-walk participant who had had repeated fertility treatment found that the landscape and the walking resonated with her circumstance in the following way:

The landscape we walked through evokes personal memories of hard walks and sore feet, tiredness and distance travelled. This connects with my journey to have a child – although the emotional hardship and patience required were so much harder. I had to let go of my own wish for my own biological daughter, wearing a sundress and a fringe, as I had carried in my mind and ask myself what did I really want (*Warnscale* participant, JH).

This participant was later to have successful fertility treatment using donor eggs. When asked if her involvement with *Warnscale* had led her to re /consider the future life-paths, she *might* choose to pursue, she wrote:

At the point of the walk I was almost moving on to trying ivf with donor eggs - I couldn't have not tried this option and I'm sat here holding my baby and writing this and I don't know what I would have done or how many times I would have tried ivf if it hadn't worked. I feel extremely lucky to be in this moment in my life. Vivienne's middle name is Rowan – the name conjures up craggy northern landscapes and wet boggy turf – the kind of landscape where Buttermere exists (*Warnscale* participant, JH).

For another participant, the metaphorical use of the landscape and the use of geological and fleeting time not only reflected but also helped her process of recovery. For this participant, the landscape of the performance became 'a place that is special and built of shared experience of childlessness and infertility is really important to me. I felt it was my special place' and she describes feeling 'strengthened by having a place that enables my feelings of loss to be expressed and worked through' (*Warnscale* participant, ZA). She adds, 'The barrenness of the landscape and beauty and timelessness helped me recognise that my grieving and pain would pass in time', adding, 'I have already begun to flourish' (*Warnscale* participant, ZA). Another participant in

¹¹³ Dr Celia Roberts is a Senior Lecturer in Centre for Gender and Women's Studies at Lancaster University. She is the co-author (with Sarah Franklin) of a book on genetics and reproduction, entitled *Born and Made: An Ethnography of Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis*. See, <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/sociology/about-us/people/celia-roberts>,

Warnscale wrote that for her the performance:

was one step towards becoming more open about my situation. Since the walk I have done a course with Gateway Women and in May this year wrote a feature about childlessness and the church for Church Times. I've also set up a peer-to-peer support group for local childless Christians, male and female, which is exciting. So I guess *Warnscale* has been part of a process over about 2 years of small steps to face up to this frankly quite devastating loss and to do something positive with it. I enrolled for an MA in art history last September at Birbeck and again this has been about doing something with the money that was put aside to spend on IVF/egg donation (*Warnscale* participant, RGi).

'Landmark/Station 8 – Summit Tarn (*vitrify*)' pursues this further by layering a text that tells participants how 'frozen embryos are now used in 20% of treatments' with another that describes how 'technology used for the purpose of deferring childbearing may give false hope'. Mapping-walk words 'convey' the way companies such as Apple and Microsoft encourage female employees to 'delay' their fertility despite the dangers of '*gambling with child-bearing future // the answer...? // cultural...social...rethink...change*'.

This station makes a direct address to the need for a social rethink around fertility, as do the others such as 'Landmark/Station 7 – Haystacks Summit (*geld*)', which reflects on the challenges of continued cycles of IVF treatment and 'Landmark/Station 2 – Wooden Bridge (transition)' and 'Landmark/Station 6 – Innominate Tarn (*heaf*)', which both reflect on the effects of ageing on female fertility, and the low percentage chances of fertility treatment being successful all. These landmarks/stations explicitly reflect, and directly refer to my third aim when creating *Warnscale*, which was to raise awareness of the increase in the numbers of women experiencing biological childlessness-by-circumstance and the personal (for the individual) and social effects of this circumstance. The aim was to ask if it is time for a cultural and social rethink, and change about how we organise around female fertility. As discussed earlier, *Warnscale* now plays a part in the debates and dialogues on the subject of in/fertility, fertility treatment, and biological childlessness-by-circumstance. I am regularly invited to write articles, exhibit and give talks and presentations about *Warnscale* in a variety of public forums. In so doing the walking-performance is contributing to the awareness raising that is taking place

around the underlying subject matter of involuntary childlessness and the missing life event of biological motherhood. Because of this it could be argued that *Warnscale* has already and will continue to affect social, cultural and even political change. This happens through direct access (individuals and groups undertaking the walking-performance, which is on-going) and through its inclusion in a range of different public forums, as discussed below.

The *Warnscale* launch exhibition that accompanied the launch-walk was subsequently shown at The Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere from 20 June to 19 July 2015¹¹⁴, and was the feature of a Tuesday Talk that I gave at the Wordsworth Trust on 1 Dec 2015 entitled *Warnscale: A Landmark Walk*¹¹⁵. The exhibition and will form part of future exhibitions of this practice-as-research project.



Figure xii – *Warnscale* launch-walk participants, 16-17 May 2015.
Photographer: Lizzie Coombes.

¹¹⁴ See, <https://louiseannwilson.com/exhibitions/warnscale-exhibition-at-the-wordsworth-trust>.

¹¹⁵ See, https://issuu.com/wordsworthtrust/docs/oi_wordsworth_whatson_winter2015.

Fertility related forums, counsellors and associated societies have engaged with both performance projects, particularly *Warnscale* but also *The Gathering*. These include organisations such as Gateway Women, CARE Fertility Group and the Infertility Network UK (INUK). Kate Brian, editor of the Journal of The British Infertility Counselling Association (BICA) recognised that *Warnscale* is of 'huge interest to counsellors working in the field of in/fertility and biological childlessness. In the *Journal of Fertility Counselling* Winter 2015 Issue 3 Volume 22, the BICA ran a feature entitled 'Warnscale; A Landmark Walk Reflecting on Infertility and childlessness'. The journal is received by all BICA counsellors and is available to all members of the British Fertility Society and to others working in the field of fertility and counselling.¹¹⁶

In the summer of 2016, I presented *Warnscale* and *The Gathering* at the Fertility Fest 2016. The festival took place in London (28 May 2016) and Birmingham (11 June 2016) and was, as outlined on the Fertility Fest website, the 'first ever festival of work in the UK explored topics including 'facing the diagnosis of infertility, IVF, donation, surrogacy, the male experience, egg freezing, involuntary childlessness and alternative routes to parenthood' and posed the questions 'what happens when IVF is and isn't successful; what are going to be the effects of this science on future generations; and how far as a society are we prepared to go in our pursuit of parenthood?' (Fertility-Fest, 2016).

The festival brought fertility experts, clinicians, counsellors, fertility educators, psychologists, and those working in the field of alternative routes to parenthood together with playwrights, writers, composers, filmmakers, photographers, theatre makers and visual artists. Artists included visual artist Tabitha Moses, poet Julia Copus and illustrator Paula J. Knight whose work is discussed later in this chapter. Other featured artist included: the playwrights Amy Rosenthal author of the play *Walking on Eggshells*; Somalia Seaton author of *Mama's Little*

¹¹⁶ See, *Warnscale: A Landmark Walk Reflecting on in/Fertility and Childlessness. Journal of Fertility Counselling* (2015) published by the *British Infertility Counselling Association (BICA)*, 22(3), 24-28.

Angel which explores the experience of a young woman who is diagnosed with infertility as a teenager; Satinder Chohan author of the play *Mother India* which looks at the story of a British childless woman who goes to India to pursue commercial surrogacy; Gareth Farr author of the play *The Quiet House* about a couples struggling to conceive through IVF treatment; Matthew Dunster author of the play *Those Who Trespass* which features a couple when IVF which doesn't work pursue adoption. Sarah Douglas and Amanda Gore creative director of The Liminal Space who created of *Timeless*, a 'fictional beauty brand created to unlock the facts around egg freezing whilst also raising public debate on how these advances in biomedical science may impact on the world of work, relationships and wider society' (The-Liminal-Space, 2016).¹¹⁷ The film maker Katie Barlow creator of the forthcoming documentary entitled *Without Child*. The visual artist and photographer Tina Reid-Peršin whose work explores the grief caused by involuntary childlessness and imagines the child/ren she would never conceive entitled *Photos I'll never take* (2013) and *Death of Hope* (2014) which is explores the process of moving on from childlessness. The musician/composer Fergus Davidson whose new composition charts his and his wife's struggle to conceive. Photographer Aaron Deemer talks about his groundbreaking project *Please Make Yourself Uncomfortable* about the patient sperm producing rooms in fertility clinics up and down the country. Writers Jody Day author of the book *Living the Life Unexpected: 12 Weeks to Your Plan B for a Meaningful and Fulfilling Future Without Children*, and Jessica Hepburn author of autobiographical book *The Pursuit of Motherhood* and founder and director of Fertility Fest.¹¹⁸

These artists and writers have made work from male and female perspectives and from the experiences of biological childlessness-by-circumstance reflecting, I suggest, how artistic expression and creativity responds to a social need felt individually and collectively to express, face up to, raise awareness and challenge experiences of biological childlessness-by-

¹¹⁷ See, <http://www.time-less.org/#landing>

¹¹⁸ For full details of the programme, participants and sessions see the Fertility Fest 2016 website: <http://www.fertilityfest.com>

circumstance. Indeed, approximately five-years ago when I began creating the practice for this research project I surveyed the field looking for practitioners making work about this subject matter. At that time there was a distinct but small handful of practitioners (Moses, Brotherus, Cummings) whose work was in the public domain and readily traceable. However, over these recent years more artists of both genders are making work dealing with fertility and involuntary childlessness and forums such as Fertility Fest are bringing their work into the public domain.

In September 2016 *Warnscale* was featured on the BBC Radio 4 programme *Ramblings, Series 31, Episode 1: Artists Ways, Warnscale* (with Clare Balding). The programme set out to ‘discover the essential role walking plays in contemporary artist's work’. This brought *Warnscale* to a wider audience [ref]. Following the radio broadcast, a large number of copies of the book were sold.¹¹⁹ In the field of scenography, the Society of British Theatre Designers (SBTD) published an article entitled ‘Warnscale: A Landmark Walking-Performance’ in the journal *Blue Pages* (Autumn, 2015) published by the Society of British Theatre Designers (SBTD) (Wilson, 2015b: 8-9). In the autumn 2016 an exhibition of *Warnscale* is being mounted at the conference and exhibition We Are Many which is taking place on the 29-30 October 2016.¹²⁰

One aspect of my personal experience of childlessness-by-circumstance which literally informed *Warnscale* was the clinical ‘egg-collection room’ in which I had to wait during the IVF cycle I undertook. This clinical room seemed to mirror my own feelings of isolation and emptiness and in my imagination coalesced with the ‘empty’ ewes in Snowdonia being ‘turned up’ the mountain into the idea of creating *Warnscale* in an empty-room on a mountain. Through working with an applied use of the concept of the feminine sublime the performance *and* the mountain might become for ‘other’ women, a ‘threshold place’ of reflection, sharing and repair. This

¹¹⁹See, BBC Radio 4 *Ramblings*. Series 31, Episode 1: *Artists Ways*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b069xkzs>

¹²⁰See, <http://www.wearemanynomos.com>

happens because *Warnscale* is created in such a way that invites participants, whether alone or in a group, to walk and dwell in the upland landscape of the Warnscale fells and because the introduction to the walk describes its use of threshold and aims to be transformative. Some participants have reported that the landscape of Warnscale has become associated with *Warnscale: A Landmark Walk Reflecting on In/Fertility and Childlessness* and is now an important place to which they can return physically or in their imagination (using the book as a memory trigger) as their in/fertility ‘story’ develops. I would argue therefore that for some individuals and networks the landscape of Warnscale acts as a ‘threshold place’.



Figure xiii – *Warnscale*, Secondary (Social/Reproductive-Science). Research in fertility clinics.
Photographer: Louise Ann Wilson.

My IVF cycle and the ‘scientific’ research I undertook in fertility clinics was, in various ways, distilled into *Warnscale*. Examples of this distillation can be seen at ‘Landmark/Station 3 – Warnscale Head Bothy (*riven*)’ where, in the book, a line drawing of a syringe, needle and IVF-drug bottles is layered with a transcript of an embryologist counting eggs during egg-collection surgery. Overleaf, a montage of photos includes: ultrasound scans of the womb and follicles; the

bed and the view from the window in the egg collection room; an embryologist fertilising oocytes and a cleaved one ready for implantation. These are overlaid with a day-by-day outline of the IVF process ending with 10-days of waiting for the result. At 'Landmark/Station 5 – Black Beck Tarn (*wait*)' the text 'Do not become attached to the embryos... there is no pregnancy until they have implanted in the womb' reflects on this wait and the agony of whether to 'hope or to grieve'.

At 'Landmark/Station 6 – Innominate Tarn' a single red-line strikes through an empty oval-shape, an image suggestive of a negative pregnancy test that reflects how, after 10-days of waiting, the woman is 'empty'. Overleaf a photomontage of the tarn is overlaid with statistics about age and fertility 'Aged 41, egg count low. Chance of IVF success <2%'. In response to the way *Warnscale* layered the 'primary/site' and 'secondary/subject' research Wanda Georgiades of CARE fertility clinic, one of the places I undertook my research, wrote:

We focus so much on achieving "success" having that much wanted child, beating the odds to become parents through IVF. We probably don't acknowledge adequately the number of patients who will not have a baby this way – ever. This project shows in a graphic form how different people cope with the loss of the baby they may never have, the grief for something that will never be. It is a beautifully executed book pulling together strands of treatment into strands of landscape (Wanda Georgiades, 18.7.13).

However, I wanted the performance to be created in such a way that it included the stories and experiences of other women who were childless-by-circumstance. This inclusion was important because I wanted the performance to have a breadth and depth that came from being informed by and incorporating a range of experiences that extended beyond my own thus making the performance of interest, and relevant to, a wide range of participants.

To ensure these stories and experiences informed the performance I needed to develop a creative methodology that enabled me to 'gather' them, and then incorporate them into the final performance (which in turn influenced the form that it would take i.e. the book). To that end, I evolved this methodology that took the form of a third 'tertiary' level or tier of social and participant research. The aim of this 'tertiary' research was to enable a deeper relationship

between the performance, the underlying subject matter and the participant in such a way that brought about a deeper level of social engagement. For this reason I called it ‘tertiary/social’ (participant) research. This ‘tertiary/social’ (participant) research involved a focus group of women who were biologically childless-by-circumstance and took the form of a series of mapping-walks. These mapping-walks informed and fed directly into the performance bringing the underlying subject matter and the participants together. This move demonstrated a significant development in my scenographic process and contributed hugely to the level with which it was becoming socially engaged.

Mapping-Walks: Tertiary/Social’ (Participant) Research

The women who joined the mapping-walk ‘focus group’ responded to a call for participants. This call-out stated: ‘Artist seeks participants for the creation of an interactive mountain walk, created through a mapping exercise which explores the under-represented life-event of involuntary childlessness’. The call-out then detailed how I would be interested in hearing from women for whom the following applies:

You are looking at a future that might not involve having a biological child. This might be due to your life or social circumstances, biologically-determined or age-related infertility. You might have attempted, or decided against, fertility treatment.

You are an experienced walker happy to cross un even, steep and rocky terrain, regardless of inclement weather, in a mountainous area for a day.

You are interested in the process of mapping the journey (one day of walking), and later undertaking the finished walk and reflecting on it. (Extract from Mapping-Walk – Call-out for Participants, see Appendix 1).

The call-out was circulated through various channels including LAW Co mailing list and mailers, the Gateway Women website and e-bulletins, the Walking Artists Network (WAN), the CARE Fertility Group, Lancaster University Women’s Studies Network, and the Standing Conference of University Drama Departments (SCUDD), Live artists Network and through word of mouth. See, Appendix 1: Mapping-Walk – Call-out for Participants.

Mapping-Walk Participants: Call-Out Respondents

Approximately 20 women responded to the call-out by emailing me directly. Their responses to the call-out seemed to demonstrate not only a desire but a need to be involved in a creative project the aim of which was to pursue a positive identity, one that acknowledged, recognised, normalised and re-identified women out-side of the role of motherhood, whilst at the same time not denying their deeply held desires to be a biological mother.

Out of these initial enquiries, thirteen respondents participated in a series of mapping-walks that took place over the course of one year. The first walk took place in March 2014 and involved a group of five walkers. All the subsequent mapping-walks were one-to-one walks with a single mapping-walk participant and me. The final mapping-walk took place in April 2015.

The women who took part in the mapping-walks were biologically childless for a range of reasons. These reasons included bio-medical factors, such as age-related or undiagnosed infertility or social infertility factors, the absence of a relationship or a relationship with a person who did not want any more children or who were unable for health reasons to have biological children. A number of the mapping-walk participants had and/or were continuing to have infertility treatment, whilst others had decided to stop pursuing treatment after multiple attempts, and were seeking pregnancy through donor eggs. Others had adopted children or were deciding to adopt. Some were unresolved as to what to do next.

Some mapping-walk participants undertook this mapping-walk in order to create a 'ritual' space for themselves, one that was removed from their everyday lives and one that they could return to. For many, participating was a brave step towards accepting their circumstance. One participant said it took her '9 months to get in contact to participate physically but [she] felt [her] participation started when [she] first read about the project' (*Warnscale* participant, MZ).

Another participant said the invitation to participate in the mapping-walk ‘felt like a permission to articulate the difficulty of [her] circumstantial childlessness’ (*Warnscale* participant, RG).

More recently, someone has told me she wanted to join the mapping-walks, but at the time of the call-out was not ready to, now however she felt more ‘accepting of her situation and was ready to undertake the complete walking-performance.

Mapping-Walk Practicalities: Preparation for the Mapping-Walks

In advance of the mapping-walk ‘Research Ethics at Lancaster University’¹²¹ forms and information were completed (and ethical approval granted)¹²², risk assessments and health and safety checks were undertaken and signed off by a mountain Leader, LAW Co and Lancaster University. Information on the aims of the mapping-walk process, how the materials that the mapping-walks produced and the participants’ right to anonymity was produced and circulated to all, along with a request form asking for signed permission to allow inclusion of their contributions in the development and creation of *Warnscale*.

As the following extract shows, this information described how the mapping-walks would invite walkers to engage with the landscape as a metaphor for the experience of facing a future without a biological child. Participants, it said, will look at, listen to, and really ‘see’ the place we are walking in and that on that day ‘there will be space to be quiet, write, draw, and/or reflect on the physical and metaphorical journey’. The information outlined how I was aware that the underlying subject matter of the mapping-walk was sensitive and that participants would ‘not be asked, or expected, to share anything that you don’t feel comfortable to talk about’. It stated that ‘This is an art project which uses metaphor, walking, mapping and landscape as a tool with which to explore the underlying subject matter – words are not central to that exploration and that there will be no pressure to speak out or do or supply anything – your presence is the

¹²¹ The Research Ethics at Lancaster University forms and information covered both *Warnscale* and *The Gathering*.

¹²² The Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee approved my ethics application and granted approval for the proposed practice-as-research elements of this project to proceed in March 2014.

important thing and your reflections might happen on that day or at a later point'. In addition it stated that if a participant should 'decide at any point that you want to stop participating in the mapping-walk activity and wish to withdraw you are fully able to' and that 'If you choose to withdraw your data from the project after participating for up to 2 weeks after the activity your data will be destroyed and not used, but after this point the data might well remain in the project'.

Practical information for the mapping-walk was produced and also circulated. This included a section on the physical walk (distance, duration, terrain) and health and safety; weather, clothing and essentials; documentation and consent forms; how the mapping-walk formed part of a doctoral research studies and that I would 'write about it as part of my written thesis; that participant could expect anonymity and that I had to adhere to strict guidelines laid down by Lancaster University regarding research ethics'.¹²³ In addition, I provided the details of a number of organisations such as Gateway Women, Fertility Friends and Infertility Network UK.¹²⁴

Many of the mapping-walk focus groups and the participants travelled from far afield: London, Norfolk and Yorkshire. Some journeyed to the site by car whilst others travelled to local train stations from which I picked them up to take them the hour-long journey to the site. All were strangers. The walk removed them from their everyday lives, from what is familiar and took them into a remote rural landscape and had the aim of contributing to the creation of a rite of passage to mark, reveal and transform the missing life-event of biological motherhood. This removal stripped them of every day concerns, relationships and habits. In these ways, their engagement with the mapping-walk process could, I suggest, be understood through Van Gennep's 'pre-liminal' rite of passage stage: 'Separation' (Van Gennep, 1960: 20).

¹²³ See the following appendices for more details: Appendix 2a: '*Warnscale and The Gathering*: PFACT project information and Ethics Questionnaire'; Appendix 2b: '*Warnscale and The Gathering*: Ethics Form, Stage 1 Self-Assessment (Part B)'; Appendix 3: 'Mapping-Walk – Information for Focus-Group Participants'; Appendix 4: 'Mapping-Walk – Participant Consent Form'.

¹²⁴ See: <http://gateway-women.com>; <http://www.fertilityfriends.co.uk>; <http://www.infertilitynetworkuk.com>

Mapping-Walk: Aims and Methodology

The aim of the walk was for each individual to walk some or all of the proposed route of *Warnscale* (though these walks also informed that route) and afterwards create their own memory-map of that walk which would become layered into the construction and performance of *Warnscale*. The mapping-walks began at the valley bottom at Gatesgarth Farm and Buttermere Lake and ascended to Haystacks ridge and summit following a route that followed cairns, led to mountain bothies, crossed streams, circumnavigated tarns and passed through three different geological time frames and rock types before descending back into the valley bottom and towards the lake.

Walking with the underlying subject matter in mind, each mapping-walk invited participants to notice and respond to the landscape and environmental phenomenon of The Warnscale fells, the act of walking, the effects of time and change, and to the sense and feel of themselves in the landscape. It invited participants to walk, to reflect upon and to notice the landscape in relation to themselves in an embodied way and through listening, observing, touching, thinking, feeling and remembering. It invited participants to emplace their personal 'missing' life event story into the landscape through the event and action of the mapping-walk. The aim of this immersive, reflective process was to enable revelatory processes that are akin to Rigby's 'ecstatic dwelling', Woolf's 'moments of being', or Barbauld's 'sudden awakenings' (Rigby, 2004: 138, Woolf, 1978: 84, Barbauld, 1773). My aim was that these processes, might allow the landscape, and its changing and powerful forces, to become a metaphor for, and a means to trigger memories and association of each participant's unique and personal experiences of biological childlessness-by-circumstance. Emplacing these experiences into the landscape and using metaphor in this way, would I hoped enable participants to think, feel and share thoughts and emotions that were highly complex and often too painful or difficult to thin about or express in words. Instead, participants shared and spoke of deeply personal, emotionally and physically traumatic and often

sorrowful experiences through the wind so strong it blew us off our feet, flooring us like years of failed IVF treatment, rain that hid tears and rivers that were so torrential they cut off our path, diverted our route and shortened our walk, fecund pools of frog spawn that acted as painful reminders of human oocytes that could not/would not become embryos, a dying wood that could not rejuvenate and acted as a metaphor for someone family-line ending with them. There were also sign of renewal, and of metamorphosis and transformation seen in rocks, flowers, seasons, animals and weather that I also wanted participants to notice and which might become reflective and transformative to them, and their experiences of the missing life-event of motherhood.

To put mapping-walk participants at ease and in order to open up a sense of understanding, sharing and trust before each mapping-walk, I described how my own personal experiences had led me to want create *Warnscale* as a walking-performance that took the form of a rite of passage or pilgrimage that, through the book this mapping-walk was contributing to, could be engaged in in the future by others. I reiterated that the mapping-walk we were about to undertake was not about me and my experiences but them and how as someone with a unique experience of the underlying subject matter they could contribute to *Warnscale*.

Whilst walking or sitting, we not only shared intimate personal stories but also became quiet and reflective. There were places where we talked a lot and other places where we were quiet that allowed a deepening and a fuller immersion into the landscape and the underlying subject matter. These moments directly informed how the performance would incorporate a series of threshold or transition ‘places’ that would provide a means to reflect. They also marked emotional shifts, gained significance and accumulated meanings that intensified as the performance progressed.

Many of the women talked about the isolation that infertility and fertility treatment causes and their grief for the biological children they will not bear; some had realised too late that their fertility window was limited and time was running, or had run out. Often there was the feeling

that their lack of childbearing was disappointing for parents and grandparents, and the weight of that awareness was increased by them knowing that their family line (genetics and name) could end with them; many were reconsidering what their identity would be outside of biological motherhood.



Figure xiv – *Warnscale*, mapping-walks: ‘Tertiary/Social’ (Participant). Research on site.
Photographer: Louise Ann Wilson.

Mapping-Walk Frame: Dorothy Wordsworth

Dorothy Wordsworth’s writing provided the frame for the day; the landscape, the walking, the looking and the actions, At the start of each mapping-walk I read Dorothy Wordsworth’s *Grasmere Journal* entry written on the same ‘date/s’ in 1800, 1801, 1802 and /or 1803.¹²⁵ Then during the walk I read aloud to the focus group participant/s carefully selected excerpts that

¹²⁵ I also read the Dorothy Wordsworth journal extracts at the start of the launch-walk and whenever lead a guided walk of *Warnscale*.

suited the weather, season and mood. I did this because I was considering using selected extracts from her journals in the completed walking-performance and the book through which it is mediated. I wanted to test their effectiveness in giving participants various ways and means of entering and being in the landscape, connecting to it and through it to themselves – thus reflecting and borrowing from Dorothy Wordsworth’s own unique way of being in landscape as discussed in Chapter 2. I also read excerpts in response to unfolding conversations and landscape-features that became poignant on that particular day and to that particular person (a solitary viola, a tree somehow managing to grow in ‘barren’ scree, a dying wood). Participants said they enjoyed being ‘read to’ and that the readings helped them to focus on the landscape and on the process of walking. They also liked imagining the figure of Dorothy Wordsworth, clad in a long skirt and wearing a corset, walking, crawling, lying and sitting in the landscape: they relished the awareness of 200 year gap between them being bridged through the mapping-walk process. To some she became a powerful link across generations to the past in the form of an independent unbidden character. These positive responses informed my decision to incorporate extracts from Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals into the performance by articulating and framing each landmark/station and viewpoint with her words. One mapping-walk participant later remarked that she:

found Louise bringing [...] reading from Dorothy’s journal of a walk on the same date years ago very enriching on the walk and established my engagement at a different level than a standard walk... Dorothy’s words, mixed with other text, also creates an atmosphere and is thought provoking (*Warnscale* mapping-walk participant, PG).

Post Mapping-Walk: Maps

Following each mapping-walk, participants drew a memory map of the walk we had undertaken that highlighted places or moments of significance and meaning. We then discussed the maps that were drawn during which time made written notes.

The figure below shows a mapping-walk map by the mapping-walk participant with the initials JH. See the Supporting Material for more examples of the Post Mapping-Walk – Maps.



Figure xv – Warnscale, mapping-walk map drawn by JH.

It is these walks and maps, and the words, feelings, images and conversations they provoked, which I then distilled, along with other research materials, into the book (through which the performance is mediated). They informed, in various ways the choice of landmark/stations, routes and content, actions and activities. The mapping-walks revealed an overwhelming sense of isolation caused by on-going fertility treatment, concerns about the discontinuation of the ‘family line’ and the lack of community this social group experiences. The books layers photographs and drawings of the landscape with: geographical, historical and biological maps; mapping-walk distillations; bio-medical and reflective texts and images about in/fertility and biological childlessness. The performance took this form so that it could be undertaken repeatedly and at any time.

Walking out of and driving way from the site became an important time to emerge from the immersive and emotionally charged place to which the mapping-walk had taken the participants. This reflected Van Gennep's period of post liminal 'reintegration' and the way in which 'pilgrims' return to their every-day lives, families and friends with the 'stories' from afar that might trigger sharing and conversation to take place back at home, in the real world.

Mapping-Walk and Launch-Walk Feedback: Questionnaires

I gathered qualitative feedback from mapping-walk participants through a series of questions designed to 'help me understand if the project has achieved what I hoped it might'. This questionnaire was also completed by some of the launch-walk participants. Thirteen participants completed a questionnaire. The questions it asked were:

1. Has participating in *Warnscale* enabled you to reflect on your particular circumstance?
If so, can you briefly outline your circumstance and say how you have reflected upon it?
2. Has your experience of, or relationship to, your particular circumstance changed – even in a small way – through your involvement with *Warnscale*?
If so, can you say how?
3. Has your involvement with *Warnscale* led you to re/consider the future life-paths you *might* choose to pursue or not pursue?
If so, can you say what these paths are and if they are new/different?
4. Are there aspects of the walk that you participated in and/or the book that you found/find particularly engaging?
If so, can you say what they were, and how?
5. Can you imagine undertaking the walk (with the book) in the future either by yourself or with a friend, partner, family member, or group?
Which would you find preferable and why?

6. Might, in your opinion, *Warnscale* enable women who are biologically ‘childless-by-circumstance’ acknowledge themselves more positively *and* be more positively acknowledged by others and society?

If you think so, can you comment on in what ways?

7. Is there anything else you feel happy to share?

For a copy of the questionnaire, please see: Appendix 6: Mapping-Walk and Launch-Walk – Questionnaire (blank): Questions for Mapping-Walk and Launch-Walk Participants. The questions and an edited selection of the responses to them framed how I wrote about and analysed the effects and outcomes of the mapping-walks and walking-performance in Chapter 3.

A week after participating, one mapping-walk participant described this process when she wrote to say:

... I really enjoyed meeting you and the rest of the group, and chatting to everyone. It has been a moving and thought-provoking experience. It's been interesting the effect that doing it has had on my close family too: it has somehow given childlessness a frame and a focus and a way of talking about it. It has opened up some quite deep conversations with my husband this week too, and I think we're getting closer to a final decision on which path to take (*Warnscale* participant, RGi).

The way that *Warnscale* reveals the isolation associated with biological childlessness and how it is a topic that people find hard to articulate shows, I suggest, the need for social, cultural, and political change to the constructed ‘normative’ around women and biological motherhood.

This reflects the third aim of, *Warnscale* which was to raise awareness of the increase in the numbers of women experiencing biological childlessness-by-circumstance and the personal (for the individual) and social effects of this circumstance *and* asks if it is time for a cultural...social... rethink, and change about how we organise around female fertility. This might include: More open discussion on childlessness-by-circumstance and infertility (for both genders) with the aim of the subject becoming less of a social taboo and stigma; better education and information about fertility and infertility particular the rapid, aged related, decrease in female fertility; debate about: whether society needs to organise differently around women’s

fertility and offer genuine opportunities for women to begin families at a younger age, which for certain sections of society is considered less socially acceptable; the effects of women ‘delaying’ their fertility and increase in women turning to egg and embryo freezing (supported and financially encouraged by multi-national companies such as Apple and Microsoft); success rates of Assisted Fertility; the choices women might make about fertility and childbearing to include debate about other roles and identities outside of motherhood; awareness about the effects of childlessness-by-circumstance and infertility and different pathways into motherhood including non-biological parenting through fostering and adoption; increased opportunity for women to return to work post maternity-leave without diminished career or salary prospects.



Figure xvi – *Warnscale* launch-walk participants, 16-17 May 2015.
Photographer: Lizzie Coombes.

Warnscale, in different ways, give voices to the taboos of childlessness-by-circumstance, raised awareness of in/fertility, and creates a means through which participants can communicate. The ‘side by side’ or companionable walking of the mapping-walks and launch-walks also evolved temporary and on-going communities and networks that reflected the socially engaged aspect, and function, of this scenographic-led performance.

In the book, at ‘Landmark/Station 12 – Solitary Viola (*solitary*)’ a photo of a solitary viola is montaged into a repeat pattern that constructs a ‘family’ of solitary violas. This is designed to suggest the temporary *communitas* that might occur for the duration of the walking-performance as well as the way in which *Warnscale* might encourage participants to re-connect to family members and friends or join network and communities such as ‘Gateway Women’. Processes such as these, I suggest, might, over time contribute not just to personal change for individual participants but also to broader social change. For one participant *Warnscale* showed her that she was ‘not alone’, and it was good to be able to ‘literally and metaphorically walk the same path’ alongside others, adding that the ‘public nature of the performance’:

starts to combat some of the shame around childlessness. It’s important to give childless women a voice – they are shamed into hiding themselves and staying silent. The more we make art, publish and speak out about our circumstances the better it will be for all of society (Mapping-walk participant RGi).

This relates to Spivak’s theoretical concept of strategic essentialism, which, writes Bill Ashcroft in *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, can be harnessed when it becomes ‘advantageous for a group to temporarily "essentialize" themselves [in order to] bring forward their group identity in a simplified way to achieve certain goals...’ (Ashcroft, 1998: 159-60). In *The Gathering* this theory corresponds to the way that the 200 participants became a temporary group who came together in ‘communitas’ because of the shared-experience of the performance. One participant in *The Gathering* who afterwards reflected on the importance of this coming together with others:

The walk alone was worth the ticket fee, the opportunity to be in that place, surrounded by others also searching/looking/feeling was so very emotional in many many ways [...] I was entranced’ (*The Gathering* participant, Sept 2014).

In *Warnscale*, many participants found the ‘communitas’ of the mapping-walk and/or launch-walks a particularly engaging and ‘helpful’ aspect of the performance. One person with whom I undertook a one-to-one mapping-walk remarked later how it ‘made her feel a bit less alone’ and that ‘through meeting [me] and reading the book it is comforting, in a way, to see how other people recognise the sense of loss of not having a child’. She thought that ‘*Warnscale* might give women a tool to acknowledge their situation because it places one’s experience in the context of

a wider community of contributors even if you don't meet them' (*Warnscale* participant, LE). Another one-to-one mapping-walk participant said the '1 to 1 participation helped me to reflect on my own circumstances and to reflect on it in relation to my experience of "motherhood by proxy" i.e. adoption and looking back on how I had plans, hopes and expectations compared with how things actually happened' (*Warnscale* participant, PG). Another participant described how childlessness-by-circumstance 'can be isolating ... so to feel you are not alone can be very positive' (*Warnscale* participant, HW), and another wrote that:

The solidarity of walking in the company of other women from different ages was engaging – the chance to meet people who had obviously created beautiful and interesting lives without their own wishes to have a child fulfilled (*Warnscale* participant, JH).

For one participant 'speaking with women who have had similar childless stories' made her 'feelings and emotions valid' and the performance provided a:

space to feel comfortable talking about things that are hard to process and acknowledge and for others to have an understanding. I think the more women and men talk about their own realities in a more open atmosphere inspires others to do the same. Just being involved in this project has made me more comfortable talking about my circumstances and my feelings around them (*Warnscale* participant, MZ).

This resonated with another participant's response. She found 'walking with a group of people considering such a personal issue in a shared space to be compelling' adding that 'the idea of dealing communally with such a personal issue to be potentially very powerful' (*Warnscale* participant, JK). Finally, another participant said that the walk showed her she was 'not alone' and that 'it was good to be able to both literally and metaphorically *walk the same path* alongside others. Also, she added 'the walk opened up a space between myself and my husband – I was able to talk about the experience with him' (*Warnscale* participant, RGi).

These outcomes positively reflected the second aim of *Warnscale*, which was to create a performance that had an on-going effect and that participants, as individuals or as a collective-group might, return home post-performance, and effect change within their immediate circle of family and friends having re-imaged themselves more positively (or differently) and then acting as 'an agent of change'. This process is a familiar part of the pilgrimage process when

participants return home with a fresh perspective of their domestic situation. Furthermore, by creating an artistic form that opens up communication, and with it knowledge, *Warnscale* embodies the artist Ana Laura Lopez de la Torre's comment, discussed by Cathy Turner in the article *Walking Women: Interviews With Artists on the Move*, that 'Once a communal knowledge about something is created, art has the possibility of working it through and leaving it in lots of different ways and forms' (Heddon and Turner, 2010: 20).

Changing Perspectives: Future Life-Paths

When creating *Warnscale* my *primary aim* was to offer imaginative and creative ways through which participants can engage with landscape and through it share and find alternative viewpoints on the experiences of biological childless-by-circumstance, a circumstance that can be experienced as liminal. The performance sought to help participants navigate towards the possibility of alternative life-paths that might have been different to those that had been hoped or planned for, having re-imaged themselves more positively (or differently) transformed. This aligned the processes enabled by the feminine sublime that allows a person to reappear – re-imaged and transformed.

The way in which *Warnscale* became a place of metaphor, reflection and transition that could alter a participant's perspective on their circumstances through processes of framing and re-viewing the landscape, in the context of the underlying subject matter was effective for one participant who wrote:

I love the Lakes – they have a really powerful pull for me as I'm from the North but live in London. Buttermere¹²⁶ is remote and stark, not pretty like other parts ... It seemed like an appropriate place to do the walk – quite intimidating at times to be out in nature, but amazing to know that you're part of creation. That had the effect of putting things into perspective a bit. Seeing some frogspawn in a puddle was quite incredible but poignant as it reminded me that I won't reproduce (*Warnscale* participant, RGi).

¹²⁶ Buttermere is the name of the village, and the lake, nearest to the place where *Warnscale* starts and ends. At various locations during the performance, Buttermere Lake is visible and referred to in the book.

The way in which *Warnscale* changed its participants' experience of, or relationship to, their particular circumstance – even in a small way – and led them to re/consider the future life-paths they *might* choose to pursue (or not pursue) could be seen in other responses. For one participant *Warnscale* 'accelerated' her 'acceptance' of her decision to choose to be child-free and the performance created a:

dedicated time to consider, come to terms and creatively reflect on the reality of being childless by choice. It felt private and yet shared in a beautiful natural environment, offering a reframing of perspective (*Warnscale* participant, AD).

For another, participating in *Warnscale* became a personal 'journey of acknowledging' her 'wants and needs' that informed significant and fundamental life-changing decisions and someone else said it 'allowed [her] to look at [her] own experience afresh' (*Warnscale* participants, MZ, RG). One mapping-walk participant said that:

since the walk I contacted our local adoption service in the local authority and started the process – information evening and initial assessment. It hasn't gone well [...]. Not sure what, if anything, will be next (*Warnscale* participants, LE).

For another the change in perspective is literal as, following *Warnscale*, she has 'decided to gaze at the world through binoculars more and to use the botanist's magnifier' (*Warnscale* participants, PG). The way that the book made visible life forms and processes that would otherwise remain unseen *or* invisible to the naked eye, invited one participant to 'notice the creativity and growth in the smallest details and most 'barren' areas' (*Warnscale* participant, RG), and others remarked on how they:

really engaged with the microscopic exploring of the plants and flora, fascinating to see beauty in such small places. Observing pattern, growth, emergence and the force of nature, uninterrupted by over thinking or fears! (*Warnscale* participant, AD).

loved engaging with the environment both microscopically and through the lens. It connected me to the here and now. Created a different perspective to the typical one (*Warnscale* participant, ZA).

The circular 'moon-cuts' that frame each landmark/station in the book and refer to phases of the moon 'connected' one participant back to her 'femininity and strength'. 'Something about the waxing and waning of the moon', she commented, 'reminded me that I am still present even when my spirit is in pain or I feel invisible in this family-orientated world' (*Warnscale*

participant, ZA).

In response to the performance and the way in which it incorporated and worked with the words of Dorothy Wordsworth extracted from her *Grasmere Journals* Jeff Cowton, Director of The Wordsworth Trust in Grasmere, described the way in which, during his solo ‘performance’ of *Warnscale*, ‘all the while’ he was:

guided by the words of Dorothy Wordsworth and Louise Ann Wilson. Dorothy made me look at the landscape – the shapes, colours, sounds – how often she describes something so perfectly. Louise spoke to me in other ways – inviting me to stop, listen, feel, experience; encouraging me to consider the smallest details of life, from a perspective not simply my own. In these mountains we can find ‘the bliss of solitude’. There were other voices too: those of women ‘childless through circumstance’ (Jeff Cowton, June 2015).

Because *Warnscale* is mediated through the walking-art book the physical and the metaphorical landscape of *Warnscale* can be re-visited, through the book, either physically or in the memory/imagination. This contributes to the on-going nature of the walking-performance and the processes of transformation. Deliberately designed to be simple and attractive yet practical, the aesthetic and design of the book were, for many, an important part of its appeal. The coalition of performance (art), landscape, science, image and words were key factors in the way it engaged participants at a deep level physically, intellectually and emotionally. The multi-layered nature of the book was intended to reflect this. One participant remarked on the book being ‘beautifully done, engaging on lots of levels, one page can be a stimulant for reflection or discussion in its own right’. Similarly, for another participant¹²⁷ ‘the layers and layers of this book insinuate themselves so deeply into the self – words, images, maps, medical processes and emotional turmoil – all with the exquisite writings of Dorothy Wordsworth and the metaphorical and physical appreciation of the landscape – I love the way all these layers interplay (I can almost hear it) (*Warnscale* participant extract from letter dated 3 November 2015, MM). This

¹²⁷ Participant with initials MM lives in Tasmania and heard the *Ramblings: Artists Ways* broadcast about *Warnscale* on the BBC Radio 4 and then ordered the book. Extracts from her feedback are taken from the on-line blog *Murmurs of Mole*, ‘Paw Print’ October 2, 2015 <http://murmursofmole.net/?s=paw+prints> and ‘Beyond Words’ November 13, 2015 <http://murmursofmole.net/murmurs/beyond-words> and a letter addressed to me, dated 3 November 2015.

particular listening/reading participant wrote that she found that the book's use of 'words in a painterly way, sparingly interwoven with drawings and maps, peepholes and photographic vignettes' invited layers of thought. For her what was striking was the layered combination of:

visual metaphors suggested by the landscape: a stand of dead trees, a fork in a stream, a cleft in a rock.... the diary entries of Dorothy Wordsworth, ... the language of locals, [the] connections between laboratory images of fertility and the minutiae of plants...drawn together [with] features from personal maps created by childless participants...' invited 'contemplation like the shrines along a pilgrim (*Warnscale* participant, MM) (Morris, 2015a, Morris, 2015b).

A feature that for MM added to this contemplation was the way in which the 'time taken and effort involved' in engaging in the performance 'allows for the evolution of memories, feelings and thoughts of the future' and how that durational process revealed to her 'something akin to a new dimension of being' (*Warnscale* participant, MM).

In addition, the way the performance and the book (there is a space for the walker to make their own mapping) literally and metaphorically leave space for the participant to make meaning and their own interpretation is another important feature of its scenographic construction. One participant found the way that 'the participants added their thoughts and experiences, was particularly helpful' (*Warnscale* participants, RGi). For another the book worked on several levels and had a 'resonance beyond the walk' that she found 'tremendously engaging', and that it:

strikes a powerful balance between presenting information and ideas and allowing space for the reader to make their own connections. The way it is organised means there is both a freedom and a guiding structure. This means that navigating the book and understanding the way in which the elements fit together leads you to draw personal conclusions and make links between the elements in an entirely individual manner.

Adding the:

layout and imagery of the book immediately intriguing and engaging. However it also asks to be revisited and browsed repeatedly and new things can be found on each re-visiting (*Warnscale* participant, JK).

This reflects how the book form makes it possible for participants to revisit the performance, physically or imaginatively, whenever they choose. For one the fact it can be 'done again and

again' not only gave it a 'lasting legacy' but was for her a factor in it working as a 'unique' sort of repeatable 'ritual' that can be undertaken as a 'physical' 'act of doing' to 'mark an important life-event' (*Warnscale* participant, RGi). One participant described how she would 'go back to and to dip in and out of sections... the book is a very beautiful reminder of the walk, but also feels like a deeper resource for thinking about land, children, belonging'. To that end, the book becomes a memory trigger (an artefact) that can be used after or away from the performance site and can enable participants to remember and revisit it in their mind and over time make different meaning from it as their perspective and life circumstances change. The book also becomes an artefact that might help participants reconstruct and remember the performance for themselves. It can also work as a tool for them to 'walk' someone else through the performance even when away from the site sharing their experiences. In this way it opens up conversations that might otherwise not have happened. A number of responses reflected this. One remarked that:

I return to the book, to remind myself of an issue that still feels unresolved to me, and hope very much to return to the walk soon. It is definitely something I will share with others in the same position as and when it arises (*Warnscale* participant, RGi).

The book form also enables participants who are unable to travel to the site or undertake it in person to do so in their imagination. This is something that a number of distant-participants, including a participant in Australia (see participant MM above), have done.

When asked if they could imagine undertaking the performance/walk (with the book) in the future either by themselves or with friends, partners, family members or a group, a number said that they already had revisited and re-walked the performance. One participant replied that:

Absolutely. I would particularly like to do the whole walk on my own and with my partner, to share the time, the journey and reflection and the unique beauty of this particular place and experience (*Warnscale* participant, AD).

Another said she could 'imagine taking others on the walk and using the book to introduce both the ideas and concepts behind the book and the notion of using walking as a form of reflection was powerful' (*Warnscale* participant, JK). Someone else cited the book itself, which she

described as ‘beautiful’, and remarked on that way that it ‘has helped her feel able to speak about the walk and its importance to me with greater confidence’, adding that she has:

gifted a book to my ex-husband and planned to walk with him (on Wednesday). I want to share the walk with him and give us a chance to reflect on our shared loss (*Warnscale* participant, ZA).

The same participant ‘plans to revisit the walk annually’ and sometimes with her Gateway

Women ‘mentorship group’. Another participant wrote that she would:

love to do the walk again – either alone, or with close friends who are also childless, or with another group of childless women. Although it might feel difficult, I think I would also like to do it with my sister, who has two children, in order to share some of this with her and think about our places in the family (*Warnscale* participant, RGi).

The participant who had conceived a child through fertility treatment with donor eggs wrote:

I would like to repeat the walk by myself at first, and then again with my partner and child. I'd like to repeat this a further time at a point when I can talk about my experiences with my older child when she would have some deeper understanding of the choices we made to have her and how we went about this process (*Warnscale* participant, JH).

The incorporation into *Warnscale* of a range of ‘stories’ and experiences became for this same participant a means by which to connect to ‘other women who have gone before and come to terms with *their* circumstances’. This was an aspect of the performance that she felt could help other participants who are ‘childless-by-circumstance’ to acknowledge themselves more positively *and* be more positively acknowledged by others and society (*Warnscale* participant, JH). For many the performance became a means of ‘individual acceptance and acknowledgement’ whilst the exhibition¹²⁸ and the book ‘make the images and reflections on this issue more public, and hopefully stimulate debate or reframing of the issue’. ‘Projects like this one’, said one participant, ‘acknowledge and support what “we” went and are going through as women and men living with this loss’ (*Warnscale* participant, JH). For one participant the performance provided a:

space to feel comfortable talking about things that are hard to process and acknowledge and for others to have an understanding. I think the more women and men talk about their own realities in a more open atmosphere inspires others to do the same. Just being involved in this project has made me more comfortable talking about my circumstances and my feelings around them (*Warnscale* participant, MZ).

¹²⁸ This participant (JH) is referring to the *Warnscale* exhibition in Buttermere Village Hall that accompanied the launch-walk.

This echoes another participant's response that:

I think it could, most powerfully by offering women a place where we 'belong', in some way, a place that is ours to return to and celebrate/grieve/be. I think its naming as a place for women who are childless could also make others aware of a stigma that is often unstated but much felt, and invite them to acknowledge the creativity and resourcefulness of many such women more positively (*Warnscale* participant, RGi).

Warnscale therefore, it seems, gives participants a material location for their experiences, their grief and their hopes in such a way that can be identified as feminine sublime. One participant saw the performance as a 'unique' response to the subject matter, adding:

there are plenty of blogs, forums, articles, etc. out there – this was an embodied experience rather than an online conversation (I'm not knocking those, they can be really helpful), but somehow this was different. Having the courage to do the walk was, I guess, part of my own healing journey, and I have no idea how long that journey will be – maybe the rest of my life, who knows (*Warnscale* participant, RGi).

These responses reflect, I suggest, how *Warnscale* was effective in such a way that echoed aspects of pilgrimages for rites-of-passage and of the therapeutic landscapes and mobilities discussed earlier. This can be seen in the way participants reflected positively on the embodied *active* engagement in the scenographic 'walkscape'¹²⁹, achieved because of how the performance required them to engage physically, cognitively and emotionally. The *sociability* of the performance, whether that be for the solitary participant who 'communed' with themselves or the 'communal' participant who through side-by-side walking and *communitas*, evolved 'supportive socialities' and for whom the performance opened up channels and networks of communication with others – all in the *context* of the underlying subject matter.

¹²⁹ Reference "Walking Together: The Embodied and Mobile Production of Therapeutic Landscape', Karolina Doughty in Chapter 1, page 10.

Conclusions

Making A Case: How the Practice-as-Research Project Contributed to New Knowledge

The outcomes of *Warnscale* analysed in Chapter 3 demonstrate, I suggest, that through an applied use of a series of scenographic principles evolved from the concept of the feminine sublime, the performance was successful in enabling participants to reflect on, re-image *and* transform their relationship to their experiences of childlessness-by-circumstance. It could be suggested that the performance therefore functioned successfully as ‘socially engaged contemporary scenography’ and achieved the social and cultural aims that I set out to achieve when planning and creating it. These outcomes, added to those I analysed earlier in the chapter when discussing *The Gathering*, draw me to conclude that this practice-as-research project has been successful in its ‘primary’ aim of contributing original knowledge in the fields of site-specific performance and walking-performance, and the emerging field of ‘socially engaged contemporary scenography’. It has succeeded in its ‘secondary’ aim of contributing to the associated fields of applied performance practice, therapeutic landscape and therapeutic mobilities. In addition, I suggest the project offers knowledge to the field of English literature and history through its investigation and application of the writing and walking practice of Dorothy Wordsworth and her contemporaries. Furthermore, this project also developed creative processes and thinking in theatre and performance design and cross-disciplinary performance-making. It offers up methodological, scenographic-led approaches and models of practice that can be applied to the creation of further site-specific, landscape walking-performance dealing with *other* ‘missing’ life-events.

With reference to Baugh’s quote made in the introduction to this thesis, I argue that this research project has, as intended, furthered the ‘function and purpose of performance’ and that as a scenographer and through my scenographic-led practice-as-research I have found ‘new ways to

engage and interact with audiences and with contemporary issues and concerns' (Baugh, 2013: 223). Key to the bringing of original knowledge was the applied use of a the six principles evolved from my interpretation of the concept of the feminine sublime, made in response to Dorothy Wordsworth and her contemporaries' approaches to landscape.

The approaches to landscape of Dorothy Wordsworth and her contemporaries offered me, as a practitioner, alternative ways to look at, see and enter into the physical and metaphorical landscape of my scenographic practice. Their work, which I discovered and engaged with during this research project, enabled me to understand, interrogate and develop my practice-as-research project in ways that I had not previously considered. Though I recognised powerful links between and even an affinity between the feminine sublime and my creative practice, the process of working with the concept in an applied way evolved over a period of time. Soon however the set of scenographic principles I evolved provided me with a means to pursue harder and with a clear focus and intention my artistic ambition that *The Gathering* and especially *Warnscale* would face head-on, and transform, the effects of the 'missing' life-event of biological childlessness-by-circumstance.

Reframing and reworking pilgrimages for rites-of-passage through the lens of the concept of the feminine sublime allowed me to work with notions of transformation. Unlike a traditional pilgrimage or rite of passage this concept is open-ended and does not seek to offer alternative identities but instead creates a 'space' into which participants can tentatively step as and when needed. This means that neither participant nor performance is weighed down with false expectation that a complete transformation will be achieved, or that an inappropriate or unwanted set of outcomes is imposed on participants. Instead the performance becomes a 'safe' and creative space of possibility, conversation and reflection. Feedback suggests that *The Gathering* and particularly *Warnscale*, using scenographic principles drawn from the concept of the feminine sublime, created a 'space' that enabled participants to find alternative perspectives

on childlessness-by-circumstance and other forms of biological motherhood and to re-image their identity. This re-imaging seemed to enable participants to go forward and ‘walk’ with positivity towards life-paths that were different to those they had hoped, or planned, to follow.

Looking Forward: Future Applications of the Outcomes

Future practice will seek to take forward the scenographic principles created for this research project. Key components of that practice will include the foregrounding of a visual ‘image-based’ performance language that sees the coalition of performance, installation, landscape, science and participation all in the context of a ‘real’ ‘missing’ life-event subject matter. The absence of ‘provided’ narratives was liberating and enabling in the way it allowed participants to engage, think and feel through visual-metaphor instead of words and speech. They were able to make their own meaning and connections, all be it guided by the scenographic-dramaturgy and the cross-disciplinary layering of information and detail. Added to this the concept of the feminine sublime enabled the landscape of the performance and the underlying subject matter to be brought into sharp focus simultaneously.

Future projects will also incorporate and develop the three-tier research process it evolved. This process included ‘primary/site’, secondary/subject’ and ‘tertiary/social’ research and involved the investigation of the site and its “earth science”, the research into the social science of the subject, and the collaboration with the individuals and groups concerned with both site and subject matter. This can be done through direct engagement with, and investigation of, the underlying subject matter and the involvement of a focus group. That process will locate participants and subject matter at the heart of any performance.

This practice-led research project saw a development in my scenographic-dramaturgical use of the landscape, which moved from a broader use of landscape features in *Fissure* into a narrowing

focus of the landscapes, shepherds and ewes in *The Gathering* and then to an individual, bespoke and very specific use of the landscape in *Warnscale*. Upon reflection I consider that this bespoke intimate scale, which allows for a particular sort of quiet focussing on the performance and the subject matter is particularly appropriate when dealing with ‘missing’ or challenging life-events and is the form that my future practice will pursue. By making the subject matter and the intentions of a performance achieve a transformative outcome, as was the case with *Warnscale*, I suggest, that outcome is more likely to occur and will be reflected in how I construct and frame future performances.

The way that the book form of *Warnscale* allows the performance to be undertaken by solo or group participants and the way that it is engaging social groups in ‘walking’ parties is a form of mediation that I would pursue again. The on-going nature of the performance has many artistic, practical and organizational benefits but it also has limitations. The main ‘loss’ is that the landscape is not animated and performed through artistic interventions or scenes as seen in *The Gathering*. Future work will not disregard this form but will seek to carefully consider the scale and location of a performance. It will guide and immerse ‘larger’ number of participants and engage them intimately and directly with an underlying subject matter in such a way that works communally but also enables a transformative experience for each individual or ‘collective’.

The rural mountainous landscapes in which I created *The Gathering* and *Warnscale* were, as discussed in this thesis, deliberately chosen. However, I am aware that their remoteness, the physically demanding nature of the performance coupled with the need for the participant to travel by car or public transport or to stay for a period of time near the site, has implications in terms of access, cost, time, organisation and inclusivity. Looking forward, these are concerns that I would consider and address to ensure social inclusivity in such a way that might lead to my practice being made with a focus on the local, the social and the domestic.

There are aspects of Dorothy Wordsworth's journal that I did not focus on in this research project and would like to investigate more fully. These include her writing about the domestic realm of the house (Dove Cottage), her involvement in looking after William and Mary Wordsworth's children and 'chores' such as mending and making. This could inform the underlying subject matter of repair and adoption that future practice might pursue. There could, for me as a practitioner, be a revived interest in domestic spaces and the materials and skills associated with them including fabric, stitching, wool and knitting. That Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals* incorporated an attention to, and valuing of, the domestic reflected how she, like many of her contemporaries, *encountered* and *noticed* the feminine sublime in the minutiae and detail of the everyday and close to hand. In so doing this revealed and re-imaged the 'domestic' and found transformative possibilities there as opposed to the high peaks and rocky crags already explored in my practice and Dorothy Wordsworth's writing. Indeed, aspects of *Warnscale* did work with this domestic scale and the pleasures of commonplace things in the way the performance invites participants to enjoy a cup of tea and Grasmere Ginger Biscuit whilst sheltering in the bothy or resting and chatting on the grassy turf outside. Similarly, in *The Gathering* the figure of The Woman, drew attention to the material detail and specificity of the landscape as well as to domestic interiors and lives.

In the end however, the underlying subject matter, focus group, intended outcomes and *who* the participants are would be the main factors informing those decisions. What is certain is that the practice will take the form of socially engaged scenography, created through the framework of the feminine sublime.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: *Warnscale*, Mapping-Walk – Call-out for Participants



Walking-Art Project, Cumbria

Artist seeks participants for the creation of an interactive mountain walk, created through a mapping exercise which explores the under represented life-event of involuntary childlessness.

Artist Louise Ann Wilson is creating an interactive walk in an upland area of the Lake District, Cumbria. The proposed walk will follow a route through a dramatic and varied landscape selected specifically for the project that will provide participants the opportunity to reflect on a significant, but under represented, life-event, namely, the event of wanting to be, but not becoming, a biological mother.

Louise is looking to engage a small group of individual women who are childless not by choice but circumstance in a mapping exercise that evolves the walk she has already plotted in outline. Participants, either one-to-one or in a group, will search for and explore features of the landscapes that symbolically reflect experiences that relate to being without a biological child. Landscape features might, for instance, include: a rocky steep climb; a mirror-like tarn that reflects the sky in its still surface; and fleeting phenomena such as a delicate flower rooting in the crack of a rock, rain clouds that gather on the horizon, and the moon as it waxes full. From these mapping exercises one single multi-layer map plotting a rite-of-passage transition-walk will be created that can be used by solo walkers as well as groups.

Louise would be interested in hearing from you if the following applies:

- You are looking at a future that might not involve having your biological child. This might be due to your life or social circumstances, or to biologically-determined or age-related infertility, and you might have attempted, or decided against, fertility treatment.
- You are an experienced walker happy to cross uneven and steep, rocky terrain, regardless of inclement weather, in a mountainous area for a day.
- You are interested in the process of mapping the journey (one day of walking), and later undertaking the finished walk and reflecting on it.

Louise is planning the 'mapping' walks to take place in Cumbria in 2014.

The completed walk will be available to walk in spring 2015.

If you would like to find out more, please email Louise at louise@louiseannwilson.com.

To develop this project Louise is working with scientist Joyce Harper, sociologist Celia Roberts. It is supported by Gateway Women, CARE Fertility Group, ACE, the AHRC and LICA, Lancaster University.

www.louiseannwilson.com

Appendix 2a: *Warnscale* and *The Gathering*: Ethics Questionnaire

November 2009

THE UNIVERSITY OF LANCASTER

PFACT project information and ethics questionnaire

(To be completed by the student together with their supervisor in all cases)

Name of student: Louise Ann Wilson

Name of supervisors: Geraldine Harris & Andrew Quick

Project Title: *Land-Mark*: Transitioning Life-Events through Site-Specific & Landscape Walking-Art and Performance (working title).

Within this overall project there are two individual practice as research projected they are: *The Gathering* (Snowdonia Project) and the Walking-Art Project, Cumbria (title tbc.)

1. General information

1.1 Have you, if relevant, discussed the project with

☐

the Data Protection Officer?

☐

the Freedom of Information Officer?

☐

N/A

(Please tick as appropriate.)

1.1 Does any of the intellectual property to be used in the research belong to a third party?

Y / **N**

1.2 Are you involved in any other activities that may result in a conflict of interest with this research?

Y / **N**

1.3 Will you be working with an NHS Trust?

Y / **N**

1.4 If yes to 1.3, what steps are you taking to obtain NHS approval?

1.5 If yes to 1.3, who will be named as sponsor of the project?

1.6 What consideration has been given to the health and safety requirements of the research?

For ongoing project Research & Development (R&D) and field work on location Louise Ann Wilson is covered by LAW Co Ltd's Annual Insurance Policy (a copy of which can be made available if required). She is trained in Walking Group Leader (WGL) and associated outdoor skills and has over twenty years of experience in making out-door site-specific and walking performance and art works.

Project A: *The Gathering* (Snowdonia Project) is a professional site-specific walking performance that will take place at Hafod Y Llan sheep farm, which is situated in the Nant Gwynant valley and extends onto the foothills and uplands of Snowdon, Snowdonia, Wales. Performance dates: 12, 13, 14 September 2014.

The project is commissioned and produced by the National Theatre Wales (NTW) with Louise Ann Wilson Company Ltd (LAW Co), the National Trust, and the Snowdonia National Park Authority. Audiences will be recruited in the same way as for most theatre or live-art shows i.e. through the NTW box office, company and partner websites, and national marketing and publicity campaigns. The nature of the walk involve will be widely publicised and when booking tickets audience will be able to choose what grade of walk they want, and are able, to undertake. There are three options: 1. upland mountain walk, 2. upland valley walk, 3. lowland valley bottom walk. All three walks will be sign posted and guided. Walks 1 & 2 will be led by a team of qualified Mountain Leaders (ML) working out of Plas Y Brenin Mountain Centre. The walkers to ML ratio will be 1 to 8. The Mountain Rescue and local emergency services will be fully briefed and aware that the event is taking place.

Plas y Brenin, National Theatre Wales, and LAW CO Ltd will provide the necessary Public Liability and Employers Insurance. Plas Y Brenin will be leading on Health & Safety (H&S) and Risk Assessments with regard to the walking and outdoor component of the project (for audience/participants, performers and technicians). They will plan and deliver, in strict adherence with their Mountain Centre codes of practice, the correct: trained MLs for the job, route planning, ML to walker ratio, first aid, emergency protocols, poor weather practice, equipment for all extremes of weather (hot to cold), radio and satellite communication systems etc.

There will be three versions of the performance project:

Version A will be undertaken in good and appropriate weather conditions;

Version B will be undertaken if weather conditions become inclement near the summit and upland; Version C will be undertaken if weather conditions are assessed to be too dangerous for the walk to take place and in this instance the performance will take place inside the farm buildings located at the bottom of the valley.

Highly experienced project and production managers employed by NTW will ensure the safe set up and running of the non-walking components of the project (the performance will take place out-doors in the open air and inside on the farm). Full Risk Assessments and H&S will be undertaken and they will oversee and coordinate, working alongside Plas Y Brenin, all aspects of the performance run safely.

Project B: Walking-Art Project, Cumbria, is a professional interactive mountain walk created through a mapping exercise which explores the under represented life-event of involuntary childlessness. It is produced by LAW Co experts in landscape walking art and performance. The proposed walk will follow a route through a dramatic and varied landscape selected specifically for the project that will provide participants the opportunity to reflect on a significant, but under represented, life-event, namely, the event of wanting to be, but not becoming, a biological mother.

Route planning and safety

Phase 1 – R&D and route finding

I have deliberately chosen the walk to follow a well used and mapped walking route. The walk is a public right of way in a popular part of Buttermere in the Lake District.

As a trained WGL I always walk with the appropriate equipment, First Aid kit, walking wear, maps, emergency instructions etc. In advance of any participants walking the proposed route I have organised to walk, in late February 2014, with a qualified Mountain Leader, this is in order to confirm the route is suitable for the project. During this walk the ML will officially advise: that the route is safe; define the level of difficulty of the walk on a scale of 1 to 10; outline what kit anyone would need to walk it and under what condition the walk should not be undertaken. The ML will also consider, with me, if the exact mapped route will need sign posting in some way. We will employ the ML to work with us in an advisory capacity on risk assessment and H&S documents.

Phase 2 – Focus Group mapping-walk/s

In March/April 2014 Louise will walk with a small group of approximately six participants who will be drawn from a focus group.

This walk will be led, ensuring the safety of the walkers, by Louise and the ML. However, the ratio of walkers to leader will have been outlined in advance of the walk and additional Mountain Leader will be employed to ensure this ratio is correctly implemented.

The call-out for participants clearly states that to become involved in the project it is crucial that: ‘You are an experienced walker happy to cross uneven and steep, rocky terrain, regardless of inclement weather, in a mountainous area for a day’. Louise will have met all the focus group participants who are interested in taking part in the project and she will be able to assess the fitness and suitability of those interesting in participating in the mapping exercise.

There will be a comprehensive list that outlines exactly what any walking participant is required to bring. This list will outline appropriate: clothing based on the weather conditions, what food and drink to bring, the sort of footwear necessary for undertaking the walking route and the graded difficulty of the walk, as provided by our Mountain Leader.

Phase 3 – the Final Walk

The final walk will require a kit of items, a map, safety information, and emergency information and will be available to walk over the space of a lunar month in June 2014. Participants can walk the piece either solo, in pairs or in groups (it will be a day of walking). They will not be able to walk the project walk without registering. It is important to point out that the walking route for the project is regularly used and well walked part of the Lakes, its path are clearly worn and it does not take walkers ‘off the beaten track’.

For the month duration the exact route will be clearly mapped signed posted as necessary (as discussed above). People who want to walk the project will have to sign up and will only be able to walk having received the appropriate information

Update on the LAW Co website and via Tweets will advise on whether the local weather condition making walking possible.

Audiences/walkers undertaking the walk independently from our Mountain Leader supervised event on the 14th June 2014 will be advised through a disclaimer developed with the company solicitors that they do so at their own risk, and that LAW Co Ltd will not remain liable for any accident or injury incurred whilst exploring the area.

2. Information for insurance or commercial purposes

(Please put N/A where relevant, and provide details where the answer is yes.)

- 2.1 Will the research involve making a prototype? Y / N / N/A
- 2.2 Will the research involve an aircraft or the aircraft industry? Y / N / N/A
- 2.3 Will the research involve the nuclear industry? Y / N / N/A
- 2.4 Will the research involve the specialist disposal of waste material? Y / N / N/A
- 2.5 Do you intend to file a patent application on an invention that may relate in some way to the area of research in this proposal? If YES, contact Gavin Smith, Research and Enterprise Services Division. (ext. 93298)
- Y / N / N/A

3. Ethical information

(Please confirm this research grant will be managed by you, the student and supervisor, in an ethically appropriate manner according to:

- (a) the subject matter involved;
(b) the code of practice of the relevant funding body; and
(c) the code of ethics and procedures of the university.)

- 3.1 Please tick to confirm that you are prepared to accept responsibility on behalf of the institution for your project in relation to the avoidance of plagiarism and fabrication of results.
- ☐
- 3.2 Please tick to confirm that you are prepared to accept responsibility on behalf of the institution for your project in relation to the observance of the rules for the exploitation of intellectual property.
- ☐
- 3.3 Please tick to confirm that you are prepared to accept responsibility on behalf of the institution for your project in relation to adherence to the university code of ethics.
- ☐
- 3.4 Will you give all staff and students involved in the project guidance on the ethical standards expected in the project in accordance with the university code of ethics?
- Y / N / N/A

- 3.5 Will you take steps to ensure that all students and staff involved in the project will not be exposed to inappropriate situations when carrying out fieldwork?
Y / N / N/A
- 3.6 Is the establishment of a research ethics committee required as part of your collaboration? (This is a requirement for some large-scale European Commission funded projects, for example.)
Y / N / N/A
- 3.7 Does your research project involve human participants i.e. including all types of interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, records relating to humans, human tissue etc.?
Y / N / N/A
- 3.7.1 Will you take all necessary steps to obtain the voluntary and informed consent of the prospective participant(s) or, in the case of individual(s) not capable of giving informed consent, the permission of a legally authorised representative in accordance with applicable law?
Y / N / N/A
- 3.7.2 Will you take the necessary steps to find out the applicable law?
Y / N / N/A
- 3.7.3 Will you take the necessary steps to assure the anonymity of subjects, including in subsequent publications?
Y / N / N/A
- 3.7.4 Will you take appropriate action to ensure that the position under 3.7.1 – 3.7.3 are fully understood and acted on by staff or students connected with the project in accordance with the university ethics code of practice?
Y / N / N/A
- 3.8 Does your work involve animals? If yes you should specifically detail this in a submission to the Research Ethics Committee. The term animals shall be taken to include any vertebrate other than man.
Y / N / N/A
- 3.8.1 Have you carefully considered alternatives to the use of animals in this project? If yes, give details.
Y / N / N/A
- 3.8.2 Will you use techniques that involve any of the following: any experimental or scientific procedure applied to an animal which may have the effect of causing that animal pain, suffering, distress, or lasting harm? If yes, these must be separately identified.
Y / N / N/A

Signature (student): Louise Ann Wilson

Date: 1 March 2014

Signature (supervisor): Andrew Quick and Geraldine Harris

Date: 1 March 2014

N.B. Do not submit this form without completing and attaching the Stage 1 self-assessment form.

Appendix 2b: Warnscale and The Gathering: Ethics Form

Ethical research at Lancaster: STAGE 1 SELF-ASSESSMENT (PART B)

This form should be completed if you have selected option 5(f) in Part A of the stage 1 self-assessment form, or following discussion with RSO. The information provided will be reviewed by the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). If you cannot easily fit the information within the space below, consider whether a stage 2 form would be more appropriate.

Principal Investigator/ Student name: Louise Ann Wilson

pFACT ID number (if applicable – staff only):

6. Please state the aims and objectives of the project (no more than 150 words, in lay-person's language):

This Practice as Research Project seeks to discover if, and how, site-specific walking-art and performance can enable participants to articulate, reflect upon and respond to unplanned or challenging life-events. To do this I am creating two professional projects A & B:

A: Cumbria Project (June 2014) will create an interactive mountain walk with a multi-layer map-book plotting a rite-of-passage walk developed through a series of mapping exercises. Working in the Lake District, the walk will follow a bespoke route that will allow walkers to reflect the under represented, life-event of wanting to be, but not becoming, a biological mother.

B: The Gathering (Sept 2014) will reveal the day-to-day and seasonal workings of Hafod y Llan sheen farm in Snowdonia and the relationship between rural and human life-events.

7. Please explain why you consider the ethical risk to be low, with particular reference to any areas of potential concern highlighted in Q.3 and Q.4 (PART A):

Project A: aims to provide walkers the opportunity to reflect on a significant life-event of wanting to be, but not becoming, a biological mother. To create the project I am engaging a focus-group of individual women who are childless, not by choice but circumstance, in a walking and mapping exercise that later evolves a single map. This is an art project, it is not therapy or social research - the landscape, and walk, will be a metaphor through which their experiences are explored and mapped non-literally. The self-selecting focus group have: chosen to participate, full anonymity, and confidentiality, and aware this is: an art project that leads to the creation of a map (for public use), a PAR project. H&S is covered.

8. If your research involves human participants, please summarise (as applicable) how participants will be recruited and consent obtained (copies of supporting documentation - information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc should be attached, if available*).

Full supporting documentation attached ☒

Supporting documentation will be submitted if grant awarded ☐

Supporting documentation to be submitted later (please include details below) ☒

Recruitment is through a targeted call-out drafted with advice from experts working in associated fields and it will be circulated via a number of websites and forums. Interested parties are asked to: express their interest in participating in the project via email; attend an initial information gathering meeting and then a one-day mapping exercise in Cumbria; undertake the finished walk; and reflecting on it (see below). All correspondence is treated as confidential and encrypted; inputs from the participants will be used only with their consent (for which forms will be written) and anonymised, unless the stated otherwise, in writing. Qual' & Quant' questionnaires will be circulated and info gathered will be anonymised.

9. If you have any other relevant information please provide details below:

Project A: To develop this project I've been working closely with scientist Joyce Harper, UCL and sociologist Celia Roberts, Lancaster University. It is supported by Gateway Women, CARE Fertility Group, Arts Council England (ACE), Fertility Friends, and the Infertility Network UK - all of whom have been consulted in its development and the writing and circulating of the focus group call-out. Furthermore, they'll continue to advise as it develops. Project B: does not engage a focus group. It will create a public, site-specific (outdoor) performance produced and ticketed by National Theatre Wales as part of their 2014 theatre programme. H&S, risk assessments, and insurance for both projects will be covered.

*Where supporting documentation is not available at the time this form is submitted it will usually need to be provided and approved before the project begins (or recruitment of participants begins, depending on the nature of the project). Please remember to allow sufficient time for approvals. Contact the Research Support Office for further details ethics@lancaster.ac.uk

Louise Ann Wilson

The Cumbria Walking-Art Project

Information for Mapping-Walk Participants

Thankyou for volunteering to participate in the Cumbria Walking-Art Project during 2014. As you know Louise Ann Wilson (Louise) would like to engage you in the project as an individual member of what she is calling the ‘focus-group’ and in the following ways:

1. The walking-mapping exercise in spring/summer/autumn/winter 2014.
2. The launch walk in March 2015 (subject to confirmation).
3. Feedback – she will be glad of your feedback and will provide a simple and non labour intensive way of doing this at various stages of the process.

The mapping-walks in March-July will engage the ‘focus group’ walkers with the landscape which we will map as metaphor for the experience of facing a future without a biological child. Participants will look at, listen to, and really ‘see’ the place we are walking in and on that day there will be space to be quiet, write, draw, and/or reflect on the physical and metaphorical journey.

Louise is aware this is a sensitive subject matter and it is important for you know that: you will not be asked, or expected, to share anything that you don’t feel comfortable to talk about. This is an art project which uses metaphor, walking, mapping and landscape as a tool with which to explore the subject matter – words are not central to that and there will be no pressure to speak ‘out’ or ‘do’ or ‘supply’ anything – your presence is the important thing and your reflections might happen on that day or at a later point.

If you decide at any point that you want to stop participating in the focus-group activity and wish to withdraw you are fully able to.

If you decide that you want to withdraw whilst on a focus-group walk you will be asked to remain with the person who is leading the walk until such as time they can organise for you to depart in safety and without compromising the health and safety of other members of the group, the leader or yourself. This might involve you remaining with the leader and the group until the walk is completed.

If you choose to withdraw your data from the project after participation for up to 2 weeks after the activity your data will be destroyed and not used but after this point the data might well remain in the project.

All digital data collected will be stored on the Cumbria Walking-Art Project hard-drive and physical material such as maps will be safely stored and archived once the project is complete.

MAPPING-WALK SCHEDULE

The plan for the mapping-walk in spring/summer/autumn/winter 2014 is:

- Start time and location tbc.
- Intro and Start walk.
- Afternoon: Complete walk.
- Afternoon: Reflection & Mapping time in Buttermere (1hour approx)
- Finish

THE COMPLETED WALK

Please note, because this is Research & Development project by its very nature it will evolve creatively and practically and is therefore subject to change so the following is indicative. The mapping-walk(s) will inform the creation of a completed walk and accompanying walking ‘materials’, that will be launched in the spring 2015 (date tbc), to which you will be invited. Louise then plans to open the walk up for interested groups and individual members of the public to undertake in the future. They will be able to do so through ordering a copy of the ‘walking kit’ through our website or other associated organisations with a specialist interest in the subject matter explored. The kit will contain:

- A custom made, multi-layered map to guide them and which indicate a series of ‘stations’ en route where the walker will look at the view, a plant, a rock, the clouds; listen to a water fall; read some text; and perhaps perform a simple action such as lying in the grass to look at the sky or a view or to take their shoes and socks off and step into the cool tarn.
- An almanac that contains a page that relates to each station and shows and juxtaposes: artistic renderings of thoughts, ideas, memories and experiences shared and expressed during the mapping-walks undertaken in March/April; layers of info about the landscape and it’s: geology, flora, fauna, topographical features, and history specific to that place; and human reproductive and biological information.
- Items that they will use on the walk such as a geology lens, a custom made frame to hold up to the horizon, a Gilpin style mirror, or a pair of scissors with which to trim a piece of heather and add to crack in a rock in order to create an accumulative, temporary and ephemeral installation that draw attention to a particular landscape feature.
- Health & Safety instructions and mountain safety instructions.

Your contributions to the project through the mapping-walk in spring and the launch walk in the spring 2015 (date tbc), may inform artistic decisions Louise makes in creating all of the above.

Your participation in the mapping-walk and/or involvement in the spring 2015 launch walk (date tbc) and subsequent feedback will be confidential and anonymous. However, we would like to acknowledge and credit the ‘focus-group’ involvement and contributions. This can be one credit for the group (and you will know you are part of that group) or if you would like to be named as a member of that group that is possible too.

DOCUMENTATION AND CONSENT

As an aid memoir, Louise would like to bring a camera on the mapping-walk. She will not photograph faces without your permission, or if you would prefer she will not photograph you at all.

On the spring 2015 launch walk (date tbc) Louise (through LAW Co) would like to engage a professional (female) photographer to document the launch walk for the following purposes: documentation and possible exhibition; Louise’s research projects (thesis, articles, presentations); and as evidence of our activities in reports to funders. The photographer will be sensitive and briefed to photograph accordingly i.e. in such a way that makes individuals not identifiable i.e. a hand touch as rock, a figure traversing a rock etc.

Please let us know your preference in relation to the above through the consent form.

THE WALK AND HEALTH & SAFETY

The mapping-walk we will follow a route that takes us from Gatesgarth Farm, up Warnscale Beck, to Black Beck Tarn and Innominate Tarn, then back to Dubs Quarry and descends Warnscale Head Bothy on the other side of the stream back to Gatesgarth Farm. It covers approx 8.5km, gains approx 500m height and takes approx 4-5 hours plus break stops.

The walking route covers ground that is regularly walked and follows a popular route with well-worn paths but because this is not a formal expedition run by an accredited outdoors centre. Louise Ann Wilson Co Ltd (abbreviated to LAW Co) is the company which has raised the funds for the project but you are not being employed it and the company insurance will not cover you for these walking days. Ultimately, your personal safety remains your own responsibility and not that of Louise, LAW Co, Lancaster University or any other third parties.

The mapping-walk(s) in spring/summer/autumn/winter and the launch walk in the spring 2015 (date tbc) will be led by Louise, who has undertaken Walking Group Leader training, and some walks will be supported by Helen Turton who is a fully qualified Mountain Guide and Leader. When walking with Louise and/or Helen, they will guide you throughout the day, taking you on a planned journey that has been properly risk assessed and Health & Safety checked in advance. Louise and/or Helen will make decisions about whether to proceed with the planned route on the day, should the weather change and prove dangerous, or should the abilities of the walking group not be compatible with the planned journey.

WEATHER, CLOTHING AND ESSENTIALS

The walking day is intended to be all-weather and will continue, rain or shine. However, should there be very strong winds or poor visibility we will contact each participant in order to cancel and reschedule the walk. **Please take time to read through this list of essentials, designed to keep you safe:**

- waterproof jacket with hood
- waterproof trousers
- please do not wear jeans or trainers
- small rucksack (with plastic bag liner to keep things dry inside)
- small first aid kit - few plasters, painkillers, **personal medication e.g. inhaler**
- spare extra layer of clothing for upper body - not wearing at the start of the walk e.g. fleece or jumper not cotton sweatshirt/hoodie (reminder to wear warm insulating layers of clothing next to skin made of synthetic, wool or silk – not cotton/denim, which soaks up moisture and stays wet and cold)
- hat, gloves, scarf/neck gaiter/buff (optional)
- sturdy outdoor boots with good grip and ankle support, worn with 1-2 layers of socks (good thick wool pair!)
- minimum 1 litre of drink and food - suggest a small thermos flask with warm drink at this time of year. Bring too much rather than too little food, to generate energy to keep warm - plan to have a small amount of 'emergency food' just in case e.g. chocolate bar.
- a packed lunch
- torch (in case delayed for any reason, although not planning to be returning after dark)
- compass and map (optional). If you feel you would like to bring the relevant OS map, it is: OL4 The English Lakes, North-Western Area. We recommend a waterproof copy!

Louise suggests everyone has a change of clothes (or at the very least, a spare change of socks) waiting for them in the transport to change into before the drive home. Helen Turton (Mountain Leader) or Louise Ann Wilson (walk leader) will bring a comprehensive group first aid kit, small group shelter, compass, GPS, map, and a spare thermos flask of warm drink.

If you would like to bring a camera, please feel free to take photographs of your own activities during the walk, or the surrounding landscape. However, we ask that you be sensitive to the other participants by not taking photographs that capture them and that you do not post your photography on any social media or public space.

RESEARCH PROJECT

The Cumbria Walking-Art Project is a stand-alone art project but it also forms part of the doctoral research studies that Louise is undertaking at Lancaster Institute of Contemporary Arts, Lancaster University. This means that she will write about it as part of my written thesis where you can expect full anonymity – indeed, she has to adhere to strict guidelines laid down by Lancaster University regarding the ethics of participation.

CONTACT DETAILS

Louise Ann Wilson
The LICA Building
Lancaster University
Bailrigg
Lancaster, LA1 4YW

M: 07944 632094

E: l.wilson4@lancaster.ac.uk / louise@louiseannwilson.com

If you have any concerns about the project please contact:

Professor Geraldine Harris
The LICA Building
Lancaster University
Bailrigg
Lancaster, LA1 4YW

T: 01524 594153

Email: g.harris@lancaster.ac.uk

USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

Gateway Women: <http://gateway-women.com>

Fertility Friends: <http://www.fertilityfriends.co.uk>

Infertility Network UK: <http://www.infertilitynetworkuk.com>

To develop this project Louise is working with scientist Joyce Harper, UCL; sociologist Celia Roberts, Lancaster University; Gateway Women; and CARE Fertility Group.

THANKYOU ☺



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Appendix 4: Warnscale, Mapping-Walk – Participant Consent Form

Louise Ann Wilson

The Cumbria Walking-Art Project

Consent Form for Focus-Group Participants

In order to make sure you are clear about, and comfortable with, the Focus-Group activities for the Cumbria Walking-Art project please could you answer the following:

Participant Name: [insert name]

Please delete YES / NO as appropriate

- I agree to take part in the mapping-walk and feedback on, date: [insert date] YES / NO
- I agree to take part in the pilot walk - date tbc YES / NO
- I agree that my contributions can inform the pilot-walk and the final-walk YES / NO
- I agree to be contacted following the spring mapping-walk for feedback YES / NO
- I agree to be contacted following the pilot-walk (date tbc.) for feedback YES / NO

As an aid memoir on the spring mapping-walk Louise would like to take a few photographs.

- I am happy to be photographed by Louise on, date: [insert date] YES / NO

On the launch walk in [insert month and date] LAW Co would like to engage a professional (female) photographer to document the pilot-walk for: documentation purposes, exhibitions and presentations, Louise's research projects, and as evidence of our activities in reports such as to funders. The photographer will be sensitive and briefed to photograph accordingly and in such a way that makes individuals not identifiable i.e. a hand touch as rock, a figure traversing a rock etc.

- I agree to be photographed by a female photographer on the launch walk (date tbc) YES / NO
- I agree for these photos to reveal my identity YES / NO
- I agree that the photographs can be used for the purposes outline above YES / NO

The Mountain Leader, Louise Ann Wilson, LAW Co Ltd, and Lancaster University are unable to accept responsibility for your individual safety.

- I understand, and accept that whilst engaged in the Cumbria Walking-Art Project I am responsibly for my own safety YES / NO

The Cumbria Walking-Art Project forms part of a PhD project that Louise is undertaking at Lancaster University and she will write about it as part of her thesis. Please can you confirm the following:

- I understand that this work forms part of Louise's Doctoral Research Project YES / NO
- I understand that my name will not appear in any thesis, reports, articles or presentations YES / NO

Participant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

THANKYOU ☺

Appendix 5: *Warnscale*, Mapping-Walk and Launch-Walk – Questionnaire (blank)



Warnscale

Questions for Mapping-Walk and Launch-Walk Participants

Many thanks for participating in the mapping-walks and/or launch-walk of *Warnscale: A Landmark Walk Reflecting on In/Fertility and Childlessness*. I would be grateful if you could answer the questions below. Your answers and reflections need only be short and will help me understand if the project has achieved what I hoped it might.

Information provided is for artistic and research purposes only and your name will not appear in connection with it in any websites, thesis, reports, articles or presentations. If you have any questions, please email Louise at louise@louiseannwilson.com

Participants Name:

1. Has participating in *Warnscale* enabled you to reflect on your particular circumstance?

If so, can you briefly outline your circumstance and say how you have reflected upon it?

2. Has your experience of, or relationship to, your particular circumstance changed – even in a small way – through your involvement with *Warnscale*?

If so, can you say how?

3. Has your involvement with *Warnscale* led you to re/consider the future life-paths you *might* choose to pursue or not pursue?

If so, can you say what these paths are and if they are new/different?

4. Are there aspects of the walk that you participated in and/or the book that you found/find particularly engaging?

If so, can you say what they were, and how?

5. Can you imagine undertaking the walk (with the book) in the future either by yourself or with a friend, partner, family member, or group?

Which would you find preferable and why?

6. Might *Warnscale* enable women who are 'childless by circumstance' acknowledge themselves more positively *and* be more positively acknowledged by others and society?

If you think so, can you comment on in what ways?

7. Is there anything else you feel happy to share?

THANKYOU – I AM TRULY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR TIME AND REFLECTIONS 😊

Please email them to me at: louise@louiseannwilson.com

Or, if you would prefer to post them my address is: [REDACTED]

www.louiseannwilson.com

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