‘The Echoes of a Place’

An investigation into the notion of place in the work of Dan Canham

Olivia Ainsworth
Student number: 3910717
Tutor: Eugene van Erven
Second marker: Sigrid Merx
University of Utrecht

Abstract

This research paper investigates the work of British choreographer and dancer Dan Canham. The focus of the investigation will be localised on the theoretical notion of 'place', in relation to Canham's work and performance theory. It will also utilise geographical and philosophical discourse in order to widen the research, creating a cross-disciplinary approach to the subject in question. It will assert that through the presentation of place in an artistic setting, an experiential understanding of place is processed and created by the receiver. This thesis will also suggest several tools that feature in Dan Canham's work in order to argue this point. The most potent of these is *choreo-mapping,* which suggests a hybrid of geographical and performative methodology in order to create a new spatial understanding within the presentation of place on stage.

I would like to thank Dan Canham for his cooperation with the research process and for his talent on stage.

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‘For me I love all that, the echoes of a place’

Dan Canham

Chapter I

Spatial Stories

In contemporary urban and architectural discourse, we are increasingly obsessed by figures which traverse space… these are all spatial metaphors, representing urban explorations, passages of revelation, journeys of discovery – "spatial stories". Through the personal and the political, the theoretical and the historical, we all tell spatial stories[1]

Michel de Certeau

To go to Lvov. Which station
for Lvov, if not in a dream, at dawn, when dew
gleams on a suitcase, when express
trains and bullet trains are being born. To leave
in haste for Lvov, night or day, in September
or in March. But only if Lvov exists[2]

Excerpt from 'To Go to Lvov' By Adam Zagajewski
Translated by Renata Gorczynski

[1] Michel de Certeau. "Spatial Stories", in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkley, 1988), 115-22.
[2] Adam Zagajewski. "To Go to Lvov." Poetry Foundation. Accessed 16 June 2014. http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/177929.

The night is electric. I'm sitting on a wooden floor between two strangers, pushed together and breathing in unison. It's August in Edinburgh and through the grubby window you can hear the dwindling din of the festival, as voices shout, drivers intermittently blare their horns and the patchwork of sounds still humming in the air form the remnants of the city's pulse. As we sit in what looks like a faded working men's club, we watch a young man purposefully enter the room and set an old tape player on a table. There's something ritualistic about his process as he places the object, handling it like a relic from the past. He presses 'play' and the sound springs into our ears, intertwining with the cacophony still drifting in through the window. He moves forward, breathes and begins.

My memory of this evening and the performance that occurred there has continued to echo in my mind for the last three years. I was taken to another place; although I had never been to Ireland, somehow on this electric night the performance brought a sense of the city of Limerick into the room. His movement, the sound, the heavy bodies pressed against me, the strung up, dim lights casting shadows like hidden stories and lost thoughts, all came together to create an ethereal glow that was alive. I sat, transported to this place, which at that moment lived in my body and mind. A place that is neither Edinburgh nor Limerick but that nonetheless exists.

In his book *Two Cities*, Polish poet Adam Zagajewski reflects on his birth city of Lvov (now in Ukraine and known as Lviv), dreaming of a place from which he was banished and will never truly know. Moving across the border to Poland the year he was born, Zagajewski's Lvov became a place of history; his introduction to the world remains as a faded memory. This memory is entrenched with loss but also imbued with a beauty created in the corridors of his mind. As with my experience in Edinburgh, the creation of a place by way of an artistic lens possesses a powerful transformative potential. It facilitates a presentation of the artist's understanding of a place and in turn is experientially processed by the receiver. Zagajewski ends the poem stating that Lvov 'is everywhere'[3]: a place does not necessarily need to be rooted, it can live within poetry,

[3] Adam Zagajewski. "To Go to Lvov." Poetry Foundation. Accessed 16 June 2014. http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/177929.

objects or ourselves. De Certeau states that we are all constantly travelling and exploring new places that we encounter but that also exist with a non-physical quality. These are our spatial stories and for Zagajewski Lvov is a spatial story, his spatial story; a place that he may never know physically but can nevertheless comprehend and transmit to a wider audience.

Dance can be as powerful a medium as poetry for the evocation of place. The notion of place is often problematised by its relationship with space, a relationship that can be comprehensively and semantically contained within the word 'spatial'. Gay McAuley acknowledges that in the English language there is an undeniable connection between space and place. She notes that there seems to be 'a certain slippage between them in so far as it provides a single adjective "spatial", which must serve as a descriptor for both space and place'[4]. Interestingly, this challenging definition points to the common ground between the two terms, but later in this introduction a selective synthesis of the discussion surrounding space and place will create an understanding for the two terms' limits for the purpose of this thesis.

I became fascinated with the transformative quality inherent in a performative presentation of place after experiencing my own spatial story when watching *30 Cecil Street*, the performance by dancer and choreographer Dan Canham described in the opening paragraphs. The experience I had in Edinburgh resonated deeply with me and two years later I expectantly sat down to watch his second piece, *Ours Was the Fen Country*. Yet again I was deeply affected and was inspired to make Canham's work the subject of this thesis. Through discussions with Canham himself and research into his work, I decided to investigate how the notion of place is explored through Canham's performances and ultimately to articulate the otherworldly experience of sitting on that wooden floor in Edinburgh all those years ago.

Dan Canham is a choreographer and dancer based in the UK. He began dancing with companies like DV8 and Kneehigh before being drawn to create his own work. Moving to Limerick, his hankering to forge an

[4] Gay McAuley. "Site-specific Performance: Place, Memory and the Creative Agency of the Spectator." *Arts: Journal of the Sydney University Arts Association* 27 (2005), 35.

artistic identity in a performative setting came to a peak and Canham began experimenting around the city, unknowingly starting a research process for his debut piece, *30 Cecil Street.* Initially created as a film in response to the lack of a live cultural scene in Limerick, Canham's piece evolved into a performative solo, which then premiered at the Forest Fringe in Edinburgh, 2011, before touring around the UK and internationally. Canham went on to form his own company, Stillhouse, with which he created his second performance, *Ours Was the Fen Country*. Conceived of in the Fens of East Anglia, this piece features four dancers, including Canham. Both of these performances are linked to the place where they were created and what is essential to their insightful quality is that both places portrayed no longer exist, or are on the verge of disappearance.

In an interview I conducted with him, Canham wondered: 'how do you conjure up a sense of place, how do you change the space with just your body and sound as the primary tools... how do you change the space and evoke somewhere completely different without being literal?'[5] It is here clear that his intentions lie within a discovery of the conceptual idea of place, an exploration that is carried out with body and sound as his 'primary tools'. In a parallel to this, and referring to my earlier brief introduction regarding the term 'spatial', my thesis will use certain theoretical tools in order to formulate an investigation into the notion of place, specifically seen through a lens of Dan Canham's work. In this theoretical vein, I will be focusing on a joint-disciplinary framework, split between performative and geographical research. For the sake of clarity, I will be limiting the greater understandings of the conceptual ideas of space and place in order to align with performative intentions and, most specifically, Dan Canham's work.

Before embarking on a thorough investigation of the terms space and place, it is useful to suggest a theoretical foundation to separate them, although some academics do use them interchangeably. 'Space' is an attempt to arrive at a notion that is non-referential. Essentially, it can be seen as a neutral area, or a canvas to which the brushstrokes are yet to be added. Space, therefore, has constant potential of becoming. The understanding of space as a neutral area can be contested as there are always connotations and

[5] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.

references attributed to every space (the building, the audience etc.), but the notion of neutrality and the absence of specifics is ultimately what separates space from place. Place is intrinsically referential and specific: a house is a space but a home is a place. As Gay McAuley confirms, 'space is taken to be a more general concept, and place a particular location within it'[6].

As a broader concept, space can be found within multiple disciplines. It can be closely tied to geography, as seen in Nigel Thrift's comment that 'space is the everywhere of modern thought'[7] and also to philosophy, reminiscent of Michel Foucault's polemic statement that 'the present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space'[8]. Conceptually, and especially in a cross-disciplinary context, space and place have both resisted definition. Geographer E. C. Relph observes that 'space is amorphous and intangible and not an entity that can be directly described and analysed. Yet, however we feel or explain space, there is nearly always some associated sense or concept of place'[9]. In attempting to arrive at a definition that encompasses multiple fields, we find that the two concepts are undeniably woven together, taking the form of a relationship of reliance: one cannot exist without the other.

The geographical field provides clearer divisions in the preferred understanding of the concepts. A more scientific understanding of the term space, related to the essentiality of its emptiness, acts as a starting point for academics writing in this discipline. Tim Cresswell notes that 'the empty space could then be used to develop a kind of spatial mathematics'[10], while also suggesting that 'space was not embodied but empty'[11]. Space is seen to be an all-encompassing entity and, elaborating further on this, Arturo Escobar highlights that 'western philosophy… has enshrined space as the absolute, unlimited and universal, while banning place to the realm of the particular, the limited, the local and the bound'[12]. According to these theoretical

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[6] Gay McAuley. "Site-specific Performance: Place, Memory and the Creative Agency of the Spectator." *Arts: Journal of the Sydney University Arts Association* 27 (2005), 35.
[7] Mike Crang and N. J. Thrift. *Thinking Space*. (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.
[8] Michel Foucault. "Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias." Foucault, Info. Accessed 25 May 2014. http://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heterotopia.en.html.
[9] E.C. Relph in Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers 2004), 21.
[10] Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers 2004), 19.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Arturo Escobar in Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers 2004), 19.

assumptions, then, place as opposed to space is ultimately entwined with the human condition; the specifics of life. The origin of place in the geographical field can be located in the 1960s when it was related to cultural geography, which tied together meaning and practice with human life in a given location[13].

Cresswell notes the move towards human geography and the burgeoning relationship between this particular strand of geographical study and philosophy. Seemingly, there is a growing understanding that space is the more general container term and place a more particularised way of understanding the world; a place is 'experienced'[14]. Within philosophical thought, the experiential quality of notions and ideas allows for a humanistic perspective to be assigned to place. French philosopher Marc Augé thus posits place as a historical and cultural ideal 'whose usage at least refers to an event (which has taken place), a myth (said to have taken place) or a history (high places)'[15]. Culturally mythical and perhaps even spiritual associations are suggested through the concept of 'high places'. These connote experiential qualities, whilst also creating an untouchable, indescribable or un-locatable classification to place, that possesses a duality of still alluding to a specific event or site.

Thus far we can see that space is an abstract concept that is a continuous expanse, philosophically and geographically describing the area that surrounds and envelops life. On the other hand, place signifies the specifics that are related, undeniably, to human life, which can be bound to location, culturally mythical or experiential, ultimately linked to the meaning that is within that place. The practice of placing names or coordinates on to a map arguably turns space into place, an action that can be said to possess intangible, referential qualities because of the constant reference to the past: the decisions made for naming a place are normally related to events that have occurred there. Experiential qualities and place-driven interrelations with human life affiliate place very closely with performance.

Place gives the impression of a certain locality; it provides a cultural understanding of a specific place. Nick

[13] Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers 2004), 17.
[14] Ibid, 21.
[15] Marc Augé. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. (London and New York: Verso. 1995), 82.

Kaye relates this to art as a whole: 'if one accepts the proposition that the meanings of utterances, actions and events are affected by their "local position", by the *situation* of which they are a part, then a work of art, too, will be defined in relation to its place and position'[16]. Within the geographical field, more often than not place is related to performative or creative practices, providing the conditions of possibility for creative social practice. Gay McAuley notes the interesting relationship between space and place in theatre: 'even in traditional theatre, by virtue of the liveness, spectators have an embodied experience of place, and the fictional places that are evoked in performance are experienced through the material reality of the presentational space'[17].

Creswell argues that place is an event rather than an ontological thing rooted in notions of the authentic, going on to say that, 'place as an event is marked by openness and change rather than boundedness and permanence' [18], a notion which contrasts with the above conclusions about the rootedness of place in geographical thinking. The lack of permanence and the flexibility innate within place can be here paralleled to performative work, as performance's ephemeral nature clearly resists a rootedness. Interestingly, when we come to look at these concepts through a performative lens there is potential to see place as a liminal concept, which parallels the abstract concept of space. From an original position where the delineation between the concepts is quite sharp, the introduction of performative thinking thus renders these limits less clear, allowing the notion of place to become more abstract. Further to this, Leslie Hill and Helen Paris note performance's deeply ingrained relationship with space and place: 'performance can be viewed as uniquely rooted to place because it happens in shared time and space with its audience, but it can also be said to be placeless in that it is non-object oriented and non-commodity based.'[19]

Site-specific performance, unlike the non-object oriented work described by Hill and Paris, is always defined by its relationship to objects, or rather places. McAuley asserts that 'site is not the opposite of place, it is

[16] Nick Kaye. *Site-specific Art: Performance, Place, and Documentation*. (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.
[17] Gay McAuley. "Site-specific Performance: Place, Memory and the Creative Agency of the Spectator." *Arts: Journal of the Sydney University Arts Association* 27 (2005), 49-50.
[18] Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers 2004), 39.
[19] Leslie Hill and Helen Paris. *Performance and Place*. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 6.

rather a particular kind of place, a place with a purpose'[20] and creative practices conceived in different sites are intrinsically linked to their respective birthplace. It could be said that in performative discourse, site is always rooted to a specific location, whereas place can be a moveable concept, much like Lvov, which as a place for Zagajewski, is everywhere. Although Pearson firmly states that site-specific works are 'inseparable from their sites'[21], other commentators highlight the many different types of site-specific performance work, including the site-based. This 'involves developing the work in a highly specific place with a view to transporting it to different sites at a later stage'[22]. In this mobility, ostensible site-specific performances can become 'placeless' (alluding to Hill and Paris's assumptions), but they can sometimes find 'a new lease of life as they engage with the different history and different memory system of the new places in which they are performed'[23]. With this site-less quality of place or *sense* of place, it is possible to traverse broader space. Kaye continues: 'in this respect, this sense of mobility, of spaces or places defined in fluid, shifting and transient acts and relationships, reveals further ties between approaches to site through visual art and theatre'[24]. Perhaps then, place has the possibility to be 'rootless' and site will always have a 'root'.

In performance, place can therefore be a fluid, moveable concept and so it is seemingly appropriate and practical to use dance as a discipline to study the notion. Additional research in the geographical field can help us understand ties between place, performance and event, and, conversely, connections between dance or movement and place. Geographer Catherine Nash notes that 'dance has now come to geography'[25] and that 'the vocabulary of dance is being enlisted in order to rethink ideas'[26]. Additionally, David Seamon clearly sees 'bodily mobility rather than rootedness and authenticity, [as] the key component to the

[20] Gay McAuley. "Site-specific Performance: Place, Memory and the Creative Agency of the Spectator." *Arts: Journal of the Sydney University Arts Association* 27 (2005), 35.
[21] Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks. *Theatre/archaeology*. (London: Routledge, 2001), 23.
[22] Gay McAuley. "Site-specific Performance: Place, Memory and the Creative Agency of the Spectator." *Arts: Journal of the Sydney University Arts Association* 27 (2005), 32.
[23] Ibid, 47.
[24] Nick Kaye. *Site-specific Art: Performance, Place, and Documentation*. (London: Routledge, 2000), 7.
[25] Catherine Nash. "Performativity in Practice: Some Recent Work in Cultural Geography." *Progress in Human Geography* 24.4 (2000): 653-64. 653.
[26] Ibid.

understanding of place'[27]. Thus, he refers to movements related to cooking in the kitchen as 'place-ballet', employing a dance metaphor as a process to describe time-space routines that interact with a specific place[28].

Several dance theorists use the broader concept of space in relation to the body. Carol Brown observes that choreography generates 'a sense of place through tangibly manipulating space as a material of the dance'[29], but the dancer may equally desire to portray, for example, a specific social interaction or emotion. Thus, dance as a field has much more of a relationship to space than place, as space is the constant medium through which a result is produced, while place is only one possible result. As has been mentioned previously, space, much like the body, has potential. Later in the same article, she expands on this subject by writing that 'location is always defined by action'[30], further emphasising that dance and movement can produce place or a sense of place.

In dance, the body interacts with the space and environment immediately around it. Roms highlights a complex relationship between 'ourselves, our bodies, and our environment, [between] our physical and sensual experience of place; and the impact a particular location can have on our lives'[31]. From this, it is possible to suggest that our bodies carry within them a sense of place through human identity but also a spatial presentation: the body as a site for performance. An environment and a place can therefore live within ourselves, impacting and affecting who we are, the associations we carry and our understanding of the world. Elaborating further, Thrift states that 'place, then, needs to be understood as an embodied relationship with the world. Places are constructed by people doing things… [they] are constantly being performed'[32]. This embodied relationship with the world is exactly what I will be studying within Canham's work, through a movement lens: a kinetic understanding of place and how this is used in performance.

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[27] David Seamon in Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers 2004.), 33.
[28] Ibid, 34.
[29] Carol Brown. "Making Space, Speaking Spaces." The Routledge Dance Studies Reader. By Alexandra Carter. (London: Routledge, 1998), 58-73. 59.
[30] Ibid, 72.
[31] Heike Roms in Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks. *Theatre/archaeology*. (London: Routledge, 2001), xii.
[32] Nigel Thrift in Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers 2004), 37.

A cross-disciplinary definition thus emerges. Space remains a broader and more abstract concept than place, as the latter can be identified by its referential nature and specific characteristics. However, these characteristics are, through a performative lens, not rooted only to sites, but also in people. Place can thus be carried within the body and is a mobile, liminal and experiential concept, paradoxically becoming more fixed than space at times in the performance environment. Space can be perceived to be more of a constant, which can be manipulated into a variety of places. Place can be evoked but space simply exists. Doreen Massey says that the kind of questions the researcher is asking will determine their 'take' on the concepts[33] and with this in mind the reader should accept the above definition and limitations in their understanding of the two terms where they are used in this text.

Canham's work, closely aligned with dance practice, has a strong relationship with place, as this is what he aims to evoke. His work is based on particular sites, so it will always have a relationship to the original location, embodying that place by creating it in the space, work that was previously described as site-based. Referring to David Seamon's earlier assertion, Canham uses his bodily mobility to carry the place within him, making his pieces also site-referential, but not site-specific in the strict sense, of being inseparable from their sites. The work is inherently linked to place and people because it is social and spatial.

Returning to that night in Edinburgh, it is possible to see how the combination of the venue in which the performance was situated merged with the experiential event and multi-layered ephemerality of this dance piece. *30 Cecil Street* was first performed in the Forest Fringe in Edinburgh, a not-for-profit art space in the midst of the commercially growing Edinburgh Festival. One of the last remaining independent art centres in the city, in 2011 it faced closure due to the owners' bankruptcy, forcing the Forest Fringe out of its premises[34]. *30 Cecil Street* was inspired by the similar closure of an arts centre in Limerick. As a result, the multi-layered presentation of this place, infused with feelings of loss linked to both the Forest Fringe and

[33] Doreen Massey in Gay McAuley. "Site-specific Performance: Place, Memory and the Creative Agency of the Spectator." *Arts: Journal of the Sydney University Arts Association* 27 (2005), 33-34.
[34] Michael MacLeod. "Forest Supporters Urged to 'buy Art to save Art''. Guardian News and Media, 06 April, 2011. Accessed 17 June 2014. http://www.theguardian.com/edinburgh/2011/apr/06/edinburgh-forest-cafe-art-auction.

Limerick, clearly struck a chord in Edinburgh and deepened its impact for me as an audience member. Canham's work is an interpretation of place and the multiple layers of meaning it contains, along with an inherent connection to the body, because the depiction of place is clearly linked to people and identity.

30 Cecil Street was conceived of in Limerick from a discovery made by Canham himself on ambulatory adventures around the city. Upon finding The Athenaeum, later called The Royal, on 30 Cecil Street, a disused and dilapidated arts centre dating from 1853, he decided to resurrect the spirit of this building by collecting information from local archives and interviews with the community, creating an aural and spatial soundscape which he then choreographed into a solo movement piece, deeply inspired by the memories and stories of the place.

Moving to *Ours Was the Fen Country,* Canham's second work, it is obvious that there are parallels in the progression of his creative choices. Originally from Cambridge himself, which sits on the edge of the Fens, Canham rediscovers this location, an area of agricultural marshland in the east of England. The East Anglian Fen basin is under threat from environmental degradation as, because of their marshy nature, the Fens have been systematically drained since Cromwell first ordered it in the 17th century, an order which began the exposure of the rich and fertile peat land below. The flooded land, once rich in endemic plant life and location-specific industry like eel catching, gave way to highly fertile farmland. However, an unintended consequence of this has been the gradual erosion of the topsoil, eventually the fertility of the land[35]. Consequently, the communities, once known for their strong identity and local craft knowledge deeply rooted in the land, have become disenfranchised, suffering from a loss of cultural distinction due to a changing place.

Ours Was the Fen Country is a group piece, involving four performers. It is based on interviews and archives collected from the area and it once more embodies memories, evoking a depleted sense of place, hinted at in

[35] "Holme Fen NNR." Natural England. Accessed 13 Aug. 2014. http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designations/nnr/1006079.aspx.

the title, imbued with nostalgia. However, both performances also project a sense of elegiac beauty in loss, similar to Adam Zagajewski's Lvov; the nostalgic undertones chime with the beautiful sadness that comes when a place lives in memory.

Intellectually, it could be said that Canham's work evokes 'a sense of place about a place the reader [audience] has not or cannot ever physically visit, of smells, tastes and feelings as much as sights'[36]. The multi-faceted nature of this site-referential work parallels and plays with a certain level of universality within its presentation of place, whilst painting and exhibiting it through the dancing body. Öztürk formulates the dynamics of what this hybridity might entail even more precisely: as an area 'where space and body are merged, entwined, co-extensive, and experience emerges as a process which is felt, affective, corporeal, open-ended, and productive'[37]. The 'felt' experience of exposing the facets of a place and the 'corporeal process' is something I aim to study and analyse.

Methodologically, this thesis will take the form of an experiential, phenomenological study; it will look at the effects that the performance has on an audience in a poetic and metaphysical sense. The structure will mirror Canham's work, which starts rooted in concrete reality and then moves to a more abstract, conceptual place. I will be drawing on both performance and geographical theory as well as some philosophical thought and as I have located many ties and relational concepts within these fields, the theoretical framework will take a patchwork form, intermingling and cross-enriching, in order to make some original observations on this area of research. In my process, I have delved into these subjects, primarily focusing on dance and human geography. I have also interviewed Dan Canham twice, as well as watching both performances and sitting in on a rehearsal. This empirically obtained knowledge will enable me to employ a more poetic structure as it builds on my experiential knowledge of Canham and his work. A full

[36] Holloway and Hubbard in Mike Pearson. *"In Comes I": Performance, Memory and Landscape*. (Exeter: University of Exeter, 2006), 13.
[37] Maya Nanitchkova Öztürk. *Corporeality: Emergent Consciousness within Its Spatial Dimensions*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), 16.

transcript of the interview as well as links to Canham's work and research process as far as it is available online are included in the appendices.

In this first chapter I have laid the basis for a more theoretical understanding of key notions and have established an initial connection with Canham's practice. In Chapter II, I will look at both the process of making the pieces and the performances as these two parts of his creative activities are, in my eyes, equally weighted. As the performances are site-referential, the process of Canham's presence within the original place is a crucial tenet of his work. The second chapter will thus end with a discussion of thematic issues related to place as it is there manifested, like memory, whilst looking also at Canham's use of sound which presents a certain spatial story of its own. In Chapter III, I will progress to a comparison of architecture (related to the original building in *30 Cecil Street*) and to landscape (the Fens in *Ours Was the Fen Country*). These two physical spaces will be presented as conceptual ideas that enhance the understanding of place shown in the performances. Finally, in this chapter I will suggest that in each piece Canham adopts a method of *choreo-mapping*, in which he embodies the places and presents an experiential and metaphysical map with his choreography.

In the final chapter, I will then develop this experiential concept of *choreo-mapping* and suggest that through this creation of an alternative map an experiential space is created that is the root of a bodily or outer-bodily understanding of place. This spatial concept is heavily influenced by a cultural and hereditary experience of place within all of us. This is an abstract chapter that will suggest postulations that are deeply influenced by my first kinetic and emotional reactions while watching Canham's performances in Edinburgh and London. Ultimately I will conclude, summarising my research and surmising my own position and 'place' within this debate. At its core, with regards to performance this thesis will be an experiential study, with a geographical emphasis focusing on topography: the relationship between people and place.

Chapter II

Process and Performance

The Limerick Athenaeum at *30 Cecil Street*

The Fens, East Anglia

It's underfoot and suddenly not. And then it's in your ears and under your nails and up your nose[38]

Mike Pearson

[38] Mike Pearson. *"In Comes I": Performance, Memory and Landscape*. (Exeter, UK: U of Exeter, 2006), 157.

Mike Pearson's visceral description of place here possesses an experiential quality. He refers to it as fluid and multi-sensory that can permeate the beholder and transform into something that infects the body. A similarly pervasive sense of place took hold of Dan Canham when he first arrived in Limerick as the city's haunting qualities increasingly affected his explorations. The birth of both his works occurred in very concrete sites, making the processes within Canham's work hugely important. The original places of inspiration and incubation are carried within him onto the stage and render them site-referential: constantly referring back to the original place in question. Doreen Massey describes spatial understanding as 'a constellation of processes rather than a thing'[39], and the idea of a constellation can be compared accurately to the final product in Canham's work. It is a patchwork of fragments from the creation process, embedded within the pieces that are very much reflective of the places that they seek to evoke.

The Athenaeum in Limerick, which sits at 30 Cecil Street, originally opened as an education and entertainment centre. Through its lifetime, it evolved through different forms, becoming a cinema in the early 1900s and a live music venue in the 1980s[40]. The building's multiple purposes and fragmented past have left it with a mysterious identity. Its outer shell, now derelict, is reflective of Limerick's cultural loss as a city. Indeed, Canham suggests that 'Limerick itself had experienced a lot of loss, just wholesale loss'[41] of its artistic culture.

Canham's process began by nocturnally walking the city, experimenting with its physical parameters. The walks through the city boldly introduced his body into the space around him and led him to be geographically confronted with the city's details: its contours, smells and sounds. Through these experiential night walks it could be said that the cityscape began to imprint onto him. Limerick's fragmented past clearly affected Canham's process as an evocative hook, as the accumulating evidence of stories and histories fed into his practical research. As Pearson and Shanks observe, 'performance re-contextualises such sites: it is the

[39] Doreen B. Massey. *For Space*. (London: SAGE, 2005), 141.
[40] Declan McLoughlin. "History of the ROYAL." Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB). Accessed 17 June 2014. http://www.limerickroyal.ie/history.
[41] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.

latest occupation of a location at which other occupations – their material traces and histories – are still apparent'[42]. The visual effect coupled with these material traces and histories sparked and inspired the sensory understandings that were received through his body, and he began responding by dancing on and in the cityscape.

Canham himself was very much aware of the impact the city had on his being: 'Limerick is a really evocative city... it's the steam rising from the factory at the bottom of the road. The fact that it rains so much or, that it's battered'[43]. Enchanted, Canham was initially drawn to make a film reflective of this place suggesting that 'if I make a live show it's not going to have much of a life because there's just not really much of a scene in Limerick'[44]. Scouting for old buildings for his film he discovered The Athenaeum: 'it was this warren, amazing building, and I thought this is the place to make a show about'[45].

The next section of Canham's investigation took the form of searching the city archives for historical information concerning the building and then 'the final bit that went into it was talking to people that had worked there… or frequented there, to feed into my imaginative possibilities'[46]. From these words it becomes clear that for the interpretation of a place, an experiential understanding of it is crucial. Canham's first inspiration was to experience and physically meet the city, placing himself and his understanding within the location. The second task was seeking facts and material histories from local people. Canham recorded all the interviews and, along with the information obtained from the archives and libraries, he began a creative curatorial process. He collected and arranged the archaeological particles from the past by forming a virtual, spatial patchwork of memories and histories, placed together like bricks forming a wall, or brushstrokes of paint forming an image.

[42] Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks. *Theatre/archaeology*. (London: Routledge, 2001), 23.
[43] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

In *Theatre/Archaeology*, Pearson and Shanks juxtapose these two fields in order to also explain how they formulate new understandings of place-based work. They observe:

'Above all, landscape archaeology is centred upon a concept which seems to offer a unifying perspective, cross-cutting culture and nature, like the concept of the "body". It cuts across both time and space too, with continuities and breaks in a temporal line from past to present, in the traces of past in the present, in the geographical shape of lives around us'[47].

The geographical shape they refer to is the result of linear cross-cutting through broader time and space. It presents a visual expression of how the aural collections, along with the historical archival traces, formulate a picture of a place that reaches well beyond temporal, cultural, and spatial limitations. Paralleled to the body and similar to Canham's walks around the city, the ontological hereditary knowledge of the locale, paired with verbal accounts and visual records of memories, begin to constitute Canham's visceral framework. These are subsequently pieced together into a corporeal, physical map that becomes the key part of his creative presentation and is reflective of the collective knowledge and experience of The Athenaeum.

In the wake of these preliminary explorations, Canham finally obtained permission to enter the building. He could now complete his physical exploratory research within the walls of the abandoned arts centre. He remembers how he would do 'emotional research… how does this feel and what kind of movement does this inspire, for me, what kind of things happened in here, and how can I channel that into movement?'[48] This is an example of how Canham translates the earlier obtained external research information into a practical setting and then into dance vocabulary. He describes this process as reminiscent of a kaleidoscope[49] and this word implies a broad, constantly changing perspective and fluidity in the way in which he understands the place. Within this mobility there is a stark contrast between the static nature of the building rooted in

[47] Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks. *Theatre/archaeology*. (London: Routledge, 2001), 41.
[48] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[49] Ibid.

memory and Canham's motions as he moves through the corridors of the building, traversing the space, raising the ghosts of the past.

In *Non-spaces: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, Marc Augé echoes Canham's kaleidoscope by examining the spatial experience of sitting on a train, used as a metaphor for photography. The traveller sees 'a parallel movement of the landscapes which he catches only in partial glimpses, a series of "snapshots" piled hurriedly into his memory and, literally, recomposed in the account he gives them'[50]. It is possible to detect a binary within Augé's commentary. The seated traveller, static yet moving, is analogous to the world moving quickly outside, which is also static yet moving. The 'partial glimpses' that the train passenger manages to catch hint at a blurred vision, one that is lacking in clarity but still constitutes a definite impression. Different levels of mobility can be attached to this binary in the example of Canham's research: history and archaeology possess their own movement language, whereas the building itself also contains choreographic elements, as the 'emotional research' reveals. Through his endeavours Canham assimilates the information he collects in the research process and gradually creates an impression of the place, which is his kinetic interpretation of it.

A key component of Canham's research process was the making of a film, using footage created on location at 30 Cecil Street. It is possible to analyse this film as a separate work to the eventual performance for which it was developed and doing so can shed some interesting conclusions on the inter-relatedness of site-specificity and the performance of place. According to the definitions described in the introduction, the film is undoubtedly more 'truly' site-specific than the eventual performance, as it was created, performed and ultimately wedded to the site. When watching the film, there is relatively less impact on the viewer than the live performance. Seeing the actual building in the footage, we lose the imaginative qualities that can be secured within our own understanding and comprehension of the place. On the other hand, through watching the performance, we can piece together the fragmented research and *live* our own experience of 30 Cecil Street. This experiential connectivity achieved in the live performances and the expressionism of the

[50] Marc Augé. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. (London and New York: Verso. 1995), 86.

place is lost by the film's actuality. The choice to make a film I see as being part of the research process; an exploration of how to present place in a creative format. Canham identified the challenge of transposing this research to a live show and his internal conflict related to its site-specificity, noting the difficulty of trying to evoke a place without being in the place itself. He notes: 'it's like site-specific film, how can I make a site-specific piece of theatre without a site?'[51] Given that the medium of film distances the viewer more from the original performance than its live manifestation, both creative examples of Canham's explorations in 30 Cecil Street offer a comprehensive study of place which relies, to an extent, on the audience's capacity to understand the identity of this place themselves.

It is clear that in the process of making *30 Cecil Street*, Canham created an archaeology of a collective past, curating and arranging the material, attempting to present a collective identity embodied in a singular dancer. In the case of *Ours Was the Fen Country,* he was yet again inspired to understand a place imbued with personal stories and memories, which he felt needed to be recorded for posterity. Having more of a personal connection to this place, as he grew up on the edge of the Fens, he began travelling around the landscape for a period of two years, initially seeking ways of life that were dying out[52]. As has been described, the Fens have gone into decline in recent years, a process which has not been helped by rural flight. Robert Macfarlane perfectly captures the uniqueness of the area when he writes: 'East Anglia has been considered its own demesne – separate culturally and geographically – for nearly 1,500 years'[53]. Recently, however, traditional, rural ways of life have almost become extinct and craft and local knowledge is in danger of dying out.

The unique geographical setting of the Fens and its disappearing lore lured Canham into exploring its characteristics. He explains that the landscape is 'very flat, you can see for miles in certain directions. They

[51] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[52] Y Ganolfan. "Ours Was the Fen Country - Research and Development Ymchwil a Datblygiad." YouTube, 4 March 2014. Accessed 18 June 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iooLjMs90aw.
[53] Robert Macfarlane. "Ghost Species." Granta Magazine, 2008. Accessed 18 June 2014. http://www.granta.com/Archive/102/Ghost-Species/Page-1.

are barren, which can be very beautiful, but can be very bleak… you're at the end of the earth'[54]. The intangibility of the way of life in this place coupled with its rural inaccessibility prompt this experiential reaction which is in essence a visceral response, immediately situating one's body within the site; 'you're at the end of the earth'. From Canham's description, one is compelled to imagine the flat landscape stretching like a blank cloth, from which human life seems almost absent.

The charm of this place extends to local knowledge, an enticing and mysterious quality, as Lucy Lippard notes when commenting on geometrical qualities of local life:

'Inherent in the local is the concept of place – a portion of land/town/cityscape seen from the inside, the resonance of a specific location that is known and familiar… Place is latitudinal and longitudinal within the map of a person's life. It is temporal and spatial, personal and political. A layered location replete with human histories and memories, place has width as well as depth'[55].

Seen here again is the connection between place and human life. 'The map of a person's life' topographically suggests that the formations and patterns in the place that a person lives in spatially describe their cultural identity. This is certainly true of the Fens: the bleak, isolated nature of the region is reflected in the attitude of the people. As one of Canham's interviewee's said person said: 'all I need is people to leave me alone and I'm happy'[56].

As in Limerick, Canham started by taking walks around the countryside, attempting to re-connect with the landscape. This process yielded some autobiographical insights, which he later included in the performance: 'as I grew older, hit around 30, started to think about the place I'd grown up in and had formed me to some

[54] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[55] Lucy Lippard in Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 40.
[56] *Ours Was the Fen Country*. Chor. Dan Canham, Ian Morgan, Neil Paris, and Tilly Webber. DanceXchange, Birmingham. May 2013. Performance.

extent'[57]. This contrasts with his experience in Limerick, where Canham was clearly an outsider and not from that 'place'. Ultimately, he was welcomed in Ireland for taking a sincere interest and perhaps also because he was in an urban area, a place more accustomed to seeing outsiders. The Fens, by contrast, is an isolated rural area where Canham's engagement with the community was made easier by his personal connection with the land and the people who live there. Part of his motivation invested in the project was accessing his own heritage: he wanted the work to 'give me an idea of the kind of place I grew up in and what those people are like and help explain what I'm like'[58]. Even so, connecting to this community for a relative insider like Canham was far from easy. Inhabitants of the Fens are seemingly proud and stubborn, characteristics that are enhanced by the growing fears that their way of life will cease to exist. As one local man put it, people from the Fens 'do not want to be put down, they do not want to be told what to do, they want to lead their individual lives un-interfered with'[59].

Fear of cultural extinction is linked culturally to a number of emerging phenomena, including the ease of mass communication and a consumption driven society, resulting in the world's 'rapidly accelerating homogenisation'[60]. The effect of this can rapidly wipe out the idiosyncrasies of place, destroying meaning that is unique to the landscape and the people within it. Interestingly, Cresswell highlights 'increased mobility' as a factor in this growing 'sameness' that is being experienced culturally. There is a static, stationary quality to both The Athenaeum and the Fens, stuck still in time, like a relic of the past, struggling to remain intact within a rapidly changing world.

Referring to David Seamon's assertion that bodily mobility is key to an understanding of place[61], we can see the attraction of using choreography as a means of exploring these places, employing two differing versions of mobility. The first 'increased mobility' implies travel, a forward moving linear motion suggesting up-rootedness with no further connectivity to that land. More in line with 'bodily mobility', Canham's dance,

[57] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[58] Ibid.
[59] *Ours Was the Fen Country*. Chor. Dan Canham, Ian Morgan, Neil Paris, and Tilly Webber. DanceXchange, Birmingham. May 2013. Performance.
[60] Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 43.
[61] David Seamon in Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 33.

which traverses space, embodies a rootedness with the site because the work is entirely emotionally attached to the place in which it was born. Canham's mobility is nurturing that place through his personal commitment to it. It could even be argued that he has activist intentions with his work, which responds actively to the site with an eye to garnering attention and telling its story.

In this sense, being on the 'inside' is a strategic position for Canham to adopt. In fact, in varying ways he has placed himself on the inside and outside of both explorations, meandering through a virtual space, both viewing and embodying the people and the geography that he encounters. With respect to this shifting position, Relph notes that 'the more profoundly inside you are, the stronger is the identity with the place'[62].

Canham is aware that these strategic positionings have consequences, noting that his company consciously attempts to evoke place 'from the position of being outsiders', showing that they are in fact 'channelling' or 'conjuring' the Fens, which he considers to be acceptable 'as long as we're not completely ignorant of what we're talking about.' [63] His words reveal a duality with regards to the inside/outside position he has adopted. In both performances he demonstrates that it is possible to obtain an external perspective of the place, but also to situate oneself within it, producing a unique understanding that the audience of 'outsiders' can potentially interpret.

Canham further states that 'the perspective of the outsider is an important one'[64] and that there is a truth and a translatable element in the performing body, which is the vessel for transferring the information to an audience. In both performances, Canham acts as custodian of the material (the audio, the interviews and the physical presentation of the place), highlighting that he is 'taking care of those fragments'[65]. Through this curatorial responsibility, the material inevitably acquires a transformative quality in the live performance. Pearson and Shanks explain this process: 'we reinterpret memories and incorporate them into new stories of

[62] E.C. Relph in Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 44.
[63] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

our life'[66]. This transformative quality, stemming from the collected artefacts, is directly related to the site-referential aspects of Canham's performances.

Both performances open simply with the house lights up, Canham walking onto the stage alone in *30 Cecil Street* and the four performers together in *Ours Was the Fen Country.* Canham sees this style of opening as a statement, 'here we are, in this time and space, let's go somewhere else'[67]. This neutral beginning establishes the performers in both pieces as objective operators, presenting their work as impersonally as they can. Additionally, it is a nod towards the external frame of reference of the performances, attesting to the fact that this work is about real people, in a real place. In both works, Canham (and the other performers in the case of *Ours Was the Fen Country*) begin by building the 'set', the parameters of which are suggestive of the places being evoked.

In *30 Cecil Street* Canham walks on with a tape recorder, places it on a table and turns it on, using audio to provide context and atmosphere. He then takes a roll of masking tape and begins to outline a series of shapes on the floor, replicating a live blueprint of The Athenaeum. In *Ours Was the Fen Country,* the four performers walk onstage, carrying mp3 players, in unison placing an earpiece in one ear and pressing 'play'. The audio serves a similar purpose here as in *30 Cecil Street.* The performers set up a wooden structure at the back of the stage, which takes the form of an empty projection screen. With this set up, Canham entices the audience into coming on a journey with him, literally framed by the wood and the tape, 'just allow the space to draw you in'[68].

Both the performances share other structural components. They begin in a more rooted reality (perhaps mirroring the rootedness of the building and the landscape) and then move gradually to a more abstract place. Canham states that 'it's trying to kind of chase the concrete and everyday and the lucid into

[66] Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks. *Theatre/archaeology*. (London: Routledge, 2001), 42.
[67] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[68] Ibid.

something more poetic and irrational'[69]. This certainly summarises the broad framework of activity within the pieces. The audio track fades in and out, becoming more disjointed and conceptual and taking the form of a blurring in and out of reality. In *30 Cecil Street* Canham moves through this process solo, whereas in *Ours Was the Fen Country,* there is a collective sharing of the responsibility of presentation. In the latter, each performer takes a turn to embody the interviews that we hear on the audio. With this audio constantly playing in their ears, the performers at times speak along with the interview and at other times mouth silently along. As the performers become more silent, so the audio becomes audible to the audience played through the speakers. The performers interpret the person who is talking, moving periodically into moments of abstract dance.

In reference to the abstract nature of his choreography, Canham comments that in *Ours Was the Fen Country*, the movement was desired to be 'poetic and open for lots of possible interpretations… we turn it into something more abstracted and physical'[70]. A specific moment that applies to this is what Canham calls 'gloom' (pictured on page 32), where the four dancers sway together discordantly as if they were being moved at the mercy of bigger forces. Canham explicitly states, however, that they are not miming being in a storm, but rather that the movement exists as a poetic distillation of the reality, becoming more symbolic of the place and its effect on the people. The very nature of Canham's choreography, which does not adhere to a 'set routine' of steps, means it possesses this blurred quality similar to the 'partial glimpses' of Marc Augé and Canham's kaleidoscope. For the audience, the movements become an image you can almost focus in and out of and that can transform into something expressionistic. In their minds it can be personalised and tailored to their individual experiences of place. The open-ended effect of the work is extremely important, because it allows each audience member to link it to their own understanding of the place in question.

[69] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[70] Ibid.

Canham is very clear about his intentions with conjuring up a more universal understanding of specified places within the audiences' minds. He states that he sees both places as 'springboards' to wider issues, meaning that the lack of intimate knowledge of them is not a hindrance in the understanding of the performances. Rather, the Fens and 30 Cecil Street act as 'vessels' that transpose meaning to an audience. The movement is therefore subjective and speculative. This style of dance appears frequently in *30 Cecil Street,* for example when Canham emotionally responds to the 'rougher' parts of Limerick (pictured on page 33, left); the fast-paced nightlife where he witnessed fights and aggression. This takes the form of a quick succession of rigid movements, punctuated by a staccato drumbeat, with fists clenched. This contrasts with other sections of movement, in which he flows through the inside of The Athenaeum, sweeping round corners and 'feeling' the space. Outside the building, he matches the frantic atmosphere and with his fast-paced response occupies a multitude of lives and voices, trying to be everywhere in this place at once.

At points in the choreography the emotive response from the dancers attains a more universal meaning, which at those moments transcends a geographically specific place. In *Ours Was the Fen Country,* the female dancer (Tilly) has a solo (pictured above right) after an audio fragment in which an old lady talks about eel catching. This fragment bleeds into a section of choreography, in which she maintains a mostly static standpoint, her upper body and torso undulating in and out of a series of contortions. Similar to 'gloom', it is as if she is being willed by an external force, and when she eventually takes steps, she does so only reluctantly. It is possible to visualise her in the Fens, as she dances in the middle of the dark stage, watched by the other three performers, the sense of isolation is profound. Her choreography is a clear response to the elements surrounding her but there is no explicit indication of what exactly it represents. The reception of this in the minds of the audience is half the performance, as place is an intensely personal and experiential thing; Canham's choreography allows for an illustrative and speculative understanding of location.

Consequently, the evocation of multi-layered realities in the performances make the understanding of place considerably richer for an audience member. As was mentioned earlier, *30 Cecil Street* was first performed in the Forest Fringe and *Ours Was the Fen Country* was performed not only in Fen areas but in selected theatres adjacent to rural areas, in a bid to add local context to the performance: Aberystwyth Arts Centre in the context of rural Wales and Bristol Old Vic on the edge of the Somerset Levels, to name two examples. In this way, the performance functioned as what Canham called a 'vessel', carrying the universal ideas of what is associated with these places, and transposing them into other sites of similar meaning. As such, the performances reinforced, as Tim Cresswell puts it, that 'place is not just a thing in the world but a way of understanding the world'[71].

With regards to site and universality, Miwon Kwon offers a useful term: 'wrong place'. This model of 'belonging-in-transience'[72] can be used as an example for nomadic people who migrate and leave places behind. She explains this 'wrong place' as a combination between a nostalgic yearning to retrieve (or hold on to) rooted, place-bound identities and anti-nostalgic embrace of a nomadic fluidity of subjectivity, identity and spatiality[73]. In this way, according to Kwon, 'site-specific art comes to *represent* critically rather than performing it. The "here and now" of aesthetic experience is isolated as the signified, severed from its signifier'[74]. In being site-referential rather than site-specific, both of Canham's performances then become the signified, severed from and yet connected to their original sites, because they still serve as places of inspiration.

Curated initially by Canham, he has interpreted the works, and then relayed them to the audience, in turn creating something new that has been changed; a space that becomes a saturated space, imbued with varying experiences of place. This transference, along with the audience's reception and understanding of

[71] Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 11.
[72] Miwon Kwon. *One Place after Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 8.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid, 38.

place in their minds, sees Canham take the original, microcosmic place and enhance it into something multi-layered and multi-faceted.

Lucy Lippard's assertion that place is 'temporal and spatial' signifies the continuous relationship between past and present, the here and the there. This notion allows for another place to be evoked, which exists in neither the theatre nor the original site. Tim Cresswell also sees places as 'spatio-temporal events'[75], the *space* of the past deeply affecting the *space* of the present. A *there* constantly alluding to the *here* is related to how the dancers in Canham's performances reach for something, presenting a place that is relatively ungraspable. Carol Brown usefully explains this evocation of an elusive place through dance as a process that 'allows my body to be both receiver and inscriber, becoming a conduit between one space and another, unpredictable and furtive'[76]. Through this quote, we see the dancer portraying a place constantly in the in-between, carrying the place within their body as it traverses the space.

Canham regards nostalgia as something ungraspable that his performance aims to reach towards: 'through doing the show we make real what might not be real any more'[77]. The slippery nature of nostalgia is shown through Canham's audio layering within the performances. Its contradictory statements represent hazy or blurred memories of the past. In *30 Cecil Street,* for example, one voice states that 'fights were happening all the time'[78]. Immediately thereafter, however, a woman refutes this by stating, 'I don't remember there being any fights'[79]. The audio tracks in both performances, along with the physical interpretation of the sites, create a spatial patchwork reflective of the original space itself. David Harvey sees this as 'a site where identity is created through the construction of memories linking a group of people into the past'[80]. This construction of memories echoing in a place through performance is carried out by three elements: memory + body + site.

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[75] Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 130.
[76] Carol Brown. "Making Space, Speaking Spaces." The Routledge Dance Studies Reader. By Alexandra Carter. (London: Routledge, 1998). 58-73. 62.
[77] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[78] *30 Cecil Street*. Chor. Dan Canham. Battersea Arts Centre, London. 12 Feb. 2011. Performance.
[79] Ibid.
[80] David Harvey in Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 62.

'Place and memory are, it seems, inevitably intertwined'[81], Cresswell notes and within this relationship, the body situates itself at the centre, being the experiential vehicle that processes and experiences memory. Like Proust's memory palace, 'the site itself becomes an agent of memory'[82], which is then unfolded and explored through the body. Proust mentioned that after eating the famous 'Madeleine' cake he could 'hear the echo of great spaces traversed'[83]. Through this powerful Proustian analogy it becomes possible to see the dancing Canham, like de Certeau's figure traversing space, exploring the echoes of the memories of these places, reverberated around the performance space by the aural, spatial and embodied presentation.

Thomas Fuchs writes about embodied memory as an important physical response to the act of remembering. He believes that 'there is a memory of the body apart from conscious recollection'[84], linking this coherently to how the body functions in relation to the past: 'explicit recollection is directed from the present back towards the past; implicit memory, however, does not re-present the past, but re-enacts it in the course of the body's performance… implicit knowing is our *lived past*'[85]. Canham re-enacts this implicit remembering through his dancing body. This act could be seen as embodying second-hand memories told to him and which he experienced living through others, while exploring the building or the landscape. As such, he operates as a sort of ghost, incorporating others in an attempt to re-live what has been lived by them. In order to achieve this quality, Canham needs to ask 'what it means to embody their voices… because they're not with us, literally'[86]. Interestingly, Robert Macfarlane's study of the people in the Fens, which strongly influenced Canham, also refers to the locals as 'ghost species'. He calls them so because 'the species most likely to become ghosts are those that are most place-faithful'[87]. The people who live there embody the

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[81] Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 85.
[82] Mike Pearson. *"In Comes I": Performance, Memory and Landscape*. (Exeter, UK: U of Exeter, 2006), 56.
[83] Marcel Proust in Christie McDonald. *The Proustian Fabric: Associations of Memory*. (University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 42.
[84] Thomas Fuchs. *The Memory of the Body*. UniversitätsKlinikum Heidelberg. Accessed 11 June 2014. http://www.klinikum.uni-heidelberg.de/Startseite.2.0.html?&no_cache=1.1-8 1.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Y Ganolfan. "Ours Was the Fen Country - Research and Development Ymchwil a Datblygiad." YouTube, 4 March 2014. Accessed 18 June 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iooLjMs90aw.
[87] Robert Macfarlane. "Ghost Species." Granta Magazine, 2008. Accessed 18 June 2014. http://www.granta.com/Archive/102/Ghost-Species/Page-1.

memories themselves and in an act of re-enactment, Canham, in turn, re-imagines and resurrects them. He becomes a ghost once removed.

A large part of how memories are conveyed in both of Canham's shows is through audio tracks. In *30 Cecil Street,* the sound takes the form of non-sequential spliced interviews, but there is nevertheless a coherency to how the material is arranged. It begins with descriptions of the building and then moves to different emotional states, delving deeper into memory. *Ours Was the Fen Country* also cleverly plays with collective remembering by employing four dancers to recount memories both vocally and silently, by mouthing along to the dialogue that they hear through the mp3 players in their ears and through speakers in the theatre space. Canham explains that 'it's a good tool in process, to have to listen and speak at the same time, because it stops you from getting in the way'[88].

The dancers' interaction with the soundtrack further emphasises the embodiment of memories. The dancers are empty vessels, in so much as they can be, projecting the 'ghost species' and the place they inhabit to the audience. Each performance has one track that runs continuously, acting as a rudder that steers the direction of the performances. The frequent looping, along with abrupt switching from one track to another and intermittently added music, shows a collective, inaccurate remembering. It takes the form of a mobile perspective; which reality or memory will we be taken to next? In this way, the sound bouncing off the walls of the theatre conjures up images for the spectator, transporting us mentally to places we can visualise through the aural impulses. This, in essence, creates a sound map in the audience's mind. The performer's bodies and our audio-induced experience create a visual representation of place.

Carol Brown gives listening as one of the most important qualities of spatial understanding. She states that 'in *listening to* rather than *looking at* space, a conversation between body and building is opened. We can think

[88] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.

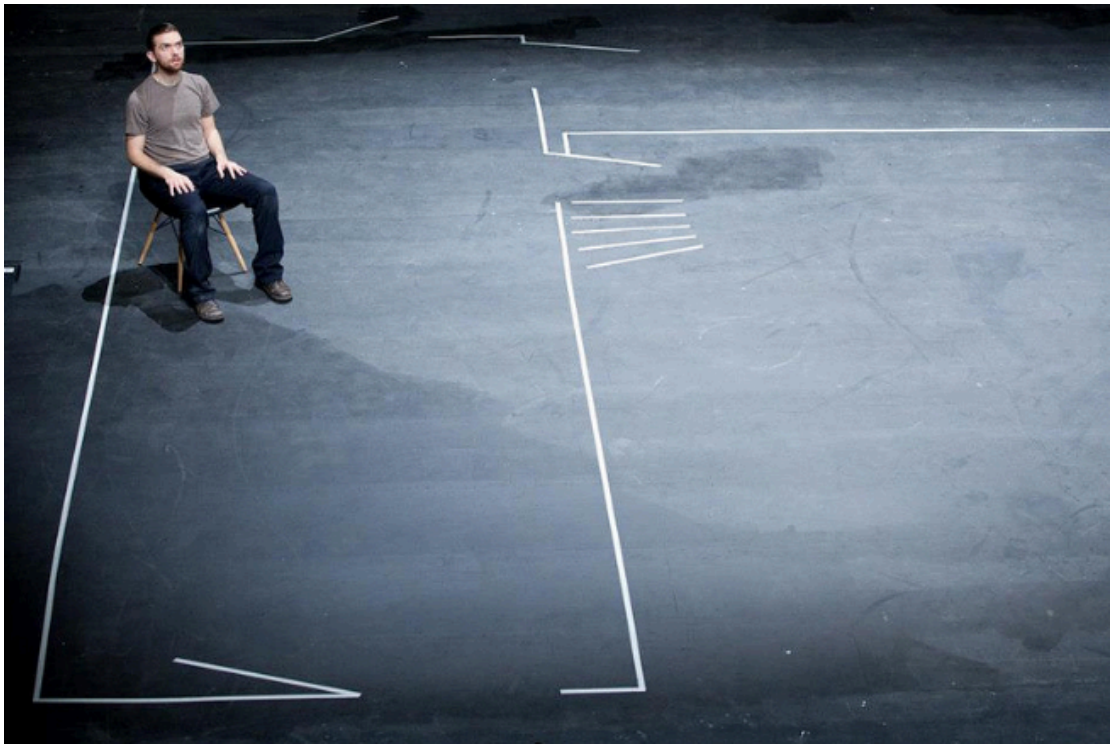
of this conversation as a process of building connections'[89]. These connections add to the multi-layers that are created in the process of witnessing Canham's performances with all our senses and reason. They enrich our understanding, allowing us to re-contextualise and perceive place in many different ways. When listening to the soundtracks, it is possible to hear noises outside of the theatre space too. Different layers of realities, the outside and the inside of the performance space, the auditorium and the street beyond the venue, blend into one, deepening our understanding in a temporary in-between space composed of all these dimensions.

It is clear that Dan Canham's performances are highly influenced by the process with which he went through in order to convey the places to an audience. His collections of the fragments from each site, forming a spatial patchwork, allowed these places to be conveyed through his body in the performance space. In this space, he exhibited a multi-faceted presentation of place, enhancing the original site and allowing the audience to try and grasp onto something that is ungraspable: a liminal space that temporarily evokes something lost but also something found. We are invited to imagine and impose our own associations in order to see a place.

[89] Carol Brown. "Making Space, Speaking Spaces." The Routledge Dance Studies Reader. By Alexandra Carter. (London: Routledge, 1998). 58-73. 62.

Chapter III

Choreographies of Place



30 Cecil Street

Ours Was the Fen Country

Place… is other to space; it becomes "dreamed", a desire, an imaginary realm[90]

Nicola Shaughnessy

It's a dynamic dance, about change and movement, discovering and rediscovering[91]

Buzz Yudell

[90] Nicola Shaughnessy. *Applying Performance: Live Art, Socially Engaged Theatre and Affective Practice*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 99.
[91] Buzz Yudell. "The Choreography of Place and Time." *Places* 3.14 (2002).

Architect Buzz Yudell writes about the choreographies of place in relation to the Baas-Walrod House, in Sea Ranch, California, describing how the design of the house allows for a 'dynamic engagement of the land and the elements'[92]. This house, designed by his architectural firm, is a useful case study thanks to its contemporary form and the process by which it was made. Yudell simply describes the choreography of place as 'the connections between the body and physical place, as experienced in time'[93]. His understanding of it extends to a firm positioning within the community around him. He created diagrams to highlight what he saw was the choreography of this place, whilst also reading about dance and patterns of movement which 'helped us understand the multiplicity of interactions latent among the site, building and inhabitants'[94]. Even though his explanation of this phenomenon is rooted in experiencing the architectural features of a place related to the world around it ('one diagram suggests sequencing the arrival with pirouettes because you're always moving in one direction, then turning around the face another view'[95]), it does highlight the possibilities of exploring a place through motion and especially the importance of the relationship between body and place.

Yudell's 'connections between the body and physical place' are also at the root of Canham's process and final work. Both inside a building and outside in the countryside he finds the relationship with place inside his own body, later projecting it outwards through choreographed movements. Within both the places in each performance, a unique standpoint occurs that replicates the intrinsic nature of both place-forms. Each place possesses an inherent choreography that when exhibited through performance harnesses experiential power in order to convey this to an audience. It is saturated with other forms of meanings and associations. Place and the experience of it is thus understood through association, cultural identification, memory and the choreographies of each place display this to us.

[92] Buzz Yudell. "The Choreography of Place and Time." *Places* 3.14 (2002).
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.

A more detailed exploration of the choreographies of buildings and architecture with regards to *30 Cecil Street* can help us to further uncover choreographies of place. Bronet and Schumacher explain that 'dancers and architects are both also involved with the act of making stable, concrete proposals at the same time as they strive to make sense of the unstable, conflicting and complex social situations in which designs are embedded'[96]. Canham's choreography acts here as a stable, rooted object, a mirror to 'make sense' of the dilapidated, culturally unstable emblem of the arts centre, which is reflective of the 'unstable, conflicting and complex social situations' in Limerick itself. The relationship between body and environment has its origins within 30 Cecil Street as a building and, in relation to this, Carol Brown beautifully articulates the meeting of architecture and dance when she outlines that 'as architectural forms that are met by corporeal states, their space-time coordinates build deep maps for choreography, creating an architectural organism'[97]. This architectural organism is pulsing with the memories, stories and life forms that still live within this building and the 'deep map' which Canham's creates through his 'corporeal state' encounters it head on.

A 'deep map' is multi-layered and is in line with the creative presentation of place that Canham exhibits, one that is imbued with personal memory and that is alive yet dead. Pearson's eloquent definition of 'deep map' usefully outlines the limits of the term here:

'Attempts to record and represent the grain and patina of a location – juxtapositions and interpenetrations of the historical and the contemporary, the political and the poetic, the factual and the fictional, the discursive and the sensual; the conflation of oral testimony, anthology, memoir, biography, natural history and everything you might ever want to say about a place'[98].

Within the performance, Canham takes the records of the location and physically interprets the results of his research process. He physically, jerkily and in an intense response to the soundscape, flows his way through

[96] Bronet and Schumacher in Smritilekha Nayak. *Dance and Architecture: Body, Form, Space and Transformation*. (ProQuest, UMI Dissertation, 2014), 3.
[97] Carol Brown. "Making Space, Speaking Spaces." The Routledge Dance Studies Reader. By Alexandra Carter. (London: Routledge, 1998). 58-73. 70.
[98] Mike Pearson. *"In Comes I": Performance, Memory and Landscape*. (Exeter, UK: U of Exeter, 2006), 15.

the space he has built within the masking tape outline of the building. If the masking tape represents the exterior lines, then his movements act as the crayons, colouring in the intricate details of this 'deep map', which contains not only brick and cement but also the stories he has been told. Patrick Steffan believes it is possible to 'think of dance as physical movement in a determinate space, whose fundamental characteristics such as energy and quality, are influenced by the surrounding architecture'[99]. It is clear that Canham's energy and quality of action is completely beholden to the surrounding architecture. Throughout the piece he veers between being lost in memory and 'feeling' the space through his movement, emerging frequently from a trance-like state to look around the space and consciously seek a new part of the architecture to respond to. Like the bare skeleton of an architectural form, he has pared down the movement to enacting only the most vital essence of the emotive structure. As he moves initially into his masking-tape outline, he leads with his hands, feeling the way through the architecture. The limited soundscape, combined with simple piano music and short fragments of interviews mainly about the past ('this was back in about 1993'[100]), communicate his purest choreography of that particular place.

It could be said that *30 Cecil Street* feels haunted with the ghosts of the past. Like Macfarlane's 'ghost species', the crumbling, empty building is full of invisible spectres. Each tangible object within it (posters on the walls or empty beer bottles) materially personifies an intangible story. Bachelard's poetic study of the home in *The Poetics of Space* tells a related story of how the emblem or the notion of home permeates every space we enter throughout our lives, most importantly suggesting that every material object, including structures, possesses an experiential quality. A multi-layered space, much like a 'deep map', a building is never a homogenous place, but rather the experiential nature of the objects within it creates a series of places, which, like Augé's snapshots, are made of imaginings and most importantly dreams, which best characterises the slippery and impermanent nature of memory.

[99] Patrick Steffen. "Dance and Architecture | TIP - Exploring New Thinking and Theory." TIP Dance and Architecture Comments. 25 May 2014. http://thinking-in-practice.com/dance-and-architecture.
[100] *30 Cecil Street*. Chor. Dan Canham. Battersea Arts Centre, London. 12 Feb. 2011. Performance.

John Stilgoe writes of *The Poetics of Space* that it is 'an enquiry focused on the house, its interior places, and its outdoor context'[101]. Its parallels to the exploration of *30 Cecil Street* are very compelling. As much as the building can be thought of in terms of Carol Brown's 'architectural organism', it also comprises facets of human life, becoming a symbol of memory. Each corridor that Canham walks along presents a different story, psychologically as well as physically. Like Bachelard's home, it is 'vibrating at the edges of the imagination, exploring the recesses of the psyche, the hallways of the mind'[102]. This psychological space is further enhanced by Canham's soundscape, as Stilgoe explains: 'Bachelard writes of hearing by imagination, of filtering, of distorting sound'[103] This is surely the process an audience embarks upon when listening to the contorted soundscape, filtered through their own perception.

Paris and Hill suggest that 'just as living and remembering intertwines with the architecture of home, so the creation and experience of art forms and artworks intertwines with the architecture of concert halls, galleries, theatres'[104]. As we frame our lives with the constant recollection of home, so too do we, as audience members, continually re-frame and re-contextualise the place which is being presented within Canham's work. Bachelard has the following comment on the dynamic interaction between remembering and imagining, asserting that, 'in this remote region, memory and imagination remain associated, each one working for their mutual deepening'[105]. In a similar vein, Canham describes a room in 30 Cecil Street, with its 'mouldy walls and the paint has all peeled and all the wallpaper has fallen off and there's pictures all over the walls of the people that used to be there'[106]. He seemingly regards memory here as a material collage in the architecture of a physical building. Canham's imaginings take the form of a memory-exploration, the architecture of his mind and those spiritual entities that are still present in the building. If Bachelard's home is poetic, then the way in which Dan Canham interprets the choreography of this place is one with lyrical, elegiac and memorial intentions.

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[101] John R Stilgoe. "Foreword to the 1994 Edition." *The Poetics of Space*. By Gaston Bachelard and M. Jolas. (Boston: Beacon, 1994), vii-x. vii.
[102] Ibid, xii.
[103] Ibid, ix.
[104] Leslie Hill and Helen Paris. *Performance and Place*. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), xiii.
[105] Gaston Bachelard and M. Jolas. *The Poetics of Space*. (Boston: Beacon, 1994), 5.
[106] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.

In comparing his first work with *Ours Was the Fen Country,* Canham makes a number of observations on the different experience engendered by a group of performers rather than him dancing alone. He describes the 'poignancy' and 'purity' of the final image in *30 Cecil Street* as he stands alone on the stage, connected completely to the memory of that place[107]. On the other hand, he describes the role of the dancers in *Ours Was the Fen Country* as 'wider' and being in relation to 'each other', which Canham understands as being a broader endeavour[108].

Similarly, Bachelard's haunting and dreamlike examination of the home is a solitary study, one that lives within the mind of a singular entity. In *30 Cecil Street,* Canham undertakes this journey alone, reflective of the isolated building that stands in the cityscape. By contrast, the landscape of the Fens is a thing alive with human communities. A landscape possesses a different kind of diversity to the building in Cecil Street. Literally, it could be said that the construction in Limerick is analogous to the inner space of the mind, whereas the landscape of the Fens is outer space, representative of a wider collective resonance. A landscape has a very human quality, associated with the quotidian day-to-day. As a flat expanse, the choreography of this place seems to feel more unified while the jumbled melange of identities in *30 Cecil Street* offers a more psychological, haunted archive of memories.

Looking onto the Fens is like looking into infinity, a horizontal flat surface with no apparent end. Cresswell believes that 'in most definitions of landscape the viewer is outside of it… places are very much things to be inside of'[109]. Once again the inside/outside binary enters the discussion with the notion of a landscape being a space and the location of the Fens and the people within it topographically a place. The English countryside in general is suffused with associations and traces of the past, as acknowledged by Pearson and

[107] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 10.

Shanks. They argue that it is 'one of interwoven traces and layers of previous inhabitation, punctured by monuments and relics of times gone by'[110].

The choreography of the Fens as a place is shown in *Ours Was the Fen Country* in several ways. Una Chaudhuri provides a useful starting point by stating that 'the spectator of perspectival landscape art is formally an outsider, and the continued coherence of the picture depends on his remaining so'[111]. We, as an audience, are the outsiders at the beginning of the performance, staring onto a flat landscape of the stage along with the 'neutral' performers. At the back of the stage, the performers build a screen onto which images of the Fens and landscapes are projected. The creation of a performance space of images (the frame and projected images) reflects the choreography of a landscape, which in essence is also a perspectival arrangement for those looking in; as an audience we start as outsiders, viewing the pictures like landscapes from afar. As the action begins the choreography of this rural place slowly draw us in and we are invited to invest parts of ourselves within it.

Pearson elaborates on this investment, suggesting that 'landscape embodies human practices… an account of their own landscape: *stories*'[112]. Along with the creation of the pictorial space, we are also presented with stories told through the performers that echo around the vast expanse of the dark theatre. These stories take different forms, each possessing a different movement language that oscillates between rigidity and fluidity. One performer speaks the words of a man interviewed in the Fens, discussing Oliver Cromwell and the tenacity of the Fen people. The audio gradually swells on the theatre speakers and replaces his live voice and the interview is looped as the four performers begin to dance. A marching beat is introduced and blends with the looped interview, which all four performers 'stamp' to, creating a presence that is indignant and unified. Later, when the subject is a man reflecting on a lifetime of working on the Fens, the movement is very slow and gentle. The performers drift around the space amongst each other, portraying a collective reliance

[110] Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks. *Theatre/archaeology*. (London: Routledge, 2001), 39.
[111] Chaudhuri, Una. "Land/Scape/Theory." *Land/scape/theater*. By Elinor Fuchs and Una Chaudhuri. (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, 2002), 19.
[112] Mike Pearson. *"In Comes I": Performance, Memory and Landscape*. (Exeter, UK: U of Exeter, 2006), 11-12.

similar in form to the Cromwell section, but with an entirely different tone. Each dance thus represents the topography of the Fens as a form of collective, experiential, yet diverse remembering.

Canham elaborates on this performative reflection of the Fen people, noting that the choreography does not follow set steps, rather relying on the performers to 'listen to each other and change so that it will have some sort of… emotional meaning'[113]. This performance concerns people who are wedded to the land and whose identity is dictated to a certain extent by the choreography of place. It is haunting and melancholy at points. Through the performative presentation of this place another dimension emerges: the inevitability of a changing landscape, a notion upon which Cresswell expounds, as 'the elements of this "place" will be, at different times and speeds, again dispersed'[114]. In other words, this performance is about a community of people who are losing their way of life and the choreography shows their united nature but also their deep and sorrowful sense of loss. The horizontality of the landscape depicts a widespread choreography of loss, whereas in *30 Cecil Street,* the building is represented as a much more compact overlapping patchwork of thoughts and memories. In spite of these differences, both pieces reflect loss in hauntingly similar ways.

With a better sense of the multi-layered and multi-dimensional qualities of places, it is plausible to suggest that they 'could not be measured or mapped'[115] and that, much like performances, 'places are experienced'[116]. However, if maps are 'spatial representations of reality'[117] then the form in which the spatial representation is depicted can have multifarious formats. Deleuze describes maps of intensity, which, ' are concerned with what fills space, what subtends the trajectory… A list or constellation of affects, an intensive map, is a becoming'[118].

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[113] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[114] Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 141.
[115] Ibid, 21.
[116] Ibid.
[117] "Mapping Weird Stuff." *Mapping Weird Stuff*. OWjL Summer Program, 14 June 2009. Accessed 20 June 2014. http://mappingweirdstuff.wordpress.com/.
[118] Gilles Deleuze in Mike Crang and N. J. Thrift. *Thinking Space*. (London: Routledge, 2000), 21.

'Maps of intensity' define the constant, ever-changing evolutionary state of place. Like the masking tape drawn out on the floor, the two dimensional representation of a place does not begin to capture the plethora of idiosyncrasies that define a place. The 'spatial representations of realities' (the maps) can be taken off the printed page and moved into a realm of spatial understanding through different, more experiential means. *30 Cecil Street's* nexus is rooted within a spatial understanding of the place, beginning with the masking tape. We are presented straight away with a version of the building plans, geometrically mapped out on the floor, transposing the outlines of The Athenaeum onto the performance space. In this way, Canham begins by setting up the world he invites the audience into and by entering the neutral space with his energy and actions he gradually creates a socio-spatial, cognitive map composed of audio-elements and his movements. These reach, stretch and fill out the space. Thus, through his 'mapped' movements, we are presented with a tactile, visceral version of the place.

Topology is concerned with things being placed next to each other, forming a three dimensional and complete map. In his work, Canham attempts something similar, seeing his performance as 'placing different things beside each other and allowing the audience to find the links'[119]. With the audio, the movement and the place, existing in multi-layers but also interwoven with each other, we return to the triple dimension of his performance: memory + body + site. We now see how these elements work together to generate a kinetic recollection, which occurs in the form of a spatial geometry. Placing the fragments Canham has curated as elements next to each other conceptually allows the audience or the viewer to imprint their own understanding or version of place. In doing so they create their own map, which, to put it in Deleuze's terms, is a modification of Canham's, or rather a state of becoming. Canham himself also recognises this cumulative evolutionary process: 'the music is saying something which is complimentary to the dance saying something that's complimentary to the sound of the old lady. They're all slightly different, but they'll allow it to grow'[120].

[119] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[120] Ibid.

Canham has clearly considered the notion of mapping within his performative intentions. Through his spatially geometric exploration of the outlines of the city of Limerick, he was compelled to express his cultural understanding of this place: 'I really like the idea of emotional mapping, you can tune into how a place makes you feel'[121].

A beautiful performative representation of the emotional map that Canham created occurs in the latter half of *30 Cecil Street.* Canham moves to the stage that he has literally mapped out (pictured right). As the audio track fades in and out with sounds of an opera, muffled conversations and music reverberate off the walls of the arts centre: they form the echoes of a place. Led by his hands, Canham then moves through the space, almost caressing the air in a rhythmic way, feeling through the particles in the airwaves, following and being led by the sound. He explains the deeper meanings of these gestures as follows: 'it's almost like for me at that point in the show, they become my eyes and my sense of smell and they are leading me through these different eras… I'm tuning in like a radio signal'[122].

With all the elements thus arranged side by side (the site, the sound and the movement) Canham transcends physical, rooted site, moving and traversing through time and diverse cultural strands, ultimately allowing the memories to engulf his whole body. He ends the show by dancing freely, focusing his energy up to the

[121] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[122] Ibid.

ceiling. His choreography here becomes emphatically cartographic, a process which I will describe as *choreo-mapping*. This term relates to a physical outlining of place through an experiential understanding. Canham's performance takes the form of an emotional responsive map, through which he corporeally and cognitively depicts a multi-dimensional and sensitively nuanced place. Canham's work provides an excellent example of the term upon which to base its definition, but its understanding is not limited to his work and can be used other performative, experiential understandings of place.

William Forsythe asserts that 'choreography and dancing are two distinct and very different practices'[123]. Following this line of thinking, movement language and what it can express is a critical aspect of choreographic work. Choreography allows for a highly specific way of working that is particular to each choreographer or performance. It involves patterns of thinking, understanding and methods of looking. The idiosyncratic methodology or approach that each choreographer has is helpful when looking at Canham's own link to the place he is performing. The creation of choreographic scores by way of visual mapping, audio recording and writing has been 'employed in contemporary dance and performance practices from the turn of the millennium'[124]. In a similar sense, Canham's method based on archival logic that he uses to gather and arrange the elements of a place acts as a score that he dances upon: a clear example of *choreo-mapping.*

Transposing the notion of scores onto the performance of place, it becomes possible to see how all the elements involved drive the performance and guide the work in its presentation. Topography, emotional mapping and scoring all embody elements of arrangement and curation in order to render a sense of place through *choreo-mapping*. Much like a 'deep map', the arrangement of this comprehensive, three-dimensional material is an accurate way of describing place and its experiential qualities.

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[123] William Forsysthe. "William Forsythe Choreographic Objects: Essay." *William Forsythe Choreographic Objects: Essay*. The Forsythe Company, Accessed 20 June 2014. http://www.williamforsythe.de/essay.html.
[124] Myriam Van Imschoot. "What's the Score?" *Oral Site*. 2011. Accessed 13 Aug. 2014. http://sarma.be/oralsite/pages/What%27s_the_Score_Publication/.

The concept of *choreo-mapping* can also be applied to *Ours Was the Fen Country.* The audience is taken on an exploratory journey that includes oral testimony, memoir, biography, biology and history. Taken together, these create a profound and varied account of a place. The body here is again used as a geographical tool, dictated and led by anecdotes from the people of the land. The Fen people govern and change the mood of the performance, seemingly oscillating between time and weather states. Governing the place, their voices resonate around the landscape: the echoes of a place.

Whereas in *30 Cecil Street,* Canham moves through the space as a solo performer, in *Ours Was the Fen Country*, the four performers exist on a barren, bare stage with a canvas covered wooden structure behind them (pictured below). The simple formations they take and the performance area outlined with horizontal wooden planks symbolically express the geometrically-lined choreography of the land. In terms of the scores, the performance sticks to a similar structure throughout its duration. It moves between verbatim sections of text collected from interviews and abstract periods of dance, in which the emotions and feelings gathered in the text are transposed into movement. Just as in *30 Cecil Street*, the score is very much led by the audio recordings, which have been arranged and collected by Canham. The aural and the visual are knitted together and the way that the audio material has been ordered has a strong effect on the *choreo-mapping* of the place on stage.

Within both performances the layering of realities and the experiential presentation of place stretches through the space, forming patchworks of understandings and comprehensions. Within the patchwork, a plurality of places unfolds as the performance evolves, in turn generating within the audience a cumulative experiential understanding of what they are seeing, transporting them to places from their own experience, or perhaps new imagined places. Ingold believes that when performance is viewed through the alternative forms of mapping that have been discussed, it can be seen from 'everywhere at once and nowhere in particular'[125].

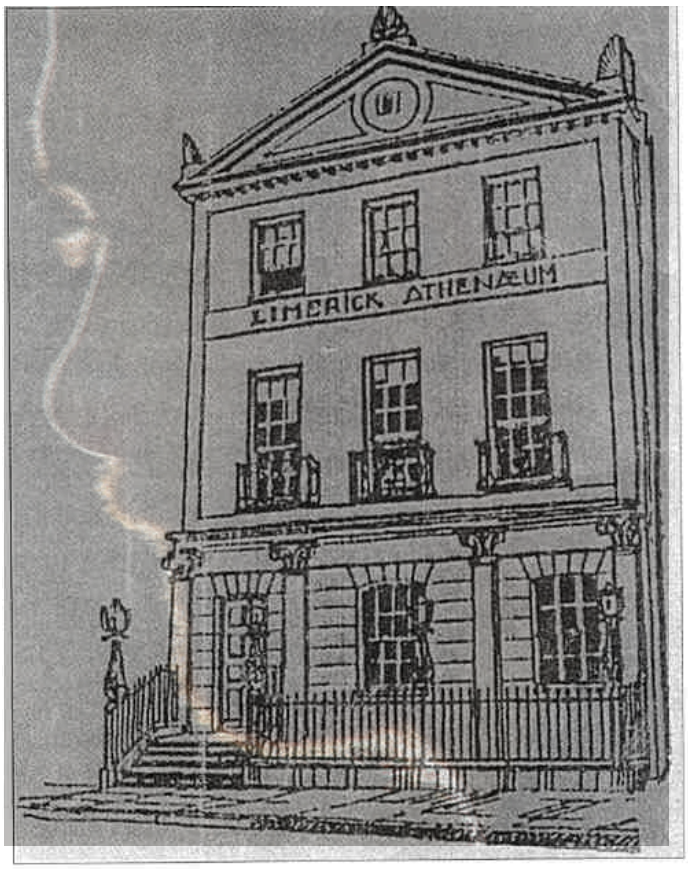
How can this dualism be possible? To be both somewhere and nowhere, in place and place-less? In the expression of place through performance, we have seen the multi-layered realities that can be evoked through the curation of collective identities and memories, coupled with the liminal and non-object bound art form that is performance. In this sense, dualism is generated through the simultaneous presence/absence relationship existing within the here/there, then/now that is constantly referenced in these performances. Referring back to Miwon Kwon and Lucy Lippard's analysis, Canham's performances are constantly in a process of being site-referential, continually alluding to other places that can never be fully captured in the performance space of the now. Yet, in spite of the strong sense of loss that permeates both these performances as central themes, we are rather left with the impression that something has been gained.

Exploring a place through motion has the potential to reveal the certain choreographies that can exist within places. Through Canham's practice (employing theoretical methods such as 'deep map' and topography), a process here called *choreo-mapping,* he shows us the layers inherent within place, which we can then experientially receive through performance. It could be said of *choreo-mapping*, as with Deleuze's definition of maps, that it is a movement form that is in a constant state of becoming or transformation. In a wider sense, as the patchwork nature of the performance creates a plurality of places, Canham's emotional and curatorial *choreo-mapping* allows the audience to access the creation of *another* place, which can offer possibilities of wider questioning about the notion of place as a whole.

[125] Tim Ingold in Mike Pearson. *"In Comes I": Performance, Memory and Landscape*. (Exeter, UK: U of Exeter, 2006), 219.

Chapter IV

The Experiential Space



Limerick Athenaeum, Scanned from "The Story of Limerick School of Art & Design, 1852 – 2002
with *30 Cecil Street*

Jonas Moore's map of a section of the Fens, The Ouse Washes Website (http://www.ousewashes.info/rivers/old-croft.html)
with *Ours Was the Fen Country*

We either view places from the inside out or from the outside in. These two views are very different and our composite understanding of places lingers on the threshold, somewhere in between[126]

Leslie Hill

[126] Leslie Hill. "On Location: Introduction." *Performance and Place*. By Leslie Hill and Helen Paris. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 101-03.101-102.

In 1968, Robert Smithson presented his work in an exhibition called *Earthworks* at the Dwan Gallery in New York. This exhibition took vast, remote landscapes and put them within a gallery to raise awareness of place, but also to present the changing conditions of the world. Smithson commented of his exhibition, called *A Non-Site*, that it was a 'three dimensional logical picture that is abstract, yet it represents an actual site-dimensional metaphor that one site can represent another site which does not resemble it'[127]. Nick Kaye refers to Smithson's work as possessing an inherent duality, which comes close to the here/there relationship elaborated upon above. 'As the term itself suggests', Kaye continues, 'the Non-Site asserts, first of all, that the site against which it claims definition is elsewhere'[128]. In referring to the original site, the Non-Site, Kaye goes on to explain, functions as a map: 'in its very attempt to present or point to the site [...] the Non-Site asserts its antithetical relationship'[129]. Similar to Kwon's signifier and signified, the antithetical relationship that Kaye detects is the manifestation of absence. It is a container of a memory or a possible presence summoned by a conscious reference to absence.

Meredith Monk also talks about her work in relation to absence, stating that 'a map is always used as a guide, a reference *before* (sometimes during) travel. In this piece, the map would be a continuous process (during the piece) and a residue of the process of the entire piece'[130]. In this comment it is possible to visualise the invisible thread that runs through performance. Firstly, we have the initial mapping of the research that drives and gives meaning to the piece. Secondly comes the *choreo-map* that guides the live presentation of this meaning (similar to a score). Finally, after the performance is finished, we have an intangible artefact of evidence that it has taken place; a living archive of the memory of the performance. This is the *something new* that is born from the performance. The term Non-Site then becomes apt and theoretically accurate to refer to the process of place as it transposes from one setting to another in Canham's work. Neither here nor there, the absence in the Non-Sites mirrors the loss that is experienced in both Limerick and the Fens. In both performances, never being able to reach the original site (or completely

[127] Robert Smithson. "Robert Smithson." *Robert Smithson*. Accessed 20 June 2014. http://www.robertsmithson.com/essays/provisional.htm.
[128] Nick Kaye. *Site-specific Art: Performance, Place, and Documentation*. (London: Routledge, 2000), 92.
[129] Ibid, 93.
[130] Meredith Monk in Nick Kaye. *Site-specific Art: Performance, Place, and Documentation*. (London: Routledge, 2000), 120.

capture its essence) is a poignant example of how the past can never be fully retrieved by people who have lost it. Both pieces curate research material from the original sites and arrange it to create a Non-Site: the paradoxical relationship between the past and the present, the simultaneously present somewhere and nowhere.

Performing a landscape of loss suspends this place in space and time, putting this paradoxical relationship in the spotlight. As a result it exists somewhere in the contested middle, which, as Leslie Hill suggests, 'lingers on the threshold'. Artistic forms offer the opportunity to allow a place to be reborn; to resurrect elements that were once intrinsically part of this place and give them new life in a performative setting. Events suspend places, objects and people somewhere between the here and there, the now and then. Canham's work is multi-perspectival and multi-layered and through this we come to understand his abstract, conceptual interpretation of place. The soundscape echoes around our minds, taking us through corridors of our own memories and transporting us *elsewhere.* The collective minds of the audience create a composite psychological map, a mesh of identities, histories and journeys that parallels the universality of this performed place.

What occurs here is a psychological, experiential effect that is enhanced and driven by the ephemeral and conceptual nature of performance. Discussing the fact that each audience member's reading of a place when presented with it in performance will vastly differ, Kaye concludes that place is 'explicitly constituted *in performance itself,* even where the "site" may have "a parallel identity" of its own'[131].

The duality previously discussed in reference to Non-Sites emerges again here as two 'places' running concurrently alongside each other, the first the original site and the second living in the performance itself. As the places in his performances exist in an in-between dimension, Canham is also 'lingering on the threshold'. His role is more complex than simply dancer: he and his fellow performers also embody the

[131] McLucas, Morgan and Pearson in Nick Kaye. *Site-specific Art: Performance, Place, and Documentation*. (London: Routledge, 2000), 55.

place. They assume the position of transmitter or conduit, the gatekeeper of the information, and the initial point of encounter, as we are introduced to the place through their bodily and emotional response to it. Canham indicates his enjoyment of 'this here and now in this space, and then and there and that space'[132]. Canham and his dancers are floating in the in-between space and the audience is prompted and invited to find meaning. They must locate their own position somewhere between where they find themselves physically, the performance and the place that it seeks to evoke.

Returning to a geographical investigation of this form of choreography, Dorita Hannah and Carol Brown recognise that cross-disciplinary approaches explore the possibilities of an experiential space at the constitutive edges of two disciplines[133]. Marvin Carlson sees artistic creative work as an 'image of performance as a border, a margin, a site of negotiation'[134]. Paralleled with the conflation of geography and dance, the original site couples with the performative to create a new site, one that exists in a liminal place. When site is moved, or when it is shown through the eyes or the body of something else, it instantly becomes a liminal representation. The parallels between the two disciplines, as with Canham's work and the juxtaposition of all the elements to each other, mean that the experience of place becomes an experiential one for the audience, which could be aligned to the deep effect of the memory of home illustrated in Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*.

Both of Canham's performances could be described as multi-site works as well as site-referential, or 'performances that exist in a number of places simultaneously'[135]. At the root of the depiction of the multi-site work that Canham creates is the interrelationship between body + memory + site, whilst also living in the other site of the audience's psyche. Maya Nanitchkova Öztürk's book *Corporeality: Emergent Consciousness within Its Spatial Dimensions* explicitly details how our understanding of an architectural space, (a term which in her analysis can be substituted for a building rather than being consistent with the definition outlined in the

[132] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[133] Carol Brown. "Making Space, Speaking Spaces." The Routledge Dance Studies Reader. By Alexandra Carter. (London: Routledge, 1998), 58-73. 65.
[134] Marvin Carlson. *Performance: A Critical Introduction*. (London: Routledge, 1996), 16.
[135] Mike Pearson. *"In Comes I": Performance, Memory and Landscape*. (Exeter: University of Exeter, 2006), 207.

introduction of this thesis) is received in part in the of our minds, as associations related to our own personal perspective are triggered. For Öztürk, our understanding of an architectural construct moves beyond the 'accustomed frameworks of "perception"', coming to represent a 'separate, external, representational and objectified entity that is appreciated intellectually and interpreted'[136].

This experiential understanding of how we contend with Öztürk's architectural space can be applied to Canham's work. Öztürk does not see space statically but rather as a mobile thing of becomings, which 'can be understood and rendered "open" to experience and the body'[137]; half the work of understanding is completed on the site of the perceiver's body. Furthermore, she usefully regards theatre as a highly experiential, social arena, 'deeply embedded in the workings of its spatial setting as an experiential field'[138]. This experiential quality, I can align very closely with my own first exposure to Dan Canham's work.

Discussing performing, Canham practically explains this experiential quality, stating that, 'you just might see something kind of visceral which is related to that and not have to know exactly what it is, literally, to feel it'[139]. Here, he is describing a phenomenological experience that is completely related to the experience in correlation to the space around the dancers. For the performers, the process of embodying people contains explicit spatial associations and understandings. Through the embodiment, they are projecting the experiences and the memories of these people in a true process of experiential understanding, which is in turn conveyed to the audience. This complete experience, which as Canham puts it is to 'literally, feel it' therefore allows the 'space to be shifted'[140].

As mentioned, Öztürk discusses space in her book with specific reference to architectural space; when her theories of corporeal, visceral experience are applied to place, further conclusions can be drawn. When corporeally confronted with a place that depicts 'deep map', a place that encompasses and holds within it

[136] Maya Nanitchkova Öztürk,. *Corporeality: Emergent Consciousness within Its Spatial Dimensions*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), 16.
[137] Ibid. Page 24.
[138] Ibid. Page 30.
[139] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[140] Ibid.

multifarious and poignant memories and stories, experiential understanding becomes more profound. Öztürk states that in performance, a plurality of textual references can be expressed through both spatial definitions, but also bodily kinetics, specifically, 'geographical location, descriptions of space and place, reference to objects and indications on proxemics relationships'[141]. Through Canham's movement language, drawn out across the performative plane, he weaves the spatial story that he has embodied, engendering the 'deep map' of this place so that it can be experienced more powerfully by an audience. In sum, Canham is here creating a spatial story that experientially affects the watcher as he traverses the performance area with a constant referential process.

Ultimately, if we look at place with an experiential understanding, it becomes a fluid concept, essentially non-rooted in definitive geographical location. If what draws us together is, for example, cultural experience, then this lives most potently in the mind and the body. Cast your mind back to Zagajewski's beloved city of Lvov that lives in the catacombs of his mind. This illustrates why artistic interpretations of place are so guttural and emotive, as they allow you to frame yourself, powerfully connecting with what is portrayed. A potent example to highlight the plurality of spaces that are first shown through Canham and then experienced through the body and the mind can be found in the image frames that are edited together to make a film. Like Canham's fragments that hold together and form an image of a represented place, when these fragments of the film are put together, the shutter speed is sometimes slow and sometimes fast. When it is slow, your perspective is drawn back out to see the bigger picture, exposing the original slides that form the creation process. However, when it is fast, you can no longer see the original fragments, just the moving, dancing image.

The original material and site first change and morph when seen through Canham, doing so again when received and experienced within our minds. Unlike a film, but similarly to Öztürk's discussion of architecture, the place depicted by dance yearns to be explored in the audience's minds as well**.** Before you

[141] Maya Nanitchkova Öztürk. *Corporeality: Emergent Consciousness within Its Spatial Dimensions*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), 130.

visit a place like the Fens, your mind is already filled with preconceptions of the place; your assumptions of rural life might constitute a dull and sleepy backwater or a tranquil and peaceful idyll. This is an undeniable, cultural understanding, which is how we experience the world. Entering the performance space, due to the abstract nature of the choreography, Canham's *choreo-mapping* completes half the work, the other half is a collaborative, experiential process of hybridisation with the audience's own memory compass. The potency of this exists within Cresswell's statement that place 'is never finished; never closed'[142]. Complete engagement with this work allows it to live on, preserved in our bodies and our minds, indicative of the cultural experience of place.

To return to our initial understanding of the creation of a place through art, it has become clear that it has a powerful transformative potential to evoke what the artist sees as the place. Portrayed through performance, this creates an experiential space, one that exists in the audience's mind. Like space defined in the introduction, it is a site of potential, as the portrayal of place in Canham's work is shown to us and then has the potential to be transformed into a new place that exists in the experiential space of the audience's own thoughts and experiences. This experiential space is the blank canvas that hovers above the theatre space upon which, instead of a single artist's impression, Canham's work allows for two brush strokes, the viewer and performer becoming equal partners in the creation of the new place.

As has been established, the term *choreo-mapping* describes the physical outlining of a place through an experiential interpretation of place. The process turns fragments of memory into dance, topographically placing performative elements next to each other and, in the work of Dan Canham, evoking all of the intricacies of a place. In keeping with the constant referential nature of place, the term alludes to a map, which itself is governed by its referential topography. In the performances, Canham himself becomes the map. Ultimately, therefore, *choreo-mapping* suggests that the most profound understanding of place can only live in our bodies and our minds.

[142] Tim Cresswell. *Place: A Short Introduction*. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers 2004), 9.

Place can be understood as an intangible concept, consisting of a series of associations, histories and cultural elements. Further to this, the intangibility of place in both *30 Cecil Street* and *Ours Was the Fen Country* is even more potent due to the extreme loss that is deeply associated with the original places. Perhaps, however, the performative engagement with these places, thanks to performance's ephemeral and imaginative nature wherein it transposes a message to the audience, has the potential to resurrect them. This refers back to Canham's activist intentions: he is breathing new life into places that are permeated with loss, marking them and re-applying cultural significance. These places live on in the minds of the audience, the intangible memory is like a living artefact of their performative marking.

Site-referential work is created in an experiential, liminal space, allowing site to take the form of a Non-Site. It lives in the rootless here and there, embodying a universal quality that is thematically common in performed place. Inevitably, the notions of site and place remain wedded to their original locales, but it is also important to acknowledge new connections that are made, which can enrich both process and performance. Work in the original site undoubtedly resonates as being true to that specific place, however imagined or experiential places equally hold the possibility of a greater experience. *30 Cecil Street's* premiere in the Forest Fringe was an interpretation of the multiple layers of place, which when exhibited through the moving body became linked to people and cultural identity. Canham is eager to show an interpretation and a re-definition of place by asserting that 'place can be a way of making sense of the world'[143].

Breathing new life into these places reinstates a belief that place, as a conceptual idea, can live on, even in the face of the world's accelerating homogenisation. Paris and Hill ask whether 'for many of us, being physically remote is less of an obstacle to our daily interactions than being without access to email and a cell phone would be. Does this, in turn, create a culture of placelessness?'[144]. With the emergence of super cities, the spread of suburbia and mass-produced everything, what was once distinguishable as a separate 'place' is turning into a flattened, unified topographical presence. The individual choreographies of place are being

[143] Dan Canham. Interview by Olivia Ainsworth. Personal interview. 9 March, 2014.
[144] Leslie Hill and Helen Paris. *Performance and Place.* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 3.

drowned out. Through performances such as Canham's, we are given the opportunity to relive and reimagine the echoes of a disappearing place in its variegated forms: memory, story, narrative, object, material and aural experience. To *feel* a place means that we can attempt to bring to life a reality.

Space is transformed into place by existing as a human notion, conjured up by cultural associations that can be seen to be imagined or 'dreamed'. Most compellingly, these places are difficult to perceive or connect to when they are in a state of loss, struggling to exist and losing resonance in a changing world. When watching these performances I experienced an instinctive and evolutionary need to understand the world around me and place myself within it. This struck a chord with me, the basic human instinct to feel, to clutch onto things that are present and ultimately constitute what it means to be. Perhaps the most important conviction that Canham's work left me with is that, in using the body, it is possible to reconnect experientially with a desire to understand and *feel* a place. The physical expression of this, running through the veins of Dan Canham, epitomises our need, our need to feel rooted in a rootless world. As he says, 'dance because nothing else will do'.

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Appendix I

Stillhouse's website:

http://www.stillhouse.co.uk/stilhouse/performance_projects.html

Interview with Dan Canham and research videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iooLjMs90aw

http://vimeo.com/41232998

http://vimeo.com/41900494

http://vimeo.com/40714581

Excepts of interviews conducted as research for *Ours Was the Fen Country*:

https://soundcloud.com/still_house

Photograph inspiration for both performances:

http://www.pinterest.com/stillhouselive/

Ours Was the Fen Country trailer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4xfRjZYTt4

30 Cecil Street trailer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rUMtrvyW98

30 Cecil Street film:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X79t8v-sgj0

Appendix II

Dan Canham Interview Transcript
9/3/2014

Olivia: Can you begin by telling me where you first got the inspiration to make Cecil Street?

Dan: So, yeah, so 30 Cecil Street. So I'd just finished a year and a half touring the DV8 around the world, and I was, I was pretty burnt out as a result of that. And Laura who you met today, she was living in Limerick, in Ireland on the west coast because she was dancing with a company there. So, after finishing with DV8 I'm just going to go and spend time with Laura and, you know, not worry about making work when I was out there, not worry about performing. I never had made my own work before, a little bit, I'd always wanted to, not really known where to start. And Limerick was a really evocative place. And my friend at the time, Will Dickie whose a performer as well, he, he was doing these things where he was going out and dancing in the streets where he grew up in Hampton, in the sort of south-west of London, he'd go out at night on these kind of drifts and dance to music and stuff, and I started doing the same, basically ripping him off, in Limerick and just going out really early when no one was around. Dancing it the city and just responding to it really, for its own sake. And then I thought, ok well, if I'm going to make any work, it's probably best to make a film in Limerick, because if I make a live show it's not going to have much of a life because there's just not really much of a scene in Limerick. So I thought a film would have more of a chance, especially because it's my first thing, I can send it to people and I don't have to worry about stuff. So I thought, where can I make something, I'll go looking for nice buildings to respond to, so I did. We found everything from like, like, an old unemployed men association that had been empty, I like the look of empty buildings and these all looked really good. Or like a shop front where the only thing that existed from it was the wall on the front and everything else was just levelled and I thought oh that would make a nice film in there, type thing. In the end we found this theatre, at 30 Cecil Street called The Athenaeum or The Royal, and next door were the owners and we asked them if we could have a look and they were really kind and they said yeah yeah, go have a look around and they showed us around. And it was this warren, amazing building, and I thought this is the place to make a show about. So, I started researching loads about that building in my time in Limerick, like going down to the library and looking at all the old micro-film, articles about things that had happened there in the 1860s or whatever. Um, cause someone had handily catalogued all the articles related to that building so I just went through that catalogue for interesting stuff. And at the same time I started collecting sound, sound was probably the first way into it. So, I started like, say I found an article that was like, for example I found an article that was um, an advert for a guy that was called Dr. Ormond, who was like a psychic that once played The Royal in 18, or 1911 or whatever, ages ago, and it said 'he'll be accompanied by his musical glasses'. And I was like ok that sounds amazing so, musical glasses that much just mean, the wine glass trick. You know, someone playing that glass organ or whatever, and so I thought yeah, that must have got them in the mood for this psychic, so I thought that's a really nice sound, I'll use that sound, record myself playing glasses. So I guess drawing links between the research and a practical application of it. Or like, I'd heard stories that a kid had died of an overdose in the car park of ecstasy, so I knew it was a rough, and people had told me there were fights there. So like, Limerick is quite a rough place, so I'd go out on the streets on like a Friday or Saturday night, basically looking for people that were having fights to record them with my microphone! Or if not that, people who were smashing bottles or shouting, or just were really drunk, just go and record drunk people, which I did. And then I got people offering me drugs and all that kind of stuff, and I got all that on microphone. Cause for me that was kind of the sound of Limerick as well, and, what else did I record, with a mike not so dissimilar to that, and started to turn that into a soundscape. And then the other side of it was we managed to get keys to The Royal, with the proper insurance once we had that, so I'd go there and do emotional research, so I'd go to like the dressing rooms and just kind of sit in there on my own and be like, you know, how does this feel and what kind of movement does this inspire, for me, what kind of things happened in here, and how can I channel that into movement. What kind of tracks would be suitable for this space, you know like, so I ended up assigning different tracks to different areas of the building. And then making choreography in the studio, away from the building to those tracks. And then putting that choreography back in the building, and then

in the edit playing different music over the top, do you know what I mean? So I had this weird sort of, chasing at my own tail sort of thing. And then the final bit that went into it was talking to people that had worked there, um, or frequented there, to feed into my imaginative possibilities and things that happened there. And that was all the making of the film basically, that was all kind of the stuff that went into it, so I had a lot of time to think and digest on it, and in the end we just shot a load of stuff in there for a week, and yeah, it was the first time I'd kind of done anything like that so we were just kind of finding it as we went and there was stuff we didn't use, and then in the edit it was difficult because it was turning something into something that was essentially just fragments. We had some nice stuff, and um, made the film, left it for another year when I went to go and work with some different companies for a year and a half or so, and then I thought, well now I have to make my own work I really don't want to work with other people so what should I do, and I thought it would be a nice challenge to turn this film into a theatre piece. How the hell would I do that? It's like site-specific film, how can I make a site-specific piece of theatre without a site, type thing. But none of it was with any great design, none of it was with any, like, I wanted to do this or this, it was really just like, I've got a little bit, I've got 500 quid from Ferment, and a couple of weeks space, what should I do. I'll play with this, and I expanded some of the soundtracks, and I used the structures I'd made from the film as an entry point and I added new ones and shifted around others and I think I had three and a bit weeks, and I whipped it into something that I then worked on a bit more in the future, turned into that piece. So that was kind of the long journey of making that. And when I was in the room making 30 Cecil Street I had some people come in, like Laura or some other friends, mostly it was just me. And I'd divide my time kind of equally between being on the floor dancing, improvising, working out what I'd done in the film and changing that, and then being on the other side of the room, working on soundtrack and changing that and thinking about it more like, directorially. And just try and separate those two hats, so that I wasn't on the floor trying to compose stuff I was just making stuff and then composing stuff kind of separately.

Olivia: Ok, so, when you were researching the place originally, because I remember one of the most striking things from the performance was the embodied bits of information that obviously you'd researched, either from information you'd collected from people or things you'd read presumably. Maybe you can talk a bit about why you chose what you chose, and what were the things that really struck you, because I know you said that some of the things really reflected Limerick…

Dan: Yeah some sort of like, Limerick is a really evocative city and a place you wander round and you can already see and almost imagine yourself in a film, because it's the steam rising from the factory at the bottom of the road. The fact that it rains so much or, that it's battered by, there's massive piles of scrap, I don't know, it's just really… so, any bits that would kind of tap into that feeling, those feelings for me. And something also about being on an empty stage with no audience out there, and the feeling of just having been on tour, playing to big houses, and then like, so that was a really thing like I thought this is quite a powerful image for me personally. How I feel, you know like, here I am in the middle of nowhere, on a stage on my own. With no one out there, and how that informs some of my choices and movement choices and so on. Yeah, something about loss actually, you know because it was a significant turning point for me, to make my own work and in a sense letting go of something. And Limerick itself had experienced a lot of loss, just wholesale loss of its culture, artistic culture because there was a time it was 15 cinemas in the city and now there are none. There's 2 just outside the city, in multiplexes you know so, the personal things, ideas of loss, none of which are explicit in the show but give me fuel to make stuff. And then more wider things about the city kind of having died, you know, through that building. Represented through that building. So all of those things echoing each other and yeah responding emotionally and physically to a space so like, going onto the dance floor, knowing all the shit that happened there, knowing that The Prodigy once played there and it was probably a massive mosh-pit at one point and choosing a track that would get me fired up, knowing that there were probably fights there because I'd be told, and so on as I said, and then kind of using the track to get into that zone, embody that. And then when it came to turning it into the stage thing I tired to find, there's a little section at the back where I do all this jerky stuff, and the jerky stuff is me trying to find a kind of physical language that will express that essence or that atmosphere in a pleasing way because if I was just flipping out at the back it would be alright, but I wanted to just shape it a bit more and find a physical language or a rule or a constriction that would stop me from just going nuts but I could give you the sense of someone being pulled around you know, whatever. Same with the hands, the slow hands thing. That little

movement, you know, it's just something that I like to look at but the same time it can, it's almost like for me at that point in the show, they become my eyes and my sense of smell and they are leading me through these different eras wherein, say I get here in the room, I'm tuning in like a radio signal, it's like a sound wave type thing, I'm tuning in to the opera that was once sung in the space at this point, and then I move along and over here there's some step dancing or something, and over here there's someone telling a joke. Like in The Subtle Knife where he cuts through different realities, for me the hand, moving the hands like that were just a way of getting into the kind of, like a radio, tuning into different things that I imagined that had happened there, and that I know did. Both of those two. Yeah.

Olivia: Ok, I've put two things here. What captured your imagination most when visiting the place, we've already kind of talked about that. And then I've put down here: so, talking about site, so 30 Cecil Street was made in the location first, then it transferred to other locations and also to the live performance. And then the Fen Country was made outside of the Fens?

Dan: We started the research there, and when it came to being in the studio we were in East Anglia, not in the Fens but in Ipswich which isn't that far, but in a studio. And then, when it came to finishing it we did a bit of work in Bristol and a bit of work in Ipswich but none of it was made on-site, none of it was did we go to the fields and start dancing there or anything. Which we could have done, and if we'd had more money I would have like to have done that sort of thing actually, but because the Fen thing was based more on interviews, explicitly, then it was as much about people as it was about a particular place, you know. The place for Fen Country, well it's the same for Cecil Street, they're both like platforms or springboards that you use to talk about other stuff you know. To talk about the wider themes, and so therefore it doesn't even matter if you've never heard of the Fens or if you've never experienced that building or anything. They're almost like vessels that you, as an audience member, can put your own imagination into and imagine your own connections with old theatre, or with rural areas with characters that you could find anywhere really.

Olivia: Was that an intention of yours to make a kind of universality?

Dan: Yeah. So the site's really important because the specifics are what give it meaning, you know like, people talking about specific things or using specific words, that stops it from being a general, let's talk about loss or whatever. But hopefully the specifics allow for people to then kind of enter through that and think more broadly about their own histories in relation to some of that stuff. Which means it will speak to some people and not to others because if you have no interest in rural ways of life or anything other than the city or whatever, maybe it won't appeal to you. But if you have some connection to that or to older people or to yeah, then hopefully it can speak to you.

Olivia: You talked about loss, and I saw lots to do with memory as well. This is a bit more of a philosophical question; do you believe a memory of a place is still living? So this applies to the Fens as well as Cecil Street, and is it still living through the work you created?

Dan: Yeah, I think so, I think that's part of its power. And I've only just discovered that through doing it. But, the sense that you make real that which might not be real anymore. I mean it's a dangerous word, nostalgia, because it's so slippery, and it's so often associated with things that were never real in the first place. But the sense of longing, and nostalgia; apparently in old Greek it means 'homesickness', basically, and something for me in the sense that like longing for something you've lost, even if it was never what you thought it was – that's a powerful thing. And through doing the show we make real what might not be real any more. And memory is really important in that sense. I guess I try to be explicit about that in a way, both Cecil Street and Fen Country have conflicting points of view, so, just to kind of show that memory can be slippery as well. In Cecil Street there's a bit in the soundtrack where he says, 'fights were happening all the time', and the woman immediately after says, 'I don't remember there being any fights'. And then it goes backwards and forwards like that, just kind of showing how you don't quite know what it is. Or even in Fen Country in a less obvious way, you've got people eulogising about the beauty of it all, but then you've also got the guy going on about Cromwell and how he's a hero and how everyone's proud to be awkward and defiant and stuff which, which is a less easy thing for people, and my self included, to swallow. So it's not

trying to say, it's trying to put it all out there in a way, and not just say, look how beautiful this is or was, or look how terrible it is, or was, you know it's just kind of, it's imbued with both of those in a way, but trying to be as even handed as possible. And that's where the body comes in really, the handle is, only though happening upon it do I realise it's a nice combination: the body is a site for memory, and then sound moving through the body and making the body move sounds associated or reflected with memories and then site, those three things together add up to more than the sum of their parts. And they're all like fragmentary, a lot of the movement is in fragments. Or the sound, you only catch snatches, and you're only getting an idea of what the space is because you don't have to have been there, but somehow those three things can like, they all make sense. The memory within me and what my feeling of what this room was like, after it's all gone or whatever, it's still in there physically, I can express that physically. It makes sense to use your body in a way that it doesn't always make sense to use your body on stage. Or to dance.

Olivia: Yeah because through my research I've been thinking loads about, because I'm writing about dance in relation to place and space, and I've been thinking a lot about what is place and how much of it is to do with people actually, and how much of it is to do with body. I mean even through these two performances you can see explicitly they are completely linked to the body. But then maybe that's our understanding of it because we of course are people. But I don't know, in a lot of research I've done people compare landscape to the body because in a way it is another kind of life-form.

Dan: And it's a nice challenge on stage, how do you conjure up a sense of place, how do you change the space with just your body and sound as the primary tools, that's like for both pieces, the primary point of interest for me. How do you change the space and evoke somewhere completely different without being literal. Without all coming out in costumes and all miming stuff, without loads of props or, just, you know, we can play the sound of a strong wind, and then we can sway together, and that will kind of change the space. And leave enough gaps, for you to put yourself in there, and then kind of fill it and fell that everything's changed, you know, the temperature and that sort of stuff. And lighting really helps, as well, but primarily I think sound and movement on these two pieces and the way they're interlinked and which one is leading the other and the dance between those two things is really important.

Olivia: How do you, and then maybe this applies to the others as well, how do you situate yourself within portraying the place and the memories of a place. I asked you this last time, I remember, but the fact that you weren't there, you grew up in the Fens which makes a difference, but maybe with Cecil Street, the fact that you weren't there and you're kind of transmitting these memories and this place, how do you find yourself within that?

Dan: I think, like it's a question of responsibility. Because there is real people and real places, and kind of acknowledging the responsibility you have to fairly represent. Of course, any sort of documentary, any sort of telling of a place will be full of subjective stuff. For me it's about being transparent, and part of that is how we perform on stage. So like, as I say, we don't come out with big costumes and anything. Even there, like Laura giving the note to bring back some of the acting with a big 'A', it's not just a taste thing it's also a question of responsibility. That we're showing that we're ourselves, and we've spoken about channelling the voices or being, or conjuring but that that's from that position of being outsiders and as long as we're not completely outsiders and being completely ignorant of what we're talking about. Throughout this process we've learnt a lot about these people but we have to acknowledge that there's a lot we don't know, and we can only show what we see as outsiders, but the perspective of the outsider is an important one. Because it can show things that we don't see from the inside. Other people don't see from inside. And, so yeah, things like having the computer on stage and seeing us pressing play, trying to expose as much of the mechanics so that we set up the set in front of you. Both shows just start simply with house lights still up and performer walking out and looking at people who are there. So it's like, here we are, in this time and space, let's go somewhere else. And there's a kind of openness to that which hopefully goes some way into acknowledging the reality of the situation. Which is, that we are outsiders and that some of the people we're portraying, you know, I only met for an afternoon. But that's not to say I didn't speak on quite a level with them, it just means that it's fragments that we're showing. And they can mean a lot, it doesn't have to be a full picture, they can still mean a lot, it'll always come through us but we just have to be honest about that.

Olivia: What was the difference for you, of exploring a building as opposed to a landscape?

Dan: I think the landscape one became more then about people and about, and I think I knew then before I wanted it to be more about people, and to have speaking in it, which Cecil Street doesn't, and to have some kind of speaking text, and I knew that would be a difference. Because the Fens are so huge, and even though they're flat and boring so on and so forth, they're also really diverse and there's a whole lot of different people there, and it's a lot more sprawling subject matter. There's loads of things, if you're just looking at a building, they'll be a number of things that you won't include in your depiction of that space. But if you're looking at a landscape there's loads of things you won't include otherwise you'd make a five hour long epic, you know. I'm looking at a real thin slice of that landscape and some of the things that are in there, so many stories in that huge space that I had to kind of be selective and exercise a kind of editorial policy that only really formed through speaking to people but that became about people with a rare way of life or people that were like the last of their line, uncommon characters, people that you don't see everyday or that might not be around in 50 years. That became the editorial policy that wasn't always the case, because I spoke to some people who didn't always fit that, but it took speaking to others to find that out. And so that's a really small element of a much bigger picture that I couldn't hope to represent fully, you know. So again, it's almost like putting an artificial limitation on it, on what you'll look at in order that it can speak more loudly.

Olivia: And I know you spoke about going into the dressing rooms in the theatre. So in comparison to going to do interviews with these people, how could you parallel that with Cecil Street, like obviously you speak to people, but especially in relation to the building, you would go in and, was it quite a tactile thing, was it quite sensory?

Dan: Yeah, I think finding the tracks were really useful and improvising, with those different bits of music, kind of mental fuel of what might have happened in here. So maybe, in the green room for example, there's a green room in there which is now without a carpet, and it's these mouldy walls and the paint has all peeled and all the wallpaper has fallen off and there's pictures all over the walls of the people that used to be there and there's a script of someone's spoof version of Raiders of the Lost Ark, that was there. And there's like half a mirror ball, and like a guitar with no strings, and there's loads of keys. All this stuff is in this room, and in another room there's like unopened bottles of coke and stuff. And there's tickets from that rave that was there in 1997, because that was the last thing and then they locked the doors. There's all this fuel, that you're like wow, and you're looking at the pictures and you're thinking, yeah The Cranberries were in here at one point, so what would that have been like and some little kids would have been in here watching adults get pissed, what would that have been like to be a kid. And then, you know, there've been arguments in here and people have vomited or whatever, and all these things so I'm just going to splurge that out, writing those things down, on a page, or thinking about them in my imagination, and drawing on different fragments. Not to illustrate them all literally, to mime vomiting or fighting, but I don't know, just like, put on a track, dance to that track, and think about what state that particular person is in, the kid that's looking up, and allowing that to affect my movement in relation to this track. And letting that go, and then thinking about the dude, Keith whatever his name is from The Prodigy, swanning around and taking ownership of it, and switching between this almost kind of kaleidoscope and then starting to codify some of that. Right, so I'm a kid looking at his Dad getting drunk in this green room, and I've got this move for that, rolling my shoulders, that's what it makes me feel like so that's what I'll do. How do I codify that, this becomes the movement where I roll my shoulders. And the beat to this track to fit this atmosphere is like [makes a beat noise], so I'm going to go like [makes the beat noise and moves], and already you just start to, again place limitations in. Already like, instead of me being a little kid and being like, ah Dad, all I'm doing is this [makes beat noise], but like somehow it kind of speaks of that. Even in my mind, as long as I've got a reason, you'll make your own reason and you won't necessarily see little kid but you'll find something in there, and it will start to move you in some ways. Because that's the joy of dancing is the irrationality of it and the kind of poetry it can offer. And so it's a process of taking something literal and squeezing it really hard into a little essence or kind of stepping it away via degrees of music or via memory into something less literal, that's still related to it. And maybe you see that, maybe I play the sound of a kid laughing and that helps you, but that coms afterwards. First comes my movement and like that's what I'm doing as a performer, that's my job done, as a director, how am I going to help the audience gain more possibilities for this movement while I'm going to play the

sound of a kid laughing at this point. You see what I mean? So I give you a hook in order for you to get into it, so you're not just looking at me doing random movements, you can start to make associations and so everything is kind of informing each other, if that makes any sense. And all of that came from me thinking about the kid whose Dad was getting drunk in the corner, or whatever. And then I'll become the Dad and do the whole process again. And maybe that's only 2 seconds of the little choreography, I make, but it's in there. With Cecil Street because the sound never changes, it's all one track, that just plays right through that just roots me, you know, in the constructive realities I've made. And then within that, as a performer, all I have to do is like respond to that, to those sounds, and to those thoughts about what happened in here. There was an audience cheering, and so I can actually do anything, movement wise, as long as, as long as it's connected to those thoughts. And to the sound. I can do any movement. And it will have meaning, as long as I'm in it, if you know what I mean. So then it doesn't become about steps necessarily, and loads of the movement material is improvised but it's improvised within these really tight borders that hold it together and stop it becoming a turgid mess. But even at the end of Fen Country, when we're skipping around, we didn't really do it properly today at all, but like, the sense that the music will root us, and Phil, that character has spoken about about nature and wind, they'll all be hooks for you as an audience to understand why we're skipping around, and our job as performers to listen to each other and change so that it will have some sort of meaning, some sort of emotional meaning. And it's not necessarily steps we've set, like a choreography (1, 2, 3, 4), but it's stuff that will allow for different possibilities and that is a kind of process, even when you're looking at it, process of discovery and of trying to solve the challenge of how do we move at this point. We're always approaching this with a question, like it never feels like it's done and then we just show you. We're kind of sharing that process of discovery with you as the audience. So then we can be really simple, and not have to do impressive stuff.

Olivia: With Cecil Street, I saw some of it when I was there, but what were the reactions to it?

Dan: It seemed to go really well, especially in Edinburgh yeah. It seemed like, I mean, Forrest Fringe where I performed it, that was its last year there, so there was some sort of, that was, as tragic as that was for Forrest, that was a, it informed the work in a really nice way. And people seemed to really like it. And I've taken it all over now. I think, generally I've found good context for it and it's pliable to different spaces and different contexts, between more of a theatre audience and more of a dance audience, internationally, small decrepit run down spaces, big grand plush spaces. It's managed to, kind of, flex with the different conditions. Because, inevitably, wherever I do it, it will inform what it is and its flexible enough to allow that to happen. If we did it in here, then somehow the history of this building would start to seep in to the history of Cecil Street and that would be a really pleasing thing. It wouldn't be something I'd want to try and hide, it would be something I would want to try and include, so then there's a really interesting kind of discussion this here and now in this space, and then and there and that space. And sort of the two things merging, and I really like that. All that sort of, juxtaposing different things, and allowing the audience to find meaning between them. Is what I'm into.

Olivia: Can you say that again, sorry?

Dan: Placing different things beside each other and allowing the audience to find the links. The bit in Fen Country that we didn't do today, but it's Tilly's solo, where she starts doing some jerky stuff. Like, if you break it down into its components. You've got Tilly dancing, you've got this big, there's this big cello track, there's a sound of an old lady's voice, the scene before was a scene talking about eels, the scene after, the little fragment after talks about how it was difficult place to live, the Fens, and people had huge families. And like, all of these things, have links between them. But none of them are like obvious, saying, 'oh she's an eel now', or, 'oh, she's one of 21 kids'. You know, or anything like that, but somehow they inform it, and the music is saying something which is complimentary to the dance saying something that's complimentary to the sound of the old lady. They're all slightly different, but they'll allow it to grow. That's the idea anyway.

Olivia: That is so great. I'm really interested in as well, in mapping, like for ages I was interested in mapping the city and alternative mapping and that kind of links to what you were talking about about going out and dancing in the city. And I really

want to translate this into, especially when I saw your pieces, to do with dance, but using the body to create some sort of map that isn't a physical map. And then you just talking about the different elements reminds me of, the next question I was going to ask is about the masking tape, which I think is when it was really like… so can you just talk really briefly about the masking tape?

Dan: The masking tape, thought about chalk at first but it seemed less practical and flexible to different spaces. That sort of Dogville inspiration, that Dogville, all you need is a floor plan and people start to see the walls themselves. And then pleasingly, although it was no way designed, the thing about tape and the soundtrack being on tape something about the physical, that it wears down over time and so on. It's just pleasing to have some physical and practical to do and take your time over. I think of that whole thing of laying down the tape as the intro, where I'm just setting out my stool really simply, and as soon as it's done it's like, ok now we'll go together. Just allow you space to draw you in. Putting tape down, just to go over certain things, in order for it to fit properly, and then you start to bring in the real space of Forrest. And the same with the sound actually, in the soundtrack there's sounds of cards passing outside, but in Forrest you'd hear cars passing outside. And those two things bleeding together so as an audience you're like, did a car just pass or didn't it, and that being a really nice, you're sort of transported by that. And sound is just really useful in that way, if you were to make a piece about this space I might walk around, and think, what are all the things that happened in here. Let me go and make some sounds over here, you know, just using my imagination, maybe they did a little pattacake thing in the corner, and I'd go and record some kids doing that. And maybe we'd make an audio piece in this room, I'd just place that little speaker in the corner or a headphone piece or something and you got into that bit of the corner and you suddenly start hearing that and you move into the centre and you hear a teacher telling someone off, or whatever you imagine. Just doing that sort of thing can reap nice… for me I love all of that, the echoes of a place.

Olivia: It's also really useful for an audience because visual is one thing, like we see in film all the time, yes we can be transported anywhere in film. But with sound you can just close your eyes and listen and it's completely individual to who I am where it's going to go.

Dan: There's a guy who apparently makes sound documentations of places, between different years and the differences between them, I forgot who it is, are really revealing. So like the Amazon rainforest like 10 years ago. Or a certain area that was full of birdsong and then he goes back there and it's completely silenced. And that stuff is really interesting. And how sound can give a portrait of a place is really interesting. And then, I really like the idea of emotional mapping, you can tune into how a place makes you feel. And then maybe what you imagine happened there. Good and bad and that that can be as valid the practical, tangible things like street lights. And you use sound or visuals to kind of suggest things that had gone on.

Olivia: There's that really nice performance by do you know Blast Theory? 'Rider Spoke'?

Dan: Oh yeah, I never did that.

Olivia: I never did it either, I wish I had. But that idea is really lovely, like, people can record and then you can go and really just go and live through their, it's almost got a similarity to Fen Country how you can really live through these voices. It's nice. And it gives the onus to the audience member because they can really decide where they go and they map it out themselves.
The last question on Cecil, it's a solo piece, so as opposed to the collective, how was it as a solo performer?

Dan: How do you mean, in terms of the performing of it?

Olivia: Yeah but also as well in the exploration phase as well, because I presume with Fen you did it with the others?

Dan: I did most of the research myself on Fen Country and brought them in when most of the research was done. We had a R&D period and then I did more interviews after that. It was mostly me kind of leading that, and then bringing other people in to help discover what it could be on stage. But, Cecil Street it's sort of, there's a poignancy for me to that final image, which is just me stood on stage and it's done and there's something about a cleanliness of one person coming on. You discover their job is to recreate this space,

there's a kind of purity to that. That's what they do. Then they go. That's it. And Fen Country is wider in terms of our role, and our relation to each other then becomes, you know Cecil Street is one person and his relationship to the sound and the space, and the memory of the space. This one's like all of that plus our relationship to people, and to each other on stage and it's kind of a broader task. And I really like ensemble work, you know work where you're really listening to each other and responsive to each other. And there are sections where basically as performers that's all we're doing is responding to each other within certain rules but hopefully the sound and the context around it makes the audience see more than an ensemble theatre exercise or whatever.

Olivia: Just thinking then there is something. Yeah, you mention last time as well, but kind of you being the… so there's a memory, there's you and there's the audience; the transmitter, the conduit. So it is really different because in Fen Country you're like responding from each other and kind of like you said it has a transformative quality and changes while you're doing it. But with Cecil Street it's almost like it's completely like… you're on your own and you've responded to these memories yourself, and there's no one else on stage who can affect that it's completely dependent on you...

Dan: And the audience to a certain degree. In a more subtle way, which is of course also happening in Fen Country, because we're talking to the audience, you know. That's the other thing. I mean they are very similar in some ways and very different in others. You know we're actively talking to people with the words of the real people because they came from interviews whereby one person was sat opposite somebody else talking to them, there's still that spirit in that show where one person is sitting talking to the audience as if they're you know together, confiding in the same space. Not behind a fourth wall or whatever. Maybe you watch Cecil Street, you know you're watching someone undergoing a process, but one that isn't asking for you to be actively part of it, whereas if you're stood talking to people, that's a different thing.

Olivia: Yeah, yeah it is. Fen Country. So like I said for Cecil Street, where did you get the inspiration?

Dan: So I grew up on the edge of the Fens and left when I was 18. Didn't think really twice about it. As I grew older, hit around 30, started to think about the place I'd grown up in and had formed me to some extent. And my Dad is from there, and his Dad's from there and so on. And started going on these long walks with my friend who grew up there too. So we'd just go on these long walks and sort of connect with the landscape in a particular way, where we'd just walk for miles for a long time and then tied with that I started speaking to people. Seeking interesting characters to speak to. Going to like libraries or local museums or nature reserves and saying who would be good to speak to. For it's own sake. With the idea that we might make something from it, maybe it would turn into some sort of work, no idea what. Maybe an audio piece, something for online only, maybe a film, live show, I don't know. But it was just a nice thing to do to sort of talk to people, especially the sort of people you'd never normally talk to that might give in my case, give me an idea of the kind of place I grew up in and what those people are like and help explain what I'm like. Although, none of that's really important for the show itself, that's where it's coming from. And the more people I spoke to I thought yeah this would be a nice challenging to turn some of this into the stage, and started seeking out those more particular types of people. And it was as simple as that really.

Olivia: Did you feel a certain kind of ownership to this project because you were from the Fens?

Dan: I think it ties into what we were saying before about acknowledging the limits of any ownership I can have, you know. Having a sense of being more like a custodian of the material like someone kind of taking care of it. But it's not mine, I can't presume to have ownership over other people's stories because I don't know them well enough, and I haven't lived them, and I'm just taking care of those fragments. But the fact that I've grown up there, I mean, it gave me that personal interest to kind of spark it which even though that's not necessary to show in the piece, it helps when making a piece because it gives you a reason to go there, an emotive connection, to what you're doing that can feed in.

Olivia: Yeah with that responsibility, did you feel that when you were organising the sound?

Dan: Yeah definitely. Also because legally you don't want to misrepresent anybody either. You know, yeah definitely. But the show I'd done with DV8 I'd done a lot of editing of interviews that was a lot more politically charged, it was about gay attitudes, attitudes towards gay people specifically in a religious context. Some of the things people were saying were really inflammatory. Really bigoted people that you had to represent properly even if what they were saying was kind of hard otherwise you'd be open to legal trouble so my experience on that fed into this even if what we were saying was less politically charged, I still tried to be as in the editing as kind of representative as possible of where it's coming from. Not kind of, rearranging words, to say what I wanted it to say but to take what was implicit in there and draw it out more, make it more clear for an audience.

Olivia: Some of the most interesting sections are when you take whatever however much text and loop it, or take words out or change it. Doesn't change the original intention, but it's so, amplifies it in some kind of way. I'm thinking of the bit where he's talking about the horses. I was just listening to it today and thinking, I can't even remember what this was originally about but it's just… yeah, it's really cool that bit.

Dan: No, it's nice. And sometimes you let that material guide you, you don't, it's like that thing, you don't try and impose your will on it, you allow it to guide you and to meet with what you're feeling and getting from it.

Olivia: Really quickly, I'm really sorry to hammer this in, it's just because I'm writing about place so performing the landscape. And maybe you can mention here the building elements you used?

Dan: Yeah, well like that setting out your stool as kind of indicating an on and an off. It's kind of a nice theatrical thing, we're putting these boards down and when we put them down we're going to change the space. When we're out, we can be more practical, I like that. It's like that in the Fen, and when we're in there, you're looking at the Fen. And again the relationship between sound and movement to suggest that, in a playful way, that yeah it happens in Cecil Street where I respond to all the footsteps, that like it's a game that I'm playing where you're listening to some footsteps and I'm copying the same sounds, with my body and that will suggest that particular stage. That the footsteps are recorded on. And the same goes for this, that, the sound of a bird playing and me turning my head to look at it will indicate we're outside or whatever. Yeah. The swaying in the wind, I'm trying to think of other moments. Yeah, all that sort of stuff. It's weird, I don't want to get too literal with it and kind of… you want it to be poetic and open for lots of possible interpretations of it, it's why when we do the thing when we call gloom which is when all of us are moving around starting and stopping, we're swaying and then we're shifting in space. That's kind of suggesting outdoors and also at the mercy of being moved by bigger forces than you. But what we're not doing is miming being in a storm or something. So it's kind of a poetic distillation of being blown in a storm, but we turn it into something more abstracted and physical.

Olivia: But that's what happens, but that's what happens with this kind of movement as well and this kind of choreography. Because of the very nature of it not being a 'set routine' it becomes, it blurs, and becomes an image that you can almost focus out of and that it can turn into anything. But that's why today when we were talking about Tilly's bit where she's, her solo. And you said afterwards, I can't remember whether this is true or not, but that's she's doing something in relation to the eels.

Dan: Her movement is in relation to the music primarily and some images around what it's like to be in the middle of nowhere with a huge sky overhead. There's a section before that refers to eels, may colour your experience as an audience to give you a hook in, but what she's not doing is pretending to be an eel, you just might see something kind of visceral which is related to that. And not have to know exactly what it is, literally, to feel it. And to still be kind of moved, and shifted, and for the space to be shifted. So then in that sense with movement as having a role of evoking a space or an atmosphere, it's as much of what you do with your face and with your focus as it is with the rest of your body. Because if you're absent there, but doing loads of clever stuff with the rest of your body. It doesn't matter, you know, your focus is really important with this work. Because it's so subtle a lot of it as well, it's how you shift your energy as well, just by looking and with your face to enable and communicate to enable people to come in as well as all the fancy other

stuff. For me that is as much of the choreography and to do with your energy and all that.

Olivia: So in relation to the fact that it was a collective, and I also wanted to link it to the earpieces and what Laura was saying today about not acting. So first of all, as a collective, what were your considerations as a collective, like you said about working with each other, also about the sound coming through the ears, what's the intention?

Dan: It's a good tool in process, to have to listen and speak at the same time because it stops you from getting in the way, you just have to get out of the way, of your own way in order to actually keep up as one, but also to do it justice. And then, in performance it's a useful anchor as a performer to like do justice to what that is, and not get too carried away basically. From the audience point of view, if you put two and two together, and it doesn't matter if you don't, but if you do, if you realise, oh they're listening to the real words, again it's kind of like, exposing the mechanics and exposing the process implicit in the performance. So we're not just kind of learning them, and coming in and presenting them to you. We're undergoing a process of listening, and then speaking, the whole time. Think something [not sure of the name] uses a lot in her work, just having the ipods and the earpieces in, just because they're, it's a really useful way. For me as an actor it's actually a really useful way, of course it is, because you've got so much more information from the voice than just from words written on a page you know. You can just follow it, and play the game of, as I said, getting out of your own way.

Olivia: But there's something sort of like, sort of incredible about it, which is more than acting. When Ian, when he's doing the bit where he's sitting down. Just like the, the subtleties of being able to, even the in-breaths, I loved when he did the in-breaths. And it becomes more than he's re-telling it. It's like a perspective thing about the original information and what space that is now living in). But yeah, so I guess it's this…

Dan: Coming through you, yeah, challenging all that. And in doing so, kind of embodying it. It's a bit like a sort of magic trick, like, look I'm me still, but look at me change. And turn into this other guy in front of you, and then I'll be me again. That kind of acting I really like, when things transform in front of you and the space and people, and people in different states and stuff. As opposed to just taking it for granted, like doing a weird accent or a funny voice and being like, oh that's acting. I have to get over that and accept it and be ok fine, but it's nice when you see it come from seemingly nowhere.

Olivia: But everything honours each other, like you walk into the space and you set it up, you start hearing, and there's always like a development in this piece where like it starts where you're just talking and then it moves into these more abstract moods where the music comes in…

Dan: Yeah that's certainly the idea. It's, we spoke a lot about this in the making, it's trying to kind of chase the concrete and everyday and the lucid into something more poetic and irrational and push it into that place so you have to dance because nothing else will do. And then come back again. It's like the dance has to earn it's place otherwise it's just a really silly thing to do, dancing. Why would you, do you know what I mean!

Olivia: I'm so nearly done, I promise! We talked about your intentions because we talked about universality, what were your overriding intentions when creating both of the pieces?

Dan: I think, I tried to maintain a healthy balance between not being able to articulate those too clearly, because when you're applying for money and stuff, you have to sort of say what you're going to make before you've even made it, and that can be death to a project. Sometimes you just need to follow your instinct and then you can talk about it till the cows come home after you've made it, because you realise why you did things. But at the time you didn't, you just did it because it felt right and made sense, that doesn't mean you can do anything that feels good, but it does mean that like you honour that instinct, as well as what your logical intention may be. Because often like, I might have had the intention to make something that was, you know, a showstopping, anarchic, crazy, wild piece. But for whatever reasons that's not where I'm being guided by my instinct and what I end up making is something really restrained and delicate and evocative

and so on. So sometimes the intentions are going in the opposite direction to what you're trying to make, you know, because just allowing that to happen I think if I did have any intentions that I could articulate before I made them it was to just tune into that more than anything. To tune into that which was really evocative for me. And that might be so for an audience.

Olivia: Do you feel like they're restrained?

Dan: I do yeah, but maybe that's…

Olivia: How do you mean restrained?

Dan: They they're… that there's a lot of stillness and silence and kind of you know, small movements and… but maybe that's just my perspective on it.

Olivia: Yeah, I think it could be seen that it starts quite restrained but then it moves into something that isn't. Yeah, I don't know if that's necessarily wrong, it's just quite interesting.

Dan: So yeah I think it's good, so now with future work you know I'm having to describe it to people to get money to do it, before I've even made it. I need to be able to separate the bit of me, that's like, this is what it will be, and it will be amazing, from the bit of me that's like, in the room and just discovering and trying to do stuff for its own sake and for the joy of doing it and not just because you want to make a masterpiece that will move people or whatever. Because that can get in the way, that ambition or the intention can get in the way sometimes. Of just, the thing you really like doing which is skipping around, or whatever.

Olivia: What do you think is the relationship between dance and space?

Dan: I guess there can be, I'm just looking at that space to imagine what the relationship between dance and that is, but I imagine, I think… I don't know if there is a logical one, you know I think, or at least there's not an easy one. I mean some spaces facilitate dance more than others, but that's a practical thing, to do with having a good floor or so on. Or to do with that space being coded to being able to dance there. And of course, you know, a space can suggest movement possibilities. Actually that's probably the most interesting answer, that's a really good thing, at the Hayward Gallery, something like 'Moving you' or 'Choreographing you' or something like that, it was an exhibition. About how people can be moved and dance. Forsythe had this really great… did you see it? He had this really great installation that was a load of like rings at different levels, that were really hard to traverse, but you were invited to basically play on them. And that was his choreographic offer to participants that you could only move in certain ways on those rings and therefore the space was controlling how you move. And I think like town planners, that's a big thing, how you direct the flow of people. And maybe we talk about movement more than dance but then for me there's a porous line between the two. Yeah. That space can directly affect how you hold yourself and how you move, and suggest possibilities for dance, yeah. Even if its, as I say, a kind of a weird thing to do.

Olivia: You see a difference between dance and movement?

Dan: Not really, not really. I think it depends on what angle you're looking at it from. I really don't like the idea that only certain things constitute dance. Because that for me is like, basically a way of kind of influential gate-keepers to maintain power on whether you're allowed in the club or not. It's like, if you can raise your leg this high or do three pirouettes, then you're a dancer. And like for me I think, anything that constitutes movement in a certain frame, could be considered as dancing, you know, and something's are easier to swallow than others as being dance. But that doesn't mean those things that are more difficult to swallow aren't dance. You know, I think, it's just a label, it's just a word. If it's useful to bring people with you, and that's been useful on this show, taking it to 'dance houses' and it's been really useful for some people to like expect one thing and get another in terms of what constitutes dance. And the same goes for theatre where they're used to watching plays primarily and then by stealth getting the movement in there

and the dance in there and people… a lot of the time people come up to me after this and Cecil Street and say like, oh I never really liked dance before, but I was really into this, type thing because for whatever reason, it's kind of stealthily in there. Hopefully because it's earned it's place and it's not just a kind of exhibition of skill. But yeah, that's a hard questions that. Hopefully that's some sort of answer.

Olivia: What do you think place is particularly linked to? People, memory…

Dan: Yeah both of those things. I guess its, you know, because we're humans we inevitably see it all through, through a kind of human perspective. That tree out there is very different for the bee that collects nectar from it, than it is for us. But I guess place can be a way of making sense of the world, and kind of a way of connecting the fragments and the chaos into a narrative that makes sense to us, you know like, this is the place where I first did this and that's an important thing. It's always interesting how we re-define our relationship to place, you know, if I go back home now, to Cambridge, it's not to same place that it was when I was 18. It is in some ways, but I sort of consciously had to work hard to turn it into something else. Because I don't want to still be 18, I want to acknowledge the present in there. So playing with this, place, it becomes a different story for me. In my own little narrative, which is of course constructed, but it helps me make sense of my experience. And my emotional connection to it is an absolutely intrinsic part of that story, you know. I'm really interested in how that changes actually, how you can walk into the same space at different times and it feel completely different. A city that you get lost in and you come back to a place you recognise, but you've come at it from a completely different angle because, you're different. And you're like, shit this is where that happened but it doesn't feel like that now, I don't know, all of that is really interesting to me.

Olivia: I know, I think about that quite a lot in relation to, another thing I'm obsessed with is Eastern Europe and the old Easter bloc, and when the wall came down and for the people who went into the other part of it, something they might have known or an idea they might have had about a place and what it's like to rediscover that place. And also a country as well, like Germany, but this is all linked to imagined ideas of what we imagine, like nation doesn't really exist.

Dan: That is really interesting and how slippery that is. The memory of a place but also the imagined future of a place, somewhere you've never been but that you're going to, and just how slippery that is.

Olivia: And they say that a lot about home too, home in the past, but also, a lot of people have an imagined view about what their home will be like in the future. Which includes childhood in way, yeah home is such an interesting idea.

Dan: Yeah, it is.

Olivia: But that's to do with nostalgia as well what you were saying about nostalgia.

Dan: Yeah, they're potent forces, kind of pulling.