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**ESSAYING PLACE:
TIME AND LANDSCAPE IN THE ESSAY FILM**

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ABSTRACT

This practice as research thesis explores the representation of place in the essay film. Place and landscape are frequent subjects of the essay film, films that often form through, and in response to, encounters with the spaces of the world. This thesis seeks to shed light onto the essayistic representation of place through exploring the structures, make-up and experience of places and landscapes and through the application of theory from the field of geography. I establish what I call an essaying of place in order to describe the processes and outcomes of an approach to cities and landscapes through the essay film, one in which the complexities and multiplicities of place come to the fore. Central to the thesis is a focus on temporality in a consideration of place and in developing an understanding of the relationship between place and the essay film. I produced two film works that both take an essayistic form in an approach to representing place and landscape, embodying the theoretical research and expanding this research through creative production. My practice approaches the spaces of England through the essay film, where travelling acts as a film production device, as a research tool and as a method of putting into practice an essaying of place. The process oriented nature of a practice as research project positions filmmaking as a key element in understanding my work as a practitioner alongside the wider research into the essay form.

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INTRODUCTION

Place, Landscape and the Essay Film

Three blond-haired children in woollen jumpers walk across a grassy hilltop, wind blowing gently, looking tentatively into the camera. A voice-over narrates, “The first image he told me about was of three children on a road in Iceland in 1965”. Filmed on location on the Icelandic island of Heimaey, this is the opening shot of Chris Marker’s *Sans Soleil* (1983), an image which, accompanied by that line of dialogue, provides the specific spatial and temporal coordinates of travelling cameraman Sandor Krasna, establishing at the film’s opening the centrality of place. From Iceland to Guinea-Bissau to San Francisco, there is a wealth of place in the film, but it is Tokyo that is perhaps most richly explored. Through a cacophony of images, sounds, narratives and commentary, Tokyo is constructed as a dense web of the material city and its cultures, histories and stories, its rhythms and people; a seemingly infinite converging of angles and avenues. Marker’s voice-over takes the viewer from subject to subject, place to place, knotting a web around geography that diverges along tangents and disparate strands, grounded in the spaces of the film. *Sans Soleil* is arguably the best-known essay film and it is here that the relationship between place as subject and the essay as form perhaps reaches its zenith. It is also of unquestionable importance as an influence throughout the wider field of essayistic film production, on my own practice and in forming the research questions at the heart of this thesis. *Sans Soleil* then offers an appropriate opening from which to build an exploration of place and the essay film.

My thesis employs a practice as research methodology in order to explore the relationship between the essay film and the representation of place. In 2015, as this research process was in its initial stages, I made a short film called *The Fifth Continent* (2015). This Super 8mm black and white film took the landscapes of Romney Marsh as subject matter. Following this, in the summer months of 2016, I undertook three significant periods of film production, each governed by a journey through England. The first of these excursions stretched from Margate on the far southeast tip of England, along the coast to Hastings, the town where I live. The second trip took me from Hastings to Cornwall. On the third journey, I travelled north from Hastings to a point just over the border with Scotland at the most

northeasterly tip of England. Intermittently, I gathered other film images through excursions to a variety of locations such as London and on a fourth journey to Lowestoft on the Suffolk coast at the easternmost point of England, and further images filmed around Hastings over time. The resulting images recorded during this time became the film *Island Stories* (2018). These two films form the practice components of this thesis. Both films were conceived as essay films from the onset, where the subject would be places and landscapes, films that would themselves emerge out of these landscape encounters. Through the production of the two films, my practice employed the essay film as a spatial tool, a form with which to research, represent and capture place through filmmaking.

In this thesis, alongside an in depth exploration of my own essayistic process and practice and place in my films, I will contextualize my practice through a broader discussion of essay films concerned with place and landscape to understand the workings and functions of the essay form as it approaches spatial subjects. Essay films often express a rich articulation of place, which can be evocative, complex, dense and poetic. They often elicit an image of place that is multifaceted, multilayered and fragmentary, encompassing a wealth of information, comments, thoughts and ideas, where a densely woven representation of place emerges. Essay films engage with manifold narratives, with a myriad of lived experiences, with the material form of places as well as their ambience and atmosphere, along with the subjectivity of the film essayist and their own experience of places. They encompass documentary elements, observations, the facts and figures of places, as well as their more abstract, imaginative, fantastical and intangible aspects.

I aim to show that within essay films, a unique image of place emerges, one attuned to the complexities, experiential qualities and atmospheric conditions of places, capturing the *genius loci* or “sense of place”, as well as forming a representation dense with the many facets of places and the structures of landscape. Within this investigation, time emerges as a central preoccupation in the essayistic representation of place, where to approach place essayistically is necessarily to engage with the inherent temporality of place and landscape. The importance of time manifests itself as an exploration of history in the landscape and of the pasts of place in juxtaposition with the continued unfolding time of everyday life in the present within essay films. Tentacular in form, the essay can pull in a breadth of information, narratives, references and subjects, unifying them within the physical spaces and

topographies of the film. This approach of the essay form to spatial subjects can be thought of as an “essaying of place”, a term I will use throughout this thesis. To essay is to “attempt” or “try”, a way of capturing and documenting thought as it unfolds around a subject. The essay film then can be considered in terms of a thought process articulated through the moving image.

Positioning the representation of place specifically within the essay film as a central preoccupation offers a route into a relatively unexplored avenue of film scholarship. As I hope to demonstrate, the employment of a film practice in an approach to place and an exploration of the filmmaking and research processes, can offer a novel insight into the essay form and spatial content. This insight is gleaned through creative practice, where attention to all aspects from conception, through the research process and film production, to script writing and editing allows for an analysis of the essay form and the filmic image of place made possible through this form. Space and landscape have been a continued area of interest within Film Studies scholarship. This trend emerged out of the wider spatial turn within the humanities and social sciences, placing the experience of space, environment and landscape as a key object of study across a multitude of disciplines. Mark Shiel has considered how this spatial turn has involved “a growing recognition of the usefulness of space as an organizing category, and of the concept of “spatialization” as a term for the analysis and description of modern, and (even more so) of postmodern, society and culture” and has been driven by a range of thinkers from Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault to Edward Soja and David Harvey.¹ This broader interest in space has widely influenced the study of moving images with the application of the study of space to film, aligning geography, sociology and spatial theory with cinema. For example, in the edited collection *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*,² Shiel is concerned with the relationship between cinema the city,³ and brings together sociology, cultural theory and spatial theory with the study of film. The book collects together a breadth of film scholarship in a consideration of film and urban space through the prism of postmodernism, postcolonial cities, of film production and exhibition.

In the book *Projected Cities: Cinema and Urban Space*,⁴ Stephen Barber offers a survey of city space in film. Through the connection between film and the city, the “corporeal, cultural, architectural, historical and social forms” of the city can be revealed. This is illustrated through moving from the birth of the cinematic city

with Louis Le Prince and the Lumière Brothers through to the representation of European cities in films such as *Berlin Express* (1948), *Zazie dans le Métro* (*Zazie in the Metro*, 1960) and *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* (*The Lovers on the Bridge*, 1991) and further, to an exploration of Japanese cities. Marker's *Sans Soleil* (1983) is considered in its representation of Tokyo, a film that "rips open the city, exploring its visual layers".⁵ This alignment of space and film has opened up along many pathways, notably a focus on landscape and film, cinema and the city, architecture on film and cinematic mapping. Urban space and film has perhaps most prominently emerged as the key area of study. *The Cinematic City*, edited by David B. Clarke, assembles essays on fiction and non-fiction film, exploring the representation of cities within the cinema and the connection between cityspace and screen space.⁶ Clarke states in his introduction that, "the city has undeniably been shaped by the cinematic form, just as cinema owes much of its nature to the historical development of the city",⁷ thus positioning the study of both together across disciplines as an important area of interest.

As well as city space, landscape and film has been an important area of study. Martin Lefebvre's edited book *Landscape and Film* brings together diverse views of film and landscape, offering a global perspective and also a breadth of genre and time period, from early travelogue films through fiction film and experimental film.⁸ Considering landscape as something "anchored in human life", the book proceeds from the position that film "contributes to this anchorage of landscape in human life", thus positioning the study of film and the representation of space as key in understanding landscape and its cultural meanings.⁹ Graeme Harper and Jonathan Rayner's edited book of essays *Cinema and Landscape* similarly groups together disparate articles resolutely global in their approach to cinematic space, largely within fiction filmmaking.¹⁰ These are considered together in an approach that sees the cinema as mapping, which through the reading of films and their landscapes, culture, nation and aesthetics can be interrogated. There have also been a number of investigations into the city and landscape within early cinema,¹¹ a study of place in avant-garde film by Scott MacDonald, titled *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place*,¹² and Giuliana Bruno's study of space and film in a book traversing the fields of geography, history, architecture and visual culture *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film*, a complex weaving of film, architecture, space and the body, through a personal lens.¹³ These studies

have broadened the field of the study of space in film, offering a varied terrain grounded in previous scholarship.

As this outline of the literature shows, previous scholarship has aligned space and film together with a focus on the study of cities and landscape as they emerge within fiction film, city symphonies and early non-fiction film. Whilst some scholarship within this body of research has touched upon space within particular essay films, the essayistic representation of place is largely absent from this scholarship.¹⁴ My approach, bringing together place and the essay film, positions my research within the orbit of this spatial study of film, particularly in the application of scholarship from the disciplines of geography and spatial theory to unpack and understand place and landscape as they emerge within the essay film and my own film practice. Whilst the dichotomy between city and landscape is a concern throughout, my approach is preoccupied rather with the broader notions of place, within which these spatial categories are subsumed.

The essay film

In Film Studies scholarship, there has been increasing interest in the essay film and this has centered largely on a number of key texts by scholars who have sought to understand and explore the essay film, its workings, functions and its hybridity as a form or mode of filmmaking. It is useful here to give an outline of some of this scholarship, both to situate my own research in the field and also to establish a basis for research that will provide points of reference and theoretical underpinnings throughout my discussion. It also provides a broad perspective before narrowing the focus on space in this previous scholarship. An evolution of thought centered on the essay film might begin with Hans Richter's "The Film Essay: A New Form of Documentary Film",¹⁵ which describes a new essayistic form of filmmaking emerging in avant-garde film practice. Alexandre Astruc's 1948 essay, "The Birth of a New Avant Garde: La Caméra-Style", mirrors Richter in describing a cinema of thought, the documenting of an unfolding thought process with the camera, "a means of writing just as flexible and subtle as written language", outlining what he sees as a cinema of ideas.¹⁶ Some years later, André Bazin's milestone article on Chris Marker's *Lettre de Sibérie* (*Letter from Siberia*, 1957) discusses Marker's film along essayistic lines, an "essay documented by film".¹⁷

These earlier texts then lead us to a number of contemporary scholars who have perhaps written most on the essay film and are at the forefront of thinking on the form. These writings help to situate my own research and I will lean on them frequently throughout this thesis. Paul Arthur's 2003 article "Essay Questions" explores and offers definitions on the essay film and its various manifestations and establishes the essay film as "a meeting ground for documentary, avant-garde and art film impulses",¹⁸ at the forefront of "intellectual and artistic innovation" in non-fiction film.¹⁹ Arthur considers the essay film a hybrid, one that uses cinema's multilayered construction of sound and image through which the personal, subjective voice of the essay can be dispersed. For Arthur, essay films are dialectical films, self-reflexive and subversive. Philip Lopate's 1996 book chapter "In Search of the Centaur: The Essay Film", traces the form's literary roots, an approach he shares with many other scholars in the field.²⁰ He considers the essay film as an argument constructed from an authorial perspective and as a film form shaped by language and voice. Through a rundown of films that, for Lopate, both are and are not essay films, comes a rigidity of definition often at odds with other scholars who provide a looser and more freely defined approach to the essay form, a freedom of form I too envision in my own approach to filmmaking and in the case studies discussed throughout.

Timothy Corrigan's *The Essay Film: From Montaigne, After Marker* is a key reference in this thesis, both for its articulation of the essay film and its workings and a discussion of space and place.²¹ Corrigan establishes the literary origins of the essay as a form and traces the evolution of the essay film, exploring it through distinct themes, from the personal and subjective point of view of the essay and the device of the diary, to its social and political manifestations. Laura Rascaroli too has written widely on the subject. Her book *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and The Essay Film* seeks to understand the essay film from the perspective of first person, subjective filmmaking, looking at memory and the archive, the voice-over and performing the self and through an exploration of the diary and notebook device in film and the self-portrait film.²² Rascaroli's most recent monograph, *How the Essay Film Thinks* investigates the essay film as a cinema of thought.²³ Within the book, she establishes the way in which the essay inscribes and produces a thinking process, verbally but also through its multiple levels of intelligence, "between juxtaposed or interacting filmic elements" where new meaning emerges.²⁴ I use some of Rascaroli's ideas on the form and function of the essay throughout the thesis and

in order to gain perspective on the nature of the essay as a first person film form, on the diary and notebook, and on reflexivity in the context of my essayistic practice.

Nora M. Alter is another prominent theorist on the essay film. Her monograph on Chris Marker discusses the essay form in the context of Marker's films, especially in relation to *Letter from Siberia*, *Dimanche à Pékin* (*Sunday in Peking*, 1956) and *Le Mystère Koumiko* (*The Koumiko Mystery*, 1965), emphasizing the centrality of the form in his filmmaking and his importance within the wider sphere of the essay film.²⁵ In "Translating the Essay into Film and Installation",²⁶ Alter explores the way in which the philosophical essay can find form through both single screen films and an expansion into multiple screen or installation contexts. The chapter "Memory Essays", in the edited collection *Stuff It*, looks at the presentation of history and memory within the essay film, particularly through the lens of archival materials and a dialogue between past and present in the films of Daniel Eisenberg, which offers some overlap with my own focus on time and place in the essay film and my use of archival sources.²⁷

The book *The Essay Film After Fact and Fiction*, gives perhaps her most comprehensive examination of the essay film.²⁸ Within it, she establishes the essay as a distinct genre, an in-between form bordering fiction and non-fiction and producing critical thought. The book is structured along a chronology, tied to theoretical underpinnings and technological developments. Alter explores the full spectrum of the essay form in film, a broad perspective on a breadth of essay films, both those of key figures and those less familiar, in an approach that also encompasses art and installation, one that is also global in scope. Most recently, Corrigan and Alter published a joint edited collection of writings by scholars and filmmakers on the essay film.²⁹ Through a loosely chronological structure, from its early formation to its contemporary manifestations, the book gathers a wide range of scholars together in a comprehensive overview of the literature. Whilst many of the chapters emerge within this thesis in their original context, the gathering of chapters written specifically by essay filmmakers offers a novel insight into the essay film, especially in the context of this practice as research thesis. Jean-Pierre Gorin's "Proposal for a Tussle", for example, describes the essay form, its processes, structures and workings, a form "condemned to playfulness",³⁰ films that build "ever opened networks of associations",³¹ and a form that is "an energy more than a genre".³² Gorin's article is a fluid, eloquent, meandering exploration of the essay

film. His outline of definitions and concerns of the form provide a useful touchstone in understanding the essayistic and I return to his thoughts on the essay throughout the thesis.

Ross McElwee uses fragments of a production journal for his film *Bright Leaves* (2003), as the basis for the chapter “Tramp Steamer”, within which he documents the production process and unfolding shooting schedule for a specific scene of the film, the work behind the location shooting and logistics, as well as details of things happening each day from a personal perspective. Of his unscripted and undirected shooting approach to the essay film, he says that there is “nothing ever staged or redone for the camera- and in that way, true to cinema vérité”.³³ Accordingly, his diary records this process of observation and waiting for the right shots. I employed a diary as a production and research tool during my own practice, which also became a narrative device in *Island Stories*. McElwee’s use of a shooting diary emphasizes the usefulness of this method in essay film practice. Further, filmmaker Lynne Sachs’s “On Writing the Essay Film” articulates some threads of her writing process in the construction of the essay film. She describes, for example, the way in which “my poems began to guide my editing”,³⁴ and she offers further insight on the nature of the essay form where “essay films are full of association”.³⁵ In particular, my interest here lies in how Sachs briefly situates a personal film practice as an insightful process into making and writing the essay film, illuminating moments of the creative process unfolding. Chapter One of this thesis looks at the process of production on my films and a significant part of this discussion is on the writing process.

Space and the essay film

Space, place and landscape are frequent subjects of the essay film. I began this thesis with a reference to *Sans Soleil* and addressed the importance of place and time in the film. I believe an initial discussion of the spatial essay film must necessarily highlight the centrality of Marker’s films, as is the case in the work of other essay scholars such as Corrigan, Alter and Rascaroli. Much of Marker's work from *Letter From Siberia* to *Chats perchés (The Case of the Grinning Cat, 2004)* is concerned with places; they are films about landscapes and cities, where subjects often unfold spatially. Whilst Marker is within frame throughout the thesis and as an influence

within my own practice, an in depth discussion of his films has occupied much scholarship on the essay film. Reference throughout to Marker's films allows them to remain within the discussion, but it is my aim rather to follow new avenues through the essay film as I seek to understand the centrality of place. Essay films as diverse as Jonas Mekas's *Lost Lost Lost* (1976), Agnes Varda's *Du côté de la côte* (*Along the Coast*, 1958), Chantal Akerman's *News From Home* (1976), Guy Maddin's *My Winnipeg* (2007), Anson Mak's *One Way Street on a Turntable* (2006) and Mark Cousins' *6 Desires: D. H. Lawrence in Sardinia* (2014), are all films that display a tendency towards the spatial as a central subject or narrative preoccupation. They are deeply invested in place and they unfold through physical geographical coordinates, within the confined spaces of the city or the wide-open landscapes of the countryside, within familiar or alien environments. Highlighting the frequency in which spatial exploration is central in the essay film offers a solid contextual foundation from which to begin to build an exploration of place and the essay film.

In the growing body of research on the essay film, there has been some discussion of space in the work of essay film scholars, but its presence is sparse and generally brief. Previous considerations on space in the essay film have overwhelmingly tended towards an exploration of travel and movement, where the experience of being elsewhere and the momentum of the journey provide the conditions for the essayistic subject to unfold within location. In André Bazin's article on Marker's *Letter from Siberia*, he states that Marker is "a Frenchman travelling freely in Siberia, covering several thousand kilometers" positioning the journey through a foreign land as key in order to construct "an essay on the reality of Siberia past and present".³⁶ Bazin thus fuses the dual notion of the geographic exploration of "elsewhere" with an essayistic filmic approach to space. He positions space as central to the form at this early moment in the evolution of the essay film and its critical counterpart.

Timothy Corrigan has given perhaps the most attention to the relationship between the essay film and space. This is confined to a chapter considering space and the essay in the context of travel, journeying and the concept of being elsewhere as a spatial experience. Corrigan has stated that an encounter with the "spaces of the world" tests and reshapes the subject in the spaces of elsewhere in the essay film. Film essayists have "explored that elsewhere across new and familiar lands, traveling natural and unnatural geographies, and temporarily inhabiting small and large

places”.³⁷ According to Corrigan, travel and space are central motifs, “around which complex ideas and reflections have been put into play”, initiating a transformation of subjectivity, a redefining of the self, or discovery of the self whilst “thinking through old and new environments.”³⁸ Here, Corrigan marries the discovery and transformation of the subjective self with the physical discovery of place, suggesting that an encounter with the external environment of elsewhere and an internal psychological encounter together forge an experiential unity that bind together within the essay film.

Laura Rascaroli similarly dedicates only one or two chapters or articles on the topic. The idea of a movement in both the physical world and an inner world, described by Corrigan, is mirrored by Rascaroli in an essay entitled “On Fog and Snow: Thought As Movement, or The Journey of the Essay Film”. She considers the essay film and the transitory experience of the journey, where geographical travel and the movement of subjective thought are both parallel and intertwined.³⁹ There are two movements at play in the essay film; that of the physical journey through space of the traveller filmmaker and that of the journey of the essay itself, which, propelled or prompted by the physical journey, “travels by its own accord, almost independently of the subject”.⁴⁰ This dual notion of the movement of thought and the journey or physical route through spaces as a mutual and corresponding flow is key to the essayistic travelogue film. In a chapter in her book *How the Essay Film Thinks*, Rascaroli explores landscape and ethnography in the essay film. This chapter, rather than exploring concepts of place specifically, is concerned with genre and the formal definitions of the essay film, its boundaries and ability to assimilate genres. In this case, Rascaroli looks at ethnographic films, specifically ones with opposing generic discourses on reality and fiction and from this, she gleans some insight into place, landscape and the essay film.

In “Essay Questions”, Paul Arthur considers how film essayists are often “ensconced in unfamiliar locales”, employing the form of the travelogue as essayistic material.⁴¹ Nora M. Alter, specifically addressing Marker’s films, notes that the transitory conditions of travel have provided Marker with rich filmic resources, where the essay unfolds through the “geographical and psychological dimensions of the journey”.⁴² She expands upon this notion in the book *The Essay Film After Fact and Fiction* through a discussion of archives and memory in these films, and brings other films about place within this discussion, such as Agnes Varda’s *Du côté de la*

côte. Phillip Lopate has also noted that, “Place and homesickness are natural subjects for the essay film: *Sans Soleil* is a meditation on place in the jet age”, positioning being elsewhere as essayistic vehicle for the exploration of space. Touching upon another dimension of the journey, Lopate states that “spatial availability confuses a sense of time and memory”, further positioning travel as a central essayistic principle, but also suggesting that time, memory and geography are key concerns of the essay film.⁴³ This temporal idea is also echoed by Alter, who considers how, in Marker’s film *Sunday in Peking*, reality in the present is “shrouded in dreams and past memories”, where “time and space are contrasted to each other”.⁴⁴ So the memorial potential of place emerges here, where the past returns in the present of place. Returning to Bazin’s article on *Letter From Siberia*, his consideration of the film as an essay on “the reality of Siberia past and present”, offers an insight into the interplay between space and time in the essay film. Corrigan too considers how Marker’s film contains multiple time zones “ranging from past memories to future fantasies”.⁴⁵ The importance of temporality in both the essay form and place comes to the fore and thus takes a central role throughout this thesis.

As can be seen, previous scholarship on the essay film and its exploration of space tends towards a focus on travel, journeying and encounters with elsewhere, where the movement of the journey and experience of travel provide the key coordinates for understanding the spatial in essay film. Whilst this provides a solid foundation for a theoretical exploration of space and the essay film in previous scholarship, I believe that by space not being at the core of these studies and by focusing on travel, the discussion of it is limited. This thesis seeks to expand upon this area of essay film study to consider more fully the concept of place. A distinct study on the concept of place allows for a new approach to space in the essay film, an approach that is situated, environmental, and immersive. A consideration of place through the representational strategies and approaches of the essay film will further an understanding of the potential of the essay film form in approaching spatial subjects.

Practice: *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories*

The two films that constitute my practical submission for this thesis evolved out of my continued research process into places and into the essay form. The films formed

alongside continued reading which influenced their making; they embody this research within their production. They take an essayistic form, partly governed by an in depth analysis of the essay, its workings, characteristics and functions. There is also something organic in the essayistic form of the two films, something emanating from an approach I took to place that sought to gather diverse material together, layering times and narratives, sound and image into an amalgamated, composite image of place, one seeking to capture the realities of place, the experience, mood and stories of the landscape, informed by theory and spatial practice. I hope to establish that a practice as research methodology offers a privileged insight into the essay form as it approaches place; an insight gained through the unfolding creative process, through travelling and being within landscapes.

An emphasis on the journey in previous scholarship and the journeys at the centre of *Island Stories* position the physical spatial experience of these journeys as central. The journey became a tool, a method of spatial encounter, a research and film production process and subsequently a narrative device within the film. Whilst not explicitly unfolding along a journey, *The Fifth Continent* too involved a process of walking and driving, of movement within the landscape as a device for exploring place. Thus, the conditions of movement cannot be ignored as a key principle. These encounters with place, often orchestrated through a walk or journey coupled with the subjectivity of an essayistic encounter, where the essayist is inscribed within space, and the marrying of thought and landscape, the inner and outer world, brings psychogeography into frame. Merlin Coverley states that within psychogeography “psychology and geography collide”, positioning the movement of a spatial encounter and the inner world of thought together as the mode through which place emerges.⁴⁶ Psychogeography resurfaces as a continued presence throughout the thesis, establishing a confluence between its methods and approaches to place with those of the essay film. Psychogeography offers a methodology deeply invested in place and its layers, its minutiae. It delves into place, beneath the surface and into the gaps, to place beyond the façade, an imaginative opening up to the possibilities of place, across lines of thought and topographical lines. Psychogeography often “views the present through the prism of the past” and “contrasts a horizontal movement across the topography of the city with a vertical descent through its past”.⁴⁷ In this way, spatial essay films and my own practice align with a psychogeographic

excavation of place through time. There is then something essayistic in the very act of the spatial encounter itself, through a mode of mental attentiveness to the world.

Practice as research is a growing area of scholarship within the arts and humanities driven by the pursuit of knowledge gained through the creative process. More specifically concerning my own area of interest in both cinema and space and the essay films, there are a number of examples that situate these concerns within practice as research projects. Filmmaker and scholar Joram ten Brink, in his thesis entitled “The Essay Film”, sought to use a practice research methodology and the production of an essay film in order to investigate the film form itself, and to position the essay film not as a documentary sub-genre but as an avant-garde, non-fiction film form. It was also an early proponent of practice as research, one that sought to use the production of an essay film to generate knowledge on the form.⁴⁸ Also within the sphere of the essay film, and the spatial study of film, Aikaterini Gegisian’s practice as research thesis employs the production of an essay film as a device through which to test out the way in which the essay film can become a space of thought.⁴⁹ Similarly, artist filmmaker Stephen Connolly’s recent PhD, “The Spatial Cinema: An Application of Lefebvre Spatial Theory to the Moving Image”, seeks to explore city space through the construction of an essay film, *Machine Space* (2016), concerned with Detroit, space and economics, framed by the theories of Henri Lefebvre.⁵⁰ Patrick Keiller, Doreen Massey and Matthew Flintham collaborated on the research project “The Future of Landscape and the Moving Image”, out of which developed Keiller’s film *Robinson in Ruins* (2010), his Tate Britain exhibition “The Robinson Institute”, an essay by Massey entitled “Landscape/space/politics: an essay”⁵¹ and a PhD thesis by Matthew Flintham.⁵²

Further, Richard Miské’s film *Rohmer in Paris* (2013) explores city space and film space in Rohmer’s Paris and bridges the gap between film studies and filmmaking, the film acting as thesis and theory. Whilst overlapping less with my own research, but important within the field, Catherine Grant’s work in the area of the audio-visual essay positions filmmaking itself as a theoretical tool and video essays as critical forms that themselves act as theoretical modes of production, transforming written film studies into an audio-visual form. Her works position practice as a key methodology in Film Studies, where film practice has its own potential for embodying and creating knowledge and research outcomes. That the practice and scholarship associated with these scholars, practitioners and research

projects is within the field of the essay film, perhaps suggests the potential for a theoretical engagement with this particular film form in addressing practice as research questions in Film Studies. I believe that due to its process oriented, reflexive and subjective nature as a film form and the potential of the form to be inquisitive and investigative, it is possible to employ the essay film as a research tool itself. The potential to revisit and reflect on the essay film in writing and within the production of a film itself allows for a relationship between theory and practice, between filmmaking and research, to develop.

There are a number of texts addressing the issues at the centre of practice as research methodologies. Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean, in their co-edited book *Practice Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts*,⁵³ have explained how, “practice can result in research insights, such as those that arise out of making a creative work and/or in the documentation and theorization of that work” and also that “academic research can lead to creative practice”.⁵⁴ Smith and Dean call this complex process of theory and practice integration an “iterative cyclic web”,⁵⁵ whereby processes of practice development and theoretical research intertwine, the generation of ideas and testing of material repeat and weave and have numerous entry and exit points, rather than unfolding along a linear progression. They further state that creative practice sometimes transmits knowledge in non-verbal and non-numerical terms, knowledge that is “unstable, ambiguous and multidimensional, can be emotionally or affectively charged, and cannot necessarily be conveyed with the precision of mathematical proof”.⁵⁶ This type of knowledge is embedded within creative arts practice. Practice research offers multiple roads into and out of practice outcomes and academic research, where the practice both embodies the research and generates its own insights through making, analysis and theorisation. As I will show, my own practice emerged out of substantial research into theory on place and landscape and on the essay form. It also enacts its own research process, into the spaces and places that form the subject of the films, where the practice acts as a research tool. Insight is then gained through this practice, which in turn leads back to theoretical research, each feeding into the other.

This idea of the production of knowledge outside of traditional research outcomes is mirrored by Estelle Barrett, who has written in the introduction to the book, *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*,⁵⁷ that, “since creative arts research is often motivated by emotional, personal and subjective

concerns, it operates not only on the basis of explicit and exact knowledge, but also on that of tacit knowledge”.⁵⁸ There is perhaps a novel production of knowledge gained through the employment of practice research methodologies, embodied in the practice itself and gleaned through an analysis of one's own practice. Of this reflexivity, Graeme Sullivan notes that “artists themselves have the capacity to explore and explain complex theoretical issues”, a methodology that is clarified “in retrospect as issues and ideas are revealed through the process of reflexive and reflective enquiry”.⁵⁹ Further, Barrett aligns this reflexivity with action-based research, where “knowledge is generated through action and reflection”.⁶⁰ The intertwining of practice and theory and generation of knowledge through creative development and continued reflection on that process explain the core methodology of practice as research.

This thesis is structured around my two films, *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories* and it is through the processes of the production of the films, the research process engaged in during their conception and production and the encounter with spaces through practice that intertwine to generate an understanding of the spatial essay film. I hope to establish that a practice as research methodology offers a privileged insight into the essay form as it approaches spatial content, an insight gleaned through doing, through travelling and the unfolding creative process. Through this practical address of the research questions, an understanding can be gained regarding the shape and form of the essay and the way in which places can be represented through this form. The accompanying theoretical work and case study analysis are closely bound together with this practice through their synchronous process and expands this discussion and broadens an understanding of the representation of place beyond my own practice, where patterns, aesthetics, themes and concepts are shared with those of other films. The production period and analysis of the finished films contributed greatly to the theoretical coordinates of the project and in turn, these two films began from an informed theoretical position. In this way, theory and practice were, and are, at all stages, codependent and intertwined as a research-filmmaking process. This thesis and associated practice seek to contribute to and further the debates surrounding practice as research, generating knowledge through film production, a form of knowledge that would not be possible to gain without the creative practice. The act of journeying as physical encounter with place and the examination of the essay as a process oriented film form, containing within it

its own production and research processes, mark the importance of a practice-research methodology to my project in leading to new knowledge gleaned through the many threads of the practice.

The essay film in a British context

It is important to situate my practice within a British essay film context. There are numerous films concerned with the English landscape that take an essayistic form. Peter Greenaway's *The Sea in Their Blood* (1983) is a semi-fictional portrait of Britain that accumulates false coastal facts and captures Britain as an island nation; Derek Jarman poetically dissects the nation in crisis under Thatcher in *The Last of England* (1987) against a backdrop of apocalyptic English landscapes; Cordelia Swann's London jaunts are cast through a fictional frame in *Perfidia* (2002) and Terrence Davies' *Of Time and the City* (2008), constructs an autobiographical essay using archival film and captures life growing up in post-war Liverpool. Andrew Kötting's film *By Ourselves* (2015), explores England along the route of the journey taken by the poet John Clare from an asylum in Essex to his Northamptonshire home, allowing the route and narrative to become dispersed and trigger tangents across multiple voices, exploring the past and present of the landscape. Andrew Kötting's free-form documentary travelogue around England *Gallivant* (1996), an exploration of Britain told through a coastal tour of the whole island, a journey taken by the filmmaker, his grandmother and his daughter, exhibits some essayistic characteristics and is a film that, in the context of English landscape and travel, is influential in my own practice and approach to place.

Perhaps most closely aligning with my own essayistic approach is Patrick Keiller's Robinson trilogy, particularly *Robinson in Space*, where journeys through England provide the spatial conditions through which the narrator and his accomplice Robinson traverse England and weave an essay on British industry and economics, architecture, culture and society. My own practice shares this interest in place and history, architecture and landscape details, literary and cultural signposts in space and the minutiae of places and their idiosyncrasies. Similarly, Chris Petit's *Content* (2010), in its fragmentary glimpses of space and multitude archival images, its delving into histories and its spatial excursions around Britain in a dissection of British life through its landscapes, aligns his film with my own approach and I return

to discuss it in detail in Chapter Two. William Raban's *Thames Film* (1986) too uses archival images alongside a contemporary journey, capturing London through time in a movement along the Thames as a structure and where paintings, photographs and archival film visually evoke the past of the river as a gateway to the British Empire, forging an essay on London, commerce and the flow of time in the city. These films all form essays out of encounters with British, largely English, landscapes and thus offer an insight into the representation of place within the same geographical context as my own films. They also share certain thematic preoccupations and cultural and historical signposts. They are films that to a certain extent helped inspire the conception of this research and subsequently throughout the research and filmmaking process became reference points and influences. As they share this geographical stage, my own practice is in dialogue with these essayistic responses and it is within their orbit that my films must necessarily be positioned.

Case studies and an approach to essaying place

I am not, however, writing a thesis on Britain in film; rather I am exploring place more generally in the essay film, with a response to English space in my own practice. In order to offer new insights into form and content, the case studies I use are geographically varied. They are also films that were influential as my practice developed, or were identified as containing shared elements, approaches or concerns. This diversity in case studies also intends to capture the broad range of spatial essays and enliven an understanding of the representation of place beyond my own practice. They help to situate my own approach to place within the broader field of essay film production. The case studies that are discussed throughout vary in geography and approach but share this concern with the spatial in the essay film form. Jem Cohen's film *Lost Book Found* (1996) takes New York City as subject and uses the narrative device of a push cart vendor in order to forge an essay on the everyday life of the city at street level. Similarly, his film *Amber City* (1999), which takes Pisa as subject matter, again takes the single city as subject but rather employs a more objective essay voice and takes a historical approach to the city, exploring its past narratives and myths as well as its present spaces.

Lee Ann Schmitt's *California Company Town* (2008) takes the landscapes of California as subject matter and the ways in which they have been shaped by the

economic forces of corporatised America. The filmmaker narrates her own encounter with these spaces through chapters, each headed by a place or town. Similarly, James Benning's *Four Corners* (1997) looks at the how history shapes the American landscape. Chris Petit's *Content* unfolds within English landscapes and also those of America, Germany and Poland, providing a spatial approach concerned with drift, whilst also positioned in the context of my own films as a film concerned with England and English landscapes. They are films not widely discussed in the context of the essay film and therefore offer fresh avenues into the essay form. They are also films in which approach, themes and aesthetics and the way in which they represent places resonate with my own practice and thus are ripe for synchronous analysis with my films. In this way, the focus is not on only one geography, but on the specificity of place within the context of each film, which collectively provides the best way to assess the relationship between form and content and to understand fully the representation of place within the essay film.

This thesis seeks to contribute new knowledge within the field of both Film Studies scholarship on the essay film and within a practice context of essayistic filmmaking. As I have outlined, previous essay film scholarship touches upon space, most prominently an exploration of the journey, being elsewhere and geographic movement as essayistic mode. Rather, this thesis seeks a broader, more in depth understanding of place and landscape in the essay, of what I call an essaying of place. Through the employment of theory and scholarship on place, landscape, history and geography, I hope to provide an understanding of place as it emerges through the essay film. I believe that the representational characteristics and strategies of the essay film forge a unique cinematic image of place that accounts for the complexities, layers, temporalities and many facets of places and landscapes. I will establish how an essayistic way of looking and seeing, as a mode of exploratory filmmaking and as an approach to the subject, creates the conditions through which places can be known, captured and represented in a dense weaving of time, landscape and narrative. Further, by marrying descriptions and conceptualisations of place and landscape with those of the essay form, shared descriptions that often overlap and complement one another, an understanding of an essaying of place can be achieved.

An essaying of place as a new idea accounts for the processes and practical outcomes of an essayistic approach to the landscape. Alongside my practice, the

gathering of case studies across a broad spectrum and placed into orbit with one another, a breadth of place and the essay form, as well as exploring the British context, offers both a contextual practice framework and also a testing out of my ideas around place and the essay film in a diverse set of films and geographies. Through a practice as research methodology, new perspectives on the essay form from the position of filmmaker and scholar can be achieved. The research and filmmaking processes are tied together and embedded within the films, particularly in *Island Stories*, where process becomes a part of the narrative itself. Bringing the filmmaking and essayistic process to the forefront, a practice as research methodology provides insight in addressing the research themes and understanding the essay form in an approach to place from the position of filmmaker and scholar alike.

Both of my films attempt to find a fresh geographical perspective in a new configuration of space and narrative. This includes a temporal perspective on English space, the past in the context of the present, the mythic and fictional layers of the landscape in understanding the identity of places and the changing uses of the landscape over time as a reflection of shifting economies and cultures. Due to the dates when the films were produced, they shed some light onto the nature of place in Britain at a significant time of change. The referendum vote to leave the European Union occurred during the production of *Island Stories*. The issues and dialogues around the vote were already emerging in a significant way before production and while Brexit is not the dominant subject or overarching theme of the films, it is a presence throughout.

The subject of *The Fifth Continent* is Romney Marsh, a little known landscape outside of its locality, and its stories and histories are idiosyncratic but also reflective of a wider picture of England. I aimed at expanding the potential of the essay and capturing a denser evocation of place through diverse narratives, multiple layers and a coming together of many strands. Building on this, *Island Stories* takes a wide cross section of space across wildly divergent places and narratives. In this way, it expands the potential for an essayistic exploration and representation of place. The film takes in urban spaces and architecture, rural and coastal landscapes, tourist locations and ordinary everyday spaces across the country, aiming for an extensive spatial depiction. The narratives and spaces converge in configurations across the country to be positioned in conversation with each other. The locations

and themes, concerns and narrative subjects differ from many of those of other British essay films and sought not to retread narrative and geographical steps. It is important to identify differences, as well as similarities, to the case studies in approach and content and a critical analysis throughout the thesis brings them together in order to position my practice in conversation with these films.

Finally, there are various formal, aesthetic, structural and narrative approaches and ideas that I use in the two films that differ from the films of others and test out the essay film and its workings. These become a part of the discussion on the essay film form and in further understanding an approach to place taken in my practice. For example, *Island Stories* uses three narrative voices testing out the multivocality of an essayistic address, dispersing narratives and journeys across three characters. The film also contains within it the story of its own making and process; it is about places, but also about the process of making and researching the film, of travelling and documenting, of the factual and fictional within place as they blur in the film. I employ both archival images and location shooting as visual material in order to animate an image of place and time across multiple discursive layers. In *Island Stories*, there is a total fragmentation of the journeys taken which become reordered and dispersed, where space and time are disjointed, testing the structural limits of the essay film to map the freedom and divergences of the essay geographically.

Chapter outline

The thesis follows a route through the research governed by my practice and structured across three chapters. Chapter One is concerned with the processes of research and filmmaking. As a practice researcher, the process and evolution of the practice alongside the development of research and theoretical underpinnings emerges as key in understanding the research questions through a practice-research methodology. The chapter begins with an exploration of my film *The Fifth Continent* and the way in which an approach to place was developed through encounters with the landscape alongside research into places, as well as research into wider theoretical concerns regarding place carried out during all aspects of the filmmaking process. The chapter then moves on to discuss *Island Stories* as it evolved from *The Fifth Continent*, looking at the difference between geographical approach in the two

films, the production process and travelling through England, the writing process from notebooks and research through to a full script. This chapter also introduces an approach to place that is temporal as well as spatial, developed through theoretical research and through observations in the landscape during the spatial encounter. This approach shaped my own films and can be observed in the essay films of others.

Chapter Two positions this idea of temporality as central to an essaying of place. I discuss my practice in detail alongside the selected case studies, seeking to contextualise my practice and reinforce my exploration of the temporality of place in the essay. This chapter looks at the capturing of the everyday of place in the present and the daily rhythms of the landscape, particular in urban space and the films of Jem Cohen, as well as capturing the present of place within my own practice. I then move on to consider how a deep temporality emerges in the essay film through a layering of historical narrative that reverberates in place and a look at the archival nature of place and the way in which the past is materially present in the fabric of the landscape. The essayistic representation of place is established through a multilayered approach, where past and present merge into a temporal and spatial composite.

Chapter Three explores in detail my two films with an emphasis on *Island Stories*. This chapter investigates my films through a variety of approaches: cinematography and capturing city and landscape; an exploration of reality and imagination, documentary and fiction in place and the essay film; the use of diaries and notebooks and the use of an epistolary mode of address; essaying as one of multiplicity in place and film form and archival images as textual layers of time. Within the chapter, I seek to unpack the representational strategies and aesthetics of my own essay films to understand the way in which place is captured and explored. Further, I aim to align landscape and space with the workings of the essay film through the use of original route maps for the production of *Island Stories* alongside a map where locations are marked in the order of the final film edit. This shows the fragmentation of the essay film through a reordering of space, a geographic mapping of the form of the essay film. The many facets of this chapter's discussion of my films, in addition to those discussed in the previous chapters regarding process and place and time, aims to construct a theoretical understanding of an essaying of place in film from the many varied concerns that constitute this essaying.

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- ² *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*, edited by Tony Fitzmaurice and Mark Shiel (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2001).
- ³ Mark Shiel, "Cinema and the City in History and Theory", 4.
- ⁴ Stephen Barber, *Projected Cities: Cinema and Urban Space* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002).
- ⁵ Barber, *Projected Cities*, 113.
- ⁶ *The Cinematic City*, edited by David B. Clarke (London: Routledge, 1997).
- ⁷ David B. Clarke, "Introduction: Previewing the Cinematic City", *The Cinematic City*, 2.
- ⁸ *Landscape and Film*, edited by Martin Lefebvre (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).
- ⁹ Martin Lefebvre, "Introduction", *Landscape and Film*, xvi.
- ¹⁰ *Cinema and Landscape*, edited by Graeme Harper and Jonathan Rayner (Bristol: Intellect 2010).
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- ¹³ Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002).
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- ¹⁸ Paul Arthur, "Essay Questions", *Film Comment* (January/ February 2003), 62.
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- ³² Ibid, 274.
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- ⁴⁰ Rascaroli, "On Fog and Snow", 242.
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- ⁴³ Lopate, "In Search of the Centaur", 251.
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- ⁵⁶ Ibid, 3.
- ⁵⁷ *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, edited by Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (London, New York: I B Tauris, 2007).
- ⁵⁸ Estelle Barrett, "Introduction", in *Practice as Research*, 4.
- ⁵⁹ Graeme Sullivan, "Making Space: The Purpose and Place of Practice-led Research", in *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*, 42.

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PLEASE WATCH *THE FIFTH CONTINENT* AND *ISLAND STORIES* NOW

CHAPTER ONE

Practice, Research and the Process of Essaying Place in *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories*

“As this wave from memories flows in, the city soaks it up like a sponge and expands. A description of Zaira as it is today should contain all Zaira’s pasts. The city, however, does not tell its past but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls“.

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*.¹

When I first took my camera along with me to film the landscapes of Romney Marsh at the very beginning of my research, my approach to place had not yet developed beyond that of looking, filming, walking and driving through the landscape and seeking stories that interested me, those evident within the landscape itself or gleaned through an encounter with the landscape, or those emerging through research. This was my starting point, the beginning of the filmmaking process and also the initial point at which my ideas on an approach to place through the essay film began to form. This chapter considers my practice and research through its development and evolution, from the conception of the project through to the finished films and it looks at essaying as an unfolding process. Focusing on the planning and production of the two films that form the practice component of this thesis, as well as the synchronous research process, will afford an insight into the development of my filmmaking along a timeline, recording my actions and decision making at various stages of the project.

Reflecting as a practitioner will shed light onto how my essay films approach and represent places from the perspective of a practice as research methodology, laying the foundation for the following chapters. Rather than the idea of an essay only as a complete, finished object, the expression “essaying” or “to essay”, suggests something process based, something active, ongoing and continuous. Thought processes, planning, research, travelling, filming and writing all occurred as key steps in the production of the films. This chapter charts these steps, from planning geographical coordinates along routes, through to the film treatment, script writing

and research into places that occurred at all stages of production. My experience of making the two films is one in which their form and narratives were in constant flux, absorbing ideas and research as they progressed. They embodied much of the research I was conducting into place and space and into the essay film form; they were shaped and moulded by this research. The production process, travelling, filming and experiencing places became a part of the narrative content of the films, as well as the process of gathering material and encounters with spaces. All of this emphasizes a process oriented film form, embodying and unfolding alongside a research process. To make an essay film approaching spatial subjects, seen from the perspective of filmmaker and researcher, offers an insight into the research and filmmaking process as well as the process of essaying, something that cannot be accessed through film analysis alone, or through a theoretical approach to the essay film.

The Fifth Continent

In late 2015, I began collecting material for what would become the film *The Fifth Continent*. This black and white portrait of Romney Marsh, completed in 2016, provided an initial practice approach within which I explored the idea of an essaying of place. At this stage, I was already planning and carrying out early research on a longer form travelogue film that would become *Island Stories*. I had established that this film would involve a significant period of travel throughout the country. For *The Fifth Continent*, I decided to focus on a more tightly demarcated geographical area that would allow for a controlled production period within a smaller location and a more localised set of narratives. I had frequently visited and travelled through the area of Romney Marsh in Kent, a sparsely populated, largely rural area dotted with old port towns and small villages. It is a unique landscape partly due to its flatness, its expanse of shingle and its marshland. It is a landscape that provokes a rich sense of place for me. I began taking a Super 8mm film camera along with me on excursions to Romney Marsh.

The resulting film *The Fifth Continent* is an essayistic, fragmentary portrait of a place, told through an accumulation of narratives coupled with film images of architecture, landscapes, people and objects. The tone of the film is something like a poetic report where the voice-over narrative weaves historical stories, factual

information, fleeting observations, sheer fabrication, myth and folklore with other commentary and thoughts into an amalgamation of many times within place. As the film began to take shape it became a testing ground in which some of my early ideas on the structure and make up of places and landscapes could play out and a research tool through which to further explore what makes places. The film also provided the conditions through which to test out an approach to place and landscape that was experiential, to begin responding to a place by spending time in locations with the camera. Taking an intuitive approach to filming meant a kind of crisscrossing of Romney Marsh, capturing landscapes, architecture and people over repeat, brief visits. This also became a method of searching the landscape for stories both past and present and for geographical and architectural detail. With little preplanning, limited note making and only a vague set of ideas to govern an approach, the production process was marked by freedom, by drift and by a looseness that allowed the landscape and threads of research to dictate the direction of filming. Figure 1.1 shows a map of the area of Romney Marsh and marked on the map are the main shooting locations included in the film, showing a scattered set of points across the area. The list of these numbered locations and brief description of their inclusion in the film accompanies the map.

A reciprocal process emerged from this period of filming, between the time spent within Romney Marsh and the development of research into the places and landscapes themselves. This had a dual working. On the one hand, a mark in the landscape or a particular building or a snippet of a story would lead to research about these locations. For example, during filming, I encountered St Dunstan church in Snargate village and the ship that was painted onto the church wall (figure 1.2). I knew nothing of the painting beforehand and subsequent research provided narrative context for this physical location, namely its association with smuggling. In this way, the images of place I recorded gathered the residue of narrative. Equally, an aspect of research would in some cases lead to a location that told a particular story and I would include this location within the itinerary for my next excursion. For example, I had known for some time about the acoustic mirrors near Dungeness, used to detect aircraft at a distance shortly before the invention of radar. I sought them out on one excursion and filmed images of them. Further research also identified another site in which these sound mirrors were present and these also became a site on my route.

Narratives also emerged directly through my encounter with the landscape. I recorded images of the ossuary at St Leonard's Church in Hythe and later made notes about how the guard had identified certain skulls and had said that she was "happy that the dead had a chance to be part of life again" through the open ossuary. This provided a constructive working method for filming, where a depiction of place could build up through the accretion of image and narrative. The looseness of this production method was furthered in that I did not see any of the images until I had completed production. Shooting on Super 8mm film, I shot six cartons of film before sending them to the lab for development. The landscape images provided the raw visual material from which to work along with research and place narratives to begin shaping an essay film about the landscapes of Romney Marsh.

There were various things emerging during my time spent in the landscapes of Romney Marsh and through research that led the way towards developing the coordinates for my essayistic approach to place. I saw the landscape as layered with stories, reverberating with narratives and marked by the physical residue of the past, through a formation in the landscape, a building, a plaque or other marker. I spent a lot of time within the landscape, filming and observing the passing of everyday life and the rhythms of place. I also gathered information ranging from geological and geographical detail, cultural, economic and historical narratives, descriptions of the place in literature or its representation in film and observations on wildlife and weather. I considered this wealth and breadth of information key in communicating place, where place is not only defined by grand narratives and overarching histories but by overlooked details, the idiosyncrasies of place and the passing of everyday life in the present. Myth and fiction in the landscape also played a part in forging the identity of Romney Marsh, through the reverberating myths of smugglers and their fictional counterparts, echoes of church bells lost to sea, the meaning behind the ship on the wall. These thematic areas and ideas began shaping my approach, both in this film and beyond to *Island Stories*, an approach that would become more universal in my examination of place and the essay film.

The temporality of the landscape emerged as perhaps the defining area of interest for me in understanding the make up and structure of place. As I discovered, Romney Marsh is a landscape replete with historical narratives and physical remnants of the past as architecture and ruins. It is also a landscape literally shaped by the past, both naturally, in the changing coastline, and by human presence and

interference, in the irrigation for farming and alterations for defences during war for example. Alongside these excursions into the temporal landscape, I was seeking relevant scholarship that theorized on time and history in place, to further my understanding of the structure of places and consolidate what I was finding in practice and within the landscape. Doreen Massey became a voice central to this understanding of the temporality of places. She considers time as an integral part of place and that “we cannot or perhaps should not separate space from time, or geography from history”.² Further, she sees “time and space as mutually imbricated” where time and place are the product of interrelations.³ She writes that space is “not just a collage of historical periods” but the result of “histories still being made now”,⁴ of on-going trajectories of time within location, where space is not just “a collage of the static” but something more fluid, as layers of time converging within location and as a multitude of histories within the present.⁵ The identities of places are forever coming into being at the point at which the trajectories of past narratives meet. In Romney Marsh and later as I travelled the country, I was searching for narratives of the past and accumulating them as layers through narrative. In this way I sought to capture places in the way Massey describes, as multiple past threads merging in the present. It is Massey to whom I refer to most frequently throughout the thesis in her prescient descriptions of place as I seek to articulate my own representations.

As I walked and drove through the landscape, I developed early on the idea of not just passing across the landscape but descending through time. I sought out and filmed the physical layers of these past times as architecture and landscape markers. Through research, these temporal layers expanded and widened as I identified more coordinates for the past of place. Narratives gleaned from the landscape and research ranged from a Roman port at Lympne to WWII military events seen in pillbox ruins and the PLUTO bungalows used as gas pumping stations during the allied invasion of France, or the pink pews seen in a church, painted for use in a TV program (figure 1.3). The book, *Romney Marsh: Survival on a Frontier* further impacted on my thinking of the landscape on a timeline.⁶ I accumulated many narratives spanning millennia, capturing this temporal depth of place. The gathering of images and stories, a broad set of information and the building up of histories to be woven into the film through image and voice, encapsulated my approach to an essaying of place.

Other voices emerged in my research at this point, scholars who influenced my thinking on place and my approach to the films I was making. Tim Ingold's consideration of the temporality of the landscape, how "the landscape tells, or rather is, a story"⁷ and that the landscape "is itself pregnant with the past,"⁸ shows how the past is contained and held within the landscape to be read and extracted, like my process of travelling and looking at places, seeking history and narrative within landscapes, in this case in Romney Marsh. I found this articulated further in the work of scholars such as Michael Sheringham who has written on the archival nature of space, how it is possible to read the city and its spaces to access its pasts and narratives; "the city is a memory machine",⁹ he states, the "archival, in its materiality, its layeredness, its endless transformations" is there to be read, accruing the past and the stories of the city into its very fabric.¹⁰ Expanded from the concept of the city, Romney Marsh contained these physical markers of the past, from the military sites and Roman ruins to old churches dotted across the landscape. Similarly, historian David Lowenthal has stated that "tangible relics make the past present",¹¹ and further, Yi-Fu Tuan considers how time is material in place through objects and buildings, where memory is aided through tangible evidence of the past such as "old furniture, old buildings and museum collections",¹² giving further theoretical underpinnings to my observations and approach to place. Writing on geography and cinema in an urban context, Les Roberts describes this as the "archive city",¹³ a term I expand to consider rather archival spaces, not only urban ones. Places then can be seen as archival and this emerged through my filmic excursions and encounters with the physical markers of the past in the landscape.

I kept little in the way of notes during production and just carried a little book to jot down certain details when filming to return to later during post-production and script writing. I compiled these with further research and gathered relevant narratives into a document that, as it progressed, turned into the script for the film. The writing process unfolded alongside the editing of the filmed images. As images and groups of images took shape in a sequence, so too narratives and information took shape. This occurred in the opposite direction too, as narratives and histories in the script were grouped into time or theme, the ordering and grouping of images followed. The script was furthered by commentary and poetic passages that I attached to certain images as I was editing and writing. Memory, mood and personal feeling played their part here, where I revisited the experience of being within place through the

images I had gathered and tried to respond to that experience, marrying subjective response with place. The script writing and editing allowed for a selection of images and ideas, narratives and spaces to form, a process of choice, dictated by the materials, a rhythm or flow of thoughts and ideas, where some elements remained and others were left out. This method of artistic selection allowed a certain version of place to emerge, dictated by the boldness of an overarching theme or storyline, a particularly interesting fragment of information or image sequence.

With the script I sought a voice that could communicate the breadth of disparate narratives and information gathered and relay information along objective as well as subjective lines. The script took an informative, documentary approach, but one that could weave multiple narratives together across a montage of landscape images, giving concrete facts but with occasional poetic description, fictional passages and subjective commentaries on images and events, testing the boundaries of the reality of place and opening up its imaginative aspects. The script sought to structure the filmed material and create order where there had not been any clear linearity beforehand using narrative groupings and thematic threads. Accumulating words and images, narratives and places, the writing and editing process of *The Fifth Continent* sought to construct a web of place with a broad set of themes and coordinates, to capture something of the complexity and multiplicity of place and time. Through the production of this film, through the process of making and reflecting and through a mutual imbrication of the theoretical concerns emanating from my spatial research, an essaying of place began to emerge.

To return to Smith and Dean, in their writings on practice as research, they make central its process oriented nature. Their “iterative cyclic web” is a diagram constructed of categories relating to three headings; practice led research, research led practice and academic research.¹⁴ These three overlapping and intertwining areas depict a web, where multiple strands lead between the research types, charting an unfolding process of practice embodying academic research and research and knowledge generated from analysis of practice. For me, as a practice researcher, the ability to create, reflect and theorize on the production of practice is a constant process. As I embarked on film production and spatial research, studied the essay form and applied analysis to the essay films of others, the cross pollination of ideas and information across these different areas shaped the research and practice in an ongoing process. Similarly, my essay films contain within them their own processes

of coming into being; the films formed through and during their own production, incorporating the research and thinking processes. Following this line of thought, Catherine Lupton states that the essay film is a “process oriented” film form and “a site for enacting the process of thought and reflection upon and around a given topic”, a statement that articulates the way in which in the essay film emerges through a process of thought and reflection.¹⁵ Practice-research and the essay film are best thought of together and considered from this perspective of process, confirming the need to follow the development of the films and research ideas from the beginning. Being a practitioner also carrying out research, afforded a furthering in understanding through the overlapping processes. Making *The Fifth Continent* helped to shape my approach to place and to the essay form and what I learnt from the production of this film greatly influenced the work both on *Island Stories* and the wider thesis.

Island Stories

During the production of *The Fifth Continent*, I began work on the film that would become *Island Stories*. *Island Stories* is a fragmented travelogue film, a semi-fictional journey through England. The film unfolds across six parts. A single voice, that of a male narrator, tells the story of a female filmmaker whose journeys make up the spatial content and narrative of the film. Her account is told through her notebooks, emails and messages, as well as through conversations she has with the narrator. Alongside the filmmaker’s travels, the narrator also makes his own journeys and he details some of his own encounters with place, which sometimes overlap with those of the filmmaker. A third character appears throughout the film, a person given the name Leland, whose story is told only through the filmmaker’s account. His name derives from the historical figure John Leland, the sixteenth century antiquary, poet and cartographer, of whom the filmmaker also speaks in the film. Through the interplay of these three voices and their separate journeys, all spoken through a single enunciating voice, the narrative takes shape across the film.

Each part is assembled around a place, set of places or a theme. The film begins and ends in Hastings; the first chapter opening at the Jack in the Green festival, the last closing on bonfire night and the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings, two contemporary celebrations with historical roots and both grounded in

English customs and acting as cultural and historical signposts. These bookends are geographically resonant, bracketing the film within a place returned to as ‘home’ throughout the film. Part One proceeds with a geographically dispersed set of glimpses of different spaces around the country, a montage of contrasts that crisscrosses England. Part Two takes a more confined geographical approach, and is centered on a journey along the south coast, eastwards from Hastings to Margate and back again, passing through Deal and Dover. Part Three is again rooted in a specific geography, moving through places in Cornwall with a particular emphasis on the evolution of inhabited space and past and present industrial landscapes. Part Four groups together diverse and dispersed spaces through the relationship between the land and the sky, the earth and outer space. Part Five takes urban space as the subject, using Louis Le Prince’s film *Traffic Crossing Leeds Bridge* (1888) as a starting point, aligning his early capturing of the city on film with my own filmmaking and bringing together these two moments in the same location in the city, past and present. Part Six, before ending at the Hastings bonfire night celebrations, takes a disjointed, fleeting tour through disparate locations throughout England, from the island of Lindisfarne to Felixstowe, to the ruins of Hallands village in Devon, in a structural mirror of Part One of the film. Part Six offers narrative closure and a culmination in each character’s journey, the travelling filmmaker leaving England, the final images being those of Dover and the white cliffs as a boat leaves the shoreline.

Where *The Fifth Continent* is geographically situated in the small area of Romney Marsh, *Island Stories* adopts a more sweeping, expansive approach to place, taking in a vast array of locations along a number of routes crisscrossing England. So why did I choose England as subject? I could have taken journeys through Europe, or somewhere further afield, making a film as traveller, as tourist, a new visitor with an outsider’s perspective. In some ways, the choice to situate the film in England is an arbitrary one. On the other hand, I am British, I live in England and I am therefore making a film from both a familiar perspective and through travelling widely, breaking with this familiarity to visit new places, travelling as both insider and outsider at once. The desire for exploring these spaces, to travel and to see the familiar with freshness and to find unfamiliarity in England’s spaces, was a driving force behind the films. I decided to keep the focus on England geographically and as subject, whilst the idea of the Great Britain is of course within frame. It made sense

to set some boundaries both to journeys taken and to the research and ideas of country and nation that came along with the choice.

Travel and the geography of *Island Stories*

Where *The Fifth Continent* takes an approach to place that is contained within a demarcated localised geography, that of Romney Marsh, *Island Stories* instead emerged out of a production period during which I travelled extensively throughout the country. Travelling was a production method, a structuring device within the film itself and a research tool into places through the encounter, establishing the necessity of considering an essaying of place through the distinct spatiality of the journey. Jeffrey Ruoff states that, “the travelogue is an open form, essayistic”,¹⁶ which “does not subordinate time and place to the regime of plot or story, nor are its elements typically yoked to a story. Description thrives”.¹⁷ Ruoff here considers how the travelogue eschews narrative linearity for something more liberated, more “descriptive”, where the movement of travel and the spaces encountered form the subject. It is through “a free combination of exposition, narrative and comment” that the travelogue takes form, where “the first person episodic narrative leaves room for detours and digression”.¹⁸ Ruoff here brings the travelogue form into the realm of the essay and this helps articulate my reasoning for using the method and practice of travel as a filmic process. For me, the essayistic journey in space becomes a filmic device through which many diverse elements come into play, and these journeys can become a rich articulation of places and spaces conjured through the encounter.

During initial research into locations and narratives for *Island Stories*, I saw the potential for utilising the journey in taking a sweeping geographical approach as a counterpoint to *The Fifth Continent*. Employing the journey as a device through which to encounter the spaces of England meant a linking up of disparate locations across routes. It would allow for a kind of spatial cross section and an exploration of the concept of place at the local level but also at the level of country or nation. *Island Stories* progressed from the idea that expanding the geographical coordinates would also expand the essayistic potential of the film. In other words, more geographical coordinates and locations would open up more narratives, more essayistic avenues, create a wider experiential encounter and a broader set of ideas and themes to be accumulated and woven together, broadening the essayistic potential of the filmic

response to place. The way in which locations and routes were selected became a part of the planning and further took shape throughout the filmmaking process. I saw the routes initially as two lines carving through the country, across the entire south coast from east to west and directly north through the centre of the country from the south coast to the northernmost tip of England. This idea remained in frame whilst taking on new coordinates as planning and travelling began. I drew up an itinerary in advance of each trip, providing a structure and a set of coordinates to govern each excursion. I followed this process for all of the journeys taken for the film's production. These routes altered with changing plans and intentions and diverted as I travelled. The maps of the final routes taken and of locations visited can be seen in figures 1.4, 1.5, 1.6 and 1.7 in the appendices.

All journeys began or ended in Hastings, where I live on the south coast. This was both logical, as a point of return and departure, but also integral to the narrative. Hastings features frequently within the film and I shot a lot of footage there over the two years of production. When planning the south coast route, I began with Margate at the eastern tip, motivated largely by a desire to film the Shell Grotto, the subterranean passageway lined with shells. In the other direction, I had Tintagel Castle in mind as an end point, owing to its association with the mythical figure of King Arthur. There were places and landmarks I marked on the map to guide the initial routes, based on research. I split the journey in two; five days from Margate to Hastings, then around two weeks from Hastings to Tintagel Castle. This process was similar for the journey northwards. I had locations marked from Milton Keynes, to Birmingham, Manchester and onwards to the furthest location on the route, just over the border with Scotland. A return journey went via Whitby, Newcastle and an abandoned radar station in Lincolnshire, all of which I had scheduled on my initial route plans. I also decided on a further journey to connect up a number of locations I wanted to film and whose narratives interested me in the context of other places and a further desire to reach the eastern most tip of England. I travelled east from Hastings, through Suffolk to the forest at Rendlesham, the port at Felixstowe and the site at Lowestoft looking out to sea over the easternmost point of the UK. I also undertook numerous visits to London, usually governed by a specific intention or place, to gather material.

The routes and itineraries took shape through a desire to visit locations I knew about already, along with spatial research and readings on places that led to

locations for specific reasons, locations that were selected through planning on a map and further through a certain amount of intuition and chance governed by the journeys. For example, on the journey north to the Scottish border, in-between the many coordinates I had preplanned, such as Manchester, the old mills at Saltaire and the village of Mankinholes where Google map markings position the words Great Britain (figure 1.8), were places such as Ribbleshead Viaduct and the village of Settle, where the flowerpot festival was happening (figure 1.9), locations that I arrived at by chance, driving through or past them and stopping to film, their stories becoming known from the encounter and later research, their landscapes and stories became a part of the film. This pattern was repeated frequently, as places passed through became new spaces to gather material for the film, a process mirroring my approach to *The Fifth Continent*, which was often one of drifting and freedom from any preplanned routes. The planned journeys in this way were rendered more fluid, journeys of spatial discovery and geographical divergences.

Timothy Corrigan has discussed how essayists have explored places through travel where through “temporarily inhabiting small and large places”, the self transforms.¹⁹ Here Corrigan marries the discovery of self with the physical movement through space, suggesting that an encounter with the external environment and a subjective, internal encounter together forge an experiential unity that bind together within the essay film. Similarly, I believe that the act of journeying allows the filmmaker to articulate information, ideas and fragments of historical and contemporary narratives onto the spatial coordinates of the journey, where travelling is both the subject itself and mode through which to experience the world. For my approach to *Island Stories*, I saw travel as a key part of the essayistic process, as a method through which to encounter place and position experience at the forefront of the filmmaking process, as a tool through which to research both the specifics of individual places and more broadly to understand the structures and make up of places, to gather film images and as a method through which to enact an essaying of place.

The development of *Island Stories*

These spatial encounters enacted through the journey created the geographical and experiential conditions for the production of the film. I began planning each journey

with an initial set of places and coordinates. These became points on the map for each journey. This set of points expanded through preplanning and later as I travelled, new places became a part of the routes. I visited places and landscapes, connecting sites and stories as I travelled and capturing images of spaces, sometimes filming specific buildings, sites or landscapes, other times capturing freely the place intuitively, its fabric, rhythms, people. In this way, I built up a record of places and the journey. After the filming journeys were completed, I made a full location list of all of the places visited. Through subsequent research, I added narrative context for each place, compiling stories, histories and information along with any experiential notes made during my own encounter with the place. This gave me the narrative material with which to begin working on an edit and script. Further, I collected archival materials that were relevant to locations, or to specific themes or storylines, the images of plans for Milton Keynes drawn by Helmut Jacoby for example,²⁰ the video clips of a surfer in a TV report about the surf club at Skewjack, the postcards of shipwrecks at Lizard Point (figure 1.10). These materials added further visual, textual layers for representing places alongside filmed images and narratives that would become a part of the voice-over.

Like the details I sought in *The Fifth Continent*, I was again concerned with history and past narratives when filming and researching places. I saw the history of places everywhere when travelling, through sites within the landscape where history is present materially, as buildings and objects that marked the pasts of place, as towns and cities showing their layers as they developed over time. This focus on time became more concentrated again through narrative research that accumulated further the many pasts of the landscape. I was finding other key articulations of place, time and history as the film and research developed. Yi-Fu Tuan considers how the past times of place build up to give meaning to the landscape and experience, where “history has depth and time bestows value” and that the city has “a temporal depth objectified in the city’s successive walls that accrue like the annual rings of an aged tree”.²¹ Physical place for him becomes time manifest and the landscape contains its pasts. This helped to form my temporal view on place gathered through travelling and research. Similarly, Lowenthal considers how “the past is not only recalled; it is incarnate in the things we build and the landscapes we create”.²² He further states that “the durability of many artefacts and other traces of the past also engenders a feeling of accretion” in considering how through the

material present, the past endures and accumulates, creating a layered landscape.²³ These voices consolidated my approach to place and time, giving voice to the physical manifestation of time in place and also the idea of history and narrative as continued time in place. I worked through amassing narratives and building up a portrait of place through its visual past layers when working on *Island Stories*.

Alongside the idea of history and the past, I also approached both *Island Stories* and *The Fifth Continent* from the perspective of the everyday, in the rhythms and the unfolding present within space, as I filmed and observed places. I sought theoretical coordinates for this everydayness in place, with voices such as geographer Edward Relph considering place from the perspective of experience, how place is known through immersion and living within it and its rhythms, through the home, place of work and “the space of the street in all its variety of views, sounds and smells”.²⁴ Michel de Certeau has looked at everyday life in the city through the walking pedestrian,²⁵ and Tuan has considered place as one shaped through habitual use, where “the path itself acquires a density of meaning”.²⁶ He states that our sense of place develops over time through “experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic”,²⁷ and through the “harmony of natural and artificial rhythms such as times of sunrise and sunset, of work and play” through which we shape our experience.²⁸ Through observation and filming spaces through the encounter and recording the unfolding of place as it happened, I sought to capture the everyday rhythms of the present alongside the narratives of the past.

I did a lot of preliminary research into locations that both helped to govern the journeys and also established narrative context to places that I would visit. To use my visit to Cornwall as an example, before taking the journey, I had carried out a great deal of location research. I was also reading Daphne du Maurier’s book *Vanishing Cornwall*.²⁹ The various histories and themes relating to Cornwall in this book led me to further build a journey through the county, to discover these histories and the many facets of place. I visited many locations, from tin mine ruins and stone circles on Bodmin Moor, the gardens and biomes of the Eden Project and the old china clay port town of Charlestown to the Geevor Tin Mine Museum, Lizard Point and Tintagel Castle, capturing a diverse set of places and varying landscapes, each with different stories, emanating different themes and from which I gathered a variety of ideas relating to the landscape. The narratives I researched in advance of my visit to Cornwall ranged from geological information, early stories of human

migration patterns and the physical remains of early settlement through to the use and mining of raw materials such as tin and china clay, tourism in the present Cornwall, the persistence of Arthurian legends, references to literature, such as Du Maurier's 1936 book *Jamaica Inn*,³⁰ the Spanish Armada and the site of transatlantic telegraph cables and later fibre optic cables. In this way, I gathered a broad set of stories that gave narrative context to places before I visited them. I was also gathering narratives of a political nature for example, recording information on the economic, social and cultural layers of places, the uses of the landscape, industry, geological information, myth and fiction attached to place and the minutiae and idiosyncrasies of geographical specificity. My research process was deliberately wide reaching, seeing spaces as a wide canvas upon which to layer a dense set of narratives and a web of place information. For me, to capture place essayistically became a gathering of many multiple layers and strands together, a depth as well as breadth.

Notebooks, treatment and script

I had kept only limited notes in a book to capture information, thoughts and ideas whilst filming and researching *The Fifth Continent*, but this note-making process became much more significant in the production of *Island Stories*. I maintained a travelling diary during the production of the film, where I wrote the order of the route each day and an account of the places visited, events unfolding and other comments on the immediate surroundings, peripheral thoughts on the nature of places and the makeup of the landscape. It documented the route from a subjective perspective and allowed for information of a less factual, more subjective and occasionally more poetic nature to emerge. These notebooks would also later become a part of the film narrative, a device through which to narrate the account of the travelling filmmaker. Alongside the filmed images, this document became key in the construction of the film and in writing the narrative. Examples of the notebook can be seen in figures 1.11, 1.12, 1.13 and 1.14. The pages in figure 1.11 outline a couple of days spent around Dartmoor, travels between places, a visit to Hallsands village and conversations with a woman called Katie whose house I was staying in. The pages in figure 1.12 then continue this story, as I visit the location of the Widdecomb in the Moor church spoken about by Katie and add details about this, before

continuing on my journey from Dartmoor to Cornwall. Figure 1.13 contains a notebook passage from Leeds and a visit to Leeds Bridge, where I write about Louis Le Prince and make some comments about cinematic space, as well as further details about the journey that day. Figure 1.14 follows the last couple of days in the north of England, before a return journey via the abandoned radar station at RAF Stenigot in Lincolnshire.

My own accounts of the places visited occur frequently throughout *Island Stories*, subsumed into the narrative, often taken from my travelling notebooks. This foregrounds a subjective experience of place and communicates the immediate present of places. These are brief descriptions such as the passage, “I explored Milton Keynes by car and it had its own strange appeal, both impossibly modern and absolutely outdated”, which is a direct action and response to the place, one governed by the actual encounter. Elsewhere in Cornwall, the narrator says that, “the foghorn rang out ceaselessly at Lizard Point, echoing over the rocky peninsula”, narrating a brief and direct commentary on the place. A more substantial adding of narrative from the encounter came from my visit to Dartmoor and the Widdecomb in the Moor church. The church was not on my itinerary, nor was I aware of it before visiting. Its presence in the film is a result of the conversation I had with Katie in Dartmoor. I told her the nature of my film and the reason for my travelling and she told me about a historical incident at the church and the story of ball lighting and the subsequent myths attached to it. I wrote about this in my notebooks (figures 1.11 and 1.12) and the next day visited the church to film it. Further information was gained by picking up a leaflet at the church outlining this story, part real, part myth. Similarly, I visited Hallsands Village in Devon on my way westwards to Cornwall, as I knew of the ruins on the cliff edge. Its narrative was unknown to me until I arrived at the location and read more from the information boards present at the site, about the dredging out at sea, the series of storms and the people left living in the ruins afterwards, before becoming completely abandoned. So the location was layered with narrative through information gained actually at the site and later fleshed out with research. Or in one section in Part Five of the film, the filmmaker’s notebook contains a passage from Soho in London where a restaurant she knows has closed down. An accompanying image shows the closed down restaurant and a bar hosting a party with a “Save Soho” banner (figure 1.15). This was a story of the

encounter as I filmed and saw it, neither researched nor known about but something that happened within place, by chance.

For *The Fifth Continent*, I didn't write a treatment. Instead, I held an idea of what the film sought to capture, the way it would look and the threads of narrative that would make up its structure and voice-over and worked from a list of stories and passages of location information, ideas and narratives that were reshaped and reordered to form the script. *Island Stories* developed rather through an initial treatment that can be seen in the appendices. The treatment was written during the periods of filming and outlines the beginnings of the film and its intentions, narrative threads and structural ideas as well as framing devices. The treatment begins in Hastings, at the Jack in the Green festival, where the character of John Leland is introduced and his historical biographical information outlined. John Leland had emerged as a figure of interest during my early research into English journeys and his inclusion in the film is established early on here within the treatment. I also established the idea of a narrator, closely resembling myself and mirroring the actual film and research project, an idea that I later expanded upon to include both a narrator and a travelling filmmaker whose story the narrator tells.

The treatment helped to structure the film to begin and end in Hastings, which remained as a geographical device. Within the treatment, I outlined a seven-chapter structure with a preface and afterword, with chapters such as "Cornwall: Past and Future" and "Skyward from the Earth". The latter title was developed as a response to sites such as Kielder Observatory, Rendlesham Forest and Widdecomb in the Moor church with the ball lightning event, as they all pointed towards the sky and outer space, sharing a thematic link or narrative grouping. In this way, these chapters took shape as a response to the images and narratives gathered and themes and routes taken. The fragmented structure and thematic or geographic chapters governed the edit and script writing and loosely take this shape in the film, where narrative fragmentation took precedence over geographical and temporal unity. The treatment set out some structural, narrative and thematic coordinates for the film and acted as a sort of guide to shaping the material and constructing an edit and script that elaborated and expanded on some of the key points developed within it. It also provided a framework from which the filmed images could begin to be assembled and organized and as I wrote the script, this early outline of the film helped to place

the information and images and group different spaces together according to the themes and subjects of the chapters.

After each journey and completion of filming, I carried out subsequent spatial research into locations visited and other peripheral research that led further to forging narrative content in the film and creating threads and ideas that became woven into the essay, broadening the narrative and historical context of places. There was always an interplay between early research, the spatial encounter itself and later research to arrive at narratives. For example, I visited Leeds Bridge specifically for its association with film pioneer Louis Le Prince. I filmed the bridge and read the blue plaque about him and his film. The detailed biographical and historical information used in film emerged at the later research stage, where I gained further information about the films he made, the film technology he used to create these films and his disappearance in France as well as other artistic and biographical details.³¹

Before visiting Cornwall, I had read about wiretapping by GCHQ in an article which revealed government information surveillance using fibre optic cables, one of which lands in Cornwall at Porthcurno.³² When researching this location, I had also discovered that this was the landing site of telegraph cables once connecting England to the British Empire and a museum at the site is dedicated to this history. It became a point on my route due to these narratives and themes that were of interest to me for the film. I visited and filmed the beach as it is now, the cable hut and various other everyday scenes and markers of its past and present technologies, or indeed absence of any visible signs of these new fibre optic networks landing here. I also searched for the nearby Skewjack data terminal where the cables surfaced, but I could not find it. This led me in further research to use Google Maps to find the site and stills of the map images became a part of the film. I also expanded the information I had already researched, looking further at the connectivity of the fibre networks around the globe using maps and diagrams and looking more in depth at the nature of the internet surveillance and the history of communication at the site. Further research also revealed that there was once a surf club situated at Skewjack and I found the archival video footage of this, adding another surprising historical layer to the place.

Through the early location research, being present within the space itself through the encounter and through subsequent research into the place and its stories,

a wealth of information became a part of the narrative of the landscape. In this way, the multiplicity and layers of place build up, along with a set of images, where narratives and commentary weave an essay film on individual local spaces, Porthcurno in this case, the larger regions or areas, here being Cornwall, and then throughout the film as multiple spaces pile up, an essay on England through an accumulation of its spaces and narratives. Through research, travelling, note making, treatment and scriptwriting as well as filming and editing, this gathering of narrative and image, and the process of writing and editing began to forge an essay accumulating these many strands and facets of place. Returning to Massey, in articulating the nature of places, she has considered space as the “sphere of possibility of the existence of multiplicity, contemporary plurality, coexisting heterogeneity”.³³ In space, she suggests, “there is always an element of chaos” of a multitude of trajectories, or fragmented narratives.³⁴ This for me captured the way in which I was trying to develop an essaying of place, in considering places as multilayered, complex and as accumulated narratives and threads and it suggests an openness and fluidity in our perception of place whose identity is one of gathered multitudes.

The writing of the essay script became a way to merge much of the detailed information gathered through these intertwining processes. It was also the process during which the film structure emerged more concretely, building upon the treatment, filming and research and shaping them into a whole. I have included the script in full for both films in the appendices, alongside the treatment of *Island Stories*. Like my scriptwriting process for *The Fifth Continent*, I kept a word document for *Island Stories* that contained within it information and research details gathered from the beginning, onwards through the production and research for the film, that grew and accumulated narratives and places as the film progressed. This document compiled places and their many narratives together along with other peripheral information and research that wasn't attached to specific locations, such as passages about Georges Perec's essay “Species of Spaces”, collated due to his concern with identifying categories of space, from the blank page, to the house, to outer space, a concept I aimed to mirror in my capturing of a breadth and variety of spaces in the films.³⁵ I gathered quotations from other sources, such as Aldous Huxley's book on blindness and vision *The Art of Seeing*, a book I was reading at the

time that drew parallels for me in the filming of places and the nature of cinematic vision in conjunction.³⁶

I also accumulated notes from texts written by other travellers in the past such as H.V Morton and his book *In Search of England*, a travelogue mirroring my own concerns with journeys through the country.³⁷ This accumulating information became the basis for the script and I altered the information and added to it as the writing developed, restructuring according to the synchronous film editing, crafting chapters around places, themes and subjects. It became a fluid working document, where information grew and its shape changed as the voices of the script and overarching narratives formed. A key part of the script writing and editing process was in tying information and image together, finding threads and links between many disparate places and narratives and grouping spaces and stories together into a coherent whole. Finding order to disorder but maintaining a wide web and diverse set of stories and places had a lot to do with my idea of an essaying of place, a weaving made possible by a freedom of form and looseness of structure. Place seen in this way is one of multiplicity, of interconnections, of varied narratives and information coming together in location, a cacophony of elements that make a place what it is. Writing the script and structuring the material in this way allowed this image of place to begin taking shape.

The script assembled these narrative elements with my subjective account of places, as well as drawing together peripheral thoughts and ideas and utilizing the semi-fictional character device as a writing tool through which to do this. Part Five of the film is concerned with cities. The script begins with the passage “I told her about my visit to Leeds, where I had stood in a spot looking down the bridge towards the city”, a subjective account of the encounter. The images show the bridge in a stationary shot and a long take. This chapter then relays the history of Louis Le Prince, his films and his association with Leeds Bridge, adding narrative layers of history and biography to the space of the city. The travelling filmmaker then comments on this history and the present space, where Le Prince forged “a new cinematic representation of space and time”. A montage of city images follows, different cities and different locations. The script here moves between specific narratives attached to locations. “The Brutalist library I had always loved is set to be demolished soon” for example, relates to an image of the old Birmingham Central Library building, already in a state of destruction. Alongside these narratives of

space, are passages from the aforementioned *The Art of Seeing*. In the script, I also use the device of the notebook to record a list, random words and thoughts that accompany a further montage of city images. Much of the script progressed in this way, in marrying research and places, the account of being within places with further commentary, references or conceptual devices, all filtered through the narrative voices of the characters of the film.

Similarly to *The Fifth Continent*, I sought an essay voice that could assemble and incorporate the many threads of information and a breadth of narrative, to capture place in this way through an accumulation of the many multiple strands of narratives alongside landscape imagery. In furthering what I had done in *The Fifth Continent* and broadening the potential of the essayistic form alongside the greater set of geographical and narrative coordinates, I sought a narrative voice that went beyond that of *The Fifth Continent*, to seek a path that took the essay form in a different direction to the essay films of others. In this way, the use of three voices, multiple notebook devices and varying communications between the voices all told by one narrator, allowed for this complex path through place and to assemble these many disparate elements into a unified voice-over. The very processes building upon the frame of the treatment, of adding narrative depth and wider contexts through the script became a key part of the process of an essaying of place. I also formed the script around a concept loosely situated in the reality of events. The filmmaking process and travelling I undertook became embedded as narrative and locations in the film, split between the three different characters and voices. My notebooks became those of the travelling filmmaker; events I witnessed and places visited became dispersed amongst these three characters, Leland, the travelling filmmaker and the narrator.

For me, the script was absolutely central in forging the essay film from the materials. It became the site of convergence and the glue that bound everything together. Place emerged in the script through the often dense narratives and broad themes and stories that emerged in the research, the diversity of places visited, the broad sweep of time of the narratives and the historical landscapes from prehistory to the present. As I discussed in relation to *The Fifth Continent*, the gathering of narrative layers, divergent threads, disparate locations and the accumulation of stories, the experience of places and the gathering of varied information constituted my approach to capturing place in the film. With *Island Stories*, this process is

magnified and multiplied; with the much broader geography and greater number of places visited, comes a wider set of encounters, a much more substantial set of notebooks from the encounters with place and a huge accumulation of narratives, histories and an even more varied set of information.

In both films, I was concerned with the multiplicity of places and the many layered experiences of the landscape, with myth and fiction and the imaginary aspects of place, with previous representations of places in literature or film, with the cultural and economic coordinates of places, with the myriad lives lived within space and the daily rhythms and unfolding flow of everyday life, with architecture and the physical landscape, with history and the past. Place for me was infinite, multiple, chaotic and free flowing and my approach became one that sought to assemble this rich set of themes and spatial characteristics. The formation of the two essay films embodied this, in their fragmented structure and multilayered approach to place and narrative. Their form seemed logical as a representational strategy for capturing places, weaving my encounter with spatial histories and narratives and the many other facets of place into a whole. It was in this way that I considered the formation of an essaying of place. As I have discussed, what emerged most substantially from my encounter with landscapes and through spatial research was the centrality of time when thinking about place. In this way, like Calvino's city of Zaira at the beginning of this chapter and the "relationships between the measurement of its spaces and the events of its pasts",³⁸ the way in which histories and the past accumulate and remain within places became central to my approach and the defining principle of an essaying of place.

To consider just what image of place emerges through the essay form has a lot to do with how places are thought about, theorised, defined and conceptualised. The scholars I have referred to influenced my approach to place and gave a theoretical framework to enable an understanding of certain spatial aspects that were emerging from my practice and research. Massey and the other scholars introduced in this chapter became reference points as I developed my approach to place. They offered pathways towards an understanding of place and its representation through the essay film and they return throughout this thesis in order to help articulate my arguments. This chapter has followed my practical process from the conception and production of *The Fifth Continent*, on through the development and production of my second film *Island Stories*. I outlined the stages of production for both films and the

emergence of key approaches and ideas in both my practice and in the formation of an essaying of place through film. I looked at the approach to geography taken in both films, from the relatively enclosed geographical area of Romney Marsh, through to the use of the travelogue form to expand the spatial coordinates in *Island Stories*. Through the process of travelling and filming, note making and keeping a diary, through writing a treatment and script and through the integration of the spatial encounters with place research, I have explored the development of an approach to place through an essay film practice. I established how my approach to place was built up through an accumulation of information, themes and subjects alongside observations, commentary and experiential responses to the landscape, alongside gathered images of place. Further, I have shown how process is central to both the development of a practice as research project and to the essay form, which contains within it its own processes. Practice as research then affords a privileged insight into research and practice and offers a viewpoint into essaying as an active, process oriented mode of filmmaking.

¹ Italo Calvino (1972), *Invisible Cities*, translated by William Weaver (London: Random House, 1997), 9.

² Doreen Massey, "Places and their Pasts", *History Workshop Journal*, Volume 39, Issue 1 (March 1995), 187.

³ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 125.

⁴ Massey, *For Space*, 118.

⁵ *Ibid*, 119.

⁶ Jill Edison, *Romney Marsh: Survival on a Frontier* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009).

⁷ Tim Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape", *World Archaeology*, Volume 25, No 2 (1993), 152.

⁸ Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape", 153.

⁹ Michael Sheringham, "Archiving", in *Restless Cities*, edited by Matthew Beaumont and Gregory Dart (London: Verso, 2010), 10.

¹⁰ Sheringham, "Archiving", 14.

¹¹ David Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory", *Geographical Review*, Volume 65, No 1 (1975), 11.

¹² Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 194.

¹³ Les Roberts, "Navigating the Archive City: Digital Spatial Humanities and Archival Film Practice", *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, Volume 21, No 1 (2015), 100-115.

¹⁴ *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*, edited by Roger T. Dean and Hazel Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 20.

¹⁵ Catherine Lupton, "Who in the World: Essay Film, Transculture and Globality", in *Telling Stories: Countering Narrative in Art, Theory and Film*, edited by Jane Tormey and Gillian Whiteley (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2009), 235.

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- ¹⁶ Jeffrey Ruoff, *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 11.
- ¹⁷ Ruoff, *Virtual Voyages*, 11.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Timothy Corrigan, *The Essay Film: From Montaigne, After Marker* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 104.
- ²⁰ Architectural illustrator Helmut Jacoby was commissioned to draw up detailed images for the Milton Keynes Development Corporation in 1970.
- ²¹ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*, 191.
- ²² Lowenthal, "Past Time, Present Place: Landscape and Memory", 6.
- ²³ Ibid, 10.
- ²⁴ Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion Limited, 1976), 17.
- ²⁵ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven F. Rendall (California: University of California Press, 1984).
- ²⁶ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 182.
- ²⁷ Ibid, 183.
- ²⁸ Ibid, 184.
- ²⁹ Daphne du Maurier (1967), *Vanishing Cornwall* (London: Penguin, 1972).
- ³⁰ Daphne du Maurier (1936), *Jamaica Inn* (London: Virago, 2003).
- ³¹ In part, the information I gathered came from: Christopher Rawlence, *The Missing Reel - The Untold Story of the Lost Inventor of Moving Pictures* (London: Collins, 1990).
- ³² Geoff White, "Spy cable revealed: How telecoms firm worked with GCHQ", *Channel 4 News*, November 20, 2014, <https://www.channel4.com/news/spy-cable-revealed-how-telecoms-firm-worked-with-gchq>
- ³³ Massey, *For Space*, 9.
- ³⁴ Ibid, 111.
- ³⁵ George Perec (1974), "Species of Spaces", *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, edited and translated by John Sturrock (London: Penguin, 1997).
- ³⁶ Aldous Huxley, *The Art of Seeing* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1943).
- ³⁷ H.V. Morton (1927), *In Search of England* (London: Methuen & Co, 1930).
- ³⁸ Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 9.

CHAPTER TWO

The Temporality of the Landscape in an Essaying of Place

“And might it not be, continued Austerlitz, that we also have appointments to keep in the past, in what has gone before and is for the most part extinguished, and must go there in search of places and people who have some connection with us on the far side of time?” W. G Sebald, *Austerlitz*.¹

“Language shows clearly that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past but its theatre. It is the medium of past experience, as the ground is the medium in which dead cities lie interred”. Walter Benjamin, *Berlin Chronicle*.²

Chapter One discusses my practice from the perspective of process and development. I described how during the production and research process for both *Island Stories* and *The Fifth Continent*, I developed an essayistic approach where temporality emerged as perhaps the most dominant theme in my practice and in the structures of place and landscape. Within this chapter, I will establish how there are different temporalities at play in the essay film, from the shallow temporality of the unfolding present and everyday rhythms of place to the deep time of many histories within the landscape. I will explore how present-day spaces can also be seen as historical palimpsests, formed of layers of time in location, both visible, concrete and material, but also conjured through resonance, narrative and the reverberation of memory. The essay film becomes an excavation of place through the landscape encounter, a journey through the sedimentary layers of time and historical narrative anchored to specific sites and locations that act as memory containers and historical markers. These temporal facets are unlocked and explored through the encounter with place. The essay film plots these geographical and temporal coordinates and weaves them together into a filmic essayistic web.

I will look at different temporal approaches taken in both *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories* where a focus on both the passing of the everyday and the present encounter and the many layers of past times and history in the landscape shape the films. The different approaches I take can be addressed through an articulation of ideas as they emerge in a varied set of essay films. In Jem Cohen’s *Lost Book Found*,

it is the present experience of the city, the unfolding of daily life and a focus on the passing moment that characterises place. I discuss this film in its representation of place at street level in the present alongside my own films that also share something of this approach. I use Jem Cohen's *Amber City* to expand on the essayistic approach to place, where the history of the city and the pasts of place come to the fore through landscape fabric and historical narratives. My own films overlap in concerns and approach with Cohen's films, in my choice to shoot places hand held, with a focus on street space and an embodied camera, in trying to capture the present of place and the rhythms of life unfolding. My films sought to capture the shallow temporality I establish in *Lost Book Found*. I also take urban centres as subject in sections of *Island Stories*, in an approach similar to Cohen's. Further, the deep spatiality I will outline in relation to *Amber City*, exploring the historical depth of places through past narratives that collide with the present landscape, is also an approach that governed both of my films. I expand on the historical make up of place and a deep temporality in a discussion of Lee Ann Schmitt's *California Company Town* and James Benning's *Four Corners*, both of which take the American landscape as subject. Finally, bringing the English landscape into frame, I will look at the meandering, drifting approach to time and place in Chris Petit's *Content* as its methods overlap with *Island Stories* and brings an aspect of travel into view, as well as the use of archival sources to depict the past times of place.

Essaying everyday life and place in the present

Lost Book Found is a film in which New York City is both setting and subject. It is never named directly, but its location is established through a few familiar sites and names and by its unmistakable skyline and streets. A first person narrator recalls his personal experiences of the city and tells the stories of people he encounters. Throughout the film, the narrator switches between past and present tense, between an account of the present experience of city and of his recent past working as a pushcart vendor. Through an encounter with another city dweller, a "sidewalk fisher" who collects small discarded items from the city, the narrator temporarily comes into possession of a book within which hundreds of words in lists are written, all relating to the city. The image of place that emerges in *Lost Book Found* is one built from an

accumulation of its disparate narratives, city street images, spoken words and ambient sounds. It is not a total view of the city, one concerned with its most familiar aspects, its grand narratives and histories. It is an image of place that emerges at the margins, in the overlooked streets and informal economies, in the lives of city dwellers and the city detritus blowing by in the wind.

After a sequence of images recorded at ground level at the opening of the film, the view changes to one high above the city (figures 2.1 and 2.2). A number of shots from high-rise building windows reveal a city at night, the glowing skyline, the rooftops and tower blocks of the city, activity in illuminated windows and traffic passing through the streets below. From this vantage point, the city is established in aerial view. This particular point of view is illustrated by geographer Edward Relph in his claim that for the city dweller, “the space of the city is only spread out and extensive on those rare occasions when he looks down on it from some vantage point” but that “more commonly his experience of cities is that of his home, his place of work and the space of the street in all its variety of views, sounds and smells”.³ A cut changes the view from this position down to the street below, to 9th Avenue. More specifically, this location is “near the mouth of the Lincoln tunnel” which would place the film geographically on the west side of the city, between Hells Kitchen and Chelsea. The geographical specificity anchors the film and narrator within identified geographical points in the city. Although offering the broad familiarity of the New York cityscape, the city streets in *Lost Book Found* are mostly the anonymous, lived spaces of everyday life.

As Tim Ingold has suggested, city dwellers and their multisensory experience of streets lend place its specific colour, stating that, “A place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there. To the sights, sounds, and indeed smells that constitute its specific ambience”.⁴ Place then is made by those who live, work and pass through, the events and daily life as captured in *Lost Book Found*. A wealth of images of the street make up the visual fabric of the film: images of architecture, night time shots of deserted street corners, street signs, traffic, hand written signs, store fronts, displayed goods in stores and on the street, the subway, people in the streets, rubbish on the sidewalk and piles of discarded objects. These all accumulate into a collage of city fragments. Cohen himself states that when walking around New York, “you see all these scraps lying on the ground. A lot of them are packaging. What they tell you is that much day-to-day life consists of people wading

through the debris generated by buying and selling. On the one hand, it's just a gum wrapper; on the other, it's a little key that opens up a bigger world".⁵ This brings to the fore the centrality of looking at the overlooked and discarded as a way to understand and explore the city, in a way which evokes Michael Sheringham's claim that "one of the city's archives is its detritus: hieroglyphic blobs of gum splattering the sidewalk, runic streaks and crevices on pavements or blank facades" and his suggestion that this detritus contains a language through which the city can be read.⁶

The cinematography in Cohen's film serves to emphasise the film's rootedness in street space. It is hand held and the shots are fragments gleaned from the street. Laura Rascaroli notes how essayistic films often "use the camera as a flexible, lucid, incisive means of personal, individual expression".⁷ Within *Lost Book Found*, the camera is very much a human camera which doesn't only observe the street, it is literally in the street; it moves amongst people and buildings, swaying through streets and shops, its movement jerky and free. Some moments are in slow motion, enhancing each glance with an extended duration. In one sequence, people pass through the street in slow motion as the camera sways. A cut reveals another street view; buses and cars turn and people pass by, the camera pans sharply to the right to follow a man in a shirt and tie as he walks past, the street action literally dictating the movement of the camera. These two shots are filmed through a dusty, smeared surface, most likely a phone box window, the images distorted, making the street viscerally present in the film (figure 2.3).

The subjectivity of a spatial experience coupled with an attempt to think through and organise the spaces of the city in *Lost Book Found*, and a narrative in which the psychology of the city comes to the fore, certainly places psychogeography as a touchstone here. The idea of the flâneur or city walker is an appropriate one in *Lost Book Found* and brings Guy Debord, Walter Benjamin and others into the frame. Where Benjamin employed the idea of the flâneur as a wealthy, leisured individual, or a poet, separated in some way from the pedestrian through a refined sensibility for "botanizing on the asphalt",⁸ strolling through Paris and its arcades, Debord sought a critically engaged, playful and deliberate act of flâneury, a tool, the *dérive* as a mode of urban experience, a description resonating with Cohen's approach. Steve Pile has observed how "Psychogeographers have often sought to imaginatively reconstruct city life piece by piece, through a style of observation that pays particular attention to the minutiae of the city".⁹ This claim

illustrates well the way in which the narrator of *Lost Book Found* acts as city walker, traversing city streets and conjuring an image of place. The idea of the solitary walker, marrying psyche and place through the urban streets resonates with *Lost Book Found*, but the narrator is a pedestrian flâneur.

With a lack of a fixed destination in the film, the narrator drifts around the city. The essay form itself is often described as a weaving, divergent and fleeting, meandering form. So through the interplay of a drifting in space and in narrative, image and word, the essay film emerges both within and through the streets of New York. That there is such a vast wealth of visual fragments of the city suggests a sustained engagement by Cohen as filmmaker with the streets, time spent moving through city space capturing snippets of daily life and street images. The idea of flâneury or psychogeography extends then outside of the diegetic world to the production methods of the film, which is itself a form of spatial practice. Further, what I have called an essaying of place may be an adept conceptualisation of psychogeography, which could be articulated as seeking to thicken or densify space through an essayistic response, following narrative threads, taking divergences, getting under the surface of place and building up a multiplicity of layers and strands through the spatial encounter. The street as site of social practice in *Lost Book Found* becomes the meeting ground for stories, city dwellers and their human traces. The images in the film are peopled by walkers, gleaners, push cart vendors, shoppers, children, people in cafes, people appearing busy, lost or in contemplation, all glimpsed amongst the city streets, its architectural fabric and detritus, the goods and store windows. The narrator also encounters people around the city and snippets of their narratives emerge in the film. The street then is first and foremost a social space; it is the coming together of people and stories. It is people who make place through interaction and dwelling. People produce the material city; they become embedded in street space, users of space and creators of it.

In *Lost Book Found*, place is evoked through a vast array of images gathered from the street, mixing black and white and colour Super 8mm and 16mm film of the overlooked, the debris of everyday life, of fragments of people in the street, posed portraits of anonymous pedestrians, the streets, shop fronts, old shop signs, hand drawn notes, the subway, rooftops, architectural details and other city fabric, all the moments captured from everyday life. Accompanying this are auditory fragments; from street sounds, voices and clips of music, along with the voice-over narration

that conveys a first person experiential narrative of encounters with people and places. Together, these elements form an audio-visual cacophony of the city. Through these elements, *Lost Book Found* portrays a particular temporality in the city. Much has been said about the necessity of thinking about space and time together in considering place. Doreen Massey provides many astute and relevant articulations of this. She has noted that “space is not static, nor time spaceless” and that neither can be conceptualized without the other.¹⁰ They are then mutually connected, and to consider place and space in the essay film is necessarily to also think of the temporality that emerges. In *Lost Book Found* it is the transience and ephemeral nature of city life, change and disappearance and recent memory that characterises city life. The visual focus on closing down stores and their sale signs (figure 2.4), the ghostly faded painted advertising signs on building sides, the street vendors, passing pedestrians, discarded objects and litter, all suggest the passage of time materially, a focus on the here and now where nothing appears rooted or solid, communicating the fleeting city.

Yi-Fu Tuan has given thought to what it means to feel a place, through a process that “is made up of experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic, repeated day after day and over the span of years. It is a unique blend of sights, sounds and smells, a unique harmony of natural and artificial rhythms”.¹¹ *Lost Book Found* reflects this fleeting experience of space. The fact that the narrator alternates between narrating the present and returning to the recent past of his own biography further allows for a revealing of the shallow passage of time. From the man who lends the narrator the lost book, to the narrator's memories of his arrival in the city and his past jobs, his leaving and returning, the passage of time is both a visual presence of the material city and also a part of the narrative. In one sequence, the narrator returns to the city after an absence. Saturated colour images of the city, blurred, misty and shrouded by rain, of illuminated adverts, street lights and cars, scrolling stock market information on the side of a building, are all glimpsed from a slow moving vehicle, camera tilted upwards, catching the tops of high rise buildings. The narrator states that there are “whole areas I didn't recognize” and that “blocks and buildings had given way to new office towers”. A few shots later, he narrates, “I can't even remember what buildings used to be here a month or so ago”. The narrator has returned to the New York of the early 1990s, a city in the midst of rapid change and tides of gentrification; he does not see a familiar city but an alien place. The act of

looking at the city from the window of his car also implies a sense of estrangement. This flow, instability and rapid change in the city leave an unfamiliar and altered space.

Tuan has argued that it would be impossible to “develop any sense of place” if the world is seen as a constantly changing process and by discussing “place as a pause”, has thus considered place as an essentially static concept.¹² This assumes that places are somehow fixed or defined by an unchanging form. Massey on the other hand considers place as the product of social relations emerging through “active material practices”¹³ and space “as a moment in the intersection of configured social relations (rather than as an absolute dimension) means that it cannot be seen as static”¹⁴ Place thought about in this way is continually being made, always becoming, a fluid concept. It is with this image in mind that place emerges in *Lost Book Found* as the film articulates a sense of place forged through a city in constant renewal and movement, always flowing in time, revealing itself moment to moment through social relations. Temporality in *Lost Book Found* is not that of deep historical time or of past narratives rooted in space, or re-emerging buried strata, but a shallow temporality, one concerned with the passing of daily life, and the recent past, the just disappeared. Towards the end of the film, the narrator asks, “What is the city made of?” He follows this with the passage: “Sometimes it seems that the city is the rubble of stories and memories, layers and layers, and that objects, all of the remnants of things are like the city’s skin”. This illuminating conceptualisation of the city encapsulates the approach to place taken in *Lost Book Found*. The film collates stories and layers, fragments and tangents into a kaleidoscopic representation of place.

The present of the landscape in *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories*

Both *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories* share Cohen’s concern with capturing life at street level, of essaying place from the perspective of the unfolding present and the rhythms of everyday life, what I called a shallow temporality. I referred to Tim Ingold who suggests that place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there and to its specific ambience.¹⁵ Similarly, I made reference to Yi-Fu Tuan, who considers how developing a sense of place is a process made up of repeated experiences, where places are a blend of sight, sound, smell and

natural and artificial rhythms.¹⁶ Places then, as well as being defined by their histories, are also defined by their daily rhythms and the fragments of the everyday, by the fabric of the street, the light, sound and atmosphere. My crisscrossing of Romney Marsh by car and on foot with a film camera for the production of *The Fifth Continent* became a visual gathering of place and landscape and an exercise in observation and a documentation of place in the present. My approach to the present and contemporary spaces overlaps with Cohen's in aesthetic and approach. I used a hand-held camera, analogue film and a montage of short shots to capture space. In *The Fifth Continent*, I included many images of people in place, gathered intuitively and dictated by events unfolding around the camera. In Rye, I captured short observational shots of people as they walked the streets, caught unaware by my camera; a trumpet player, a group of motorbikes, a man drawing in a churchyard. These attempt to capture something of the unfolding of the contemporary everyday life of place through observation and documentation. I also recorded the present encounter by including a description of particular events within the voice-over, such as the meeting with a woman in the ossuary and her comments that she was "happy that the dead had a chance to be part of life again", or an observation that "migratory birds stop at the lakes on their journey", narrated over landscape images of a nature reserve at Rye Bay. Similarly, over nighttime images of the power station and houses at Dungeness, the voice-over narrates that "deep into the night people line the beach, fishing into the moonlit ocean", an observation I made of people fishing whilst filming there at night.

My capturing of the present of place became more comprehensive in *Island Stories*, through a more intensive gathering of images shot during the encounter and through a focus on more heavily urbanized cityscapes. The fifth section of *Island Stories* takes the experience of the city as its focus. This section largely addresses the present and seeks to consider the process of filming, navigating the city and the act of looking in communicating an emotional, psychological and perceptive response to the encounter rooted in the everyday spaces of the city. Fragmented views of three cities, Manchester, Birmingham and London unfold. Through montage, the cities are merged, cutting from one city to another, creating a composite image of urban space. Much of the footage is hand-held and made up of shots of short duration. They tend towards brief moments of city life, of people on city streets, of glimpses of the urban fabric. In one section, images of Manchester at night unfold. A ghostly image of a

clock tower and carved statues on the side of the building, captured from the street below, is followed by a short shot of a man nodding at passersby, seen from a distance and obscured by a fence in the foreground, followed by a grouping of people similarly framed as they talk and laugh. Then images unfold of two men carrying out building work behind a closed shutter (figure 2.5), a brightly lit street and surrounding buildings, a shaky pan across a large building then a man on a running machine seen at a distance through an elevated window. The sound of a saxophone echoes across these images, audio caught on the street as a busker plays. For me, this was an exercise in capturing the particular atmosphere of urban space at night, a mood or feeling as time unfolds within the place.

Within this section, images pile up to reveal places and their daily rhythms: a shaky image of a train, in slow motion as it passes the camera in the dark, a statue of Queen Victoria as a man carrying his child on his shoulders moves into frame and passes by, the unfinished demolition of the Birmingham library building as its last remnants stand, a glimpse with the camera facing downwards of a sunlit pavement as feet pass along it and shadows move across the floor (figure 2.6), and then a fade to a shot looking upwards towards high rise buildings. Shortly afterwards, a rapid montage of street images and people unfolds. A lunchtime rush of workers move along a street away from the camera as a man looks up directly into it. Images of people in suits pass by buildings filmed from across the street; statues jostle with building sites and old and new architecture across all three cities. A man with luggage waits for a taxi, buses go by and a busy bridge in London gives way to netting covering a building blowing gently in the wind. These images all work together in this sequence to build up a sense of the passing present in the city, the routine and rhythms of streets and daily life unfolding, as well as attempting to capture atmosphere, mood and feeling and communicate a sense of place governed by frenetic and quiet moments of city life.

I also recorded more detailed description of unfolding events as I travelled in notebooks that acted as a diary. These then provided the material from which to write the present encounter into the narration, such as the narration of events at the Jack in the Green festival in Hastings, where across images of the festivities, the voiceover narrates, “on a stage overlooking the sea, the Jack is stripped of his foliage”. Elsewhere, over images of rocks and the sea at Lizard Point, the narration states how “the foghorn rang out ceaselessly at Lizard Point, echoing over the rocky peninsula”,

and over images shot across the water from Lindisfarne the words, “I watched people retreat from the coming tide”. In these cases, the verbal narrates the visual, cementing the present within the film. Within the narration, there are also moments telling of contemporary events that form a backdrop to the journeys. For example, the narrator states that, “it had been one week since the United Kingdom voted in the referendum to leave the European Union”, accompanied by an image of a Vote Leave sign and followed by an image of the English Channel seen from the cliffs in Dover, in this way layering the present political situation over images of the landscape and setting very specific coordinates in time. Alongside the film images, the narration serves to further contextualize the present moment and to emphasize an encounter with place as it is now.

Time, place and the history of the city in Jem Cohen’s *Amber City*

Jem Cohen’s film *Amber City* will help to expand this investigation into the essayistic representation of city space through a different temporal concern, that of depth and the history of place. *Amber City* is a film portrait of an unnamed city and is constructed from a vast variety of images, from ambient observational footage of street scenes, to the material cityscape and architecture and static portraits of the residents of the city. A voice-over spoken by a female narrator, weaves together historical narratives, fleeting observations, myth, fabrication and information of a more factual nature. Similarly to *Lost Book Found*, the image of the city that emerges in *Amber City* is not a city of well-known and recognisable vistas or landmarks, but the city of fleeting ambient moments, street corners, suburbs, of crumbling architecture, untold stories and moments of everyday life. The city is Pisa, and what is most notable in its absence is the famous leaning tower. The narrator does not engage with the street in quite as direct a way as in *Lost Book Found*, but is rather an observer of it. The cinematography mirrors this observational position; it is more composed, considered and stationary than *Lost Book Found*. There are fewer shots and less cutting and the camera moves less, with the exception of some moments that do thrust the viewer back into the lived space of the city, with rhythmic cutting and fragmented views. The sheer volume of images, myriad objects, locations and architecture, the many portraits of people and a wealth and diversity of narratives

about the city, its histories, its present and its inhabitants, all converge and accumulate in a multifaceted rendering of place.

An accumulation of temporal layers in *Amber City* creates a dense and multilayered image of place. The difference between the temporal approaches of the two films can be considered partly by the difference in their spaces. As Michel De Certeau has considered, “Unlike Rome, New York has never learned the art of growing old, by playing on all its pasts. Its present invents itself, from hour to hour, in the act of throwing away its previous accomplishments and challenging the future”.¹⁷ Accordingly, there is perhaps something of Pisa that invites a historical reading of its spaces, whereas New York, as seen in *Lost Book Found*, unfolds moment to moment in a city that is defined much more by the present, by its constant change and renewal than by its contained pasts.¹⁸ Whereas *Lost Book Found* was mostly concerned with the ephemeral nature of city life and what I called a shallow temporality, *Amber City* is much more concerned with the past, and so a deep temporality emerges in the film.

This deep temporality is achieved through two distinct, but intertwined methods in *Amber City*. Firstly, through a vast accumulation of images of the material city, its architecture and objects from different historical periods, the past is made materially present. Alongside this physical manifestation of time, the voice-over narrates fragments of the city’s stories. Massey has noted how the past is present in place in a variety of ways. It can be present materially through aging architecture as a reminder of times past, or through resonance, such as place names or myths for example, and lastly through the “unembodied memories of people and in the conscious and unconscious constructions of the histories of that place”, in other words, through memory and past narratives.¹⁹ Accordingly, in *Amber City*, the past is present in a way that reflects these different articulations.

The wealth of objects and architecture display the physicality of time within city space and a deep historical time is made evident in the visual disparity between many different time periods. These material displays of time can be seen in aging architecture, such as the recurring images of the weathered neoclassical facades along the Arno river (figure 2.7) and the age marked textures of walls and surfaces in the city streets, in the large ornate doorways, church towers and arch covered walkways, in the interiors of churches and other old crumbling buildings and in the sculptures and statues seen throughout the city. Further, images of objects such as

paintings, the human cadavers in the laboratory (figure 2.8), the religious artifacts and relics, books in the library and scientific equipment, are all objects chosen for preservation within the city's institutions, which act as memory banks or repositories for the material past. Photographs in the film, such as those a TV repair man shows to the camera (figure 2.9), images from the Second World War, and photographs on grave stones of the dead, are further material remnants of the past, images as memories of earlier inhabitants of the city. In *Amber City*, these objects and spaces are expressions and containers of time, reflecting Michael Sheringham's notion of the city as an archive to be read and his vision of a city as an archive working through "the interplay of a variety of archival strata".²⁰ Thus, the city's very fabric is imbued with the accretion of its pasts. As it emerges from Cohen's film, this essayistic representation of Pisa, like Calvino's city of Zaira, reveals that places can be seen as much vertically, through time, as horizontally, across their spaces.

Like the many images of the physical city in the film, the voice-over narrative is also a collage of many time periods and in this way, the past of the city resonates with histories and memories, reflecting Massey's descriptions of reverberating histories of place.²¹ Histories told by the narrator range from an "American writer passing through in the last century", a brief reference to a Roman aqueduct and a subtle narrative that seems to be that of Galileo and his inquisition in the 1600's. Later, towards the end of the film, fragments of historical narratives begin to breathlessly pile up, like the numerous images of city space and objects. The narrator tells of a sea battle ending in 1284, where 10,000 men died or were captured, of the student unrest of 1968, and "the time of the plague" when 500 people died each day during the twelfth century. Shortly after, the voice-over states, "it was the greatest series of medieval murals in the world. Last night many of them were destroyed by allied bombing". This was of course the Second World War and this layers two time periods; medieval and twentieth century events are tied together with later events literally obliterating relics of time. Within this sequence, it is almost as if too much history begins to overwhelm the present and the place struggles to contain all of its pasts. The lack of precise details and linear histories, a distorted chronology, results in a confusion of time and space.

Historical spaces and narratives are crucial to the image of place that emerges in *Amber City*. However, rather than merely a collage of historical periods, the city appears here as one in which these histories merge and converge in the present where

place unfolds and continues its story, and like *Lost Book Found*, daily life and ambient moments of the present are central to the city and here intertwine with the pasts of place. The present or recent past is also evident in graffiti on city walls, in building demolitions in progress and through many extended observations of everyday life passing on the streets; the rhythms of daily life, observations of life at the university, and in interior dwellings and lived domestic spaces, in the bustling market place and in the illuminated night time streets during a city festival. The present day spaces are also narrated. Stories of various inhabitants are told; that of “the TV repair man” and his bird for example and “the two girls who would one day go to the university”, who pass through the frame to the left in front of an old building. Then there is the story of “Bee” we hear over images of the market place who “sat and watched and sold things that people needed”.

One way of thinking through the construction of city space in *Amber City* is as an articulation of what Massey calls the “spatio-temporal event” of place. She states that space is the “simultaneity of stories so far” and that “places are collections of these stories”. This collection of stories in space accounts for the specificity of place but where place is more temporal than the notion of “space as a collage of historical periods”.²² In *Amber City*, these multitudes of histories are still there in the present of place, materially, through resonance and through narrative. The convergence of times within the present can be seen visually in a sequence in which a night time image of train tracks, illuminated by electric lights, a concrete tower next to the track shows small shadows of figures stretched in a line across it (figure 2.10). This image is mirrored by a row of four medieval statues lined against a blank wall (figure 2.11). Then a shot of two old statues is juxtaposed with a following shot of a contemporary portrait of a woman. This layers past and present together in the material city and this creates a kind of reverberation or repetition of different social and cultural moments in the city.

Cohen uses these many archival objects and spaces as memory traces or as marker points for historical time as preserved from the past of the city, thus documenting the converging trajectories of time which intersect and continue in the present, whilst interspersing narratives from different eras into the film. The meaning of the film’s name here resonates, that of a city as amber, a fossil preserved in time. But the placing of these material threads of historic time alongside the flow and rhythms of daily life suggest rather a permeable fossil, one not so much solidly set in

time, but flowing and evolving, continuing this history. So perhaps through the collage of these many material archives within the film, in conjunction with the many layers of time present within the historical narratives and contemporary observations we are drawing closer to a complex reality of place, one constructed, like the film itself, through its many histories emerging in the present.

Like *Amber City*, my own approach to space in *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories* was concerned with capturing the accretion of the past through archival spaces and the material landscape as container of the past and as historical narratives that reverberate throughout spaces. In a specifically urban context, like *Amber City*, as well as capturing the present, everyday of the city, my practice, particularly in a section of *Island Stories*, seeks out the historical and the past narratives of place as temporal layers. Part Five of *Island Stories* begins with archival film of Louis Le Prince's *Traffic Crossing Leeds Bridge* and its narrative context, framing a section on urban space within this historical moment in the landscape and the birth of the cinematic city. A shot at the beginning of the section captures Leeds Bridge, the site where Louis Le Princes' shot his film. A static shot of long duration looking over the bridge into the city watches traffic and pedestrians cross the bridge, mirroring Le Prince's view, creating a juxtaposition of now and then, from 1888 to 2016 (figure 2.12). The voice-over narrates biographical information about Le Prince and his films, the technology he used and his disappearance, the historical narrative overlaid onto the contemporary image of the bridge. The image then cuts to show a blue plaque commemorating Le Prince, marking the site and its resonance. Alongside this historical marker, the bridge is also the original bridge and many of the buildings remain from 1888, so the images then show time in the material city.

The glimpses and views of the city that follow in the montage of urban space, alongside new buildings and modern architecture, often show old buildings, statues and other objects from the material past of the city. The old Midland Railway building and the factories and industrial buildings in Birmingham show the past layers of the city visible within its present spaces. Aged statues, church interiors, crumbling facades and images of different architectural styles across different eras accumulate and different times jostle with one another visually across these different cities. In the narration, many histories are touched upon alongside the images. An image of a statue of Abraham Lincoln in Manchester is accompanied by the narration

telling how the statue was erected as a gesture of solidarity to Manchester textile workers. The narrative touches upon the preserved relic of a saint in a London church, the London stone, the Roman city marker preserved under a city street and the Pen Museum in Birmingham and the narrative of manufacturing in the nineteenth century. These images and narratives serve to depict city space in the film as an amalgamation of layers of time, a continuous site of temporal residue seen in its buildings and heard through narratives. This pattern is repeated throughout the film in both urban and other landscape settings.

The American landscape and temporality in Lee Ann Schmitt's *California Company Town* and James Benning's *Four Corners*

Amber City and *Lost Book Found* are essay films that approach place specifically through the prism of urban spaces. Both *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories* are concerned with space at the broader level, as city, countryside, suburb or other landscape. Lee Ann Schmitt's *California Company Town* and James Benning's *Four Corners* will also help to move this investigation away from the city to consider the image of place that emerges through a response to different landscapes. *California Company Town* and *Four Corners* share much in approach, both taking the American landscape as subject through varied topographies, from the desert to urban neighborhoods or suburbs. They are both keenly engaged with how socio-political, economic, racial and historical forces shape and inscribe themselves within the landscape over time and how these pasts become manifest in the present of place. In this way, they connect the deep time of places with the present landscape. Aesthetically, the films overlap in their use of static shots, long takes and narration of histories. Through the interplay of text and image, landscapes and narrative, a dense and complex image of place emerges in the films. The landscapes in *California Company Town* and *Four Corners* occasionally appear as geological, natural topographies, but human presence past and present is always visible in some way. Therefore, these are very much human landscapes and as such they tell human stories. However, the city as seen through Cohen's lens, the city centre, with its street life and density of architecture, is largely absent from these films.

California Company Town is concerned with the corporate ownership and exploitation of the landscape and people across the state of California, charting the

effects of industrialisation on landscapes and towns, some still heavily marked by these industries, others now largely abandoned or half derelict. The film is divided into chapters, each titled with the name of a town. Each section contains a series of colour images from that location. The images tend towards long takes and stationary shots, a contrast to the process of filming the city streets in Cohen's films, with their fragmented and distorted views and vast montage of shots. The camera here is more meditative and studies landscape and space through a handful of shots. Camerawork ranges from wide landscape shots to close-up images of objects in buildings, interiors or close-ups of people at an event. The camera gently infiltrates the space, exploratory, but less visceral, bodily, and free flowing than Cohen's. Like Cohen's, the camera is mostly hand-held, emphasizing the subjectivity of the film.

Time is central to the representation of place in *California Company Town*. Unlike *Amber City*, where various city images are accompanied by loose historical narratives, the histories of places in *California Company Town* are very specific to each location. Spoken narratives of the place unfold in parallel and synchronous alignment. The narration of histories along with images in which landscapes bear traces of the past and the additional use of archival material captures places and their pasts. Time in the film is not the shallow time of *Lost Book Found*, nor does it quite encompass the historical depth of *Amber City*. Rather, it is through a broadly modern history, from the nineteenth century up to the present day, that the temporality of place emerges. The images within each chapter show the landscapes and buildings, objects and people present within the space. The voice-over tells the histories and narratives of these spaces, adding depth and context to the images. Time and place are intertwined in the film through the interplay of text and image. In the chapter "Eagle Mountain, CA", the images show an abandoned town; pink and yellow houses show the effects of time with peeling paint and broken windows, rusty metal fences, weeds growing along a cracking road (figure 2.13). No people populate the images, only remnants of past lives; a choice of curtains; hopscotch drawn on a pavement. These images show a place in ruins and abandoned, the passage of time evident within its fabric. As Tuan evocatively suggests, "objects anchor time",²³ and accordingly the spaces and architecture of Eagle Mountain contain time within them; they make the past and the passage of time visible, whilst also giving physical form to historical narrative.

The voice-over tells the narrative of the town and closes the gap between what happened and what is now physically inscribed in the landscape. The mine closed down and without work everyone left for good. The voice-over then leaps further back in time telling the story of the founding of the town, which was “Henry Kaiser’s vision of an ideal place”. The narrative then moves forward in time again to reveal its fate, Kaiser abandoning the town in 1984 and more recently the town being earmarked as a landfill site. Kaiser’s vision of an ideal place is directly opposed by the ruinous images of the present and revealing shifting economic and social forces playing out within the landscape. It is this interplay of past and present, between contemporary landscape and its past narratives through which place is articulated and explored in the film. Place then reveals its structure as the sum of its pasts. As Massey has explained, “the presentness of the horizontality of space is a product of a multitude of histories whose resonances are still there”.²⁴ As *California Company Town* illustrates, histories merge and converge within the present of place, as trajectories of time.

Unlike Cohen’s films, *California Company Town* frequently uses archival footage and photographs. There is a historical function to the archival images; they serve to make the past present again, or as Jaimie Baron puts it, to “bridge the distance between past and present”.²⁵ But they also serve another active, critical function. Paul Arthur has considered the frequent “deployment of found footage and collage” in the essay film, and notes how there is often a “juxtaposition of archival images and present tense commentary” at play.²⁶ He further suggests that this often entails “collision or dialectical critique” and that essay films “gnaw at the truth value, cultural contexts or interpretative possibilities” of the images.²⁷ *California Company Town* uses archival images as critical tools, through re-appropriation shifting their meaning and that of the landscapes and historical narratives throughout the film, placing archival images to work within this complex web of image and text, creating further space for engagement and a visual and verbal interplay between the different elements at play.

The archival images are used to alter, question and undermine history as well as providing a way to bring the past visually into the present. Under the place heading “Manzanar, CA”, a series of landscape images unfold: a mountainous backdrop and a road in the middle distance where cars pass to the left of screen. To the right of frame, what looks like a watchtower with desert in the foreground. This

gives way to a similarly framed image, mountains, desert and trees. To the right, two low-rise, long buildings disappear out of frame. The visible buildings, before any specific narrative context is given, are empty and are reminiscent of barracks or prison camp buildings. The voice-over then begins, stating that an internment camp was built here in an abandoned apple orchard. “Many of the buildings here are gone”, we hear on the narration, torn down or given to locals to use as barns or houses. This section ends with an archival film clip; a US government made film on the relocation of Japanese US citizens, taken in the camps during World War Two (figure 2.14). This archival material reveals a staged version of the daily life of internees revealing a false image of the camps. Prisoners perform in a stage show, a feel-good cabaret with dancing, comedic acts and clapping audiences. A sign in one image reads “Americanification Classes” and attentive and enthusiastic Japanese students of these classes are shown, children are given milk and prisoners roam freely. A panning shot across the desert landscape reveals multiple prison buildings. In this way, like the return of the past in the film through the juxtaposing of landscapes and archival materials, in the place itself, dormant memories are being awakened and preserved. The employment of archival images as a device for accessing the past creates a multi-textual rendering of place. As images and narrative accumulate as layers, stories reverberate within the spaces of the film. So too does the film material itself; a weaving of materials to create meaning, drawing links and parallels between different elements in dialogue with one another.

Like *California Company Town*, James Benning’s *Four Corners* narrates histories tied to landscapes. His focus spans millennia, creating an even deeper sense of the temporal landscape. The title of Benning’s film *Four Corners* refers geographically to the Four Corners region of the United States, the area around the meeting of the boundary lines of four states, Arizona, Utah, Colorado and New Mexico, state boundaries that form a geometric cross at the center and a historically contested area. In addition to this area, *Four Corners* uses the director’s birthplace, Milwaukee, in Wisconsin, as a location. The film is made up of four sections, each of which contains a painting accompanied by a narration of a specific landscape, then a set of images that follows, depicting that landscape. Landscapes unfold visually through only thirteen shots, each of a long duration. The landscapes are largely unpeopled. The camera is static, images intensified through long duration. So unlike the camera navigating the enclosed spaces of a city as in Cohen’s films, it is here

placed within a landscape that stretches out before it. Where *Lost Book Found* and *Amber City* present a meandering, fragmented, drifting sequence of images and stories from the city, like *California Company Town* there is a precision in the selection of stories and landscape images in *Four Corners* and an orderly structure of space and time.

It is a deep temporality that emerges in Benning's film, in a grand sweep of time from the geological formation of the landscape through moments in human history, up to the present day. In the first cycle of the film, the narration tells the biography of Richard Wetherill, the first white man to discover and excavate the ancient cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde amongst other Native American sites. The narrative looks at the history of indigenous peoples, of the Spanish colonists, American expansion west and the devastation of the native population. This is told with precise dates and close attention to historical details and locations and creates a fragmented timeline of the landscape. As Matthew Potteiger and Jamie Purinton state, "by selecting certain events from the flow of time linking them to make intelligible sequences, or plotting an end in relation to a beginning, narratives shape the sense of time".²⁸ Accordingly, *Four Corners* uses stories of the early Pueblo peoples, the Navajo and the Spanish settlers, including Weatherill's death at the hands of Navajo Chiishchilí Biye, in order to allow place to emerge through narratives that establish the depth of time rooted in the landscape. Visually, the following images trace these histories within the landscape. As Fred Inglis states, landscape "is the most solid appearance in which a history can declare itself",²⁹ and it is within landscape that the past is made material, where history takes shape as physical residue in *Four Corners*.

The images in *Four Corners* reveal the landscapes to which the historical narratives belong. A static shot of a ruin, perched on a hill top in centre frame, blue sky and birdsong (figure 2.15), gives way to a close up of a brick wall, covering two thirds of the frame, the vast landscape spreading out beyond it. Through association, the viewer aligns these ruins of the Pueblo with those described in the narration. Graffiti carved into the wall reads 'A G Grommer, 1899', another human marker. This image then reveals both the architectural remnant of an ancient Indian culture as well as later graffiti etched by someone around the same time as Wetherill, and further, the epic span of time represented by the geological history of the landscape. Another shot reveals the crooked gravestone of Richard Wetherill. Both materially in

the landscape, and through the reverberation of the narratives preceding the images, the past is there within the spaces of the present.

Narrated by Benning, one section of the film takes the viewer from the Four Corners region to Milwaukee and adds a personal biographical past into the wider context of history. The narrative of Milwaukee is wide reaching in scope and the deep time of the landscape is portrayed through myriad narrative layers and tangents, both biographical and historical. The narration begins with “My father bought our house in the fall of 1943”; a line enables Benning to root himself within place amongst the other sweeping historical narratives. The narration makes a huge temporal leap, far into the past, giving a summary of the geological history of the region and the settlement by the Paleo-Indians, who “left behind effigy burial mounds shaped like lizards that can still be seen today”. Following this, the voice-over tells many other historical narratives, from the arrival of French fur traders in 1634 to the beginning of America and the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and to the loss of all Indian lands by 1848.

Benning returns again to personal biography, and addresses the shifting of the neighborhood from a German to an African-American one, now the centre of the worst poverty in Milwaukee. Again, he slips back in time, narrating how in 1910 a socialist mayor, Emil Seidel, was elected to office. Benning brings himself back into history with an account of the events of 1967 when the black community fought for civil rights, holding rallies and marches and he was one of a handful of white people who joined the demonstration. Benning then returns to the present day, stating how the “blood is being drained from my old neighborhood’s soul”. This dense narrative spans multiple times and histories and traces politics and socio-economic and racial turmoil along with personal biography attached to a place shaped by historical narratives and ranges from the earlier geological formation of the landscape through to the various human stories attached to the land over time.

The images that follow create a different effect to those of the native dwellings and landscapes at Mesa Verde in the first part of the film. Whilst the narration gives a deep history, the images show mostly the very recent past, distinctly focusing on the present. The images show industrial scenes, abandoned or run down houses and streets in an inner city neighborhood in Milwaukee. One shot, an image taken from above, shows an ageing industrial complex, dilapidated and strewn with waste and discarded objects. Another shows a row of houses along a

roadside. The prominent house in the foreground shows weathered boards, graffiti and shuttered windows (figure 2.16). These images reveal poverty, neglect and a declining industrial presence, a physical manifestation of social and economic deprivation. These images do not reveal markers of any histories or evidence of deep time, but rather, how the forces of history have shaped the present.

Temporal landscapes in *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories*

Throughout the development of both the theoretical and practical components of this thesis, temporality emerged as central to the structures and meanings of places and thus as fundamental to the essayistic representation of place. I outlined in Chapter One how I began taking a temporal approach to place in *The Fifth Continent* influenced by, and in turn shaping, the theoretical approach that was emerging. I expanded upon this through an initial discussion of an approach to place and time in *Island Stories*. Through the encounter with Romney Marsh for the production of *The Fifth Continent*, searching for images and stories, the temporality of the landscape came to the fore as perhaps the defining force in my experience of the place and its subsequent representation. I encountered a landscape that physically contained its pasts, spanning a breadth of time, each layer coexisting within space in the present. These physical markers of time, from the architecture of different periods to the landscape itself formed both by human hands and by nature over time are visible and to varying extents remain in the present landscape. This insight gleaned from being physically in the place, through the encounter, was mirrored by simultaneous theoretical readings into the temporality of places. This relationship between place and time became the central thread for the film. Further historical depth and past narratives emerged through detailed research into Romney Marsh and the places I had filmed.

The Fifth Continent excavates a multitude of historical layers and collates fragments of these narratives together into a whole. Considering one specific thematic idea, that of Romney Marsh as a border and frontier over time, and as a site of defence during wartime, there is a trajectory that runs through its history and has many manifestations. In one section of the film, the narration says, “alongside church spires and transmission towers stand the remains of the architecture of military defence, spreading through time from the Roman ruin”, the Roman castle ruin that

appeared shortly before this passage in the film. Following this sentence, a number of images show nineteenth century forts, Martello towers (figure 2.17), and the Royal Military Canal, all built during the Napoleonic Wars. There are post-First World War aircraft detecting sound mirrors (figure 2.18) and various other Second World War architectural remains. These landscapes and buildings appear largely in chronological order in the film, a timeline of historical defence and war. The images reveal these sites in their present form, as ruins, or as buildings showing the markings of time, the decay of age. Fragments of these many historical layers remain and coexist in the landscape as temporal markers. The narration accompanies these images, adding narrative depth, layering the landscape with story context.

There are many other histories drawn on, from narratives of global connectivity, import and export, smugglers, the story of the sea and the changing coastline over time. These histories are filmed as landscape images, their stories narrated and image and text are assembled into a spatial palimpsest of overlapping and multilayered histories, where place constitutes the sum of its pasts. This building up of multiple histories within the film is one of the key ways by which place is approached in essayistic terms in *The Fifth Continent*. Places can be thought of as complex and densely multilayered constructs made up of accumulating sediments of time. As I have established, Massey sees places as temporal and not just spatial, constructed out of articulations of social relations over time.³⁰ This emphasizes the way in which places contain their pasts, as layer upon layer built up gradually over time. Histories contribute to the specificity of place and *The Fifth Continent* reflects on these ideas in a filmic response to Romney Marsh.

The physical residue of time within place serves an archival function. The camera captures the present place, but one that is perpetually changing, and so also captures its visible layers of time. Tuan's notion of "place as time made visible"³¹ resonates here, as does Sheringham's consideration of the city as archive, an idea I would extend beyond the solely urban to the concept of place more generally. This foregrounds the material, physical remnants of history within place as markers of its pasts. Within *The Fifth Continent*, the images of ruined castles, military sites, sea walls, geological formations, architecture from various time periods, street names and signposts are all physical traces of the pasts of Romney Marsh. A multitude of histories then, are still there and converge in the present of place, both materially and through resonance. An engagement with the temporality of place and landscape

continued in *Island Stories* as a defining aspect in my approach to place and the formation of narrative in the film. The film is fundamentally concerned with the history of place. Through the act of travel and the spatial encounter with temporal landscapes within which history is embedded and through a research process into places that often diverged along historical paths, the film layers times within place. The essaying of place becomes a vertical as well as horizontal essaying, moving both across space and vertically, into temporal layers.

Places contain their pasts as physical manifestations of time, markers of history. I referred previously to Sheringham in considering the city as an archive to be read, where the vision of a city as an archive works through “the interplay of a variety of archival strata”.³² This suggests the city’s very fabric is imbued with the accretion of its pasts. Similarly, Les Roberts has suggested that places constitute their own archive, that “landscapes bear the archaeological traces of the recent past in any number of ways” and can be read for signs and narratives that convey the past of the city.³³ These conceptions of archival space apply to city and landscape alike, only perhaps in the city the accumulation of layers is more densely structured, although not necessarily more deeply set in time. Travelling for the production of *Island Stories*, traversing the landscape and exploring city space, the archival nature of places shifted from a theoretical perspective to a practical one. Sites visited, governed by preliminary spatial research or encountered through the route of the journeys contained these histories as material archives and these became images of time within place. From the architecture of mine ruins to the remnants of Hallsands village on the cliff edge, from the collision of architecture from many times in Birmingham and London to the fort remains on the cliffs at Dover, the film is dense with these images of the landscape where the past times of place are visible and material, acting as markers of the past and of temporal narratives. This concept extends to the archiving of space within places themselves, as museums, the Pen Museum or the mineshaft open to tourists for example. Through the interplay between these physical spaces and the narratives, the many layers of time are evident in the film. Spoken narratives expand the context of locations and add historical depth. Histories range across the film from deep geological time through ancient histories to the more recent past, creating a vast sweep of spatial temporalities across the country, many layers of time overlaid and intertwining.

In Part One of *Island Stories*, disparate locations are captured through a montage that jumps from place to place, across distance, where narratives for each place also move through different times. Images of the Hastings Jack in the Green festival show the parade pass by the camera whilst the narration tells a brief history of Mayday, from the Celts to the 1980s. So this present event is rooted in the past and its evolution told. Images of the ruins of Witley Court unfold in long shot and in mid shots, showing architectural details and people exploring the ruins (figure 2.19). The narration, a passage from the filmmaker's notebook, tells the history attached to the building, its ownership by industrialists, royal visitors and a redesign by John Nash in the nineteenth century, later "sold to a carpet manufacturer" and once "put up for sale on eBay". The essay voice offers temporal layers and narrative context to the images and the dialogic relationship between what is said and seen creates a temporal gap between past narratives and the present as ruins. Similarly, static shots of framed architecture in Milton Keynes are loaded with narrative context, the plans and intentions for the architectural spaces of the town. Similarly, in Part Four of the film, abandoned tropospheric dishes in a field are given a historical context through the narration of their previous use and the history of the RAF site. At Widdecomb in the Moor, images of the church interior and exterior are given narrative weight through the historical detail of the ball lightning story, an incident embedded within the space itself as painted plaques outlining the narrative. Images of a quarry, of the landscapes of Bodmin Moor and the remaining stones of Daniel Gumb's hilltop house are accompanied by Gumb's biographical details and other stories. In all these cases histories pile up, traversing many different times within location.

In Part Three of the film, Cornwall is captured through its landscapes and architecture, along with narrative histories and the spatial encounter told through the voice-over. The section begins with two landscape images, framed in long shot with a stationary camera, of Bodmin Moor and the Cheesewring granite tor, with tourists standing on the top. The narrator reads from the filmmaker's notebooks information about the geological formation of the land 300 million years ago. Images of prehistoric stone circles follow, the accompanying narration stating "homo sapiens have inhabited Cornwall since the lower Paleolithic period", before briefly outlining settlement and migration patterns across time. Images of mine ruins and chimney stacks follow (figure 2.20), the voice-over stating that "the history of Cornwall is tied closely to mining" and continues to tell the story of Cornish miners emigrating

around the world and the fate of the mines. Images of the waste product of the china clay industry and the once thriving port of Charlestown follow, accompanied by the narrative about the beginnings of china clay production in the area. Then, images of the biomes at the Eden Project continue the temporal trajectory from past to present. Histories stack up from here in this chapter: the lake at Dozmary Pool and the legend of Excalibur; images of a medieval castle ruin on a cliff top; the Jamaica Inn pub and its association with Daphne Du Maurier and Lizard Point and the sighting of the Spanish Armada in 1588, each accompanied by landscape images of the present location. The section ends with a passage about telecommunications and fibre optic networks. Images of a beach, the sea and a small fishing harbour are followed by a shot of the white painted cable hut on Porthcurno beach and signs related to the old telegraph wires. The narrator tells the story of telecommunications history at the site and the narrative moves across time from the first transmission from Porthcurno to Bombay, connecting Britain to its Empire in 1870, to the current use as a fibre optic landing point connecting the globe and of recent government surveillance. Archival maps here illustrate the past and present networks and show global connectivity from this localized point.

These sections of the film show how *Island Stories* assembles histories and landscapes across a grand sweep of time, creating a multilayered temporal effect in the film. Image and spoken text and by extension, place and narrative, are closely linked here; spatial narratives and landscape images illustrate one another through the direct relationship between what is said and seen, the simultaneity of narratives and place. Potteiger and Purinton consider how narratives are present within landscapes, where they “intersect with sites, accumulate as layers of history, organize sequences, and inhere in the very materials and processes of the landscape”.³⁴ It is this suggestion that the physical landscape contains and tells the historical stories of place that I sought to capture and utilize in my approach to place in *Island Stories*. Through the spatial encounters in *Island Stories* and through research into these spaces, narratives emerged, unlocking the temporal layers of places, the voice then pinning these narratives onto the images of landscape. As Massey states, place is more temporal than the notion of “space as a collage of historical periods”.³⁵ A multitude of histories of place are still there in the present, where they converge. Space then is not static but continuously becoming. In this way, Cornwall is represented through the specificity of its landscapes and its temporal threads, its

many histories told in the voice-over and seen through archival spaces with material markers of the past. But as well as these histories, the present is very much a part of the representation of Cornwall and across the other historical spaces of the film.

The first images of Cornwall are of largely unpeopled, symbolic landscapes marking different temporal points, exploiting the archival materiality of the spaces. The second half of the section contains images of daily life in the present, capturing a busy tourist landscape unfolding in the summer months. People take pictures at Lands End and images show fast food outlets, amusements and the obligatory red phone box; people walk around the plants and biomes at the Eden Project, taking photographs; they descend into old mine shafts on a guided tour of a now redundant tin mine. What emerges then is a place where the function of space has shifted, and the present landscape is a tourist landscape, visitors engaging with history, making a curious descent into mining history or visiting locations famous as attractions, Lands End as theme park, Eden as ecological utopia. Daily life is observed in Charlestown; a man cleans a boat, people talk alongside the old docks, people can be seen on the beaches at Sennen Cove and Porthcurno and two men talk next to fishing boats and fishing equipment. These images all capture the present landscape, the immediacy of place experienced through the encounter, observed and recorded. The spoken historical narratives and accompanying images juxtapose past with present.

Archival spatial images are also positioned alongside images of everyday life and the rhythms of place, emphasizing visually both the layers of time within locations and the continued time of the present. This representation of Cornwall is a spatial palimpsest, a composite image of place made up from its many pasts as well as its present, an approach that often collates a deep and shallow temporality throughout the film. The essay film then captures place in its temporal complexity. Tuan has described how “the past really existed. All that we are we owe to the past. The present also has merit; it is our experiential reality, the feeling point of existence”,³⁶ describing a dual experience of time within place. Following this thought, historical layers merge and converge in the present in *Island Stories*, capturing this dual temporality. The essayistic representation of place is one that necessarily engages with the temporality of place, with landscape narratives, memory and histories, capturing place as a palimpsest.

Drifting archival spaces

My use of archival images, internet images and various maps in *Island Stories* was a choice that would help my film move beyond the landscape images and narrative voice-over of Patrick Keiller's Robinson Trilogy or Chantal Akerman's *News From Home* for example, bringing in something more of Marker's *Sans Soleil* and Raban's *Thames Film*, an approach to place that is multi-textual and where archival images add narrative threads and temporal layers to the film. In Chris Petit's film *Content*, his essay on contemporary England via other global spaces, in pulling together many disparate fragments of landscape images, archival images, multiple times and places, I saw the essayistic potential of a drifting approach to space and subject, where psychogeography by motor car gives the idea of the flâneur an updated, fast paced encounter with space, capturing the twenty-first century experience of the landscape. His use of travel and journeying as a filmmaking and narrative device positions my own approach to *Island Stories* in orbit with Petit's film.

Content drifts through space in England, Europe and America without a concrete route. It is a complex multi-textual essay film structured as a fragmentary road trip through physical space combined with a mirrored journey through cyberspace and the digital realm. Through this dual movement, a third journey is enacted in the shape of a drift through time, through a non-linear, fragmentary history of the twentieth century, told through the convergence of personal memory, spatial narratives and archival imagery. Place is evoked visually through fleeting glimpses from a car window, numerous landscape images, and through the accumulation of many different forms of archival images. The movement in *Content* then, the idea of 'drift' rather than a journey per se, both due to its physical spatial movement and to the complex thought process that emanates from this spatial drift, may be thought of in terms of a psychogeographic *dérive*, defined by Debord as a "rapid passage through varied ambiances" by means of a spatial movement carried out with an "awareness of psychogeographical effects".³⁷

Content's endless car journeys along roads mirrored by an equally endless movement through a digital stream of images resonate with the definition provided by Debord. The film accumulates various motorcar *dérives* as film footage, that are recalled from a digital image bank alongside a vast array of other imagery. The montage of these fragmented journeys and geographical drifts constructs an endless

accumulation of multi-directional movements across varied terrain and thus intensifies the nature of the *dérive*. Petit outlines the effect of driving in the film on the voice-over, explaining that the journey is “carried along not by the constant motion and linear unfolding of the road, but by driving’s dreamlike state of mind, which takes me back to haunt old haunts”. These words are spoken over images, shot from the car window, of the Westway in London, the elevated dual carriageway section of the A40 trunk road running from Paddington to North Kensington (figure 2.21). As the voice-over refers to ‘old haunts’ taking the shape of both past memories and places revisited, the movement along the Westway is a form of drift or *dérive*, resulting in reverie experienced as a dreamlike flow through space and time. This establishes a key device in the film which returns in a sequence filmed along a highway with a camera mounted on the windscreen: as the road unfolds, Petit’s narration takes us back to his childhood and recalls “grown up silences” or “what wasn’t talked about in front of the children.” The road literally becomes a road into the past and into memory expressed through the essay voice, which unfolds through drifting movements.

Cohen’s films eschew the use of found archival imagery in the recall of the past in favour of filmed images of the encounter, as does my film *The Fifth Continent*. Like *California Company Town* and my own film *Island Stories*, *Content* frequently uses archival images including maps, old postcards, paintings, film clips, and photographs and exhibits a complex relationship to the archive. What complicates the status of these archival images and objects is that they all appear, despite original context, to be emanating from the same digital archive accessed through a scrolling digital interface, or from the Internet (figure 2.22). Jaimie Baron has argued that filmmakers are drawn to the “endless storehouses of digital documents that can easily be accessed and reused in infinite ways”.³⁸ Accordingly, *Content* engages with this proliferation of images, collating them into the fabric of the film. This multi-textual collage expands the parameters of the film, creating a wider web of connections, thus broadening the spatial and temporal fields where meaning can be created and history recalled.

Isabelle McNeill has argued that, “the vast interconnected space of contemporary media, film multimedia and the Internet doesn’t flatten time and space but creates inter-textual mnemonic spaces through which to think and view by surfing and navigating. Like the city flâneur moving through spaces, the subject

navigates media”.³⁹ Here the spatial and the digital are positioned in parallel to one another and McNeill considers the possibilities for engaging with this dual navigation of archive and space as a process with a potentially expansive effect on representation. This statement resonates well with *Content*, in which navigating the digital archive mirrors movement through physical space. Through car journeys along boundless roads and the empty landscapes of distribution and transportation, the film drifts around these physical spaces searching for history, memory and narrative whilst also searching the endless repository of the digital archive and online, virtual space. Through this dual digital and spatial navigation, *Content* pauses within the drift, arrives at particular images and places in which history and memory are anchored, and through the collision and alignment of these multiple elements conjures up these places and creates meaning.

One sequence shows how *Content* navigates a wealth of media and moves through multiple spaces to construct a complex web of place and time. This sequence begins with a YouTube video of the Auguste and Louis Lumière film *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon (Workers Leaving The Lumière Factory in Lyon, 1895)*, followed by a scroll through the digital image bank. Next, street scenes and images of present-day distribution warehouses are juxtaposed with *Workers Leaving The Lumière Factory in Lyon* and illustrate a shift from the bustling factory of a nineteenth century industrial economy to the hidden operations of a service and consumer economy. The narration establishes a link between the commercial landscapes of distribution warehouses to the Cold War landscapes of the defunct military facilities at Orfordness in Suffolk, where the filmmaker digresses along a personal recollection of growing up as a child of an army officer. The scenery changes to Poland where the film recounts the story of Hans Stosberg, who was employed to design plans to modernise the town of Auschwitz in 1941 after the Nazi invasion. The plans and maps of this project (figure 2.23) are then juxtaposed with film images of landscapes around present-day Auschwitz (figure 2.24), layering the past over the present of place through archival images and narrated histories. A link between the Second World War and the filmmaker's biography is further established through images of the Barbican Estate in London where the filmmaker lives, and where rubble from bomb damage was shipped to East Anglia to build runways for bomber fleets to take off to bomb German cities, including the city of Hanover where Stosberg was born, which is shown in the film in an old postcard. This is followed by

archival postcards and photographs, over which the narration recounts the story of the destruction of German cities during the Second World War. As it is revealed that Stosberg was also employed to rebuild Hanover after the war, another pre-war postcard of Hanover is juxtaposed to a present-day image on location of the runway in East Anglia. This sequence illustrates a complex web of associations which links places, moments in history and personal memory through disparate trails of thoughts using archival images and the internet to shape the film fabric, as well as locations and physical spaces to weave an intertwining network of place, memory and representation. The film bridges the gap between diverse subjects, disparate places and different times, between diverse archival images, and collates the global spatial drift through travelling to sites, whilst also pausing in the flow of archival images, generating meaning and recalling history and memory through constellations of images, temporal layers and spatial narratives.

Island Stories shares much with Petit's *Content*. I sought to capture complexity created through a kind of drift in the film, the result of fragmented journeys that disrupt any linearity to geographical unity. Like Petit, I travelled widely by car, a kind of psychogeographical motorcar drift throughout the country, encompassing many sites around England and a wide set of histories and coordinates to try and create a broader essay on place and a dense image of England. Less autobiographical and philosophical than *Content*, *Island Stories* rather aimed at delving into landscape histories and specific spatial narratives, dipping in and out of places and their pasts as I travelled, ranging from very brief insights to more detailed histories. I too use many archival sources in *Island Stories*, many of which are gleaned from the Internet, from Google Maps for example, or as archival video found on YouTube, such as Louis Le Prince's *Traffic Crossing Leeds Bridge* and the video from the surf club in Cornwall. Similarly, I placed these landscapes and images into orbit with one another, seeking links and weaving them into a web of place and time.

Conclusion: Essaying place and time

The essay films explored here, as well as my own practice, all engage with geography and temporality. Time in place is captured through encounters with everyday places and the unfolding present or through an engagement with specific

sites in which history is anchored, where the past is told through the narrated histories of spaces, evoked through its landscapes where time is materially present, or captured through the use of archival material. Temporally, *Lost Book Found* is fully immersed in the present experience of the city, captured through images of detritus, street life and city fabric and an experiential narrative of life in the city as it unfolds. The present cityscape holds the passing of everyday life within its spaces. Cohen captures this in fragments of images and narratives and amasses them within the essay, creating a kaleidoscopic image of place. Likewise, both *The Fifth Continent* and *Islands Stories* are concerned with the presentness of space, with everyday life and rhythms in the landscape captured whilst travelling and observing during the immediate encounter with places. I called this approach in the films a shallow time.

Cohen's *Amber City* builds on this capturing of everyday life by delving into the city and its histories, where past narratives merge and converge in the present to create a city of deep time. The past of the city is evoked through the archival nature of its material spaces and its loose narration of historical events and past layers of the city and its inhabitants. These histories are positioned within the present through Cohen's approach to the contemporary city. My own approach to urban space shares Cohen's interest in the city as container of its past times. Throughout *Island Stories*, this delving into the past whilst essaying place in the present became a key motivation in both urban and other landscape contexts.

California Company Town and *Four Corners* approach places through a focus on landscape and their narratives, which unfold in the film through a dialogic relationship between image and text. The temporality of the landscape is central as history and the present become intertwined and the pasts of place and the present landscape are enmeshed in a multilayered representation. Time in *California Company Town* and *Four Corners* is what I described as deep time in Cohen's *Amber City*. *Four Corners* in particular spans millennia of geological and human time, bringing these histories into the present as they shape contemporary place. Viewing landscape and temporality together was key to my approach in *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories*. Landscape and architectural images show the many times of place visually in the fabric of the landscape. Attention to historical details layers the past times of place onto these images. Together these accumulate to create essay films dense with the past and present of places. Finally, Petit's *Content* forges

a meandering path through place and time, a fragmented drift across different countries and through the digital real of the computer image and the archive, essaying place through a collision of coordinates, narrating the past and showing histories through archival images. I described how *Island Stories* in particular shares Petit's concern with essaying place through this drifting, fragmented approach to landscape and also in its use of archival imagery to work alongside filmed images and spoken narration in gathering fragments of time and place together.

Thinking of place and time together is central in an essayistic approach to the landscape. The essay film is an expansive form of representation, which through its multi-textuality, multilayeredness and potential for multivocality, provides the filmic conditions for these layers of time and space and manifold narratives to be collated and intertwined. The use of images, narrative voice-over and archival sources accumulate to create a particular essayistic representation of place. As Arthur notes, since "film operates simultaneously on multiple discursive levels- image, speech, titles, music- the literary essay's single determining voice is dispersed into cinema's multi-channel stew".⁴⁰ What the essay film allows for then, is an exploration of place across landscape surfaces, but also a vertical movement, down into the layers of places and their temporal depths. Massey sees places not as "points on a map" but as "integrations of space and time" which are "woven together out of ongoing stories".⁴¹ As places are inherently temporal, their time structures are ripe for exploration in the essay. Through accumulating temporal layers, the essay creates a dense filmic rendering of place, across topographical spaces and along temporal avenues, a representation built up from the many pasts of place, as well as the present. The encounter with place becomes an essayistic tool, a mode of excavating these layers.

¹ W.G. Sebald (2001), *Austerlitz*, translated by Anthea Bell (London: Penguin 2001), 359-360.

² Walter Benjamin, "A Berlin Chronicle", *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, translated by Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 25-26.

³ Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion Limited, 1976), 17.

⁴ Tim Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape", *World Archaeology*, Volume 25, No 2 (1993), 155.

⁵ SF Said, "Do You Recognise This Scene?", *The Telegraph*, February 01, 2001, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4721388/Do-you-recognise-this-scene.html>

⁶ Michael Sheringham, "Archiving", in *Restless Cities*, edited by Matthew Beaumont and Gregory Dart (London: Verso, 2010), 1.

⁷ Laura Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film* (London: Wallflower Press, 2009), 15.

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- ⁸ Walter Benjamin (1969), *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, translated by Harry Zohn (London; New York: Verso, 1997), 36.
- ⁹ Steve Pile, *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 4.
- ¹⁰ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 1994), 264.
- ¹¹ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 183.
- ¹² Tuan, *Space and Place*, 179.
- ¹³ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 118.
- ¹⁴ Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 265.
- ¹⁵ Tim Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape", 155.
- ¹⁶ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 183.
- ¹⁷ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven F Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 91.
- ¹⁸ Tuan (*Space and Place*, 191) also describes how the European landscape is "historical, a museum of architectural relics" in which many different architectural styles and periods coexist, a city being formed over time and amalgamated as it forms.
- ¹⁹ Doreen Massey, "Places and their Pasts", *History Workshop Journal*, Volume 39, Issue 1 (March, 1995), 186-187.
- ²⁰ Sheringham, "Archiving", 9.
- ²¹ Massey "Places and their Pasts", 186-187.
- ²² Massey, *For Space*, 130.
- ²³ Tuan, *Place and Space*, 187.
- ²⁴ Massey, *For Space*, 118.
- ²⁵ Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 127.
- ²⁶ Paul Arthur, "Essay Questions", *Film Comment* (January/ February 2003), 59.
- ²⁷ Arthur, "Essay Questions", 59.
- ²⁸ Matthew Potteiger and Jamie Purinton, *Landscape Narratives: Design Practices for Telling Stories* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1998), 4.
- ²⁹ Fred Inglis, "Nation and Community: A Landscape and its Morality", *The Sociological Review*, Volume 25, No 3 (1977), 489.
- ³⁰ Massey, *Places and their Pasts*, 186.
- ³¹ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 179.
- ³² Sheringham, "Archiving", 9.
- ³³ Les Roberts, "Navigating the Archive City: Digital Spatial Humanities and Archival Film Practice", *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, Volume 21, No 1 (2015), 102.
- ³⁴ Potteiger and Purinton, *Landscape Narratives*, iv.
- ³⁵ Ibid, 118.
- ³⁶ Tuan, *Space and Place*, 197.
- ³⁷ Guy Debord, "Les Lèvres Nues #9" (November 1956), reprinted in *Internationale Situationniste #2* (December 1958), translated by Ken Knabb, <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html>
- ³⁸ Baron, *The Archive Effect*, 142.
- ³⁹ Isabelle McNeill, *Memory and the Moving Image: French Film in the Digital Era* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 137.
- ⁴⁰ Arthur, "Essay Questions", 59.
- ⁴¹ Massey, *For Space*, 130-131.

CHAPTER THREE

The Fifth Continent and Island Stories: Place and Essayistic Film Practice

“You may see the country from one of the many transcontinental flights that pass right over it, or you may view it from an Amtrak window (no stops in the county), or you can get fired down the long smoking bore of the turnpike that shoots across it. You may also see it from the graveled roads, dirt lanes, pasture tracks, or vestiges of historic trails, or from its couple of hundred miles of canoe navigable waters, and you can travel it by leg and butt – that is, by walking and reading. There’s another means too: call it dreaming, where the less conscious mind can mouse about”.

William Least Heat Moon, *PrairyErth (a deep map)*¹

Chapter One examined an essaying of place from the perspective of practice as research and a process-oriented methodology. I explained how this approach offers a unique insider perspective, from the point of view of a practitioner carrying out research as well as a researcher making a film, an intertwined process of filmmaking and research. In Chapter Two, I explored the temporality of the landscape as a central concept to an essaying of place in film, using a number of case studies alongside a discussion of my practice. I established how places are temporal and how the essay as a multilayered form gathers these temporal layers as excavations of the landscape. I applied various theoretical concerns regarding space and place to an analysis of my films and the essay films of others to further shed light onto the nature of place and its resulting representation in the essay film. Through a process of interweaving, the theoretical analysis of essay films and the development and production of my own films worked together in exploring the concept of essaying place.

This chapter builds upon the content of the first two chapters whilst considering a broader set of parameters through which to understand an essaying of place. Through a close analysis of *Island Stories* and with reference to *The Fifth Continent*, this chapter looks in depth at the essay form and the representation of place as it emerges within my film practice. Like Chapter One, this chapter also takes a more subjective approach to its material whilst keeping the theoretical framework explored in Chapter Two as a solid structure from which to work. This chapter takes the form of sections and headed segments, each addressing specific practical and theoretical concerns. Approaching the material as discrete sections will allow for a

thorough discussion of the different facets of the films, of the essay form and of place and also reflects something more of the essay itself, a fragmentary and meandering thought process. In this way, it is possible to consider the many aspects at work within the film and its production, in the essay form and in the spatial content of the film, where attention to these elements work together as a whole in developing a complete analysis of an essayistic representation of place through a film practice.

The multiplicity of place and the essay film

During production of both *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories* and in my research into essay films concerned with place, I began to see in both the essay as form and place as subject an abundance, a densification, a piling up of fragments. Seeing place in this way is to see it as inexhaustible, an infinite layering of culture, economics, politics, work, home, lived experience, histories and narratives, landscapes and buildings, varied geology and topography. For the essay form, thinking of it in this way is to see it as a multilayered and multi-textual form, an agglomeration and a web that weaves around a subject, amassing narrative and image into itself. To account for these characteristics, I consider an essaying of place to be one of multiplicity, a quality that is a defining characteristic of the essay film. Constructed from many elements of sound, image, voice-over, and heavy use of montage, the essay film form is described by Paul Arthur as a multi-channel stew, with “converging angles of enquiry” that “pile up diverse fragments”.² Essay films are often described as multilayered, fragmentary and hybrid. According to Rascaroli it is a form that is “diverse, disjunctive, paradoxical, contradictory, heretical, open, free and formless”.³ Author Brian Dillon, in his book on the essay form, considers that the “essay is often itself a fragment, or it may be of fragments”.⁴ These articulations are often mirrored in conceptualisations of place and space. Doreen Massey considers space as the sphere of “multiplicity, contemporary plurality, coexisting heterogeneity”.⁵ Elsewhere, Relph discusses how places are not experienced as independent, clearly defined entities that can be described simply in terms of their location or appearance; “rather they are sensed in a chiaroscuro of setting, landscape, ritual, routine, other people, personal experiences, care and concern for home, and in the context of other places”.⁶ To represent the reality of place is necessarily an approach that engages

with its multiplicities. This is where the essay form and place become unified through formal multilayeredness and spatial multiplicity.

Both *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories* can be considered through this concept of multiplicity, a characteristic they share with the spatial essay films of others. In Cohen's *Lost Book Found*, it is the vast accumulation of street images, of the many people on the city streets, the many narratives of the street vendor and his encounter with the city and the people he meets and the endless words and lists from the lost book that capture the multiplicity of the city in an essayistic representation. Petit's *Content* is constructed through a mass of archival images, glimpses of the landscape of England and beyond through endless motorcar drifts and an accumulation of personal biographical stories as well as historical narratives. Or in *California Company Town*, images are grouped by place name in chapters, all within California, and these landscapes accumulate one after another in the film. A set of images visually evokes each place, with archival footage adding further visual and historical layers. Each place is accompanied by a set of narratives across a broad spectrum ranging in time from the deep past to the present, building up narratives and temporal layers. The breadth and density of image and narrative in these essay films and the landscapes and stories of place position their representational strategy as one of multiplicity. Their narrative preoccupations move through social, political, cultural, historical and personal avenues, creating narrative webs across many images and sounds.

The Fifth Continent gathers short glimpses of the landscapes and people of Romney Marsh, accumulating bursts of Super 8mm film into a visually dense capturing of space. I sought to gather a broad set of images of people, landscapes, new and old architectural interior and exteriors, objects, town streets, the sea and beaches, aiming to capture the visual spectrum of the place, to record its fabric, rhythms and atmosphere. Alongside this wealth of images, I aimed to record the many narratives of place through the encounter and through research into Romney Marsh, searching for snippets of information, for histories and recording observations. The narratives range from topographical details and the changing coastal landscape over time, Roman settlement, war narratives from Napoleonic era to the Second World War, reference to H.G. Wells and a sixteenth century topographer, lists of place names and the names of birds on the marsh, narratives of farming and fishing, the history of the ossuary in a Hythe church, pirates and

smugglers, passing pilgrims, global trade, myths, fiction and folklore, as well as poetic or imaginative passages commenting on images and places. These narrative threads flow as the montage of place images unfolds. This wide reaching set of narratives and observations is what really seeks to capture place in its diversity, as a multitude of stories and locations.

Island Stories aims for a more expansive representation of place. Its breadth of geographic space encompasses places throughout the whole country, meaning an opening up of the narrative and essayistic potential of the film. It takes in a wildly varied set of locations, from cities such as Birmingham and Manchester, rural landscapes, stately homes, old tin mines in Cornwall, an observatory in man-made forest, post-industrial spaces, coastal towns, ruins, new buildings and towns such as Milton Keynes and small villages in Yorkshire and Devon. I filmed images across these many locations, sometimes long takes of landscapes, other times short glimpses of the fabric of places, small details, of city streets and people. These images accumulate in the film to build a picture of individual places and a broader portrait of the country.

The wealth of locations discussed in the voice-over, places visited and the many filmed images that make up the visual material capturing these spaces is mirrored by the use of multiple narratives, references, notes and threads of information about places told through the voice-over, alongside many divergences and asides. These narratives emerged during filming and travelling and through pre- and post-production research and in the writing process. Across the film, subjects range from politics, economics, technology, references to literature and other historical travelogues, the story of folk festivals, histories of places, events, buildings and biographies, as well as a commentary on the present rhythms and immediate encounter with place and contemporary events unfolding. The voice-over narration also contains passages from notebooks, lists of words or phrases that have an abstract or poetic association with place and narrative threads that are more conceptual.

In Part Three of the film, the focus is entirely on Cornwall. The expansive approach to place and narrative is built up through diverse information told in the voice-over, from the geological formation of Cornwall, “the Cornubian batholith, a large mass of granite rock” that forms the backbone of the landscape to the history of telecommunications and later GCHQ wiretapping at Porthcurno and Skewjack, which was once “the site of a surf club in the 1960’s and 70’s”. Between these broad

temporal coordinates are many other narratives, from the wave of different settlers and the “immigrants from the Iberian peninsula” and other places, and later Cornish diaspora around the world, tin mining and the extraction of china clay of which “Plymouth apothecary William Cookworthy found a rich supply in Cornwall”, and the rising of the Eden project in a former clay pit, to observations on Lands End and its “tourist theme park”, the narrative legend of King Arthur’s sword thrown in a lake at Dozmary Pool, a reference to Daphne du Maurier’s *Jamaica Inn*, set on Bodmin Moor, and observations on the foghorn sounding “ceaselessly at Lizard point”. This accumulation of histories, place narratives and divergences is repeated throughout the film in different ways. For example, Part Five of the film moves across different urban spaces, where fragments of story, phrases and words link conceptually with the images. Multiplicity in this section on urban space is achieved through histories attached to spaces, through the number of images that often appear in fragments, through multiple references to literature such as Aldous Huxley’s *The Art of Seeing* from which passages are read in conjunction with other phrases and words, biographical detail of Louis Le Prince, observations on the structure of city space and further lists of words and sentences such as “impending” and “much of life is lived on the surface”, all read as if lifted directly from the filmmaker’s random notes. These different assemblies of elements, at the level of individual locations, create a densification of the landscape through a rendering of its many facets and layers. These elements also build up throughout the film as an accumulation of landscape narratives across England.

Further, throughout the film, the voice-over focuses away from England to connect with other places in the world through narrative links. I sought out these narratives connecting England to the world to further broaden the essayistic web of place and time and to consider places as interconnected in an inclusive geographical network. These narratives include the aforementioned one in Cornwall, where the narration tells of the very earliest settlers who share ancestry with people in the Basque region and later settlers in Cornwall who came from the Iberian Peninsula in the Neolithic period. The narrative continues with the story of the dispersal of Cornish miners through emigration around the world in the nineteenth century, thus layering the film with this story of space as seen through the global movement of people over time. Global connectivity within localized spaces is made material within the section on Porthcurno and telecommunications. Where telegraph cables

once relayed messages to India during British imperial rule, significant fibre optic networks now link Britain to the world from this corner of Cornwall. This global link is revealed visually through the use of maps showing the web of connections. (figures 3.1 and 3.2).

There are many of these global ties in the film. Over images of the beach and seafront at Deal, the narration tells of Captain Cook's arrival after returning from his first voyage to Australia, placing this beach within a global historical context. Elsewhere, London is described in the voice-over as a global city with financial connections with the rest of the world, which the narrative suggests was initially established through links made by the East India Company. The narration also refers to H. V. Morton's *In Search of England* (1927),⁷ and Julian Green's book *Paris* (1983),⁸ and their respective visions of place through the prism of elsewhere. The final images of the film, as the white cliffs at Dover can be seen from a boat leaving the shoreline, further juxtapose an idea of home and elsewhere, of the country and the globe. The identity of place becomes fluid and malleable as the flow of information, or the movements of people put the landscape into a global context.

An understanding of the multiplicity of the essay film is furthered in *Island Stories* by the complication of a multilayered narrative device. Three different characters travel and their narratives intertwine as they communicate through the use of notebooks and messages, as well as remembered conversations. The narrator also makes additional commentary on places and events as he narrates his account of the travelling filmmaker. Through these different voices, the narratives of the film take shape, both the narratives of the travel encounter and also the many stories and layers of place that are told through these devices. Additionally, the essayistic multiplicity in the film is furthered by the use of archival images as film fabric, as multi-textual audio-visual layers. From Google Maps to the surf club video clip in Cornwall and illustrated designs for a utopian Milton Keynes, the fabric of the film is imbued with these archival materials, as layers of place contained within the film.

An essaying of place then can be understood as an approach that gathers many layers and multiple elements into a multifaceted representation. Through multiplicity in place and in film form, a breadth and depth of representation is achieved through the amassing of filmed images, histories and stories, images and text, archival images, cultural, social and political coordinates, creating a dense and an expansive view of place. Jean-Pierre Gorin says of the essay, "It is the rhizomatic

form par excellence, forever expanding and finding no better reason to stop than the exhaustion of its own animating energy”,⁹ suggesting the essay’s construction as a web, a dense accumulation of threads leading into, out of and around the subjects and concerns; in other words, a form embodying multiplicity.

Journeys in fragments: mapping the essay film

The method of spatial encounter and film production in the landscape varied greatly between *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories*. As I have discussed in Chapter One, the material for *The Fifth Continent* was gathered through numerous excursions into the landscape of Romney Marsh. The map in figure 1.1 shows these shooting locations on Romney Marsh as dispersed points on the map with no linearity or route governing their order. I didn’t record the order in which they were visited, as this was a fragmentary process in itself, not governed by a route or itinerary beyond rough location lists. The numbers marked on the map are used rather as a key in referring to each location. *The Fifth Continent* captures a dispersed geography but within a relatively small area with defined boundaries. They emerge again within the film in this geographically dispersed manner, aligned along thematic links, grouped by historical threads or otherwise flitting between different sites ordered by the narratives spoken in the voice-over. In this way, both the filmmaking method and the editing and construction of narrative in the final shape of the film proceed from a disordered and meandering spatial encounter.

Rather different in approach and capturing the way in which an essaying might fragment and alter its materials and production, *Island Stories* took linear routes as starting points and then completely undoes them within the film. As I have outlined, the material for *Island Stories* was collected through four principle journeys. These journeys formed the spatial encounter through which to film and gather information and research and can be seen in the maps in figures 1.4 to 1.7. As the film took shape, rather than edit the material from these routes into a sequential order, the material is fragmented and reordered according to other principles. Some sections of the film are structured around geography; Part Three of the film is centered on Cornwall for example, and Part Five is made from material and stories gathered according to urban space. Others have thematic links, such as Part Four, which is structured according to a shared theme, that of the link between the land and

the sky, from the ball lightning incident at the church in Widdecomb in the Moor, to the story of Daniel Gumb stargazing on Bodmin Moor. Part One and Part Six unfold along geographically and temporally disordered coordinates, moving from place to place, story to story. Other themes, such as folk celebrations, offer some structure, bookending the film with festivals in Hastings, whilst other material is gathered based on the narrative trajectory of the characters or the device of the notebooks.

The map in figure 3.3 shows the progression of space in the order of the final edit of the film, from location to location. The map shows many crisscrossing routes, a dense set of lines jumbled up across the country. In six colours, the locations are divided on the map by each of the six sections of the film, with each location as it appears in that section marked on the map and joined by a line, denoting the order of appearance. The final edit of the film, fragmented and reordered, redraws the routes, moves between locations from one end of England to the other and often returns, repeats and revisits. The inclusion of these maps within the thesis is not only intended to display the literal and filmic order of space, but to translate geography to the workings and fragmentation of the essay film. The way in which topographies are reordered in *Island Stories* sheds light onto the nature of essayistic representation. The map makes the essayistic process visible as a web of routes overlaid onto space. What began as simple routes becomes a jumbled assemblage of coordinates. It shows the working of the essay film in geographical form, a map of essayistic fragmentation through the edit and through narrative meanderings, through the film form itself. The map shows links between disparate locations, some linked in the film by theme, others linked by the progress of the journey, yet others juxtaposed at random, linked by the essay's ability to thread fragments, many lines of thought and varied subjects together into a unified whole. In some sections, the order of the film follows that of the journey in the landscape as taken during production. Chapter Three, in Cornwall, follows roughly a similar route to the one taken during the film's production, moving through sites in Cornwall and following narratives across it. Similarly, Part Two of the film follows the progression along the south coast between Hastings and Margate, following more or less the route taken during production. These sections are grouped by the specific geography, by exploring the spaces governed by locale and by route.

However, this direct relationship between geographical routes is drastically altered in other sections. In Part One, space is completely fragmented. This is

governed by the narrator reading the travelling filmmaker's notebooks, which contain fragmented notes on various places. What begins in Hastings at the Jack in the Green festival quickly disperses to scattered locations. The motivation behind the fragmentation here was to create a disjointed, disordered effect, to disturb the reality of the routes taken, to offer a meandering survey of contrast and difference across the country. The intention was also to create the spatial conditions to mirror the disorientation of the filmmaker's notebooks and communications and the three different voices of the film. Part Four is similarly disjointed, moving from neolithic sites in Cornwall to the ruins of an RAF site in Lincolnshire, to Rendlesham Forest in Suffolk, to Widdecomb in the Moor in Dartmoor, to Daniel Gumb's house on Bodmin Moor in Cornwall and the observatory at Kielder Forest in Northumberland. This dispersed geography of Part Four is governed again by the filmmaker's notebooks, but locations are linked by theme, that of the relationship between the earth and the sky. The diverse locations, whilst juxtaposed through the montage of the film are drawn together by the theme. As the narrative voice tells the stories of places, they become unified across their geographical distances.

The distortion of the routes and resulting network of lines shows the process of complication and densification that occurs through the essay film. Through the communications of each character and voice in the film, and a narrator who assembles materials based on disordered notebooks and images, the journeys become fictionalized; their initial linear routes, whilst embedded within the narrative of the film, become distorted and reworked, abstracted in the process of essaying. Place, journey and narrative become malleable in *Island Stories*, changeable through the nature of re-engagement with the images and stories of place, assembled and accumulated according to an essayistic logic. In *Island Stories*, a reweaving of material and route became one through which thematic links, cultural contexts, histories and other narratives all merge and converge through the narrative devices in the film. Space becomes almost imaginary, a mental space plotted by the thinking process of the essay.

While working on *Island Stories* and considering the film from this restructuring and mapping of routes and locations, I gained an insight into the potential for different ways of mapping place. Something I was reading around this time that furthered my ideas around alternative mapping was Rebecca Solnit and Joshua Jelly-Schapiro's book *The Nonstop Metropolis: A New York Atlas*.¹⁰ The

book contains a selection of essays and maps, each gathering different information, or addressing a different topic, from histories of riots and protest in the city to waste disposal or the Bronx in the 1970's. Together, this wide ranging set of maps and associated information form a multilayered evocation of New York City, mapping its spaces not just through its geography but through the many multiple components that make the city, past, present and future. In *Island Stories*, I sought to capture place in this way, through the gathering of different subjects and themes, the many facets of place and its narratives together alongside images of its landscapes and fabric. The structure of this approach to place reflected work I had begun in *The Fifth Continent* and its form was something I adopted further as *Island Stories* developed, the idea of building up representation of places through layers and the assembly of information into a composite. I believe there is also something of the idea of mapping within my work and the inclusion of route maps within the appendices grounds the idea of mapping within my processes and films. The films too are perhaps a form of mapping, like Solnit and Jelly-Schapiro's *New York*, using spatial details and narratives to forge a cinematic map of England, an essayistic map, plotting time, narrative and lines of thought on to space.

I included a quote of Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, at the beginning of Chapter One, a passage from his description of the city of Zaira. To come back to this book here, there are similarities between *The Nonstop Metropolis* and *Invisible Cities*. *Invisible Cities* captures places through the prism of imagination; each city described according to another facet of its form, altering its image, structure and atmosphere, exploring its layers and culture through poetic, conceptual visions of cities. The narrative device used in the book, as Marco Polo recounts his travels to the emperor Kublai Khan, helped shape my decision to use a character as narrator through which to tell the stories of the landscape. Further, the episodic, conceptual structure also mirrors *The Nonstop Metropolis* and in *Island Stories* I grouped images and narratives into chapters and sequences within these chapters, across different themes, subjects and places. The many spatial and temporal layers are woven together through the film to form an essayistic composition. As Philip Lopate states in his introduction to *The Art of the Personal Essay*, "the essayist attempts to surround something – a subject, a mood, a problematic irritation- by coming at it from all angles".¹¹ This provides an adept articulation of what I attempted to do in my practice, a densification, approaching place from multiple angles and through myriad

narrative and visual elements, woven into a collage. As writer Lucy Lippard states in her study of a sense of place, place is “temporal and spatial, personal and political. A layered location replete with human histories and memories, place has a width as well as depth.”¹² Thought about in this way, *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories* form essays that weave many historical and contemporary narratives, mythical and imaginary coordinates and a subjective encounter with place together into a kind of cinematic map, one not only concerned with the horizontal mapping of spaces, but a vertical mapping through time.

Cinematography and capturing spaces

In *The Fifth Continent*, I used a hand-held camera and shots of a short duration. I shot footage freely within locations as I passed through the landscape and to a certain extent shot length was dictated by the medium of Super 8mm, with less than three minutes per reel. Visually, the grainy roughness of Super 8mm and the hand-held shots lent the film an eerie atmosphere with its imperfections, catching something of the mystery of the landscape. The choice to shoot hand held lent the film a subjective, personal point of view, where I as filmmaker am within frame, the camera as vision, seeing, probing as it passes through the landscape. In *Island Stories*, I sought to continue partly with this approach to filming spaces. Employing a hand-held camera kept the filmmaker visible, tangible and material in the actual action of the camera. Along with the personal voice-over, method of shooting emphasizes subjectivity in the film and the experience of space. Within the fictional frame of the film, the images originate with the travelling filmmaker, so the character’s hand can also be seen in the free moving, subjective camera. Shooting digitally, the limitations of Super 8mm film were gone. This also meant that I could shoot synchronized sound, further adding to the representational immersion in place through the recording of location sound.

The use of hand-held camera shots of short duration or stationary long takes was sometimes dictated by the place, by various practical factors including the dichotomies of city and landscape or interior and exterior spaces; or they were influenced by the situation or event unfolding when filming, by landscape, architecture, rhythm and pace, by the reverberation of narrative within a space. Within the film, hand-held shots can largely be seen in townscapes and city streets, at

festivals and indoor spaces. In Part Five of the film, fragments of different cities unfold through shots of short duration and they display movement, varying angles and a more casual, spontaneous view of space. Images unfold in Manchester at night capturing a glimpse of the city. Two shots from the ground looking upwards capture an illuminated building. These give way to two images of people, a seated man nods at passersby and construction workers talk, all framed behind a fence in the foreground. The camera quivers a little, the shots are short, the views obscured by objects or fragmented and partial, immersed in space (figure 3.4). More buildings follow, people pass by a quiet street in front of the camera, a shot lingers of two men working late at night as the sound of a saxophone echoes along the street. These are shots gleaned from within the city streets, loosely framed, fleeting moments caught by a camera, visual details and moments of everyday life and atmosphere.

This approach brings me back to Jem Cohen's camera in *Lost Book Found*. I discussed his moving camera, hand-held, free and fluid, navigating the city streets amongst people sharing social space. I drew upon Laura Rascaroli in this context and how the camera in the essay film is often used as a flexible and lucid means of personal expression.¹³ There is this search for the expressiveness of the camera in both *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories*; a human camera rooted in place, subjective, active and experiential. At the Hastings Mayday festival in Part One, all shots are hand-held. The procession moves towards and past the camera, which is situated amongst the crowd. Shots are continuous, hovering, watching. On the hilltop, the camera shakes in the wind and the view is obscured by crowds of people (fig 3.5). The narration in which the travelling filmmaker character is positioned within the place aligns her subjectivity in image and narrative, placing her behind the camera. Elsewhere, in Part Two of the film, a hand held camera wanders and explores The Shell Grotto, navigating the passages, drifting along walkways and across the surfaces of the walls. Through its searching, the camera renders the space three dimensional, approaching something akin to vision.

Landscape images and narrative

Landscape images in *The Fifth Continent* were mostly fragmentary glimpses, the occasional tracking shot or an establishing landscape shot. They were hand-held and captured on the move, quickly and in the way a photographic snapshot might be

taken. In *Island Stories*, these hand held glimpses continue, but are contrasted frequently with static shots of longer duration, inspired by Benning's stationary camera in *Four Corners* and the carefully framed landscape shots of *California Company Town*. I employed static long takes within *Island Stories*, often filmed with the camera mounted on a tripod and left to roll for long periods of time, a sustained observation, the camera absorbing the space, as opposed to the hand-held camera becoming immersed within the space. This has a significantly different effect on the representation of place. The length of each shot was dictated by a particular landscape, by an architectural feature or by a narrative attached to the location that required pause and a sustained focus. Rather than being within space, shooting with a visible hand showing the presence of a filmmaker, these are moments when the subjectivity of the camera is lessened and space is confronted through a static image unfolding in an act of intense looking.

In a sequence in Part Four of the film, images show the abandoned satellites in a field of what was RAF Stenigot in Lincolnshire. There are only five images in about a minute of duration, beginning with a wide shot of four satellite dishes, followed by three closer shots from slightly different angles (figure 3.6). There are no other details or landscape images from this location. The narrative unfolds over these images allowing the histories to be absorbed into the landscape and also giving time for contemplation of these dishes as contemporary ruins. Elsewhere, in the first half of Part Three, a series of landscapes unfold, beginning with The Hurlers, the stone circles on Bodmin Moor, then the ruins of tin mines spread across Cornwall and more recent industrial landscapes such as the mounds of china clay near St Austell, followed by the contemporary spaces of the Eden Project. Most of these landscape images are stationary, each space captured through an economy of shots and each lasting some duration. Again, the camera allows the landscape to unfold before it, soaking up the space, a period of prolonged looking where a depth of narrative can be attached to the location through this pause. Faced with space over a long duration, composed and held in frame, the viewer is given time to study landscapes that tell their own story. The final shots in the film are framed from a ship sailing away from the coast, continuing for almost a minute, a moment of reflection. This shot was inspired by Chantal Akerman's *News From Home*, where an extremely long take from a boat watches the New York shoreline shrink into the distance,

signaling a departure and possible return home, which in *Island Stories* becomes a departure to elsewhere.

Island Stories employs these different approaches to filming space, visually rendering the physicality of place. This is conjured through both the subjectivity of a spatial encounter, being there with the camera, amongst people within street space, but also through static images, where the viewer is faced with a sustained image of the landscape that unfolds before the camera. Viewed together, these different approaches to filming space collectively build up a varied visual representation of place through the amassing of a wealth of images. *Island Stories* displays a visual tapestry of cityscape and landscape, people and place; an essaying of place as kaleidoscopic. The film captures a little of the varied terrain of England through varied modes of experience, across deeper levels of engagement, from the fleeting nature of travelling to the pause of a sustained gaze. From a glimpse seen from a moving train of the city skyline at night, to the wide-open space of Bodmin Moor upon which Daniel Gumb viewed the stars, a spatial cinematography emerges, whose technique and aesthetic re-renders space filmically.

Narrative and the essay voice

The Fifth Continent uses a largely objective female voice to narrate place and its stories. The delivery is simple and there is no device that questions this narrator. She gives brief details and information about locations and histories and makes some comments on the places visited and past events. Most importantly, the narrator does not in any obvious way have an encounter with the landscape; the voice is detached from location. Using a voice actor allowed some distance between me as the filmmaker and the narration of the film. *Island Stories*, whilst building upon some of the approaches established in *The Fifth Continent*, deviates significantly in voice and narrative style. On reflection, I thought the voice in *Fifth Continent* too detached from place and a spatial encounter was not a part of the narrative. The narrator in *Island Stories* has his own encounters with places as told in his own stories, as well as narrating those of the travelling filmmaker. In this way, the experience of place is always within view. After heavily fictionalizing the narrative of the film, using my own voice kept me within the frame and further blurred the boundaries between fact and fiction. Rascaroli states that the film essay “decidedly points to the enunciating

subject, who literally inhabits the text” and this enunciator is embodied in a narrator, “close to the real, extratextual author”.¹⁴ In *Island Stories*, I am both the enunciating subject and the extratextual author evoked by Rascaroli. The actual process of research and filmmaking are thus embedded within the narrative devices and voice of the film.

My narrative approach was inspired by, but departs from, the narrative devices of other essay films most notably *Robinson in Space*. Keiller utilizes a dual narrative device through the construction of two fictional characters whose travels and commentary give the film its narrative and informational content. Similarly, Chris Marker’s *Sans Soleil* utilises a fictional narrator and a fictional character whose communication with the narrator form the basis of the film. *Island Stories* furthers these methods through multiple voices and different modes of address, from emails and letters to notebooks and direct narration, all working together to convey narrative. This was reflective of the filmmaking process itself and the fragmented way in which information was captured and recorded, of the fragmented journeys taken and the different facets that make up the research and filmmaking processes. The three voices in *Island Stories*; the narrator, the travelling filmmaker, and the notes of Leland, are narrated by one voice. In this way, the narrator becomes the author, assembling the materials left by the characters in the film and narrating his own version of the filmmaker’s story, reordering her materials and offering a partial account of her travels and notes.

This narrative device perhaps challenges Rascaroli’s view of the essay as “the expression of a personal, critical reflection”,¹⁵ that emerges as a “single authorial voice”,¹⁶ by playing with this notion where one voice becomes multiple voices. However, the notebooks, messages and narrator’s words are all written by myself as filmmaker and essayist, so any multivocality is in fact a construct. The use of three voices in the film disperses the single authorial voice of the essay across multiple voices, further fragmented through multiple modes of address. The single author or essayist is within view, but the voice is fractured across characters, emails and notebooks. There is something dialogical in the intertwining of the three characters and the interplay between narratives and journeys. Rather than allowing the film to develop through a single viewpoint, the personal becomes troubled and complicated. The essay opens further into the subject through this narrative dispersal, broadens the essayistic form and gathers more spaces and more stories together. This creates the

conditions through which to move around freely in place and time without the necessity of narrative linearity. In this way, a wider web could be woven around themes, locations and histories and a deeper engagement with place emerged.

The structure and form of the essayistic voice arose out of the necessity of finding a way to assimilate the many processes at work within the production of the film, along with the many strands of research and information into specific locations, the experience of the journeys and encounter with places and other peripheral research from literature, theory and wider spatial contexts. In this way, through the writing process, the essay took form, alongside the film editing process, a parallel, mutual process where image and text shaped one another. The three characters are used as vehicles for spatial narratives, for the encounters of the journeys to unfold and as intertwining voices in plotting narrative onto landscape. The three voices bring together a wealth of information, building up an image of place that collects narrative fragments into a whole. The narrator's reading of notebooks and messages from the travelling filmmaker and occasional asides into his own travels create a structure that allows for these many facets, from histories, biographies, literary quotations and discussion of theoretical ideas, cultural contexts, politics and economics and other peripheral research to build up as narrative along the journeys, capturing the complexities of place.

Notebooks, diaries and epistolary narrative

Like Marker's *Sans Soleil* or Chantal Akerman's *News From Home*, where letters form the basis of narrative and the essayistic voice, *Island Stories* employs the device of an epistolary form of address as remembered conversations and emails, alongside notebooks and diaries, narrating from multiple sources and perspectives. For *The Fifth Continent*, I chose an uncomplicated narration, opting rather for a 'voice of god' type narration. I wanted to diffuse and complicate this voice for *Island Stories*, partly to mirror the more fragmented approach and to capture the sheer multiplicity of place and narrative that emerged as I was making and researching the film. I also hoped it would allow a testing of the form and shape of the essay, a refraction of information of ideas dispersed across multiple channels of communication and documentation. The images, places and stories in the film are complemented structurally through both multiple voices and different forms of communication. The

filmmaker's discarded notebooks make up the majority of the narrative voice in *Island Stories*. Most importantly, this narrative device allows for both a significantly detailed survey of places and also provides the potential for historical description, subjective reflection, notes on the film process, inclusion of research and a personal interpretation of the experiential effects of place, all gathered through the journey. The notebooks used as a device in the film stem from my own use of notebooks as travelling journals when on the filming excursions, keeping my own processes and journeys within frame.

Rascaroli has considered the notebook and diary as different narrative devices used in the essay film and the notebooks in *Island Stories* often pass between these two modes, the personal diaristic and the informational, fleeting and random. The diary, Rascaroli argues, is “composed simultaneously with the events, or after a minor interval”. It is a “work in progress, open and unstable”¹⁷ that “records facts and events – her own impressions, ideas, sensations”.¹⁸ The narrated books in *Island Stories* often contain subjective, diaristic passages, recording journeys and events throughout, details of the immediate encounter with place and a recording of travelling as a travel diary. In Part One for example, the filmmaker writes, “this is the fourth year I have been to the Jack in the Green Festival”, situating herself in space through this record of event. Elsewhere, her notebooks tell how she, “drove around until I spotted the satellite dishes in a field”, where she meets a young girl and boy. She writes of this event that, “We talked for a while. They told me about an empty hospital building nearby that they liked to explore. Then they left”. These passages record the travelling filmmaker's journeys, which she writes like a journal, a travel diary outlining her subjective experience of place and event. These are passages influenced by, and closely aligned with my own encounter as filmmaker when visiting these sites. As I established in Chapter One, I recorded events in notebooks as I travelled each day. These notes formed a kind of diary of events as well as being a place in which my notes, observations and impressions could be recorded. Figure 1.14 shows a page of my notebook that details my visit to the satellites. The passage records the day of travelling, visiting the sites in the rain and speaking to the boy and girl. This shows a close relationship between my own journeys and recording of events and those that became the narrative content of the film.

Alongside these diaristic episodes are more fragmentary, elliptical and informational passages, documenting research, ideas, thoughts and reflections.

Rascaroli argues that, “If the diary is open and fragmentary, the notebook is more so”, it is a “monologue with the self”. Where the diary is, “imposed by an activity of recollection and reordering”, the notebook is more agile, accompanying the author to “jot down ideas, impressions and projects as they emerge” and it can act as both a tool and a record.¹⁹ The narrator reads from the travelling filmmaker's notebook, that under a heading “Organizing spaces” she had written, “George Perec, in his meditation on inhabited space, breaks space down into categories”, which continues to outline Perec’s ideas on inhabited space as explored in his essay “Species of Spaces”.²⁰ So this notebook entry records a title, a theme, a potential subject for the film or organization of research and brings a theoretical idea within frame.

Elsewhere, in Part Five of the film, the notebooks drift from a detailed biographical narrative of Louis Le Prince through to a fragmented meditation on cities. At night in Manchester, images show illuminated buildings, people talking, ambient street lights, people walking past the camera in Chinatown and diners seen through windows eating in restaurants. Two men work late into the night to the sound of a saxophonist playing on the street and a man can be seen in a far away window on a treadmill in a gym. These images of city space are accompanied by the narrator reading passages from the filmmaker’s notebooks. Some of the notes are gleaned from Huxley’s book *The Art of Seeing*. For example, the words “Sensing and selecting and perceiving equals seeing”,²¹ “the eye organ of light”,²² and “the current fear of light”,²³ are spoken over these images and are jumbled up with spatial narratives, observations and encounters, from the narrative of the Abraham Lincoln Statue “erected in Manchester as a gesture of thanks to the textile workers”, to a rumination on city space where, “below high rise buildings springing up, it is still possible to find the preserved holy relic of the hand of a saint”. Huxley’s words tie the Le Prince film together with these images through the concept of vision. The passages continue, as increasingly fragmented views and moments in the three cities unfold: people on busy streets, glass towers and new architecture, street fabric and pedestrians, a richly textured image of the city. At the same time, the fragments of text continue, offering a conceptual, psychological and immediate response to the experience of city.

This section of the film also includes a passage written by the character of the filmmaker in her notebooks, concerning materials belonging to the figure of Leland. Within his writings, she states, are similar lists to her own. These notes and thoughts

consider the painter Atkinson Grimshaw's images of Liverpool or they run through seemingly random words and sentences such as, "cars move silently through the weaving road into the valley", "the unfinished spaces" and "shapes in stone". Where the images of cities offer a chaotic visual representation, these passages act together with the images and a fragmented, meditative city emerges, one where the experience provokes both a visual direct response to its spaces and a verbal one, with notes gleaned through the experience of the city. A poetic rendering of the city emerges through associations between the text, the encounter with the city, and the unfolding images, a dialogic assembly capturing the complexity of place and experience. The notebooks become film process, a recording of ideas, an assembling of research, comments on the spatial encounter with cities with ruminations and meditations, written sporadically, a tentative and spontaneous collection of notes around places and the filmmaking processes. These notebooks then embed the film's production within the spoken narrative voice and also provide the device through which spatial stories and histories can be told together with a wealth of other information and the subjective, personal diaristic passages.

These two sequences concerning Perec and Huxley also show the complex dialogical relationship between text and image, narrative and place. Where some sections of the film combine image and text in an illustrative harmony, in these two sequences the link is conceptual. Perec's categories of space in the narration are overlaid onto images of Hastings from the window of a house looking out on to a street (figure 3.7). His categorizations overlaid here place the images into this context of thinking about the nature of spatial experience. Perec's words continue in dialogue with images and narratives across the wider film through which many different categories of space are explored, including a section on outer space and the sky. Similarly, Huxley's notebook fragments on vision work in dialogue with the narrative of Le Prince and his cinematic rendering of space, shaping an image of the city through the interplay of these elements.

Although the notebooks make up the most significant narrative device in the film, much is also established through the communications between the narrator and the travelling filmmaker. This takes the form of emails and messages, read by the narrator. These correspondences lend an epistolary mode of address to *Island Stories*. Similarly to the notebooks, these record histories and narratives, offering a form of travelogue record. The notebooks are written for personal use and record, whereas

the emails are to an addressee; they are written *to* somebody, informative and performed. Both Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* and Chantal Akerman's *News From Home* use the device of the letter to communicate experience, thoughts and details of places and these were influential in my decision to utilize the epistolary mode of address. I saw the potential of this device in *Island Stories*, as it involved travel and movement, being away from home. It also seemed like a method that would allow for a piecing together of much of the fragmented journeys, a way to order and reorder the material. Hamid Naficy has given close attention to the epistolary form in cinema, largely through the lens of diasporic and exilic filmmaking. His category of "film-letters", that "inscribe the letters and acts of reading and writing of letters by diegetic characters", apply to the nature of the epistolary in *Island Stories*.²⁴ The filmmaker sends emails to the narrator as she travels, which he then reads. The diegetic character of the filmmaker inscribes the act of communication through writing and sending emails that record her journeys and thoughts.

Part Two of *Island Stories* is told through one long email sent by the character of the filmmaker. The narrator reads this email word for word as images from the trip the filmmaker describes unfold. Structured as notes governed by place, akin to a travelogue, she describes a journey "from Hastings to Margate". In the email, she outlines her encounter with the places as she travels and the order of events from her arrival where she "parked outside the Winter Gardens and walked to my hotel on King Street" and shortly afterwards, before leaving Margate, she "visited the Shell Grotto". These statements position her within the spaces of the film as traveller. She tells of her thoughts and feelings on places and events, from the associations of Margate with the paintings of J. M. W. Turner, the film *O Dreamland* (Lindsay Anderson, 1956) and T.S Eliot's poem *The Wasteland*,²⁵ to a rumination on Britain as an island, provoked by the recent referendum on EU membership and ending the email feeling depressed, "until I arrived back in Hastings".

The email also communicates histories and narratives of place, the discovery of the Shell Grotto for example "by a man digging a well in his garden". She also asks if there is not "some hidden wisdom" in the grotto, making subjective rumination blur with historical detail. She also writes of Deal being an arm of the Cinque Port confederation and of Captain Cook's arrival there "after his first voyage to Australia". She also refers to Dover, its Napoleonic era hill fort and the Roman port that once operated from the coast. The epistolary form of the email then, like the

notebooks, blends information, from the personal and subjective to the historical, communicated as a travelogue of sorts, written in the past tense. In *Island Stories*, the epistolary address has the effect of grounding experience within space, as the communications come as a form of travel diary or digital postcard, dispatches from around the country, through which the filmmaker records her experiences and divulges information on the locations she visits. Alongside the notebooks and fragments of conversation, these emails and messages allow for a narrative device that can move from place to place, theme to theme and traverse grand histories and small personal observations, with their own structural and narrative logic. The devices also root the filmmaking process within the film, embodying the research carried out into places, the encounter with landscape through the journeys and the thoughts and comments that emerged during this process.

Central to representation in *Island Stories* is its self-reflexivity. The processes of filmmaking and essaying are mirrored within the film itself. Essay films are often described as reflexive and containing within them their own workings, mirroring their own coming into being. According to Catherine Lupton, the essay is a process oriented film form, “a site for enacting the process of thought and reflection upon and around a given topic”.²⁶ The acts of filmmaking, thought and research are embedded within the film. Spatially, my own journeys for the making of the film are dispersed through three characters who each travel the country, reflected most closely by the travelling filmmaker whose geographic movements are the most substantial in the film. My journeys in this way become fictionalized, the events and encounters with place that I myself witnessed or experienced become a part of the narrative of the filmmaker and narrator.

The journeys taken in the film and in reality provide geographical coordinates and my coordinates become those of the characters within the film. Similarly, the filmmaking process in reality is mirrored by the one within the story of the film. There are in effect multiple films being made. There is the film being made by the travelling filmmaker, whose materials and images for an unfinished film provide visual and narrative material. The narrator assembles these materials, reads from her notes and recalls a timeline of events and in this way a second film is being made. These two films in progress are themselves mirrors or versions of the filmmaking and research process enacted by me in reality. The images, sounds and narratives come from my journeys; the notebooks contain information that I collated in

preparation for the film, and the encounters with space narrated are my own encounters. The sections and headings read from the notebooks are ordered and titled, based on preliminary plans I had for chapters within the film. The film within the film is then the one being made in reality; it shows its processes and formation. This applies too to the essay, as the essay's own formation and workings become the content of the film, ordering images and narratives, weaving notebooks and messages, histories and images along the desired routes of the filmmaker and through the assembly of the narrator. The narrative voice reads from notebooks that contain partial essays, snippets of text, layers of places as narratives. The fragmented narratives and routes, disparate information, historical and contemporary stories of place are presented in a way that allows elements of the essay to unfold and be woven together by the viewer.

Archival images and found footage as textual layers of time

As well as the layers of time within place and the multivocal approach of the narrative in *Island Stories*, it is also a multi-textual film. I have established how essay films frequently employ found footage and archival material as textual layers in relation to *California Company Town* and *Content*. I chose to use only filmed images to capture the landscapes of Romney Marsh in *The Fifth Continent* and relied on narrative voice to layer histories and context onto place. *Island Stories* also contains largely filmed images and location sound as audiovisual material. However, *Island Stories* also employs archival materials throughout the film that serve multiple functions. Through the engagement with the landscape and through research, I identified archival materials that act as representational devices to access past layers or contemporary concerns, to layer textually as well as through narrative. Their inclusion within the film was a natural part of the process of essaying place through practice. In a sense, some archival materials were intrinsic to the landscapes I had visited and filmed and to the narratives attached to them. I used only a select number of archival images, adding weight to them as necessary and integral components. Archival and found images appear in the film as still images, such as the plans for Milton Keynes drawn by German artist Helmut Jacoby (figure 3.8), photographs of shipwrecks at Lizard Point and the use of Google Maps. Photographs also appear in Part Four of the film, notably colour shots of the night sky. There are also moving

images, such as those of *Traffic Crossing Leeds Bridge* and a video from the Skewjack surf club (figure 3.9).

The archival images act as a thread between past and present, illuminating one more layer of time amongst narrative and physical place, or between the digital realm and landscape. Jaimie Baron has considered how archival materials create a “temporal disparity,” where the perception of the viewer of a “then and a now” is “generated within a single text”. This experience of temporal disparity within a film is “one of the things that gives rise to the recognition of the archival document as such, or, in other words, to the archive effect”.²⁷ This temporal gap between archive images of the past and landscape images of the present is a key method through which archival images are employed in *Island Stories*. Part Five of the film is built around the briefest of archival film materials, with which the section begins. *Traffic Crossing Leeds Bridge* shows a shot of Leeds Bridge from a high vantage point looking diagonally downwards onto horse drawn carriages and pedestrians as they cross the bridge, footage containing only a few frames. There are multiple functions of this archival footage. One is a historical function. I positioned myself in a similar spot and recorded again this image of the city in the present. Cars and people pass by the camera along the bridge. Through the placing of these two images together, the past and present of the city are juxtaposed, and the gap in time is bridged, creating a temporal contrast in space. The material gives visual, filmic form, a direct cinematographic representation, to the accompanying narrative of Le Prince. As the narrator tells Le Prince’s story over the filmed images of the present, the inclusion of the archival material provides a concrete link to the past narrative and to the layers of the city.

There is another function that emerges through this juxtaposition. Placing Le Prince and myself together in dialogue, his film and mine, positioned on the same spot over a century apart, is about the capturing of two moments in social space through the camera lens. It is about the nature of cinematic representation of place, about vision and technology, from the conception of cinematic space in Le Prince’s images, to the filming of the city in the present, from early film technology to high definition digital images. The chapter on urban space in *Island Stories* proceeds from this point into an exploration of the cinematic city and into the nature of vision. As the chapter unfolds with images and narratives of the contemporary city and passages

from Huxley's book *The Art of Seeing* are spoken, Le Prince's film remains in frame, in constant dialogue with the images and voice-over.

In Part Three of the film, a section on the history of telecommunications in Cornwall contains multiple archival images, all in dialogue with one another and serving multiple functions. Filmed images of the beach at Porthcurno, of the small telegraph building and telegraph signpost are accompanied by the found image of a map of early telegraph communication networks and a map of later fibre optic links as well as images taken from Google Maps showing the fibre optic terminal at Skewjack and finally, archival film images of the Skewjack surf club, based in the same location in the 1970s. The communication maps show a visual comparison between two different communication networks across time, ones whose fates are closely bound together, the later fibre optic networks having their foundation in the routes laid with the much earlier telegraph lines and linked by the same physical location. The density of the fibre optic map highlights the extent to which global communication has expanded. The surf club video further layers time onto landscape, showing the historical dimension of place through past images, a temporal disparity between then and now. It shows a shifting cultural landscape and a changed use of land from leisure to technology. The footage in the context of global connectivity and the Internet also offers something ironic; the metaphor of surfing as surfing the Internet. As the slowed figures surf towards the camera, previously spoken narratives hang over the images, of a society of surveillance and of rapid communication and the hardware of the Internet, countered with this view of freedom from the past. The Google Maps images of the Skewjack terminal work to give visual form to the spoken narrative and also thematically tie in with the narrative of surveillance and intercepted fibre networks. The images also make visible the physical location of Internet hardware, using an image source from the Internet. The juxtaposition of digital mapping images with filmed images engages with the way in which place is rendered through a comprehensive mapping, a layering of the real world with that of its intricately mapped digital counterpart.

Together these archival materials, alongside the filmed footage of the present, create a multi-textual rendering of place, a collage, a visual layering evoking the past of place alongside spoken narrative layers and the physical markers of time visible within the landscape, widening the cultural and thematic context of place and subject through a variety of images. In relation to Petit's *Content*, I referred to

Isabelle McNeill and the “the vast interconnected space of contemporary media, film multimedia and the Internet”, creating spaces through which to think by surfing and navigating, something she aligns with flâneurism, traversing media as a psychogeographer does space.²⁸ Within *Island Stories*, this takes on a new relevance as the digital becomes embedded within my practice, both as material within the film and as a part of the research process, using Google Maps, browsing the Internet for information and in finding visual materials through online sources. This engagement with the digital and with archival materials more generally has an expansive effect on the representation of place, a gathering of textual layers, creating a dialogue between images, times and themes, the found images serving both a historical and conceptual function.

Reality and fiction in place and film form

Both *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories* are built up through landscapes, gathering narratives past and present, place information and details of the spatial encounter together into a composite of place. Alongside these factual events and details and documentary images capturing place in the present moment, there is another significant aspect that shapes the presentation of place in my practice and the essay films of others. The essay film seeks to create a more lucid relationship between fact and fiction, often incorporating fantastical and fictional aspects of place alongside the factual, blurring the lines and enmeshing these registers of place, capturing something of the reality of places. Fiction and documentary film approaches merge in the essay, where psychology and the outside world meet. Both of my films are concerned with myth and the imaginative and fantastical side of places, as well as with the potential of the essay film to play with fact and fiction formally. Rascaroli has argued that the essay film blends documentary and fictional elements and sees it as a “hybrid form, which crosses boundaries and rests somewhere in-between fiction and non-fiction cinema”.²⁹ Corrigan too considers how there is an, “essayistic play between fact and fiction, between the documentary and the experimental, or between non-narrative and narrative”.³⁰ Corrigan has also considered the essay as an exploration of the “interior and exterior geographies of everyday life”.³¹ Similarly, Michael Renov states that the essay film aligns the world of imagination and inner realities with those of the outside world, and can be read as

a “self examination and an outward gaze”.³² This tendency of the form to blend fact and fiction, inner and outer realities, has a significant effect on the representation of place and is in fact mirrored by the blurring of reality and fantasy in the conceptualisation of place and the city.

Writing on cities, Jonathan Raban has established that, “The city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps, in statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture”.³³ This dual urban experience then takes in the “real” city, the physical, tangible and factual city alongside the dream city of thought, imagination and fantasy. Ben Highmore conjures up a similar image of the city, and considers how it is the “tangle of physicality and symbolism, the sedimentation of various histories, the mingling of imaginings and experience that constitute the urban”, the “real” of the urban being that which creates a “thickly allusive and illusive reality”.³⁴ Michel De Certeau too establishes within the pedestrian level of the street that “another spatiality” emerges, one that is “anthropological, poetic and mythic” where, he states, “a migrational or metaphorical city thus slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city”.³⁵ Cities then are both objective and physical on the one hand and subjective and psychological on the other. As Simon Schama suggests, landscape “is a work of the mind” as much as a physical, factual entity, where the same overlapping of fact and fiction in the forging of a sense of place is present.³⁶ The essay film, as a multifaceted, open form enmeshes these two sides thus approaching something of the reality of places.

Returning to Jem Cohen’s *Amber City*, myths and fictional embellishments play with the borders of imagination, fantasy and reality in the film to forge an image of place. Encounters with the present and description of events unfolding are given a fictional slant by the narrator, through an imaginative treatment of the city and its stories. Over images of the television repairman and his shop, the narrator states, “the man repairs devices that gather invisible waves from the air, capturing them as moving images and sounds. Most of these are sent from the bigger cities and depict an even bigger world”. The ordinariness of the situation and reality of the man’s job and the observational imagery of him, his shop and the street are altered by this description, achieving an enhanced mystery with an almost science fiction slant. Elsewhere in the film, the narration provides a poetic meditation where ships and

churches embody a conscious dream of exploration: “they say the churches are the remains of the once great fleet. Like galleys they dream of sailing, turned towards the sea.” Further, actual historical narratives are spoken in a way that blurs the truth of events. Images of the university library are accompanied by the story of a scientist who lived and worked in Pisa for some time, went blind and spent time under house arrest. The narrator is alluding to the life of Galileo but this episode is narrated without dates, names or specific facts, and this renders the story incomplete and vague, a shadow of a true story told through some of its loose threads. The city remains enigmatic, mysterious, stories echoing through its contemporary spaces, muttered half-truths of past narratives and inhabitants.

The narrator also taps into myths of the city, treated with equality alongside other city stories and histories. In one scene, over an image of a busy street and a man sitting on an old motorbike centre frame, the voice-over notes how, “sometimes local stories turn into fables” and, across a montage of city images at night, the voice-over tells the story of a man who was prevented from entering his house and thus became the night guardian of the market. That this story is treated on an equal narrative plane alongside other narratives emphasises how the city contains endless stories, a cacophony of spatial narratives, both real and fabricated. The city in Cohen's film is a mythical city, a dream space, an imaginary city overlaid on the real one, and in which truth and fiction are blurred. *Amber City* creates an urban portrait made up of the city's pasts combined with the unfolding present of everyday life in street space and narratives of a mythical and fictional nature, a palimpsest of place and time, reality and fantasy.

Influenced by the way in which essay films can play with the borders of fictional and documentary forms and the myths and fictions of places themselves, I incorporated this approach in my films, beginning with *The Fifth Continent*. The film not only focuses on the historical narratives of Romney Marsh; it also plays with the boundaries of reality and fiction, closely keyed in to mythical layers and imaginary aspects of the landscape. Within *The Fifth Continent*, the imaginative aspects of Romney Marsh are accessed in two distinct ways. Firstly, there are those mythic and imaginary elements that emanate from within the place itself through its narratives and representations. This can be seen and heard in the myths of smugglers and their relationship to the church for example, or in the fictional tales of H. G. Wells who comments on the landscape at the beginning of his book, *The First Men in the*

Moon,³⁷ or Russell Thorndike and the character of Dr Syn in both literature and film. The remaining pink pews found inside a church, were painted for a film version of the Dr Syn character,³⁸ and remained that way afterwards, highlighting this blurring of reality and fiction, thus displaying a fictional story now embedded within the physical reality of the place.

Secondly, there are those aspects that occur as constructions within the narrative and form of the film itself that create or exploit dream and fiction. The first line of narration in the film, “imagine a land delivered by a retreating sea”, suggests that what will be seen is not necessarily grounded in a real geography but filtered through the imagination. Elsewhere, the narration says, “the inhabitants dream of being returned to the ocean” and in another passage, “with the winds came fragments of their dreams”. These are spoken over images of the beach, the sea and other coastal scenes, which might alone provide purely a visual, observational rendering of a location. Both of these examples exploit fabrication and fiction as a device for transforming a physical encounter with place into one infused with the imaginary. In this way history, facts and physical space merge with the world of dream, fiction and imagination, returning to Jonathan Raban’s conception of the “soft” side of place as opposed to the “hard” side of facts and truths, which may be just as real when forging a sense of place.

This focus on the imaginative and fictional facets of place continued in *Island Stories*. Place in the film is represented through the accumulation of historical narratives, through real encounters and true stories alongside those of the mythic and fictional, filtered through the imagination. In *Island Stories*, the relationship between fact and fiction becomes much more complex within both the form of the film and within the narratives of place and landscape. The film employs a set of fictional narrative devices. The narrator tells the story of the travelling filmmaker through her messages, notebooks and conversations, gives an account of his own travels as well as assembling and reporting on the materials of his filmmaker friend and her encounters with Leland and his notes. This construct facilitates navigation through space and narrative in a disparate and complex order, allowing me as the filmmaker to speak from some remove, whilst keeping my own real story and my journeys within the frame. These fictional facets to the film allow for a freedom and fluidity with which to explore accumulations of narratives and a way to gather information of different kinds. In Part One of the film, I quickly move between locations and spatial

narratives, from one place to another. This is made possible by the device of the filmmaker's notebooks, and a narrator who reads these materials at random. The fiction aids in creating the conditions for an essayistic approach to place where a density of narrative can be explored.

The fictional frame is heavily based on the reality of events, of the filmmaking process and my own travels. The three travellers are all in some way parts of, or versions of, myself as researcher and filmmaker. The routes they take and the places they visit are those that I followed on the journeys taken during the production of the film. The written notebooks, the emails and conversations are vehicles through which my own account as a travelling filmmaker are told, elaborated upon and woven together. For the essay, these devices allow for an expansive, wider field of thought, a multilayered rendering of geographical routes and spatial detail, a more complex weaving of narrative and comment, a building up of essay content through many voices and multiple forms of communication. These also complicate the essay with regard to authorship, to the origins of the images seen and the order of events and routes.

It is not only with the essay film form but also within the content of the film, within places, that the boundaries of fact and fiction are blurred and the film exploits these figments of place. Much of the narrative voice-over addresses places directly as fact, through historical narratives and a direct account of the spatial encounter. But there are also many instances in *Island Stories* where, like the myths and stories emanating from places told in *The Fifth Continent*, the imagined and mythic aspects of places come to the fore. Often these take the form of half-truths, past stories that themselves are part truth, part fiction. Within Part Three of the film, the filmmaker visits Dozmary Pool, where she writes that King Arthur "rowed out to meet the lady of the lake who gave him the sword Excalibur". This is narrated over stationary shots of the lake (figure 3.10). This attaches the myth of King Arthur to place and embeds a historical fiction within the landscape. Elsewhere, the story of a visitation from the devil in Widdecomb in the Moor church, a story embedded within the present space through commemorative plaques, emphasises the fantastical as it filters the real and how this emerges in the present of place as myth and folklore. There are the stories of Rendlesham forest and a military UFO incident, an event rooted in factual accounts, but essentially remaining speculation and fantasy. These litter the essay with the imagined aspects of place, with myths and stories passed down as legends,

with fictional renderings of the places overlaid onto the real, giving a further multilayered composite. There are also passages concerned with fictional books emanating from space. A few images show a glimpse of the Jamaica Inn, and the voice-over outlines how Daphne Du Maurier was inspired to write the novel *Jamaica Inn* by her stay there.³⁹ So in turn, this real location was fictionalized in a novel and is now synonymous with its fictional version. Images of Whitby in Part Six are accompanied by a narrative linking Bram Stoker's *Dracula*,⁴⁰ to the seaside town, purportedly where the seeds for the book were sown and fragments of true events and a sense of place found their way into the work. This layers another aspect within my film, those instances in which real places are imbued with their fictional representations.

There are also numerous instances where events and places in the film are embellished with a fictional lens. In the visit to the observatory in Part Five, the narrator says that he “had seen the northern lights one clear evening”. In reality, I did visit the observatory and it is in fact possible to see the northern lights at this location, but on this occasion I did not. The account is given a fictional slant, because it adds something to the place and to the event, something nearer to a poetic rendering of the potential of place, allowing for the relaying of information not immediately experienced. Elsewhere, the filmmaker spent the day “crossing every bridge” in Newcastle. There is something in this act that grounds the travelling filmmaker within the landscape, an obsessive experience of place. However, on my visit I did not cross the bridges, only observed them. So this encounter with place is embellished, through playing with the truth of events and building upon the reality of the encounter a more richly articulated view of place is achieved.

Travel, movement and place as active

Island Stories is a film with travel at its centre, created through a number of journeys that are also central to the narrative. Corrigan has considered how encounters with place are an essential approach of the essay film, a practice that has utilised the “journey, the walk, or the exploration”,⁴¹ to move through “different, new or well known environments to create essays in which the experience of space redefines the self”.⁴² Following Corrigan's words, travelling for *Island Stories* provided the conditions through which the essayistic subject could take shape. There are three

facets to travelling within *Island Stories* and its production; travel as research process, travel as film production and travel as film narrative. The process of travelling provided the conditions through which to film space, to capture landscapes, people and places. These production journeys acted as an essayistic vehicle, both a production process filming the encounter and a research process into places, their structures, rhythms, histories and narratives. This extends from the specificity of one place to the universal, an understanding of space by being within it, experiencing, observing and recording. As the essay takes form from the landscape encounter, in the assembly, edit and writing of the film, the journeys become a part of the film narrative. The journeys taken become film form and plot, where research and encounter are again mapped onto space through narrative voice attached to images.

The act of journeying further becomes embedded within the content of the film through the frequent references to other travellers through England and their accounts of these journeys. In the initial stages of planning the film and deciding upon its form as a travelogue, I was reading a number of historical British travelogues alongside more contemporary psychogeography. These added a historical dimension to my thinking. H. V. Morton's book *In Search of England*, captures snippets of the country and its pasts through a motorcar journey of discovery and blends detailed descriptions of place both contemporary and through the lens of the past, with other landscape narratives and autobiography. I also make reference to this book within *Island Stories*, about viewing home from elsewhere.⁴³ Similarly, I also refer to William Cobbett within *Island Stories* and the strange story of his exhumation of Thomas Paine's bones. Cobbett's book *Rural Rides* follows his journeys by horse throughout the country, a political treatise of sorts and a travelogue through which to chart the rural conditions of England.⁴⁴ Further, my discovery of John Leland and his travels carried out between 1534-1543, helped shape *Island Stories* in both its focus on historical narratives within the landscape and as a narrative device where Leland becomes a character in the film.⁴⁵ Leland's *The Itinerary* contains an exploration of the topography and antiquity of Britain carried out as he travelled through England. I became fascinated with Leland and his biography and he became a kind of illusive fellow traveller in the film. These British travelogues as well as others influenced my own journey approach in *Island Stories* and in recording the details of place through geographic movement, but also become

a part of the narrative of the film, adding historical layers through the lens of other journeys mirroring my own.

Positioning the journey at the centre of *Island Stories* served another function. Through the encounter with the landscape and through the assembly of the film, place becomes active. As thought and experience are mapped onto place, the narratives of place are awakened and woven into the film. I have referred to psychogeography and the figure of the flâneur a number of times throughout this thesis, especially in relation to Jem Cohen's city essays and Chris Petit's motorcar *dérive*. I suggested that what psychogeography does, how it transforms place and represents landscapes, can itself be seen as an adept conceptualization of an essaying place. Like Cohen and Petit, *Island Stories* marries thought and the inner world with places. An essayistic tendency is at work, delving into place, beneath the surface and into the gaps, to place beyond the façade, an imaginative opening up to the possibilities of place across lines of thought and topographical lines. In this way then, there is something essayistic in the very act of the spatial encounter itself, through a mode of mental attentiveness to the world, a world that shifts and shapes through this engagement. Psychogeography is both a method and an outcome, a process and subsequent representation that emerges through this process. I became immersed in place as filmmaker and researcher and the film is rooted in this spatial encounter; in this way, the essay takes shape through these spaces whilst also remapping the voice in the film in a dialogue with place.

Beyond film, there were other voices from literature that became reference points for responses to place through the journey. The works that influenced my own approach were largely personal, subjective approaches to place, poetic responses to the landscape and texts that could be considered experimental travelogues or as psychogeographic in their approach. There is a shared approach and set of concerns between these works and my own. Iain Sinclair's work has remained a constant influence and to my approach to *Island Stories* in particular, in his personal, subjective accounts of spaces in England that blend historical narrative with biographical detail and wide reaching anecdotes, connecting threads of thought and aligned through a geographical drift. I re-read his *Hackney, That Rose-Red Empire*, a book of weavings, excursions, spatial narratives and stories of people and place throughout Hackney, a web held together by the landscape and by the author as essayist, by his walks, digesting and re-ordering Hackney and its small and large

histories and narratives. Structured as chapters within chapters named after places, streets and people, it meanders and fragments place and time across half forgotten stories and the hidden corners of the borough.⁴⁶ Sinclair's writing and approach is certainly within frame in *Island Stories*, with its movement through places, recording impressions and details, seeking detailed histories and the buried strata of places, connecting up multiple locations and narratives, weaving a web around places and drawing together different threads. Similarly, the influence of this book can be felt in the structuring of my material for *Island Stories* in chapters, material linked by place or theme, groupings of landscape and narrative.

Like Sinclair, the work of W.G. Sebald aligned closely with my own intentions, from the conception of the films and my research into the essay form and place. His use of the landscape in conjuring narrative and historical detail renders his books essayistic in their representation of places, a multilayered assembly of narratives and digressions across the past and the present, aided by movement through space. In the book *Austerlitz*, Sebald uses a fictional character, as well as a narrator to tell the story and he uses locations to explore a Europe lost in time, whose histories are held within places. Sebald's blend of fact and fiction had a significant effect on the writing and narrative devices used in *Island Stories*.⁴⁷ His earlier book, *The Rings of Saturn*, follows the narrator's route through East Anglia on foot, an English travelogue of sorts that connects spaces with histories and memoir.⁴⁸ Sebald seamlessly moves between narratives and times in the book, finding threads with which to weave disparate strands of narrative into a whole essayistic response to the landscape. Before making *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories*, I considered the ways in which something similar to Sebald's approach could be achieved through film, where encounters with places in England could be used as a methodology for filmmaking and for creating the conditions through which to explore places through their histories and narratives. Sebald's approach to place and the form of the book shares much with that of Iain Sinclair and also with approaches to place by essay filmmakers, especially Patrick Keiller and Chris Petit in their encounters with English landscapes and history.

An essaying of place in practice

Key to an essayistic response to places is a critical approach, an interrogation of places and their structures, not just a film about them as a subject. Place is active within the spatial essay film; it is not a backdrop or a setting, a landscape scene or vista within which to situate a story. Nor is the identity of places fixed or static. Place and landscape in the essay film are active elements whose meanings are shifting and fluid. The many dialogical elements of narratives, filmed images, landscapes and found footage are positioned together through montage and unified through the essay voice, inviting the viewer to shape and create meaning and thus generate an image of place and its pasts made up from constitutive elements. The viewer becomes a part of the process of thought. All of these layers, threads, elements and fragments amalgamate into a spatial cacophony in the essay film, an immersion of sight and sound, landscape and history that works towards capturing a sense of place.

Anne Whiston Spirn, in her book *The Language of Landscape*, has considered the coming together of a wealth of elements in formulating an understanding of place. She states that, “a place is particular, a tapestry of woven contexts”, such as the enduring and ephemeral, local and global, the past and future and that landscapes are made up of narrative strands where, “many stories have been shaped over tens of thousands of years, others over several human lifetimes, still others are just emerging”.⁴⁹ This eloquently articulates the way in which place is structured and conceptualised, and thus how it might be represented. The idea of landscape as woven narratives over time is mirrored in consideration of the essay form itself. Rascaroli has written how the process of thought is woven into the essayistic text, where the essay is seen as a “moving tapestry”,⁵⁰ building upon the writings of Adorno, who notes of the essay that, “concepts do not build a continuum of operations, thought does not advance in a single direction, rather the aspects of the argument interweave as in a carpet”.⁵¹ This idea of weaving makes clear how an essayistic approach to place is one in which many layers, narratives, times and registers are woven through the film fabric. Place is allowed to thicken through the essay film, accumulating narratives, times, spatial encounters, landscape images and audiovisual material into a dense composite of place filtered through the subjective prism of the essayist’s voice. To essay place is to use the form to articulate the

complexities of place through a meandering thought alongside a probing camera mapping its spaces.

The Fifth Continent and *Island Stories* form the culmination of my practice for this thesis. As I have explored in this chapter, an essaying of place is the result of the many processes unfolding; pre- and post-production research into places, theoretical research, travelling and the production of the film, post-production, editing and writing, all of which evolved simultaneously, feeding into each other. It is this process-oriented angle that a practice as research methodology makes possible, where insight is gleaned from being within places, through doing and making, from conception to completion. The processes of filmmaking and research are present in the film as structuring devices and as narrative content. The film's own processes are contained within it, highlighting the self-reflexivity of the essay form. I outlined the geography of the film as situated within the spaces of England where through travel, a wide web of space broadens the essayistic potential and where an essayistic understanding of the complexity of place can't be developed without seeking out connections between the local and the global. I also explored cinematography and the way in which different spaces and encounters are captured visually within the film, from hand-held street images, to static long takes of the landscape, resulting in an image of places grounded in the encounter and allowing for particular configurations of narrative and image.

I established how reality and fiction merge in *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories* and how the essay film plays with the borders of documentary and fiction film practices whilst blurring the boundaries of reality and fantasy within the narrative of places themselves. I explored the essay voice in *Island Stories* and the way in which three voices are filtered through a narrator. The narrative devices of notebooks and epistolary modes of address, as well as the account of the narrator as he relays events and stories, are used to convey the many layers of place, the cultural, political and historical coordinates of place, as well as communicating the subjective encounter of the journeys. I explored the idea of multiplicity in seeing places as multilayered and dense with narratives and threads. I also mapped *Island Stories* as production routes and as an essayistic map that redraws these routes according to the structure of the film and its spatial order, showing geographically the workings of the essay film in its fragmentation and fluidity. Previously, I established how Massey sees place as the sphere of the existence of multiplicity, plurality and heterogeneity,⁵²

and explored Relph's idea of places as multifaceted; a chiaroscuro of setting, landscape, ritual and routine.⁵³ In *Island Stories* I sought to follow these, and many other routes into place gleaned through geography and spatial theory, where place emerges as a multifaceted and multilayered construct, an accumulation of narratives and experiences, of varied rhythms of daily life, of links within and between different places, as culturally, social and historically heterogeneous.

In Hans Richter's writing on the essay form, he argues that, "in its effort to make visible the invisible world of imaginations, thoughts and ideas, the essayistic film can tap into an incomparably larger reservoir of expressive means than the pure documentary film".⁵⁴ With its fictional devices and imaginative opening up of place as well as weaving of thought process and subjective rumination along with the unfolding journeys of the film, *Island Stories* seeks to map place through this reservoir of expressive means. He continues by describing how the essay pulls together material from everywhere, and in this way "one can jump throughout space and time",⁵⁵ a passage reflected in *Island Stories* through its accumulation of information, its fragmented narrative disorientation split between three voices where a disordered sequentiality of events occurs that jumbles place and time across England. *Island Stories* collates the many facets of the landscape and its narrative contexts together, a composite image of place, densely rendered through a multi-textual film form that layers and weaves narrative and image. The film brings these many images and stories together along with the spatial encounter of the journey, the research and production process and an emerging progression of thought. As such, the film documents an essayistic meandering in time, place, narrative and thought. The different registers for place and the breadth of information given, the many angles of enquiry, the facts and figures of place as well as the imaginative and fantastical, the emotional and sensory all come together into a unified essay. The film layers historical narratives, observational information and various themes and thoughts emanating from the subjective encounter of the journeys around the country. It is this composite, multiple and dense representation that constitutes an essaying of place through film in *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories*.

¹ William Least Heat-Moon, *PrairieEarth (a deep map)*, (New York: First Mariner Books Edition, 1999), 17-18.

² Paul Arthur, "Essay Questions", *Film Comment* (January/ February 2003), 59.

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- ³ Laura Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film* (Wallflower Press: London, 2009), 39.
- ⁴ Brian Dillon, *Essayism* (London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2017), 67-68.
- ⁵ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 9.
- ⁶ Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion Limited, 1976), 29.
- ⁷ H.V. Morton (1927), *In Search of England* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1930).
- ⁸ Julian Green (1983), *Paris* (London: Penguin, 2012).
- ⁹ Jean-Pierre Gorin, "Proposal for a Tussle", in *Essays on the Essay Film*, edited by Nora M. Alter and Timothy Corrigan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 272.
- ¹⁰ *Nonstop Metropolis: A New York City Atlas*, edited by Rebecca Solnit and Joshua Jelly-Schapiro (California: University of California Press, 2016).
- ¹¹ Philip Lopate, "Introduction", *The Art of the Personal Essay*, edited by Philip Lopate (New York Anchor Books, 1995), xxxviii.
- ¹² Lucy R Lippard, *All Over the Place: The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York: The New Press, 1997).
- ¹³ Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera*, 15.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*, 33.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*, 32.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*, 33.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*, 115.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid*, 116.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid*, 146.
- ²⁰ George Perec (1974), "Species of Spaces", *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, edited and translated by John Sturrock (London: Penguin, 1997).
- ²¹ Aldous Huxley *The Art of Seeing* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1943), 15.
- ²² Huxley, *The Art of Seeing*, 47.
- ²³ *Ibid*, 15.
- ²⁴ Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton NJ and Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 2001).
- ²⁵ T.S. Eliot (1922), "The Wasteland", *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1934).
- ²⁶ Catherine Lupton, "Who in the World: Essay Film, Transculture and Globality", in *Telling Stories: Countering Narrative in Art, Theory and Film*, edited by Jane Tormey and Gillian Whiteley (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2009), 235.
- ²⁷ Jaimie, Baron, *The Archive Effect* (London: Routledge, 2014), 18.
- ²⁸ Isabelle McNeill, *Memory and the Moving Image: French Film in the Digital Era* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), 137.
- ²⁹ Rascaroli, *The Personal Camera*, 21.
- ³⁰ Timothy Corrigan, *The Essay Film: From Montaigne, After Marker* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 51.
- ³¹ Corrigan, *The Essay Film*, 106.
- ³² Michael Renov, *The Subject of Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 73.
- ³³ Jonathan Raban, *Soft City* (London: Picador, 2008), 2.
- ³⁴ Ben Highmore, *Cityscapes: Cultural Readings in the Material and Symbolic City* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan 2005), 5.
- ³⁵ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven F. Rendall (California: University of California Press, 1984), 93.
- ³⁶ Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), 7.
- ³⁷ H.G. Wells (1901), *The First Men in the Moon* (London: Penguin, 2005).
- ³⁸ The film shot on location in the church is the 1963 film: *Dr Syn: Alias the Scarecrow*, directed by James Neilson (UK, 1963).
- ³⁹ Daphne du Maurier (1936), *Jamaica Inn* (London: Virago, 2003).
- ⁴⁰ Bram Stoker (1897), *Dracula* (London: Penguin, 2003).

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- ⁴¹ Corrigan, *The Essay Film*, 104.
- ⁴² Ibid, 105.
- ⁴³ Morton, *In Search of England*, 1. I reference a passage in which Morton writes of his imagining of an idyllic English scene whilst he suffered with illness in Jerusalem as a catalyst for his travels around England.
- ⁴⁴ William Cobbett (1830), *Rural Rides* (London: Penguin, 2001).
- ⁴⁵ John Chandler, *John Leland's Itinerary: Travels in Tudor England* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1993). Leland's manuscript is available in many different book formats, for reference I read this edited modern language translation.
- ⁴⁶ Iain Sinclair, *Hackney, That Rose-Red Empire: A Confidential Report* (London: Penguin, 2010).
- ⁴⁷ W.G. Sebald (2001), *Austerlitz*, translated by Anthea Bell (London: Penguin, 2001).
- ⁴⁸ W.G. Sebald (1995), *The Rings of Saturn*, translated by Michael Hulse (London: Vintage, 2013).
- ⁴⁹ Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Language of Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 160.
- ⁵⁰ Laura Rascaroli, "On Fog and Snow: Thought As Movement, or The Journey of the Essay Film", in *Telling Stories: Countering Narrative in Art, Theory and Film*, edited by Jane Tormey and Gillian Whiteley (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2009), 246.
- ⁵¹ T.W. Adorno, "The Essay as Form", in *The Adorno Reader*, edited by Brian O'Conner (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 101.
- ⁵² Massey, *For Space*, 9.
- ⁵³ Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 29.
- ⁵⁴ Hans Richter, "The Film Essay: A New Form of Documentary Film", in *Schreiben Bilder Sprechen: Texte zum essayistischen film*, edited by Christa Blümlinger and Constatin Wulff translated by Richard Langston (Wien: Sonderzahl, 1992), 197.
- ⁵⁵ Richter, "The Film Essay", 197.

CONCLUSION

“I’m writing you this letter from a distant land. Its name is Siberia. For most of us, that name suggests nothing but a frozen devil’s island – and for the Czarist general Andreyevich, it was the biggest vacant lot in the world. Fortunately, there are more things on heaven and earth than any general, Siberian or not, has ever dreamed of”. Chris Marker, *Lettre de Sibérie* (1957)

These first spoken words in *Letter From Siberia* are particularly significant in thinking about place and the essay film. The voice-over communicates impressions of an alien environment as a traveller writes letters home from Siberia. The passage gives a historical and political coordinate for place at the outset and also alludes to the shape and form of essayistic representation in what is to follow. This “vacant lot”, this “frozen devil’s island”, is in fact dense with narratives and histories, with people and cultures, with the rhythms of daily life, all of which become the subject of the film as the narrator travels through Siberia. Place, like the essay, is richly abundant and inexhaustible. This thesis set out to explore the representation of place in the essay film. As I initially outlined, many essay films have at their core an encounter with cities and landscape and it is the nature of this response to place that became my object of study.

I employed a practice as research methodology through which I hope to have expanded the parameters of the research by making two essay films that approach places in different ways. My research and process of film production, as well as the finished films, offer an insight into what I have called throughout the thesis, an essaying of place. This practice was grounded in the landscapes of England and the spatial encounter became fundamental as film material, as research process and as film production method. The unfolding of practice and the development of a theoretical approach that run through the thesis were intertwined at all stages, a mutual practice and theory relationship that I hope has offered an insightful methodology in approaching the research questions and aims. Working within the established theoretical framework of a spatial approach to Film Studies, I sought to trace a path that considered specifically the relationship between place, landscape and the essay form. Through bringing together scholarship on the essay film with historical, geographic and spatial theory along with a film practice, I hope to have opened up avenues into an understanding of the essayistic representation of place and landscape.

I began the thesis in Chapter One by focusing on my films *The Fifth Continent* and *Island Stories*, thinking of essaying as an active process, not only as a finished form. Beginning the thesis with the process of filmmaking allowed for an insight into the essay film as it approaches place through various stages of development along a timeline. I aimed to establish an essaying whereby the entire process comes fully into view, from conception to completion of the films, through travelling, researching and writing. In this way, I sought to document knowledge gained through doing, through being situated within place as observer and filmmaker and as researcher gathering place-based information, and through all aspects of film production. I established the different geographical and methodological approach used in each film, from the confined landscape of Romney Marsh to the broad sweep of countrywide journeys. I looked closely at the development of the films from conception to production, treatments and script writing in forming an essaying of place. These insights into essaying and representing place through doing and making were afforded by a reflective, process-oriented practice research methodology. I also developed my initial theoretical approach to place in this chapter through a scholarly research process that sought to find a theoretical counterpart that reflected and built upon ideas on place I gathered through the process of filmmaking and of my own research into places.

Chapter Two considered my own practice in the context of other essay films. Establishing temporality as central to the essayistic representation of place, this chapter explored the concept of time as one of shallow time and the passing of everyday life and also of a deep time in place, where layers of history and past narratives converge within the landscape. I considered these temporal concepts from the perspective of urban space in the films *Lost Book Found* and *Amber City* by Jem Cohen, that of the American landscape in James Benning's *Four Corners* and Lee Ann Schmitt's *California Company Town* returning to a drift through time in English and other landscapes in Chris Petit's *Content*. Bringing together theoretical coordinates from geography and spatial theory with scholarship on the essay form, I sought to unpack the representational strategies of the essay film and to articulate the structures of place and landscape in order to describe what image of place emerges in the essay film. I used these case studies in conjunction with my own films, both of which positioned time as a key driver for articulating place, a concept developed through being within the landscape itself during film production and observing its

physical layers of time as architecture and landscape features and also through pre and post-production research into the narratives of places that formed the script and voice-over.

Chapter Three focused on an analysis of both *The Fifth Continent* and in particular *Island Stories*. This chapter gathered together an analysis through multiple angles of enquiry in order to most comprehensively engage with my practice, exploring my films from the perspective of multiplicity, mapping the journeys taken and remapping these locations in the order of the film, showing the fragmentation and fluid nature of essayistic representation and the relationship between landscape and narrative, image and text. I also explored the devices of the notebook and diary as production method and narrative and looked at the use of archival images in *Island Stories* as layers of time within place embedded in the film as textual material. Further, the enmeshing of fact and fiction in both film form and within places themselves offered a view that opened up the imaginary of place, the essay film playing with the registers of reality and fantasy, fact and fiction.

I established the filmic rendering of place as an essaying, a unique configuration made possible by the workings, functions and aesthetics of the form. The essay film, my study aimed to show, is an ideal vehicle for capturing and communicating the complexity, abundance and many layered, multifaceted nature of place. As the essay takes shape through the spatial encounter, place provides a wealth of material through which the essay can come into being. The spatial encounter emerged as a key methodology in the essay film and in the exploration of landscape, as the essayist responds to place through being within it, where the essay emerges through these encounters, emanating from the spaces visited. Within the essay film, narratives, multi-textual images, layers of history, the many fragments of place, merge, converge and interweave into a kaleidoscopic, composite image.

This thesis has offered a necessary examination of the essay film and the representation of place and has aspired to shed light onto an area of scholarship that contributes to the spatial study of film in a novel way. With the frequent employment of a spatial encounter as narrative device for an investigation of place, I have sought to unpack and understand this area of the essay film, exploring the unique and complex representational response to place and landscape, where form and content are inextricably intertwined. Through the production of two films unfolding alongside theoretical research, a privileged insight could be gained as an insider, as a

practitioner examining their own practice and addressing the research questions through film production and analysis. In my case, working with the essay film, a reflexive and generically hybrid form, its own processes became bound up with its production and in this way, theory and practice were always closely shackled together. Analysing the representation of place in the case studies of the essay films of others, whilst employing an essayistic film form to approach place through a personal practice, offered insight through a dual process that I hope binds tightly in this thesis. Through a practice methodology and the production of films as an investigative method and embodiment of the theoretical coordinates of the research, I also hope to have contributed to showing the potential for practice as research methodologies for future Film Studies scholarship.

With a focus on the spatial study of film and in particular the production of an essay film as an integral component, this thesis has, I believe, opened up avenues for future research. It is concerned with understanding the form, aesthetics and strategies of the essay film as it approaches space and place, in this way aiming to contribute to debates in the spatial study of film, whilst also considering the ways in which the essay film can capture and depict places. Further study need not then be one on genre or form, nor an overview or survey of place and the essay film in general. Rather, I see the potential for further scholarship that uses the essay film as a tool or method through which to carry out spatial research into specific places. Chapter Three began with a quotation from William Least Heat-Moons book *PrairyErth (a deep map)*,¹ his dense evocation of the grassland prairies in Kansas, within which is contained a wealth of information and narrative focused on a small stretch of landscape. He calls this study a deep map, an approach to examining place made up of a depth, of layers, digging through the soil, into time as well as exploring its minutiae, its stories, its people. It is multilayered, minutely detailed and a wildly diverse exploration of place.

This idea of a deep map has much in common with the essaying of place explored in this thesis. There has been significant interest in the spatial humanities in the idea of deep mapping.² Studies within this area are often concerned with not only a geographical mapping of space but also one that forges a deeper understanding and engagement with places. I also mentioned the book *Non Stop Metropolis: A New York City Atlas* and the way in which it builds up an image of New York through maps, images and information concerned with different facets of the city, a layering

of landscape, subjects, stories and histories of the city and its people.³ For me, this accumulation results in a deep mapping of New York. There is then potential in an overlap between the detailed exploration of place through the essay film and this idea of a deep map. In this thesis, I approached an idea of essayistic mapping, plotting my production routes on maps as they occurred during travelling for *Island Stories* and reconstructing these locations on a map in the order that they then appear in the finished film. This mapped the workings and structures of the essay geographically, showing a fragmented, dense network of lines crossing backwards and forwards across the map, a weaving of the essay through England. For me, this made concrete the idea that an essaying of place could be one that is linked to a kind of mapping.

Following this then, the spatial essay film can be seen as its own map, plotting narrative and information onto landscape through the assembly of image and word. It is a form that enacts a deep map of place through a building up of spaces, narratives, histories and voices, through an accumulation of filmed images, archival materials and in-depth spatial research. Rather than expand as a web across space through travel like the approach taken in *Island Stories*, I envision that this could rather take a small geographical area as subject where place is explored in depth, vertically, like that of the approach taken in *PrairyErth*. Place would become known through an engagement with a concentrated landscape, its narratives and history, through interviews with people who live and work within a place and through an engagement with local and national archives and found footage, along with a sustained encounter with the landscape over time, capturing daily rhythms, observing and experiencing place in all its minutiae. It would be geographically specific, densely multi-textual and utilize a wide range of narrative devices and voices, building up spatial narratives over a depth of time. The focus would not be on film form, but on spatial research, where the essay film is employed as a device through which a deep map can form and where the weight falls onto place itself as subject. This, I believe, offers the potential for a future pathway through the spatial humanities, the essay film and practice as research, one that builds upon the outcomes of this thesis.

¹ William Least Heat-Moon, *PrairyErth (a deep map)*, (New York: First Mariner Books Edition, 1999).

² Two examples of scholarship exploring deep mapping are: *Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives*, edited by David J Bodenhamer, John Corrigan and Trevor M. Harris

(Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015); and a special issue of *Humanities* journal, “Deep Mapping”, *Humanities*, Special Issue, edited by Les Roberts (2016), https://www.mdpi.com/journal/humanities/special_issues/DeepMapping.

³ *Nonstop Metropolis: A New York City Atlas*, edited by Rebecca Solnit and Joshua Jelly-Schapiro (California: University of California Press, 2016).

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PRACTICE FILMOGRAPHY

The Fifth Continent, (2015) 23 minutes

Aspect ratio: 4:3

Super 8mm black and white film, digitized to HD video.

Written, filmed and edited: Adam Freeman

Soundtrack: Adam Freeman

Voice: Anonymous via voicebunny.com

Film processed and digitized by Gauge Film Lab, Bilston.

Filmed on location in Romney Marsh, Kent, 2015.

Island Stories, (2018) 59 minutes

Aspect ratio: 16:9

HD Digital Video

Written, filmed and edited: Adam Freeman

Music/ Soundtrack: Jonathan Fryer

Voice: Adam Freeman

Filmed on location throughout England and Scotland, 2016/ 2017.

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APPENDICES

FIGURES

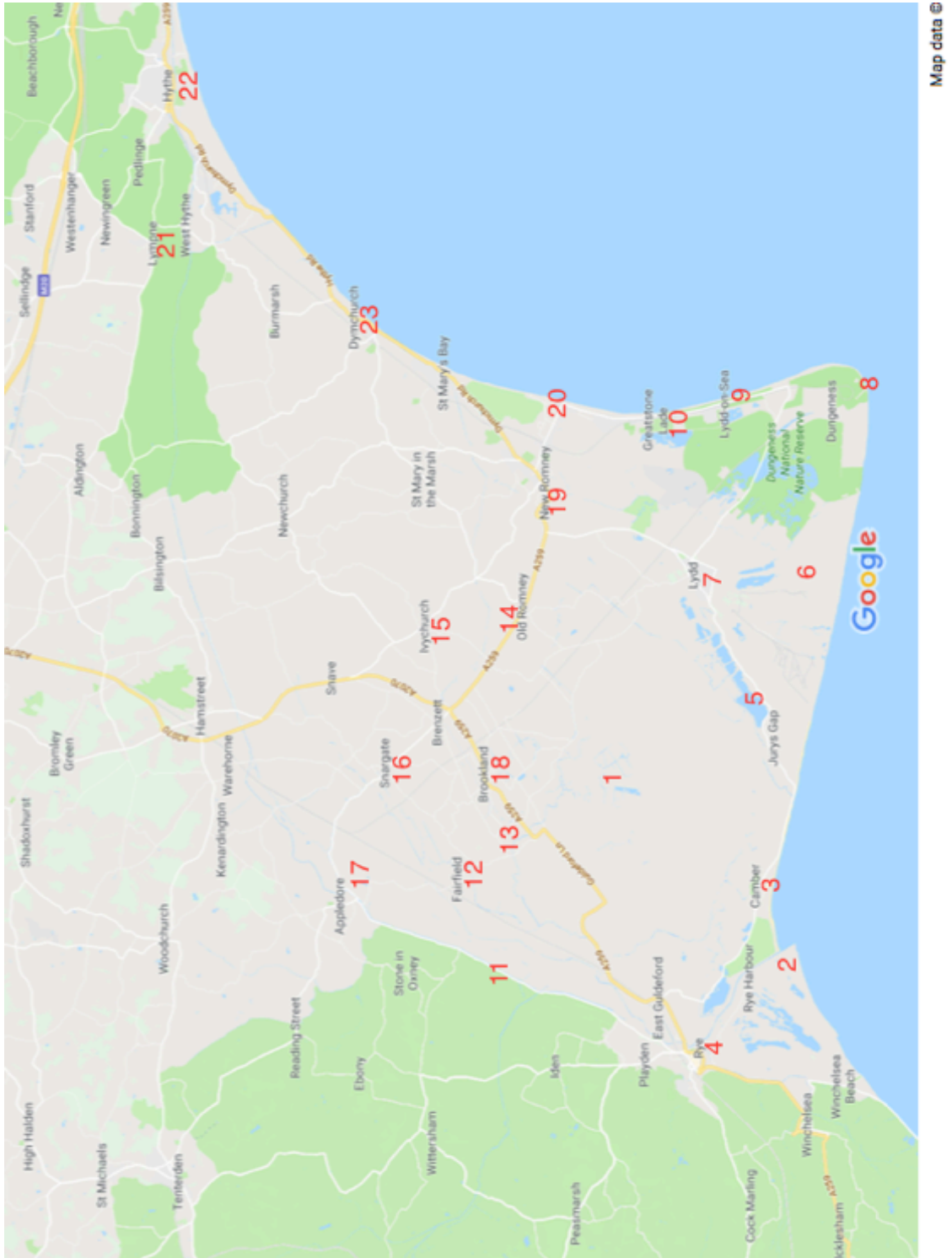


Figure 1.1: *The Fifth Continent* location map

The Fifth Continent filming locations:

1. Little Cheyne Court Wind Farm, a few shots of which are in the film, as well as many nearby sheep grazing fields.
2. Rye Harbour, the salt marshes at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve where migratory birds stop and a Napoleonic era Martello Tower and Second World War pillbox structures are all at this site.
3. Camber Sands, seen in the film after a storm that displaced a large quantity of sand from the beach.
4. Rye town centre: Locations include the model of the town in the tourist centre, the high street, the medieval town gates, the castle and a number of streets in the town.
5. The caravan park with pylons towering above.
6. A large Ministry of Defence site runs along the coast including shooting ranges at Lydd. There is also a police training site including mock townscapes for counter terrorism and civil disorder training.
7. The village of Lydd, where I shot images of streets and houses.
8. The houses, power station and lighthouse at Dungeness beach and nature reserve feature in the film.
9. Two art deco bungalows used as disguised pumping stations for the PLUTO-pipeline under the ocean- operation during the Second World War, to pump oil across the channel during the allied invasion of Normandy in 1944.
10. The large Denge concrete sound mirrors used as an early detection device for aircraft between the wars.
11. The old sea cliffs before the coastline changed and the Royal Military Canal runs along here, between Rye and Hythe.
12. The St Thomas Becket Church, alone in a field near Fairfield.
13. The Cup of Hope and Truth Foundation Christian Spiritual Church and the fifteenth century Woolpack Inn are glimpsed in the film.
14. The church with pink pews, St Clement in Old Romney, where Derek Jarman is buried.
15. The Brenzett Aeronautical Museum.
16. St Dunstan's Church in Snargate, the location of the ship drawn on the church wall.

17. Appledore village – mentioned by name in the narration and I also filmed a pillbox and a part of the Royal Military canal here.
18. Brookland Church, with the freestanding steeple.
19. New Romney street scenes.
20. Water tower at Littlestone and some beach scenes.
21. Lympne, site of the Roman fort ruins and with views across the whole of Romney Marsh to the sea.
22. Hythe town streets and the site of the ossuary at St Leonards Church and nearby pre Second World War sound mirrors.
23. Dymchurch, beach, amusements and site of the Dr Syn shop sign seen in the film. There is also a Martello tower nearby and a Napoleonic war era fort.



Figure 1.2: *The Fifth Continent*



Figure 1.3: *The Fifth Continent*



Figure 1.4: Margate to Hastings

Island Stories filming locations: Margate to Hastings

1. Margate – Various locations including the town streets, the beach, the Shell Grotto and Dreamland fairground.
2. Deal –Seafront, beach and fishing boats, town streets and outside the Deal Timeball Tower museum.
3. Dover – The Citadel and Drop Redoubt forts, Knights Templar Church ruins the Roman House, town streets and ferry port.
4. Hastings – End point

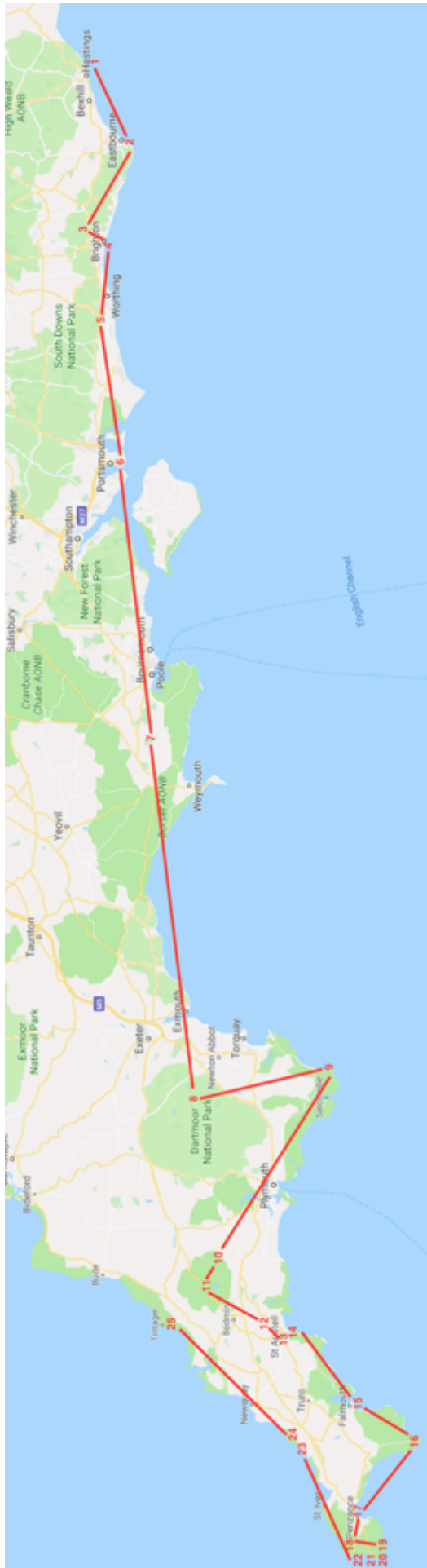


Figure 1.5: Hastings to Tintagel, Cornwall

Island Stories filming locations: Hastings to Tintagel, Cornwall

1. Hastings – Start point
2. Beachy Head – Views and seafront
3. Lewes – The statue of Janus in Grange Gardens, Thomas Paine’s House, High Street. Filmed images of the South Downs on a walk from Lewes.
4. Brighton – I filmed a few images of the seafront passing through in the car.
5. Arundel – Castle and town streets – not used.
6. Portsmouth – The sea, planting flowers near the seafront and restoration of the castle underway.
7. Clouds Hill cottage, crash site and surroundings – T.E Lawrence’s house in Dorset – Not used.
8. Dartmoor National Park – Landscapes, Widdecomb in the Moor Church where the ball lightning incident once took place.
9. Hallsands Village.
10. Bodmin Moor – Mine ruins, the Hurlers Stone Circles and other Neolithic/ stone age sites, Daniel Gumb’s house, quarry and the Cheesewring tor.
11. Dozmary Pool – Mythic Resting place of King Arthur’s sword Excalibur.
12. Eden Project – and nearby locations including a house called Walden’s Pond.
13. St Austell Alps – Mounds of earth and china clay, remnants of mining/ quarrying.
14. Charlestown – Old China Clay port and small coastal village
15. Falmouth – I filmed the town and docks.
16. Lizard Point – Cliffs, rocks and boatyard.
17. Penzance – Street scenes, not used.
18. Lanyon Quoit- Prehistoric burial chamber.
19. Porthcurno – Site of fibre optic and once, telegraph cables, as they come ashore. Filmed the beach, the cable hut, views and runners along the cliff top.
20. Lands End – Filmed tourists and the architecture at the site.
21. Sennen Cover – Beach and other landing site for fiber optic cables

22. Geevor Tin Mine Museum

23. Chapel Porth – Filmed the cove in bad weather and the surrounding mine ruins in the fog.

24. St Agnes Tin Mine – Ruins on the cliff tops.

25. Tintagel Castle – Arthur’s legendary seat.

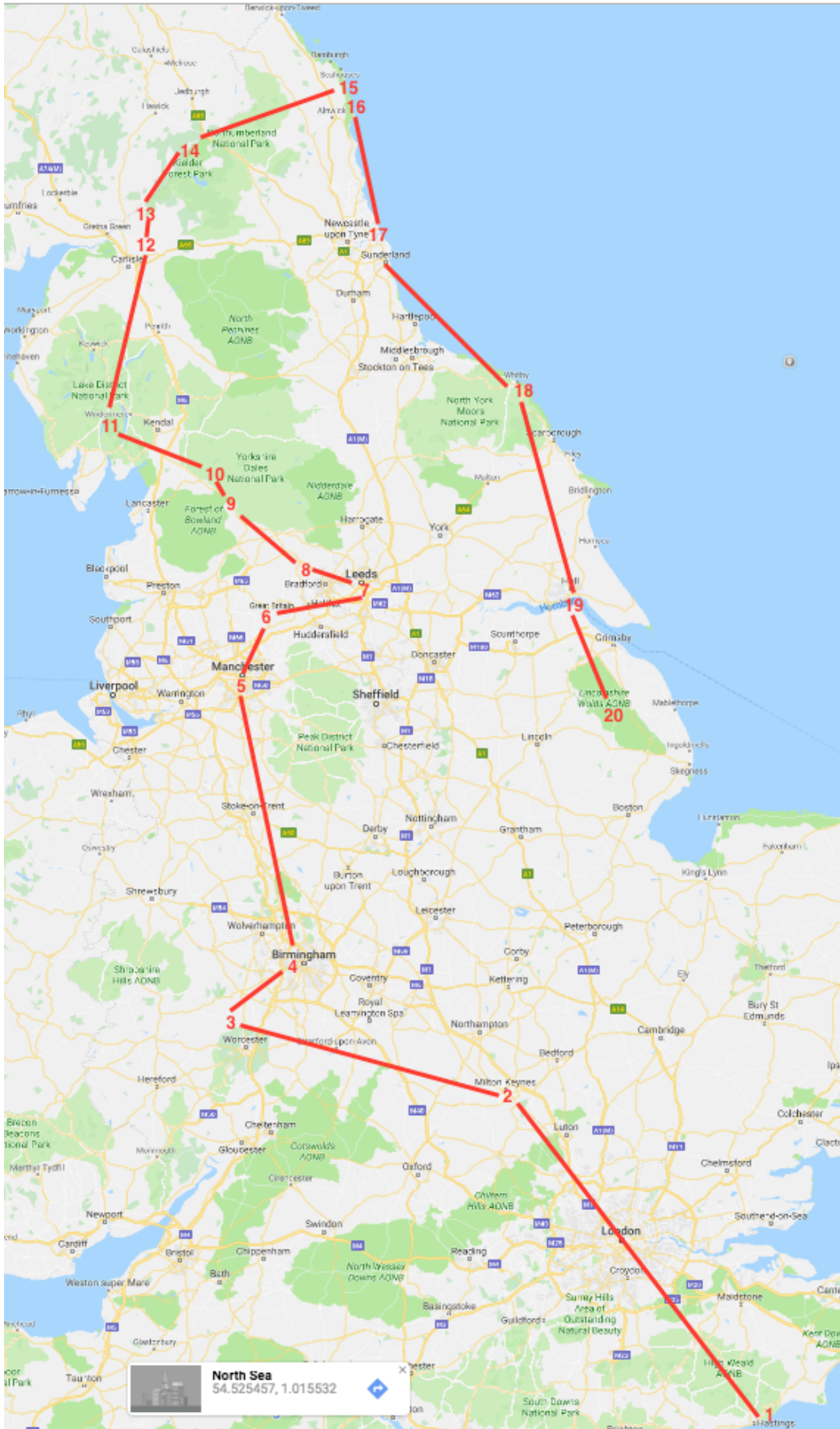


Figure 1.6: Hastings to the Scottish Border and RAF Stenigot

Island Stories filming locations: Hastings to the Scottish border

1. Hastings – Start point
2. Milton Keynes – Town and architecture.
3. Witley Court – Stately home ruins and grounds
4. Birmingham – Walked widely across the city centre, Digbeth and the Jewellery Quarter, filming street scenes, architecture the pen museum and industrial buildings.
5. Manchester – City Centre streets, Salford Lads Club and the Manchester ship canal.
6. Map spot where Great Britain is written on Google Maps, near a village called Mankinholes and close to Todmorden.
7. Leeds Bridge – filmed at the site of Louis Le Prince’s film *Traffic Crossing Leeds Bridge*.
8. Saltaire and Salts Mill – Filmed the village built for workers and the textile factories built by Titus Salt - Not used.
9. Settle – Filmed the town when the flowerpot festival was happening.
10. Ribbleshead Viaduct
11. Lake District -= Landscapes and the gardens at Brantwood, John Ruskin’s House.
12. Hadrian’s Wall
13. The Bewcastle Cross – Filmed the church, graveyard and surrounding landscapes.
14. Kielder Observatory and Kielder forest.
15. Scottish border – Filmed the border marker and landscapes either side of it.
16. Lindisfarne Holy Island – Filmed as the tide came in, Lindisfarne was visible across the bay.
17. Newcastle – Streets at night.
18. Whitby – town streets, fishing boats and the Abbey on the cliff top, site of Dracula’s landing.
19. Humber Bridge
20. RAF Stenigot - Lincolnshire tropospheric scatter dish ruins in a field.

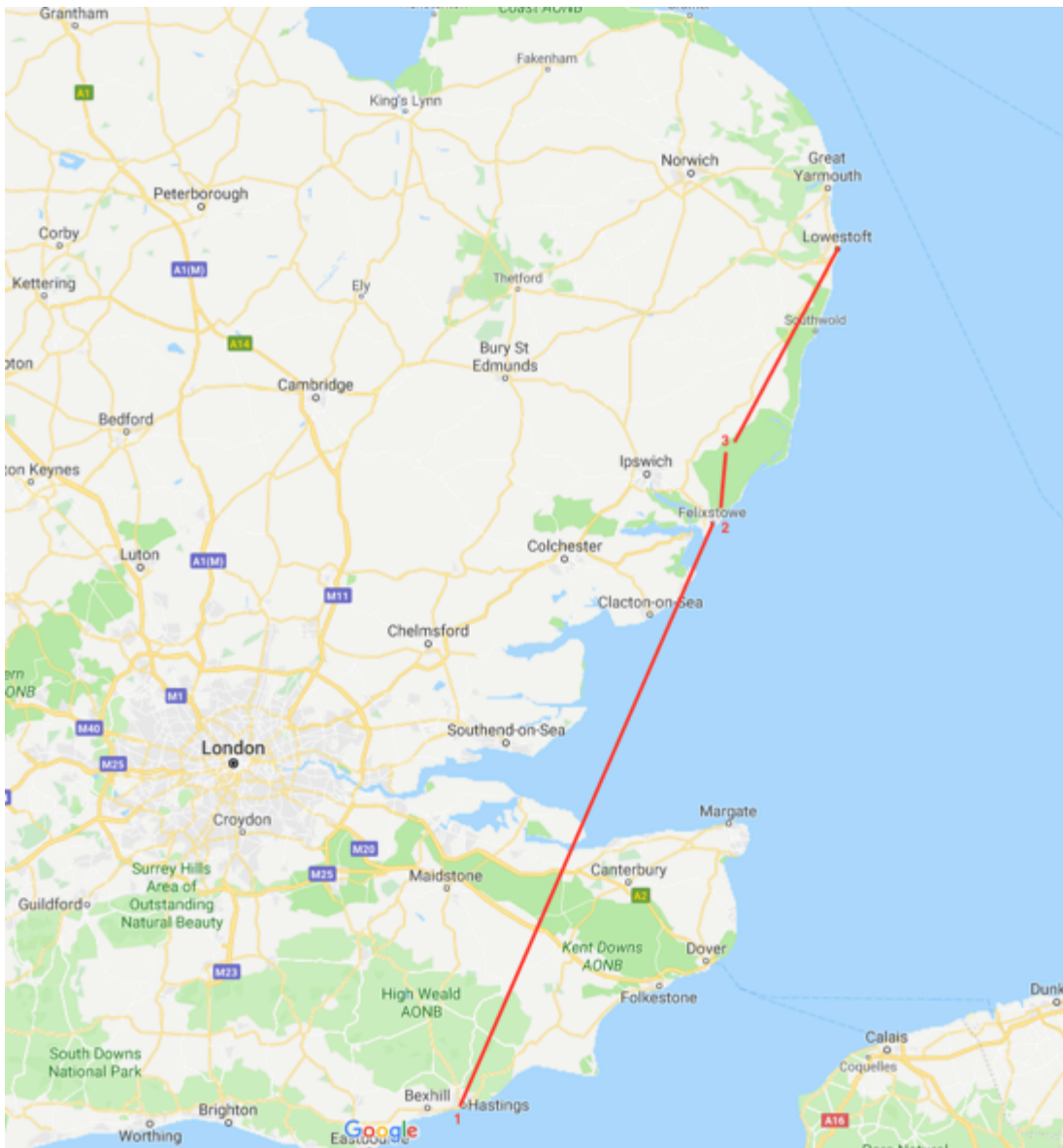


Figure 1.7: Hastings to Lowestoft

Island Stories filming locations: Hastings to Lowestoft

1. Hastings – Start point.
2. Rendlesham Forest – Supposed UFO landing site in the forest.
3. Lowestoft – Far eastern point of England.
4. Felixstowe Docks.



Figure 1.8: *Island Stories*



Figure 1.9: *Island Stories*



Figure 1.10: *Island Stories*

DAY 3 07/26.

• Early start to Hallbards village. It sits due at the edge of a cliff - very difficult to reach down a tiny track and steep hill, after many costly lines high the must make down alongside. Hallbards is notable for what is not there.

There is a village of fishermen & river fisheries, though dredging out in the sea, the government - the water levels rose and high stands protected the village away sit by bit. The stories of the village are fascinating. There is an amazing connection in the destruction of the county through corporate greed and government collaboration.

Two or three houses remain from the original village as well as the ruins that are left. - more houses. One was built on the cliff edge, lost to erosion. A school was built on the site where only a few people were evacuated. The big bridge side high the winding cuts, lanes, farms and pretty villages to Dabur.

Dabur is a spectacular expense. Dominated by the towers and castles - we are at western Dabur + the two adjacent hills. A 19th C tower but set at the base of the hills next to a sheer which would be way down the hillside.

A man starting the route which is was nearly on the coast to coast walk; over 100 miles.

A track for days on hill top - an old tramway for the transportation of coal.

A number of strange attempts were made to be made across the narrow river spectacular, life is slow in these towns & villages - Dabur is most and looks as an island, Dabur is not so much, some

No. _____
Date _____

the past, but a rather long presence - the significance of
 the landscape for the ancient people who lived here is
 the same story for life up on the uppers now.
 Kate, when she stayed with me told me of many places of interest
 & of the lore of the moors. She was a solid woman, & kept
 above her girth which she shared with her dog and a
 many other dogs she looked after, and let the women out to
 Johns - one, a catering student, making potatoes for
 £15000 ~~per year~~ for a 5 week course.
 Tomorrow, I will go to the lecture she talked about.
 She said that the really ~~great~~ ~~deeds~~ deeds would be in
 industry, places for me to visit for my film -
 with my interest in place & the past. She said
 a funny story told at Wilbury, from a doctor at
 the church. She said that my god said it was a visitation
 from the devil, or god's hand. Talk of a black mound
 in the village. Something about 1800 being a hard and
 God's sign was to the west. By my god said she would
 show me on a map & that I would see more of
 the story at the church.
 Kate also showed me a slide of a country about
 Dartmoor - narrated by a faithful farmer. When I
 went to God. It was, quite & I could just take out
 the hills & fields in the morning.

Figure 1.11: Travel and production notebook, Dartmoor and Devon.

Day 4 18/06/16.

the spot

- Started out from father house to Udecant, in the morning - a small and nondescript village. The woman who attended the airport showing us a 'leave badge' - her dog got stuck in a pen, so small and ~~small~~ unloved, seems to be abandoned, it would hardly matter but we are or stay should be granted - as it would have no significant effect here, in the Parish of St. Peter's village. The church on the town wall of significant interest - a stone wall, 3 tablets spelled out an incident of falling debris from the heavens, of many miles in packets and our damage + debris - but high the grace of God - no one was injured.

Then we see the painted faces on the arch, of saints and the grey man - a pagan looking of sacred icon ~~the man was also a priest~~. After this we headed to Balmuccia - across the Tamar into Cornwall, up high hills and woodlands. The moor with ^{the} edge with a wash with relics from many eras. The more we go along the landscape, more and more he where landscape. Chaperon for looks at other (in) near for other. The water study others, two ~~some~~ circles next to one another.

The into the quiet, impressive study above next to some modern houses - the guy looking over the water and we just got with water. ~~run into~~ the pool within which ~~Excerpt~~ was supposedly taken after AM's death. Over the Jamaica Inn - with all its associations. ~~the~~ small where indebted more to the spot than to ached history - St. Exuperius' ~~with~~ place in Balmuccia - perhaps its path is close to the face.

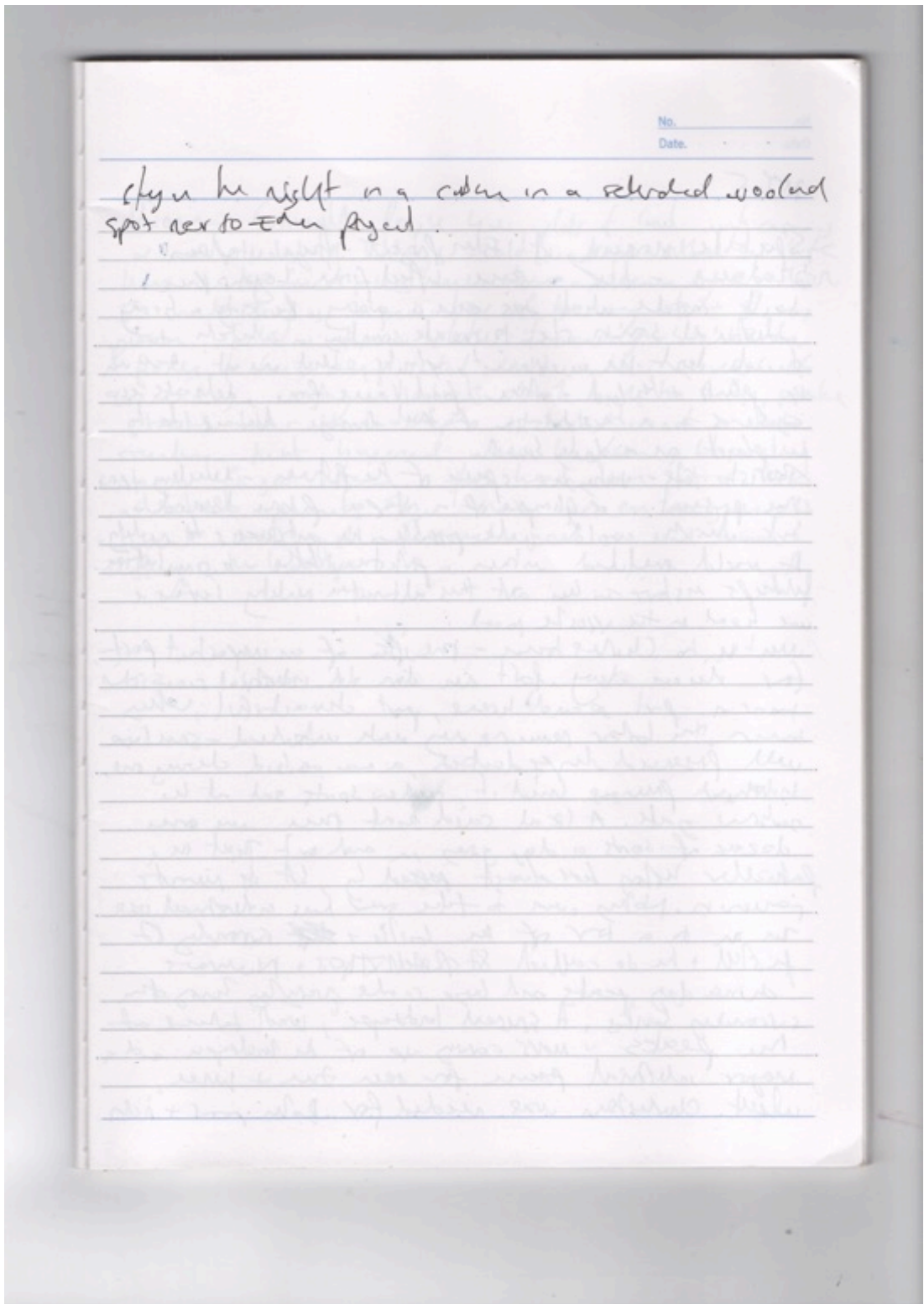
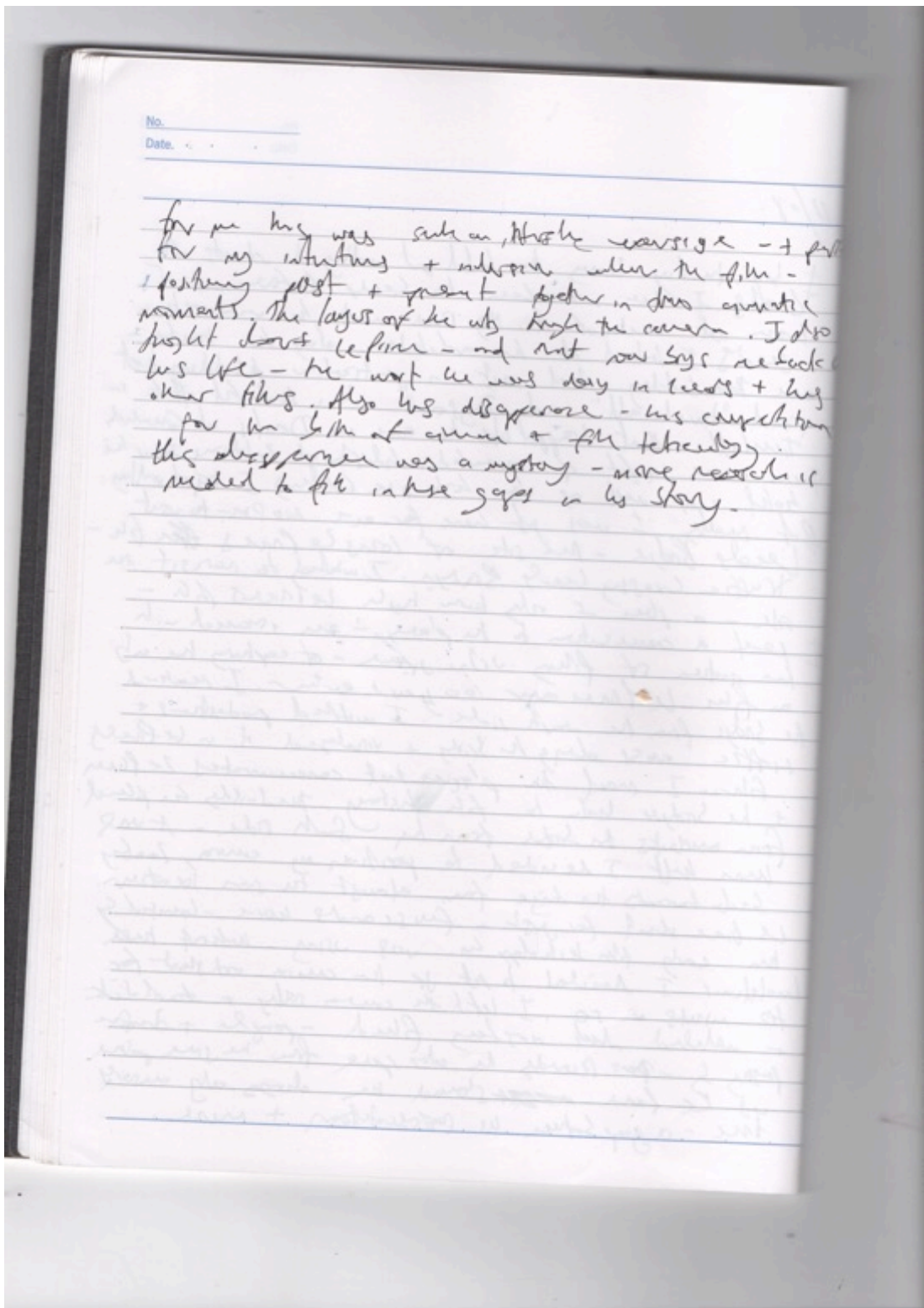


Figure 1.12: Travel and production notebook, Dartmoor and Cornwall.

13/08.

I began the day leaving the hotel and walking the streets of Leeds. I have never been to Leeds before and I know not much of it. My Dad went to university in Leeds. I looked at the architecture along the route - one ~~the~~ building stood out in particular - a building that read "Theatre" and "Dysons" with a beautiful office - "Theatre" - that looked like the one in Deal at Grouse. There were a lot of converted historical buildings near the hotel - as well as other high rise buildings. I kept walking. But really, I was not here for an hour - to visit Leeds Bridge - the site of the Leeds Bridge - the film - Traffic - crossing Leeds Bridge. I wanted to revisit the site - a place I only knew from the internet - I felt a connection to the place - one connected with the garden of film when space - of capturing the city on film. The bridge over 100 years earlier. I wanted the bridge from the north side. I walked pedestrians + traffic east along the bridge + visualized it in the film. I read the plaque that commemorates the film + the bridge back to film history. The bridge is filmed from overlocks on the side from the south side - it was more half I decided to position my camera, looking back towards the bridge from almost the same location. The time shot for just a few seconds here - limited by the early film technology he was using. What time limitation I decided that for the camera and shot for 10 minutes or so. I left the camera rolling + started to walk + watched what was being filmed - people + traffic passing by - for records he was sure that he was going to be fine ~~as~~ stand the things along every time - a guy before the presentation + more.



No. _____
Date.

for me his was such an, ~~the~~ ~~reversion~~ - + for
the my intentions + intention when the film -
1. focusing post + present together in down cinematic
moments. The layers of he why through the camera. I also
thought about before - and not now says he looks
his life - he work he was doing in Leeds + his
other films. Also his disappearance - his competition
for the film of cinema + film technology.
this disappearance was a mystery - more research is
needed to fit in his gaps in his story.

Figure 1.13: Travel and production notebook, Leeds.

20/08/18.

No.
Date.

This morning I left my hotel in Newcastle - slept well and was an early forward to coming on today. I don't plan to stay in the city again but rather head southwards to Wharfedale where I will stay tonight. After two cups of coffee I will come on. I know Newcastle well. Last night I wandered around the city, enjoying its buildings + especially its various buildings - and little of its cultural offerings and the lovely old buildings.

I just drove over the Humber Bridge and bought a camera from the museum. I couldn't really capture what it is. Anyway a shiny bridge - It was once the longest suspension bridge in the world. Correctly to follow + to be a bridge. Just past the bridge is where I am now - RAF Stn 101. I had been given a map location west from the beginning of the project. I found out that there abandoned rather distant from a friend a long time ago - someone with an interest in industrial archaeology + abandoned sites. I then parked up in the town - just got back in the car after walking back to a field - looking over a fence and spending time filming the dishes. I was not too happy when I arrived as there were people already there. I was hoping to be able to film + spend some time here alone. They are so impatient - magazine + completely out of place as they are left over of the site - day with a large transmission radio mast. Which I'm not sure is a part of the original site. The one people I met were a young brother and sister. My visit to the dishes after and had an interest in

exploring abandoned places, they told me about
a nearly abandoned building, just used to be a
hospital - across edge of childrens hospital, I
don't remember after that for a while - but
living in the countryside - about my reason for
being here - they left. I then found the
depot in the town for aged and I was asked
I was supposed to stay the night in Whitby -
but I got home really early this morning after
leaving Newcastle. I hated Whitby. The #2 bus
the hill was really steep, as were the
steps up to it. Dislike was always there
and despite only the small link - this is what
prevented me. Otherwise I felt Whitby was
too touristy - it was so busy I struggled to get
empty seats for my pile of the m/s. I walked
around + found the town walked the people and
high the narrow streets, walked down play on the
rocks. still feeling plenty working the dock. To the
end of my lay day - from weeks away from
Glastonbury. I felt important in Whitby, fed up with
filming and my trust for spends time in places
had diminished. I decided to grab some shirts I
wanted in Whitby and leave - instead of staying at
my girl. knows also I wanted to see these
dishes - if I remember when I did - I could
cross the sidge, film here and drive straight
back to Haskey's. it is about 4 hours from here.
I have no more stops - I am needed by
the doc ahead - by not staying - and will
have tonight.

Figure 1.14: Travel and production notebook, Newcastle, Whitby, RAF Stenigot in
Lincolnshire.



Figure 1.15: *Island Stories* (2018)



Figure 2.1: *Lost Book Found* (Jem Cohen 1996)



Figure 2.2: *Lost Book Found* (Jem Cohen 1996)



Figure 2.3: *Lost Book Found* (Jem Cohen 1996)



Figure 2.4: *Lost Book Found* (Jem Cohen 1996)



Figure 2.5: *Island Stories* (2018)



Figure 2.6: *Island Stories* (2018)



Figure 2.7: *Amber City* (Jem Cohen 1999)



Figure 2.8: *Amber City* (Jem Cohen 1999)

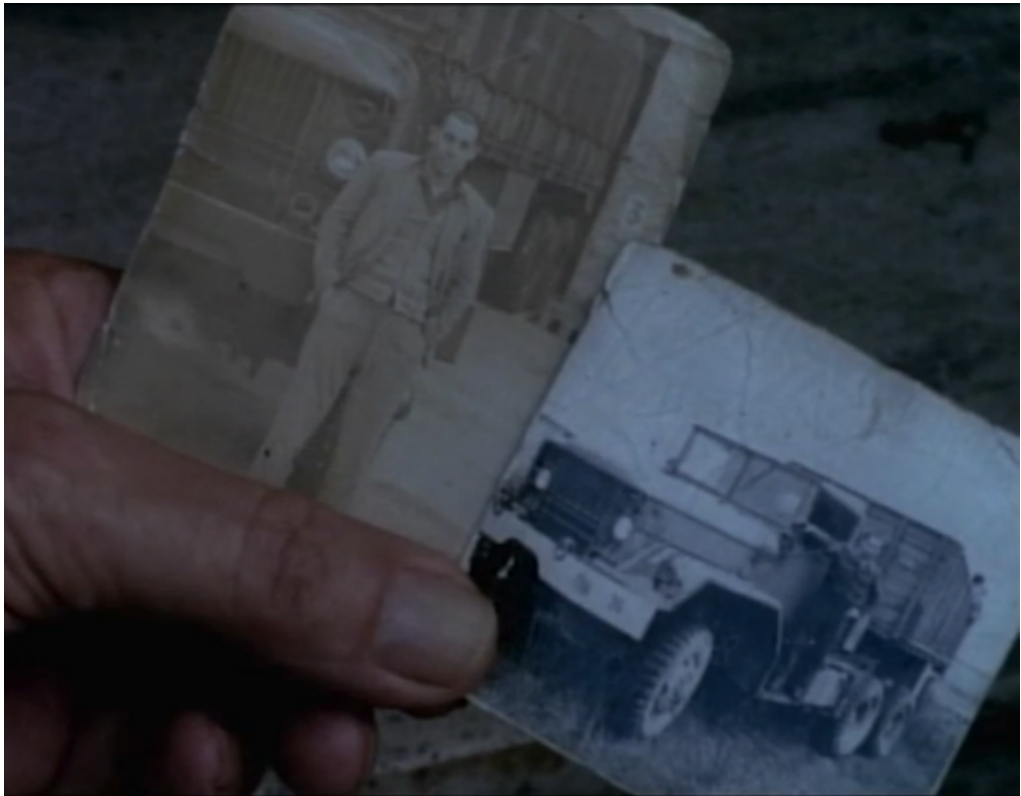


Figure 2.9: *Amber City* (Jem Cohen 1999)



Figure 2.10: *Amber City* (Jem Cohen 1999)



Figure 2.11: *Amber City* (Jem Cohen 1999)



Figure 2.12: *Island Stories* (2018)



Figure 2.13: California Company Town (Lee Ann Schmitt 2008)



Figure 2.14: California Company Town (Lee Ann Schmitt 2008)



Figure 2.15: *Four Corners* (James Benning, 1997)



Figure 2.16: *Four Corners* (James Benning, 1997)



Figure 2.17: *The Fifth Continent* (2015)



Figure 2.18: *The Fifth Continent* (2015)



Figure 2.19: *Island Stories* (2018)



Figure 2.20: *Island Stories* (2018)



Figure 2.21: *Content* (Chris Petit 2010)

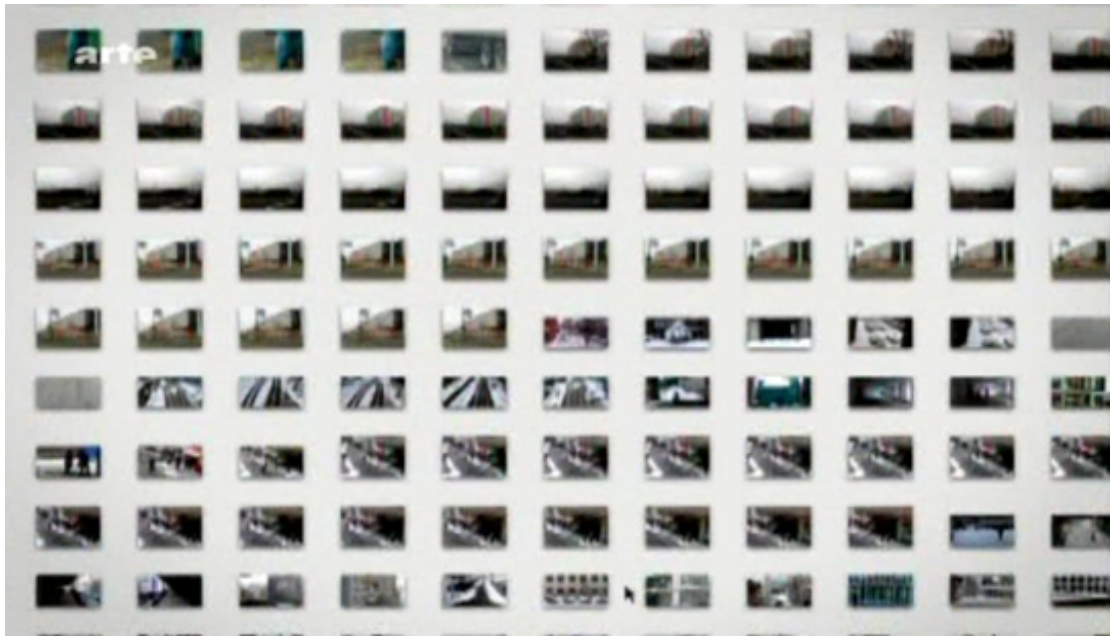


Figure 2.22: *Content* (Chris Petit 2010)

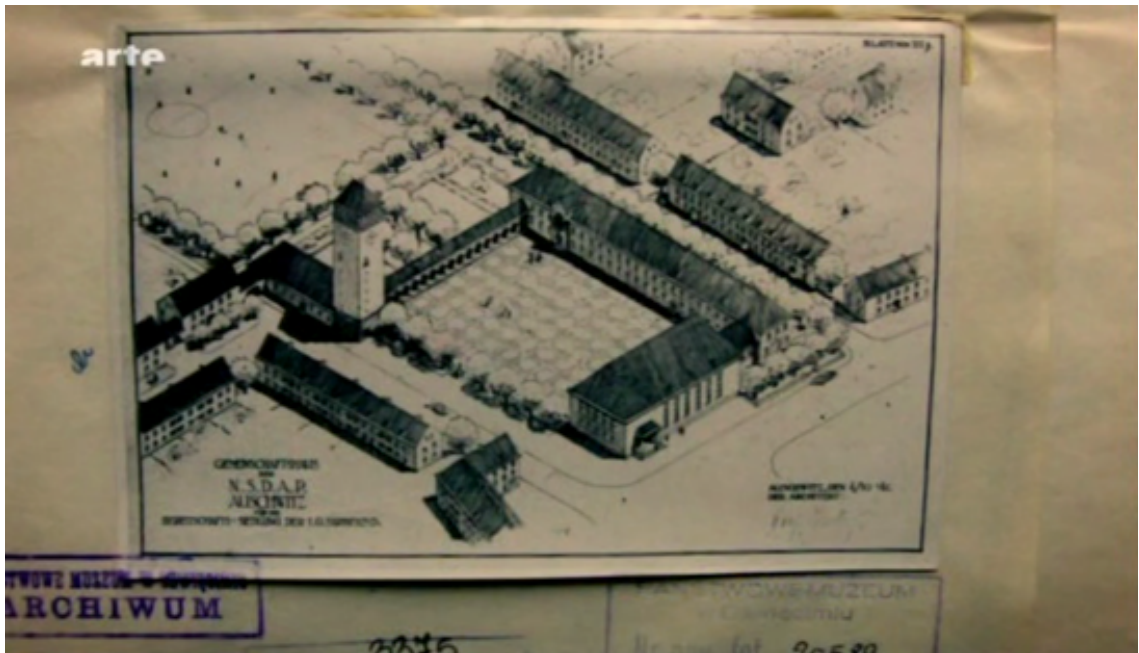


Figure 2.23: *Content* (Chris Petit 2010)



Figure 2.24: *Content* (Chris Petit 2010)

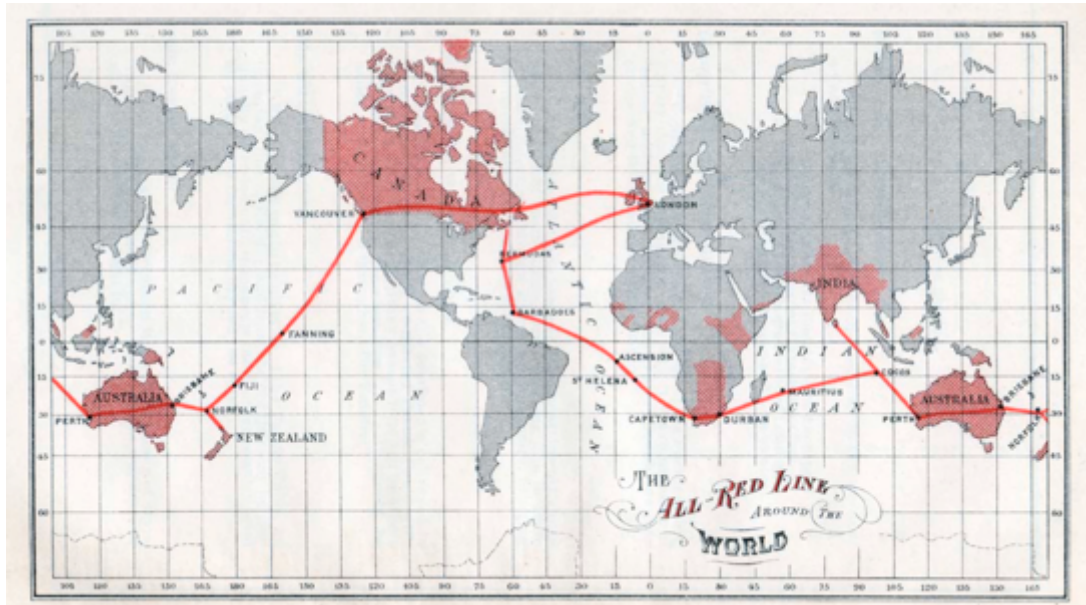


Figure 3.1: *Island Stories* (2018)

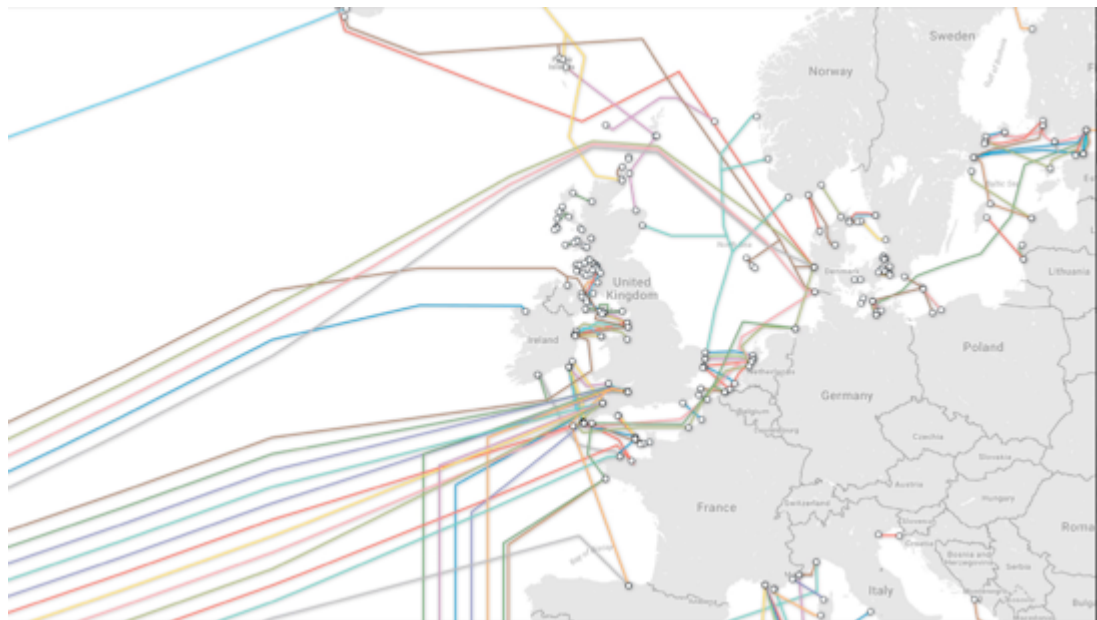


Figure 3.2: *Island Stories* (2018)

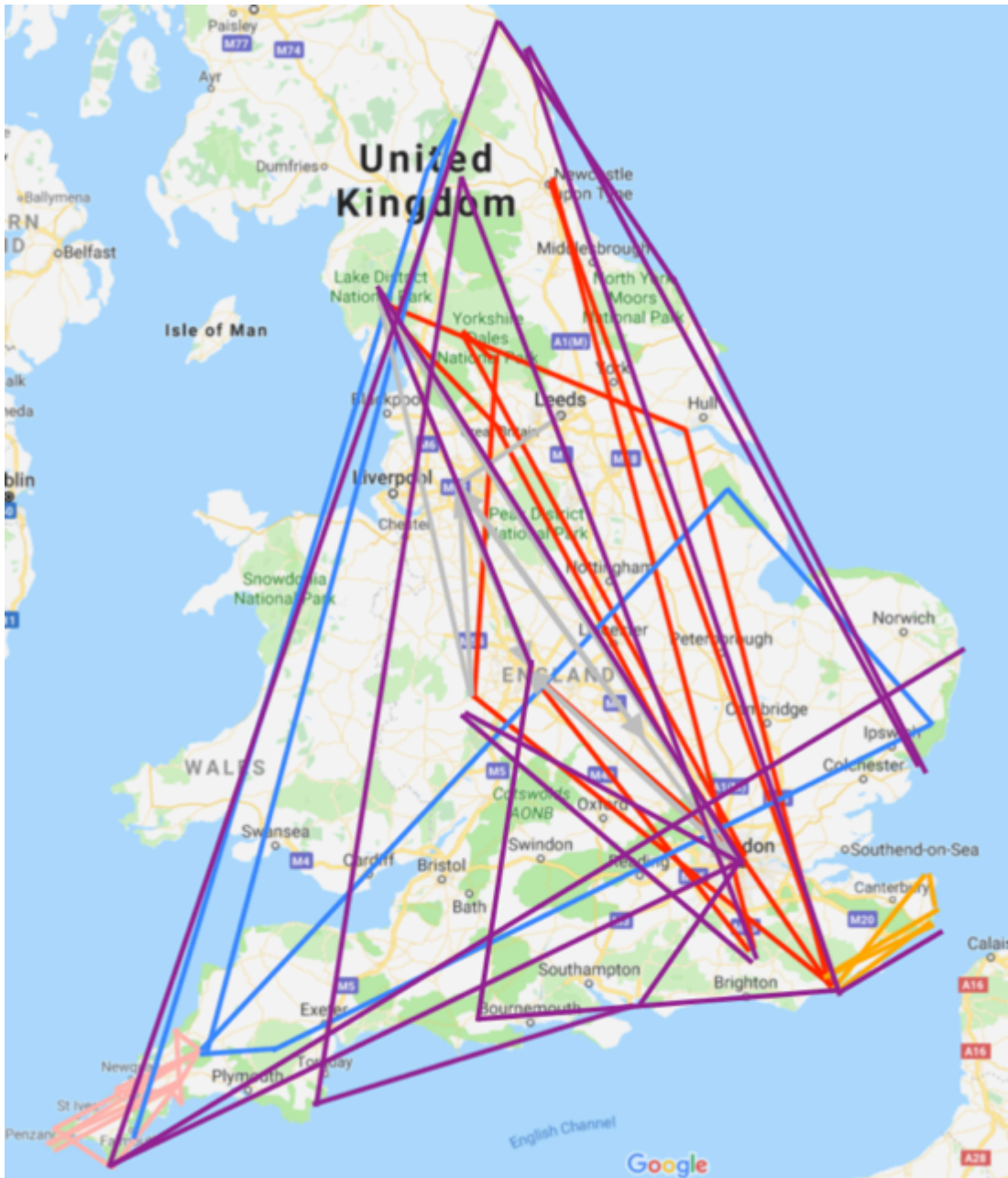


Figure 3.3: Map showing locations in order of appearance in the film, grouped by chapter and connected by a line, *Island Stories* (2018)

- Part One
- Part Two
- Part Three
- Part Four
- Part Five
- Part Six

Locations in the order of appearance in *Island Stories*:

Part One:

Unknown roads

Hastings

Newcastle

South Downs

Birmingham

London

Ribblehead Viaduct

Settle

Witley Court

Hastings

Milton Keynes

Mankinholes

Lake District and Ruskin's House

Humber Bridge

Unknown roads

Hastings

Part Two:

Hastings

Margate

Deal

Seddlescombe

Dover

Hastings

Part Three:

Bodmin Moor

Chapel Porth

Bodmin Moor

St Austell Alps

Charlestown

Eden Project

Lands End

Dozmary Pool

Tintagel

Eden Project

Jamaica Inn/ Bodmin Moor

Geevor Tin Mine Museum

Lizard Point

Eden Project

Porthcurno

Eden Project

Part Four:

Bodmin Moor The Hurlers

RAF Stenigot Lincolnshire

Rendlesham Forest

Widdecomb in the Moor, Dartmoor

Bodmin Moor

Kielder Forest

Bewcastle

Unknown, somewhere in a plane over England

Falmouth

Part Five:

Leeds Bridge

Manchester

Birmingham

London

Manchester

London

Birmingham

London

Manchester

Birmingham

London

Birmingham

Manchester

London

Birmingham

Manchester

London

Birmingham

London

Lake District

Witley Court

Manchester

London

Part Six:

Hastings

Lindisfarne

Felixstowe

Whitby

Border Scotland

Lizard Point

Lowestoft

Lizard Point

Crystal Palace

Malvern

Lewes

Hadrian's Wall

Hallsands Village

Portsmouth

London

Lake District

Birmingham

A village near to T.E Lawrence's house, Clouds Hill

Hastings

Just off the coast of Dover



Figure 3.4: *Island Stories* (2018)



Figure 3.5: *Island Stories* (2018)



Figure 3.6: *Island Stories* (2018)



Figure 3.7: *Island Stories* (2018)



Figure 3.8: *Island Stories* (2018)



Figure 3.9: *Island Stories* (2018)



Figure 3.10: *Island Stories* (2018)

THE FIFTH CONTINENT SCRIPT

Imagine a land delivered by a retreating sea.

An Atlantis in reverse, coughed up by the waves little by little over the centuries, so that what was once the ocean floor is now fields and beaches; where there were once islands in a lagoon, stand hills surrounded by land.

This exchange of sea for soil prompted a sixteenth century historian and topographer to note that, as Egypt was the gift of the Nile, and the pastures of Holland a gift of the North Wind and the Rhine, this Marsh country was a gift from the sea.

The threat of the ocean returning for its gift has pitched the land in battle with the sea over time.

Walls, canals and ditches cut across the marshes, swallowing water and breaking the tides.

The gradual deposit of shingle from the sea and sediment from the river caused the whole coastline to be redrawn. Large port towns where ships once docked now found themselves inland, stranded from the sea.

Storms sent other towns to the ocean floor.

Sunken bells sound far out in the bay.

High above the marshes, a fort once stood, built to protect the site of the large Roman *Portus Lemanis* in the bay below. Here, old Watling Street begins its long line to the north.

Now the sea is four miles away and the marshes take its place.

The narrator in the H. G. Wells novel *The First Men in the Moon*, looking over the landscape, says “I doubt if the place would be there at all, if it were not for the fading memory of things gone forever”

But in the place of fading memories, new ones form, and things long gone return as echoes.

As well as the sea itself, other threats came from across the oceans.

Alongside the church spires and transmission towers, stand the remains of the architecture of military defence, spreading through time from the Roman ruin, mementos of war spiking the landscape, testament to the fragile land protruding from the body of the country south into the water.

To prepare for a possible invasion by Napoleonic forces from across the channel, defences were built along the coast. A chain of Martello towers and forts stretched across the south and east of England, with many overlooking the marsh beaches.

The Royal Military Canal was constructed to cut the marsh off from the land to the north, and was fortified with artillery batteries.

Of course, neither the towers nor the canal were ever put to use against invasion.

To imagine that the narrow and gentle waterway might deter Napoleon and his army takes some leap of faith, and soon after the threat passed, the canal became something of an embarrassment.

Employed for a different purpose, with guards at crossing points, it was later effective as a hindrance to smugglers, and along with the towers, found use again by the military in a future war.

After the First World War, Acoustic mirrors were built to detect enemy aircraft out at sea before they came into sight.

With the invention of radar, they were never used and very quickly became obsolete.

These redundant concrete ears slump in the landscape, monuments to the past technologies of conflict.

World War Two also left its marks.

Pillboxes litter the landscape, facing seaward, still on the lookout.

Plans were in place to flood the area, cover it with oil and set fires to prevent invasion from the sea.

Spikes and other obstacles were positioned across the marshes to prevent aircraft landing.

A pipeline was installed through the marshes to run from England across the channel to carry oil to allied troops fighting on the front in Europe, and eventually stretched as far as the Rhine.

Pumping stations for the operation were disguised as residential bungalows, which are in continued use as houses. The small gauge railway was used for military transportation.

A water tower, also now residential, served as a surveillance post.

A museum displays the remnants of war and its images.

Deep into the night people line the beach, fishing into the moonlit ocean

The inhabitants dream of being returned to the sea. The ocean flows beyond the shores, over the land, waves lapping at bedroom doors.

Then one morning, after a nocturnal storm, they awaken to find unfamiliar dunes and a village submerged in sand.

With the winds came fragments of their dreams.

Long winding roads lead to names: Appledore, Brenzett, Dymchurch, Snargate, names that conjure large towns on the horizon but leave the smallest of villages in their place.

Migratory birds stop at the lakes on their journey to other places across the seas. Guillemots and Firecrests, Arctic Skuas and Dusky Warblers.

The local sheep – in high demand due to the superiority of their wool - departed for new lives around the world in the mid nineteenth century, with the breed established from New Zealand and Australia to Patagonia and Brazil, distant cousins of those for whom the marsh is still home.

At Dungeness fishing boats come and go, the power station hums its nuclear tune, and the lighthouse sends its beams out to sea, both a warning and invitation to passing ships.

Through a small door behind a church are housed row upon row of skulls and bones.

A woman working as guard and guide points out a birds nest in a cranium, two shrunken skulls and another with visible trauma.

She said she was happy that the dead had a chance to be part of life again, and that she often thought about the lives of those who now shared this space with her.

Previously thought to belong to soldiers slain in the battle of 1066, Danish pirates or black death victims, the bones instead belong to the past residents of the small town itself, displaced from the earth over time and finding a new home together in the Ossuary.

Pilgrims passing through from the seas came to see the hollow faces from the past, neatly stacked and shelved, a vanitas display to stir the soul before the long road ahead.

Dotted along the marsh stand the once powerful Cinque Ports, important for trade and used by the crown for defence of the realm.

The marsh ports looked naturally outwards, culturally, commercially and politically. Wool, fuel and fish left for other ports, wine, stone and foods from the Mediterranean came in.

From here, pilgrims departed for Santiago de Compostella, merchants left for European ports and engineers came in from the low countries to offer expertise on drainage and flood defence.

Sixteenth century Rye had one of the largest foreign communities in the country; merchants, traders and those fleeing religious persecution.

The port town declined with the retreating sea, stranding it inland, but it is still a river port.

The sea remains in its names and signs.

On the maps in the street, hikers pass through the terrain alongside Norman warriors marching inland.

In the absence of these chainmailed soldiers, tourists look to the aging buildings and castle walls to position themselves in time.

Those tired of looking up at the hill top town can instead look down from above and see the streets frozen and hear their history narrated.

Visitors passing through, along the maze of roads crisscrossing the landscape may ask; what unnamed and unseen simulated wars are being fought in the empty desert towns behind fences in preparation for real ones somewhere else in the future?

or others may wonder at the lines of caravans positioned under electricity pylons, with the protection of angels at the gates.

One night a ship was lost at sea and surfaced as an image carved into a church wall.

Another story suggests that before leaving land, superstitious sailors etched the image of their ship to protect them from the perils of the sea.

Another says a galleon drawn onto a church wall signified safe storage of contraband goods and shelter for smugglers.

At St Dunstan's Church a large seizure of tobacco was made in the belfry, and a cask of Dutch gin was found under the vestry table.

The partnership of church and smuggler found its way into the fictional tales of Dr Syn, which still resonate across the marsh.

Vicar by day, scarecrow leader of smugglers by night, he makes a reappearance on the day of Syn festival.

At St Clements Church, parishioners sit in pink pews, painted for use in a film of the Dr Syn tales, a small piece of the fiction encased within the church walls.

Like the Dr Syn of the story books, Reverend Richard Harris Barham, one time Rector of St Dunstan's church in the nineteenth century, also led a double life, with words on the page as cargo and a pen name as a mask. He wrote a book of myths and legends, a work of fiction rooted in marsh folklore.

At a time when the world was frequently divided into only four continents, he wrote, "The World, according to the best geographers, is divided into Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Romney Marsh".

The Fifth Continent. An illusory gift. Three parts sky to one part earth, a border and frontier, between the sea and the land beyond.

FILM TREATMENT: ISLAND STORIES

TREATMENT FOR A FILM - IN FRAGMENTS

The film begins in Hastings, at the May Day Jack in the Green festival. As the procession winds up through the town and the crowds in the fog and rain, the narrator meets a man in period costume, John Leland. This may or may not be the sixteenth century John Leland, born 1503, died 1552, English antiquarian, poet, bishop, and topographer, and also Royal appointment to King Henry VIII. This is never addressed directly, nor resolved. Hastings is both where I live and the beginning and end of the film, spatially looping the locations, a rooted point to which to return after travelling backwards and forwards around the rest of the country.

JOHN LELAND:

To give some relevant backstory, John Leland began his travels around England, when, as chaplain to Henry VIII he undertook an examination of the libraries of religious houses, shortly before the dissolution of the monasteries, making lists of books in their possession. After the dissolution, he spent six years travelling around England and Wales. The information from these, of which there seem to be five in England taken between 1539-1543, became known as his 'Itineraries', assembling information from observation, books, charters and oral sources. Whilst unpublished until the eighteenth century, his plans for the material never taking shape, the information he gathered provided a rich resource for many antiquarian works, notably William Camden's *Britannia*.

As an antiquarian, he was concerned with looking at how the history of England was visible within the landscape, architecturally and archaeologically. He was also a staunch patriot and believer in the reality of King Arthur and his legends.

One of his Latin poems was written from the point of view of a swan swimming down the Thames, in praise of Henry VIII, from Oxford to Greenwich. It contained many topographical references.

In the mid 1540's he wrote a letter to the King, within which he outlined his achievements and future plans for the information he had accumulated during his travels. These included a detailed map of the realm, engraved onto a silver tablet, and a history of England and Wales, one book per shire, which would number over 50. These over ambitious plans never came to fruition.

Eventually retiring to his house in the London parish of St Michael-le-Querne to work with his collections, he lost his mind, and was certified insane. He died two years later. He was buried in the St Michael-le-Querne church. The church was destroyed in the Great Fire of London, 1666, and never rebuilt, and so his tomb was lost.

The narrator tells the story and speaks in the first person. All exchanges between the two characters are told from the narrator's perspective. The narrator is a fictional version of myself, someone gathering material, both visual and narrative, about locations around the country. The narration unfolds across the spaces of England as they follow one another and continue in dialogue, spoken in the past tense. Through this dialogue the past and present of England is explored, at the local, national and global level. The narrator shapes the essay voice from his own thoughts, ideas and reflections, often breaking away into tangents and paths into different subjects, locations and histories, whilst also assimilating elements from John's parallel journeys and thoughts on England, past and present. Both John and the narrator have an obsessive quest to gather information, and neither are completely clear why they are doing so.

The film ends in Hastings, at the bonfire procession, also the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings, 1066, where the narrator loses John again in the crowds, never to be seen again.

JOURNEYS IN TIME AND SPACE

Throughout 2016, I travelled around England. One journey started in Margate, Thanet and ended at Lands End, Cornwall. The other began in Hastings, cutting through the centre of the England up to its most northeasterly tip and just over the border with Scotland. As well as these two main trips, I spent time filming in Hastings, London and Suffolk. The footage recorded during these journeys and excursions provides the raw material for the film, of which there are some five to six hours. The trip took in locations from abandoned satellite dishes, post-industrial cities and spaces, stone age relics and the modernist utopia of Milton Keynes to an observatory in the middle of a man made forest at Kielder, the tidal estuary subsuming the land at Lindisfarne, the spaces of the East India Company in London and the streets of St Leonards on Sea.

TOWARDS FORM

The film will take a fragmented structure and approach to the material, to narrative and to time and place. It will be structured into seven chapters, each unified either by place, theme, story or concept. The journeys will not follow their linear path, but rather will be broken up into reflections and placed into orbit with other aspects. A preface and end note will frame the film, beginning and ending at the same location and the same scenario, six months apart.

PREFACE. The film opens with images from before, during and after the Hastings Jack in the Green festival. It is here that John Leland appears for the first time.

1. Coastal currents: South Coast spaces and stories, Margate, Deal, Dover and Hastings. Finally, the sea in the estuary at Lindisfarne comes in to take the land, as people retreat.

2. In Search of England: Jumping around the country bringing sites and stories together, semi logically, pulling many different spaces and narratives into orbit, leaving behind organized time and space, creating a non linear chapter. Culminating with the story of Thomas Paine, his locations in England, his death. His bones were dug up by William Cobbett (who happens to be another English traveller whose book *Rural Rides* took him across England and was very influential in its depiction of rural life) and brought back to England in a trunk, which sat in his basement. The bones were scattered and mostly lost, with parts of Thomas Paine turning up throughout the country.

3. Cornwall: Past, Present and future as symbolised by various historical layers in narrative and physical landscape, from iron age ruins to King Arthur to Cornish tin mining, through observation on the present from heavy industry to tourism, culminating in the future: the Eden Project, recycling brownfield site and now an eco utopia, science fiction-esque and alien.

4. Global connectivity: Fibre optic networks from Porthcurno and Skewjack (previously, ironically, a surf club and camp) and the history of submarine cables connecting the British Empire, first message sent to India from here. East India Company sites in London and previous position as global corporation.

5. The Art of Seeing: A chapter shaped by Huxley's book *The Art of Seeing*, so a chapter about vision and looking. Leeds Bridge and Louis Le Prince: cinematic vision and city space. Expands through an unfolding of vision and cities, images from London, Birmingham and Manchester, a kind of ambient tour through cities, combined with detailed snippets of histories.

6. Skyward from the earth: Abandoned satellites, redundant and silent, the observatory and Kielder, looking up at the sky from the forest, the supposed UFO sightings at Rendlesham Forest, Daniel Gumb, amateur mathematician and astronomer who lived in a cave up on Bodmin moor and carved his visions into the rock, the great balls of electricity that descended from the sky and into the church at Widdecomb in the Moor, seen as a prophesy and inscribed for the future in text at the church, finally, a colorful comet painted on a wall in Falmouth.

7. Ruins and new builds: an architectural tour and the stories that go with them, revealing England through its variety of architecture and reflective of its story through time. Taking in the industrialist wealth in ruins at Witley, the modernist utopia of Milton Keynes and the abandoned village at Hallsands.

AFTERWORD. The film returns to Hastings, on bonfire night, and the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings, where John Leland disappears into the crowds again. Ends with fireworks and the fire.

1.

I met her through a chance encounter in Hastings in winter. She was making a film she said, but her plans were vague and often changed.

She later told me that it was in Hastings, at the Jack in the Green festival, that the project took a new direction and that some weeks afterwards, she embarked on the first of what would be many journeys through England.

It was on the day of the festival that she first became aware of the mysterious traveller, although she would not realize this until a few weeks later.

I also took numerous travels through the country during this period for my work gathering and generating geographical data for an open source mapping project for a small software company, and on whose time and money I was also taking photographs and carrying out my own research into the architectural evolution of English towns and cities, material I one day hoped to assemble into a book.

We met occasionally when our routes overlapped and I received messages from her during her travels, somewhat erratically. She also posted a continuous stream of images online and I followed her journeys through these images.

It was after nearly two years of extensive travels and research for the project that she abandoned it altogether and abruptly left the country.

Just before she left England, I came into possession of her discarded materials for the unfinished film; a wealth of unedited footage, photographs and notebooks filled with diary entries, research, observations and comments. There was so much material it was difficult to find any order.

In one of the notebooks left behind, she wrote:

This is the fourth year I have been to the Jack in the Green festival to welcome the summer. The festival is rooted deep in the English past, a folk ritual to beat off the winter. The Celts called May Day 'Beltane', celebrated half way between the spring equinox and the summer solstice. The Romans dedicated it to the Goddess of flowers, fertility and spring, naming it Flora. What was a pagan festival, became a more secular affair in sixteenth and seventeenth England. It was banned by Puritan monarchs, reinstated by Charles II and continued to be celebrated into the eighteenth century.

Enormous garlands of plants covered the local chimneysweeps who participated in the festivities, and over time they became known as the Jack in the Green. The anarchic behavior associated with Jack in the Green was at one point deemed inappropriate and the Jacks inclusion in festivities ceased. In Hastings, I am told, the Jack was revived by a group of Morris dancers in the 1980s.

On a stage overlooking the sea, the Jack is stripped of his foliage and his leaves thrown into the crowd, a violent killing of winter and a welcoming of summer.

The routes traced in her notebooks followed no particular order and didn't seem to correlate with the journeys I knew she had taken, nor with the images she posted online, which followed their own illogical progression.

On one page she is in Newcastle, where she notes only the number of bridges crossing the Tyne, seven in total. She writes that she spent the day crossing every bridge on foot, train and car.

In the following passage under the heading "South Downs at Sunset" was written:

I have walked the Downs many times before but on one quiet summer evening as the sun set, it has become fixed in my mind like never before.

She writes of an unspecified city:

From the 39th floor I could see the streets far below and the city's limits in the distance, faint hills lining the suburban sprawl in the South.

Then she writes;

When Ribblehead viaduct was built, shantytowns sprang up to house the workers and their families. They were given names such as Sebastopol, a battle triumph of the Crimean War, but also Belgravia, one of London's wealthiest areas, the name the supervisors gave their town, raised above the other shanties on a plateau.

Then on the next page,

I was born in England and grew up in England and have never lived anywhere else, but there is something about English people and customs that are completely alien to me. In Settle, Yorkshire, there was a flowerpot festival and I felt both completely at home and lost in a far-away country.

This was followed by the passage:

I walked around the ruin at Witley Court, the remains of a country house once owned by a succession of families who made their fortunes in the industries of the nearby Black Country.

The renowned architect John Nash was employed to redesign the house in the nineteenth century and it was frequently visited by the Prince of Wales, the later King Edward VII. It was later sold to a carpet manufacturer in the twentieth century and after a fire the estate was broken up and sold again. The ruins were once put up for sale on eBay.

In another of her books, under a heading “Organizing Spaces” she had written:

Georges Perec, in his meditation on inhabited space, breaks space down into categories, beginning with the page, then the bed, the bedroom, the apartment, the street, town, the nation, the world, and finally to the concept of space, measured, studied, in abstract and the infinite space of the universe.

An addition to Perec’s own *Species*, she had written, would include now the computer screen, the internet and virtual space.

On the next page, a simple gridded map was drawn accompanied by the words:

I explored Milton Keynes by car and it had its own strange appeal, both impossibly modern and absolutely outdated.

I had myself been to Milton Keynes not long before her. The town had sprung from the landscape in the mid 1960s.

It was designed on a grid system with parks and landscaped areas, a non-hierarchical layout where roads lead between communities, all of which exist as an element of the larger grid.

Retail, industrial, residential and employment infrastructure are all linked through a well connected and easily navigable space, updating the outmoded cluster of older cities.

Milton Keynes was dreamt up by architects as a modernist utopia, a city of the future, and it has aged well.

She wrote in a notebook that:

When tracing a route on Google Maps, I came across the words ‘Great Britain’, labeled on the map. As I zoomed in on these words, the map drew closer to the location, just above a place called Mankinholes in West Yorkshire. I found this exact spot, this Great Britain from the map.

In the summer, on an occasion when our paths crossed, we visited John Ruskin’s house and the landscaped garden, based on plans Ruskin drew for a garden influenced by Dante’s purgatorial mount, a zigzag pathway through the seven deadly sins.

She talked about Ruskin’s insanity and how he saw his shifting mental states mirrored in the landscapes surrounding his house.

I later read in her notes:

I wonder whether there is not something in the English landscape that invites insanity. The poet John Clare was compelled to walk through England from an asylum in Essex back to his home in Northamptonshire, all the while plagued by visions and delusions as he traversed the landscape. And John Leland, the sixteenth century antiquary, cartographer, poet and clergyman, who went mad after spending his life travelling the country.

She wrote frequently of John Leland. Dispersed through the books were fragments on his life and work: In one book she wrote that:

John Leland sought the patronage of Thomas Cromwell and served Henry VIII for whom he also wrote a poem, describing a journey along the Thames and the majesty of the king's country through the eyes of a swan.

Later I read:

After the dissolution of the monasteries, John Leland began to travel the country in search of books and manuscripts. Through his travels, he developed an interest in topography and history, and in particular, the physical presence of historical materials evident within the landscape. He made a series of journeys over six years, gathering the information from these excursions in notebooks that would become known as his *Itineraries*.

At the bottom of the same page was written:

Earlier today I walked along the sea front, to the Old Town. It was sunny but the town still had its late winter air of neglect, but the miniature railway was still running its course, and the swan pedalo pond was now full again after its empty months, flooded the bluest blue.

2.

I received an email from her in July.

I just returned from a short trip. I wanted to send you a message before I leave again.

I spent two weeks heading eastwards from Hastings to Margate and the Isle of Thanet, no longer an island as it once was, previously cut off from the mainland by the Wantsum Channel.

When I arrived, I parked the car outside the Victorian Winter Gardens and walked to my hotel on King Street.

The idea of the seaside has seeped so deeply into the national psyche and an image of Britishness.

Three things come to my mind when I think of Margate. The paintings of the sea by JMW Turner who painted over and over again the vast skies bleached in sunlight; the dreariness and the beauty of Lyndsey Anderson's film *O Dreamland* and T S Eliot's poem 'The Wasteland' written in Margate whilst he recuperated from a breakdown.

"On Margate Sands I can connect nothing with nothing".

Much is changing in Margate, I observed on my walks around the town, like many once grand coastal resorts long since faded, but now witnessing a turn in fortunes.

I saw a man I recognized through a café window. I had now seen him twice I realised, the first time being in Hastings, where he was dressed in elaborate Tudor costume following the procession at the Jack in the Green festival.

I went into the café and sat near him. He left shortly afterwards. There was a napkin on the table, full of handwriting and a crudely illustrated sun.

Before leaving Margate I visited the Shell Grotto.

After long laying dormant and forgotten, it was discovered in the eighteenth century by a man digging a well in his garden. It has been associated with pagan, Roman and medieval origins. Some research suggests a link to the Knights Templar back in the twelfth century. Over four million shells line its walls. Is there some hidden wisdom in the layout of the shells, some pattern to decipher? Some of them were brought from hundreds of miles away.

As I left, in the guestbook I noticed a few entries back, the man's unmistakable scrawl, next to which was drawn the same sun.

I have not been able to shake him from my mind.

I later passed through Deal, and walked along the seafront and out onto the concrete pier. As long as the Titanic an old plaque states (although it is in fact longer).

I walked past the Timeball, once used to signal to ships out in the bay, now a museum.

Deal was an arm of the Cinque port confederation, one of the busiest ports in medieval England. It was here where Captain Cook set foot after his first voyage to Australia.

Last week, the United Kingdom voted in the referendum to leave the European Union.

In Dover, I stood and looked out over the sea on this stretch of coastline so close to Europe with France only a few miles away, visible on a clear day.

I thought about Britain as an island for the first time, surrounded by the oceans, cut off from the mainland. I thought of an island in reverse, the Caspian sea, an ocean locked inside a sea of land. Or Slovakia, a country landlocked by other countries.

At Dover, high above the docks on the cliffs, stands a sunken hill fort, built during the Napoleonic wars and later used during WWI and II.

Along the same cliff top are the remains of a church built by the Knights Templar, the unusual form of which mirrors the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

Dover was once a Roman port. I went to the Roman house with painted walls buried underneath the city and now shrouded by museum walls.

Within the walls of the old house stood a Roman soldier, seemingly modeled on James Dean.

Dover is famous for the white cliffs, that geological symbol of national identity, both a border and frontier.

I saw no beauty in the cliffs and I drove on along the coast. I felt depressed and could not shake it until I arrived back in Hastings.

There was some confusion on my part after reading this email. She had given an account of two weeks along the south coast, but the photographs she had posted online during this period had in fact been of Birmingham and the West Midlands. I never did ask her about this discrepancy in time and place.

3.

Her notebooks contained a wealth of information written during her time spent in Cornwall. She wrote that:

Cornwall is an island within an island cut off from the mainland by the river Tamar. The backbone of the landscape is made up of The Cornubian batholith, a large mass of granite rock, which lies beneath much of the south-western peninsula of Great Britain, formed during the early Permian period, about 300 million years ago.

Homo sapiens have inhabited Cornwall since the lower Paleolithic period just after the last ice age. The earliest settlers are thought to have a common ancestry with people in the Basque region.

Later immigrants from the Iberian Peninsula settled in Cornwall, the origins of the Celtic tribes and the forbearers of the Cornish peoples and the Briton and Breton cultures.

Early humans left behind their stone circles and burial chambers.

Because of rich mineral deposits, the history of Cornwall is tied closely to mining, early settlers discovering, or bringing with them, the knowledge to mine tin and produce bronze. People mined the land continuously and Cornish mining reached its peak in the nineteenth century.

The miners whose ancestors had found their way here from elsewhere in the world, found their way again out into the world in the nineteenth century, to the Americas and the California gold rush, to Australia and elsewhere, emigrating and taking their mining knowledge and Cornish culture with them.

Cornish tin mining declined and finally ceased in the late twentieth century, rendered unprofitable by competition from abroad.

Mining ceased but the extraction of China clay continued.

China clay had been used for making fine porcelain in China for millennia, and it was eventually imported for use in Europe. Plymouth apothecary William Cookworthy found a rich supply in Cornwall. He patented a recipe for porcelain and began making china in England.

The port of Charlestown evolved to transport the clay around the world and half of the world's china clay came from Cornwall by the early twentieth century.

The St Austell Alps, mountains of china clay, are the waste product from the mining process.

The biomes of the Eden Project rise from a former China clay pit and signal a shift in the landscape to a tourist economy, projecting a utopian future from the grounds of an industrial past.

There were other fragments of information on Cornwall dotted throughout her notes.

She had written that:

At Lands End, England is conjured through an Arthurian Legend experience featuring Brian Blessed, red telephone boxes, pasties and the Union Jack, a

geographical location turned tourist theme park, a strange composite image of England.

The mines closed in the 1980s and tourists not miners descend into the old shafts.

At Dozmary Pool, it is said that Arthur rowed out to meet the Lady of the Lake who gave him the sword Excalibur and here is where the sword was returned after Arthur's death, thrown into the bottomless lake by Sir Bedivere.

There was much disappointment amongst Arthurian enthusiasts when the lake was emptied out in a drought, to reveal it was not bottomless, and no sword was found within it.

John Leland was a staunch patriot and believer in the historical truth of King Arthur.

Later in the same book she wrote:

Unrealistically ambitious and restless, John Leland wrote a letter to the King, a New Years Gift, in 1546. In it, he described the wide reaching extent of his travels and his future plans for the information he had collected. He would, he outlined, write an encyclopedia on English writers in four volumes, engrave a detailed map of the realm on a silver tablet accompanied by detailed descriptions and also write a history of England and Wales in as many books as there were shires, as well as off coast islands, around 56 books in total.

John Leland made little progress with these projects and he began to go mad. By 1550 he was certified insane and died two years later.

The Jamaica Inn gave rise to Daphne du Maurier's book of the same name, inspired by her stay at the inn, by the stories of smugglers, and by the people who frequented the bar.

I stopped at the inn and again saw the man whom I have now seen several times, this time with increased anxiety.

I watched him for some time in the next room. He got up and left, leaving something on the table. I went and took what was there.

There were a number of handwritten sheets in his very small distinctive scrawl, a copy of *Paris Peasant* by Louis Aragon and a series of large folded maps, on which are marked a significant number of points connected with lines across the country, some of which I had been to on my own travels, but which are so numerous that the routes appear like webs overlaid on the land.

His peculiar writing corresponds to the locations marked on the map and to other journeys taken. The same crude sun is illustrated on a page corner.

In one section he writes:

The foghorn rang out ceaselessly at Lizard Point, echoing over the rocky peninsula, a sonic warning to ships in this notoriously dangerous part of the coastline. When I now think of the place, I hear the sound.

It was from Lizard Point that the hundreds of ships of the Spanish Armada were first seen.

He also writes of Eden where he says:

Hiding within the plants in one of the domes until long after everyone else had left, I remained on my own through the night and hiding from security, I wandered around alone as a utopian vision unfolded.

I find his account of trespass amusing. But who is the mysterious fellow traveller, whose path keeps crossing my own? I now refer to him as Leland, this modern day traveller through England, keeper of journals and maker of maps.

He also writes of his visit to Porthcurno, of its significance in global communication, of the theatre situated on the cliffs high above and the tides of runners who kept passing him throughout Cornwall.

She had written that she intended to visit Porthcurno finally on her last trip to Cornwall, but never did get around to it.

She later wrote:

The site of the first telegraph communication was situated in Porthcurno, where wires came ashore connecting Britain with the Empire. The first message from England to Bombay in 1870 said, “from Anderson to Stacey: How are you all?”, to which the reply was: 'All well'. The reply took under five minutes, at a time when intercontinental communication had previously taken weeks.

The site became the landing point for fibre optic networks, where the cables come ashore and run to the cable station at Skewjack. One such link, the Fibre Optic Link Around the Globe connects France, the UK the United States, India and Asia.

It is at these geographic points, once the nerve centre of the British Empire, that the hardware of the Internet and of global communication become physical in the most unexpected place.

It was at the Skewjack data terminal that the government communication headquarters intercepted fibre links and accessed data as a part of the Mastering the Internet mass surveillance operation.

Where the Skewjack terminal is now, was the site of a surf club in the 1960s and 70s, a small slice of California on the coast of Cornwall.

I later went through her other materials and found the images filmed on the beach at Porthcurno, something that struck me as odd after reading that she had not actually been there. These inconsistencies occur frequently throughout her images, notes and messages.

4.

Underneath the heading “ The Land and the Sky ” she had written in her notebook:

Like many Neolithic and bronze age sites, the stone circles on Bodmin Moor are speculatively thought to be in alignment with the stars, the three circles aligning with Orion’s belt on the winter solstice.

She had written:

I drove around until I spotted the satellite dishes in a field, illuminated in the bright sunlight. I walked across the grass to reach them.

A young girl and boy stood in front of them. They said they were from a nearby village. We talked for a while. They told me about an empty hospital building nearby that they liked to explore. Then they left.

The location was originally the site of RAF Stenigot, a Second World War radar station, part of the Chain Home radar network intended to give early warning of incoming aircraft raids. After the war the site was active during the cold war. In 1959 the four tropospheric scatter dishes were added for transmission reception as a part of the Allied command Europe program, a NATO communication network spreading from northern Norway to eastern Turkey.

The site was decommissioned in the late 1980s and mostly demolished.

She wrote the words ‘war ruins’ and the sentence:

A strange history could be traced by following these sites of conflict around the country, of outdated technologies and past enemies.

She wrote that:

Over three nights in December 1980, military personnel encountered a series of unexplained sightings at Rendlesham Forest, just outside the Woodbridge RAF base used at the time by the US Air Force.

The event became England's own Roswell Incident, with stories of cover-ups and further witness statements of alien craft encountered.

The sightings have been attributed to various natural phenomena or to the lighthouse at Orfordness flashing in the distance, illuminating the forest and to other secret activities at the military bases.

Other stories have arisen about Rendlesham Forest. Cables buried underneath one of the bases, laid in 1980, were said to be delivering an internet connection, even more powerful than the fibre optic cables available now, over thirty years later.

She wrote in her notes of Leland's found papers. Amongst the writing was a passage about a church in Dartmoor.

He had written:

I visited a church called Widdecomb in the Moor where an incident occurred in 1638. A great storm engulfed the village. 300 parishioners were in attendance at the church at the time.

A crack of thunder was followed by a ball of lightning and fire and a sulphurous smell. The ball of fire tore through the church, the roof and windows were destroyed and many were injured and four people were killed. The tales tell of coins that melted in a pocket without harming the owner, of bodies burned beneath undamaged clothes and people being raised into the air.

It was said to have been a visitation from the devil, some said in punishment for card playing in the pews during service.

It is now thought that the rare occurrence of ball lightning was to blame during the severe storm.

She adds, following Leland's words:

I myself visited Widdecomb in the Moor, following Leland's visit. Tablets adorn the walls telling the story of the incident. A model of The Uncle Tom Cobby Horse depicts a scene from a local folk song in which a borrowed horse dies after carrying many people to the Widdecomb Fair, and returns again as a ghost to roam the fields.

She had written that:

Just below the granite tor known as the Devils Cheesewring Daniel Gumb lived with his wife and many children in the eighteenth century, in a house built from rock on Bodmin Moor.

Gumb was a stonemason by trade, working at a quarry and carving building materials and gravestones. He was self-educated and a keen mathematician and astronomer.

Gumb chose the site for his home located near the quarry, to retreat onto the moor, and into his mind, and purportedly to live tax-free. During the day, he could work and by night he could stargaze.

Carved into a large granite slab is a version of the forty seventh proposition from Euclid's geometry, the theorem of Pythagoras. Gumb never went to church and people visited him as a mountain philosopher, for advice as a surveyor due to his mathematical knowledge, and as a geologist. Gumb assisted William Cockworthy with information about local clay, shortly before Cockworthy patented the process to make porcelain.

Gumb died on the moor aged 70. His surviving family worked locally as tanners and stonemasons, and some of his descendants, like many Cornish emigrants, made their way to America and Australia.

Stone from the quarry was used to build the Albert Memorial, Tower Bridge and the docks in Calcutta.

In a message I told her of my own travels where I visited an observatory in Northumberland, from which I had seen the northern lights one clear evening.

The observatory is situated deep within Kielder forest. The sparsely populated area has one of the darkest skies in Europe.

The forest here is man made. Planting began in the 1920s as a reserve of timber for the nation, an objective upheld until the 1960s.

The reservoir is the largest artificial lake in the UK created by flooding the valley.

Local myths suggest at low water levels, a church spire and submerged villages are visible.

She had written about her own visit to the observatory soon after.

I made my way here into the centre of the forest and these dark skies, seeking visions of the cosmos. From the observatory I watched Saturn pass across the sky through the telescope lens, viewed the craters on the moon and saw clusters of stars in other galaxies.

The computer traces an object across the sky, adjusting for the Earth's movement and the telescope follows, tracking it as the Earth slowly turns.

The virtual universe is navigable from earth's horizon to distant galaxies.

I did not see the northern lights.

Kielder is situated within what were once contested areas in the borderlands between England and Scotland. William Wallace's army rampaged through this area in 1297 and it is recorded that in 1311-1312 Robert the Bruce "laid waste to Keildir".

The fluid borders and frequent strife created a lawless borderland of raiders and warring clans.

In nearby Bewcastle, an Anglo Saxon stone cross from the seventh or eighth century stands in the graveyard, with runic inscriptions on each side. Surrounding the church are the remains of a Roman fort, once attached to Hadrian's Wall and a later castle built with stone from the wall.

Many graves contain the name Armstrong, one of the Scottish clan families. A descendant of the Armstrong clan, Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon, took with him a piece of clan tartan on the journey.

A road sign gives the miles back to Rome from this distant corner of the old Roman Empire.

In a message she said:

The further into the country I retreat, the more I feel the urge to leave it, to look upon it with clarity from somewhere else. As French American writer Julian Green wrote in his book about his beloved city of Paris, "Step back even a pace and you gain by it. So I find it hard to write anything about Paris while I am there; I have to get up and go away". English writer H V Morton spent his life travelling abroad but upon suffering an illness in Palestine, he saw a vision of rural England.

It was in Falmouth where a celestial object again caught her eye.

She wrote:

A rainbow of flames appeared as I walked through the streets of the town. In this comet I saw the stone circles at Bodmin, the UFO in Rendlesham, the ball of lightning in the church and Daniel Gumb, pondering the mysteries of the universe from his granite observatory. It brought the cosmos down to street level.

5.

I told her about my visit to Leeds, where I had stood in a spot looking down the bridge towards the city, just below the window of the building where Louis Le Prince had placed his camera when filming *Traffic Crossing Leeds Bridge* in 1888.

Soon after, she too went to Leeds, eager to visit the bridge and to see what Le Prince had seen.

She had written in detail of Le Prince:

He moved to Leeds from France and founded the Leeds School of Technical Art with his wife in 1871. They became well renowned for their work in fixing colour photography on to metal and pottery, leading to a commission for portraits of Queen Victoria and the William Gladstone. These were included alongside other objects in a time capsule placed in the foundations of Cleopatra's Needle on the embankment of the Thames.

Before 1887, Le Prince recorded *Man Walking Around a Corner in Paris* with a 16 lens camera. In 1888, he filmed *Roundhay Garden Scene* with a single lens, a camera he had recently patented.

Shortly after this, he recorded *Traffic Crossing Leeds Bridge*, capturing city life in moving images for the first time.

He vanished in France on the 16th September 1890 just before a planned to trip to screen his films in New York, a disappearance that is still a mystery. Suicide, murder and voluntary disappearance have all been suggested. A photograph of an unidentified drowning victim resembling Prince turned up at a Paris police archive some years later.

She told me that she had crossed the bridge a number of times and thought about Le Prince in the window looking down on the street and capturing the city on film for the first time, forging a new cinematic representation of space and time, the unremarkable scene forever embedded in history.

In one of her notebooks under the heading *Cities and Vision*, she had written titles and fragments of text from Aldous Huxley's book on blindness and vision *The Art of Seeing* jumbled up with disordered notes on cities she had visited.

Sensing + Selecting + Perceiving = Seeing

The Eye, Organ of Light

I arrived at night and walked around the city until the early hours.

The current Fear of Light

I visited many sites that I knew well. Chamberlain Square. The markets at the Bullring. The Midlands Railway building. The canals. The industrial areas on the outskirts of town.

The Brutalist library I had always loved is set to be demolished soon.

In such a world of fantasy, where nothing is fixed or rigid, there will be no danger of immobilizing the inward eye in a fixed stare.

The statue of Abraham Lincoln was erected in Manchester as a gesture of thanks to the textile workers in Manchester who during the civil war and the abolition of slavery were considered to have offered solidarity with the cause and were deeply affected by the cotton crisis in the American south.

Unconscious vision

Memory and imagination will be stimulated and the mind will do its work of interpretation, perception and seeing with increased efficiency.

The founding fathers had undergone a thorough restoration.

When we see, our minds become acquainted with events in the outside world through the instrumentality of the eyes and the nervous system.

That area of the city most enthusiastically heading for the future also contains its most enduring anchors to the past. Below high rise buildings springing up, it is still possible to find the preserved holy relic of the hand of St Ethelreda or just below street level, the London Stone, where it has stood through centuries the city's ebb and flow.

In Manchester, I stopped at the Salford Lads club, made famous by its association with The Smiths. Others had made the pilgrimage, a gathering of Morrissey obsessives.

In Birmingham, there is a museum dedicated to pens. Being a major industrial and manufacturing centre, a significant proportion of the worlds pens were made in Birmingham, meaning that much of what was written was done so with pens made in Birmingham, from a simple shopping list to *The Communist Manifesto*.

In Soho, I went to a place where I often ate when in the city, but found the restaurant had gone and a whole block closed down. Around the corner I went into a bar. Although there were signs of resistance it seemed its days were also numbered.

It was in London when we met again; she had been travelling for months.

We talked about our travels and her film, which she said, may either be coming to an end, or only just beginning.

I talked about my visits to cities, the photographs of buildings I had taken and the detailed histories I had written for my research. She was preoccupied and took little interest in my work.

She said in a message to me shortly after this meeting:

I found more of Leland's writings, folded up and placed into my bag, I do not know how they got there, but it means he is aware of me.

The pages make little sense, taking the form of random notes, lists and comments, along with place names, coordinates and drawings.

For example, he had written:

Atkinson Grimshaw's paintings of Liverpool by night capture something magical in the city streets, the allure of which I have searched for on many rainy nights in different cities.

The cars move silently through the weaving road into the valley.

A mounted floor mirror through which to view the ceiling above.

Ritual

The prism.

The unfinished spaces.

Shapes in stone.

Impending.

Much of life is lived on the surface.

And the coordinates: *Latitude: 57° 48' 59.99" N Longitude: -8° 34' 59.99" W*, which I later found was the location of the islands of St Kilda.

There was a drawing of an unspecified monument, a figure on a pedestal, a drawing of a section of a map and a number of rough pencil outlines of people in movement.

She later said:

I am increasingly disillusioned with the project. Any attempt to capture England seems to slip away in this new time where the nation will be redrawn.

I overheard someone say yesterday that the UK had never accepted its place in Europe, that it had never really been European.

6.

In her last email to me she wrote:

I am at home and I walked again the same streets I have walked countless times, past landmarks so familiar; Maze Hill Lodge, the Burton family Tomb on the clifftop, the remains of the old Lido, the statue of Harold and Edith. Hastings feels less like England than its own island, something separate.

Last night thick fog swept in through the streets from the sea.

On my last trip I watched people retreat from the coming tide, teasing the sea as it filled the channel between the mainland and Lindisfarne, The Holy Island.

The port of Felixstowe is the busiest container port in England, upwards of 4 million containers pass through each year.

I passed through Whitby, where Dracula arrived in England with a cargo of Transylvanian soil and silver sand. On arrival, in the form of a large dog, he bound up the 199 steps to churchyard above. When Bram Stoker stayed in the town the seeds for the story were planted. He heard the story of a Russian shipwreck whose cargo of coffins washed up in the bay.

I have the far reaches of England in my head as newly forged compass points; the northeastern point of England as it meets Scotland, the southwestern tip at Lizard Point, the far eastern point at Lowestoft.

I have now seen Leland many times over on my journeys, from Cornwall to Northumberland. I saw him from a distance rowing a small boat around the rocky waters at Lizard Point where he disappeared into a gap in the cliff face. I saw him in London walking amongst the model dinosaurs in Crystal Palace and again in Worcestershire, drinking from the fountain that springs from the Malvern Hills.

In the handwritten sheets he left in Cornwall he had written a strange story concerning Thomas Paine:

In Lewes stands the house where Thomas Paine once lived and the inn where he met with others to expound his revolutionary politics. His writing became influential in the American fight for independence. Known famously as a political agitator throughout his life, he died in shame in America and was buried on his property with few guests present.

Not happy that his death had gone unnoticed and forgotten, William Cobbett, MP, radical author and writer of Rural Rides, a travellers account of rural life and conditions in England, exhumed the bones from the grave and shipped them back to England in order to give him a proper burial. This burial never happened and Paine's bones remained in Cobbett's basement. What happened to them then is a mystery, but the bones were dispersed throughout England. A woman in Brighton claimed to have Paine's cheek bone and a vicar claimed to have one of his hands, but none of his bones were ever accounted for.

In a garden in Lewes a sculpture shows the head of Janus, with two faces, a male and female, into the future and the past. Janus, the god of war and peace, beginnings, passages, endings, time, duality, transitions.

He had also written of Hadrian's Wall:

Built by the Romans as a display of force and rule at the northernmost point of their empire and to keep back the tribes above. I walked the route of the wall over a few days from west to east.

He wrote:

At Hallsands Village only a few ruins remain. Government sanctioned dredging in the bay to fill in the naval dockyard near Plymouth damaged the village's natural defences against flooding and subsequent storm damage all but destroyed the village.

In the last passages of her last notebook she had written:

It seemed when I arrived the whole town was in preparation for some forthcoming event.

In London I visited sites once occupied by the East India Company. The East India Company had effectively paved the way for the British Empire and had in fact accounted for half of all of the worlds trade and ruled large parts of India with its own armies until the crown took over rule in 1858. The first global corporation.

I thought about the complex link between the exploitation of the world by commercial interests in the service of one nation, and the modern growth of the city as a global financial centre.

I cannot make sense of the figure Leland. I am not sure if he is following me, or I am following him. A modern day John Leland, again mapping England and its landscapes along the routes of his unfinished itineraries.

The rest of the book was blank.

Having read her many notes, I believe the similarity between her research and what she had told me of Leland's, between their writings and their travels, to be uncanny. At times, there is confusion as to who said what, who went where.

They seemed to be travelling on frequently intersecting routes, too often for coincidence to account for it.

I saw her for the last time in Hastings on bonfire night, on the 950th anniversary of the battle of Hastings. We watched a compacted rerun of history unfold, the English past edge forward to the present in a jumble of war, pirates and imperialism.

She was carrying two large bags. She said Leland was here too, but I did not see him.

Later, in the crowds, I lost sight of her. I knew she would be leaving.

I returned home and her bags were next to my front door. They contained all of her discarded materials for the film; footage, photographs, notebooks, photocopied pages from books, found objects.

None of Leland's papers were amongst her belongings.

Her online stream of images had ceased after our last meeting in Hastings. I wondered on what journey she travelled now.

The last time I heard from her I received an email containing a link to a video.

THE END