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Following or forging a way through the world: Audio walks and the making of place

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ABSTRACT

Audio walks are increasingly used as tools for city boosterism and tourist promotion, in part because they offer alternative invitations into place; they seemingly personalise the urban experience, they allow multiple stories of place to emerge and they present 'insider' knowledge that may be quirky and different. Yet in their desire to open up the city, these touristic audio walks tend to produce particular kinds of place. They present very smooth, polished, choreographed and linearised invitations to place, wherein knowledge is assembled not developed, a route is given not made and, to borrow from Ingold (2007), we become passengers not wayfarers. This paper argues that audio walks are not always like this, they can be more than a geographical given or an instrument of navigation that gives us place ready-made. It suggests, through a focus on the creation and reception of a non-touristic community-based audio walk project within Cardiff, South Wales, that the material line of the audio walk conceals and creates other worlds. These worlds, whether real and imagined, past, present or future, arise through the entanglement of lived experiences that happen in the moment of the walk's making and doing. Thus, attending to this 'making' and 'doing', reveals the audio walk as a living and lively encounter with the world; it is an emotional and affective way of making not merely representing place.

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Visit any town or city today and the chances are that there is some form of audio walk available to guide you round it. The Guardian, for instance, has created a series of London podcast walks (theguardian.com), Visit Bath guides visitors on a heritage walk through the city (visit.bath.co.uk), while Tourist Tracks offer historical and cultural tours around most of Britain's major towns and cities (tourist.tracks.com). The growth in popularity of this form owes, in part, to its capacity to offer alternative invitations into place; it seemingly personalises the urban experience, it allows multiple, even counter-stories of place to emerge, it may appear to present 'insider' knowledge that may be quirky and different, and it can act as a letter of introduction (Butler, 2006) to previously marginal or hidden areas of a city. What is more, it can present place as an auditory and tactile space as well as a visual one. Consequently, audio walks give the impression of offering a city experience that is 'off the beaten track' and therefore more authentic and real. Yet in their desire to open up the city these touristic audio walks tend to produce a very particular kind

of place.¹ They present very smooth, polished and choreographed invitations to place that flatten and deny the living richness of it.²

In some respects, such audio walks can be seen as part of the conduct of power; they are a structure of action that is brought to bear on our possible actions (Foucault, 1982). They guide us through place in a way that leads us to believe we are encountering something that is more 'real', yet this is a tightly marshalled 'experience'. The form, for instance, tends to identify place as a connection of interesting sites, it works through a linear narrative that ties these sites together neatly and it offers a clear route with an accessible and engaging story. What is more, it draws our eyes in one direction and not another, our feet are conducted down certain paths and not others, and we hear some voices whilst others remain quiet. Thus, for every new vista that is opened up others may be purposefully closed off. What we can broadly term, tourist audio walks, therefore, seemingly code our spatial imaginaries – our ways of sensing and experiencing the world – in very particular ways. They pivot upon and create what Ingold (2007) might term, point-to-point connections, wherein knowledge is assembled not developed, a route is given not made and we become passengers not wayfarers. We will return to these ideas later, but for the moment they illustrate how audio walks under the guise of the 'alternative' may actually be part of what de Certeau terms, the 'Solar Eye' (1988:92).

In this paper we explore audio walks not as geographical givens or instruments of navigation that give us place ready-made, but as prac-

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¹ The audio walks that form the basis of this paper's critique are those made for predominantly tourist purposes. As will be seen, there is a more artistic type of audio walk, one that is often disruptive of the smooth and cohesive places these touristic walks present, and these will be drawn upon to elaborate the argument made in this paper.

² Contrary to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of smooth space – a space of lived becoming that is made through our variegated movements through it – we employ smooth to suggest a space of known routes, which lends itself to easy and unthinking movement through the world.

tices of making and doing. We suggest that by attending to the creation and reception of particular non-touristic audio walks we can begin to understand them as living and lively encounters with the world; they are emotional and affective ways of making not merely representing place. Our work builds on a substantial critical interest in audio walks (Lavery, 2005; Butler, 2006; Myers, 2010; Gallagher, 2014), but where this paper diverges from this heritage is in its focus not just on the walker, but on the producer as well. Approached in this way, audio walks produce place not as a smooth and coherent expression, but rather as ragged and messy happenings that occur in the interstices of, or relationality between, self and world. Our focus is on an audio walk project that 'happened' in Grangetown, an inner city ward of Cardiff, South Wales.³ Initially, this project worked with a group of young, Muslim men, to develop a series of audio walks around the neighbourhood, which expressed and explored their place in the world. On completion of these walks we talked with a number of locals and non-locals who had undertaken the walks about their 'doing' of the walks and how (if at all) the process of being-within and moving through the area had shaped their experience, their understanding and their making of Grangetown. Our interest, then, is in how, through the making and doing of audio walks Grangetown is continuously happening, not given. The paper begins with some theoretical reflections on how we make and know the world. It draws from a range of theoretical perspectives, but its purpose is to explore audio walks 'in-forma-tion' rather than as forms. This perspective is developed in the subsequent sections that address formation as both a practice of making and doing audio walks.

1. Lines in the world

The city, we learn from De Certeau (1984), is organised from above, with the powers and decisions of officialdom controlling how we live, move and make meaning within urban space. In juxtaposition to this 'Solar Eye' (1988:92) are the resistant tactics of everyday life; the inventiveness and idiosyncrasies of our being-within-the-world. These resistant tactics accrue most clearly, de Certeau argues, in the practice of walking, which is a form of enunciation, a way of narrating one's own story of the city. Although pregnant with possibilities, Pinder (2011) cautions against over-determining the tactical power of walking, for it is a practice that rarely addresses the underlying processes or continual inscriptions of power; it may institute small practices of resistance, but it does little to resist, what Ingold terms, the linearization of the world. Where '*once the trace of a continuous gesture, the line has been fragmented – under the sway of modernity – into a succession of points or dots*' (Ingold, 2007:75). As walkers we rarely thread living lines through the world, for our experience of the world is increasingly that of an amalgam of connected, predetermined elements and not an emergent becoming.

The community produced audio walks noted above are indicative of this, for if we follow Ingold (2007), they are assemblages of the world, not movements through it. They are comprised through a series of interconnected dots or points of interest, they follow a route-plan, they have a pre-defined plot and they are inescapably destination orientated. What is more, in the way they convey information in bite-sized chunks, each of which is related to that which comes before and that which comes after, audio walks build up knowledge, rather

than facilitating its development. Such audio walks therefore, if we follow Ingold's critique further, are modes of transport. They pick up their passengers at certain points, and set them down at others. They disclose certain views to their passengers and withhold others. At each point of interest the passenger is momentarily re-connected with the world, while the world in-between is intended to pass them by having no bearing on their movement. Thus, audio walks affect how we experience and come to know the world, and, at the same time, our expectations of the form condition, or affect, the very manner in which audio walks present and convey information. While the world is increasingly linearised and we become mere goods to be transported hither and thither, this paper argues that an audio walk is not always complicit in this linearization, for it,

... is not defined by the points it connects, or by the points that compose it; on the contrary, it passes between points, it comes up through the middle, it runs ... transversally to the localizable relation to distant or contiguous points. A point is always a point of origin. But a line of becoming has neither beginning nor end.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 2004:323)

In this paper we want to suggest that audio walks are not all modes of transport that move us across the world, but, instead, living lines or gestures through the world. We begin by arguing that conceptualisations that follow de Certeau and Ingold downplay human agency, by presuming that we are, what Laurier (2001) might term, cultural dopes: we move, see and experience as instructed, with our range of responses being reduced to a binary of resignation or resistance. This tends to miss what has variously been termed the *haecceity* (the this-ness), the site ontologies or commonsense topographies of our being-within-the-world: an interest not in what might be, but in what is (Laurier, 2001; Woodward et al., 2010). What is more, as Duff (2008) elaborates in relation to de Certeau, there is an absence of an affective dimension within his work. We learn little, for instance, of how emotional, felt and lived sensations resonate in the world. Where Ingold is more attuned to the affectiveness of the world, the binary he establishes between passengering and wayfaring seemingly narrows and determines the affective registers available to us. It creates what Anderson (2009) might term, a collective atmosphere with singular affects; it conveys to us how we should react to the world. Yet to conceive of audio walks as only modes of transport that carry passive passengers through the world is to deny how affects are subjectively experienced. In developing these 'lines' of thinking we start by considering the this-ness of the non-touristic audio walk form, and it is to another vision of the line that we turn for instruction.

In *Relational Aesthetics*, Bourriaud argues that an '*artwork is a dot in a line*' (2002:21); it is a process that occurs through the actualities and materialities of differently orchestrated doings. Thus, art is not a product that appears *de novo* in the world; instead, it is an on-going accomplishment of social agencies and affects. These social agencies and affects do not stop with the dot – with the art work's material completion – rather, they continue to shape its reception in the world. Although audio walks are not always seen as works of art these ideas are particularly instructive, for they suggest that we see audio walks neither as end products or starting points (a line's destination, or its commencement), nor as self-contained lines (impositions on the world, movements from A to B, or routes with a discernable destination), but rather, as processes replete with multiple pasts, presents and futures. Audio walks therefore, are always more than the materiality of a route. Myers (2010), for instance, prefers to see them as practices of 'conversive wayfaring', wherein the creators, the place and the consumer become co-producers of the form, the place and the experience. Already our idea of the line is altering, for conversive

³ The argument within this paper is directly informed from the understanding that emerged within this community produced walks project, but we would also tentatively suggest that it could be useful in understanding forms of engagement within other types of non-touristic and touristic audio walks, however this is not developed in this paper.

wayfaring pivots upon the mingling of lifeworlds. And so we saw, within the community project research, how audio walks emerge from and immerse participants, or percipients, within an active lifeworld, and, at the same time, percipients inevitably forge their own narrative as they weave this lifeworld into their own. Thus, while audio walks may appear as lines or routes that carve up and order the world, directing our experience, there is also scope to see them as pathways; they are not rigid or unforgiving, but rather, pliable, yielding and rich in opportunity. They do, for instance, work backwards and forwards; they are concatenations of histories and stories of and about place, and at the same time, they are pregnant with possible new worlds and new worldviews, as new inscriptions are made on and within them.

This is a useful beginning, but conversive wayfaring is articulated more through the affective lifeworld of the percipient than it is through the affective lifeworld of the creator. We still have little insight into an audio walk's making and the different lifeworlds that converge in this creation. Of course, in following Bourriaud (2002) it could be argued that any distinction between creative and receptive affects dissolve, for the audience is simultaneously the author and vice-versa (see Lavery, 2005 for a development of this argument). Yet there is something different about the lifeworlds that occur before the audio walk. It could be suggested that they are more visible, more voluble and more bewildering, for so many different routes, histories, stories and voices press and push against one another in a bid to be heard, recognised and incorporated into the 'official' line. What we see therefore, is a confluence of lines, as different worlds touch, mingle and, at times, miss one another.

Audio walks have a material line, which appears as a route through the world. Yet this route is always more than it appears. It is a route that in its making begins very much as a whirl, as different ideas and understandings circulate and vie for attention. As a practice of 'doing' the line intersects with others, as new worlds reveal themselves to percipients. The material line of the audio walk therefore, in many ways conceals an entanglement of lines both past, present and future. At different moments different lines converge forging an ever denser meshwork of interconnecting lifeworlds, or more aptly, lifelines. This returns us to Ingold (2007), for in his idea of the meshwork he argues that life takes form not in places, but on lines and paths. We become through our movement not our stasis, and where our lines become entangled with others new opportunities arise. It is this, we argue, that is more characteristic of audio walks than the analogy of the passenger, for as we move along a line we simultaneously make new ones; whether it is with our feet or our eye line, our imagination or our memory, we constantly find and weave new paths into the material line through place. It is by exploring the making of these lines on both sides of the dot, and the way the experiences of author and the audience are intertwined, that we can begin to understand the spectrum of lived experiences, or what we might term, the generative time-space of the audio walk.

2. Making lines, leaving footprints

Footprints are the impressions we leave behind us. They are made, Ingold (2010) observes, in soft surfaces by the pressure of the human body and are often quite ephemeral as time, weather and other footprints obscure our own. Given their transience, footprints are rarely marks of ownership, but rather clues to our identity and location. Through the depth of their impress, their spacing and their directionality footprints yield information about our relationships with the world. Although in a conventional sense, when experienced as tools of urban tourism, audio walks would rarely be seen as footprints, and more what Ingold (2010) terms stamps – impositions on the world –

the analogy of the footprint allows us to look beyond the audio walk as an object and explore, instead, its making through the landscape.

Our project began one January evening in 2011 when we were invited to a local youth club to talk with a group of young men about making a number of audio walks around the neighbourhood of Grangetown. If we fast-forward to May 2012 the output was two walks around the neighbourhood, one that traced the area's social history and one that traced its sporting history and culture. These walks emerged from the interests of the young men, but their making was far from simple. During the seventeen months of the project many footpaths, both real and imagined, were forged around Grangetown. One of the first was ours. Although we wanted our project, *Sounding the Way*, to challenge the conventions of touristic, urban audio walks by taking place within relatively marginalised rather than iconic settings and being forged by those within the community rather than by ourselves, this was the limit of our critique (in the first instance). Thus, when the young men presented us with their initial routes around the neighbourhood we began to realise how our imagined vision of audio walking removed the young men from, or at least demarcated, their social worlds. The output that emerged as the *Sporting History and Culture* walk, for instance, started life at Cardiff City stadium, it then moved on to the Star Centre in Splott before heading to the Cardiff Devils stadium in Cardiff Bay. This was a journey that took in large swathes of the city, stretched for four miles, barely touched the neighbourhood of Grangetown and tracked back and forth at whim.

We had formulated place and method in a particular way, which if we follow Schegloff (1972), established the terms by which we evaluated what a 'proper' audio walk was: a relatively short route, contained within a neat geographical area and punctuated by a number of points of interest. In contrast, the young men offered us something very different. As they observed at the close of the project:

YM1: 'I thought we'd just like do walks. That's what I thought. Like at the beginning, like the Duke of Edinburgh, but everyone say no'.

YM2: Because the title: audio walks [laughing]

YM1: Yes, I, that's what I thought. I didn't know you had to record.

YM2: He just think [sic] you had a voice recorder in your hand and you just walk round

YM1: Yes, that's what I thought

(Post-project Interview, 23rd March 2012)

The reference to the Duke of Edinburgh Award is instructive, for this requires participants to undertake an expeditionary walk of up to four days. Although these walks often have a theme or aim, they tend to be more wide-ranging, potentially digressive and designed to test endurance. In some respects, their initial audio route reflected this, but it also emerged from and expressed their encounter with the world; it was tied up with their interests, their daily lives and their everyday geographies, which were more expansive than we had anticipated. Our preconceptions over what an audio walk should look like came to affect the power of action of the young men. Through discussions with us they came to revise their route. The result was a more compact walk that began at the Cardiff Devils stadium and followed the line of the Taff River into Grangetown. This would not be our way of doing things now, but at the time we were motivated by a particular vision of the footprints we wanted to leave within Grangetown – we wanted something that simultaneously emulated the touristic audio walk model while occurring in a place and being made by commu-

nities that disrupted the accepted discourses of urban tourism. Thus the audio walk a participant encounters today is haunted, to borrow from Gallagher (2014), by absent presences; by other lines, other footprints, other 'intensities of feeling' (Thrift, 2004:57) of and about place that we struggled to reconcile with what we knew of touristic audio walks.

It was our (naïve) intention that the audio walks would express the young men's Grangetown, but what was this Grangetown? Was it their life in the area prior to the project, or, was it their life as it developed through the project? What became apparent early on in the project was the young men's anxiety over their Grangetown. They did not feel their Grangetown was of interest to other people, and so there was, in the process of making, an ethics of affect: feelings of inadequacy, of the invalidity of their knowledge and of the need to seek alternative, more valid Grangetowns. Thus and as already noted, they opted for two broad stories around the neighbourhood, one that narrated the area's social history and one that narrated the area's sporting culture and heritage. With the first walk in particular it became clear that this was a Grangetown the boys knew little about prior to starting their walk. Consequently, the walks increasingly took form through a series of interviews and conversations with local people about the area. One of the first interviews the young men conducted was with a group of interested residents and locals within the area. The intention behind this was to gain a greater understanding of the area's past:

YM: What was the area like before it is now, was it more erm' happier than now because now you get a lot of knife crime?

Resident1: We never had any vandalism in our day, you could leave your door open day and night ...everybody had the same, nobody had anything to take, we were all in the same boat ...

Resident2: Don't think that ...we blame all you friends, and ethnic people for coming in, I think most of the present trouble in this country is one thing: drugs.

(Local Community Interviews, 1st March 2011)

Although this sounds quite uncomfortable, even somewhat xenophobic, conveying as it does both intergenerational and inter-ethnic differences, it reflects the uneasy coming together of two very different Grangetowns: the white, working classes who dominated the area in the mid-twentieth century and the more recent in-migrants who come from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds. This conversational encounter is a meeting of pathways, a nodal point if you like, between different social worlds, and it reveals what Haldrup et al. (2006) term, the practical orientalisms of everyday life. Following Edward Said (1978), they argue that orientalism is not merely a form of representation, but rather, a lived practice of cultural differentiation that saturates our social interactions. It can take form in our ways of speaking; for instance, the above extract, in its use of 'all you friends' and 'ethnic people', conveys a hegemonic grammar of us and them; us allows for internal difference, but them does not. Such language also suggests a coping strategy, a way of managing the emotional fall-out, the fears and anxieties, of spatial and social change. Although only one extract, this was the tenor of many of the conversations the young men engaged in, making us conscious of the way in which they were anticipated by particular communities within Grangetown. They were seen not as individuals but as members of a pre-existing and pre-determined group. Thus, in this instance, the conversation fore-structured or positioned the young men as outsiders, they were not perceived as part of the 'natural' or traditional make-up of the area.

Instances such as this suggest an affective absence within our social relationships. In so many of our social encounters we barricade ourselves against the lived world; we distance it, we understand it through an institutional or generic lens and we opt to describe it not in terms of the impression it makes on our senses, but in more objective ways and through more accepted terminology. As a result, we tend to perpetuate such disembodied discourses, such ways of speaking and understanding, helping to normalise a situation which responds not to the individual but to our idea of them. This practical orientalism and the sensory absence it was predicated upon formed an implicit backdrop to much of the project's making, but if affected not only how the young men were positioned within the area, but how they came to negotiate, position and narrate the area within their walks. In their conversations with different people it became apparent that there was a particular way of talking about (and listening to) Grangetown, one that idealised the past and seemingly laboured its present diversity. Matless (2005) would term this, the area's sonic dialect; its hegemonic narrative and whatever the young men's emotional and affective experience of place, the soundscapes that they formulated had to be in line with these overarching narratives, or dialects, if they were to be recognised, endorsed and taken-up. There is an obvious acoustic or auditory politics of space here (LaBelle, 2010; Kanngieser, 2012), for there was only so much of the young men's self and felt experience that could be poured into and heard in their audio walks. Their power of articulation, their selves as emotional beings and ultimately the soundscape they produced were restrained by the Grangetown narrative.

That said, it could be argued that the Grangetown narrative was a beguiling one, it was a story ready-made. It made sense, it had order, and it had a clear emotional expression. In many ways, the Grangetown narrative gave us an instant 'regime of feeling' (Thrift, 2004): an impassioned sense of place and agency. If we turn to the *Sporting History and Culture* walk we hear from one local rower who stresses the physical demands, level of commitment and expectations of the sport:

The higher the level you want to compete at you've got to dedicate more of your life to it, you know the Olympic guys don't have normal jobs, they just row and train all the time ... but even to compete at the club level, that I do, I train most nights for a couple of hours and then Saturday and Sundays you've got about three hours. (Sounding the Way, 2012b)

The young men were confronted with many vignettes like this, which convey quite palpably the felt nature of experience, or, what we might term one's aliveness and vitality (Massumi, 2002). This is the lived and living experience of the rower, but the challenge was how to mediate and manage such liveliness into the audio walk without destroying it. The young men resolved this by including such vignettes in their entirety, as a Grangetown ready-made for them. As a result, the narrative was structured more through lengthy monologues, rather than the bite-sized polylogues found in the more conventional audio walks of urban tourism. At times this seems quite overwhelming. There is no narrative beyond the lived experience of the person we are listening to. When we hear from the rower for instance, no sound effects are used to help us imagine rowing on the River Taff. There is little coherence between one monologue and the next and there is no internal logic awaiting discovery. The walks do not seek to affect the participant in one particular or intended way. Instead, Grangetown is made in the immediacy of each social encounter, with the liveliness of each refusing to conform to a material line through

place or to the fostering of a smooth and uncomplicated soundscape of place.

3. Following footprints, making lines

Butler (2006) refers to audio walks as letters of introduction to place; they help us to familiarise and apprehend the unknown. To do this, they seemingly draw our eyes and feet in particular directions. They tend to require us, for instance, to move with our eyes looking up and around rather than down at our feet, they point out places of note and they tell us things about place that may not be obvious or evident. A letter of introduction though, is merely that: an introduction. It eases one in to place, offering a material line through it, but it does not prescribe what occurs on this line. What happens on this line depends upon our other lines, for as Deleuze and Guattari (2004) observe, we are packets of lines that cross, mingle and interweave. Some crossings are productive and others are moribund, but it is at these crossings that we make meaning. If we follow this *line* of thinking, all audio walks are always spaces of opportunity not certainty; they offer us a set of footprints, but the very nature of the footprint makes them hard to follow and so, an audio walk is always pregnant with possible new footprints.

It is to the possibilities of the line, or put another way, to what goes on, on the other side of the dot, that this paper now turns. Part of the opportunity of the audio walk lies in its mode of accomplishment: it depends upon walking and listening. Walking tends to make for a slower engagement with place, allowing us, Pink (2008) observes, to become more attuned to the rhythms and routines of its social fabric. As such, audio walks do not merely represent place to us, they demand that we immerse ourselves within it; we have to negotiate people and traffic, navigate uneven surfaces, do battle with the weather and submit ourselves to the sensory atmospheres of the place. Consequently, we become co-producers of the place. This co-production though, has tended to be understood as a form of witnessing, wherein the participant is invited to make meaning at the confluence of viewpoints (heard narrative) and viewing-points (seen places) (Butler, 2006; Lavery, 2005; Myers, 2010). Problems arise, however, where viewpoint and viewing-point fail to elide. Although uncommon on professionally authored, tourist orientated audio walks, as we discovered on the Grangetown audio walks, there was little intimacy between viewpoint and viewing point with the viewpoints often arising before the viewing point had been reached:

We had to pause it [the audio walk] quite a lot and go to the next [stop] it wasn't one long [audio clip], so we paused it for a while and caught up with each another and during that time, when you had like free time almost, you'd look around and the eye would look at it in a completely different way to normal.

(Walkers' Focus Group)

The audio walk was not an all-encompassing soundscape. It moved participants through Grangetown faster than they were able to go, creating a disjuncture between sound, place and pace. This disjuncture though, can be promising, for it throws up what Iser (1980) terms a space of indeterminacy: a moment when the narration may become quite ragged, where narrative and setting may become uncoupled or where the narrative voice becomes uncertain or hesitant, all of which create opportunities for the interpretative and creative agencies of the participants. In the Grangetown *History and Change* audio walk for instance, the participant hears no geographical reference point until six minutes into the walk. The walk starts at a local youth club, yet we are not told this, rather location is implied through the first character we meet, a local youth worker. The next waypoint is

the local library, but again, the participant is expected to elucidate this through the conversation we overhear with the Grangetown *Historical Society*, who meet at this location. The youth centre and the library are scarcely more than 100 m apart, yet the first five minutes of the audio walk focuses on these two sites. Thus, the relationship between the soundscape and the line of movement is not clear. That which is heard imparts neither rhythm to the walk nor direction to the walker: the walker is not told what to do – should they stop (but for how long), hover, or walk on – and so, it falls to them to improvise and fit the seen world with the heard world. The sound affects of this are manifold. It can be an immersive experience wherein the self is given over to an auditory world in which the materiality of place temporarily fades in significance; it can be a creative opportunity as we forge a way through the gaps in the soundscape, and, the lack of clarity can also be disorientating and disconcerting: participants do not always like being lost.

At the same time, throughout the walk references are made to places the participant cannot see from their vantage point. We hear, for example, about Cathedral Road's Jewish enclave and the Irish immigrants living in Adamstown, yet neither of these places is in, or proximate to, Grangetown. Thus, far from sweeping the participant into a seamless, self-referential encounter with place, the audio walk is leaky. We might say that its meaningfulness depends upon a pre-existing spatial and sonic literacy of the city that will allow one to imagine that which is not visible. Yet this is to assume that meaning arises only where we can relate parts to whole in a logical and linear way. Narratives, Ingold (2000) argues, should be like walking; they should meander and wander at will and at whim. They are a living expression, not impression, of our world, and so, they open and close vistas, turn one way and then the other, track back and forth. The Grangetown audio walks operate in a similar way, for they make it impossible to imitate the footprints of the makers. Where viewpoint and viewing move out of kilter participants are presented with what we may term a wormhole: a way through to another time-space. This time-space is the world of their mental wanderings. It is a world in which body, place and time are folded within one another; remembered pasts, imagined futures and the felt present collide within the moment of the walk.

Similar creative moments arise if we turn to the experience of listening upon which the audio walk is predicated. Our participants were plugged in, and while it can be suggested that this disconnected them from the immediacy of Grangetown and immersed them within an all-encompassing auditory world, the ragged nature of the narrative with its manifold pauses, its erratic sound quality and its foregrounding of what would normally be background meant that they were far from ensconced within a hermetic world. This worked on multiple levels. In the first instance, where everyday noises punctuated and intruded upon the narrative of the audio walk, other spaces were disclosed:

I've lived in Grangetown, grew up here. Grangetown is a brilliant place [door banging in background], erm as a whole. It's very multicultural. Just walking round Grangetown you will find people from different cultures, different nationalities, you know, there's a variety of languages spoken in Grangetown, a really good mix.

(Sounding the Way, 2012a)

This punctuation alerts us to the backstage of the walks, to the lives and the things going on in the wings. As such, we hear something of the living depth and texture of space; the audio walks are a part, not apart, from everyday life. They remind us that the places on the walk are not points of stasis or social vacuums, but inhabited spaces, whose integrity and materiality arises through the relations on-going

within it. This points to a second way in which the walk blends worlds, for as one participant observed, it was these other lives, or sidetracks that,

‘... made you interested in, like, erm who the people were ... I was walking past doors and rather than usual you just sort of push on and don't really think, it made you think about the people who were living behind the doors. There were people drinking on the curb as we went past and I thought it would be quite cool to stop and talk to them, which is something that'd never occur to me before’

(Walkers' Focus Group)

The audio walk is opening up a dialogic space, wherein inside and outside, real and imagined, self and other attend and respond to one another. This is a very radical, transformative and affective space for we do not merely hear the other, we listen to them and we conduct, albeit imaginatively, conversations with them. Where hearing is quite passive, a constant and persistent attunement to the world, listening is active, creative, or as Bakhtin (1986) terms it, anticipatory, for it is pregnant with a response. Conventional touristic audio guides or walks often depend more on the former than the latter; they convey place in a smooth, regular and measured manner that requires little work from its participants. Take the popular Touristic Tracks, previously mentioned, which are a near ubiquitous tourist feature within many cities, these require little input or effort from their participants, or more aptly, passengers. They offer place ready-made; a seamless soundscape that moves over not through, offering a view on but not in place. The Grangetown audio walks, in contrast, are neither easy nor smooth; rather, they are ‘practically ... quite tricky ... they're quite quiet voices and so ... a lot of it [the audio] got missed because of the traffic noise’ (Walkers' Focus Group). Consequently, the audio walks work through, what Carter (2004) terms, ambiguous listening. This is where the ground rules of ‘normal’ dialogue – the often unconscious feedback loop between speaking and hearing, and the assumption that meaning is grounded in a shared language – are suspended. Instead, participants are active listeners who pursue ambiguous, auditory traces. Our participants were not fazed by breakdowns in the auditory space, caused by poor sound quality, the punctuation of background noises, or unfamiliar sounds, accents or sites; instead, they embraced partially heard or misheard utterances, bridging gaps in the sonic landscapes and forging alternative routes through the world. Thus, rather than offering an all-encompassing world, the Grangetown audio walks should perhaps be seen only as a beginning. They offer possible ways into the neighbourhood, in terms of footpaths and narratives, and the articulation of these ways in, or ‘beginnings’, affects their reception and development. If beginnings are overlooked, unheard or misheard then place can be made in unanticipated, novel and odd ways. In this way, ‘doing’ the audio walks requires imaginative construction and completion within the lived world. The walker does not passively follow a seamless route or set of footprints; rather, they dwell within the sonic environment of both walk and world. This dual or layered soundscape means that the affects of the audio walk are always inimitable: the threads that the participants take-up, the beginnings they respond to and the choices they make are exceptional to the moment of doing. Through this dual dwelling they ‘gain a sense of the value of ... [the walk's] yet-to-be-achieved aspects—the prospects ‘it’ offers us for ‘going on’ with it’ (Shotter, 2003:463). In ‘going-on’ with it, the walker knits or crafts their own line through the world, actively responding to (and helping to make) the soundscape they hear and the places they encounter.

4. Conclusions

The Grangetown audio walks were ‘off the beaten track’ in more ways than one. Not only did they happen in a neighbourhood off the tourist trail, and fail to take in ‘iconic’ buildings or landscapes, but they challenged the aesthetic of the form. Instead of giving us a place ready-made – an uncomplicated, all-encompassing and easy to follow route through the area – place had to be forged on both sides of the dot [the audio walk]. Making was not a case of collecting stories or narrating self-experience, instead, it was a process of negotiation between expected narratives, epistemological uncertainty and ontological ambiguity. As a result, those doing the audio walk were not presented with a footpath, either physically or sonically, but rather, a set of footprints; these might suggest direction, but they were easily effaced, offering no surety for getting from A to B. Thus, doing was not an imitative or smooth undertaking; it required improvisation and instinct in order to bridge gaps and make imaginative leaps across sonic ruptures and visual disjunctures.

Thus, stepping behind the form and exploring the practices of making and doing audio walks, complicates thinking over how we move within, hear and make the world. Audio walks are not forms of transport, replete with passive passengers who are ensconced within an all-encompassing sonic environment, but nor are they instances of subjective wayfaring, wherein directional decisions are made in the moment. Instead, they come up through the middle; they reveal the malleability of the route as it encounters the emotional whirl and press of everyday life. Consequently, rather than conceptualising the audio walk as a route – something unwavering and unambiguous – it is more productive to regard it as a meshwork of lines that come together in the continuous making of both walk and place. A focus on making and doing reveals the lines that go into and come out of the dot; these are multiple, they run in varying directions and they become in different ways as new lifelines, sounds, and mental wanderings are brought to bear on locational, directional and emotional decision-making. Thus, rather than making place, audio walks create possibilities for place-making: our walks did not make Grangetown they were generative of Grange-towns.

Uncited references

The Guardian, 2016; Tourist Tracks, 2016; Visit Bath, 2016.

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