

Enchanted Geographies: experiences of place in contemporary British landscape mysticism

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Declaration of Authorship

James Thurgill

I hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Abstract

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This research explicates the role of place in contemporary practices of British landscape mysticism, seeking to understand the relationship between landscape, place and enchantment through a set of experiments in the Heideggerian phenomenology of absence. Landscape mysticism offers particular methods that allow for the formation of a profound spiritual attachment to place and the production of a more overarching understanding of the vitality of nature. The project locates instances of the preternatural, exploring the idea that such anomalies are in fact a way of accessing the landscape, of engaging with place.

The study is broken down into three strands, each one providing an account of the enchanted landscape: *haunting*, *magick* and *leylines*. The strands are dealt with using specific sites, exploring each one through a combination of theoretical discussion, phenomenological engagement and (auto-) ethnographic response. Each of the case studies will be shown to be interrelated through the framework of hauntology, a position that will be used to emphasise the role of absence and memory in the production of place and space.

The geographies I will discuss are widely perceived as marginal, however they are abundant in the natural landscape. Sites such as ruins, earthworks, ancient trees and prehistoric trackways all form places where a sense of the past permeates the present. Of yet greater import still are the practices involved with an occulted engagement of these sites (ghost hunting, magick, divination, meditation, dowsing). These will be explored as methods for dealing with the fragmented ontologies, the hauntologies that pervade these enchanted geographies. The enchantment of place is developed further

by practices such as these. Via an investigation of the practices and the performativity used to engage with these spaces of seemingly unnatural animation, the thesis elucidates the experiences of place formed within contemporary British landscape mysticism.

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Preface

*“For the past does not but sleep; no, for Perchance
it is awake and it is they of the present who do
sleep and dream.”*

- F. B. Bond, *The Illuminated Address*.

Sometime during October 2012, I cannot remember when exactly, I picked up a copy of an odd looking book that detailed the archaeological excavations of Glastonbury Abbey, from a second hand bookshop in West London. The book immediately caught my attention due to its face-out position on the shelf and a rather esoteric graphic embossed upon the cloth cover. The book, a 1920 third edition of Frederick Bligh Bond’s *The Gate of Remembrance*, was going to make a nice addition to the growing number of mostly well thumbed-through, semi-antiquarian occult and esoteric titles that I had been amassing since the beginning of my doctoral studies.

It was later on when, whilst flicking through the pages, that I noticed something was loose within the book itself. The binding was in good condition and being certain that I had not failed to spot any damage before leaving the store, I tipped the book on its end and gently tapped the spine to reveal whatever it was that was hidden away within the leaves of the text. What fell from the book were not loose pages at all, but a slightly yellowed, sealed and addressed envelope. Curious, I decided to investigate the contents of the envelope further. Within it, a collection of ten monochrome and sepia photographs and postcards, all of which portrayed either the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey ruins or nearby Glastonbury locations. The majority of the images appeared to be field photographs of the ruins and had been dated ‘1918’ in pencil on the reverse sides. The postcards displayed detailed etchings of the remains of the abbey and had been stamp marked with similar dates. Indeed, this had become an interesting find, especially when put in context with the theme of the book itself; spectral investigation. The real shock however, was that on the back of one particularly worn looking photograph, were inscribed the words ‘*Glastonbury abbey, View Through*

Choir (looking South), Please return to F. B. Bond' (Fig. i) with a subsequent forwarding address. I was instantly drawn into the bizarre and seemingly chance circumstances that had unfolded.

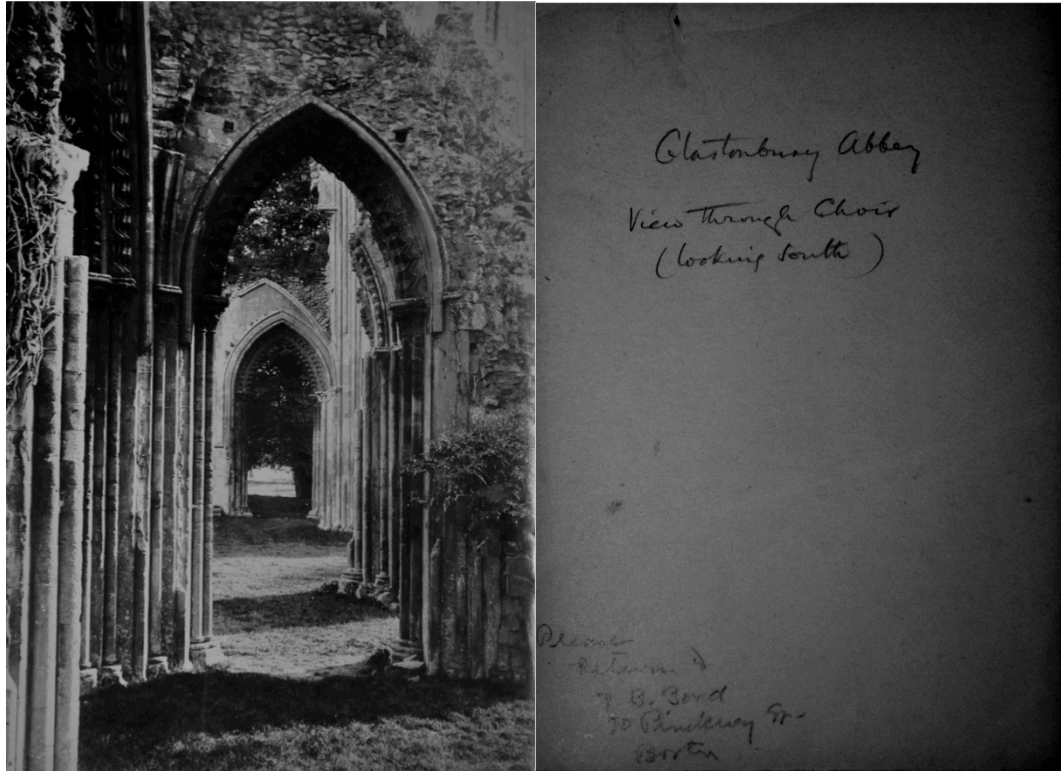


Fig. i. *View Through Choir* by F.B. Bond (No Date).

A preexisting interest in spectral geographies and the production of mystical and ghostloric narratives, has led to the incident being an aptly framed anecdote for expressing the modes by which our thinking about certain objects and place is conditioned by uncanny, seemingly inexplicable events. The strange nature of Bond's entering into my knowledge of British esoteric land practices and moreover the intriguing case of the psychically and spiritually led excavations at Glastonbury, of which the book documents, demonstrate the reasoning behind the inclusion of Bond, his practices and ongoing spectral legacy, here. But the seemingly strange tale of the book's coming into my possession will by many, be reduced to probability, to chance. It was a fortunate find, and in many ways, the aesthetic value of the objects alone outweigh their placement here as strange. However, the work of Bond and his contribution to fringe archaeological practices, as well as the

widening of the mystical topology that envelopes Glastonbury, can be seen as a significant narrative in which to codify the thesis proper.

In 1908 Bristol based architect and archaeologist, Frederick Bligh Bond, was appointed Director of Excavations at the ruined ecclesiastical site of Glastonbury Abbey. Bond was commissioned to dig the site in search of 'lost' foundations, particularly those belonging to an apse of the Edgar Chapel. Bond conducted archaeological surveys of the site during the months of May through August; his seasonal approach was somewhat enforced by insufficient funding and a dwindling team of labourers (Kenawell, 1965). Initial archaeological enquires had been carried out at the site during the previous year, prior to Bond's acquiring the position of Director. It was around the same time as these earlier excavations began, in November 1907, that Bond and a like-minded former naval officer, Captain John Allen Bartlett, began experimenting with the use of automatic writing and Ouija boards (Bond, 1920).

Initial experiments with psychical phenomena had produced intriguing results, and Kenawell (*ibid*) claims that hand drawn plans of Glastonbury Abbey and information pertaining to the lost Edgar Chapel had been received in the very first sitting that Bartlett and Bond had partaken in. By the sixth sitting, Bond notes that he had been instructed on where to begin his excavations;

Sitting VI, 26th November 1907.

Question: 'Where should we commence to dig?'

Answer: 'The east end. Seek for the pillars and the wall(s) at an angle. The foundations are deep.'

(Bond, 1920, p. 41)

The series of questions and responses that were recorded by Bond highlight the specificity of the information that was 'coming through' during the automatic writing sessions and support Bond's theory that his apparent success at locating remains at the site was partially down to scientifically inexplicable occurrences.

Bartlett, who had had an on-going involvement with various Spiritualist and psychic circles (Kenawell, 1965), was the more adept of the two when it came to any involvement with psychical practices. It stands to reason then, that when Bond employed the 'occult' skills of his friend Bartlett in 1908 to help navigate, map and uncover the concealed foundations of the abbey site, he did so with a genuine belief that Bartlett, who was now operating under the pseudonym of *John Alleyne*, was capable of wielding some supernatural power; a spectrally originating knowledge made manifest through the arcane practices that the two men undertook.

For more than a decade Bartlett and Bond conducted séances and varying forms of divination to commune with the spirits of the monks who had frequented the abbey all those centuries ago. This in turn provided Bond with 'details of its structure and history, written in the archaic language of the old monks' themselves (Michell, 1989). The experiments went on in private, many sessions taking place remotely whilst at Bond's Bristol based architectural office; behind the backs of the conservative church authorities who Bond had suspected would be less than enthused by the prospect of his psychical methods (*ibid*). Both excavations and the experiments continued until word finally got out about Bond's occult practices and he was immediately dismissed from his role by the Bishop Armitage Robinson on the grounds of using of necromancy at a consecrated site.

The methodologies employed by Bond are the first documented instances of psychic archaeology; a fringe discipline that remains practiced today. Bond's techniques for uncovering the material past through spiritual practices provided the foundations for later spiritual enquiries into landscape seen in the works of Foster-Forbes (1973); Lethbridge (1957, 1963); Underwood (1968); Broadhurst and Miller (1990), and Devereux (1991, 1994, 2010). My interest in this case is not so much to validate the claims of the paranormal, of proving or disproving that the information gathered by Bligh Bond and his team had emanated from spectral sources. Not at all. The subject of my interest is rather that of re-imagining our connections to the materiality of place and moreover, what this might mean for the evolution of terms such as *genius loci* – the spirit of place.

Furthermore, what might be the implications for the geographic imagination when aligned with a case such as Bond's? It appears that whether real or figurative, Glastonbury Abbey retains its own unique set of spirits. Bligh Bond made a connection to these 'spirits' through a multiplicity of materialities; the abbey site, masonry, soil, grass, shovel, paper, the very ink from Bartlett's pen that permeated the notebook and recorded the sessions. Through each of these objects, Bond was able to ascertain the location of the hidden chapel; he did so through an engagement with the immaterial via uncontestably material means. The tension between these two, the material and the immaterial, is what forces open a space for the engendering of enchantment. The mobilisation of a mysticism that shrouds the abbey, as well as the wider setting of the Somerset town of Glastonbury, makes for a deeply affective environment that is situated within a landscape saturated by its past and associated narrative(s) of myth. Such a landscape is where new meanings, re-imaginings can take place. We might refer to such a spatialities as being the place where the (im)material comes to exist; where the immaterial inflects and works upon materiality.

Ghosts like that of Glastonbury Abbey are only accessible through material entities, whether it be a tipping table, a pen and paper, a Ouija board, the fact remains that the spectral has to be engaged corporeally. The (im)material accounts for this, it does not attempt to separate the being from the non being, the seen from the unseen, the perceived from the unperceived; rather it fuses such binaries to demonstrate the possibilities for enchantment in objects, in things. The absence of the definite here, gives way to a place of exploration; the chapel remains were simultaneously lost and present, both there (existing) and not there (unseen). Bond exploited the tension between this absent-presence further through the replication of the process; he engaged with unseen subjects, using material *things* to bring their voices to life.

It strikes me that the interaction between the historical figures of the abbey (the architect and the monks) has further developed the hauntological existence of the site. Ruins act as spaces for rethinking history of their own accord, they possess the affectual qualities that lead one to contemplate and

imagine previous acts of habitus that would have occurred within them. In this sense structural remains haunt us by continually allowing the past to permeate the present. In bringing the 'spirits' of the Glastonbury ruins to life, Bond created a duel haunting whereby ghosts appeared both as detritus (the ruins) and as unseen agents. The spectralisation of such a site is amplified further through the retelling of Bond's discoveries. The entire site is a wound upon the landscape, one that shall never be fully healed. The abbey, its ghostly narrative and indeed Bligh Bond himself will continue to occupy the space; the lives of all three in continuous repetition.

Psychic archaeology as practiced by Bond, evolves the way we might think about the notion of the 'spirit of place'; the abbey appeared to Bond and Bartlett (Alleyne) as having multiple sensed spirits, *genii locorum*. Moving away from the preternatural ghosts of Glastonbury in favour of (im)material agencies does not necessarily mean disregarding their value in the determining of the abbey's lost remains. Rather it augments them by repositioning ghosts as the unperceived matter of material objects. Furthermore, the case puts an interesting slant on how we might perceive places to exist; haunted geographies such as this one, change the nature of how we imagine place both temporally and spatially. The site of the abbey has been enriched both in terms of its own socio-cultural narrative and also in regards to its non-linear temporality. To be sure, Glastonbury Abbey is both a haunted and hauntological landscape, it remains and repeats both in situ and in memory. Dismissing the results of Bond's work on grounds of a doubt or fraudulence is to do a disservice to Bond, his commitment to the abbey and the archaeological developments he made there.

The case of Bond's Glastonbury excavation is one that encapsulates both the thematics and tone in which this thesis is written. The work conducted by Bond and Bartlett at Glastonbury Abbey works to provide a codified example of the manner in which sites might become framed by enchantment. Moreover, it demonstrates how the practices conducted at and around the site, even those that took place remotely, work to construct a narrative of enchantment that saturates the Abbey ruins and the surrounding milieu. Bowman (2009) speaks of the complexity of Glastonbury, positioning

the site as a multitude of place-based encounters;

Glastonbury is not a single space; it has a variety of natural features and constructed sites which are imbued with different resonances, attractions and meanings

(Bowman, 2009, p. 167).

Through such a lens, Glastonbury becomes represented by a fluid identity; one that is both essentialised and yet capable of shifting the conceptualisation of its 'rootedness' in and between myriad mythical readings, from biblical to spectral. The vignette presented here then, contextualises the body of research to come; The acts of spectral conjuration, of practicing geomantic or place-based divination, together with the placement of the abbey within Glastonbury's wider landscape of myth (Bowman, 1993, 2004; Prince and Richards, 2000; Wylie, 2002; Holloway, 2003), work to provide a thematic introduction for the tradition(s) of landscape mysticism that are presented throughout the chapters that follow.

I. Exordium

“(W)e sometimes feel a kinship with, and are strangely drawn to the dead; who were not as these, the long long dead, the men who knew not life in towns, and felt no strangeness in sun and wind and rain. In such a mood on that evening I went to one of those lonely barrows”

- W. H . Hudson, *Hampshire Days*.

“(T)he absence of a thing can only follow the thing”

- *Tristan Garcia, Form and Object*.

Introduction

This thesis will examine the role of experience in the encountering and development of enchanted geographies and the practices of landscape mysticism that work to form them. The work here intends to be experimental, offering a set of tests or probes for the examination of mysticised places and moreover variations in the absence that pervades them. The experimental is itself fast becoming a popular area of study within human geography (See Thompson, 2008; Last, 2012; McCormack 2013) and its inclusion within this thesis is used to account for the tentative nature of the research and its findings. Experimental geographies do not describe a unified approach to the analysis of the lived environment (Last, 2012) but rather they reiterate the range and diversity of methodologies available to the geographer.

The experimental welcomes interdisciplinarity and provides a platform on which myriad practices and interventions might be used to approach the geographic subject; artistic and literary practices are frequently utilised by geographers as tools capable of further describing the rich, multifaceted, sensually dynamic environments we inhabit. Seeking to analyse experience, the work has required a fluid research methodology, one that has had to be readily adaptable so as to deal with what has often been the immediate affects of place on the body, on my own body. The area of

research developed here, enchantment, a less than rigid term itself, has required further flexibility in regards to methodologies and so the complex nature of the research subject is reflected in both the subject area and presentation of the data collected. The experimental should be seen as widening the space in which geographers have to work, not only allowing for a more dynamic approach to research but offering the chance of a more thorough account of the range and influence that placial /spatial affect has on the human-subject. Furthermore, experimentation not only allows for gaps, failings and digressions in research but actively seeks to counter them by creating news ways in and around subjects. The experimental approach to the research in this thesis has been utilised precisely as a way of countering this problem. The empirical work has been primarily conducted through phenomenological engagements with place and specifically set within a Heideggerian framework. Rather than producing flat phenomenological analyses I have experimented with Heidegger's method, meshing philosophical enquiry with sensual, visual and autoethnographic accounts so as to provide a set of deep topological engagements with place and (im)materiality.

The primary reason for the research following in a tradition of Heideggerian phenomenology is that it is a method of analysis that rests upon experience alone from which to gain an understanding of the surrounding world. Heidegger's phenomenology is unique in that it privileges us with a view of the world that is predicated upon presence, and materiality as well as absence. Heidegger sets experience within a framework of 'unveiling', allowing the world to unfold through objects/things as they are encountered by the subject. This process of unveiling responds to what Heidegger posits as a concealing of the object proper. For Heidegger, the physical environment can never be fully known to us due to its existence within a state of continuous concealment; as we cannot view every aspect of a thing or object simultaneously then part of that thing will act to continuously evade us, to be made present only by its absence. The development of concealment not only creates a feeling of limited engagement with the world but also purports a sense of absence in things, thus producing

an experientialism that it not solely underpinned by what is present, at hand, but which is equally about that which is not there: the absent. Heidegger's phenomenology is developed further through the framework of hauntology in Chapter III, a term that will be used to describe both the indebtedness to and omnipresence of absence in Heidegger's work.

Absence is important to the remit of this thesis in that not only does the research presented here work to engage with the intangible elements of place - those feelings, visions and sensations that seemingly have no grounding in the material world - but also because the work here seeks to make a wider argument about the way place is encountered as an unveiling object. Such an approach has required a careful consideration of the types of enchanted place that should be included in this work and the methods through which encounters with them should be recorded. There is no single method through which to analyse the experience of absence and there is little in the way of previous attempts to engage with enchantment through such a lens. Therefore the approach taken in this research is necessarily experimental, it aims to test both the way an enchantment mobilised by absence can be experienced as well as the methods that are capable of describing such a process. As previously outlined, it has been necessary to present the empirical research of the later chapters as a set of phenomenological experiments with enchanted geographies. Each of the three empirical chapters featured in this thesis should be seen as an experiment in a Heideggerian phenomenology of absence. In each of the empirical tests I have explored a different element of mysticism, deploying a combination of practical and theoretical modes of analysis through which to interrogate the experientialism of place.

As such the research aims to provide an account of the way mysticism and its practices work to produce and reiterate a landscape of enchantment. The thesis will make an original contribution to the study of human geography through the appropriation and application of hauntology to the study of place and its associated enchantment. The research engages with what is ostensibly intangible, even incomprehensible to some; the occult, the paranormal, the magickal. It is easy to become dismissive when considering

these concepts; to the scientific mind they remain outside of the realms of a logical, measurable belief system. To this end, many of the themes I discuss throughout this work have been, and to some extent understandably so, largely neglected by many geographers working in the fields of place and affect.

The work of what we might describe as occult geographies remains fringe but is, as this work will demonstrate, gathering momentum and a widening academic interest (See Bartolini, Chris, MacKian and Pile, 2013 Dixon, 2007; Holloway, 2000, 2003, 2003a, 2006, 2007, 2010; Holloway and Kneale; 2008; MacKian, 2012; Matless, 1991, 2008; Pile, 2005, 2005a, 2012). What strikes me about the occult, mysticism and alternative spirituality in general, is that despite dismissal from opponents, these areas continue to have an exceptionally grounded response to geography. They are deeply topological belief systems, embedded in place and space and supported by affectual encounters with the landscape. The work that follows seeks to explicate this relationship between the contemporary practices of landscape mysticism in Britain and the geographical imagination through a series of conceptual debates and empirical reflection.

Geographies of affect have been used elsewhere to discuss the emotional interaction between the body and the spatial (Thrift, 1999, 2008; Anderson, 2004; Bennett, 2004, Lorimer, 2008, McCormack, 2008). Affect forms the basis for a growing trend in geography and cognate disciplines to represent the way place and space are felt (Pile, 2010). Affect lends itself to describing the mechanisms at play in our interaction with place. As a concept which can be seen to have emerged from the approaches of phenomenology, embodiment and participatory observation, affect works to unpack the way we not only exist within material space but also the ways in which we interconnect and relate to those materialities through touch, sight, smell, sound, emotion and movement. Affect allows us to describe the immaterial effects of the materiality around us. This thesis is not about geographies of affect *per se*, rather it is about particular types of spatial affect that can, for some people, engender a profound spiritual attachment to place. I describe this strain of place-based affect as enchantment and the grouped identity of

the beliefs, practices and site bound experiences that belong to it as enchanted geographies.

Enchanted geographies are complex, they can appear as disparate, marginal and sometimes difficult to locate, and yet are ubiquitous within our surrounding landscape(s). Enchanted geography is a composite term for other areas of existing geographical enquiry that I believe to be working within similar conceptual trends in marginal and sacred spaces: absences, place based materialism, spectrality and spirituality. Enchanted geography not only binds these terms into a single functioning conceptive trope but also allows for an overarching claim to be made of the particular affectual properties of particular places. This process is not only useful in discussing the wider implications of situations where a strange or uncanny spiritual engagement with place occurs, but is paramount in defining the process itself; showing how we are able to present places of a seemingly otherworldly agency as typical of a certain type of affectual process.

Within this thesis I deal with selected encounters of mysticism and solely within a UK geographical setting. Though it would be possible to extend the arising concepts and reflections on these sites and practices to include other forms of mysticism and in other locations. The decision to select specific and limited variants of landscape mysticism has been taken for demonstrable purposes only, the practicalities of presenting three strands of practice allows for a deeper more measured reflection upon the processes occurring within each of the studies. The thesis has been structured so that there is logical progression of analysis occurring in each of the practices of mysticism discussed.

This opening chapter of the thesis will be used to outline the thesis structure, introduce the key themes of the research and provide a concise discussion of the developing tropes that lay within the work. In this introduction I wish to establish some of the underpinning theories of dwelling, mysticism, nature, place and enchantment that support the work, as well as making nods towards the key readings of the project which include the works of Jane Bennett (2002), Wylie (2002) and Martin Heidegger (2003) so as to contextualise my research within the overarching aim of the project;

an investigation of placial experience within contemporary British landscape mysticism. The introduction will be used to set up the wider research questions that the thesis aims to address. The last section of this chapter will be given to introduce the case study thematics of the research: spectral workings of place, parageography and the performance of absence; magick, mobility and place-based practices of modern magickal traditions; geomancy, the cultural history of leylines and the cartographies of enchanted materiality.

In the second chapter I introduce a breakdown of the mixed methodological approach I have taken to conducting this research. Beginning with a short discussion of ethics, the chapter then succinctly covers the qualitative framework of visual methods, ethnography, informal interviews, phenomenology and autoethnographic response and concludes with a segment on walking as practice.

Chapter III has been used to construct a theoretical trajectory for the thesis and defines and develops the concept of hauntology. Much of this chapter is thusly dedicated to the explication of this term, tracing its emergence within critical thinking towards the end of the twentieth century. The chapter also begins to outline the path from ontology to hauntology via the philosophies of Heidegger (1971, 2003), Husserl (1983, 2012) and Derrida (1994) and discuss the impact of the uncanny (*Unheimliche*) on developing the notion of a haunted ontology.

The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters are given over to the discussion of the three case studies, employing both theoretical debate and original empirical research to unveil the workings of place and enchantment in the affective spatialities of contemporary British landscape mysticism. The first of these case study chapters is entitled *Hauntings: A spectral ecology of placial absences*. Chapter IV begins with a theoretical discussion of absence and (im)materiality and the development of the parageographical; the study of haunted geographies. It provides a critical engagement with existing literature on place and haunting, building upon this work to show the relationality between place, materiality and absence that exists as the basis for contemporary practices of paranormal investigation. The second part of

this chapter is used for exploring these previously outlined theoretical concerns of haunting. This second strand of writing is intended to empirically 'speak back' to the conceptual underpinnings of the first. Incorporating and mirroring the philosophical concerns of the theory of haunted spatialities, this section will also be methodologically transparent, providing explanations of the tools and methods used at each site.

The next strand of research to be discussed (Chapter V) is that of magick, sacrality and the mobile performances of enchantment that occur within nature based worship. This fifth chapter, *An Enchanted Naturalism: The Ankerwycke Yew*, defines the sacred landscape as viewed through the lens of magickal practice. Chapter V looks at the role of magick (within the context of Neo-Paganism) in constructing a vital material agency of landscape. Here I discuss not only definitions of magick and the practices performed within its rituals but also the significance of place and mobility in the formation of the magickally enchanted landscape. In addition to the conceptual framework developed in this chapter, I incorporate a detailed analysis of a specific site (the Ankerwycke Yew) and its practitioners in relation to the magickal ecology developed by Neo-Pagan traditions. Through an ethnography of the Ankerwycke Yew, a site of neo-pagan worship in Middlesex, England, I provide reflections on four selected ethnographies of rituals that I took part in at the site over the course of twelve months; Samhain, Yule, Beltane, Mabon. In a detailed discussion of my findings, I position the yew within a phenomenological framework, illustrating how my experiences of the place, as well as the place *itself*, are shaped through the practices that occur there.

The third area of substantive research, *Geomancy: The Ley of the Land* (Chapter VI), investigates engagements with the landscape through the alternative spiritual-cartographic practice of geomancy. Geomancy is a method of fringe archaeology that works to uncover hidden trajectories or leylines which run across the landscape, interconnecting with points of both sacred and historical importance. This section aims to highlight the importance of the leyline as a tradition of mapping the landscape (from a utilitarian perspective) as well as its wider significance in the development of

British landscape mysticism. Leylines make for a rather odd cartographic system that provides a method for navigating one area of the country to another, purely by walking straight lines marked via a series of alignments in naturally occurring and manmade landmarks. As well as providing a concise cultural history to the ley with particular reference to the work of Alfred Watkins, I also develop a critical engagement with geomancy alongside auto-ethnographic responses to the practices and practitioners. This area of research is derived from empirical data generated from my work with a dowser and my own experiences of mapping and walking a leyline.

The research concludes with a summarising of the information gained through the knowledge generated within preceding chapters and draws together the conceptual discussions of place, enchantment and mysticism that are interwoven throughout the thesis, under the 'umbrella' theory of hauntology (as it is outlined in Chapter III). By teasing out the links between the themes of each case study, the *coda* positions the work set out in the thesis within a phenomenology of absence and defines the relationality of place and landscape as an enchanted (im)material agency.

Having set out a clear structure for the reader, I will move on to introduce the conceptual concerns of this research in more detail before moving onto a discussion of research methodologies.

On mysticism

The following section aims to briefly introduce the subject of mysticism, some general definitions and manifestations of the term and to speculate on the need for a reflexive study of contemporary landscape mysticism. All beliefs systems carry with them a set of occluded knowledge - arcane rituals, incantations, summoning rites and invocations - hidden shortcuts that allow one to access the most inner realms of sacrality. Such processes fall outside the standard practices of worship and are rarely known to those outside of the orders who utilise them. Mysticism refers to these practices and the spiritual enlightenment that is acquired through the studying of texts and

languages that work towards spiritual transgression; a union with the Absolute or deity(ies).

Mysticism is a particular wielding of metaphysics, a spiritual philosophy that underpins the vernacular practices of religious life, and is used to obtain an Absolute Reality (Summers, 1950). The 'Absolute' or transcendental reality is at the crux of religious thought; it is the belief that something or someone exists beyond that which is physically accessible to the believer. Montague Summers' (1950) treatise on Christian mysticism ascertains that there are fifteen physical phenomena associated with mysticism that are identifiable within Judeo-Christian traditions. Among them include; *ecstasies, rapt and trances; stigmata; levitation; supernatural fragrances; visions and apparitions; healing; telekinesis and a supernatural and extraordinary empery over nature and creatures (ibid, pp. 60-68)*. Certain mystical permutations such as stigmata are referential of a biblical history and are unlikely to be reproduced in other mystical contexts, such as those of the Jewish Kabbalah, Hinduism, Sufi or Buddhism. Others however, are prevalent throughout the multitude of approaches to accessing the divine and as such form a wider cross-cultural set of practices that can be seen in part influenced by and in influence of contemporary forms of (Neo)Paganism.

In his *Mystical Encounters with the natural World*, Marshall (2005) explains mysticism as being constructed of a series of *extrovertive experiences* and claims that 'mystical experience is essentially a unitive experience', a reaching of or moving towards a deeper reality (*ibid, p. 31*). Marshall maintains a predominantly phenomenological perspective throughout the text, reasoning that mysticism is at once defined and realised through its experiential qualities. Marshall's position in by no means an abstraction; he works to emancipate mysticism from religion, widening its participation to include a variety of practices that seek to gain knowledge of a deeper reality, including paranormal experiences. The view taken by Marshall is useful in describing the complexity of mysticism and working towards a response to extraordinary place-based encounters that lay outside of the sacred like those of haunting. Furthermore, such a view can be used alongside readings of myth, where one necessarily aids in the generation of the other. Myths,

Armstrong (2005) tells us, 'is about the unknown; it is about that for which initially we have no words' (p. 04). This is not to suggest a fraudulence behind claims of mystical experience, rather, as will be shown in later empirical chapters, myth, folklore and narratives of enchantment work to augment landscape mysticism and draw individuals closer to sites of 'occult' notoriety.

One might ponder the reasons as to why mysticism should or could be relevant in an age of apparent secularism. Interest in alternative spiritual practices is on the rise, with a purported 60 per cent increase in the number of 'spiritual experiences' being reported between the 1980s and 1990s (Hay and Nye, 2000). Occult culture has become part of the everyday, to the point where we barely even notice the growing number of psychic fayres, alternative or spiritual healing practices, paranormal investigation events, ghost tours or stores catering for 'alternative spiritualities'. As Pile (2006) notes, the very act of partaking in occult, New Age or alternative spiritual practices form an almost everyday facet of modern life;

People today consult psychics and fortune-tellers, ...hold séances, ...read tarot cards, ...such beliefs and practices are not some legacy of a bygone age, nor a minority endeavour, but part of the very stuff of modern Western urban culture. They are strangely commonplace.

(Pile, 2006, p. 307).

A rise in the popularity of esotericism in the West together with a widespread commercial uptake has proven lucrative, with big name retail outlets moving in on the market. For example, since 2006 the luxury department store *Selfridges* of London, has operated its own divination and spiritual healing suite managed by 'celebrity' psychic Jayne Wallace and her team of sixteen 'sisters'. The store offers a selection of psychic courses, face-to-face readings, healing sessions and email readings conducted over the internet (Wallace, 2014). Such a phenomenon is more than a step away from a seaside palm reader or a dabbling with the Ouija board; rather, the economy of the occult is demonstrative of the widespread spiritual practices of esotericism and mysticism that pervade modern culture. It may well be that such practices

are a result of a moving away from organized religions (Roof, 1999, Brown, 2009; Turner, 2011, MacKian, 2012) as well as from secularism (Dewsbury and Cloke, 2009, Cloke 2010).

There is an unquestionable growth of vernacular mysticism that inflects our experience of the urban setting. However, the research set out across the following chapters works to show a transposing of this form of everyday enchantment (MacKian, 2011, 2012) to seemingly marginal or strategic encounters with the natural environment. The thesis will present the formation of a landscape mysticism produced through enchantment and associated place-based practices; conjuration, divination and spiritualism. The sites and situations of enchantment will be worked through and represented by a presentation of empirical data and experiential encounters; reflecting upon the agency, ontology and affective environments of three key areas of contemporary British landscape mysticism.

Place and Nature

Prior to any assessment of the preternatural, I would like to spend some time here looking at conceptions of dwelling, place and nature. Nature's role in the construction of place has become a significant facet within human geographical debates in recent years (see Jones and Cloke, 2002; Whatmore, 2000, 2006; Wylie, 2007). The importance of the non-human in creating place is not to be underestimated. Mankind's evolution has been dependent upon its surroundings, upon nature. From shelter to sustenance, nature has played a pivotal role in the engendering of the *human being*. To this end, the ties between people and nature are inextricably linked. The situation of place in such a relationship is, I will argue, based upon a process of *techne*, a bringing forth of nature to create place. Moreover, in bringing forth nature, man can create an entity, a living thing capable of conscious and affect; Nature. This is not to suggest that such places can become 'human' in their agency, as indeed they cannot, but rather that these places are organic in their structure, that they pertain to an essentialism, a spirituality of sorts, and

are capable of enchanting, disturbing and haunting those that choose to dwell within them.

Place might be considered as both of and beyond nature. Through the introductory chapter two key concepts will emerge; firstly, that nature is responsible for the genesis of all places. Secondly, that certain places contain a stronger link with Nature than others. These sites might be considered as enchanted due to the way they expose an entanglement between human and natural worlds. Such sites call for a deep(er) ecology; a rejection of the anthropocentrism bound up with the view of man-in-environment in favour of a more holistic realisation of a human universality (Naess:1997). Not all places call for such a deconstruction of one's role in the universe, the sites that do are perhaps marginal, heterotopic in their nature (Foucault, 1987). These heterotopic spaces can be recognised in their ability to destabilise time and blur the lineage of history (as is the case in hauntings). Additionally, in order to fully access the 'spirit' or sense of such sites, one must traditionally enter the landscape via a set of specific rites or rituals. Here we turn our attention to the role of magick and mysticism in harnessing the energy of place, and moreover, Nature itself.

Humanistic geographies sought to cultivate a spirituality of place through a return to human experience; a privileging of the phenomenological method in accessing place. Rodaway (1994) has explained humanistic geography as a 'revived interest in individual experience [...] drawing more upon a phenomenological perspective' than previous modes of geographic enquiry (p. 16). Pocock (1996) describes such a phenomenological focus as 'an epistemology of the heart' which 'concerns knowledge acquired by union or communion' with place (p.376). The 'union' that Pocock describes is a marriage of both the modes of perception and embodiment one undergoes in certain spaces. The union is the point at which place transcends physical boundaries and enters a relationship of mutual reciprocation with its observer. Here we have a point at which an uncanny attachment to place is realised through the surpassing of the sensory and the physical (Crang, 1998); place usurps the subservient role it was formerly afforded and appears more intimately linked with those who stand within.

Such a spiritually motivated outlook on place can result in an atmosphere or feeling that mobilises a psychic engagement with a location thus *affecting* the way a place is perceived. That is to say, place is experienced as an affective entity; it provides a sensed presence emanating from within the spatial confines of the area. Such a presence may be felt as an oppressive, malevolent force as is the case of hauntings; alternatively a more positive, uplifting energy can be felt, like that harnessed by geomancers and ley enthusiasts. At the root of a humanistic position on place there is always the supposition that place is alive, animated (enchanted even); that place is in rhythm to Nature's pulse.

Furthermore, a conceptualisation of place that emphasises a natural or rather supernatural genealogy is furthered still through the notion of the *genius loci*. In reference to the unique character or essence of place, *genius loci* – the spirit of place, draws closer still to the idea that place is derived from nature as an ontological Being. A living apparatus. The *genius loci*, an evocation of the sentience that nature derives from the Earth, is what gives place its existential foothold in the world (Norberg-Shulz:1980).

The aim of this chapter is to develop these existing strands of humanistic thought into a singular trope, one that I determine as preternatural. The term preternatural describes a phenomenon that is generally considered to be beyond what is natural or normal within the confines of scientific thought; this is inclusive of rarities and oddities within biology and at the farthest end of the spectrum, fairies, werewolves, vampires and all mythical creatures of this sort. The preternatural refers to the almost indistinguishable area that is both anomalous in the everyday yet not quite within the realms of the supernatural. Indeed, discourse on the preternatural within the geographic discipline is scarce, with few texts documenting the work of geographic monstrosities (see Davies, 2003; Pile, 2005; Dixon, 2007,2013; Kneale, 2006, 2010; Dixon and Ruddick, 2013).

The ontological situation of place within the process of enchantment has been to some extent overlooked; moreover the relationship between alternative spiritualities and the ontology of place has been side-lined to make room for post-structuralist analysis of place and space that seeks to find

the human imprint in the random and arbitrariness of a constant unfolding of place. Through locating place at the heart of an analysis of enchantment, it will be shown why a return to (strategic) essentialism(s), in part, a return to nature, is pivotal in gaining a clearer understanding of what it means to be in sync with our surroundings.

Place and Dwelling

A discussion of place in and of (pre)nature must be underpinned by an understanding of what it means for place to exist in the world; a necessary turn to the existentialism of place. Place has undergone myriad conceptualisations; exemplary definitions posit place as pauses in the flow of space (Tuan, 1977) to 'stages of intensity' (Thrift, 1996, p. 289) within an ever shifting strata and as a 'fusion between human and natural orders' as 'centres of our immediate experiences of the world' (Relph, 1976, p. 141) Yet these conceptualisations are not sufficient for a theorising of place that affords a vitalism to the world around us. For such a theorising to take place there must first exist a language that perceives the relationship between people and place as inseparable, as existing both for and of each other. This perspective is referred to as the *dwelling perspective* by Ingold (2000) and describes "a perspective that treats the immersion of the organism-person in an environment or lifeworld as an inescapable condition of existence" (*ibid*, p. 153). Ingold's view accounts for the being-in-the-world of both people and place and allows the positing of a mutually reciprocative relationship between the human being and the being of place; displaying a further embedding of both in the natural world. Furthermore, this standpoint allows one to make assumptions on the ontological nature of place, namely its existence.

Heidegger (1968, 2003) places dwelling at the forefront of understanding what it means to be-in-the-world. For Heidegger it is not simply a case of things existing as they are, that is as unrelated, undirected facets within an abstract space, but rather that they exist within an ever growing topology that can only be measured by a being's closeness or

connectedness to the world around it (Malpas, 2008, p. 76). Heidegger (1958) himself, posits place (*platz*) to be 'a profound and complex aspect of man's experience of the world' (p. 19); a platform in and on which dwelling can take place. Here we might say that 'dwelling' is to be in sync with the environment, with nature. Indeed, for Heidegger dwelling marks not a fixed, rooted, connectedness to the present but rather a constant being and growth that ebbs and flows with time itself. For Heidegger, dwelling is the essence of existence (Vycinas, 1961), it accounts for the way they we temporally exist within and upon the world. The concept of time is paramount to Heidegger's understanding of dwelling, he sees places as inescapably linked to the past, but the past itself is posited as a moment of being-at-hand, of temporal tangibility;

'the past' has a remarkable double meaning; the past belongs irretrievably to an earlier time; it belonged to the events of that time; and in spite of that, it can still be present-at-hand 'now' – for instance, the remains of a Greek temple. With the temple, a 'bit of the past' is still 'in the present'.

(Heidegger, 2003, p. 378)

Following a phenomenological trajectory, that he himself made infamous, Heidegger (*ibid*) comes to reason that the metaphysicality of being-in-the-world, that is the essence of the thing that dwells (or Dasein for human beings), rests entirely upon the supposition that there is a real physical world in which to dwell in and upon. Such an existence consists of two parts then; a physical retainer of Being - that is the thing itself which physically dwells - and inner essence, a Being or spirit which characterises a thing. Thus, through Heidegger's conception of dwelling, places can be said to be things that dwells upon the Earth.

An emphasis on the dwelling of place exists within Heidegger's topology as a conduit through which to understand both human and non-human agency in relation to each other (Malpas, 2008). Dwelling allows the cold physicality of place to be transcended, for places of dwelling to be ascribed *telos*, to exist within an objective driven ontological design. The oft cited *Building Dwelling Thinking* (Heidegger, 1971) positions itself as a

bringing together of Heideggerian *World* and *Earth*, conduits through which to examine the differences between placial matter and form. For Heidegger these two concepts are intrinsically different. World is the form for which place must take and Earth is the matter that the World is brought forth from. Earth is the material of nature from which all beings are created. The rationale for the existence of place as a being that dwells within the World and upon and out of the Earth itself, is illustrated in Heidegger's alluding to the peasant's farmhouse;

Let us think for a while of a farmhouse in the Black Forest, which was built some two hundred years ago by the dwelling of peasants. Here the self-sufficiency of the power to let earth and heaven, divinities and mortals enter *in simple oneness* into things, ordered the house. It placed the farm on the wind-sheltered mountain slope looking south, among the meadows close to the spring. It gave it the wide overhanging shingle roof whose proper slope bears up under the burden of snow, and which, reaching deep down, shields the chambers against the storms of the long winter nights. It did not forget the altar corner behind the community table; it made room in its chamber for the hallowed places of childbed and the "tree of the dead"-for that is what they call a coffin there: the *Totenbaum*-and in this way it designed for the different generations under one roof the character of their journey through time. A craft which, itself sprung from dwelling, still uses its tools and frames as things, built the farmhouse.

(*ibid*, p.160)

It is clear that for Heidegger, it is from nature that dwelling is brought forth (*techne*) and thusly that place (*platz*) is brought into existence. There is a strict process of causation at work in Heidegger's writing, a causation that is presupposed by the *telos* of place; places works to provide a shelter or home in which Dasein may dwell. Dwelling then, is rooted in place and so suffice is to say, that place is thusly rooted within nature. However, such a reading of place subscribes to an acute circumspection of place, a notion that place itself follows design and has motive. Here, place can be seen to sprout from nature to be used by and for man; "(p)lace as dwelling, then is a spiritual and philosophical endeavour that unites the human and natural worlds." (Cresswell, 2004, p. 22). Through dwelling, Heidegger provides us with a view of place that precedes itself with visions of an animated natural world,

an inflection of the otherwise inanimate material nature of things. Through Heidegger's envisioning place comes alive, it is rich, vital and replete with spirit.

However, Heidegger's theorising of a predisposed nature-place correlation is largely dependent upon the human agent within this network whereby nature is called forth for and by man in order for dwelling to take place. Thus nature creates place as opposed to place creating as nature. Conversely, the appropriation of dwelling by nature is the thematic for Jones and Cloke's (2002) collaborative writings on place and non-human agency. It is the very nature of dwelling that appeals to those who are attempting to unite people, place and nature; seeking an embedding of people within the world:

Dwelling is about the rich ongoing togetherness of beings and things which make up landscapes and places, and which bind together nature and culture over time. It thus offers conceptual characteristics which blur the nature-culture divide, emphasize the temporal nature of landscape, and highlight performativity and nonrepresentation, and as such it is attractive to those trying to (re)theorize the nature of nature, and the nature of landscape and place.

(Jones and Cloke, 2002, p. 81)

In their *Tree Cultures: The Place of Trees and Trees in Their Place* (2002), Jones and Cloke describe the transgression of trees from subjects of place to place-makers. Indeed, the authors ascribe something of an autonomous ontology to trees, suggesting that trees themselves dwell. Certainly the tree resides within both nature and place; it is capable of being both anachronistic and entirely modern, simultaneously straddling millennia and yet seeming entirely in keeping with its surroundings. To be sure, the tree both makes and gathers place for itself (*ibid*).

In order to substantiate claims that like Dasein, trees as spiritual beings can too call forth nature in order to dwell. Jones and Cloke posit the agency of trees through a framework of materiality; *presence, size, senses* and *body form*. All are used to depict the embodiment of trees in the lived environment. Moreover, such an emphasis on the existentialism of trees purports to determine their presupposing role in nature-culture networks

(Harrison, 2007, p. 626). Forgoing Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Latour, 1993; Law and Hussard, 1999), the placement of trees as dwelling, non-human agents, sees nature become a proactive actant in a series of nature-culture interactions and thus suturing the nature-culture divide. The conjecture that in dwelling, a place can gain agency and animation, is paramount in understanding the way that nature can be perceived as existing beyond itself; as autonomous or in becoming preternatural. Furthermore, the role of perception in realising and reciprocating affect within such spiritual or deep-ecologies is not to be underestimated. Dwelling is reliant upon the placement of people within nature.

Place and substance – materiality, embodiment and the phenomenological perspective

If dwelling provides a term that enables a coherent understanding of the vitality and ontology of place and nature, how the might one think of the way in which such an environment is perceived? Here I shall discuss the place of the *dwelling perspective* in the discovery of an enchanted landscape, moreover, the importance of materiality in constructing the enchanted preternatural experience.

The materiality of place is key in understanding how nature and spirit are united in geographies of enchantment, of how a spirit of place is created *intra muros* of nature and how we might think about the ways in which such a deep ecology can permeate these boundaries. Materiality lies at the heart of enchantment; the way we perceive things with a new sense of wonder. Bennett (2001) places the disenchantment tale at the centre of modern life; enlightenment, technology, commodification. Disenchantment, as described by Bennett, sounds the triumph of scientific thought over the magick, mysticism and divinity that presided over the previous order of the natural world. The true mobilisation of the disenchantment tale, so far as to bring disillusion to nature, comes from the erasure of the Godhead in Western cultures and the eradication of the Divine from the cosmos;

The death of God spelled the end of nature as the earthly residence of the divine. The animated creation gave way to a field of lifeless matter. Although such corpses can serve as objects of scientific interest, the laboratory reports, no matter how extensive or detailed, can offer nothing in the way of *ethical* guidance. Nature was once enchanted by the word of god and inscribed with His divine purpose, but it is now disenchanting, stripped of spirit and vitality and no longer wholesome.

(*ibid*, p. 78)

Such a bleak outlook as this may well suppose that the natural world is drained of spirit, that the materiality of the natural world consists of inanimate, 'lifeless matter'. And yet, it is this same dead, homogenous subject that gives way to new lines of sight - new trajectories - and generates the possibilities for moments of enchantment to exist. Working through the Epicurean thesis of *primordial (meta)physics*, Bennett (*ibid*) is able to regain some of the ground lost by the diminishing 'spiritual sciences'. Initially turning her attention to atomism enables Bennett to rekindle the vital spirit of nature through a concept that seeks to explain all matter as consisting of minute, highly active barbed atomic structures (primordia) that vibrate in sync with and attach themselves to other surrounding atoms (*ibid*, p. 80).

Primordia are not dead or lifeless in any sense but are extremely active. An Epicurean materiality then, breathes a new vitality into nature. It is through atomism that Bennett is able to grip the small wonders of nature. By turning science upon its head, we are shown how even the most meticulous of reasoned activities can become a setting for a milieu of enchantment. Bennett's focus here lies in the very heart of scientific precision, nanotechnology. Nanotechnology states Bennett, paths the way for 'new, self generating and evolving forms of matter' (*ibid*, p. 85). Thus, we are deployed a new method for gaining vistas onto the vibrancy and *dynamis* of nature. If nanotechnology enables one to re-enchant natural materiality, then surely, the same potential for reinvigorating wonder and spirit can be applied to the concept of place? After all, through dwelling, place is attributed with an existential power capable of both affecting and being affected by the presence of Dasein, an entanglement with the human being.

The very fabric of place, its material workings, are what grounds it within nature. These material workings equate to the movement and properties of matter; “matter potentially takes place with the capacities and properties of any element (ie earth, wind, fire, air) and/or any state (ie solid, liquid, gaseous).” (Wylie and Anderson, 2009, p. 19). This principal is the origin of a *material imagination (ibid)* that is used by Wylie and Anderson to propagate the complexity of materialism within the natural landscape. Landscape is materiality per se; it is the textures and folds, the creases in the topology of the land that create a physical environment out of the elements. Landscape might creatively insinuate itself into vitalist, relational, and topological geographies but it is more than just this. The physical properties of landscape are but appendages to the incorporeality that is manifest in our surroundings; colours, sound, smells, forces, presences, vistas, connections, movements and flows. It is symbiosis of the materiality and immateriality of nature, of place, that makes it possible to evoke such a vitalism. A material vitalism that is required to mobilise the preternatural, the enchanted; ‘landscape reintroduces perspective and contour; texture and feeling; perception and imagination.’ (Wylie and Rose, 2006, p. 477). It is the entanglement of the corporeal and incorporeal that gives nature, place and landscape their depth. Moreover, it is precisely this complexity that allows a place, indebted to nature, to become alive, to move beyond what is within the realms of a banal naturalism. And so we have a notion of place that purports it to live, to dwell, to enchant. However, it is specifically the process of embodiment that allows one to experience the wonderment of place and more importantly the encroaching of nature beyond its boundaries.

One might refer to embodiment as a specific kind of perception, an enquiry that starts with the placement and experience of the body within the world. The body is a subject; it presupposes any experience we might encounter. Furthermore, the body is what allows us to interpret experience; pain, pleasure, joy, fear, love, and hate, all begin with the placement of the body in a specific process or context. Emotions may be born in the mind but they depend upon the hard physicality of the body in order to be

experienced. Embodiment is but part then, of what we describe as the phenomenological method. The genealogy of modern phenomenology can be traced back to Hegel, though it was Husserl that reignited interest in the philosophical deployment of phenomenology with his *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* (1983). Later it was Heidegger (usurping Husserl) and Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1968) that gave new life to phenomenology; moving away from the transcendental idealism of Husserl to project focus onto the materiality of the world. Indeed it has been in this strain of materialism based phenomenology that much landscape and place analysis has been born (See: Casey, 1979, 1998; Ingold, 1993, 2000; Wylie, 2002, 2006, 2007).

Phenomenology rejects Descartes' (2006) notion that perception comes from the mind, that it is thought alone that uncovers Truth. Instead, phenomenology privileges the unique personal experience of phenomena in order to make sense of the world. Much like existentialism - the relational encounters we have with the world in order to posit our own existence (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001, p. 69) - phenomenology places the body as central in understanding both our surroundings and the substance of things. Through phenomenology, we can access place in real, lived terms; textures are felt, emotions experienced; place is *sensed*. Embodiment within geographies of nature and spirituality can provide an insight into the affective nature of place. Foremost, embodiment gives agency to the body, allows it to experience phenomena that the mind is able to neither perceive nor rationalise. Such is the case for the investigation of what we might term, parageography (see Chapter IV); the prefix of *para* here, mobilises a term that can describe geographies of nature *extra muros*, the things that manifest outside of normative geographical study.

The phenomenological method of enquiry is key to determining the heterotopic spaces of the enchanted, permitting the researcher to be affected by place through visitation and participatory practice of extraordinary beliefs. An example of such a phenomenological study of nature-spirit-place can be seen in Wylie's study of the Glastonbury Tor (2002) or 'Isle of Avalon' as it is otherwise known. Wylie provides a descriptive account of the

ascension of the Tor, placing an emphasis on the processes of 'ascending' and 'elevation'. The closer the writer gets to the summit, the more the endeavour becomes about a communion with nature and spirit, about the unfolding and yielding of landscape to perception, and less of an academic enquiry into the place itself. The Tor has a rich heritage of myth, 'it speaks to the heart of great silence' (Armstrong, 2005); an occult history that still permeates the site today. Being handcrafted from the existing natural rock, the Tor stands alone, alien in the Somerset plains and housing nothing but the foreboding ruins of a tower upon its summit. The plains themselves, both beautiful and bleak, are a focus for the most significant collection of earth and stone-works in the United Kingdom; "In these terms, the unusual and 'eye catching' topography of the Glastonbury landscape seems purpose-built to generate myth and mysticism, to shelter esoteric traditions within its folds." (*ibid*, p. 42).

Landscapes like that of the Glastonbury Tor provide an aperture through which the magic of the nature-culture relationship can be gazed. Wylie presents a study of the unfolding vistas of and around the Tor, examining the movement of his own body that seems somehow in synchrony with the mystical surroundings. Furthermore, Wylie notes how the Tor is at one with spirit and nature. Perhaps, suggests Wylie, this is indicative of their natural;

The Tor is a vector as well as a thing--aligned at 63° to the azimuth, its axis points towards important calendrical and astronomical events: the sun rises on this axis on May 1st and August 6th, and sets on this axis on February 1st and October 31st. These four dates are those of the four most important ancient druidic festivals (Belatane, Lughnasad, Samhain, Imbolc) when the Tor may have been the scene of ceremonial ascents.

(*ibid*, p. 452)

It would seem apt then, to consider the Tor as a site of and for the embodiment of the landscape, a physical calendar purpose built, to be acted upon by both man and nature. The Tor continually celebrates mankind's entanglement with the natural world through the cycle of seasons; it forces the acknowledgement of a spirituality that is bound to place. Human action

brings the Tor forth from nature; in turn, the Tor works concurrently to set people a place within nature. Both people and place dwell upon and within nature then. Through the phenomenological perspective we are clearly able to view the way that the body figures within the concept of place. Moreover, a greater understanding of the way landscapes unfold before us, the way they are sensed and the rich tapestry of emotions they can evoke.

As Wylie moves towards the ascension of the Tor he focuses on the way his body is coerced into gazing upon the landscape, at becoming one with its surrounds;

Eyes and arms and chest take a position in relation to the visible land below to reach an equilibrium, with hands on hips or head, deep breaths, drinking eyes. The body composes itself by tuning to the elements and levels of the visible. This composition, moreover, is intimate with the emergence of an idea of coherence and awareness. One becomes this individual, this locus, this apprehensive ability, in the midst of seeing and framing. With the view, you are composed.

(*ibid*, p. 449)

Here, composure is what enables the body to embody, to perceive the environment in a way that clarifies one's place within it. What is more, is that such a composure is demanded by nature itself; the gaze is perhaps both instructed by place and also from an embodied sense of place; a predetermined composure that is only possible in *this* place. Other places, other embodiments, would command their own vistas. Returning to Heidegger, all places are called forth from nature and yet some remain more entangled, woven further into the fabric of the Earth. Places like these, such as the Tor, have a lineage that goes beyond man, beyond history, they provide windows onto the sacred; these places lie within the realm of the preternatural, they enchant, they haunt.

Beyond place, beyond Nature: enchantment, spectrality and spirit.

Having discussed the nature of place in relation to dwelling, and the role of phenomenology in accessing place, attention will now be turned in the direction of those places that are anomalous within the natural landscape. That is, towards places that seem beyond or peculiar to nature, that invoke a deep sense of wonder and or disturbance in our every day psychic engagement with the world. Working through notions of enchantment, spectrality and mysticism, the following section will explicate the development of the preternatural and suggest sites that may fall under the remit of preternaturalism.

Firstly, to deal with enchantment. The enchantment tale presupposes a meta-narrative of disenchantment. This much is true: in order to be enchanted - to be filled with wonder- one must be of a world that is essentially banal, disenchanting, but where there is still the potential for the sacred or magical to re-emerge. Enchantment calls forth the spirit of nature, it confronts and reawakens the senses, animating the subject of our gaze. Bennett (2001) posits; 'enchantment is something that we encounter, that hits us . . . to be enchanted is to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday' (p. 05). Furthermore, Bennett details such a theorising of enchantment as being constructed of two facets: firstly, an unprocessed feeling of wonder, of being charmed by a novel encounter and secondly, a sense of the *Unheimliche* (uncanny); of being dislocated from one's default sensory perception to encounter something both strangely familiar and Other (*ibid*, p. 05). It is through this definition of enchantment that an application to place can occur. Such a positing of enchantment leaves the purpose and causality of the process open; Bennett's own conception of enchantment is both nonreductionist and nonteleological (Holloway, 2006). The absence of both *telos* and reasoning leaves Bennett's enchantment open to interpretation and reapplication. It is precisely because of the sheer *openness* of this enchantment theory that its attachment to place

is unproblematic. As Bennett focuses upon the enchantment of naturally occurring phenomena, from the connectivities of thought to bio-science, a move to the enchantment of place feels both reasoned and logical.

What then might these places of enchantment look like and where might we encounter them? Subscribing to the Bennett's enchantment as outlined above, assumes two things of a place that we might consider enchanted; that it invokes wonder and novelty, and that it creates a feeling of discomfort, of being beyond a normative consideration of the natural.

Bennett implores the reader;

to keep an eye out for contemporary practices and experiences that are anomalous within a world understood to be wonder-disabled. In other words, to foreground cultural sites that ought not to exist in the way that they do, within a disenchanted world.

(ibid, p. 84).

Supposing that the world is disenchanted, as a seeking of enchantment rests upon such a dysphoric vision in order to prevail, attention must be turned to *place*, to particular 'cultural sites' where a practice for the evocation of enchantment might be possible. One might well consider enchantment is synonymous with the notion of sacredness. Sacred places are comforting and disturbing, novel and wonderful; 'they are places where the life-force of the Earth wells up' (Harvey, 2007, p. 146). Sacred places are sacred precisely because of their immediate connection to the fabric of Nature or the divine and act as gateways to all that lay beyond nature. Furthermore, sacred sites are the points at which man connects to the spirit of nature, to its heavens and divinities. Sacred spaces stand as the physical markers of mankind's entanglement with the other or inner worlds; anchoring culture to landscape (Ivakhiv, 2001). It is a process of enchantment, of a meeting between the uncanny and the wondrous simultaneously, that constructs sites of the sacred. The sacred calls for 'anomalous practice', for mysticism, for a movement beyond one's normal thresholds and into a space of liminality through rites or ritual (Turner, 1969). The enchantment of place then, calls for an act of transgression, a movement to the uncertainty of nature. Places

where enchantment is experienced, where the sacred or mystical is transfixed upon a transgression beyond nature, might well be found in sites of magick, ritual or Earth mysteries.

Naturally occurring sites of mysticism, like that of the Tor described by Wylie (2002), are the places where humans' dependence upon and entanglement with nature are brought to the foreground. Moreover, it is these sites where 'anomalous practices' come to pass in the present (as well as historically). There is no deficit of research into the use and production of sacred sites (see Hetherington, 1996; Bradley, 2000; Ivakhiv, 2001; Tilley and Bennett, 2001; Green, 2003 and Harvey, 2007) yet the possibility for a strategic or ontological essentialism of such places through the development of the preternatural appears as *terra incognita* for contemporary geographies.

Hitherto, there have been no solid examples of where such a preternaturalisms or enchantment might exist. Accounting for the placement of such theory in the lived and embodied landscape, the following section will suggest places that might call for the mobilisation of enchantment theory. In doing so, it is hoped that enchantment can be placed within a framework of onto-place analysis and as way of dealing with the relevant yet non-ubiquitous presence of essentialisms in and of nature.

It is not enough to assume that all sacred places enchant nor that any or every strange manifestation within the natural landscape contains the potential to become enchanted. Enchanted places appear heterotopic by nature; they are somewhat marginal in our general understanding of the world around us. Enchanted places may be built by or from nature and commonly have attachments to some sort of worship or tribute. An oft cited example of a site of wonder inducement is Stonehenge. The megalithic monument sits, like Wylie's Tor, nestled in the west of England and is also thought to be calendric in its nature. The enchantment of such a site is dubious though, one might argue that it is purely the enigma of how such sizable sections of dolomite and sarsen could be transported during a time thought to have lacked the technology to have done so. Greater mystery still is brought into account when trying to answer the question of why the stones

were placed specifically upon this location and what the stone circle might have been used for.

The supposition that the henge was used as a site of ritual is one that remains today. The stone circle plays an important role in creating a place of sacredness for today's Neo-Pagans and is perceived as purpose built for honouring the seasons. However, the constructed nature of the circle does not infer that the enchantment of Stonehenge is one that occurs independently of nature, insofar as it is constructed from naturally occurring material. Moreover, the henge is set upon nature and is widely used to celebrate the annual solstices. Such a site confronts our mortality, our existence within and upon the world. The existentialism brought about by such a confrontation is somewhat ironic. We are forced to recognise our own existence within a world that is created through relations to matter, whilst simultaneously forming a realisation of a placement in the landscape, an entanglement with nature. It can be claimed then, that places such as Stonehenge reinstate a sense of belonging in human's dwelling upon the Earth. Enchantment occurs as a specific reaction to a relationship with nature and place. As such, it is only certain sites that allude to a connection with the spirit of place and allow entrance into an affectual relationship with the surroundings. Though such sites may become sacred through their utility, they are not unconditionally so, insofar as they may, in the case of Stonehenge and the Tor, remain sacred for the purposes of some individuals and not for others. Either way enchantment can occur; the landscape falls to mysticism.

Mysticism, a proponent of enchantment, threatens reason and rationality, it holds the potential to confuse reality (Matless, 2001). This in itself however, does not negate the truth of experiencing enchantment. Great trees, tors, henges, standing stones; all are physical matter and all form part of an embodied mystical landscape; enchantment occurs as a result of such materialities reconnecting us with nature; allowing the potential for re-imaginings of what nature might be. Enchantment is not limited to earthworks and monuments, the potential for enchantment can be almost anywhere in nature where a connection to the embodied landscape can be

made. The importance of enchantment lies in its ability to animate matter, to bring nature and Dasein together.

The arguments presented here serve to reunite notions of essentialism with the natural environment through an explication of place and it's dwelling upon and within the world. Moreover, such a perspective has been developed through the theory of a deep ecology, a position that seeks to promote the spirit of nature and our duty to recognise our entanglement within it. A move to the preternatural, the components of enchanted places, assures a refocusing upon nature as the impetus and provider of place. Our entanglement with nature and our struggle to be both free and master of it, has until recently (Ingold, 2000; Cloke and Jones, 2001; Jones and Cloke, 2002; Wylie, 2007) been neglected, at least since its initiation in the embryo of humanistic geographies in the late twentieth century by the likes of Cosgrove (1978), Pocock (1981) and Livingstone (1992). Enchantment can be seen then, not only to provide a return to the role of nature in constructing place and marginalities, but also in mobilising a unique way of defining our own position within a world that is both strange and familiar.

Hitherto, I have both clarified the structure of the thesis and introduced the key theoretical components of the research and its objectives. The following chapter will introduce and reflect upon the qualitative methods that have been used to conduct the empirical research, showing the overall reasoning behind the qualitative approach and the appropriateness of the methodology to the work that has taken place in experiencing and reflecting upon geographies of enchantment.

II. Reflections on Methods

“my power of imagining is nothing but the persistence of the world around me”

- Maurice Merleau-Ponty,
The Phenomenology of Perception.

Preamble

If the preceding text worked to lay the way for a conceptualisation of enchantment, one that seeks to account for the affective experientialisms of particular marginal places, then what follows can be seen as a more practical offering towards examining how one might access, analyse and reflect upon such sites. There exists a multitude of methods at hand for deployment in the study and analysis of enchantment. I use enchantment throughout this work as term in which to frame the affective outputs of the mysticism surrounding heterotopic spaces. The work presents a mysticism that engenders a particular experience or encounter with or of the natural (or urban) landscape. Such an experience can be posited as part of a ‘deeper’ or spiritual ecology, alluded to in the environmentalism of Naess (1977), a concept described in more detail elsewhere in this work (See Chapter V).

The research for the thesis has been conducted at a number of sites, each one presenting a very different group of people, atmospheres and problematics that have needed to be overcome. As such there was no single set of prescribed methods for use at the individual sites and so a mixed methodological approach has been used to gather the empirical research. All of the methods used to undertake the research for the thesis have been qualitative due to both the nature of the enquiry (a record of experience) and the empirical situations I have been working in. The purpose of following an exclusively qualitative empirical trajectory has been to report from a fully immersed perspective; a methodology which records, from an embodied position, the manner in which place works upon the practitioner of mysticism in sites of enchantment. Therefore, the methodologies employed

were chosen so as to actively engage with each of the differing sites and situations I had planned to encounter. In doing so, the patterns, correlations and connectivities between each of the sites could be mapped and discussed holistically and placed within the wider context of landscape mysticism from an experiential viewpoint.

Each of the three case studies (Hauntings, Magick and Geomancy) has been presented separately in this thesis. The reasoning behind the selection of the methodology employed in each case and site will become more apparent when positioned within the context of each of the dedicated chapters. Starting with a brief discussion of ethics, I now wish to critically reflect upon of each upon the methods adopted in the undertaking of this work, explicating what the empirics involved are and how they relate to the research undertaken for the thesis.

Ethics

For this research to take place, it has necessitated an establishing of communication with the individuals, societies and spiritual groups that work within the remit of landscape mysticism. I began to forge connections with local groups via electronic communication and joined a small number of societies such as The Ghost Club and The Leyhunters Society so as to provide me with a 'way in' to researching experiences of landscape mysticism; potentially presenting me with opportunities to network with individuals who practice divination and furthering my empirical reach.

The nature of the research has meant that I worked solely with individuals over the age of eighteen as due to overnight stays and the nature of rituals, children have been prohibited from taking part. All participants in my research have remained anonymous so as to comply with data protection laws. I have provided participants with pseudonyms where requested in order to be included within the text and used illustratively to portray the role they have played in the research. The study does not and never has intended to supply evidence of the authenticity of the supernatural or magick; as Knibbe and Versteeg (2008) postulate;

experiences do not have to be “explained”, but simply “understood” as the way of experiencing the world that is natural and unremarkable, strange only to the outsider .

(p. 49).

In light of this, and in addition to the study’s focus on *understanding* not explaining extraordinary experiences of place, the research does not encroach upon or contest the participants’ beliefs or spiritual practices. It is paramount that ethnographic work respects the rights, privacy and wellbeing of the research subject (Berg, 2007). I have developed my research objectives and methodologies to be used accordingly so as not to overtly challenge or provoke the beliefs of those involved. Similarly, I have worked to ensure that the same respect be shown to sites that I have based my research upon.

At times I have been working with sites of heritage and this has prevented certain activities from taking place, such as the lighting of ritual fires and organisation of paranormal investigation. There were, at a number of stages in the research, difficulties in gaining permission to work at certain sites, like that of Waverley Abbey in Surrey, UK. The practices observed and recorded later in this work were organised entirely outside of my knowledge and prior to my having witnessed them. Some of the research took place on consecrated land and burial sites; as such all activities were designed to respect the surroundings and the beliefs of those to which the land belonged.

The question of whether or not to research covertly had arisen quite early on in the research and is one that initially appeared problematic. Gold’s typology of naturalistic research (1958) offers four states of conducting research; complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant and complete observer and is an oft cited source for discussions of qualitative research methods (Marks and Yardley, 2004; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Punch, 2005; Angrosino, 2007). There are varying degrees of immersion within the subject attributed to each one of the research types, with labels of overt and covert attached to the polarities of complete participant and complete observer. The advantages and disadvantages of each are predominantly entwined with the level of effect or influence the

researcher can be seen to have upon their subject (Berg, 2007). The four profiles of naturalistic research can be briefly outlined as below:

- *Complete participant* - insists upon full covert emersion with the research subject, with the researcher's intentions remaining concealed throughout the research period. The position offers an increased likelihood of receiving accurate information and an authentic understanding of the interactions and meanings behind the practices being observed.
- *Participant as observer* - an overt form of data collection that relies upon more informal collection of data; informal interviews, discussion and immersive analysis. The researcher formally makes the individual or group aware of his presence and role but continues to participate in the practices and interactions the research subject. Unlike complete participation, there is no risk of being found fraudulent by those whom the researcher intends to observe. However, through practice and participation comes a distinct possibility that boundaries will become blurred, that the researcher 'goes native' and is unable to objectively record his or her observations.
- *Observer as participant* - requires the researcher to take a more distanced stance from the research subject. Participation may be maintained but with a more obvious set of boundaries that separate the subjects of the researcher's gaze. Observatory-participation utilises more traditional modes of qualitative data collection; formal interviews and a more detailed examination of social structures and quantitative analysis. With an increased distance there comes an increased risk of capturing the more idiosyncratic and nuanced interactions within the research subject.

- *Complete observer* - a furthering in the distance between researcher and subject. The observer is passive to the interactions between and amongst the individuals being recorded. The type of data collection maximises the foci of the observer but removes the ability to reflect critically, from an empathetic view point, with the practices being observed.

In this case of my own research, it was decided that as there would be nothing gained from deceiving the subjects of my study into thinking that I shared their beliefs or was an existing practitioner of them. Opting for the role of participatory observation, I fully disclosed my intentions to participants prior to beginning any investigation of their practices. In the case of both the investigation of ley lines and the Circle of Ankerwycke, the individuals I worked with were approached by me, as a researcher, and the intended project and research practices were discussed in full prior to any participatory-observation taking place. There was the obvious risk that my presence would impact upon the way individuals interacted, changing the practices and interactions that I had intended to observe, especially given the personal nature of the study; belief and experientialism. However, I reasoned that in order to conduct even informal interviews successfully, I would be leaving myself open to scrutiny and doubt if I failed to make my position known. Over the course of the empirical research I found that my presence was actively encouraged by some of the individuals I was working with and firmly believe that the clarity with which I positioned myself within their activities was what led me to gaining a deeper understanding and mutually trusting relationship with the groups.

Visual methodologies

Visual creative practices provide an alternative route into a subject and possess the ability to materialise the abstract. Sights, sounds, colours, even textures can be recorded and interpreted. Furthermore, visual methods provide a more 'evidence' based resource in which to refer to; one can

describe an environment through words or text alone but does this conjure up or recount the experience correctly? Derrida (1974) noted that '(w)riting is dangerous from the moment that representation there claims to be presence and the sign of the thing itself' (p. 144); this is certainly the case in early ethnographic studies which aimed at representing through words alone. However we frame them, words are unable to provide the same accessibility to the represented subject as visual practices for the reason that they describe but do not show how or why something is and so are dependent upon a subjective filtering through from the author.

To say that the researcher is fallible is axiomatic; he/she relies solely upon the images imprinted on and embedded in memory in which to record experiences without technological intervention. Memories alone can become skewed, that is if they were ever correct to begin with. What one remembers of an event is likely to be constructed of half-truths; of a particular composition of the body in situ, of specific vistas gained. This alone does not stand as a record of all that happened in a certain place at a certain time but presents fragments of the two woven together in the human mind. Although personal accounts are paramount to an understanding of our environment, it is also true that one person's experience can be very different to another. In such cases, where does the truth lay?

Visual methods aid in such practice; they document objectively (or subjectively depending upon the researcher) and precisely, giving a more thorough and detailed response to a subject. The visual method that I am primarily concerned with here is photography. Photography is seen as providing its audience with an experience of the 'real' and in consideration of this, one must look at how reality and truth can be conveyed through the use of the camera. The natural landscape and its vicissitudes can be captured through employing the practice of photography; the photographic image bears witness to the environment in an (potentially) objective manner which alternative research methods would not be able to attain. However, the question exists as to whether photography can establish the entirety of the natural ecology that it purports to document. The photographic image can be criticised in that it 'only show(s) surface information' and 'give(s) no

indication at all of the wider social, economic and political histories' (Spence, 1988, p. 83) that are intrinsically bound up with the subject it portrays. The next passage aims to explore the reality of the photograph and whether photography can truly be trusted as a means of investigating and documenting the reality of the environment.

Since its advent in the Nineteenth century, photography has been privileged as the method of recording the world around us. Essentially, this opinion is down to the camera being perceived as an entirely objective entity; free from the subjectivity that lingered in the hands and minds of the painters and writers that worked before it. Bazin (1980) states that through the camera 'an image of the world is formed automatically, without the creative intervention of man' (p. 241). It is this view of photography that provides us with the ideal of the camera being able to reproduce reality, to objectively record the real and provide us with the truth. Certainly it can be said that photography supplies the researcher and their intended audience with an insight into the reality of their subject that words alone could never achieve.

The photographic image not only allows its viewers to bear witness to the real but it presents them with a much desired objective 'pictorialisation' enabling the extraction of precise and detailed information about the subject that no written account could replicate. As a tool for investigating the landscape 'the photographic image can be seen as the precise and objective reproduction of reality' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 77). The visual image speaks where theory cannot and provides a tangible representation of a single moment in the landscape that no other medium can proclaim to do with such precision.

The researcher can employ the camera to capture a defining moment in their subject's existence as well as providing themselves with the evidence that the event they intended to study has occurred; the photograph stands 'for incontrovertible proof that a given thing happened.' (Sontag, 1979, p. 05). In the case of the natural landscape, photography does not just aid the researcher in the reproduction of the real but also supplies an explicit visual account; detailing the environment in a manner that would most likely go unseen during the actuality or happening of the event. As Benjamin claims,

photography 'can bring out those aspects of the original that are unattainable to the naked eye' (1999, p. 214). Due to the celerity of natural metamorphosis, the idiosyncrasies of the landscape can easily fall beyond the scope of human vision and so the documentation of the smaller changes in the environment and those that inhabit it can easily slip from the investigator's sights. Photography stands as a cure to this ailment by tightly grasping the otherwise unrecognisable and unconceivable details of the surroundings and entrapping them in a cellular prison for the close scrutiny of the researcher.

A post-positivist view of photography would suggest that it is inevitably the mind and finger of the photographer that makes the final decision as to what the camera captures on film. It is therefore an abstraction of reality; at a decisive moment the investigator has chosen what will and will not be documented, collecting only a small fraction of the entire picture. Such a process would be an extraction from the surface layer of reality, a biopsy from which to configure a desired truth. The subjectivity of the photographic researcher compromises the truth and authenticity of realism belonging to the investigative image. In spite of the camera's reputation for being an autonomous recording machine it inevitably falls victim to its own design, in that paradoxically, the mobilization of the objective truth through the camera is dependent upon the subjective motivations of its operator. The photograph therefore acts a pendulum, perpetually swinging from objective truth to an abstracted reality, between the evidential and the circumstantial. And yet, despite this flux of both objectivity and subjectivity, photography remains the most sympathetic method in reconstructing the reality of the researched environment. The camera then, can be used without making any significant changes to the atmosphere of the places and practices it intends to record and is therefore the most advantageous of visual methods at the disposal of the researcher in the field.

Ethnographies

Ethnography is an empirical method for explaining a culture from the native's point of view (Spradley, 1979). Unlike quantitative methods of research which 'serve to distance the researcher from the object of study' and 'keep the sociologist at arm's length from the people whose lives he or she is purporting to comment on' (Grills, 1998, p. 03), ethnography requires the researcher to be at one with their subject, to put themselves in 'someone else's shoes'. The key questions that exist in relation to an ethnographic approach are to probe at how ethnography should be recorded and what role the ethnographer should play in the investigation. Wolcott (1999), makes the criticism that '(e)thnographers do not describe what they see, they see what they know how to describe', in this sense, the particularity that is required by the ethnographer (Geertz, 1973) is reducible to a set of pre-existing observatory traditions. Such a view may well be true of traditional ethnographic enquiry, examples of which can be seen in the writings of Malinowski (1928, 1967), Evans-Pritchard (1940), Levi-Strauss (1966) and Ewart Evans (1971) where the approach is to enter, observe and record in a significantly 'distanced' fashion. However, ethnography is not reducible to its embryonic offerings and more immersive and nuanced techniques have developed since the method's inception.

The common method of recording ethnographically is to keep an ethnographic diary, consisting of notes regarding the setting, sights, sounds, smells, emotions, times, names, places and as many other details as can be recorded whilst carrying out the immersed research or soon after. The ethnographic diary is perhaps the antithesis of the immediate engagement provided by the visual methodologies previously outlined. The writing up of such diaries takes various forms depending on what the researcher aims to achieve. Extracts can be taken straight from the diary itself (see Taussig, 1987, 2003, 2006; Watson, 1999; Rapport, 2000) this provides immediate personal data on the subject, conveying the researcher's interpretation of the subject experiences at that time. Diary extracts are useful in 'painting a

picture' of the environment in which the research took place. With good execution this method shortens the distance between reader and subject, done poorly and you are left with nothing but a narrative that desperately tries to speak where it in fact cannot. Doubtless this method is an evolution of the work carried out by Malinowski (1928) with Pacific island natives during the early part of the last century. Alternatively, the diary can be incorporated into a more traditional framework, taking quotes and references from the scribbled notes of the diary and converting them into more conventional presentation.

'The first step in an ethnographic study is to gain access to a site appropriate for answering the researcher's general research problem or question' (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005, p. 137). Prior to entering the field a planning process must take place; who will be studied? Where? When? How? Though many of my research questions can be answered through personal engagement with place, some inherently rely upon other people in order to be responded to. The practices of ritual and divination need to be observed, as well as the communing with *genii locorum*. As such I have had to identify groups that partake in these activities such as The Inner Wheel of Ankerwycke (Pagan Moot) and The Ghost Club. There have been individuals that I wished to research with who were not affiliated with groups or covens and so was vital to be prepared for such situations. The nature of landscape mysticism is as arcane as the subject itself; many of those who practice divination and Nature worship are unaffiliated with official organisations and so there has been a strong element of extended networking required in order to uncover these people.

Ethnography has, in varying guises, been the dominant research method for this research but has been deployed concurrently alongside a phenomenological reading of the landscape. The mixed methodology became the mobilisation of a praxis based approach, part theory, part practice. Unlike observation or textual analysis alone, I believe this approach has provided a more enlightened, insightful study of the subject of landscape mysticism. Such an insight becomes ever more present when we consider ethnography as a reflexive method; there is some scope to assess one's own place in

through a participatory-observation approach, to have room to comment on and evaluate the impact researchers themselves have on their subject. Ethnography therefore, has been privileged as a research tool in the study of human relations to space and place precisely because it allows the ongoing incorporation of theory and analysis into practice based approaches.

I believe that there is no more real or more realistic way of exploring communication in general than by focusing on the simultaneously practical and theoretical problems that emerge from the particular interaction between the investigator and the person being questioned.

(Bourdieu, 1999, p. 607)

The limits of the ethnographic method, such as those mentioned previously, will become more apparent during the discussion of autoethnography later in the chapter. However, what ethnography lacks in its ability to deal with experience, it makes up for in the capacity to maintain an almost exclusive length of objectivity; one which allows for the probe and questioning of the groups of individuals being researched and an accurate sociological analysis of the interaction that takes place between people and the practices they partake in.

Interviews in qualitative methods

Ethnography itself can involve a great deal of questioning and interviewing. However, opposed to the structured or formal interviews that take place through the quantitative approach that is seen in survey led or standardised questioning, interviewing as a qualitative method allows far more freedom of expression and provides a capacity for individual responses (Bryman, 2008).

Structured or standardised interviews are based upon a series of questions that are read exactly in the same manner and order for each interviewee. The reasoning behind the method is to form a standardised collection of responses from subjects, so as to answer very specific research questions and form tangible data for analysis; thus maximising reliability and validity of measuring key concepts (*ibid*). As such the questions themselves

are more often than not 'closed' so as to get precise answers that can easily be aggregated for later analysis. The benefit of such an approach is that interview schedules can be built, ensuring that all the data is collected within a specified timeframe. There is also the obvious advantage of being able to select the responses required from the subject; multiple choice questions (MCQs) can be used to further implement structure upon the interview process.

Conversely, structure takes a back seat to individualisation and differentiation in qualitative based approaches. Within ethnographic studies, unstructured interviews are used to gain a further insight into the research subject. Rather than any clear focus on the researcher's concerns, the emphasis is placed upon the interviewee's experiences. This route leads to results that are more firmly rooted in the subject's response to his or her surroundings, beliefs, motivations. Furthermore, the interviewee has the freedom to digress; what may initially appear as a 'ramble' can later be found replete with useful information, perhaps even offering a background to the subject. Another difference between the former and latter approaches to questioning is found in duration and numbers. Structured interviews are generally a single occurrence; one interview may be deemed sufficient for gathering the required data. Qualitative researchers are not bound to such regimes; they can repeatedly interview the same subject. Changing questions and length of interviews enables the researcher to build a rapport with the interviewee, this in turn allows for more personal and honest response to the questions that have been posed and is generally considered as gaining a greater insight than structured interviews alone. Additionally, interviews can be recorded through film and audio equipment and the results transcribed at a later stage. Though this is more time consuming as a method of data collection, it has the benefit of providing greater detail in response than can be found in those gathered through quantitative methods.

Phenomenology and auto-ethnographic response

Phenomenology is best viewed as an approach of two halves, both as a methodology and as an interpretive framework. Phenomenology offers a specific way of knowing how one thing encounters and relates to another thing in the perceived world (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001). Central to a phenomenological approach to landscape is human experience; like participatory-observation ethnography, this usually requires a personal account of how the environment unfolds before its subject. The placement of the researcher's body within the research milieu is, as Coffey (1999) posits, integral to the manner in which one considers reflecting upon their observed subject;

Our bodies and the bodies of others are central to the practical accomplishment of fieldwork. We locate our physical being alongside those of others as we negotiate the spatial context of the field. We concern ourselves with the positioning, visibility and performance of our own embodied self as we undertake participant observation.

(p. 59)

A phenomenological response to place (and space) begins with an understanding of our *being there* within the research subject, reflecting upon the affects of not only the research terrain upon us but additionally the way our own bodily presence affects or acts upon that which is being researched. As such experientialism is the primary source of understanding in phenomenological engagements, removing the concept of a unified, singular reality in favour of a world that is created by multiple, constantly changing individualised vistas. Such is the role of auto-ethnography, which I use interchangeably here with the phenomenological mode of enquiry that sets out to record experience as mediated through ones own body. Reed (1997) states the meaning of auto-ethnography to be bifurcated, relating to either the autochthonous, recording a subject from within the space it originates (see Thornton, 1995; Muggleton, 2000; Hodkinson, 2002) or an auto

(biographical) response or personal reflection upon a subject or experience. Where as early interpretations of auto-ethnography positioned the method as a form of anthropology carried out within the social context which produced it (Heider, 1975; Hayano, 1979; Strathern, 1987), contemporary uptake has followed in a more phenomenological vein (Cunningham, 2004; Jones, 2005; Humphreys, 2005; Wylie, 2005) by looking at the embodied practices of the researcher, memory and perception. These later offerings to auto-ethnographic representations of place and space offer a unique, experiential reportage of encounters within sites and are illustrative of the ways in which we can extract a deeper sense of place and its textures through personal reflection than through observatory practices alone.

There may indeed be similarities between people's experiences but they are nonetheless different, idiosyncratic and perceived only by the individual. The phenomenological method places all perceivable reality within human experience; this is not to negate the existence of a wider objective reality, but rather it suggests an inaccessibility of that reality to the outside observer. Laing (1967) claimed that it is impossible to experience another person's experiences. Ethnographic enquiry has attempted to counter this by way of representation, of describing what is observable of other people's experiences. However, as previously discussed, traditional ethnographic approaches have tended to remain ignorant of experience in favour of an empirical structuralism (Turner and Bruner, 1986), flattening socio-cultural relations into an organised collection of processes and results. Structuralist readings of religio-social interactions are flawed in that they 'reduce mythology and ritual to the same structural model as house plans and village organisation' (Bruner, 1986, p.11). Omitting an analysis of experience is problematic in that it misses the richness of the practices and encounters that it purports to record. The application of an embodied or phenomenological practice allows for a closer reconciliation of a subject and its representation and permits the researcher to reach a deeper understanding of the subject than mere observation or even participatory observation are able to achieve.

The results of applying phenomenology as a method can vary depending on the intentions in which it is being implemented. Within humanistic geographies, phenomenology has been developed as a particular way of describing the landscape, of detailing the moments and facets that are experienced when encountering our surroundings. Particularly the approaches of Heidegger (1971), Ingold (1993, 2000), Pocock (1996), Casey (1998) and Wylie (2002, 2007) are most relevant to the role of phenomenology in my own research. Wylie (2002) is of specific relevance. Providing a Merleau-Ponty inflected account of his ascending of Glastonbury Tor, Wylie has paid particular attention to the way in which the landscape impacts upon the composure of the body in order for vistas to be gained. It is this very personal method of accounting for embodiment and perception that will enable me to respond precisely to the environments I encounter and moreover provide a method for describing the ways in which the landscape can be perceived as enchanted within the realms of the natural.

Walking as method

As Chapter VI will demonstrate through a study of ley lines, there is a certain strain of landscape mysticism that has been fostered through the practice of walking, of being out and about in the landscape on foot. Perambulatory practices call for an obvious physical dedication to the environment; the body is forced to quite literally move in and around other objects, to rise and fall with the elevations and depths of the landscape. There is a restriction in speed, or at least the available speed at which one can attain when walking and so we see an associated widening of the perceptive scope. That is to say, that a slow transition through or across the ground leaves more time for intake of the surroundings. Walking allows for an inherently physical connection with the landscape through the placing of the body in the environment and the necessary contact between body and earth.

Returning once again to his *An essay on ascending Glastonbury Tor*, Wylie (2002) discusses ontologies of visual perception as produced through what he describes as the 'incarnate subjectivity' (p. 441) engendered through

acts of ascension in the environment, of being in-place. Following a description of both the social and mythical histories of the site, Wylie goes on to detail the act of walking the Tor, providing an annotated narrative of the walk underpinned by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception (1962, 1968). Though Wylie privileges acts of perambulatory elevation, the power of walking itself is carried throughout the paper and the positioning of the moving body as a point of entanglement with the landscape only serves to reiterate that walking brings about an embodied knowledge inaccessible through other forms of movement. Commenting on the way we encounter place through the method of walking, Rendell (2006) states:

When we walk we encounter sites in motion and in relationship to one another, suggesting that things seem different depending on whether we are 'coming to' or 'going from'. Rather than proceed from the observational, to the analytic, to the propositional, by intervening and moving through a site, walking proposes a [...] method that enables one to imagine beyond the present condition without freezing possibility into form.

(p. 188)

This sense of the momentum offered by pedestrianism, of allowing the world to unfold before you as you pass through it, is what makes walking a unique practice in the understanding of place and space. Rendell goes on to summarise that '(t)hrough the act of walking new connections are made and remade, physically and conceptually, over time and through space (*ibid*, p. 190). Connections to place are important not only in providing us with a sense of belonging, of homeliness, but because they allow us to learn through an immersion in the environment; offering a position which confirms our embeddedness within the landscape.

The writer and naturalist W. H. Hudson worked extensively on research projects undertaken by foot, stating that 'with other means of getting about I do not feel so native to the earth' (1909, p. 25). Hudson reiterates the idea that there is a certain confirmation of emplacement in the environment that exists only for the walker, in being physically connected to the ground. Hudson goes on:

‘in walking, even in the poor way, when, on account of physical weakness, it was often out of pain and a weariness, there are alleviations which may be more to us than positive pleasures, and scenes to delight the eye that are missed by the wheelman in his haste, or but dimly seen or vaguely surmised in passing – green refreshing nooks and crystal streamlets, and shadowy woodland depths with glimpses of a blue sky beyond – all in the wilderness of the human heart.

(1909, p. 32)

This romanticising of the walking experience, emphatic as it seems, has been the motivation for myriad writers, artists and enthusiasts to attempt similar engagements with the landscape. It is both the slowed pace and the opportunity to observe the world in detail that privileges walking as the method of choice for many of those who wish to explore their surroundings. Edensor (2006) posits that the practice of walking:

allow(s) for a particular experiential flow of successive moments of detachment and attachment, physical immersion and mental wandering, memory, recognition and strangeness.

(p. 70)

Such a sentiment is shared in the contemporary nature writings of Robert Macfarlane, who’s *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* (2012) works through a personal rediscovering of the landscape through its ancient trackways, routes of pilgrimage and drove-ways. What Macfarlane presents is an immersive account of being-in-the-landscape, and much like the romantic accounts of Hudson, positions walking as the salient method in accurately experiencing and recording his surroundings. Macfarlane notes in the introduction to the text that much of the thinking behind what is written ‘was only possible – by foot’ (xi). Macfarlane places much emphasis on the role of travelling through the walk, as well as the mystery of paths themselves; ‘The way-marking of old paths’ he states, ‘is an esoteric lore of its own’ (2012, p. 15).

The esotericism of pathways is one which is then, only knowable through travelling in or amongst them and one which calls for both a placial immersion and spatial transgression, for following markers and moving beyond them. Movement on foot takes us within and through places; walking affords us time, to observe and to reflect; to see and to hear; to touch and to

smell. Walking allows us to not only reflect on but to react to place; a view that is crystallised in the contemporary works of psychogeography, a so-called psychic engagement with place (See Home, 1997; Pinder, 2005; Self, 2007; Papadimitriou, 2012), that explores 'the behavioral impact of [...] place' (Coverley, 2006, p.10).

Psychogeography necessitates walking in order to gain the desired psychical and physical bodily responses that coerce the walker into following new routes, reimagining urban spaces and being led by the built environment. The *derive*, a predominant psychogeographical technique that requires drifting or psychically led spontaneous changes in trajectory, is a method of movement that could not be realistically, nor safely, replicated by any mode of travel other than by foot. Indeed, one gains a far richer topological perspective through walking, moving the body both within and around built spaces, over and under, in and out. But despite the packaging of walking in psychogeographic practice as an unfiltered response, it nevertheless works to produce an outcome. Whether it be photographic, cinematic, literary or performance based; walking here is not merely for discovery and re-imagination but for artistic and counter-political production. In this sense, we might well look to the works of art's practitioners and theorists for examples of how walking might be used to form creative interventions with place and landscape, to provide a malleable secondary response to a movement through the environment.

Much of the work of land artist Richard Long, for example, is firmly embedded in walking practice. Long uses the natural landscape as the canvas for his work, problematizing notions of trace, occupation and fixity within it. Works such as *A line made by walking* (1967) (Fig. xviii) and *England* (1967) were produced by walking repeatedly in linear patterns across open meadows; the effect being the flattening of grass and flowers which led to a temporary performative sculpture in the landscape; the production of a falsified trace of habitus.

In other works, *Sea Level Waterline* (1982) and *Brushed Path: A Line in Nepal* (1983), Long has repeated the walking process through and across a beach and forest respectively (and over a course of twenty one days for the

latter), each time resulting in the adding of a human centered narrative to a place that had otherwise been remote and uninhabited. Not all of Long's lines are produced in this way, others are sculptured through natural materials that have been scavenged from the vicinity of the artwork and invariably arranged in the formation of straight line, circle or spiral. The effects of the walking and gathering and arranging of objects, whether native to the landscape or not, to create linear patternation, works to engender a notion of emplacement, of positioning the human body –whether absent or present – within the landscape through suggestion of habitus and ritual. The works themselves mimic the traces of ancient trackways and henges that Alfred Watkins had looked out on at a previous moment in time.



Fig. ii *A line made by walking*, Richard Long (1967).

The use of walking as artistic method is well documented within geography, with much work being done on the links between pedestrianism, place and creative production (Romney, 1987; Pinder, 2001; Butler, 2006; Edensor, 2006; Hawkins, 2011; Lorimer, 2011; Middleton, 2011; Wylie, 2005). Much of the work places an emphasis on pedestrianism as an immersive embodied

practice, what Ingold (2004) describes as a weaving through place. This sense of a negotiated entanglement firmly places the human body in place and purports an embeddedness of the practitioner within the site of enquiry. Such was the appeal for geographers during the humanistic turn of the latter half of the twentieth century who began to focus upon the positioning and connections of the human body within the wider natural landscape (Entrikin, 1976; Tuan, 1976; Cosgrove, 1978; Ley, 1981; Pocock, 1981; Daniels, 1985). Humanistic geographies employed place-based analysis in order to respond to people-place relationships. Tuan (1976) places the role of humanistic geography as gaining ‘an understanding of the human world by studying people’s relations with nature, their geographical behavior as well as their feelings and ideas in regard to space and place” (p. 266). In terms of practice then, no method brings the researcher or practitioner closer to place and nature than walking. Cultural histories of walking (Nicholson, 2010; Solnit, 2002) illustrate how engrained walking practice is upon myriad cultural endeavors; artistic (Long, 1967; Knowles, 2013), literary (Bernhard, 1971; Auster, 1987; Sebald, 1998; Sinclair, 2002) and academic alike (Tilley, 1994; Wolfreys: 2007; Ingold and Vergunst, 2008; Pink, 2008; Cheng, 2013).

Walking offers us a unique practice of both getting to grips with the landscape and of understanding place and space through an embodied medium that allows us to pass in and between sites, observing, sensing and engaging with them. To reconnect with Watkins here; what walking offers then, is a chance to physically engage with landscape and history, to uncover the traces left by our predecessors and to indulge in a mysticism that sees the world become a vast network of pre-aligned pathways. Walking gets people into places and in regards to ley lines; confirmation can only take place at ground level, as Watkins confirms ‘Fieldwork is essential’ (1925, p. 219). It has been necessary to show the prior reasoning for walking as method here, in order to clarify why following a ley ‘in the field’ is an appropriate technique for the analysis of this particular strain of landscape mysticism presented in Chapter VI.

Having introduced the key methodological components of the research, the following chapter will be used to develop and discuss an

overarching conceptual framework to the work: hauntology. Hauntology as will be discussed, is a specific ontological standpoint on the being and interaction of the ontic and will be used to produce a reading of place and both its material and immaterial presence(s) at sites of enchantment within the context of British landscape mysticism.

III. A Heideggerian haunting: essentialism, entanglement and the need for a hauntological return.

*“Who am I? If this once I were to rely on a proverb,
then perhaps everything would amount to knowing
whom I haunt.”*

- Andre Breton, *Nadja*.

*“When I write, I necessarily write about the past,
about something which, at least while I am writing,
is behind me.”*

- Peter Handke, *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams*.

Introduction

The remit of this chapter is twofold: firstly to introduce the treatment of place as an object and secondly to show how the object is, as a thing, fundamentally haunted and as such is liable to be experienced as uncanny, strange or enchanted. Structurally the chapter is bifurcated; I will begin by defining and unpacking the Derridean concept of hauntology and presenting its viability as a mode for reading the conditions of an enchanted landscape. I shall be paying particular attention to hauntology’s engendering through an academic climate of historical eschatology. The second part of the work shall be spent exploring the notion of the place-object through an object oriented ontology (or OOO) which will allow for the later readings of place as *essentially* haunted. The purpose of the chapter is to produce a paradigm for the thesis, to illustrate how, through a set of absent and present forces, place becomes rendered enchanted. That through attempted engagements with its unknowable elements, place presents as preternaturally vital. One of the arguments I want to make here is that all places are haunted, though perhaps not in the same way.

The various incarnations of absent-presences come to appear not only as uneasy facets of placial experience but might also be seen as rather more positive, enriching and enlivening the world around us. In order to

position place within a hauntological framework we must accept the universal ubiquity of nothing and nothingness, the ever present 'missing' that is encountered in and of objects.

In his *Introduction to Metaphysics* (2000), Martin Heidegger poses the question 'Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?' (p. 01). Nothing, the absence of a thing, is at the heart of the enquiry set forth across the following pages. It is nothing that has proceeded to operate as something of a preoccupation for the twenty-first century. The question posed by Heidegger above, goes some way to ascertaining why 'nothing' or absence should be of importance to us at all;

The question embraces all that is, and that means not only what is now present at hand in the broadest sense, but also what has previously been and what will be in the future.

(ibid, p. 02).

There is an on-going sense of simultaneously dealing with the past and future together, meaning that one's existence and therefore perception of the world, is continuously positioned between the two; always moving away from the past but unable to leave it in situ. The past is carried forward. As a thing, place is no difference. The beginning of this chapter shall work to explicate this haunted ontology, what Derrida (1994) comes to describe as a hauntology, showing its development since the latter part of the twentieth century.

As the case studies seen later in this work will testify, I have a deep interest in things that are in many people's eyes, seen to be make believe. These elements of an imaginary or pseudo-existence (ghosts, monsters, the crypto-zoological) are as real in their conceptive state as they are in their as yet unsubstantiated matter. Following the Heideggerian OOO set out by Harman (2011), I assume to make no distinction between the physical and the non-physical, nor do I privilege or place hierarchy upon types of non-physical objects; the werewolf is as real as the forest. Both are unified objects, they are the amalgamated knowable properties of a thing. It is

objects that form here the basis for the discussion of hauntology and the uncanny. It may be a tautology to claim that without presence there can be no absence, but beneath the surface is a symbiotic relationship that gives birth to the stranger elements of affective landscapes.

Hauntology: towards a haunted ontology

To begin with, I will dedicate some time to the introduction and exploration of this notion of hauntology further. Let us look at exactly how hauntology is to be defined and more aptly what can be defined as being hauntological? Working through Derrida's (1994) ontological framing of the concept, this chapter will (re)position hauntology, demonstrating how the concept's prior utilisation can be further built upon through an object oriented approach and show how spectral repetition lays at the heart of an enchanted spatiality. The placement of an ontological spectrality that underpins this work is essential in understanding the ubiquity of enchanted experiences, of things' or places' capacity to haunt. Indeed, uncanny resonances are prolific, 'the experience of haunting has never been greater' (Wolfreys, 2002, p. 01)

As previously mentioned, hauntology is a concept that first came into use through the lexical fusion of ontology and haunting. Hauntology is used by Derrida to portray the state of contemporary politics and political ontology in relation to anxieties that lay within a French school of demarxified thought throughout the latter part of the twentieth century. During this period, both Marx and Marxian thought were seen to have been implemented 'beyond the bounds of respectability and academic tolerance, (Jameson, 2008, p. 26). Derrida's own fear was that Marxism had been forced to produce the bastard offspring of Marx, whereby Marxist theory had been pushed beyond Marx's literal workings and had thus lost any sentiment of Marxism's ontological indebtedness to Marx himself. For Derrida the solution to the ill position that Marx had been brought into was to perform a reuniting of Marxism with Marx's spectral legacy. Derrida believed that only this process could rectify the situation and reduce the theoretical processing that

had worked to produce such abstractions.

Derrida's hauntology is by no means limited to the analysis of Marxist politics and Francophone academic discourse. Derrida notes that there is more than one spectre at work, both for and of Marx, and which play a part in the conjuration of Derrida's own deconstruction and the positing of an end to political history. Indeed, it is after history itself where Derrida's Marxian spectres are truly seen to be set to work. The very idea of an 'after' history is integral to the positing of a haunted political climate. The reasons as to why such an intellectual position was ever viable will be explicated through this next section of work.

The End of History

When Theodore Adorno proclaimed Spiritualist enquiry to be 'the metaphysics of dunces' (2005, p. 241) he would have had no idea that ghosts would one day find themselves at the forefront of critical theory. But this was to be the case. By the time Derrida published his treatise outlining hauntology in 1994, the idea that history had come to an end was already widespread (Kojève, 1980; Fukuyama, 1989, 2006; Jameson, 1998, 2008, 2009; Lyotard, 2001). Derrida's metaphysics were in essence, a response to endist theory, defining the spectres that linger on after history had reached its event horizon. Derridean ghosts, as Davis (2005) notes, are positioned in a manner that allows them to provoke this notion of a grand end point, destabilising certainty of finitude; 'Derrida's spectre is a deconstructive figure hovering between life and death, presence and absence, and making established certainties vacillate' (p. 374). Though Derridean hauntology allowed history to return, to disrupt and destabilise time, it fractured time-logic and critical perceptions of the past as a lost, irretrievable moment.

Frederick Jameson stated that our own present can, 'under exceptional circumstances betray us' (Jameson, 2008, p. 39); what then might these circumstances be and how do they relate to the loss of a sense of history and an inherently hauntological existence? Throughout this section I shall interrogate the idea that history itself has come to an end; the ultimate

death. The death of history is, in many ways, a worthy justification for the return of the spectre and the wider return to spectrality as a tool of contemporary socio-cultural analysis. I shall present and examine here three variants of the theorising that history has come to an end; all of which can be seen to have added to the climate and therefore foundations, from which Derrida's theory of hauntology could be built. Beginning with the work of Francis Fukuyama on the end of a historicised political philosophy, I shall move on to Lyotard's conception of the loss of narrative before ending with Jameson's take on the finitude of the modernist era.

Fukuyama first introduced the idea that political history had reached its optimum status in an article "The End of History?" (1989) which was published in the *National Interest*. Fukuyama's article outlined the end of history as he saw it, conjecturing that 'liberal democracy may constitute the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution" and the "final form of human government" and as such "constituted the end of history"' (Fukuyama, 2006, p. xi). Fukuyama's endist conception of history had been inspired by the earlier writings of Alexandre Kojève (1980) who had himself built upon Hegel's concept of historic cycles (Hyppolite, 1974). Fukuyama develops his ideas further in his *The End of History and The Last Man* (2006) whereby he works through both Hegelian and Marxist conceptualisations of the end of history as being satisfied by a single dominating politics; Liberalism and Communism respectively. Fukuyama sets upon working through Hegel's take on Platonian *thymos*; a deep rooted teleological desire in man to be recognised or valued as himself (*ibid*). Hegel himself deduced that the desire to be recognised was the pivotal factor in mankind producing dictatorial leadership, therefore at the end of history, all men would see themselves as equal to all other men. Liberalism would be the natural progression of man in reaching this point.

For Marx, the finishing point of history meant an end to class and historical materialism. Like Hegel, Marx too sought to find all humans equal at the end of history, though through a scenario whereby the state dealt with the problems of capital and attained Communist rule. Fukuyama claims that the end of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes in the West, both the failing

of communism and of fascist political orders, have given way to a plateau of democratic liberalism, thus resulting in political equality. The consequent degradation of class and classist hierarchy, are thus posited as having brought about the end of political history. Through the synthesis of both Hegelian and Marxian conceptions of the end of history, Fukuyama develops a historical demise that is non-apocalyptic and temporally unproblematic.

For Fukuyama then, history is to be measured by politics and its philosophy; history has no goals only those sought out by mankind (*thymos*) and if as Fukuyama would claim, these goals have been engulfed in a democratic capitalism then history can only exist as a measurement of the periodic past. The end of history leaves one feeling more than a little pessimistic about what is yet to come; the future becomes uncertain and moreover troubling. The ghosts of a political past, like that of Marx, can be seen looming. Fukuyama claims that this gloomy outlook of both the current and past century 'stands in sharp contrast to the optimism of the previous one' (2006, p. 04) and states that the optimism felt in the nineteenth century was predominantly the result of two beliefs in what the future held;

The first was the belief that modern science would improve human life by conquering disease and poverty. Nature, long man's adversary, would be mastered by modern technology and made to serve the end of human happiness. Second, free democratic governments would continue to spread to more and more countries around the world.

(Fukuyama, 2006, p. 04)

If as is suggested by Fukuyama, the event horizon of political evolution and subsequent collapse of political ideology has taken place, then we are living within a time where only the past exists to make sense of the future. With the end of a theorised political history, the argument has been made that there has been a distinct shift in the way we consider ourselves to pass periodically from one historical moment to the next. We no longer measure time via grand historical narrative, those great events that define one historical moment from the next. This is the death of something far more organic than politics and is symptomatic of what Lyotard (2001) defines as the

'postmodern condition'. Grand narratives work to monumentalise the past, to neatly position one period of time in front of or beyond of the next. The absence of such a structure leaves us operating within a de-historicised plane of existence.

For Lyotard (*ibid*), grand narratives are the overarching explanatory formations that provide societies with a sense of history. These narrations are the necessary universal accounts of a temporal period that are used to distinguish one historicised moment from the next. Grand Narratives provide us with a universalised account of the past; in a general sense, one looks towards notorious historical moments as universal truths that carry with them embedded ideology, philosophy and politics particular to a time and people and thus applies these truths to their own understanding of how the world has formed. Lyotard (*ibid*) conjectures that we have always made sense of our present and our past through the grand narrative; narratives may well have been how we have previously defined ourselves in history, through epics, odysseys and sagas, but for Lyotard this now causes problems.

It is true that Lyotard no longer sees the world or history as running in these extensive over-arching events, claiming that postmodernism has provided us with more complex desires; a heterogeneous society that 'opposes the very aspiration to domesticate the world by bringing it under the rubric of an explanation' (Browning, 2000, p.40). The death of the grand narrative can be seen to emancipate us from the 'histories' of the past. In contrast to Fukuyama (2006), Lyotard sees our present temporal existence as floating independently through a period of sustained variation; a perpetual flux that can no longer be summed up by a singular chronicled ideology or politics. For Lyotard, validation comes from technological and scientific advances (Lyotard, 2004). Through the ongoing development of a society Lyotard sees the role of grand narratives 'in legitimating knowledge in the modern world as redundant in light of the advent of postmodernity' (Browning, *ibid*, p. 01). Claiming that '(t)he grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses' (Lyotard, 2001, p. 37), Lyotard views historicity as dead, broken down and out of use. According to Jameson (2001), grand narratives have become "buried master-

narratives” (xii). Taking into account Fukuyama’s claim that the horizon of political ideology has also been reached, if we similarly begin to follow Lyotard’s trajectory, where in our own conception of time do we sit? If the manner in which we distinguish our time from others, both politically and through historic narration, can be seen to have come to an end then it should be of no surprise that it is spectres that Derrida (1994) has conjured to haunt us.

Through the conjuration of spectres, the hunting of ghosts, there comes the enactment of digging up these “buried” narratives. The resurrection of the past grounds us in the present; history’s spectres, those that appear from the death of history itself, confirm our present through a distorted, bastardised version of the past that at the very least presents us with where we are not, temporally speaking. On encountering the ghost, one can imagine then, that it is not he or she that is ‘out of joint’ with time and space - the anachronism presents itself purely as that, temporally and spatially erroneous – but that the apparition provides confirmation to its audience that there is a definite past and furthermore a definite future and of course, the possibility to gain a mobility between the two. The ghost itself is temporally disjointed, however those who witness its apparition can be sure that they are not. Hauntology ensures that ‘all forms of narrative are spectral to some extent’ (Wolfreys, 2002, p. 02).

Certainly this exhumation of narrative here is to be thought of as hauntological; the ghost making its return to finish its business, to set the future straight by temporarily bringing with it the (dis)joining of the past and present. When mobilised through the spectre, hauntology can be seen to illustrate history’s capacity and necessity to repeat. Through dialogue with the ghost, one learns more about the passing of time and their own place within it than those who might postulate over its demise. But the ghost and the death of history are by no means limited to either the expiration or burying of narrative and politics. The notion of postmodernity, in regards to the loss of a narrated legitimisation of the past, is integral to Lyotard’s reading of history, and furthermore, intrinsic to Jameson’s (2001, 2008) understanding of the complexities of our time. Unlike the conceptual work

that takes place in the theory discussed so far, Jameson bases his endist readings upon more materialist foundations, postulating that the postmodern (and subsequent death of history) is characterised by 'a new depthlessness' (p. 06), a cycle of limitless repetition that at once displays both an end to new modes of cultural production and a yearning for the past.

For Jameson, both our inability to produce the new and preoccupation with retrospect have led to the forming of a 'nostalgia mode' (2001, 2008). The nostalgia mode does not seek to move forward historically rather its aim is to reproduce that which has been before. Such a process is indicative of a historical death, not only enforcing the stagnation of the new but concretises the placing of the past as fundamental in the present. Jameson's belief in returning objects, things from the past that should have long been outmoded, sets the precedent for the following section of this chapter where attention is turned to things themselves and their ability to become revenant. The death of history is outlined above is primarily relevant as a way of further exploring the surrounding theories of death and return that surround the current leaning towards spectrality in geography and cognate disciplines. What follows might be seen more as a moving away from the spectral in favour of materiality itself.

Giving up the Ghost: Place, The Uncanny and The Haunted Object

If the preceding part of this chapter has worked to conjure ghosts, it might seem counterintuitive that in what follows, I shall work on exorcising them away. It is not to call into question the relevance of Derrida's spectres nor his haunted ontology but rather to allow a space for thinking about how objects might seem to be fundamentally uncanny, haunted in their nature and thus ever capable of presenting the opportunity for enchantment. In the subsequent positing of place as object, it shall be demonstrated that the overarching theme of enchantment here (of which haunting is but a facet in the process thereof), is rather more bound up in phenomenology than pure narrative alone.

Freud's 1919 explication of the uncanny introduced the idea that haunting is an internalised process; that which frightens or disturbs us is, more often than not, a repressed feeling with delayed affective qualities; it recurs. For Freud, it is 'a matter of indifference whether what is uncanny was originally frightening' (1995, p. 142), what is of importance is that the affective state which allows for the repressed to recur is itself unsettling. This feeling of being disturbed makes the marginal stand out; it turns the everyday into the unfamiliar. In this sense, any object can possess the ability to disturb when recalled in the mind or reencountered through certain phenomenological and psychoanalytic lenses. What is of interest to me here is a) the removal of the supernatural in favour of a non-temporally linear response to an object that works to disturb the observer, and b) this aspect of the hidden or occluded elements of the vernacular being called forth to enchant. But, if not a ghost, then what is it that haunts or stirs us?

In Freud's native German, *Den Geist aufgeben* means 'giving up the ghost', the precise act the psychoanalyst committed to when ruling in favour of the uncanny (1933, 1995). I want to show in what follows that through giving up the ghosts, we are able to posit the uncanny as a necessary component in object-place relations. Leaving the notion of spectrality behind for a moment in favour of a discussion of things and their existential nature, that is, to speak of their existence in the world; even if albeit that is a haunted one. It not the ghost itself that I wish to discard in this work, but rather the notion that the ghost is defined solely by its ghostliness and therefore, it's capacity to *not* exist. Furthermore, I wish to set out a philosophical trajectory that accounts for a hauntological reading of objects, moreover of places and of landscape. This direction will signal the importance of memory in human encounters with places and explain why all places are both capable of an uncanniness and revenant in their nature.

Again, the aim of this is not to eradicate spectrality *per se*, but rather to establish the hauntological uncanny as a non-reductive, non-teleological exchange between objects and encounters that surpasses the workings of the spectral alone. The spectral in this sense, is a facet of the relationship between humans and enchanted places/objects. I will attempt to configure

an alternative to the contemporary prescription of affective landscapes, looking at why absence (nothingness) is an essential element of all *things* and why its importance should be considered equal to that of presence. I will begin with a few short comments on the uncanny, before moving on to an account of haunting and the hauntological.

When we speak of the uncanny in English, we speak of a poorly translated, misrepresented version of what Freud attempted to execute in his 1919 essay *Das Unheimliche*. To begin with, the title of Freud's work *Das Unheimliche* refers to a noun and not an adjective. This suggests then, that the uncanny exists firstly as a thing in the German language; an object, not a description. Graham Harman defines objects as 'units that both display and conceal a multitude of traits' (2011, p. 07), some of these traits he posits to be perceivable, others hidden from sight. The treatment of the uncanny as an object (or at least trait of one) is important here because it sets up a dichotomy of things that are both familiar and unknown to us which allow the enchantment process to work. Conversely, *Das Unheimliche's* opposing counterpart, *heimlich*, is an adjective, which has traditionally been regarded in German as functioning in two ways. Firstly, something that is occluded from vision or comprehension, which according to Freud is 'unconscious, withdrawn from knowledge, hidden, inaccessible' (1995, p. 127). Secondly, in an older Germanic tongue, it functions as describing an emotive state; a response to other objects or a feeling of being 'in place' (*ibid*, p. 126). The addition of the prefix '*Un*' to create *Unheimlich*, thus forms an adjective (minus the *e*); a term which now opposes a sense of place, homeliness, and signifies disjuncture in object relations.

In relation to the first reading of the negatively connotative *heimlich*, *unheimlich* must refer to that which is seen, present or knowable in some capacity. Consequently, the object that we began with, *Das Unheimliche*, is then only partially knowable and never 'in place'. Therefore *unheimlich* is the uncanniness which *Das Unheimliche* or the uncanny, affords us. Regarding Harman, if the uncanny is to be objectified, then it is so, precisely because it has the capacity to display and conceal its traits (Harman, 2002, 2012). It is this sense of agency, of being capable of concealing, that allows the uncanny

to disturb us, to act upon us; to be considered both present and prior to the cognition of things. The purpose of this exercise may well appear seemingly obscurantist, but a correct grammatical reading of the uncanny is indeed necessary to its placement in the analysis of objects, and moreover, of place.

The point here is then, not one of linguistic point scoring; however, a brief discussion of the genealogy of the uncanny allows us to speculate on its physical manifestations as well as the prospect of its 'unknowability'. If the uncanny can be viewed as an object or as an objectified element, a constituent part of other objects, then it is surely deserving of an ontological capacity in its own right. As would be the crow subtracted from the murder or the spanner from the set, the uncanny is then, but a component present within other objects or object assemblages. Such a view mobilises the uncanny within a discourse of agency, of affect. However, I am not entirely interested in affect itself here; objects should not be reduced to their affects alone. The ontology presented in this chapter works towards a reading of objects as unknowable and as such un-exhaustive. Affects are the qualities objects offer to other objects; they are part of the thing but not the thing in its entirety. Affects might be used to describe an object but they do not define it.

How we regard an object here is integral to the later readings of place as thing. As an example, take a book. The book is a thing; we perceive it as such by at once noting its physical attributes (height, width, depth, colour, material etc.) in addition to a number of assumptions. Firstly we assume that the book *is* a book; we make this judgment based upon our experiences of other books and an understanding that all books share a commonality in their appearance. We observe a *bookliness* that is in character with all other books that we have encounter before and will experience in the future. The book's reality is intentional, it is intentional because I as an observer intend it, (sub)consciously. I grant the book reality based upon my conscious engagement with it, through my observing of the book. This is the basis of Husserl's phenomenological understanding of intentional realism (Husserl, 2012). The problem here claims Harman, is that Husserl negates a move beyond the sphere of idealism by placing an object's reality within perception alone (2010, p. 21).

There are issues with addressing the perception of physical phenomena through a single lens in this way, in that we omit the possibility of unlimited experiences of reality and instead reduce our understanding to a cognitive perception. Plausibly then, if we return to the example of the book; approaching the book-object from any multitude of angles we gain different views of it, the book remains the same object and yet one clearly perceives it in numerous different ways. How can we be sure that the different books are one and the same thing? Here Husserl accounts for variations in perception through adumbrations (*Abschattung*), the many different views of the book are not the same as the book itself. Rather we conceive the object as a single unified whole; a collection of vistas that produce a singular, immanent object. Here it is not a question of calculating the adumbrations through a process of addition rather it is a case of subtraction (*ibid*, p. 24). We discard the experience of alternative perceptions of the book to give us a single, immanent object; one that we can consciously realise. However, if we reduce all experiences of an object to a single idealised version of the phenomenological engagement that is confined to our experience alone, then there is little to say about the objects themselves, other than how we view their form and affect. Heidegger offers a far more nuanced version of objects; one which not only provides things with agency, but removes them from the Husserlian phenomenological position of immanence in favour of a phenomenology based upon absence. *Das Unheimliche* then, might well be seen as the hidden profile of the familiar.

To follow Heidegger does not necessitate a flat out rejection of the Husserlian method, fundamentally the rift comes in accepting the idea of the transcendental, the existence of a beyond-our-perception that Husserl himself refused to acknowledge in his phenomenology. Much of what Husserl proposes in the *Ideas* (2012) is reconcilable to a point, with what Heidegger sets out in his *Being and Time* (2003). To return to the analogy of the book once more however, the difference lies in the perception of the book as a totalised unification of perception(s). A Heideggerian reading accepts the multitude of views of the book as relational to the whole, however it refuses the idea that we are able to perceive all views of the book simultaneously and

so the process of the object unveiling itself in entirety to us is neither complete nor possible. One side or more will always remain hidden no matter where we approach from or how we handle the book. To this end we are unable to fully know the physicality of book, let alone the essence of the object, the 'bookliness' of the thing. Heidegger (2003) not only leaves room for a space beyond our perception, he actively encourages it; for him the world is constructed through a multitude of objects in a continuous state of unveiling.

Furthermore, the way in which Heidegger sees humans as encountering the world acknowledges this sense of the unknowable and posits our way of existence as one which bases itself upon the assumptive perception that Husserl makes. A Heideggerian view however, not only acknowledges the absence that pervades all things but provides a platform on which this absence (*Das Unheimliche*) can perform. Thus, Heidegger's ontology is necessarily haunted by both the unknowable aspects of things and the potential for them to become known to us. Perhaps these are the ghosts that come to permit a hauntological reading of place. I would like to keep this notion of the Heideggerian uncanny in mind for the duration of this thesis. Heidegger makes substantial reference to the uncanny as a particular kind of anxiety that disturbs one's feeling of being-in-the-world (2003, p. 233) moreover, being-at-home in the world. Uncanniness, Heidegger conceives, is a constant threat to our being (*ibid*, p. 234) and as such is ever present. Thusly, Heidegger's ontology presents us with two constant facets of Being (and of beings) that are worthy of the later development of what we might posit as a Heideggerian or post-Derridean hauntology. Firstly, the ever presence of absence, a pervasive unknowable element of things; and secondly, the omnipotent uncanny, a force that seeks to disrupt and disturb our being-in-the-world. Both these factors are required in the development of enchantment and moreover of enchanted places. Such a view engenders haunting.

Ghosts themselves are a particularly good example of objects that cannot easily be defined; indeed they have very little definition and are never capable of being viewed from multiple sides simultaneously. Sometimes

ghostly objects present themselves as translucent or transparent, sometimes invisible entirely. Ghosts are both an idea and an occurrence, what we might know about them usually comes about as a result of the affective landscapes they create. What we more often than not neglect though, is the ghost's ability to exist, to dwell, to be present at all. Conceptually, it is hard to draw out what exactly the ghost-as-object might be. Nevertheless, it can be described as a triangulation of the material, the immaterial and an observing objects perception. All three are necessarily connected in order for this particular rendering of the uncanny to be experienced. Each of the factors must in turn respond to the other two. There is a basic requirement of feedback between object and objects – sensed and real – in order for the model to work.

As Derrida suggested in his *Spectres of Marx* (1994), ghosts require being dealt with. Derrida attempts to deal with ghosts via hauntology, a portmanteau in his native French. However, the humour is not truly in the irregular pronunciation of a Francophone speaking English, rather it is more a play on, or inversion of Martin Heidegger's obsession with non-presence in his own ontology. Here, I would like to move onto a more in depth discussion of place and hauntology, of what the hauntological might mean in relation to landscape and moreover, what it might mean in this post Derridean sense. How does hauntology resonate with the uncanny as an object and what might be achieved through the development of an object oriented hauntology? That is, if we can even conceive of such a thing. Firstly, a change in direction.

The human object monumentalises place; place is understood and located though imagination and memory. The 12th Century theologian Albertus Magnus claimed that it is seemingly impossible to recall anything without fixing it to a place (Carruthers, 1990). This much is certainly true, as a human, I think in places. As an animal I think in places. So much must then be true for all animals capable of cognition; of those who migrate to remembered places, those who hibernate in hideaways only they can recall, of those who breed in specific destinations and of those who habitually prey in specific places. My world, like theirs, unfolds before me as a multiplicity of retained placial experiences. Each of these places is stored, recalled and

recollected as I occupy and inhabit different spatialities. One would argue however, that not all places are new to us, rather they are the result of a multitude of previous memories, layered and stratified, piled high being brought forward to active consciousness; a standing reserve that we perpetually borrow from in order to make sense of our surroundings. In this sense, nothing about place is ever truly new to us, our previous encounters haunt the sites we are yet to venture into, a reiteration of Wylie's (2008) comment that haunting is a requirement in the composition of place and another route back into Freud's uncanny, 'that class of frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar' (Freud, 1995). There is the capacity then for all places to encompass the uncanny object, in fact the uncanny is at the very core of place-making in this memorialised approach. What is new is old, what is unknown is already familiar. A continuous doubling of objects. Again, this aligns closer with a Heideggerian way of seeing than it does that of Husserl. Husserl does not factor the past into his work on perception; 'Husserlian phenomenology was basically ahistorical' (Elden, 2001, p 08).

One might assert to replace the position of perception in our earlier triangulated model of haunting, with place itself. Place then becomes the defining point at which the uncanny begins to manifest. The perceiving object can be removed entirely. The bond between the uncanny and place is unbreakable and this extends beyond object perception and into the materiality of sites. In his thinking about place and spectrality, Wylie poses the question 'what is place?', responding with the supposition that 'perhaps haunting is a pre-requisite to place'. Such a remark must be met with a twofold response; firstly, for all modern places to exist, the remains of the past must be rebuilt or reconfigured. Haunting is a pre-requisite to place insofar as history cannot be erased, it will always linger, in landscape memory or physicality of some variety and is thus palimpsestic. Modern places are erected upon a foundation of revenance, of absent presences. Secondly, the perpetual haunting of place can be determined as a haunting by place, perhaps a previous place or by a sense of place, our own sense of place. Haunting is nature's way of readdressing the balance between the future and

the past; one will always coincide with the other. The two qualities are only reducible to the others reciprocal existence.

Appropriated for the analysis of place, hauntology can be used to describe situations of spectrality and enchantment. Hauntology does not stand in opposition to the ontological existence of place, rather it would be my suggestion that a haunted ontology can account far more honestly for the repetition of the past and its presence amongst all things; amongst all concepts;

To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with being and time. That is what we would be calling here, a hauntology. Ontology opposes it only in a movement of exorcism. Ontology is a conjuration.

(Derrida, 1994, p. 161)

Derrida's positing of a haunting that is ontologically just, does so in an attempt to ruddy the phenomenology of Heidegger, whereby objects are received through both their ontic and essentialist nature. As the essence is always present but unseen, Derrida sees no choice but to spectralise Heidegger's things. But such a reduction misses a crucial distinction between Heidegger and his forerunners (see here Hegel (1977) and Husserl, (2012)).

Heidegger's ontology is in many regards a haunted one, not purely by the absence of the essential substance of the thing in and of itself, but also in regards to Heidegger's conjecture that we are unaware of objects until they continue to function. In regards to place then, the most haunted places are those which have stopped working, the ones where things have been broken or left behind – murder sites, battlefields, ruins, graveyards, old buildings. These are the places, the objects and repositories for the things that have ceased to exist as they were or in the form in which they were designed to function. They are necessarily hauntological because they cannot reconcile what is there with what should be or has been there previously. In attempting to cognate this situation, we project our own sense of what should inhabit these spaces from memory or imagination. The uncanny rears

its head as the object that fills the gap that is there with something that is not; our sense of unease is the working of the uncanny upon us.

The very concept of place is haunted by its own existence. Unlike the abstract reaching of space, place is fixed, at least to the conceptual area that we pertain to in our everyday dealings. Place is stuck, anchored and bound. Consider the following;

'The place where I used to live'

'The place where JFK was shot'

'The place where Oscar Wilde is buried'

'The place where we first kissed'

'The place where I was born'

'The place where you grazed your knee'

'The place where your grandmother died'

These places are bound to earth and to memory and all other places that incite a sense of familiarity with these places thus become uncanny; they become haunted. This is what occurs when memory projects or transfers its sense of place onto somewhere it should not, or when we choose to recall a memory that may never have occurred. It is perhaps, a mis-placing of objects. Try as we might we cannot shift the site of these places elsewhere, time passed in them, an occasion was had, is happening and will be had. Time cannot occur for us outside of place, or rather we cannot perceive time outside of place. As such, place can only be experienced reiteratively as repeated encounter. Those slight moments of having already passed through a time, those that we refer to as *déjà vu*, are disturbing precisely because we have seem to have been there before. Hauntology accounts for this, the uncanny accounts for this and our inability to act outside of our own minds account for this. Objects, including humans, find themselves continuously repeating experiences in place, and the uncanny would suggest that sometimes these experiences relate to happenings occurring in the wrong place or at the wrong time; a misfire of memory perhaps.

Both de Certeau (1988) and Benjamin (1999a) recall that places change superficially but their histories exist within us and it is through the process of recalling these memories of place and articulating them as narratives, that we enter back into the cycle of haunting. Place is ill fated then, it does not progress with the same freedom that time does. And nor can place exist outside of time. A place is always the location where some thing was, is or will be. It is not problematic then, to reason that place continues to resonate with the uncanny trope. Definitions of what a place is may change but our phenomenological engagements with place will not and cannot. This is due to the paradoxical nature of a place always dwelling both inside and outside of the mind and inside and outside of the present; what we see, feel, smell, hear and taste in a place is transferred into memory, before being reissued as a point of reference through which to understand the next place.

Not all places are haunted in the same way though, I would argue that due to the reasons noted above however that all places are necessarily haunted. The framework of hauntology allows for a vision of place that is not only located in becoming but also from what has become. It begins with the concept of place as echoed, or reiterated and locates itself with an understanding of objects that is not ontologically flat, but rather one that is persistent, that repeats, reinvents and breaks away from linear movement. As such it is always present within *Das Unheimliche*, the uncanny, and affords us a sense of uncanniness, *unheimlich*; an unknowable entirety. In doing so, hauntology does not just become another buzzword for the geographical imagination but rather it explains the porosity of place and the uncanniness through which it presents itself. The reason hauntology serves to describe experiences of place, is that because there are physical limitations set upon place itself – that is to say, there is only enough room on the Earth for a finite number of places to exist – (human) objects must continually recall in order to reinvent new places. This is a process of haunting to be sure, but it also one of necessity that keeps us from living in perpetual *déjà vu*, in a continuously represented uncanny. It allows us to exist outside of an exhaustible reality.

The uncanny is not only essential to a reading of object relations but also it has become ontologically viable in understanding the doubling, fear

and disjuncture encountered in object-landscape relations. Furthermore, hauntology, as a way of describing both the repetition of place in history and its experience as a series of memory based returns, allows us to account for the inescapable nature of the uncanny in our own relationship to landscape as well as conjecturing its place in the experience of others. This chapter has worked to theorise place as an object; a thing that is perceivable only in part by its multiplicity of physical profiles and the subsequent affects afforded by the. It has been shown that place is both composed of an ever-present absence, an unknowability that contains and projects the uncanny onto our experiences of the placial. The following chapter will work to explore the notion of a spectral haunting further, developing the notion of the parageographical and looking into how haunted places are experienced phenomenologically.

IV. Hauntings: A spectral ecology of placial absences.

*“Place is a mis-en-scene for remembered events
precisely to the extent that it guards and keeps
these events within its self-delimiting perimeters.”*

- Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*.

*“(To) claim that the spectre, the ghost, the phantom
comes as a figure of terror is to oversimplify. It may
equally be that in a world that seeks to banish the
supernatural, then the very resistance of the revenant
to a final expulsion may also be a figure for our own
resistance, our refusal to be written out of history, or,
perhaps more importantly, to allow others to be thus
written out.”*

- David Punter, *Spectral Readings: Towards a Gothic Geography*.

Placing the parageographical

Much of our attention in life is directed upon the dead. For some this may be in part an act of tribute, of remembering those who have been lost; for others it may be about understanding history, viewing the remains of the past as a future for the present. Everything in the world works to a death of some description; it is the end point that all successful lives work towards (Jung, 2008). For a growing number of people however, a focus upon the dead is about gathering evidence of the existence of an afterlife, collecting proof of the paranormal; looking for confirmation that a life beyond death exists.

Ghost stories are ubiquitous; our cultural history is replete with legends and tales of vengeful phantoms, ghastly spectres and terrifying apparitions. Our landscape is overflowing with supposedly haunted places, which is for me the most interesting part of the spectral ecology that imbues our surroundings. Most people can almost certainly recall at least one place that has been referred to as ‘haunted’; many more of us could recount a tale of having known someone who has visited or inhabited a haunted space. And

then there are those who claim first-hand experience of having co-habited with ghosts, of living with the dead.

This chapter emerges from a developing strand of geographic writings primarily known as spectral or spectro-geographies. The role of these spectral geographies has largely been figurative, used to describe the 'haunted' spatial politics of the twenty-first century; 'a century of haunting, of irregular, unexpected and (un)anticipated events' (Maddern and Adey, 2008, p. 291). However, geographic writings pertaining to the spectral do not explore the importance of the paranormal in the production of space, nor do they acknowledge the tradition of ghost hunting as a geographic practice. To this end we might consider a type of geography that seeks to posit the paranormal as a part of place, one that accounts for both the types of haunted places that exist as well as seeking to understand the ways in which ghosts manifest in places.

The work here intends to develop a framework in which to understand the relationship between ghosts and the spaces they haunt; a parageography. Later in the chapter I will provide a discussion of ghost hunting that draws upon ethnographic work carried out with paranormal investigators and aims to show why hunting ghosts is as much about uncovering the spectral qualities of place as it is about finding evidence of the supernatural.

This chapter intends to provide an applied response to what has hitherto been described as the spectral in geographic writings. Moreover, much of this work, I believe, is far better defined as parageographical; a geography imbued with a sense of paranormality that is suggestive of the role non-human or 'not-quite-human' actants play in the production of haunted places. This is not merely a question of semantics; rather, it is a nod towards what is more definitely being encountered through engagements of the spectral; an addition, a something else that is presencing at certain sites. The parageographical implies that rather than this figurative element of ghostliness pertained to in so many contemporary explorations of place and landscape, we might rather look at the agents that are at work there as well as, and beyond, the normative experientialism of place.

Ghosts are an appendage to what we encounter in a place; they are bound up within the fabric of placial experience. Such an argument might well be countered with the suggestion that certainly then, all places are intrinsically parageographical. This however, is not the case. What this work, and particularly the term parageographical pertains to, is a sense that some spaces are embedded within a certain ghost lore, that they have narratives of haunting that cannot be separated from the sites themselves and thus result in a particular kind of enchantment. These are the places where paranormal investigators set themselves to work; locations that might have a genealogy of haunting, a traceable history of spectral entities; old manor houses, churchyards, inns, ruins etc. It is these sites in particular, where an encounter with place can become parageographical.

Working through an ethnographic account of paranormal investigation, this work endeavours to respond to the explorations of parageographies, problematising the materialities of which they are constructed and articulating a performativity of the absence(s) which reside as the ghostly appendages of place. Furthermore, this work makes an appeal to deal with the enchantment process that is at work amongst the strange familiarity of archetypal haunted locations. Haunting is but a facet of enchantment; an extraordinary animation or an unravelling of the complexity of our surrounding materiality as described by Bennett (2001). Enchantment is firstly, an unprocessed feeling of wonder, of being charmed by a novel encounter: secondly, a sense of the *Unheimliche*, of being dislocated from one's default sensory perception to encounter something both strangely familiar and Other (*ibid*). Such a positing of enchantment leaves the purpose and causality of the process open. Indeed, the application of enchantment or rather haunting, to the description of the (im)material agency of place underpins the conjecturing of haunted locations as being both commonplace and periphery, and that their animation may be brought about by human experiences of absence.

Notes on the spectral

Ghosts have long been a contested area of study within academic disciplines; with psychology, theology, philosophy, sociology and literary studies all providing their own definition of what the phantom may be. Although geography is a latecomer to the investigation of haunting and indeed the acquisition of the spectral trope, the uptake of these foci within the discipline has been prolific. Spectral or spectro-geographies have become increasingly popular as a matter of academic enquiry in recent years, emerging as a posthumous response to the *fin-de-siècle* and undoubtedly influenced by Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* (1994) (Maddern and Adey, 2007) as well the increasing popularity of Walter Benjamin's corpus on Nineteenth Century urban modernity within the humanities (see Buck-Morss, 1991, Buse *et al*, 2006, Hetherington, 2001). Subsequently, this development in the use of the revenant as a mode of analytical discourse has led to a 'spectral turn', negotiated through 'a language of ghosts and the uncanny...of anachronic spectrality and hauntology' (Luckhurst, 2002, p. 527).

The magnitude of Derrida's role in mobilising this 'turn' has been incommensurable. To be sure, Derrida has posited that the act of political-socio-cultural revenance is somewhat axiomatic in postmodernity. A separatist from many other theorists at the time, Derrida writes us not into an endist theory of history; moreover, his claim is that history itself is repetitive and therefore haunting by its very nature. It is no wonder that under these conditions of perpetual reiteration, of a present constantly haunted by its past, claims of place in geography and more generally critical theory, have become beset with writings on the ghost and the *Unheimliche*.

Wylie's suggestion that 'Perhaps haunting is a pre-requisite to place' (2008, p. 180), must in these circumstances of continual reiteration, be true. For Wylie (*ibid*), place is a result of haunting; a necessary by-product of memory. This would suggest then, that all places are haunted, that ghosts are bound to the ontology of place, a concept that resonates in the work of many of the writings explored throughout this chapter and follows on from the

discussion of hauntology found in the previous chapter, although to quite different ends.

Conversely, in essence the ghost might be a remainder of a former place or rather the ill disposed waste of time and space. For Derrida, a haunting disrupts our sense of history, indeed 'the idea of a return from death fractures all traditional conceptions of temporality' (Buse and Stott, 1999, p.11). Consequently, ghosts have been sort out as objects of ruination, *malus fortuna*, ill fated detritus of the past with their exorcism imminent. To witness the ghost is to witness a paradox, a being that is both present and absent, living and dead. Spectral geography purports to deal with the paradoxical nature of ghosts by assigning them to studies of memory, trauma, outmoded architecture and the waste of Capital; ghosts are always as a critical facet of place. Through the explication of key writings in spectral geography, this next section will show the diversity in approaches to and dealings with ghosts.

In his *The Arcades Project* (1999), Benjamin makes regular use of the term *phantasmagoria* to describe a psychology of the urban space and commodity exchange within it. Originally a concept devised to aid his analytical framework of dreams and awakening from which a modern Paris could be examined (Buse *et al*, 2006, p. 61), phantasmagoria took on a new meaning for Benjamin, and was used to explore the more peripheral, ghostly encounters of city life through the collection of fetishised commodities of the Parisian arcades. Benjamin noted that fetishism results in phantasmagoria when the commodity 'ceases to be a product and to be ruled over by human beings. It has acquired a 'ghostly objectivity' and leads a life of its own' (Benjamin, p. 182; G5, 1). This 'ghostly objectivity' is used further in depicting the practice of the *flâneur*. The *flâneur* experiences the streets of the city through a series of recollected memories and dreamscapes that are emancipated from their present human construction;

According to Benjamin, memories can flash up in front of your eyes as you walk through the city. Ghosts accompany the living, even while the living are not always aware of their presence.

(Pile, 2005, p. 137)

To be sure, the *flâneur* experiences the past in the present through a ghostly city; a landscape where place is constructed through haunting.

Benjamin's haunted cityscape has featured heavily in the work of Pile (2004, 2005, 2005a). The conceptualisation of a 'ghostly city' is developed further through Pile's *Real Cities* (2005). Pile posits that the ghostly city is dichotomous; haunted by its former inhabitants (living and dead) as well as haunting those that currently reside within its walls. The ghostly city is at once both haunted and haunting.

Like Benjamin, Pile too conceives of a phantasmagoria created through recollection, or at least partly so. Whereas Benjamin views the phantasmagorical as attributing to a city-myth created through the experience of forgetting and remembrance (of dreaming), Pile derives a haunting from the memory of place and the movements of its people. To this end, the future of a city *is* haunted by its past; its ghosts are the ghosts of past events, of the grand narratives of the city that echo in the future. Pile's ghosts are then, essentially of a political making, he guides us through tales of terrorism, riots and social injustice showing where the city *needs* to be haunted so that it can perhaps have a more hopeful future.

In contrast to Wylie, Pile places ghosts in proximity to place and not as a precursor to its formation. Instead, a more traditional sense of haunting is established in which the ghost frequents a 'site of loss, trauma and injustice' (2005, p. 131) bringing about a 'dislocation of urban times and spaces' (2005, p. 132). This dislocation of time and space causes a rupture in the urban fabric; 'Ghosts[...]haunt the places where cities are out of joint' (2005, p.164), that is, 'out of joint' with time and space. These fissures in the urban landscape allow the 'intertwining of the material with the immaterial' (Holloway and Kneale, 2008, p. 303) and permit the city to become a haunted geography.

Drawing attention to memorials, plinths and monuments, Pile claims that the city is able to haunt through the commemoration of its dead, through an interweaving of memory with physical architecture (2005). It is this constant state of remembrance that keeps the dead alive and dislocates

urban time and space. Pile refers to this process of haunting as grief-work, a evolution of the dream-work of Benjamin's arcades. The ghosts which Pile speaks of here are of the linguistic trope of spectrality rather than indebted to a notion of the supernatural. The negation of attending to a spirit-work or *genius loci* in Pile's *Real Cities*, results in spectrality being used as an extended metaphor for the temporal-spatial nuances of the urban experience.

In the work of Pile and Benjamin, spectral geography places ghosts as the loci for urban memory. Furthermore, it situates specific sites of mourning, such as memorials, at the centre of haunting in the urban landscape. This notion of the ghost as a signifier of loss or trauma is a concept taken up by Till in her *The New Berlin* (2005). For Till, the ghost not only signifies a memory of social trauma but reflects what she refers to as an 'open wound' in the cityscape; a wound that is opened to let ghosts haunt, to allow the memory of past atrocities to permeate the present. Till interrogates haunting through the act of place-making. Through a series of case studies of the 'new' Berlin; Till deconstructs the ghosts of both National Socialism and a pre-unified Germany through consciously constructed reminders; memorials, museums and artworks act as both a celebration of progress and a commemoration of the dead. Till recognises the potential for ghosts to bring change, acting as conduits for social and political progression; 'The promise of a resurrected past through symbols and material objects gives us hope. For some it is a promise of redemption' (2005, p. 11).

Across Till's work there is frequent reference to Avery Gordon's *Ghostly Matters* (2008), acting as a theoretical underpinning to the study of a haunted Berlin. Like Till, Gordon forms her ghosts around trauma, loss and socio-political memory. Gordon describes a situation where ghosts mobilise memory. Haunting in order to educate, the ghost leads to an enquiry of place and history; it is as Gordon claims 'a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening' (2008, p. 08). A conceptualisation of the ghost, where a haunting informs us of the past of place, a biography of sorts, is to some extent a truism; though ghosts under this guise cannot speak to us of a future. If under such an abstraction the ghost is conceived as memory, then those spectres that haunt the present can only provide us with lessons in

history. Moreover, the spectre here never prophesises; it does not provide its audience with foresight. Rather, those who witness the ghost learn from society's previous mistakes in the same way an infant learns not to place its hand in hot water again after it has been scalded. The ghost as memory is reductive, it does not speak of a future for place nor does it deal with an ontology of the placial; at least not to the point where place is attributed autonomy in its substance. Both place and its ghosts are for Till (*ibid*), contracted to pure social construction. Failing to deal with the ontological make up of place leads one to the notion that haunting is secondary to place; an affective afterthought or by-product.

Enquiries into urban ruination, dereliction and waste can be seen to attempt a reclaiming of some of the space left open by memory-works. Edensor describes a land of industrial decay; places haunted by the very absence of their inhabitants and the mundane, mechanical performances they were designed to undertake (2005). Here, the fabric of place is accessed through the performance of the imagination. Edensor postulates that the fictional narratives that their (the ruined places) explorers ascribe to them enchant spaces of outmoded architecture. In this sense, place is constructed psychically, its ontology is developed not through social memory or factual history but through a fantastical past.

Concerned with perceptions of absence and the interrogation of urban abandonment, Edensor develops 'spectral networks' of architectural waste through the exposure of 'a series of disjunctions through which the past erupts in the present' (2008, p. 325). Ghosts as the product of waste are not restricted to industrial ruins or outmoded architecture. Hetherington (2001) claims that ghosts are waste themselves; ill disposed of remains of a commodity culture that haunt all corners of society. To this end, Hetherington describes a discourse of ghosts that is capable of bridging the gap between object and language. The ghost is the waste product of time, space and society and finds itself speaking through the statues and figurines that represent a previous conception of place, a *Phantasm Agora*. The *Phantasm Agora* provides a platform, on which the remnants of the past are able to inflict memory upon the present: anachronisms that speak.

Spectral geographies are undeniably centred upon memory-work in the city, whether recalled or re-imagined, and yet for memory to mobilise the spectre, one must acknowledge that a death has occurred, that a loss has taken place. Here, loss must be the starting point rather than end point of an analysis of place. The various readings of the spectral that have been taken into account so far do not so much deal with the concept of place as a result of death but purport to analyse place as the commemoration of death. Wylie (2008) states that place comes after haunting; that is to say that 'place' can only be made in those spaces inhabited by ghosts, those locations where 'open wounds' are pre-existing. This would suggest that '(h)aunted places are the only places people can live in' (de Certeau, 1988, p. 108).

In *Walking In The City* (1988) de Certeau visualizes a metropolis constructed of shifting layers of space. As strata shift, they fragment causing rupture and displacement in the urban landscape. The dislocation of space occurs through a process of destruction and redevelopment that places the buildings of the past alongside those of the present. This process forms a disarticulation of time that provides the cityscape with anachronisms; ghosts. The fracturing of the city gives rise to myriad histories, memories and perceptions of a present; visible and invisible structures of the city present themselves to the urban wanderer. These ruptures that de Certeau envisions are the ruptures that places are built upon. A reading of the city that deals with space as being constructed through loss sees ghosts as foundations; primordial elements of place making that have been used to negotiate and renegotiate the urban material landscape, rather than as the undesired leftovers of social entropy.

If the previously discussed writings have endeavoured to explore where and why ghosts exist, it has been through a shared trajectory in coming to an understanding of how hauntings are perceived, experienced and affective through ghosts. Ubiquitous in our understandings of space and time, '(g)hosts are much of what makes a space a place' (Mayerfeld Bell, 1997, p. 815). Working towards a 'phenomenology of the environment', Mayerfeld Bell (*ibid*) develops an understanding of ghosts that is not so reductive as to posit them as memory alone; moreover he does not seek to

place the ghost within the confines of the past. Rather, and in opposition to many of the previous conceptions, Mayerfeld Bell sees ghosts as transcendent; beings that connect past to present and present to future in a single turn. Through a series of case studies that deal with childhood holidays at sites of heritage, Mayerfeld Bell illustrates how ghosts are physically attached to place, that they are experiential rather than recalled. However, even those ghosts conjured by Mayerfeld Bell are brought forth from the conjecture of an underlying social construction; claiming that spectres, although intrinsically bound to the *genius* of place, are none the less fabricated or imagined entities '(t)hey may conjure up in places, but it is only people who can conjure them up' (1997, p. 831).

The materialisation of ghosts, albeit imaginarily derived, is a notion scrutinised in Holloway and Kneale's analysis of the *séance* (2008). During the *séance*, the ghost is registered through the conjuration and movement of physical objects; the 'tipping of tables', production of ectoplasm, flower petals and ghostly limbs. Rather than a recollection or imagined memory, the materialisation of the spectre is seen to displace our understanding of materiality, of time and of place. Things are no longer in their place, they are rendered uncanny by the spirit, 'lending an *uncanny affordance* to material geographies' (Holloway and Kneale, 2008, p. 304). Furthermore, this mobilisation of the uncanny has significant implications for the affective qualities of place. The *séance* creates a rupture in time-space; it calls for the immaterial to materialise, to shift objects, to both tip and tap tables and to corporealise the spectral through the body of the medium. The *séance* permits ghosts to disrupt place, to change the perception of place, to render the everyday uncanny and to register fear and anxiety in those that sit around the table. It would seem unlikely that the material objects of Edensor's ruins or Till's memory-work possess the same ability to spectrally embody place as those that are transformed through the *séance*. The *séance* calls for a suspension of belief and a willingness to succumb to the unknown affect of the *genius loci* that memory alone does not require. One might suggest that the wounds of the city are opened through a Spiritualist

investigation into the urban place. Additionally, the séance dictates that place be haunted before its becoming, that haunting *is* a prerequisite to place.

It should be noted that there exists a variety of methodologies lending themselves to an investigation of the spectral. Psychic practice in the form of the séance is but one method of detecting the spectral qualities of place, memory-work another; the analysis of trauma, grief and the urban anachronism supplying further complexity to an understanding of ghosts. One of the main criticisms of many spectro-geographical works is that they do not deal with the experiential, the liminal aspects of haunted places. Here psychogeography lends itself to the investigation of spectrality. Psychogeography aims to discover the specific effects of the environment, consciously or unconsciously organised, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals (Debord, 1955). Psychogeography sets itself the task of experiencing place and therefore experiencing ghosts.

Rodinsky's Room (2000) sees psychogeographical accounts of East London, specifically dealing with the spectral in a lost synagogue on Prinlet Street, Brick Lane. Lichtenstein and Sinclair delve into the ghostly remains of David Rodinsky, a caretaker of the Prinlet Street synagogue who mysteriously disappeared in the late 1960s (*ibid*). Through the forgotten space of Rodinsky's room, Lichtenstein and Sinclair reconstruct the once inhabited chamber through both psychic engagement with place, photography and the delineation of local histories. The authors map their own understanding of Rodinsky's existence upon his now derelict abode. Sinclair systematically employs his own version of psychogeography to drift throughout London, constructing alternative cartographies of the city by being drawn to its more arcane histories (see also *Lud Heat* (1998), *Downriver* (2004), *White Chappell*, *Scarlet Tracings* (2004)).

However, despite its ability to 'investigate the marginal and the vanished through the language of lost inheritance and ghostly debt' (Luckhurst, 2000, p. 529), psychogeography fails to deal with the evidential; instead it purports to form truths from abstractions, led through the subjectivity formed by the individual's unconscious. Yet, even the more conventional form of participatory research seen in ethnographic

investigations of the spectral, fall short of providing an objective understanding of haunted places. Sandhu's *Night Haunts* (2007) provides a subjective account of the ghostly nature of London in darkness. Holding a torch up to the more sinister or forgotten practices of the city, Sandhu describes a landscape of night creatures that lurk in the shadows of London's night time; the marginal inhabitants of London that exist only as nocturnal entities. The ghostly figures of *Night Haunts* are not in the least bit paranormal, moreover, they are the practitioners of the mundane; security guards, cleaners and mini-cab drivers. Sandhu, borrowing from the same linguistic trope as Pile, Till and Edensor, uses the language of ghosts to conjure a spectral landscape but without dealing with the *spirit* of place. Instead the reader is provided with not memories, but a series of first hand accounts and interviews that are laden with the hyperbolic designs of establishing a contrived haunted city.

Place has undergone many attempts by scholars to be conceived of as spectral; the work of memory, grief and trauma can be said to cause ruptures in the urban landscape, allowing the permeation of the past in the present. Dereliction and ruination leave material fragments of history behind; fragments that conjure their own ghostly narratives, imagined memories that enchant space. Phantasmagoria sees the city become 'ghostly' through the flux of commodities and municipal development; geographies of literature have drawn upon the arcane, the isolated and the obliterated landscapes of fictional representation to assign spectres to place (Matless, 2008; Wylie, 2007, 2008). Although attempts have been made to engage with the affective nature of haunted spaces, there appears to be an obvious void in the literature willing to employ spectrality as an analytical tool of ontology in place, the absence or fragmentation of *Being* in the haunted locale.

Nevertheless, such contestation remains as to not only, what the ghost is, but in how it should be investigated so that the practice of deconstructing and analysing spectral geographies remains turbulent ground. Approaches to understanding the nature of hauntings are as diverse as the spirits that manifest within them; from aural histories and recorded memory practice (Pinder, 2001) to ethnoarcheology (Sabot, 2007) and memory-work to urban

exploration. An analysis of place, in regards to haunting, should by all means seek to employ multidisciplinary investigation; ethnographic, visual and critical approaches to spectral geographies and work as a single unified response to the affect of the *genius loci*, the *geist* of place.

Furthermore, with Holloway and Kneale's explication of the séance as the exception, spectral geographers have failed to deal with the supposed 'real' ghosts of haunted places. Instead, privileging the metaphorical ghosts of memory, loss and social trauma. It would appear that in determining whether or not place can be haunted, as a precondition or as a side effect of death (actual or virtual); geographers have neglected to deal with the supernatural proper. Given the significant rise in the popularity of ghost-hunting (Holloway, 2010), dark tourism (Inglis and Holmes, 2003), and the Spiritualist revival over the past decade, it emerges that the ghosts that have been silenced by spectral geographies are the ones making the greatest impact on both place and place making.

(Im)materializing things: In light of absence

Exploring parageographies means to be first and foremost engaging with sites that can be excavated, where concealed or absent bodies can be exhumed. In this sense, ghost hunting or paranormal investigation seeks to work with absences; to draw conclusions from the things that are known to be missing; people, tools, voices, movements etc. To be sure, the parageographical is always as much to do with absence as it is presence. One is speculative of the reality that they encounter; an experience of a physical place is predicated upon an understanding, a perceived relationality, between the observer and the observed. Parageographies stand contra such a perspective, forming places where the absence of entities populates a location and allowing it to be surveyed as a space replete with tears and fissures in its make up. Parageographies are the spaces where absences are called forth to perform. Of paramount interest here is the tension that exists between materiality and immateriality at such sites.

If there is to be any involvement with the spectral in this chapter then it is surely to be at this point. Ghostly interventions, that is to say a haunting or the potentiality of a ghostly manifestation, are greatly dependent upon the psychical projection of emotion or affect of a witnessing body upon space and its various material offerings. I offer an example: a rocking chair swings slowly back and forth in an empty room. Who moves the chair? We are unsure. We would not assume that the chair has the autonomous agency to move itself. What is presented here then is the question of who moves the chair? We might believe the chair to be rocking not of its own accord but because of some agency external to the chair's physical existence. That is to say, someone or something is moving the chair. We do not need to know what acted as the impetus for the movement; the readers can imagine for themselves what they might determine as the exterior cause for such an action as a chair rocking by itself.

Let us problematise the situation further with an addition; the chair is swinging (apparently) of its own accord as in the first situation, but let there be a small doll resting in the chair as it gently sways to and fro. Now, does the doll rock the chair? Certainly not. This we consider to be as improbable as the chair moving itself. However, a spectral or paranormal account might speculate further that there is still someone or something absent from the scenario; an absence that is perhaps present but not available to our vision. The mind might wander to suggest what such an absence might be - the spirit of a child or the spiritual manifestation of a nursemaid perhaps. There are myriad imaginings that could be entwined within this sketch, depending upon the age of the chair, the doll, the physical surroundings etc. To be sure though, within a parageographical framework, it is the performance of the immaterial, of the absent, that formulates or rather that predicates, a positioning of spectral agency in the relationality between people and objects. When the above scenario occurs in a place that is of known phenomena, an existing ghostly narrative, then the relationship between observer and moving object is enveloped by the spectre further still. An understanding of, or an engagement with, the absent-presence or present-absence is heightened when we add to the situation that the rocking chair is

situated within a Victorian nursery and that the doll belonged to a child who died of consumption at the same house. In such an analysis we might project further meaning onto the objects; perhaps the child continues to reside in the room somehow, for whatever reason. The plausibility of such a scenario is of no import; the haunted rocking chair is a figure that crops up in a number of ghost stories and it is rather more about how we chose to frame the experience than what the causation for it might be. What matters, at least for an analysis of parageographies, is that there is potential for such spectrally indebted occasionings to occur, that there are places where ghosts are more likely to be witnessed than others. Moreover, that there are materialities at work which can be used to position a place as paranormally active; the word 'active' again indicating a relational agency to things, present and absent.

Such a model of thinking seeks, perhaps unintentionally, to pervert the basic revelations of phenomenological thinking; that is applying a subset of rules to the philosophical enquiry of the relational perspective between human and object that makes up our view of the world. In this (para)phenomenology, we are able to enquire beyond what is visually perceived, to speculate as to what the mobilisation of the ever-present absence (the ghost) is. The parageography or haunted situation then, is to be explained through an understanding of the relationality between man, the material (presence) and the immaterial (absence).

The architecture of hauntology

Throughout this chapter I have made reference to the increasing number of geographers who have turned their attention to the spectral in its various guises; from Pile's Benjaminian 'ghostly cities' (Pile 2005), replete with phantasmagoric flows of drifting commuters and laden with anachronistic monuments conjuring the past from beyond, to John Wylie's (2008) account of the spectral landscapes of W.G. Sebald. Not to mention the various endeavours of uniting haunting, place and politics seen in the likes of Edensor (2006), Hetherington (2001), Holloway and Kneale (2008), Matless (2008) and Till (2005). Holloway interrogates organized ghost tours and

their capacity for generating what is termed in his paper as 'infrastructures of enchantment' (2010) setting to work the foundations of parageographies; making use of data gathered from a series of ten organized ghost hunts in way of introducing types of haunted places and the commercial practices of interacting with a (perceived) haunting that occurs within them.

With Holloway being the exception, ghost hunters scarcely attain so much as a whisper of a mention in the works of spectral geography. Is it then, that hunting ghosts is itself non-geographical? Certainly not. Ghosts occur in places and geography is thus fundamental to their existence. The ghost is an anachronism; its presence extends beyond a singular moment in history. A spectre permeates the past and present causing a delineation of history. Existence, a being-in-the-world, is as much about time as it is about place (Heidegger, 2003); the ghost provides a perverse bastardisation of such this *being-in*, it persists to dwell in places and times it should not naturally exist. Ghost stories tell of places, spaces, dwellings, sites and situations where hauntings occur. The ghost occupies, albeit temporarily, a physical location. So might it be the case then, that to deal with ghosts is to deal with something that is in fact nothing; nothing insofar as the ghost proper is but the presence of absence? Where does one begin in describing a practice that seeks to deal with absence? Herein lays the problem. A suggested route, or trajectory, to follow in working towards an understanding of parageographies might be that of analysing the interrelations between materiality and immateriality, presence and absence, as has been aforementioned in this chapter. A second course of action might be to follow what could be what we have termed previously as *hauntology*.

Hauntology demonstrates a twofold approach to place. Firstly through a Heideggerian objected ontology that is predisposed to understanding place as in a perpetual process of unveiling. A part of place is always absent from our perception and therefore we are never truly able to know a place. Rather place imposes upon us a sense of familiarity that can be revoked at anytime, engendering the enchantment process. Secondly, we can use hauntology to describe the way we experience place as a reiterated memorialised spatiality.

However, reading place as hauntological does not necessarily equate to the type of haunting that is traditionally considered as ghostly. There needs to be another part of the process and so here I refer back to this process we call the monumentalisation of place. By accepting that places exist not as ordered and independent but layered, jumbled and distorted, then we can move into a discussion of the ways in which a place might be made sense of as temporally stratified. It is time that truly defines the ghost, not place. As described previously, place can only exist within time, now if time itself is knowable only through stages or layers, then so too is place. Ghosts can appear in the fissures of these layers, where cracks appear due to the ill disposed remnants of the past. Some places have far more obvious remains than others. For instance, ruins are the physical remainders of the past; though indeed, all manner of anachronisms act as disjuncture between temporal strata; graveyards, signposts, period buildings, monuments, henges, disused pathways.

Places become problematised then, not only by their inability to be independent of other places and memory but also in the way that they exist among a multiplicity of timescapes. People make sense of places by simultaneously locating them in memory and comparing these memorialised sites to other places, positioning them within time. Where a rupture occurs the process becomes more difficult and making sense of place becomes a confusing procedure. Dylan Trigg (2006) uses the example of ruins as a conduit through which to explore modes of nostalgia and decay. Trigg claims that ruins act as monuments and monuments in turn provide places whereby 'memories are preserved through representation' (p. 59). Places that become monumentalised, are understood through a self referential system that sees them relate back to not only a historical context of loss - of something requiring remembrance - but also through a permeation of past-present boundaries. The dead represented by a cenotaph are not the quiet dead of those fallen on the battlefields of the twentieth century, they are a lively dead, an assemblage of speaking ghosts that have been provided with a new place in which to dwell (Pile, 2005). The memorial is then, not merely a representation but a trace; a trace of an event or a person that becomes the

appendage of a usually unconnected place. Nonetheless, the monument connects to the moment or people that pre-existed its becoming, no matter where it is placed. Therefore the monument or trace ensures that a particular contextual framework for remembering occurs; 'Remembering the experience testifies to the trace that remains' (Trigg, 2006, p. 59).

Hauntology, as an analytical framework, offers a coherent method in which to deconstruct geographies that can be placed outside the realms of what are considered normal experientialisms, the parageographical. As a companion to the analysis of both the genealogy and spirit of place; hauntology then, ensures a comprehensive approach to sites of historical import, it enframes the subject within a process of transgression, a movement through or beyond tenses and boundaries and allows for such a movement to occur as part of the natural order of things. This is important if we are to recognise the intrinsic value of haunting in the construction of place; the ever present absence that pervades our perception of certain places, manufacturing a presentimental experience of sorts. That is to say, a premonition, an advanced understanding that even our very own occupation of place, our role within it, will one day also be reduced to nothing more than a series of absences, ghosts. Thus ghosts are set to work, absence coerced into performance.

Discussions of the hauntological nature of place lend themselves to the formulation of a parageography. However, it is not in the least bit of interest to maintain any sense of poetic or semantic symmetry in the revision of absence's role in placial experiences of haunting. Rather it is the case that place and its (im)materialities are brought to life by absence, animated by revenant agency, placing the paranormal within an ontological framework that accounts for the simultaneous return and apparitional debut of place; its memories, its trauma, its vicissitudes (Buse and Stott, 1999). To return to the ghost hunter then, parageographies make for a rich topology of ghostly interventions, sites where a deep archaeology can be practiced, where absence can be conjured into performance. This next section seeks to describe how such notions of hauntological absences, that is, the things

missing from a place, are permitted to return through the practices of the paranormal investigator.

Ghosts are problematic; they are entities made manifest through a set of oppositional themes; being and non-being, absence and presence, life and death, past and present, benign and malevolent. Ghosts can also be cryptic, they occlude, obscure and unsettle. They are the descriptive term for those things made present by their absence which lurk and linger in the shadows of our peripheries and which create a rupture in our experience of space and of time. But ghosts are not only purveyors of problems; they are, as we have seen, integral to an understanding of place, of history and of the interrelation between these two concepts. The contradistinctive nature of the ghost is one we face in all places, at one time or another. Paranormality is geo-oriented, earthbound, site specific; it is parageographical. What we might call here then, the parageographical, a basis for the phenomenology of the haunted landscape, might best be expressed through its workings as ghosts in places. Much is to be gained through deconstructing instances of haunting as lived experience.

The triangulation of perception, materiality and immateriality set forth in haunting, leads to a collection of nuanced experiences which we might describe as ghosts but the term ghost here should not be seen as the limitation of affect in this process. Like Harman's objects, the ghost itself is irreducible to affect alone. To be sure, although certain types of places might lend themselves more easily to the haunted situation - old buildings, graveyards, public houses, battlefields - as anachronic sites that are out of time and place by their very nature, hauntings are not limited to these sites. Indeed, our perception of place as primarily located in memory would suggest then that all places have the ability to bring forth ghosts.

The examples I now offer in this chapter are attempts at concretising the parageographical, showing how haunted places are used for alternative engagements with heritage (and tourism) and further elaborating on some of the practices involved in the workings of spectral sites. One of the things I want to emphasise here is that there are different motivations for individuals 'hunting' or investigating ghosts and that different places and spaces are used

in myriad ways. Furthermore, that engagements with ghosts do far less in the uncovering of the supernatural than they do in unveiling the hidden workings of place; its strange affects and the shaping of our thinking of a place based history, its biography if you will. The case studies set out here function more as a coder for the parageographical traced out hitherto, elucidating how one arrives at the conclusion that place exists hauntologically, and why then that there is a certain uniformity to experiences of place as haunted.

Waverley Abbey: performing absence and absence performing



Fig. iii *Waverley Abbey from the Northern Boundary.* Taken by author.

The following work has been derived from twenty three separate investigations of Waverley Abbey ruins, a former ecclesiastical site that rests a few miles outside of the M25 orbital motorway which circumvents the city of Greater London. The subsequent writing is a composite piece; produced as such for both the necessity of the reader via a process of reduction and distillation of the necessary information relating to the research gathered, and also due to my own inclination to maintain a strong narrative without the need for annotative interjections. In doing so, I offer a descriptive account of performative engagements with the site that took place over a period of eighteen months. Each trip to the site led to the meeting and informal

interview of sets of different individuals, no two trips produced the same research subjects which I interpret as a sign for the varied and widespread belief in the haunted narrative of the ruins themselves. There is also a particularity in the type of investigation that was held at this site that sets it apart from the work that will be laid out in the second example. The particular nature of the practice I refer to here is based upon the groups and individuals that I happened to meet at Waverley conducting ad hoc investigations, usually a spare of the moment decision to follow up on the locally developed ghostlore or with very little forward planning. The people practicing paranormal investigation within the ruined walls were doing so on an amateur level and without any commercial gain, they did so in order to uncover what secrets the place was so supposed to hold and often out of the pleasure of engaging with a historic site under the cover of darkness. What the site offers then, is a distinct vista into how a natural curiosity, a drive within people to explore the mysterious, leads to a rediscovery of place as both a retainer of memory and of hidden and complex agency.

Waverley Abbey

In the late summer of 2008 I stumbled across the ruins of Waverley Abbey, a large complex of flint walls and crumbling masonry that rise from a quiet area of grassland just south of the B3001 byroad in rural Surrey, UK. I say stumbled upon, as *my* discovery of the ruins was entirely coincidental; the rest of that day had been spent driving through picturesque country villages in an attempt to navigate the local vicinity of an area I had but recently moved to. It was around 9.30pm by the time I found the ruins and this was only on account of needing to take a break from the four hours of driving I had already undertaken. A small brown road sign marking heritage at a sharp left hand turn seemed an adequate and interesting stopping point in the journey. I followed the sign a short distance along a driveway signalling Waverley Abbey House, and parked the car amongst a slight clearing of trees by the side of the road, in the company of two or three other vehicles.

Temporarily abandoning the car, I passed through kissing gates into a meadow bordered by a river to the right hand side. Beyond the water there lay a large and illustrious manor house, and to the far end of my path the skeletal remains of the old abbey. As the sunlight began to wane, there was to be made out, a series of flickering, torch beams hitting the ruined walls; fracturing the all encompassing darkness that was beginning to take hold of the evening landscape. Having seen the parked cars beside my own, it did not appear too extraordinary that there were lights emitting from within the abbey complex and so I continued to tread through the now sodden grass trackway towards the area of interest. As I arrived at the entry to the ruins proper I saw what appeared to be a séance taking place under a partially covered area of the abbey ruins. It appeared I had wanted into a ghost hunt.

Built in 1128AD, Waverley Abbey lies some 20 miles south west of central London just beyond the Surrey town of Farnham. The abbey was the first to be built for the Cistercian order in Britain; its construction being founded by the then Bishop of Winchester, William Giffard. Waverley underwent dissolution during the English Reformation, prior to this the abbey had played home to some two thousand Cistercian monks for over four centuries (Waverleyabbeyhouse.org). Over the centuries, disuse and neglect have seen Waverley fall into ruination. Now situated opposite the grounds of a conference centre that was formerly Waverley Abbey House, the ruins are surrounded by forest and marshland with a slim but extensive lake to the Northern boundary. Indeed, the ruins cast a foreboding and isolated atmosphere upon those who chose to visit. The site is entirely reliant upon natural lighting and save the 18th Century manor house that lay opposite at the far side of the waters, there is no other sign of occupation. It is widely rumoured in the area that after the dissolution of the abbey, stones were removed from the buildings walls to aid in the construction of the manor house on the other side of the lake. The two structures juxtaposed against this desolate rural setting, make for eerie companions; both looming out of

the plains that fall amongst the Surrey Hills. The location of the site is but a couple of miles from Farnham itself, however the feeling or sense of the place is one of abandonment. Half a century of neglect has seen nature have its way with the surviving remnants of the abbey; the manor house opposite being built just far enough away from the ruins, with the addition of the lake between, to be beyond connection with the site.

The artificial lighting falters when attempting to bridge the water, the ruins remain in darkness. When visiting at night, torchlight is the only way to gain vistas over the abbey, seldom are the nights when the moon reflects enough light to navigate the ruins.



Figure iv *Aerial photograph of Waverley Abbey, Google Earth. Annotations by author.*

Few walls remain fully intact, though enough of the abbey exists to provide the visitor with a good indication of the structure's former existence. Now managed by *English Heritage*, Waverley has been provided with a small number of information plaques to assist in forming a historical context in which to view the ruins. However, it is not the history offered by English Heritage that attracts the individuals with whom this project is concerned, rather it is those who seek to engage with the site's more spectral offerings. The enclosed, rural location of the abbey ruins, mobilises feelings of isolation

and discomfort, stirring the imagination to project wild phantasmagorias upon the medieval masonry that stands solitarily against the backdrop of deep woodland and rising hills.



Fig. v *The South wall.* Taken by author

Such a coming together of outmoded, derelict architecture and nature gives rise to an enchanted landscape. It is no wonder then, that Waverley Abbey is a much-frequented site for those who seek the spirits of history, moreover who hunt its ghosts.

Waverley's turbulent past and the subsequent dissolution of Catholicism in Britain aid in the processes of mythmaking and mysticism at this site of ruination. Large sections of the monk's dormitories penetrate the earth, some still forming three walled enclosures. These are the places where the habitus of an ill-fated group of individuals took place. It is perhaps the mundane nature of the monk's existence; prayer, work; sleep; that come together to create a sense of the ordinary that is surpassed by the very

atmosphere of the place or building itself. This sense of the mundane, the vernacular, is what forms the basis of a haunting at the ruins. It is the future-present absence of this mundanity that allows previous acts of habitus to be recalled as ghosts (Sobol, 2007, p. 30). There is nothing intrinsically extraordinary or beyond normative where the life of a monk is concerned; it is both a solitary and transparent way of living. Such a lifestyle is reflected in the secluded location of the abbey, a mimicking of the introverted, singular existence of the monks who had previously inhabited the structure. From where then, might this sense of a haunted or occulted history of the structure arise? Certainly, holy ground is conducive to the heterotopic; a marginal place on which liminal practices, ceremonies and traditions occur (Foucault, 1987). Furthermore, sites such as churches and cemeteries act simultaneously as heterochronies; places where loss of life and notions of eternity are concurrently bound up with each other (*ibid*, p.24). Waverley Abbey is therefore worthy of parageographical analysis.

Ghostly Interventions

Some eighteen months after I had first become acquainted with the ruins at Waverley I made the decision to return, at night time, prepared to conduct an investigation of the site on my own, in what was now early March. My first encounter with ghost hunters at the ruins had sparked an interest in me; *what* was it that these people were engaging with, how might they be experiencing the ruins differently to myself, what made the ruins appear haunted to them? Having previously taken part in some organised investigations of other haunted locations with paranormal investigation groups, I was familiar with what tools would be needed to explore the ruins supposed haunting. Generally speaking, the basic equipment required by the contemporary ghost hunter includes a torch, dictaphone, digital camera, notebook, pen and some trigger objects. The trigger object is usually a coin or a cross; something that can be deposited, traced in situ and then left to observe any possible movements as well as being easily recognisable to any spirit folk. Arriving at the ruins after nightfall was paramount; the absence of

light is intrinsic to the investigation of haunted sites, or so other investigators had informed me. There is much speculation as to why the spirit world holds a closer affinity to night than day, the most logical reason is that night time generally makes for a quieter, less busy space and therefore providing a more practical platform on which to observe anomalies (Gooch, 1978).

I pulled into the English Heritage car park just after 11.30pm and again, there were other cars already parked as there had been on my first visit. Immediately excited about the prospect of running into other paranormal enthusiasts, I gathered my equipment from the vehicle and hastily made my way through the gates and alongside the banks of the water to the entrance of the abbey ruins. Strobing lights from what I could make out as the old refectory building, confirmed that I was in luck. I started walking, fairly slowly at this point, through the frost bitten grasses to the source of the lighting whereby I was joined quite abruptly, and from what seemed like out of nowhere, by a tall bearded man and two teenage boys who proceeded question me about what I was looking for. With some reluctance I responded to the queries that were put to me; it seemed that there were two ghost hunting groups out on this occasion and that the man who had (in some sense) greeted me, belonged to one of them, feeling obliged to enquire as to what I was up to 'lurking about in the ruins at night'. Apparently there had been trouble with vandalism at the ruins and those who frequent the ruins in search of ghosts like to monitor the situation whilst they are present, acting as a deterrent of sorts.

Having explained my intentions of exploring the abbey remains, I was invited to join the man and his co-investigators for the rest of the evening. I spent around two hours in complete darkness; the only sounds to be heard were the chattering of teeth as we trembled in the winter night. Phantom like plumes of exhalation came spiralling above us, disappearing into the ether. But there appeared to be no ghosts, nothing in the least bit paranormal. However, the stories being told whilst we waited for the spectres to appear, implied a very real reliance upon the fractured materiality of the ruins, a space on which to project the absent phantoms. A Yew clinging to a tombstone-like foundation stone was described as 'the hanging tree', a tunnel

that led past the main atrium of the abbey was where voices were said to whisper, emanating from unseen bodies. The old refectory area, the most complete and most 'haunted' area of the remaining structure was where the monks were reported to be lingering in spirit form. The tales I heard did much to form a more complete sense of the haunted history of the abbey, a hauntscape (Sabol, 2007, pp. 129-130), a site replete with much reported activity. However, the momentum of the investigation appeared to lose steam and amounted to what had been little more than an attempt to generate a climate of fear through the telling of ghost stories; reporting on the terrible things that had happened in the past, the things seen and reported by others in which to encourage a sense of uneasiness.

At around 2am, the group bid me farewell; apparently unperturbed by the lack of activity at the ruins, it was insisted that they would return at a later date for a second round of investigations. At this point it was decided that the rest of the evening would be spent with the second group of investigators in the refectory area. Making my way over to the enclosed ruins of the fraternity, the silhouettes of five investigators could be made out in the darkness. The area was less noisy than it has been earlier in the evening, lit by only a single torch whose beam flittered across and between the abbey walls. Approaching this section of ruins it appeared that luck was once again on my side, and as had been the case on my first visit, the team were busy making preparations for a Ouija board; a popular but controversial method of spirit divination.

The team of five, who told me that their investigative group had originated from the Portsmouth area in the south of the UK, enquired of my experiences hitherto. 'Nothing to report', I answered, '*That's about to change*' replied the only female investigator of the team, with an unnerving certainty in her voice. Unlike the first group I had worked with on this night, the latter investigation appeared to be far more thorough, rigorous in their approaches to exploring the space. The team made little attempts in the way of introductions; rather, they were focused on the task at hand; conjuring spectres and recording peripheral activity. Portable motion detectors were set up by the entrance to the abbey's frater house; this would sound an alarm

if something or someone broke the beam that had formed between the two small plastic boxes. Dictaphones were turned on and strategically placed on the windowsill and the table that had been erected on which to perform the Ouija. An infrared thermometer was used to take base temperature readings of the walls, floor and table surrounding the site of divination. A video camera was set to roll. A crucifix placed upon paper was left on the floor by the fireplace as a trigger object. Photographs were taken of every aspect so as to gauge a pre-communication picture of the site.



Fig. vi *Amateur paranormal investigators conduct séance in the Southern dorms. Taken by author.*

When all was in place, three of the investigators sat down around the table. The wind had gathered over the evening and the atmosphere was unsettling even before the divination had begun. I was invited to join the circle but insisted that in the interests of research I needed to play more of an observational role in the conjuration. The lights were again turned down, save one small torch that was used to light the table. The table itself now had an upturned glass resting upon the top with each of the investigators having placed a single finger tip upon its base in the hope that energy of a spectral nature could be channelled through their material bodies and used to move

the glass in response to questions. I stood to the side, taking photos as I watched the glass spinning around the table as if of its own accord, darting to letters placed around the tabletop with such urgency that it seemed as though whatever the impetus for the mobilisation of the glass mouthpiece was, it certainly had a message of great import to relay. At this point I should perhaps make clear that I was entirely sceptical of the situation; I held no concrete belief in the afterlife prior to my observations at Waverley and continue to hold no belief in such things now. Nonetheless, what I experienced that night was, in any case, paranormal. It was beyond what could be described as an everyday occurrence. Something, or rather *nothing*, was apparently generating answers to questions put forward by the group; an absence was called forth, engendering an 'intertwining of the material with the immaterial' (Holloway and Kneale, 2008, p. 303).

As the divination went on, it felt as though the temperature in the ruins had dropped; the trails of breath seemingly stood frozen in mid air. The three who sat around the table continued to call out to what seemed like the building itself, the glass would almost instantly move in response. Twigs could be heard snapping underfoot in the surrounding darkness, disembodied voices were carried upon the now chilling breeze and whistled through to us from the paneless windows. This could have been the set of any horror movie or indeed the foundation of a new ghost story; that moment right before something jumps out. But, the point is that nothing did jump out. In fact, the event was all quite charming, perplexing yet still somehow romantic all the same.

Questions had been asked regarding the nature of the absent or spirit person the Ouija was in conversation with; enquiries into the age, gender, cause of death, current year for the deceased, their intentions, their ability to spell out our names using the glass, whether they possessed the ability to move the trigger object. Through communing with the spirit of the abbey place, its *genius loci*, the group had formed a new history to the site; whether real or imagined, a neo-narrative pertaining to the abbey's past had been generated, a presence had been conjured forth from the depths of the ruin's absence(s); its absent inhabitants; habitus; light; sounds; smells; purpose, its

perceived absent vitality. Something had been created from nothing. The ghosts encountered that night did not however present themselves without human intervention, this is for sure. The first instance, in the beginning of the evening had revolved around sitting and waiting for something to happen, and although the stories told heightened the sense of haunting, of being haunted, they did little in the way of manifesting anything other than a slightly more acute awareness of our surroundings. What haunted spaces, parageographies need in order to allow their spectres to appear, is a rather more specific *modus operandi*; a set of practices that are geared towards communing with place and its immaterial qualities. To be sure, ghosts may present themselves in places, but they need people there in order to be presented (Mayerfeld Bell, 1997). Parageographies, like those referred to in the divination at Waverley abbey, are geographies of performance, moreover, they are places where absence is allowed to perform, where the immaterial is provided with an existential grounding, a corporeal body through which to speak and interact with.

Communication via the Ouija had thrown up a plethora of interesting responses to the ruins; it had formed a method of communication not just amongst people but with the place itself, moreover, with the past of the place. The conjuration of spirit led to further manifestation when two of the investigators reported that the third member's face had transfigured into that of a monk whilst seated at the table. Whether or not monks have a particularity about their features was not a discussion that came to surface that night, rather the incident led to further and more introspective monitoring of the temperature and vibration changes that emanated from around the table and glass platform. For all intents and purposes, the material facets of the investigation served their purpose; they had materialised an absence, called it fourth and coerced it into performance. The transfigured man, whose face remained the same throughout in the photographs taken of the process, seemingly acted as the conduit through which the history of the ruins could be revitalised. The abbey, in its entirety, became an affective space via the Ouija. The role of embodiment throughout the performance was one of great significance; the body played an essential

part in gathering the absences together, in understanding and translating them into a language of haunting, without the body the absence belonging to the ruins could not perform, could not be called forth. Ouija boards and séances call for a reciprocal relationship between the material and immaterial, indeed the realization of the practice is reliant upon such a relationship having been met (Holloway, 2006).

Ouija boards and séances are a common tool of the field; the circle formed requires silence, patience and concentration in order for communication with spirit to take place. Such divination takes place in supposedly haunted locations to call forth absence, to fill the chasm that exists between the past and the present. My witnessing of such techniques within the abbey ruins at Waverley has underpinned my belief that ghost hunters and indeed ghost lore, provide a space in which the theatrics of absence can be practiced.

The investigation of the ruins concluded shortly before daybreak, by this time the Ouija had been retired and one of the team had opted for an attempt at automatic writing; a practice which involves ‘tuning in’ to one’s surroundings and allowing the spirits to communicate through hand, pen and paper. This had failed to raise any further significant information about the ruins, their past, or the spirit that had previously presented itself at the table. However, what is interesting here is the ability to psychically engage with a place, to allow it to speak for itself. Perhaps this more general sense of absent-presence that pervades a place, that retains this sense of lost or missing entities could be described as the *genius loci* then. It is the set of spectral affects that purports the enchanted ecology of a haunted place, thus creating the parageography.

The scribblings on the sheets of paper that had come through from the writing experiment were little more than that, scribblings, and yet, they were arguably engendered from this missing thing that belonged to the ruins. This is not to suggest that a ghost or spirit actuated the response of the pen on paper, though perhaps it did, but rather the very idea of the missing, the absent, led to a material intervention; a feeling that something needed to be said that had not yet been spoken. In other words, such a hauntological

engagement with place as this, requires bodies in order to make sense of the immaterial offerings that are to be explored, excavated, analysed as part of its experientiality.

As I helped the group to pack up and made my way back to the car park, I had the distinct feeling that something had been animated that night; a new vitality permeated the building, at least for the group and I it had done. Such affect had been mobilized by our actions, by six individuals, five participants and one observer, abetting the performance of absence. The ruins were no richer, physically speaking, than they had been on our arrival but all were in agreement that experiences were had that lay beyond the normative; superfluous perhaps in any commonplace interaction with place but profound when contextualised with the events of that night.

The Ghost Club: apropos the appropriation of ghosts

In addition to the ad hoc investigations that took place in the ruins, I also conducted research with paranormal exploratory group, The Ghost Club. The Ghost Club (GC) are a membership based, amateur led society who perform investigations at either sites where they have been invited to do so by the proprietor, or sites of notoriety in ghostlore where they seek to validate claims of supernatural disturbances. The reasoning behind working with an organisation as opposed to ad hoc movements alone, was to ascertain whether or not the experiences of a haunted site that were gained through serious investigation were approximate to those which could be had through employing mysticism and occult practice on a individualised basis. Moreover, how might a haunting being encountered differently through a more rational methodology? What might an organised and well prepared investigation do differently to an off the cuff encounter with a Ouija board? Would both result in a similar reading of the biography of place?

To begin with the approach to a site was different. Where the visitors of Waverley Abbey arrived with a pre-existing notion that the site was haunted and were looking for the ghosts to reveal themselves, the GC would begin with a far more neutral understanding of a site. For the ad hoc group

there would be the expectation that either something or nothing would happen, with the former building a case in favour of the existence of ghosts and the latter working in opposition. In the case of the GC, the site would be under far more scrutiny and I would suggest, the haunting process itself more open to an unbiased deconstruction. The purpose of any GC investigation was to explain phenomena rather than to surmise as to its origin and this, as I shall discuss, makes a notable difference in how the parageographical comes to be unveiled.

The Ghost Club

The Ghost Club is a 'members only' group who conduct investigations into haunting and paranormal phenomena across the United Kingdom. The club was founded in 1862 and claims to be 'the oldest organisation in the world associated with psychical research' (Gearing [online], 2005). Its former members list is impressive to say the least, boasting Charles Dickens, W. B. Yeats and Harry Price who was the founding member of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research (Ghost Club 2012). The Ghost Club manifesto states that their 'prime interest is that of paranormal phenomena associated with ghosts and haunting' (Gearing [online], 2005), they are a non-profit organisation that holds regular overnight investigations into supposedly haunted locations. The Ghost Club runs by charging a minimal annual membership fee (£30 at the time of writing) that provides the member with quarterly newsletters, full access to the club's website database and a place at the Ghost Club's monthly meeting which always has the appearance of a guest speaker; normally an expert in the field of parapsychology or a writer on ghosts and ghostlore. The group's website states that membership is open to the 'genuinely open-minded, curious, and interested sceptic' and 'any academic or scientist with an interest in (paranormal) research' (Ghost Club, 2012). In making this statement the GC attempts to position itself as driven by academic interest and as such is emancipated from the legend-tripping (Holloway, 2010) which occurs across the UK's network of tour based pay-per-scare venues. The Ghost Club is then,

not only the oldest ghost hunting group, but also – as it proclaims - a research based one, which would perhaps mean an entirely different set of practices to those I had previously encountered.

In order to undertake investigations with the GC, one must first register as a member. This is done through an extended online questionnaire, nineteen questions and a disclaimer, which aim to determine your value as a potential member, some examples of which are replicated below;

- *Have you any scientific/technical expertise which could provide useful during an investigation?*
- *Are you knowledgeable about specific periods in history or events?*
- *Please name any periodicals/publications concerned with the paranormal that you read regularly*
- *A notable number of "hauntings" involve religious figures such as monks, nuns, etc. Do you have any knowledge or connection with any religious orders or any particular religion?*
- *Do you have any knowledge of specialist languages such as Old English, Latin, Ancient Greek, etc.?*

(Ghost Club, 2012)

The focus is very much on what you as an individual can offer the club and this, in addition to the membership fee, aids in discouraging people from joining for a cheap scare. The GC aimed to be taken seriously and the questions posed in their membership form pointed towards a collective who wanted to get to know places inside and out, disclosing a complete history of a site in order to understand its place within the paranormal.

I first joined the Ghost Club in 2008 when developing a proposal for doctoral research. At that time my interest had been in the development of the ghost as spectacle and I ended up spending more time on city ghost walks than on group based research and so my membership expired without my participating in a single investigation with the club. Renewing my position as an active member within the club in 2010, I was keen to select investigations that were taking place in locations different to the ruins I had already been

working in. I took part in four investigations with the GC between 2010 and 2012; The Windmill on the Common (Clapham, London), The Ragged School Museum (Mile End, London), Colchester Castle (Colchester, Essex) and Kew Bridge Steam Museum (London). Each location offered a radically different environment in which the investigation was conducted. The experiences had by the research teams were equally varied. However, I wish to focus upon one of the sites for the remainder of this section; The Windmill on the Common. The reason for this selection is that this site makes for an interesting comparative study of as a site of contemporary habitus. There is also an ability to discuss at length the importance of spectrally infused materiality within this case study. Additionally, out of all of site investigations, The Windmill was the most contained and well organised. The Steam Museum, the castle and the Ragged School were large expansive spaces and individuals wandered about them freely; this made it difficult to gauge whether or not people were having similar experiences and also meant that the ability to describe the practices employed at each of these sites was hindered.

The Windmill on the Common

The Windmill on the Common, or as is it is more commonly referred to 'The Windmill', is a hotel and public house situated on the south side of Clapham Common in the south west of London. The invitation to investigate the site came in a group email and gave the time, date and location of the investigation only. The investigation was limited to fourteen places. The Ghost Club had been instructed to carry out research into the paranormal occurrences of the venue by the hotel management and as such there was no fee involved in attending the investigation. The email from the event organiser, a Jim Leaver, Head of Investigations, stated that he would not disclose any information on the nature of the haunting so as to rule out auto-suggestion. The idea being that any comments on the ghost stories or history surrounding the location would undermine the authenticity of the research

being carried out there. Moreover, there is very little scientific value in setting out to test a hypothesis if the conclusion has already been written. Furthermore, approaching the site as a blank slate was valuable in allowing practices to develop which sought to work with the place as it presented itself on the night, as it unfolded around us.

Scheduled for 15th January 2011 at 9pm, each of the fourteen successful applicants for the investigation (over forty had subscribed) was informed via email three days prior to the event happening of which of three groups they would be working in for the night. Each of the groups were designated one of three areas to conduct ninety minute investigations of, before reconvening and swapping locations. The process was repeated until each of the groups had investigated all of the areas. The areas designated to each group were kitchen/restaurant, bar and private room/storage area. The email culminated in a request to bring visual and audio recording devices to evidence any phenomena that may occur.

On Saturday 15th January, I made my way from Clapham Junction Station across the common towards The Windmill so as to arrive shortly before the 11pm meeting time. Walking up to what appeared to be a typical 18th century redbrick manor, I watched as punters noisily spilled out into the pub's car park. The ghost club members had arranged to meet on the benches at the front of the venue and I recognised a suspiciously sober group of twelve as being my own. We were let through the front door and led into a wood panelled back room that had been reserved for our party. Jim, our leader, explained that the staff needed to clean the bar and restaurant ready for the morning shifts and so the first hour of our evening would be spent in the backroom investigating a haunted object which one of the cleaning staff had requested we looked into as part of the investigation.

After the initial welcomes and a short introduction to the schedule for the evening, Jim revealed a very ordinary looking wooden framed mirror from under the table. The mirror, we were told, had been hanging in the venue for the past twenty five years and had apparently been left there by an unknown customer. The landlord's wife, taking a liking to the object, decided to hang the mirror upstairs in the hotel area of the building where the staff

were able to rent rooms. After a few years it seemed that when a number of photographs had been taken of the staff, their friends or family members in front of the mirror, the spectral form of a man or sometimes just his face, could be seen reflected in the glass when in reality there was nobody else there in the room.

To back up his claims of the haunted mirror Jim provided us with a selection of documenting photographs which had belonged to one of the cleaning staff and did in fact display both the mirror and within it, the distinct outline of a ghostly figure. Jim instructed us that the remaining time in the room should be spent attempting to debunk the ghost theory. We each took it in turn to photograph the mirror, to be photographed with it and to try and replicate the images we had seen. Although the group failed to capture any ghostly activity within the mirror itself, there was a particular feeling that the object held an unnatural agency. The mirror is designed to reflect, to show back to us that which is set before it. The tale of an object presenting things from a world that cannot be seen thus not only placed the mirror within the realm of ghostloric discourse but also provided another example (in addition to those seen at Waverely) of specific materials being used to bring forth the ephemeral, the immaterial. The mirror itself was physically of little peculiar aesthetic value; it was just a plain, wood framed mirror. Perhaps it was this sense of the ordinary alone that was enough to render the thing uncanny. Uneasiness had manifested around the object, that the mirror looked so commonplace and yet contained such a decidedly strange, macabre even, history. Furthermore, one of the photographs I managed to capture did raise something out of the ordinary; taking a picture of one of the investigators looking into the mirror, my photograph displays her hand in one position in reality (outside of the mirror) and in another when cast in the mirror's reflection.

The mirror appeared then, to provide a disjuncture in time and place. The image that was reflected had to have occurred prior to the photo being taken due to the positioning of the hand. And despite what now appears to be more likely a glitch, a possible delay in the image taking rather than anything

extraordinary, at the time of taking, this image provided us as a group with a unique encounter with something preternatural.



Fig. vii *Haunted mirror*. Taken by author.

The photograph worked to codify the rest of the investigation. The image and the object grounded the place into a space for possibility; if this object was haunted then so must be the place where it resides. The mirror then became a monument for the Windmill proper; a memorialisation of not just the ‘man in the mirror’ but of the man who left it in the bar, of the landlord and his wife, of the cleaning lady and her family members who were in the photographs that Jim had shown us.

Moreover, we were now also part of this narrative; the mirror became a ruin, a site where history had not only amalgamated but contextualised (Trigg, 2006). The haunted narrative itself is of course of interest here, in that narrative is the process through which the ghost comes to be understood, in a

wider context as well as being the course through which we come to understand our place in its present form. Narrative is paramount to the defining of the individual within the world as Malpas (1999) suggests 'Narrative is that we can be seen as structuring, in a similar fashion, both memory and self-identity, as well as the places, the landscapes' (p. 185). Through our addition to the narrative of both the mirror and The Windmill, we had established not only the genealogy of an object, but our place within that lineage.

It is not only narrative that is of importance here, once again I would like to bring attention to the object itself. Objects play a significant role in the work of haunting. The mirror is but another example of where the ghost hunter employs materials through which to engage with the immaterial. The mirror, cameras and torches used in the evening worked in synchronisation with the object's narrative and the (imagined) history of the venue so as to perpetuate the belief in the unnatural agency of the ghostly item. It is this interplay between the real and the virtual that leads to our interpretation of the object, and indeed the site, as haunted. This process provides a valuable paradigm for the understanding of all haunted places.

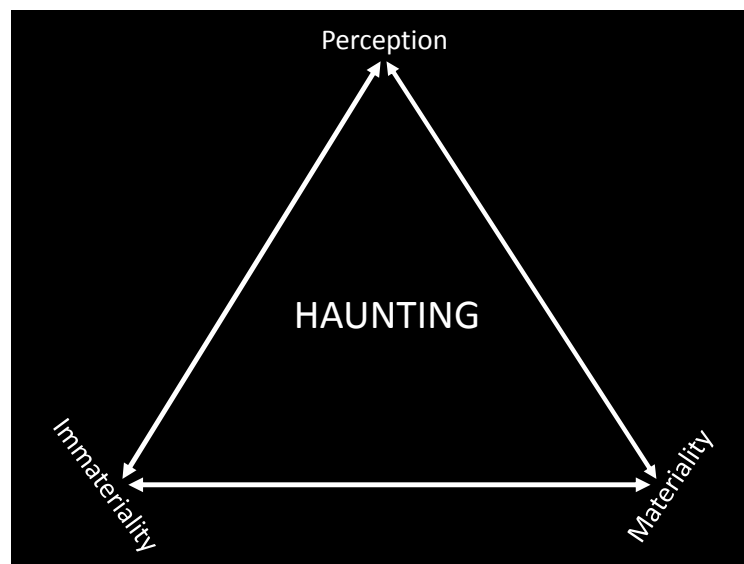


Fig. viii *The haunted paradigm.* Image by author.

Such a model is useful in understanding the necessity of each variable. To be sure, a haunting cannot occur without an object to perceive it. In turn, this

object must be aware of or rather made subject to both its physical surroundings as well as the unseen forces at work in their environment. To take us back to the mirror then, the object required someone to photograph it, it required a camera to mediate its response – to present the ghostly apparition, and it required an awareness that was received and interpreted by the viewer as a comportment of both the physical object and its memory, or narrative. In this case then, it was not just mirror that determined the haunting, but also the camera and the photographer.

To return to the investigation. Once the bar and restaurant areas had been cleared, each group were instructed to conduct vigils at the first of the three areas they had been assigned. For my group this was the bar. The bar itself was nothing out of the ordinary, a horseshoe shaped unit with bottles and glasses stacked behind a counter. The fridges providing a comforting residual hum to what was otherwise a silent space. Jim suggested that we set up any recording devices we might have before taking a seat and ‘acclimatising’ to our surroundings. Both Jim and I set our Dictaphones to record and placed them on the bar. Jim whispered to the group (four of us, including Jim), that the bar was one of the more *active* areas of the venue, though he declined to provide us with any further details. This was enough to excite some of the group members, even without any solid information about the nature of the spectral activity. After half an hour of silence had passed, the bar seemed far less active than Jim had anticipated and I wondered whether this feeding of quasi-information was perhaps a ploy of his to liven up the space.

Work in the abbey ruins had suggested to me that it was the idea of a ghost that first brought it into being; perhaps the same was to be tried out here. By telling us there were things to be seen, Jim had fostered a climate of potential activity whereby all of us were waiting for something to announce itself, to show a presence. Though it never did. Again, it was not until cameras came back into use that the absences of the space became mediated; there was once again a method for capturing the supernatural, or at least hints of its existence. The photographs taken on the night had displayed strange light anomalies, glowing colours and even the outline of a figure. The camera not

only mediated the space but lent itself to a getting into place; a getting beyond the physical reality the group could see and into a previously hidden world.



Fig. ix *A ghostly figure stands to the left of the bar.* Taken by author.

The image of the spectral figure (Fig.ix) in particular changed the nature of the investigation. Objectivity was quickly disregarded in favour of supposition and re-imaginings of the site. Suddenly the blurry lighting on the left of the image became a definite outline of a gentleman, most likely a Victorian gentleman, a previous punter – you could see it in his attire! Probably he had died at the pub, or possibly at the hotel. Probably he was a regular, The Windmill being his favourite haunt. Perhaps he had come for his mirror? Adding to the suppositions came audio recordings of the area that Jim had captured; bizarre screeching sounds made from the silence, momentarily dismissed as feedback or interference before being attributed to our photographed visitor. What struck me was not the speed at which the human mind chose to rid itself of logical explanation, we were on a ghost hunt after all, there was to be a certain aspect of suspended disbelief. Rather it was a move towards gaining an understanding of the place we were

investigating, of its history, of its affective atmosphere. Attempts being made to ascertain magnetic frequency, energy levels, infra sound, temperature and light sources, were not merely being used to describe the place we were currently in, but ultimately to describe the place as it had previously been. Each test supplying data that would be discussed in connection with the buildings past, a past that was now largely created through supposition; we had no historical accounts to go on.

The remainder of the evening threw up similar occurrences; each group finding their own little pocket of history nestled away in the nooks and crannies of the old public house. With each new recording of a phenomenon came an addition to the haunted narrative of the space and furthermore a development in the affective qualities of the area. This was a site that we had been invited to explore and one which had not previously been subject to investigation and yet the work we were conducting seem to propagate the notion of the place being haunted from the outset of the investigation. Any group to follow us would naturally be privy to our findings and would enter into a now established spectral ecology; manifold happenings now woven into the Windmill's ghostly narrative. The ghost of the 'Victorian gentleman' would now be as real to the history of the site as the mirror and the landlady.

My thoughts are that whatever small and possibly misinterpreted events may occur on occasions like these, work to provide the cornerstones for engagements with place, for creating a place-based history which is engendered through an experience of place as opposed to factual accounts alone. For sites that are habitually visited by paranormal investigators, there is concern that a place comes to be reduced to the ghosts it retains, whereby history is rewritten in terms of its memorialised manifestations, replacing the traditional narrative that stood before it. However, at a site like the Windmill, investigations like this create opportunities to re-establish our immersion in a place; to not simply glide through place but to get back into it, to know it, as Casey (2009) suggests 'There is no knowing or sensing a place except by being in that place, and to be in a place is to be in a position to perceive it' (p. 321). As Casey posits, one must be within a place in order to perceive it, and

this in itself helps to explain why haunting is decidedly place oriented. Why the paranormal is in effect, the parageographical.

A haunting as I suggested earlier requires three things in order to occur; a perceiver, materiality and immateriality. Place itself also requires these constituent parts in order to manifest. It needs subjects, it requires objects and it employs memory. The production of haunting then is not so far removed from the production of place, perhaps it is more the case then that hauntings are particular types of enchanted places? Either way, a haunting needs to be placialised, a sense of pre-existing site history on which to base emergent spectral manifestations i.e. *what happened here before?*

Furthermore, like place, the model suggests that a haunting is not something that happens to us but rather something that involves us; that which is perceived and requires us to be there in order for this to occur. What differs in the practice of hunting ghosts in organised groups to that which is involved in ad hoc investigations is, I would argue, is rather more about utilising a place systematically than about scientific rigour. That is to say, that groups like the Ghost Club select their sites carefully, they provide investigators with a protocol explicitly designed to test the affective qualities of a location. The mirror for example provided a thematic anchor for the evening; it located a ghost story at the site and gave a selected history. The mirror itself provided a tangible object that would become subject to experiment.

Moreover, the mirror supplied context. The group could only assess the nature of the object through being in that place at that time. Furthermore, the place was split into sections, each section being an area where paranormal activity had taken place. This mapping of the space produced a cartographic understanding of The Windmill that was not designed to aid us in navigating between rooms but rather to prompt us into exploring certain types of ghostly narratives. Each area housing its own manifestation of the spectral. In this sense then, a multitude of ghosts were explored and each belong to a different area of the place we were investigating. Unlike the Abbey where all ghosts were contextualised as being the revenants of monks, The Windmill offered multiple sites of habitus. There were then, suggestions

of the ghostly histories of drinkers, holiday makers, workmen, cooks, highwaymen, cleaners, porters – each section of The Windmill offering its own players to the narrative of haunting. Again, the mirror worked as the motivation for subscribing to the anomalous recordings that occurred in each area as it had primed the group, made us ready for an engagement with a particular material, one which led the group to enquire as to whom the man in the photographs had been and whether he remained in situ, lurking in the shadows of the hotel.

The Windmill sets itself at a middle point between two types of haunting then; one like the abbey where the place itself is texturally strange with areas aesthetically and physically different to one another. The other type being more like the place of artefact whereby the entire area is codified by remains, leftovers- outmoded materials that are a) set within a specific historical context and b) which come to be recognised as creating the overall sense of the place. Straddling the two types of situation, The Windmill provides an example of how place can not only come to be contextualised through history and its materials but also through engagements with narrative, with a strange biography of sorts.

V. Magical Ecologies: nature, place and the enchanted landscape

“Magic has but one dogma, namely, that the seen is the measure of the unseen.”

- Somerset Maugham, *The Magician*

A Conjuring

In this chapter I will develop notions of magic and sacrality in regards to the theorising of enchantment and mobility. Beginning with a close analysis of these concepts, I will move on to show how they are used in the fostering and conservation of magical ecologies and that places and place-making are of a decidedly preternatural quality where enchantment ensues. I aim to follow a trajectory which cuts through the existing literature on landscape, enchantment and sacred spaces and develops an argument for placed-based essentialisms, or rather ‘strategic essentialisms’ (Spivak, 1990) of place that are used for the purposes of ritualistic practice and the assigning of a preternatural agency to the natural world. In doing such, the chapter will follow a series of discussions arranged non-hierarchically, but so as to trace a logical progression and create subsequent connections between themes.

The first task will be to define what exactly is meant by terms like nature, place and dwelling, with the latter part of the chapter devoted to a discussion of the adjective ‘magical’. Working through conjectures of what the magick might entail, I hope to clearly show the link between ideas of mysticism and the making of sacred places. Furthermore, the term magick will itself be used to define a specific theorem of how landscape, and moreover nature, comes to be viewed as a system of conscious and malleable agents, in other words a moving beyond the natural. The challenge is of course, that the very idea of magick is itself beset with contradictions and like other faith-based practices it falls into a self-problematizing realm for those outside of its methods. Nevertheless, magick is to be explored here as a particular method of exploiting the entangled relationship man has with nature and furthermore, that this entanglement is surveyed through a set of

practices and beliefs that not only augment the agency of both material and immaterial actants but that posit certain places as accentuated, heightened in their sacrality; essentialist.

Essentialism is something of a dirty word amongst academic discourse, many scholars moving away from the sort of totalising ideology that proved so devastating to civilisation in the early part of the twentieth century. Naturally, there is a common fear when attaching specific communities to certain places, and rightly so, this type of application of the term is what festers in the bowels of the ideologue on the far right and rarely makes itself known within liberal discourse. Even Spivak's (*ibid*) attempt to reconcile the gap between extradited communities and their homelands, through a theorising of the strategically essential, has later been seen to be revoked, by Spivak herself. Notwithstanding the obvious aversion to the placement and displacement of individuals through essentialised topologies, one must look beyond the negativity that surrounds the term, which is not I believe, as malevolent as it has come to be portrayed. Rather more, essentialism regards a unique sense of character, something which is adhered to, a sense of belonging but not in the way of an ostracising exclusivity but rather that which defines what something is; the thing *qua* thing.

To resuscitate the philosophical concept of essentialism is not an objective of the chapter. However when tackling nature, magick and the place-based sacred, it is impossible to deny that people feel spiritually connected to certain geographical sites. Almost all forms of spiritual worship have a specified site at which prayers are made and there are often various practical and logistical reasoning behind the placement of these places. It would also appear that it is commonplace for sacred spaces to become usurped, to mutate and obtain new forms of worship. In this case a pre-existing site of worship that is to be superseded by new or evolving beliefs, forms a foundation for the new place of religious congregation. Certainly, this was the case in the construction of both Roman shrines and temples and later Christian churches, which were frequently built upon the grounds of sacred Pagan sites (Park, 1994). Logically it was a move that made sense; firstly as a

display of power, the new God(s) quite literally burying the old, and secondly, the new congregation of converts would already know where to go and worship. But this doesn't make a case for the essence of a place, seemingly it debases the concept, at least if taken at face value. What is missing from the argument is the selection process behind choosing the original site of worship and that is where we might detect notions of essence.

Early Britons are believed to have built their holy places upon sites that were perceived as possessing an intrinsic divinity, a 'territorial imperative, or *genius loci*' (Ackroyd, 2000: 141). The *genius loci* or 'spirit of place' is what defines a place for us, it is the particular characteristic of a site that people describe as unique or elemental. The spirit of place cannot be detached from the site itself; it can barely be distinguished, and yet, it remains so rigidly intact that it is sensible, we feel it. Sacred sites are often afforded this sense of feeling 'spiritual' or 'alive', and within the context of spirituality and belief such feelings remain relatively uncontested. It is of course plausible to hold the belief that Mesolithic and Neolithic communities selected their sites of worship because of this inexplicable feeling of awe that is prevalent in certain places; places where the water unnaturally springs from the ground, pastures that yield mysterious flora, that seem to open up to the cosmos or where the land reaches the heavens (Cope, 1998).

At these places, we can conceive that a people lacking the geological or geomorphologic knowledge that we possess today, would project notions of the supernatural onto otherwise explicable natural phenomena in order to satisfy their curiosity. However, this continues to produce little in way explaining the essence of a place. Why one point in the landscape becomes sacred and another does not, cannot simply be reduced to the restricted faculties of an early people. It remains the case then, as is now, that certain spaces holding this '*genius*' or spirit draw people through an unequivocal sense of connection. This connection is exclusive to the site and its construction lays in more than just the social makings of place, rather it is upheld by a combination of mythology, mysticism, history, habitus, experience (or ritual) and somatic knowledge, that which becomes known to us through experience. The inherent essence of a place is as inescapable for

some as a socially constructed world is for others. The work of cultural geographers has largely worked to undermine the essentialism of place; eradicating its place in the theorising of landscape in light of the work of social constructivism (See Shields, 1991; Hetherington, 1996). But such a stance is problematic; depicting a world where places are but empty vessels awaiting delivery of ascribed meaning does not account for experientialism, not completely. It does not pinpoint why certain places feel sacred. Nor does it provide answers to the selection of ground for sacred sites.

The focus of this chapter is not only on the type of fixed (or essentialised) versions of enchantment that were discussed in relation to haunting (Chapter IV), rather it is about opening up a sense of the fluidity of enchantment, its mobility. The aim here is not so much to provide a space for the further analysis of mobility itself; rather it is to form a discourse around enchantment, magick and place that acknowledges the role of movement as inseparable from the performance of the sacred in nature-based worship and practice. Places themselves are all about connections (Massey, 1994); sacred places are no different, they too require connections, to the people who use them and to the landscape they occupy. This connectivity is itself underpinned by mobility; a purposeful movement to and from the site as well as the circulation of materials, myth, worship and ritualistic practices within and around the sacred space that promote and extend spiritual importance. This occurs through a process of reiterated performances that seek to develop the spiritual or imagined landscape (Blain and Wallis, 2004).

Mobility proffers a deliberate method for opposing the world as inanimate, static (Wylie, 2007) and instead sees places as existing within a continuous state of flux. Reflecting the ways in which we experience the world through a set of embodied practices, mobility emphasises the production of spatial narratives (Cresswell and Merriman, 2011). Maddrell and della Dora (2013) examine the links between movement, place and landscape through 'surface framework', a response to both the vertical and horizontal trajectories of pilgrimage which allows for a deepened analysis of sacred mobility via the process of 'embodied travel, ritual, perceptions of the visual, material, affective, and the numinous' (p. 1105). Pilgrimages act as

'kinetic rituals', working to charge space with a sense of sacrality and further determining their function as places of spiritual importance (Coleman and Eade, 2004).

The movement that occurs between sacred sites forms part of a process that sees the ongoing production of the sacred space; it is not just place and ritual but movement that work to define the sacrality. Cresswell (2002, p. 20) claims that 'places are never complete, finished or bounded but are always becoming – in process' and although this transience might well appear to undermine the sense of a fixed sacred in many domains, we shall see how this strengthens the affective properties in cases of sites with an ascribed magickal sacrality. In such instances the idea of a placio-spatial becoming can be seen to support the idea of a vital, animate sacred in which to engage with; purporting a landscape imbued with a sense of super-natural agency. The presence of a vital mobile place that 'gathers things, thoughts and memories' (Escobar, 2001, p. 143) not only positions mobility as a key facet in the theorising of a site, but additionally places it within a spiritual framework that at once aims to connect with the observer (so as to provide an experience of place) whilst simultaneously 'gathering' them into becoming part of the place; that is part of the place's materiality. As we shall see later in this chapter, this is the case with the Ankerwycke Yew, a place that requires mobility in its ritualistic worship, its consequent spatial performance and entering into the magickal.

Defining Magic(k)

For many, the language of magick can appear obtuse; to begin with there are conflicting definitions of what magick is (or might be) and furthermore, there lies the distinction between magic and magick, which should not be mistakenly reduced down to the addition or subtraction of a single consonant alone. As a rule, magick is the term widely used to describe the practices and rituals encompassed within the occult; things that are explicitly preternatural in their origins or affects; spells, curses, unseen agency etc. The word magick is generally used within the Neo-Pagan and

occult traditions to create a distinction between the magical practices of ritual and the tricks or illusions performed by entertainers; the deviation in spelling elevates the performance of the Neo-Pagan over that of the person performing the 'rabbit in a hat' trick (Harvey, 2007). Magick deals not so much with sleight of hand, but with a commanding of the unseen forces of the world, and although one could ostensibly argue that both provide agency to unconscious material forms (be it a wand or a pack of cards), magick is about belief itself rather than the suspension of it. And in this contradistinction we find neither a homogenous belief in what magick is, nor totalising conception of how it should be practiced. Rather, magick and the practices involved in its craft are as varied in their instances as any theist belief system, with practitioners being categorised by various orders, some of which include but are not limited to; Druids, Wiccans, Heathens, Gardnerians, Thelemists, Hellenists and often Satanists.

The definition of the term Pagan itself also comes under contestation, which until as late as 1986 was believed to be translated from the Latin *paganus*, as meaning 'country dweller', 'rural' or 'rustic' after which Robin Lane Fox, who claimed that the above belief had never been substantiated in Roman records, proffered an alternative definition as a description for non Christians, later challenged by French Historian Pierre Chuvin whose belief was that Pagan was derived from Pagani, or follower of the old gods (Hutton, 1999, p.04). Presently, (Neo)Paganism is widely accepted as the encompassing term for all of those religions that work closely with nature and a worship of the pre-Christian God(s), incorporating those listed above and others. It would appear that like theism, whether it be mono, pan or poly, the variation between the many divisions and orders who practice magick can only truly be grouped together by the shared sense of the natural sacred, though again with definitions of what this sacrality might entail being nuanced to the point of obscurity. Crow (1972), states that '(m)agic consists of primitive science' (p.12), Frazer (1925) observes that 'magic is a spurious system of natural law as well as a fallacious guide of conduct' (p.11) and Starhawk (1982) suggests that it is 'the art of turning negatives into positives' (p.99). Levi (1923) asserts magic to be a 'transcendental science'

(p. 03). Each of these conjectures, sets out an entirely different scope for the definition of magick, and the list should not be read as exhaustive. For the purposes of this discussion I wish to focus upon two definitions that are widely accepted among Pagan circles and which are the cornerstones to any workings with a magickal ecology in a geographical context.

The first classification comes from Aleister Crowley who in his 1973 *Magick* wrote 'Magick is the Science and Art of causing change to occur in conformity with Will' (p.131). Crowley's definition inflects the Cartesian model of knowing through the mind alone and augments it (preternaturally speaking) so as to position knowledge not merely within a realm of experiencing the world but as a model to change the world. That thought or 'Will' can not only influence but produce affect in the outside world is what drives the continual practicing of magick, the belief that change can be brought about by mental/psychic causation alone. This element of the definition is perhaps not exclusive to magick; multi faith forms of prayer act in much the same way though usually it appears in the form of a plea with a deity. How magick differs then, is to allow the individual to take control, to cause change through his or her own being. Furthermore, Crowley ascribes the notion of magick to a challenging of conformity, a way of igniting disorder or irregularity in an otherwise predictable system.

In applying such a concept to nature, Neo-Paganism often seeks to cause a change in the regularity of the ordered world making the ordinarily static become mobile, perform, in other words, extending agency to the largely inanimate. And so trees become alive, rocks can hear, the Earth can speak. Fundamentally, the sorcerer works within what Arne Naess described in eco-political terms as being a deep ecology, a rejection of the anthropocentric in light of an understanding of man existing in and of nature (Naess, 1997) and although Crowley focuses upon the role of humans in magical practice, it is not as part of a hierarchical system but rather as constituents of a more universal being. Thus is the reasoning that any one part of the being can move position so as to affect or influence any other part and bring about a change: magick. What Crowley initiates then, is a mobility of magick, a term that I wish to pursue later in the chapter.

The second classification of magick I wish to impart here brings us back to nature itself, it states that magick is 'at once the knowledge of a network of sympathies or antipathies which bind the things of Nature and the concrete implementation of this knowledge' (Faivre and Needleman, 1992: xvi). Again, the emphasis is on magick being produced via knowledge and its transfers, however, rather than the abstract conformity of which Crowley alludes to, Faivre and Needleman explicitly express magick as the knowledge of Nature's complexity – a complexity that exists to be undermined and manipulated by the practitioner of magick craft. There are telling signs in this second definition that the magickal is pre-existent with the natural world, that rather than the creator of something new, the magickian or magus, is the impetus for mobilising changes in the 'sympathies or antipathies' which hold together and cohere the natural world.

Together these two definitions act so as to elucidate two key facets in our ecological understanding of the surrounding landscape; firstly, that it is ordered, regular and open to disturbance (by the magickian) and secondly, that magick is innate, that it is a mobilisation of the agency that exists with all things. In making sense of both the theorising and utilisation of the magickal landscape it is important to understand that the belief systems which are in play to support such a view, do so through both the definitions of essentialism – that there are (malleable) essences within all natural things – and practice, that each thing possesses the ability to manipulate the natural order of any other thing if using the correct technique. Consequently, the landscape comes to exist within a network of pliable entities, each one waiting for its preternatural agency to be conjured, to be worked upon, magicked. Magick is not then, something that is done to an object, rather it is a process that brings about the vibrancy of matter, that enchants and augments the material qualities of a thing via immaterial workings (Bennett, 2010). It appears then, that magick mobilises the natural world in the most unnatural of ways.

As I have previously alluded to, magick is a craft; it is a method of practice and much like the smith works upon iron, the carpenter their wood and the mason, stone, so too does the practitioner of magick set to work upon

his or her subject. Each of the varying orders or divisions of belief system that uphold magick as a methodology have a set of practices, which they employ to work upon the world. I will come to describe some of these practices in the latter part of this chapter where I shall discuss my ethnographic work with a group of pagans in the west of London. Presently however, I wish to speak more generally of magickal practices. As Neo-Paganism is itself such a diverse system of worship, the history, customs and rituals of each faction is equally varied. Many of the divisions borrow heavily from the historical civilisations more widely documented as displaying forms of pre-Christian worship from Egyptian, Greek, Norse and Roman spiritual practices. Often there is an amalgamation of beliefs taken from one or more of the above and usually these beliefs and customs have been modified, adapted to fit the needs of contemporary followers.

Needless to say, each form of mysticism forms its own set of practices, though for the majority of nature-based spiritualities (which are the focus of this chapter), the methodologies are borrowed from either Druidry or Wicca – the two predominant movements within Neo-Paganism. Magick itself is practiced within these Paganisms with equal multiplicity, but chants, meditation, ritual performance and spell casting are fairly commonplace and are endorsed both privately and publically. Each of these practices is used to engage with a place of personal or ritual importance, to invoke gods, goddesses and spirits, to change fortune, to heighten energy or to commune with Nature. All of these practices in turn deal with both the making of a place through the casting of a circle and initialising mobility; a movement in objects, energy or spirit. Casting a circle is the practice of creating sacrality, chants, citations and poems are read in addition to the calling of the quarters, the four guardians of the North, East, South and West and the sweeping or cleansing of the area. The space within the circle, which is either formed by individuals positioning themselves in a circular formation but can be drawn or even imagined, creates a sacred space for the practicing of magick, the performance of ritual and the worshipping of the divine elements (Harvey, 2007, p. 44). The production of this space is not only a practice of place-making but also of movement. There is both the physical movement of bodies

from outside to within the circle, the process of casting the circle itself; of sweeping it clean, of inviting entities to move in and between the sacred space that has been formed. All in addition to the believed flows and transference of energy and motions acted out within the ritual itself. What we have then is a place not only of a new production but one which is both liminal and transgressive (Turner, 1969), existing simultaneously as a threshold between realms of physicality and the incorporeal, a place of ritualism and a site that counters, even usurps, any preconceived notions of the natural. The cast circle becomes the place where not only the natural but nature *per se* becomes challenged, complicated and problematised.

Evocations of N/nature

The complexity of magick lies not only in the difficulty of forming a unanimous definition; like all concepts, religious or otherwise, magick is open to a multitude of understandings and applications. And again, one should not see the intangibility of the subject as the rendering of redundancy; magick, however nuanced, abstract and incomprehensible it might appear, can be used effectively to describe a specific set of actions and relations between people, place and nature. In fact, it is nature itself that proves for the most part, similarly complex a term to work with. As a subject, geography works to broaden the body of knowledge regarding phenomena within the field of nature, both human and non-human. Castree (2005) posits that with geography exists three 'meanings' of nature; the non-human, the essence of something and an inherent force (p. 29). The non-human aspect is philosophically self-evident: all that exists outside of the human body. Nature, as essence relates back to the ontological discussion at the beginning of this chapter; the nature of a thing here refers to the unique characteristics of a an object (human and non-human), it is that which makes a thing particular, of itself and not any other object. The final classification, nature as a force or represented thing, is for Castree, a twofold manifestation; that there is the measureable element of a natural force as seen in the making

of mountains, movement of glaciers, wind, tides etc. And secondly, that nature is a conscious entity; that it has works to a *telos or* end goal of sorts.

There becomes a clear movement from the previously ontic mode of analysis, in favour of ontological reasoning; nature as being. In this sense, nature can be seen to work within its own specific remit and accounts for an understanding of nature as causal. Through this we begin to see that there are further differences to be drawn between the uses of nature in geographical writings pertaining to this classification. Often the capitalisation of the N in nature is used to invoke an inner essence or Truth to nature, a spirit or *Being* that resides within it (Castree, 2005). Nature becomes named as a thing in its own right. Such a view engenders a non-anthropocentric vision of nature and it is from this that we begin to see the sprigs and sprouts of a traversed political, spiritual and ecological movement, one which attempts to commune with nature. An essentialised nature. It is this final classification that lends itself to the formation of eco-spirituality, the spiritual interaction of humans within the realm of a vital nature and one which aids in the mobilisation of magick.

This idea that nature can be represented as a conscious force is not uncommon outside of a religious context. Arne Naess' 'deep ecology' makes moves towards bridging the gaps between the natural and the cultural by encompassing the natural with a shared sense of the spiritual and political interdependency that unites man with the Earth. Such a movement places emphasis not upon the differences between man and nature but conversely it begins to etch out the inseparability of the two, their mutual entanglement. What we are left with is a moving away from a nature-culture divide in favour of a mutual entanglement. Naess (*ibid*) makes a distinction between what he terms 'deep' and 'shallow' ecologies. The latter which he views as synonymous with reform environmentalism is set up as a weak ecology, one which displays only limited understandings of reality and the position of humans in the natural world. It is for the most part an anthropocentric view that remains fixed upon privileging the place of humans in the environment and furthermore it refrains from placing any weight upon the concerns and interests of non-human life forms (Katz *et al*, 2000, p. *xii*). Shallow ecologies

are limited then, not only in their grasping of a holistic world view but also in regards to their understanding of what nature is. In such a view, nature is on the receiving end of culture's actions. When speaking of (neo)paganisms, which place the human as elemental, equal in their value to all other things, we are looking a more spiritually informed version of deeper ecologies.

Deep ecologies are of depth precisely because they seek a more comprehensive understanding of nature; furthermore, they work towards a worldview (or belief system) rather than forming the basis for a solely political position. What makes the ecology 'deep' is that it is mobilised around six key points; a rejection of anthropocentrism, focuses upon the value of the ecosphere and ecological systems, identifies with all forms of life, a belief that helping the environment is a process of self realisation, moves away from instrumentalism in favour of spirituality and artistic expression and that all of the above are used to inform and construct a worldview (*ibid*, p. *xiii*). Deep ecology is fundamentally about inflecting ecology with both a spiritual and a philosophical awareness. In doing so one becomes conscious of not only the importance of preserving the natural world but of their place within it. There is something interesting about the use of verticality to develop ecosophic thinking here; it not only reflects a sense of deeper understanding but it quite literally places the human being beneath the surface. That is to say, beyond and within the thresholds of a tamed, ordered nature. It begins the process of entanglement that is necessary for a nature-based spirituality to take place. Moreover, the embedding and complicating of man within nature opens the way for us thinking about how such concepts lead towards a questioning of the sentient properties of N/nature proper. Moreover, how the materialities of the natural world might become mobilised and enchanted in these 'deeper' understandings of the world; how a rational knowledge of the landscape might give way to mysticism.

A Return to Magick

Magick is a process of enchantment; it works within the framework of a deeper ecological awareness to bring about willed changes to the natural

environment. Magick is about understanding the world at a micro level; its user seeks to affect and be affected by the occluded energies of the earth. Magick is as we have seen, a mode of mobilisation and is the resulting composite of a spiritually inflected ecological philosophy. If geographers have hitherto recognised the existence of a nature defined by inherent force, it has largely been through a disregard of the magickal properties attributed to nature by Neo-Paganism and other forms of ecospirituality. Instead, privilege has been placed upon the processes of enchantment; Returning to Wylie's ascension of Glastonbury Tor for example, narrates a landscape that is viewed as enchanted only within a specific theoretical framing. I do not wish to make a case in favour of the existence of magick as a reality but rather would like to use this final space to discuss the differences between a magickal ecology and an enchanted one.

Enchantment informs mysticism; it is the process whereby objects of banality become re-envisioned as alive: vital matter. Magick then, is not then existing instead of enchantment, it does not replace it or aim to supersede it; what magick does is prompt enchantment, it mobilises the process. Sites like Stonehenge and the standing stones seen at the village of Avebury, UK become viewed as enchanted because they are inexplicable, despite the workings of archaeologists and historians to unravel their mystery. Stones of huge proportions are not only standing upright, balanced as if of their own accord, but they are positioned as such within a context we are no longer able to understand. The secrets of how these monoliths came to be placed upon the site, where they travelled from, how they were assembled and what they were used for belong to a lost knowledge (Michell, 1989; Cope, 1998). Their history is occluded not by secrecy itself but by time, moreover the passing of. Nevertheless, such sites as these provide places of ritual; their very mystery providing the perfect space for mysticism to fill. But magick itself is not at work here, it may be practiced but it is not what enchants these places. Rather it is the profound sense of spiritual attachment that is awakened in individuals who visit the sites that appears magickal. Through participant observation, Holloway's (2003) analysis of Neo-Pagan sacred sites is rather different to that of Wylie. Holloway understands the sites as made ostensibly

sacred through practice, their sacrality he posits, is down to the combination of historical and contemporary rituals held there and moreover the interplay between space and embodiment. Of greater importance still, is what Holloway observes in Glastonbury through the practices that are performed there, he comments that through the relations and interactions between the human and the non human 'a unity-in-difference is performed through the subject's and other's possession of a unique and qualified agency in relation to one another' (p. 169). In other words, the removal of any hierarchical order that would ordinarily exist between man and nature leads to an extension of agency. But such spaces and rituals are fundamentally biased; they rely upon a preconceived notion of the sacred that is already present in the work of Wylie; the idea that the monumental nature of the space affords it supernatural qualities. And herein lies the difference between the ordinarily sacred and the magickal.

Magick forms sacrality; as we have seen in the casting of the circle, the place is made, sacrality evoked. Magick thus enables the sacred and allows it to transcend prescription. Magick does not require a fixed point for its practice; it may use but does not rely on pre-existing sacred spaces, such as the Tor or Stonehenge. Rather, practitioners of magick invoke the spirit of place in order to perform rituals. In other words, magick is a strategy; for both enchantment and for essentialism. Strategic essentialisms are used to construct sacrality; the embodiment of the space by the ritualist not only occurs particular to this space but it is one that cannot be felt by those outside of the performance. What exists then, is a site which is temporarily sacred, one which for a limited time only affords a preternatural agency to N/nature. I will discuss more closely the practices involved in the process of magick and place-making in the following section but for now I only wish to acknowledge the differences between the magickal and the otherwise sacred, as well as illustrating the emphasis on mobility and ecological understandings that are inherent with magickal practices.

This discussion has hitherto served to reunite notions of essentialism with the natural environment through an explication of magick, place and enchantment. Moreover, such a perspective has been carefully developed

through the theories of a deep ecology; a position that seeks to explicate the spirit of nature and our duty to recognise an entanglement within it. If essentialisms of place can be said to exist at all then such claims can only be made with the knowledge that the phenomena is non-ubiquitous. Not all places have deep rooted, spiritual ties to the Earth from which they were created, nonetheless, all places have a direct link to nature. The very act of dwelling depends upon nature to exist insofar that nature creates the world, and from that world we derive place. As such essentialisms are existent only through their strategic development and usage.

Moving towards a theory of the magical mobilises the pre-existing components of deep and eco spiritualities, mysticism and *genius loci*. Moreover, magickal ecologies provide a rich and varied landscape on which extremities and anomalies of nature can occur. Nothing occurs outside of nature; there is no outer subjective consciousness that can be ascribed to those things that incite the uncanny (Farber, 1967). The magickal or preternatural provides a space in which to both usher and analyse phenomena that have previously resided as fortean, supernatural or paranormal. Fortean geographies like that in the work of Dixon (2007) force myth outside of naturalism. These previous ways of mobilising that which is beyond do little to aid the intellectual debates around critical geographies of alterity; rather they further marginalise and segregate discussions of the strange from a discourse of nature. Magickal ecologies, and their mobilities, provide an option for getting back into nature, for its reimaginings and for its subsequent animation.

Sylvan Spirits: Conversations with the *Genius Loci*

"Trees are sanctuaries. Whoever knows how to speak to them, whoever knows how to listen to them, can learn the truth. They do not preach learning and precepts, they preach, undeterred by particulars, the ancient law of life."

- Herman Hesse, *Wandering: Notes and Sketches*.

The remainder of this chapter seeks to deal with the strange vitality of nature and landscape, moreover, of places, through a discussion of the empirical research undertaken at a site of Neo-Pagan significance. I would like to use this space to articulate a discourse of place that deals with not just the production of magical ecologies but with placial autonomy and agency; or in what has become a less than fashionable turn of phrase; the essentialism of place. Exploring further the notions of the strategic in doing so. What this chapter sets out then, is an enquiry that attempts to explicate the interconnectedness of enchantment and place, of place and nature and of people and enchanted places; moreover, the attempts of magick to make a place.

Furthermore, it aims to provide an account of the spiritual essence of place; that is the *genius loci*: the unique character of a place that lends itself to the attribution of the sacred at specific sites. The ancient Yew I will come to speak of is but one example of such a site; a particularly potent case due to its role within ritualism; a performance that sees the tree becoming ever more 'alive'. Moreover, the practices involved in the ritualism of this site, prior to and embedded within the rite itself, make for a more transgressive sense of the sacred; a mobile magic; a strange juxtaposition of flux and fixedness that questions the import of the static sacred and pushes towards mobility, materiality and immateriality as being the foundations of enchanted sites.

An Enchanted Naturalism: The Ankerwycke Yew.

I first came across the Ankerwycke Yew whilst out walking in the National Trust managed land to the south of the village of Wraysbury, where I had been living at the time. The land here is mostly open grassland with some areas of woodland that create a natural barrier between the meadows and the river Thames which separates the village from Runneymede. I had moved to Wraysbury in the January of 2010 and as the weather had been poor and the area prone to flooding until the Spring, it was not until early April that I was able to make my way into the green spaces beyond the village.

Wraysbury, a small, semi-rural community situated approximately eighteen miles west of London, exists as something of an island. The village is almost completely surrounded by water with large retired gravel pits to both the northern and southern sides, the Wraysbury Reservoir and River Colne to the east and the River Thames snaking in from the west. Due to the expansive waters, the low laying level of the ground and additionally river, Wraysbury is susceptible to annual flooding throughout the autumn and winter and much of the land beyond the housed settlement is inaccessible during this period. The somewhat isolated nature of the village was and is not entirely negative; Wraysbury has been able to preserve its history in quite a unique way compared to that of the more touristic Windsor that is but a ten minute drive or train journey further to the west. In fact Wraysbury itself appears quite peculiar; there is a large windmill dominating the skyline, constructed entirely of railway sleepers and for aesthetic purposes alone, the out-of-place structures feels like it watches over the entire village. There are two gothic churches serving a population of approximately 3,700 (Wraysbury, 2001).

A ford runs across the old High Street, the old trading route between Windsor and Staines. The predominant architectural styles consist of Georgian and Victorian through a significant number of much older properties remain such as the The Grange manor house and King Johns Hunting Lodge, both on situated along the Windsor Road. Wraysbury felt sleepy and indeed during the winter months it offered very few signs of life. Other than a 9am-5pm post office and a pharmacy that was closed on

weekends, there seemed to be very few visitors to the settlement. And so this leads me back to the finding of the tree. With little else to do but walk, I took the first possible opportunity to get out in the Spring air and discover the surrounding countryside for myself.

There were two ways of accessing the land to the south of the village; one could simply cut through St Andrews churchyard which lay opposite the rolling hills of Egham to the south west of the Village, or via a lane off of the main road to Staines, Magna Carta Lane. The walk via Magna Carta Lane was the least wet and most accessible, cutting off a mile or so of awkward negotiation of mud clogged paths, sodden fields and roaming horses. Following the lane for only about five minutes I soon found the National Trust car park at the back of an old farm and the remains of what used to be Ankerwycke House, according to a village noticeboard. The ground here was mostly dry due to the openness of the space and I soon found myself wandering through the forested land towards the banks of the Thames. It was here that, in a clearing, a cloak of moss green seemed to so emerge from the grasses, creating a covering of leaves for what I assumed to be a number of smaller trees. A narrow trodden pathway ran into the shadows of the copse from my left hand side.

Following the flattened blades into the darkness of the canopy I saw for the first time that this was a single tree, a wooden hulk of gigantic proportions; at least the width of a car. More astonishing than this were the scores of tiny ribbons and knots that decorated the trunk and lower branches. It was a Yew tree, of a size and scale of which I had not previously encountered and of greater mystery still were these strange decorations. The whole place seemed magical. Tree dressing is not uncommon amongst Neo-Pagan and rural folk customs (Hole, 1976) and this appeared to be an example of something similar. Furthermore, the remains of what was seemingly a ritualised performance lay upon a substantial branch which rested upon the floor to the side of the Yew; melted candle wax, incense and strange flower arrangements had been left in situ, objects of an 'informal memorialisation' that furthered the potential sacrality of the spot (Maddrell, 2013).

The Ankerwycke Yew



Fig. x *South Side of the Ankerwycke Yew, Taken by author.*

As one of only fifty trees listed as heritage by the National Trust, the Ankerwycke Yew is one of the oldest trees in Britain. Indeed, the issue of age is contentious here, with the earliest date being at around 1400 years and the latest in excess of 3000 (Bevan-Jones, 2002). The Yew sits within the former grounds of Ankerwycke Priory, what was later to become known as St. Mary's Priory (Wraysbury, 2001). Ankerwycke's grounds lay to the south of the village of Wraysbury; the site, like the village, is bordered to both the east and south by the River Thames, which meanders its way through this small area of land between the counties of Surrey, Berkshire and Middlesex. Tree-lined ditches to all sides of the area enclose the yew tree. Like the ruins at Waverley referred to in Chapter IV, it is pertinent that this spectacular monolith too sits isolated from local communities, the dense woodland and boundary waterways act as moat for the site that has remained in situ for millennia.

On visiting the site, what immediately becomes clear is the abnormal scale of the tree; this was recorded at being 27ft 8 inches in girth in 1822 (Bevan-Jones, *ibid*, p. 58) and according to the National Trust, it has now spread to over 31ft around (nationaltrust.org). Along with the remaining ruins of St. Mary's to the SW of the Yew, there are various other histories that tie into the narrative of the tree's location. Reference is made to the Yew in Charles Knight's *Old England: A Pictorial Museum* (1845). Knight tells of how the ancient tree was a supposed meeting place of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn; a secluded spot conveniently placed west of Hampton Court Palace. With both locations sitting on the Thames it would have been but a short journey by boat in order to escape the prying eyes of the City. Delving further still; the Magna Carta of 1215, originally thought to have been sealed the other side of the Thames in Runnymede, is now considered to have taken place at Ankerwycke. Indeed both the positioning of the site off Magna Carta Lane and its close proximity to Wraysbury's parish of Magna Carta Island help to feed this notion. Strutt (1822) makes reference to the signing of the charter as a tale more agreeable to an oral history of the Yew than that of the ill-fated love affair between the Tudor monarch and his victim to be:

It is more pleasing to view this tree as the silent witness of the conferences of those brave barons who afterwards compelled King John to sign Magna Charta, in its immediate vicinity, between Runnymede and Ankerwyke House, than as the involuntary confidant of loves so unhallowed and so unblest as those of Henry and Anne Boleyn.

(Strutt, 1822 [www.archive.org, accessed 02.02.2014])

Doubtless is the Yew at Ankerwycke a node to which the histories of the local vicinity are connected, interwoven even. Runnymede, to which Strutt refers to, is situated on the southern banks of the Thames just a few hundred metres from the tree itself. Runnymede, thought to derive from the Saxon for 'meadow of runes' (Carr-Gomm and Heygate:2010), is a historic meadow laying between Egham to the south and Wraysbury to the North, It is bordered to the east and west by Staines and Old Windsor respectively. The

very idea that this land lent itself to the casting of runes, the knowledge foretold at the hands of village elders, aids in the enchanting of an already myth stricken locale. The meadow is calm, flat, marsh like and provides the shadow for the natural vantage point of Coopers Hill running along its southern side, a raised area of land that looks over Ankerwycke and Wraysbury to the North of its slopes.



Fig. xi (Left) *Ankerwycke Yew* and (Right) *Runnymede from Coopers Hill*, Knight, 1845.

Furthermore, King John, to whom the charter was bound, often took residences in the aforementioned hunting lodge at Wraysbury, north of Runnymede, further embedding the site and its surroundings within a wider sense of historicity.

To return to the Yew itself; both the tree and its situation are ancient; they extend themselves to an experience of time, allowing the very structure or confines of history to melt. The tree holds memories incommensurably beyond the possibilities of a human; furthermore, these memories are an amalgamation of both the physical and the metaphysical. The tree is scarred, split, entangled with itself through a process of rupture and regrowth; its bark, bough and branches tell the tales of a long and arduous existence that predates the priory, the charter, the founding of Wraysbury itself. Moreover, the tree holds secrets; knowledge of the events that have unfold beneath its occluding, thickened canopy. The tree presents an immediate sense of enchantment; a comportment; of wonder, of being charmed by the novel whilst simultaneously presenting a sense of the uncanny. The Yew is by no

mistake a tree. This much is obvious insofar as can be deduced from the structure of its matter and resemblance or similitude to all other trees. And yet, such a tree feels different, its character unlike those trees that surround it; this is the Ankerwycke Yew.



Fig. xii *Ribbons, crystals and photographs offered to the Ankerwycke Yew.*
Taken by author.

The physicality of the Yew appears so unique that it sets the mind to work; the site feels alive, possessing a responsive vitality. The twisted, hollowed out trunk serves to stricken this sense of enchantment further still; an 'empty

vessel' that both hosts and amplifies the contradicting nature of the tree as both animate and static, vernacular yet sacred (Eade & Sallnow, 1991). In viewing the northern side (Fig. x) of the trunk, a certain anthropomorphism occurs; there are faces, bodies and limbs embedded, entangled within the tree itself. The tree appears almost human and yet unfathomably inhuman at the same time. To be sure, this is not the warped or manipulated perception of an individual; people visit this ancient tree precisely because of its uncanny sense of agency, the ungraspable sense of history, of memory that comes with something this old. Ankerwycke belongs to mysticism.

Studying the tree closer, one notices the vast array of ribbons, scraps of paper, crystals and polished stones that appear to act as offerings to the Yew, or even to Nature herself (Harvey, 2007). The first sighting of the yew left me awestruck; initially due to its size and formation but not least because it had been heavily decorated with candles, ribbons, polished stones and flowers. Outside of its normative historical accounts, Ankerwycke had been a site for Neo-Pagan ritual and ceremony, a tradition that I will later confirm, continues today. A large broken piece of branch lay to the side of the tree, mounted upon it, the remains of candles, incense and dead flowers. Evidence of ritual, perhaps of magic, objects that signify the trees significance in Neo-Pagan practices. Neo-Paganism, as previously discussed, is an interaction with N/nature; a direct response to the vitality and multiplicity of the Earth. As the most ancient examples of life that surround us (in abundance), trees become symbolic for the Neo-Pagan as they sidle across the temporal boundaries but also those belonging to the (meta)physicality of nature-based religion. The tree begins beneath the surface of the earth, its roots anchoring the trunk to the underworld; the body of the tree, its trunk, rises from the ground, claiming dominion by its size alone; *making a place for itself*. The branches of the canopy reach towards the Heavens, extending to the sunlight, the catalyst of all life. For the Pagan, nothing embodies transcendence more than the tree. For these reasons, Neo-Pagans have produced what is regarded as tree lore (Harvey, *ibid*); such lore dictates that trees are responsive to human engagement with them;

Many Pagans.....assert that trees are willing, and able in some way, to communicate things that they would otherwise be unaware of, and therefore the “speaking with” and the “hearing” may also pursue information.

(*ibid*, p. 132)

Communicating with trees may sound primitive, irrational even, but it is the preferred method for many, of interacting with N/nature.

The material offerings left at Ankerwycke demonstrate the site as such, a place of exchange; ribbons tied in knots are the products of spells, crystals encourage positive energy flows, photographs pay tribute to lost loved ones for whom it is hoped that the tree will keep safe. The trinketisation of the tree itself, the out of place items possibly paying respect to the spirit of the place, its *genius loci*, provides evidence of ritual. Something about the Ankerwycke Yew makes it feel like it belongs where it is; its age alone gives the impression that it has always been there. As a potential site of study, Ankerwycke had appeared to me of great importance. Firstly, the site has largely escaped previous investigation by academics due to the history attached to nearby Runnymede. Runnymede seems to have proved more favourable for historians due to its long standing association with the *Magna Carta* (Schama, 1995). Secondly, ethnographic investigations of tree law and landscape mysticism in geography are also to be found omitted, with attention being turned towards sites of human construction; Avebury, Stonehenge, Glastonbury Tor (Wylie, 2002; Holloway, 2000, 2003). However, such accounts do not draw upon the links between site materiality and magick that point toward strategic essentialisms in the conjuring of place, in making matter vital.

Research into the mysticism of trees has, in particular, been touched upon by Jones and Cloke (2002) in their *Tree Cultures* as well as in the anthropological work of Rival (2001). Pogue Harrison (1992) places an emphasis upon the symbolism of sacred groves, positing that the forests were the original dwelling place of God and such a belief is reflected in the architecture of cathedrals whose arches mirror the cloaking of the canopy. Schama (1995), Porteous (2002) and Maitland (2012) describe the linkages

between folklore, fairytales and the forest but only insofar as positioning trees within the oral traditions of storytelling. The import of mysticism in constructing places falls by the wayside in order to proffer an argument for the social place of trees, their situating alongside people. That is to say, discussions of magick and enchantment become either lost or reducible to seemingly outmoded human activity.

Ankerwycke lends itself to this project as a way of reimagining the landscape, of reencountering nature as mystical. Groups involved in Neo-Pagan moots or covens see the vitality of N/nature as a source of enchantment, the product of a magickal ecology. I believe that such a view can be extended beyond mysticism through a framework of enchantment to gain a new understanding of the ways in which both place is tied to the earth and an entanglement of man feature within such a network. I have previously offered an introduction to the theoretical underpinnings of the magickal, focusing upon the conceptions of place and the enchantment thereof, so that it can be used to mobilise magick in the practices of Neo-Pagan nature worship.

What follows now is a presentation of the empirical data I have produced to support the theoretical work developed above. There is an analysis of the ethnographic research I conducted with a group of individuals who identify as Neo-Pagan and who utilise the Ankerwycke Yew as a sacred place of ritualised worship. In doing so I wish to show how the practices of place-making are aided by landscape mysticism and how the practicing of magick not only mobilises the non-human but how it is used strategically to incite a deeper connection with the natural landscape.

The Circle of Ankerwycke

I have spoken of how the history of the tree, its sheer scale and age, are able to invoke feelings of wonder, yet it is the Yew's place within Neo-Pagan traditions that truly set it within a framework of enchantment; a magickal ecology. After my encounter of the tree at Ankerwycke, I took to the internet to research what the ribbons and charms might mean. From observing the

remains of what appeared to have been ritualised performance laid to the side of the Yew and having already spent time researching spectral geographies with ghost hunters, I had a feeling that this place too was presenting something extraordinary. A quick internet search of “Ankerwycke Yew” and “pagan” delivered immediate results. The top link was to a directory page entitled WitchVox (2011) which in turn gave me a description of a Neo-Pagan group named the Circle of Ankerwycke. Better still was the contact details for ‘Gil’, who the page instructed to telephone if one was interested in attending either the moots (monthly meetings of the group) or the rituals.

Seemingly the best way of gathering information on the ‘offerings’ I had found left at the Yew, I called the number armed with a list of questions. The discussion with Gil was brief; I informed her of my findings and she confirmed that ribbons had indeed been left at the Yew by her group, stating that she was surprised they were still there as they had formed part of the February celebration of Imbolc. “Normally the National Trust dispose of them for us” she said. I asked if it would be possible to observe a ritual at the tree, that I was a researcher and that I was interested in how the group interacted with the landscape during their practices. Gil told me that the group varies in size depending upon the ritual but that it usually ranges between 20 to 40 people. She was proud that the Circle had been working the site since 2004, with the permission of the National Trust by whom the tree site is managed.

Gil explained that though I was welcome to take part it was on the condition of participating; observation was not allowed, as it would appear invasive to those who believed themselves to be taking part in a sacred practice. There was a second condition that I should attend one or two of the monthly moots over the summer so as to get to know the group and what their belief system was about. I agreed to both, though feeling quite uncertain of what exactly it was that I would be asked to perform. Gil later confirmed with the other members of the steering group, otherwise known as the Inner Wheel of Ankerwycke, that I would be attending the moots which took place in a Conservative Members Club in Staines, Middlesex. Due to some members being absent, my first meeting with group wasn’t until August 2010, this was

some three months since I had first contacted Gil. Gil herself was not present as she had left the circle to move to Cornwall and so had instructed me that on arrival I should ask for Gina.

On attending the first moot, Gina was welcoming; mid forties, a social worker, two sons and a long-standing member of the Neo-Pagan community. She wore all black and had a pentagram symbol hanging from a leather thong strung around her neck. Gina introduced me to the rest of the group, numbering around ten in total. All were curious as to who I was and what I was doing. As with all my ethnographic work, I made the decision to inform the research subjects that I was there to document experiences of seemingly enchanted places. As it was of no importance to conceal my identity there was little point in going to the trouble of falsifying my intentions. Although the group were friendly, some of them were uncomfortable with my note taking and so I left this alone, making the decision to observe and learn through informal discussion, a practice that shaped the research from there on in.

Gina introduced me to a middle-aged man named snake (*sic*); snake described to me his path into Neo-Paganism and his belief that “Woodland is the *church* of Wicca”, that the place of the tree is not selected by the Circle for worship, rather it (the tree) chose them. I was advised to read a number of books so as to gain a basic knowledge of the practices and traditions of the group, which I agreed to do. The evening passed quicker than I had anticipated and almost three hours had disappeared since I had first met Gina. The majority of the conversation that night had been about the coming ritual, Samhain, which would take place at the end of October, the most extensive of the celebrations and one which I was invited to join.

The Neo-Pagan Calendar

The following sections will detail my workings with the Circle of Ankerwycke through four ritual ceremonies; Samhain, Yule, Imbolc and Beltane. Each example provides an insight into how the group utilise the landscape,

specifically the tree for the purposes of magick and ritualised worship. Furthermore, in describing these accounts of the events that I witnessed at the Yew, I hope to illustrate how a magickal ecology comes in to being and how the practices deployed there afford a preternatural agency to the non-human. Together these facets share linkages that form the processes of place-making at the tree site, the development of a strategic essentialism and wider the enchantment of the landscape.

Samhain

Samhain, pronounced *sow-ain*, is the name given to the celebration of Hallowe'en or for Pagans, the beginning of the New Year. Samhain traditionally marks an entry into Winter, the end of the harvest and the symbolic of the death of the land (Hutton, 2001). The celebration occurs between October 31st and November 1st and is often viewed as a festival of darkness, of openings to the underworld. Samhain 2010 was my first meeting with the Circle at the Yew and occurred at what is arguably the most important event of the Neo-Pagan calendrical year.

The gathering first took place in a National Trust car park, some quarter of a mile from the Yew. The Circle met at 7.30pm. The whole area was pitch black. In small groups, members made their way down through the meadows of Ankerwycke to a tree-lined avenue which lead to the Yew itself. When approaching the avenue, there was an unsettling drone of intense rhythmic drumming. Candles flickered through the trees, illuminating glimpses of cloaked figures.

Some members were adorned in ritual cloaks, black gowns; others were dressed more casually. People were chatting, drinking, smoking, and generally enjoying the heightening of energy before the ritual proper. More people trickled in from the meadows until there were totalling fifty five. At this point the drumming stopped. The ritual narrator told of the purpose of Samhain, of the importance of celebrating the end of the year, the end of harvest and the end of mortal lives. This was read from his smart phone; a curious juxtaposing of the ultra modern and (supposedly ancient). The

drumming resumed and the group were led down the tree-lined avenue to the entrance of a small labyrinth, constructed of ribbon and candles.



Fig. xiii *Candlelit labyrinth beneath the Yew.* Taken by author.

Instructions were given to enter the labyrinth; to ponder death figuratively, as a change; to consider the decisions one had made over the previous year and to think on what could have been done differently. Entering the maze, it was obvious that there had been orchestrated attempts at forcing specific vistas so as to illuminate different sides of the sacred tree. This movement towards sacredness was contrived, systematically devised to heighten the sense of magick at every turn.

At the end of the labyrinth lay the entrance to the place of the tree itself; again, this had been lit by candles. The group automatically arranged themselves into a circle. A cloaked man handed a candle to everyone gathered around the tree, and a ribbon. There was some talk from the ritual leader; he spoke of the ancient history of the tree, of our ancestors who struggled through the harvest and of the sacred geometry; the ley line, on which the Yew had grown from and which connects it to a host of other

'magickal' sites across the landscape through a perpetual transference of subterranean energy and a continuous movement of the magickal.

We were then asked to tie the ribbon we had been given to the right wrist of the person to our left, in remembrance of someone close to us who had passed to the other side. Some of the members began to weep; the ritual played into something of a grief work - the Yew allowing for a place of mourning. These evocations of bereavement, of both physical and emotional loss, now positioned the site within a deathscape (see Kong, 1999; Maddrell & Sidaway, 2010), a topology of mourning through which the participants could celebrate and connect with the otherworld; as Laviolette (2003) says, '(d)earth itself is a ritualised process' (p. 2.16). The candles were then lit one by one, acting as illuminated callings for loved ones who had passed; the light of the flame intended to attract spirits on a night, when the veil between this world and the next was at its thinnest, guiding the revenant to the place of the tree.



Fig. xiv *The 'Altar'*. Taken by author.

The candles were then placed into a pentangle shaped frame that rested upon the floor. This would focus the spirit's attention on the tree place, freeing them from the earth. Traditionally, Yew trees have been

planted to commemorate the dead and as Bevan-Jones states in his *The Ancient Yew* (2002), many a graveyard still shelters a Yew tree. One of the Circle members had described to me previously how Yew trees were planted in graves as living headstones, the mouth of the dead.

Praise was then given to the *genius loci*, the spirit of the place. The circle referred to this as *Morwenna Cygnis*, a female deity that dwells within the Yew; she is believed to guard the tree and it is her that the circle encourages to perform for them. Later, this deity was asked to lead the spirits back to the Underworld; the Yew became a symbol of death; it provided a material gateway between this world and the next. The axis mundi.

Throughout the ritual, tributes were made to the Yew, to its history and to the spirit that protects the circle. Handmade Samhain decorations constructed of twigs, leaves, flora and berries from the local vicinity were placed alongside carved pumpkin lanterns upon the 'altar' - a substantial section of branch that must have fallen from its own weight at some point. The altar had therefore come from the tree itself, as if proffered to the circle; it substantiated, for them, the agency of the Yew.

Cake and Mead were offered to the tree in thanks of the fruitful harvest that the circle had been gifted with. For many of them was symbolic; they had been rewarded for their hard work in money, good spirit and good health at the end of the year. Mead was poured onto the base of the tree; it soaked up quickly into the ground as if being drunk by the Yew's roots. The mood was merry as the ritual came to an end, the tree was once again thanked; some individuals placed keepsakes in the nooks of the tree's trunk as offerings, hanging corn dollies and other objects of folk craft from conveniently placed shoots and twigs. This contributed further to the sense of enchantment. Strange looking corn figures adorned the face of the tree; making it obvious to outsiders that this was a sacred place. Post ritual; something of a party began. There was much drinking and merry making and tales of Samhain's past, ghost stories and the like. The tree stood above the circle, watching over the goings on. The gnarled trunk embossed with human looking faces in the candlelight. The completed ritual had brought the tree to life.

The materiality of the site, the altar, the decorations, the candles, ribbons, grass, sticks, leaves, branches et cetera; these all play a role in the coming to life of the Ankerwycke Yew. To be sure, the immateriality of the *genius loci*, *Morewenna Cygnus*, cannot be accessed other than through material engagements; through the offerings left at its corporeal body, through the placing of the body within its vicinity. The tree remained rooted, in situ; however, its spirit of place appeared far more transgressive. The vitality of the tree, its spirit or agency, was something that can be conjured, the ritual performance based at the site worked to perpetuate this. When I asked one of the steering group why they 'worked' with the Yew, they replied "because we are meant to, because the tree chose that place for us". The same thing might be said of the tree itself; it feels as though it is meant to play host to rituals. That it is a place where our entanglement with nature can be witnessed. In either way, such a claim indicates two things that purport an essentialism of the tree; firstly that it can select, determine, request to be ritualised. Secondly, that the tree itself is not the draw here, rather it acts as a conduit for the *genius loci*; the Yew animates the spirit of place, it materialises the immaterial. The tree practices that took place during Samhain celebration helped to mobilise the site, not only in the sense of setting it within a magickal context but also in the way that it began to live, appearing to move, gesticulate and converse with the Circle.

Yule

Yule is the midwinter festival, it takes places just before the Christian celebration of Christmas. As the dates of Neo-Pagan feasts are often based around the solar and lunar solstices the dates can vary. Normally Yule is celebrated between the 21st and 23rd of December, though Hutton (2001) claims that originally the festival would last until the 1st January of the coming year. Again, the group met in the car park, preparing for an 8pm start. The starting time is irrelevant to the ritual other than that it allows members of the circle enough time to arrive at the site after a day of work. There were fewer members that had turned out for this ritual than for the previous

Samhain celebration. I asked Gina why this might be, she replied that it was “normal for this time of year, people don’t really like coming out in the cold and dark, especially when it’s Christmas.” I was slightly perplexed as to what Christmas would have to do with anything but Gina pointed out to me that the majority of Neo-Pagans don’t have families who share their beliefs and also, that having been brought up celebrating Christmas, they find it difficult to get away from commitments to friends and family. It made sense, to an extent. Harvey (2007) acknowledges that Neo-Pagans derive their beliefs from a number of sources and the privileging of family traditions over personal beliefs is likely less of a disparity in faith than I had initially perceived. Additionally, the temperature was struggling to get above freezing, the ground was frozen and we were walking in the absence of light, save a few candles that Gina and ‘Tom’, another Inner Circle member, had brought along.

Crossing the meadows together, I counted fourteen of us heading towards the avenue of trees that led down towards the Yew. There was a significant ritualistic importance placed upon the journey between the meeting point and the yew itself which should not be overlooked, a commonality that exists between the movement of actants in and around Neo-Pagan ritual and early forms of Celtic-Christian pilgrimage a removal of the normative demarcations of the divine in favour of ‘sacralising the quotidian’ (Maddrell and della Dora, 2013, p. 1109). The walk itself proved to be the starting point at which the practitioners would start to cross a liminal threshold, moving from the vernacular space of the car park to the venerated ground of the tree; the sacred mobility that I could feel coming into play here was not only engendered through the anticipation and darkness but by the progression forwards, towards the tree, and the ritualistic sounds employed by the group to accompany the journey. Approaching the avenue the rhythmic drumming began, beating faster and more intensely as we drew closer. The sound echoed the movement; this is the point at the ritual where mobility truly comes into play; the drums not only echoed our walking but guided the procession, driving us forward. The group were instructed not to stop but to continue down towards the Yew. As the trees gave way to the

open space where the Ankerwycke Yew grows, a masked figure called us to halt. Cloaked in black, he stood before us, adorned in a bronze mask that shimmered in the candlelight.



Fig. xv *The Sun God welcomes the Circle.* Taken by author.

The Yule Lore Speaker announced that the ritual was open. We passed by the masked man and along the pathway under the tree. As the group did so, each of us was ‘smudged’, cleansed by a smouldering posy of herbs and grasses. The smoke cleared away the evil spirits. I was proffered a card that displayed the following:

*The **challenger** asks attendees, “Why do you come to this sacred place”*

They reply, “To awaken the Sun”.

*The **challenger** replies “And in what vain do you come here”*

They reply "In a spirit of love and trust".

*The **smudger** smudges the attendee and finishes by saying, "You may enter".*

I read my lines before passing beneath the branches and into the snow free ground under the canopy of the Yew. Once more the Lore Speaker's voice began to boom, this time narrating the tale of Yule and the importance of welcoming in the Sun God, the role embodied by masked man we passed only a few moments before.

The Circle was then cast, guardians of the quarters were called and the circle swept clean with a makeshift broom constructed of dead twigs bound to a length of hazel wood. Despite the cold, the area around the tree felt warm enough to stand without the chattering of teeth. Some of the circle members had arrived earlier to arrange a circle of candles around the base of the tree. The snow glowed yellow beneath the flickering nightlights. The altar was set as it had been before, with candles, a board displaying a pentagram and an assortment of flora; holly, mistletoe and a Yule log.



Fig. xvi *The candlelit Yew cast in the circle.* Taken by author.

Once the circle was cast the main part of the ceremony began. Gina who was leading the ritual had decided to miss out on the meditative part of the performance in favour of chanting due to the temperature and snowfall. The group, following Gina's lead began to call out "The Circle of Ankerwycke",

starting with a whisper and ending in a frenzy of screams. The onus here was on building energy in the circle, coercing the powers that lay outside of the tree to manifest within us.

Once the calling had come to a climax, blessings were bestowed upon *Morwenna Cygnus*, the tree spirit. The Lore Speaker then initiated the ritual proper; he called to the invokers of the God and the Goddess to come fourth and immediately two member of the circle stepped forward. They turned to the tree and offered mulled wine and cake as gifts. Returning to their places they were then replaced by two other members; this time offering praise to the Sun and to the Moon. The Lore Speaker described to the circle the importance of the sun and reasons for calling Him forward to banish the darkness. The man in the mask stepped forward from outside of the circle – he must have hidden out of sight behind the tree, as I had not noticed him since the ritual had begun. The masked man who had played the Sun God was called forth to bring light and clarity into the circle.

Each member was then prompted to tell the Sun God what they had learnt over the past year and what, if anything, they desired for the next. This was followed in turn by the Sun God and then the group collectively chanting “So mote it be”. We were instructed to turn to the Yew, to pay attention to the way ‘she’ climbed above us. “Can you see how she moves before you?” enquired the Lore Speaker, “She sleeps through the Winter, but breaks her slumber to grow before you”. I looked for movement but failed to see any; unlike the rest of the group who were astonished at how the tree had once again transformed before them. The Sun God, returned to his place behind the Yew and the Lore Speaker welcomed Gina to close the circle. The Four Quarters were bid farewell and the ritual came to an end. Altogether, the ceremony has lasted only twenty five minutes.

As we stood around the fire pit trying to keep warm after the ritual, I noticed that snake, who I had previously met at the first moot I attended, was standing with some other members by the tree. I walked over to greet him and was met with a welcoming smile. As the conversation flowed into topics of ritual and practice I asked him again why this tree was particularly significant, he responded:

“It’s not entirely...whilst we might focus and base our ritual around say a tree, we are actually connecting to the otherworlds and how we move from life to life between them.”

The tree then, was and is not enchanted for all of its worshippers, it becomes so only strategically, as a portal, a way into connecting with somewhere else - some place other than the tree itself. In conducting the ritual then, we see a contrived method for mobilising the place, its sacrality and its worshippers. In fact the tree only becomes a place of sacrality in order to trigger this movement; the sacredness of the site is attributed to multiple layers of time and space. The ritual or practicing of magick becomes the impetus for enchantment, or rather a strategy for its development.

Magick or ritual is then, the act of fostering enchantment through a set of deliberate strategies (Bennett, 2001). Moreover, these strategies are complicit with the act of developing essentialism. In using the tree, a site which was said to choose the circle to worship under it, the group have bound themselves to a particular place. The Circle have progressed this ‘binding’ further by naming the spirit of the place and therefore providing themselves with a basis for the sacrality under which they worship. This second ritual led me to believe that what was paramount to the ceremony was not only the site but again, the movement towards it, the making of a place beneath it and the moving of individuals, non human actants (tree, candles, wind, sun, earth) and energies in and around the place. Mobility had become a key role in the complexity of magick.

Imbolc

Imbolc, like Yule and Samhain is of a Celtic origin; it was the name given to the start of the lambing season (Carr-Gomm and Heygate, 2009) and is considered to be the start of Spring. The ritual takes place in early February and is used to welcome in the warmer weather and start of life anew for flora, fauna and humans. Procession and drumming began this ritual as they had done previously and as the route to the tree remained the same I shall not discuss it again here. Needless to say that the cold was biting, it was February

2nd shortly after Yule and the ground was still frozen. Candles lit the way through the meadows and towards the Yew. Gina had contacted me about a week before the ritual and asked me whether I “would like to call a quarter” during the ceremony, to which I agreed. I had been given the part of calling East. This I had been told was fool-proof as I would go first and have to turn to the direction of the tree. It felt appropriate to take an active part in the ritual so as to gain a closer experience of what it ‘felt’ like to invoke an element and not least because it showed a certain level of acceptance on the part of the circle. They trusted me, I was no longer an observer but was entrusted with opening the ritual proper.

As always each member of the circle was smudged before entering the tree place. This time the emphasis of the ritual was on bidding farewell to the winter season and its coldness. With this in mind each of us was invited to burn any remaining Yule logs or winter greens that we were in possession of; the act of burning quite literally taking the cold stocks of winter and turning them into light. The fire and the act of burning were symbolic and a conduit for the lesson of the entire ritual; that light would be entering the world once more. Again, there began an emphasis on movement, on a passing to and from somewhere; seasons, darkness, the profane. Stories were told of the elders, of the traditional reasons for celebrating the sun as previous communities of farmers and land lovers had always done before. The Circle was gathered and cast; I began by calling the East:

“Guardians of the East, divine wind of enlightenment and inspiration. Bring us the warm, soft breezes that herald the start of Spring. Bless us with words of knowledge and open our minds to new ideas. We ask that you lend us your guidance and protection tonight. We bid you Hail and Welcome!”

I did so without fault and surprised at my actions, I began to feel a warmth inside that had not been there before. There is a sense of embodying the tree place that comes to mind when I think back to the ritual, of the way that everybody in the group had become instruments for the enchanting of that space; no one thing of any greater import than another. Through the ritual, one becomes more aware of the presence that the site casts and of its history,

a past that permeates the place and which adds a pervading sense of verticality, of depth to the sacred – ‘deep time’ (Holloway, 2003). The ritual continued.

Tributes were made to the gods as they were once again invoked to feed the circle with energy. Similarly to Samhain, the Yew tree became the object of our gaze. I noted the following from a copy of the ritual script left upon the altar at the end of the ceremony:

*You witness the turning of the wheel as you have for many centuries.
With roots reaching deeply within the Earth, you sit at the gateway
between the realms, a portal to the Underworld connecting us with the
eternal cycles of life death and rebirth.*

*We feel you as you join your energy with that of the earth, soft beneath
our feet.*

*We feel you as you join your energy with that of air as we smell the
incense.*

*We feel you as you join your energy with that of fire and see candles
flicker.*

*We feel you as you join your energy with that of water flowing near this
sacred place.*

Hail and welcome. (No author given)

Once more immaterialism was the basis for an awakening of the tree spirit; energies, unseen agencies that affect the circle, ‘we feel’, ‘we see’, ‘we smell’; energies belonging to the tree, *Morwenna Cygnus*. Once more there was a strong sense of verticality, of a movement upwards from below and of a ‘deep time’ (*ibid*) which performed a reconciliation of the physical and the incorporeal, of eternal powers. Again the site was strategically used to operate the sacred. A candle was lit in favour of the tree spirit, its *genius loci*. Praise was then offered to the God and the Goddess; candles were lit and the deities welcomed.

At this point, the masked man or *Sun God* entered from the side of the circle, he was holding lit flares in front of him and begging to be reawakened. The flares were blinding; I looked to the floor to avoid direct contact with the burning red that illuminated the entire space. As the glow began to fade I looked up; a female member of the circle stood in the centre of the ritual space. The masked man was facing her; he described his winter sleep and his

reasoning for waking and demanded the affections of the Goddess, who he referred to as “The Lady of Spring”. The two pledged allegiance to each other, each one offering their hand and a lit candle to the other. As the candles were exchanged a dance ensued, the two bodies moving around the inside of the circle, slowly at first and then quicker and quicker as a drum beat away in the background. The fire from the pit outside of the tree cast shadows across the circle; the tree too appeared to dance in the flames. The drumming ceased. Both performers bowed and took their place in the circle. The ritual was drawn to a close.

Beltane

Beltane is the final account I wish to provide of the Ankerwycke rituals. Taking place in mid spring, Beltane sometimes written as Beltain, welcomes in the summer. It is the season to which May Poles and Morris dancing are attributed and is a celebration of the vitality of the Earth, of sexuality and of fertility (Harvey, 2007). The Beltane celebration at Ankerwycke was the most mobile of them all. Whereas previous rituals had mostly pointed at the movement of nature, Beltane tried to mimic and re-enact the natural order. There were of course obvious similarities to the previous rituals regarding procession and smudging and the casting of the circle. However, this was the first time I had proceeded towards the tree in daylight. What welcomed the group upon their arrival on this occasion was neither a Sun God nor a Lore Speaker, rather it was something altogether more ‘Pagan’: a six foot high ‘wicker man’ complete with extended phallus which marked the point of entry to the tree. *He* was, as we were informed during the ritual, symbolic of fertility, an image of the life that Spring brings with it.

The wicker man was moved during the ritual and brought down to watch over the sacred space. Moreover he was given an active role in the performance of the ritual; to observe the joining of the May King with the May Queen. After Gods and Goddesses had been invoked, tree spirits blessed and Quarters called, the ritual began to gather a new lease of energy.



Fig. xvii *A wicker man marks the entry to the ritual space.* Taken by author.

The Lore Speaker called forth the May King and a participant stepped forward, adorned in a long green cloak and a crown. The King recited some words on the topic of the spring season, the lengthening of the days and the movement towards light, new life and reproduction. He then called for his Queen. A cloaked woman in a green gown and crown stepped inside of the circle. “The King must catch his Queen” yelled the Lore Speaker. The Queen began to run around the circle, the King in tow. The pair were running at quite some speed, occupying the space as two green flashes taunting each other with near misses, touches here and there but with her always narrowly out of the reach of him. As the two chased on, the onlookers began to cheer and chant, clapping their hands and dancing to what I now heard as piped music coming from outside of the circle. With a final snatch the crowned man reached out and brought the young woman under his cloak. Clapping ensued as the two, now out of breath, embraced each other to yet more cheers.



Fig. xviii *The May Queen and King.* Taken by author.

The performance of the capturing of the May Queen was used to display the energy of the season, its positioning underneath the tree was symbolic of the rejuvenation of life that occurs in the tree-place on a cyclical basis, throughout the summer seasons. Although the Yew featured more as backdrop to the ritual, its spirit was nevertheless called forth by the Law Speaker and its twigs and leaves were used in the making of the crown headdresses for the Spring Royals. In doing so the Ankerwycke Yew not only played a physical part in the ritual through offering a sacred space in which the ceremony could be carried out but also in bringing its more tangible, material qualities into use as instruments of the celebration. The ‘wicker man’ too had been constructed entirely of wood, vines and twigs from the surrounding area of the tree-place. Everything produced was from the site; these materials were considered as sacred as the tree itself and allowed the

energies of the land to flow within the circle, now embodied in material form. At the end of the evening the wicker figure was dismantled and burned, each member taking a piece to offer to the flames, making a wish or prayer as they did so.

The movement in and around the circle once again illustrates the importance of mobility. In defining magick we saw two common elements, transference of energy and transference of knowledge. The rituals acted out under the tree honour this; mirroring movement in myriad forms through procession, dance, light, chanting, energy. What occurs to me when thinking of the Yew, is that it is not merely a historical lineage that engenders wonder here, nor is it just the size and scale of the tree that provokes awe. Rather, it is the vitality that the ritual practice plays privy to that informs the process of enchantment. Nothing particularly 'magickal' occurs. Yet, there is a privileging of the preternatural, of the agency of the tree that does not exist in the vernacular for the majority of us. It is afforded essence, raised beyond the strata of the merely non-human. We do not readily come across sites that are so obviously ancient as this and yet rarer still are they so bizarrely formed.

Furthermore, the treatment of the Yew as alive; the manner in which it composes itself in the candlelight; the ways in which the landscape seem to have adapted to produce such a space as this, all heighten the feeling that this is how the place is supposed to be, that nature has somehow intervened in the order of things. If these feelings exist only for the purpose of the ritual then this does not in itself deny essentialism, rather it points to the idea of the essential being used strategically; that it exists temporally, to be embodied by the place for the purposes of sacrality and the practicing of magick.

Lastly, to speak of mobility, of movement, once again. To say that the tree is fixed, rooted or anchored to the site is but to speak of only half of its being. To be sure, the tree is far from static; it grows, develops, reaches upwards and outwards, gathering place for itself. The essence of the site, it's supposed unique character or spirit thus develops simultaneously. As the tree usurps earth and air from the surrounding flora; it moves, at a slow but steady pace. The rituals practiced below the Yew's branches play mimicry to

such movement; the slow unwinding journey through the labyrinth, the diffusion of the mead through the soil, the subterranean energy line, the transference of knowledge in the rites, of narratives, poetry and song; the procession, dancing, drumming, the movement from darkness into light, from death to life and back again. The magick of the tree comes about via a process of enchantment that is reliant not so much upon the conjectured fixing of the tree and therefore its energy to one place, rather it is about cycles, rhythms and journeys into the sacred, the materiality of the tree acting as a portal; a gateway to enchantment.

Enchanting Place

Having provided an insight into the workings of place based ritual, where might we position magick theoretically, how then might this fit into a critical understanding of the enchanted sacred landscape? For this we must look at how magick can be viewed within a conceptual framework of placial mobility, of the peculiar agency of sacred places. Magick is a process of enchantment; it functions as a deeper ecological awareness to bring about willed changes to the natural environment.

Enchantment informs mysticism; it is the process whereby objects of banality become re-envisioned as alive, as vital matter (Bennett, 2010). As Mackian states, such a process;

connects across the boundary between the tangible physical world of experience and the intangible, unknowable world of spirit; and these connections, or communications, are fundamental to the everyday worlds of those who experience them.

(Mackian, 2011, p. 69)

Magick does not replace nor supersede enchantment theory, rather it mobilises enchantment through a particular set of methodologies. Sites like Stonehenge and the standing stones seen at the village of Avebury, UK become viewed as enchanted because they are inexplicable, despite the workings of archaeologists and historians to unravel their mystery. Such sites

as these provide places of ritual, their very mystery –tangible and yet incomprehensible - engendering the perfect gap for mysticism to fill. Magickal ecologies are fostered through sites like these, heterotopic spaces that are not only ‘empty vessels’ (Coleman and Eade, 2004) where we seek to impart meaning but furthermore spaces like that of the Yew. Spaces that demand an unorthodox engagement in order to become sacralised, appearing unnatural and then becoming seemingly more so through the alternative spiritualities that they encompass. It is the profound sense of spiritual attachment that is awakened in individuals who visit these sites that appear magickal to them.

Magick forms sacrality. As has been shown in the casting of the circle, the place is made, sacrality evoked. Magick enables the sacred, allowing it to transcend prescription. Magick does not require a fixed point for its practice; it may use but does not rely on pre-existing sacred spaces. Rather, practitioners of magick invoke the ‘spirit of place’ in order to perform rituals. In other words, magick is a strategy for both enchantment and for essentialism. Strategic essentialisms are used to construct sacrality; the embodiment of the space by the ritualist not only occurs in particular to this space but it is one that cannot be felt by those outside of the performance. What exists then is a site that is temporarily sacred, that for a limited time only affords a preternatural agency to N/nature. I only wish to acknowledge here the differences between the magickal and the otherwise sacred, and to illustrate the emphasis on mobility and ecological understanding that are inherent with magickal practices.

Closing Comments

The materiality of the Ankerwycke site, the altar, the decorations, the candles, ribbons, grass, sticks, leaves, branches et cetera; these all play a role in the coming to life of the Ankerwycke Yew and furthermore the role of mobility in the enchanting of the site. The material offerings initiate a sense of a mobility of the sacred; things are brought *to* the tree and in doing so are

viewed to have become magickally valorised (Foley, 2011; 2013). Through the circulation of material offerings at the Yew, we see a change in the perceived state of the objects and a galvanising of their affectual qualities, which can only be brought about through their movement into the site itself. These trinkets are placed at the tree as payments of love and respect to the spirit of the place, its *genius loci*, and in doing so there exists the hope that such an act can bring about an affective change to a space outside of the tree (Foley, 2011) – that its preternatural powers will become mobilised via a remote agency. Such a process sees a confirmation of the extended veneration of the sacred space via material souvenirs.

Through a bringing to rather than a taking away of the sacred ‘the more-than-representational qualities which material objects might stand in for’ (Maddrell & della Dora, 2013: 1120) augment the sacrality of the tree; the knots, ties and corn dollies which adorn the site do not merely infer a sacredness, they confirm it, tying both practices and people to the tree itself. To be sure, the sacred cannot be accessed other than through these material engagements with the place, through the offerings left at its corporeal body (the tree), through placing the body within its vicinity. The vitality of the tree, its spirit or agency, is something that is conjured and the ritual performance based at the site works to perpetuate this. When I asked one of the Circle members why they work with the Yew, they replied “because we are meant to, because the tree chose that place for us”. The same thing might be said of the tree itself; it feels as though it is meant to play host to rituals. That it is a place where our entanglement with nature can be witnessed. The practices that took place during the Samhain celebration helped to mobilise the site, not only in the sense of setting it within a magickal context but also in the way that it began appearing to move, gesticulate and converse with the Circle.

The movement in and around the sacred circle beneath the tree illustrates the importance of mobility; in defining magick we saw two common elements, transference of energy and transference of knowledge. The rituals acted out under the tree honours this; they mirror movement in myriad forms; through procession, dance, light, chanting, energy. When

thinking of the Yew, what occurs to me is that it is not merely a historical lineage that engenders sacrality here, nor is it just the size and scale of the tree that provokes enchantment. Rather, it is the vitality that the ritual plays privy to which informs the enchantment process. Nothing particularly 'magickal' occurs. Yet, there is a privileging of the agency of the tree that does not exist in the vernacular for the majority of us. The enchantment of the Yew comes about as a direct result of the interplay between its fixity and the ongoing processes of mobility that occur around it.

The treatment of the tree as 'magickally' sacred rests upon this practice, both in terms of its mobility and of its becoming enchanted, an extension of the affective qualities of the Yew that sees it shift between the everyday and the more-than-representational. It is afforded essence, raised beyond the strata of the merely non-human. We do not readily come across sites that are both ancient and aesthetically peculiar as the Ankerwycke Yew. Furthermore, the treatment of the Yew as alive; the manner in which it composes itself in the candlelight; the ways in which the landscape seems to have adapted to produce such a space as this, all heighten the feeling that this is how the place is supposed to be; that nature has somehow intervened in the order of things. If these feelings exist only for the purpose of the ritual then this does not in itself deny essentialism, rather it points to the idea of the essential being used strategically; that it exists temporally, to be embodied by the place for the purposes of sacrality and the practicing of magick. Magick is about understanding the world at both micro and macro levels; its user seeks to affect and be affected by the occluded energies of the earth. Magick is a mode of mobilisation and is the resulting composite of a spiritually inflected ecological philosophy. The magick of the tree comes about via a process of enchantment that is reliant not so much upon the conjectured fixing of the tree and therefore its energy to one place, rather it is about cycles, rhythms and journeys into the sacred, the materiality of the tree acting as a portal; a gateway to enchantment that stands at the threshold of the sacred.

VI. Geomancy: The Ley of the Land

“When we concentrate on a material object, whatever its situation, the very act of attention may lead to our involuntarily sinking into the history of that object. Novices must be able to skim over matter if they want matter to stay in the exact same level of the moment. Transparent things through which the past shines.”

- V. Nabokov, *Transparent Things*.

Trajectory

Nowhere is the evidence of mankind’s interconnectedness with nature more prevalent than that found in the remains of ancient earthworks, causeways and monuments. The barrows, cairns, henges and moats of old England provide us with an unrivalled clarity; an insight into how *places* have been in our past, brought forward from nature. Forts were built on hills due to them being naturally occurring vantage points; shrines, monuments and henges constructed at points where water permeated the surface as natural springs or where ancient trees climbed towards the heavens; barrows and ditches carved out of soft geologically stratified landscapes. Early humans were bound to nature; held captive by the elements. Yet, at the same time that their contemporary technologies might have impeded a emancipation from nature – from the tyranny of dry summers and perishing winters – early human occupation had the opportunity to develop a relationship to the environment that allowed for enchantment and mysticism, for a rich tapestry of spiritual attachments to one’s surroundings (Armstrong 2005).

This chapter is by no means intended to romanticise primitive culture and repackage it into the ‘spiritual loss’ that has become ubiquitous amongst contemporary nature and eco-spiritualist writers. The objective here is to explore the ways in which such an ecocentric experience might still exist. Through tracing a connectivity to remains of the past, individuals are accessing an enchanted nature via spiritual readings of the physical

interconnections, the linear correlations and geometric patterns, that have been left upon the landscape by our ancestors.

Theories of correlation and patternation between sites of prehistoric importance were initially surmised in the writings on leylines of Hereford born photographer and antiquarian Alfred Watkins in the early 1920s. Since Watkins, a number of New Age writers, occultists, naturalists and fringe archaeologists have conjectured as to the existence and meaning of these lines that scar the country. This aim of this chapter is to address the foci of landscape, place and spirituality through the lens of leylines. The challenge therefore, is to account for the cultural genealogy, practices and theoretical underpinnings of leylines and geomantic depictions of the environment. In light of this, the final and most necessary task will be to interrogate the lines themselves. What is the importance of linear forms? How might these formations allow for an alternative accessing of the landscape? How does the leyline strengthen, disrupt or dissolve conceptions of place? And, how then, might such a nuanced theorising of place lend itself to notions of enchantment? Starting with a discussion on the linear, this chapter shall illustrate the way a symbiotic relationship between absence and presence, the spiritual and the archaeological has worked to produce a form of landscape mysticism that works to imbue the wider physical environment with a sense of enchantment.

Lineage

The very idea of the line suggests movement, or at least opportunity for mobility to exist. A line has two connected points; it runs from and between one and the other. Ingold (2007) posits two manifestations of the line; threads, an entanglement of lines upon a surface, and traces that can either add or remove from a surface linearly. We place a line *upon* something or we place a line *in* something. The line suggests two certainties; firstly that there is or will be a beginning, a place where the line starts, where a journey, distance or trajectory sets off. Secondly, a line must have an end, a finishing point at which there is a terminus of some description. The line might not

necessarily be joined to anything other than itself; that is between the origin and the endpoint. However, more often than not lines pass through things or intersect points within the range of the line's trajectory. There is in fact a certain uncanniness to thinking of lines: beyond the banality of what the line is, we have of greater import, the allure of finding out where the line goes, what it means, what it does. The line itself is an altogether familiar entity, in the recess of our past we have all begun to form shapes, write words, pictorially describe the world around us as abstract lines; crayons or felt tip pens putting into physical form what our infantile minds could not express as anything other than crude scribbling.

However, the linear markings created by a child are no less open to subjective interpretation than those belonging to the Neo-Plasticist Piet Mondrian whose formation of non-representational geometric patterns challenged early twentieth century notions of aesthetic beauty. Lines tell us something, or at least they try to; perhaps then it is more apt to describe lines as indicators. A line indicates movement; a line may indicate ~~error~~; or importance. One can have a line of thought, or follow a line of inquiry. A line can divide, or subtract. Time is plotted as a line, travel mapped as a line, so too is the notation of music. Lines indicate boundaries, physical and figurative. On the face they indicate age, on the fingers, identity. On a graph the line is used to indicate both relationality and correlation. To be sure, a line is never *just* a line, it need not even be straight; wave, spiral, arc, loop, squiggle – each indicates something different. Trains follow lines, roads are similarly linear, paths and footways too. Power runs along lines.

However, the ubiquity of the line is not the key facet of this particular line of thought, rather it is the idea that lines *do* something; that they have an inherent agency about them. Such a theorising is necessary if we are to survey the place of lines in contemporary landscape mysticism and its geomantic traditions. Nevertheless, a few thematics that have been raised should be taken in to consideration whilst reading this chapter; firstly, that lines indicate movement, secondly that they can signify correlation and that can intersect points of some kind.

In his *Lines: A Brief History*, Ingold (2007) notes the relationship between the linear, movement and place. In conjecturing that 'Life on the spot surely cannot yield an experience of place, of being *somewhere*' (p. 02), Ingold sets up a theoretical trajectory which supports a spatiality of place, an experience of being '*somewhere*' as reliant upon movement. Ingold surmises that '(t)o be a place, every *somewhere* must lie on one or several paths of movement to and from places elsewhere' (*ibid*). To this end, we might consider then that places can only exist as *places* if they are in connection, in dialogue with other places. This is much in keeping with Tuan's (1977) belief that places are pauses or resting points in space; suggesting that there is an inter-relationality between points of movement (lines) and points of stasis (places). Such a view supposes that movement is integral to the creation of place and that place is mutually indebted to the continuity of this movement and the creation of other places. Where nature permits, humans like most animals, tend to move in lines.

Traditionally, settlements have occurred either as a result of people having paused whilst *en route* to somewhere, or established residence having got there. Archaeology suggests that this appears to be the case our early ancestors just as it has been for their successors (Hoskins, 1981). In regards to lines, moreover mystical linear land patternations, is the point at which the more ancient of these settled places can be seen to physically correlate along lines. It should be of little surprise then that as roads run in and between towns, villages and cities forming a series of linear valences, so too do paths and trackways connect a number of ancient sites, settlements and monuments. As will be explicated further in the discussion of Watkins ley theory (1922), the enchantment of the landscape comes about through the line itself. The banality of such a simple indicator is rendered uncanny by the magnitude of attachments and connections it holds and moreover, its capacity to link, to lead somewhere. Enchantment does not necessary imply a supernatural agency; lines are capable of entering into the realms of wonder and awe through entirely logical processes. Macfarlane (2012) notes the power of the line on the landscape;

‘The eye is enticed by a path, and the mind’s eye also. The imagination cannot help but pursue a line in the land – onwards in space, but also backwards in time to the histories of the route and its previous followers.

(p. 15).

Such a view places power in the line, it draws upon an agency of the trace or marker, one which invites us into the landscape as if by its own accord. The line possesses the power to draw us in, to confuse us, to stir us.

Take the maze for instance; mazes are created through a meticulous process of ordering lines so as to deliberately confuse, unsettle and disturb those that follow them. The idea of the linear *per se* becomes fractured, that is, the points of beginning and end seemingly no longer exist or are at least become more or less un navigable without a prior knowledge of their routes. Mazes use lines to create a space to become lost in, with intent; their pathways look altogether identical and yet are in most cases entirely new with each turn. Here the linear becomes *delinearised*; lines work against themselves, each pathway leading to an endpoint that either does not exist or is not the ultimate end to which one strives to discover - the centre. Again, it is indicated that the lines of a maze are only confusing because each line, each wall, hedge or pathway, infers a root to closure, to the completion of the task at hand and yet in this instance, each line, each marker of the maze is there to deceive, to stall completion and resist the reaching of an end. In this sense the line negates *telos*. Or at the very least obscures it. The processes of enchantment, of a perceived agency to the line of the maze come into play when we consider that the maze intends to trick us. The maze rises up at every path but one in order to slow us down, to control our movement, to force composure. By forcing vistas, the confusing sensual properties of mazes are not unlike those affects afforded to the ley line. As we shall see, leys too force specific views and like the maze are also aim to become an embodied lineage.

A final comment on lines: in a discussion of enchantment of the mundane, of the mysticism of a line’s agency, how might we regard the presence or absence of the line? Returning to Ingold (2007), we are presented with a short taxonomy of lines. Ingold outlines that the majority of

lines can be categorised as existing as one of two forms: thread or trace. The thread 'is a filament of some kind, which may be entangled with other threads or suspended between points in three dimensional space.' and may appear to have a surface but is not produced on a surface. Listing examples such as 'ball(s) of wool, 'an electrical circuit' and 'a washing line', Ingold describes the thread as being predominantly artificial in origin, though can and indeed do occur naturally. Threads are interwoven, they create things of tangibility, and hence are conducive to the production of a surface, given that they hold a physical presence. The second nomenclature occurs as a trace; the trace is that pertaining to a mark made *upon* a surface. It is latter of the categories that I wish to focus upon here.

In traces, Ingold ascribes a second order of classification: lines belonging to traces exist as either additive or reductive. The distinction lays in the way the line is produced; when pressed, the pencil adds a layer of carbon to the paper, the line or marking is added to the surface. In this case of the reductive trace we see quite the opposite; a scoring or carving of a surface results in the removal of material from the substrate. Curiously though, in regards to leys, can such a distinction be made? Leys as we shall see, dwell upon and within the surface (Ingold, 2000), they may exist as either material or immaterial actants, or as both. Leys can also be interwoven; they can form shapes, patterns and arguably a surfaced network.

The sacred and the enchanted profane

Sitting within this developing trope of preternaturalism, of the strange vitality of nature and of places, I would like to articulate a discourse of place that deals with the interconnectedness, the relationality that is expressed through certain occult beliefs which allow for enchantment to be seen linearly as both mobile and navigable. Strictly speaking this is to be then, a discussion of cartographics, of maps and of mapping, albeit in an arcane fashion. Furthermore this is an enquiry in the broader sense, of how lines interlope the realms of archaeology, spirituality and placial ontology. Moreover, how lines might indicate a particular trajectory that lends itself to

a re-imagining and re-acquainting with our surroundings. Explicitly then, what this section intends to achieve is an enquiry that explicates the interconnectedness of enchantment and place, of place and nature and of people and enchanted places. What then might these lines of enchantment look like and where might we encounter them?

Alfred Watkins: The ley of the land

In the September of 1921 Alfred Watkins, then aged 66, delivered a talk to the Woolhope Naturalist's Field Club presenting his thesis that the landscape could be mapped as a series of straight lines or *alignments* that 'connected ancient burial mounds, monuments, barrows, ditches, castles, ponds and trackways' (Matless, 1998, p. 81).Watkins went on to detail such alignments as ley lines. Born in Hereford, UK, during the January of 1855, to Innkeepers Charles and Ann, Alfred Watkins was one of eight children. Alfred's father was a successful businessman and gave his children an untypically privileged childhood, even accomplishing the rarity and luxury of building his own home. Ron Shoesmith (1990), who has produced the only biography of Watkins' life describes how the experience of having seen his new family home being constructed, was the initial motivation for the young Watkins' interest in architectural history.

As Watkins grew older he entered a long and varied career path, beginning at the Hereford Brewery his father had purchased, restored and reopened. From the brewery, Watkins moved into the flour business, another inheritance from his father's prosperous business developments. Along with his elder brother, also of his father's namesake, Watkins strived to improve the quality of his flour (Vagos) and the yield of the family mill – the only mill to be electric lit during this period (Shoesmith, 1990). Later, at the age of 21 and already a keen photographer, Watkins began to develop a solution to a problem that had besieged photographers across the country; calculating the correct time for creating the perfect photographic exposure. Innovative and creative, Watkins produced the Bee Meter, perfected for calculating the exact amount of light and time required in almost any lit environment.

The meter was so successful that it was used during Scott's expedition to the Antarctic in 1910 (*ibid*). To add to the complexity of Watkins' history, we then find that not only was he a keen photographer but Watkins also had become a keen antiquarian, local historian and archaeologist. And perhaps this is where Watkins' biography begins to make sense in terms of just how he came to deduce the existence of leys. Already well published in the fields of photography and history, Watkins' long walks across the rolling Herefordshire countryside had generated a huge amount of data, both written and photographic; the work indicated the age and locations of ancient monuments, hill forts, pre-Roman villages, churches, trees, follies and more. What Watkins later noticed was that these objects and their places appeared to be aligned in an unmistakably intentional fashion. Long straight trackways appeared to Watkins as etching their way across the landscape and naturally he attributed the causation of these lines as matching the age of the monuments that marked them. Watkins went on to describe the conception;

Imagine a fairy chain stretched from mountain peak to mountain peak, so far as the eye could reach, and paid out until it touched the high places of the earth at a number of ridges, banks and knowls. Then visualise a mound, circular earthwork, or clump of trees, planted on these high points, and in low points in the valley, other mounds ringed round with water to be seen from a distance. Then great standing stones brought to mark the way at intervals, and on a bank leading up to a mountain ridge or down to a ford the track cut deep so as to form a guiding notch on the skyline as you come up. In a bowl or mountain pass the road cut deeply to show as a notch afar off. Here and there, and at two ends of the way, a beacon fire used to lay out the track. With ponds dug on the line or streams banked up into "flashes" to form reflecting points on the beacon track so that it might be checked when at least once a year the beacon was fired on the traditional day. All these works exactly on the (ley) line.

(Watkins, 1925, p. 218)

The foci of Watkins alleged discovery, was not then of magical genealogy, rather it was a clear diagnosis of the facts as they presented themselves to him. Similar conceptions of extensive trackways had previously been

recorded. Belloc (1911) for instance, had posited and indeed mapped semi-ancient pilgrim paths. Belloc displayed a deeper sense of connection to trackways, remarking that the road 'gives a unity to all that has arisen on its way' (*ibid*, p. 04). However, although Belloc had made early claims of a series of now forgotten travel routes, he limited his scope to the movement of early pilgrims and never conjectured an interrelated network of tracks like that seen in the work of Watkins.

Watkins' life was by no means ordinary amongst his contemporaries, and mostly the facts pertaining to Watkins' life as presented in Shoesmith's monograph portray an eccentric albeit highly enigmatic character. Yet Watkins' description of his findings smack of a dignified truth, almost axiomatic so clear that he was unable to see how they could be disputed. However, Watkins greatest challenge was not deriving the concept of the ley from the data he had accumulated, rather it was formulating the theory into something solid, something that could articulate his discovery to a wider audience. The solidity came in the form of an oral paper given to his archaeological peers at the Woolhope Naturalist's Fieldclub in 1921 (Watkins, 1922).

The paper was entitled *Early British trackways, moats mounds camps and sites*. In this initial formulation, Watkins developed his belief that there were a significant number of monoliths and monuments that fell into almost perfectly straight lines within the vicinity of his home county of Herefordshire. He provided hand drawn maps and vast quantities of field research to account for this belief of an intended linear correlation. For the majority of the essay, Watkins opted against the word ley, favouring the term sightline. The term ley developed later as a result of the number of alignments crossing through places ending in 'ley' (Watkins, 1925). There was, Watkins believed, a functional reasoning for the existence of these sightlines, to guide people through the landscape. This he posited as being the predominant reason that these alignments had arisen; in the absence of cartography, people still required an indicator that they were travelling along the correct route. What Watkins claimed in his paper was the initial development of 'a framework for a new knowledge' (Watkins, 1922, p .34).

It is not known how Watkins' theory was received by the Woolhope Club, Shoesmith (1990) notes that the club did not record any commentary of the presentation in their minutes. Whatever the reaction, Watkins set out to publish his findings and produced his first book on the subject; a publication of the original lecture to the Woolhope in its entirety, complete with accompanying monochrome plates that was released a year after delivering his talk. In the foreword to the text, addressed to '*the average reader*', Watkins launches a diatribe against his contemporary antiquarians, who he accuses of having 'alternated between a misty appreciation of hill-tracks and ridgeways, and an implied depreciation of all track makers before the Romans came' (Watkins, 1922, p. 07). The impact on the wider public was generally well received, and Watkins is known to have kept a scrapbook of newspaper cut outs that documented the publicity that his ley theory had attracted (Stout, 2008).

Continuing his research, the self taught antiquarian, photographer and naturalist was keen to have his geometric patterns recognised, and produced his most significant and widely received work *The Old Straight Track* in 1925, the text for which he would go on to be best known for producing. Unlike the initial theory etched out in his *Early British Trackways*, Watkins produced a set of evidence based reports for these hidden linear routes; this included sketching of ley trajectories, extensive descriptions of the types of indicators of alignments and further photographic verification. Watkins explicated his theory over two hundred and twenty six pages, his most substantial and articulated output on the subject of ley lines. 'The Old Straight Track' as Watkins termed it, was to be seen across the country and the richly illustrated and meticulous effort he had produced, presented others with the chance to go out and explore the countryside for forgotten ancient pathways themselves. The positive nature of the second book's reception became the impetus for Watkins writing a third and final book on the subject of leys. Acting as something of a training guide for fellow ley enthusiasts, *The Ley Hunter's Manual: A Guide to Early Tracks* completed by Watkins in 1927 (mass published in 1977), gave clear instructions on how to identify and uncover leys from maps and sight.

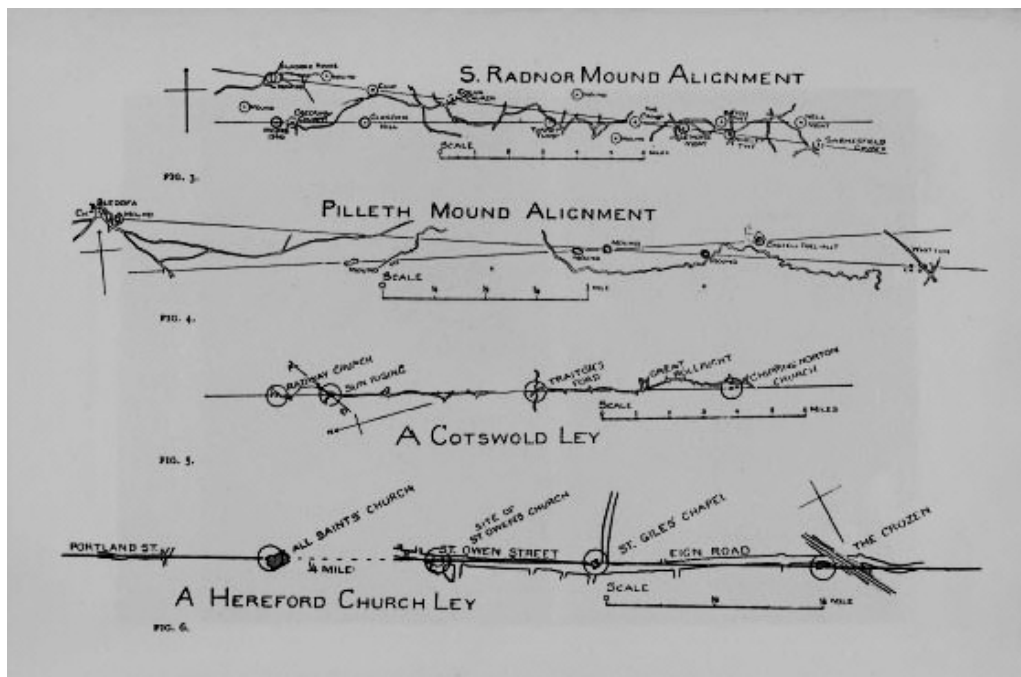


Fig. xix Plate showing alignments from *The Old Straight Track*, 1925, A. Watkins.

For Watkins, leys indicate a forgotten and ancient knowledge, or rather a compartment of knowledge; lost, historic and immanent. Watkins stated such an understanding was embedded within the landscape, left for us to uncover:

Knowledge is only to be gleaned from three types of evidence. Firstly and chiefly from what exists or is recorded on or in the earth of the work or remains of man of that period. Secondly, from what can be gleaned and surmised in place-names and words, for it is often forgotten that words were spoken in Britain for centuries before they were written down than there have been centuries of written record, and there are indications that many words elements come down through both periods. Thirdly, from folk-lore legends; lingering fragments of fact disguised by an overlay of generations of imaginings.

(Watkins, 1977, p. xix)

In its Watkinsian form then, 'ley hunting' is an engagement with our ancestors, a way of retracing history and reimagining the landscape, it is a particular way of knowing where we came from. As Paul Devereux (1991) confirms 'Watkins' ley lines marked specific path or trackways across the

country that joined settlements with sites of ritual and sites of trade'. Watkins has uncovered a map of knowledge engrained into the landscape, with its paths forming clear nodes at sites of importance, a systematic approach to a navigating of the countryside, or as Matless (1998) describes it 'a specific topographical geometry' (p. 83). A topographical geometry that is produced of traces, of additive lines.

Leys belong to that classification where lines become productive or rather are engendered through a process of production; they add ancient objects to the landscape and are valorised by something far more than just the providing of scale, distance, direction, destination. As lines, leys provide meaning, they validate the belief that our ancestors knew the land around them in a perhaps now unknown manner. Leylines enrich history through a deepening of our interrelation with the natural world and of greater import still; leys provide a way of getting back into the landscape, of retracing, reimagining and resurrecting our place within places. Leylines infer a meaning between places; they indicate a movement between spheres, areas that would once have appeared as the hostile milieu of otherwise abstract space. Watkins leys then, can be seen to make sense of things, to provide clarity through the making of lines.

Stephen Daniels (2006) depicts Watkins thesis not so much as a theory but as 'a sorting out of previously unrelated and unnoticed information 'embedded' in the mind and on the ground' (p. 06). Daniels may be right, but the ramifications of this sorting out have remained relevant almost ninety years on. To be sure, when discovering leys, we are unveiling our surroundings as a topography of generosity; a space that creates places for man through its very unfolding. If one is to follow Watkins' line of thought then *stones, mounds, ponds, trees, beacons, churches, camps, hillside notches* all correlate along natural trajectories throughout the landscape on which early man would have ventured. The idea of the ley was, for Watkins, as we have seen, quite clearly a scientific one, however although he himself steered clear of the occult, John Michell's (1989) investigation of geomancy suggests that Watkins 'remained aware that there was a far deeper significance to the leylines than he had given mention to through the supposition of ancient

trackways and trade routes ' (p. 189). Naturally, the genesis of such a novel idea –as it had been perceived- left itself wide open for various interpretations; mysticism quite quickly became one of the frameworks in which leys would be viewed, and forsaking the intentions of Watkins, is now probably the trope in which leys are most commonly equated with.

Leyter

Another notable figure in the development of leys came slightly later in the form of Guy Underwood and his *The patterns of the Past* (1968). Like Watkins, Underwood too believed in a hidden order of things and conjectured that despite the beliefs of the academy, there was surmountable evidence of leys across Britain and at no greater place than that of Stonehenge. Contra Watkins, Underwood's interest in alignments lay not in trackways per se, but rather in the formation of pathways and patterns by water, which he termed as Geodetic lines. Underwood categorised Geodetics as existing in three strands: 'water line', 'aquastat' and 'track line'.

“The three “primary lines” are so called to distinguish them from the secondary effects they produce. The water line, the aquastat and the track line have much in common: they appear to be generated within the Earth; to involve wave-motion; to have great penetrative power; to form a network on the face of the Earth; to affect the germination and manner of growth of certain trees and plants; to be perceived and used by animals; to affect opposite sides of the animal body, and to form spiral patterns. They are controlled by mathematical laws which involve in their construction the number 3; and in their spiral patterns, the number 7. They played a prominent, and possibly fundamental, part in the religion of many widely scattered primitive peoples.’

(Underwood, 1968, p. 34)

Not only did Underwood distinguish his lines from Watkins leys in terms of their causation, he also made far more obvious links with the occult and divination. Connections with numbers, Earth mysteries and an ascribed power of intent, are all discussed with direct reference to leys in Underwood's work; the result of which leads to the mystification of leys.

Following an occult trajectory does more for Underwood than just sensationalising the already existing mystery of landscape patternation; it offers an unprecedented agency to both the Earth and the leyline, which consequently emancipates leylines from the belief that they were constructed by humans. Such a conjecture is what formed the basis for the transgression of leylines from archaeology into mysticism. By positing that an unseen 'magic' was at work in forming the landscape, Underwood had created a platform in which to *use* leys. Underwood posited that he was able to work with leylines via a harnessing of the Earth's energies, employing supposedly ancient practices such as that of dowsing, a traditional that I shall discuss in further detail later in this chapter.

In fact the *Patterns of the Past* is far more of a guidebook to using these ley-focused practices (in their various incarnations) than a reimagining of the historical ponderings of Watkins. Together with other ley enthusiasts at the time, Underwood helped to give rise to *archeoastronomy*; the study of the connectivities between sacred monuments and the celestial. Leylines became something of a mode for realising enchantment (Ivakhiv, 2001, p. 23). When combined with theories of mysticism, leys provide an underpinning to the essentialism of place and initiating of a cartography of enchantment.

In their mystical guise, leylines seek to map the sacred as a series of interconnected, interdependent sites of enchantment which themselves dwell-in-the-world. To this end, so-called New Agers, followers of earth mysteries, writers, (and later) psychogeographers and artists, all had a new way of connecting the Earth to mysticism. Leylines became perceived as a network of supernatural energies superimposed upon the surface of the Earth. This strange hybrid of geometry, naturalism and mysticism is known as *geomancy*, a term described by Harvey (2007) as discerning the flows of energy that are creative and supportive of its particular forms and mapping them in linear form across the landscape.

The wider influence of Watkins' geomantic leanings on landscape mysticism have been significant for the development of a number of land based theories relating to arcane knowledge of the Earth and our early

ancestors. Indeed, the turn toward the mysteries of the prehistoric past seen during the 'Celtic Renaissance' of the 1960s and '70s led to what John Mitchell described as 'megalithomania' (Parker, 2009, p. 05). Much of the work derived from Watkins that developed within this period presented as far more esoterically inflected than it did archaeological, for example the archaeo-exploratory work of John Foster-Forbes. Together with the assistance of psychic, Iris Campbell, Foster-Forbes built upon the more suppositional aspects of Watkins' work to conduct field studies of ancient sites across Britain. Foster-Forbes (1973) took the foundational approach that megalithic sites were important to the ceremonial cultures of early British people but entwined the creation of these spaces with a fantastical history, positing their construction as being the result of giants.

Similarly, T.C. Lethbridge (1957, 1963) developed a far more mystical approach to Watkins' work, looking to the correlations between mythology and the archaeological to provide the answers as to why ancient sites existed and how they were connected. Similar sentiments can be found in the works of Pennick (1979), Pennick and Devereux (1989), Devereux (1991, 1994, 2010), Cope (1998) and Sullivan (1999) who each presume an underlying mystical energy to the ley. The acceptance of leys is thus twofold; on the one hand there is an evidence-based application to the understanding of alignments through a mapping and walking of their routes. On the other, the belief that leys relate to an intrinsically mystical and lost past and hint at a mystical 'Golden Age' of human existence. Such a position resonates in Cope's (1998) claim that our land 'once undulated with the all that was the wonder of Mother Earth' (p. ix). The impact of this growing trend towards a spiritual inflection of the prehistoric landscape brought with it a revival of folk traditions and land divination, parts of which were employed by geomancers like Underwood (1968) in order to commune with the resonating energies of the earth. The practices of dowsing or divining although showing little fidelity to the Watkinsian origins of ley lines, remain widely used as a method for tracking linear earth patterns.

Ley Hunters, Dowsers and Diviners

The practice of dowsing is in itself an enchanting practice, utilising material objects in order to locate and navigate unseen energies in the natural environment. In an online introduction to dowsing, the British Society of Dowsers (BSD) describe the practice of dowsing as being 'to search with the aid of simple handheld tools or instruments, for that which is otherwise hidden from view or knowledge.' (British Dowsers, 2013). The BSD were formed in 1933 by Colonel A.H. Bell who founded the society in order to promote the profile of dowsing throughout the British Isles (*ibid*). Dowsing, continues the BSD, is foremost the 'art of discovering the presence of energies, substances, objects or missing persons or things not apparent to the senses, usually by using rods or pendulums' (*ibid*). The rods indicated by the BSD come in varying forms; L shaped rods, V-rods or tools fashioned from willow or hazel. The rods or pendulum are employed in such a way that they demand mobility from the dowser. As the dowser walks the landscape in search of a ley, energy or geodectic line, the tool responds; it moves as of its own accord, responding to the energies or geodetics of the earth; the power of the line. In this sense, sacrality can be physically traced, the material objects indicate the line and the experiences is rendered through the embodied practice of the dowser moving within the landscape. The practice can also be employed in a similar manner to the Ouija or divination board, with some dowsers posing questions to the spirit(s) of the environment and allowing the rods to act as a mediator, moving in a predetermined pattern in order to answer 'yes' or 'no'.

In his *Ghosts and Divining Rod*, Lethbridge (1963) notes the similarities between the dowsing the energies of land and that of spirit, claiming that either phenomena could be posited as types of recordings to which the diving rods were in tune. Wilson (1985) follows on in this rather more mystical trajectory in his positioning of dowsing as a method that works to reconcile man with Earth. Watkins himself never used dowsing rods in his experiences with leys but this has not stopped the more spiritually minded followers of ley theory from putting such practices to use. Dowsers and

ley hunters work to various methodologies and belief systems; spiritual, water sourcing, energy lines, archaeological. Each employs a different set of tools. The accessibility in regards to employing such practices is unrestricted. The ley hunter or dowser is able to begin the process of divination and discovery as and when they please, without the necessity for a great deal of preparatory work. As such the practice is readily at hand, providing an almost instant engagement with the landscape and rapid method for archaeological discovery that swiftly bring about material results. Williamson and Bellamy (1983) claim that the growing acceptance of the leyline has been due to this apparent readiness at which the practice of 'ley hunting' offers itself as an evidence based practice;

A ley can easily be found and confirmed in a weekend so the ley hunters can feel themselves to be pushing forward the boundaries of knowledge without giving up a an enormous amount of time.

(p. 202)

The readiness of geomantic dowsing, its capacity to become a tool through which we can access the environment both in terms of its past and its essence, in addition to the physicality it brings to an engagement with the landscape, solidify its position as a methodology for getting into place. The strange way in which ordinary materials (copper rods, hazel, willow) gain agency through such a practice as this, displays a movement towards enchantment of both tools and landscape.

Geomantic visions of landscape can be acted on. Both Watkinsian and post-Watkinsian readings of ley lines call for a getting out into place. Leys are then experiential, one can hunt for archaeological evidence or spiritual nurturing in the same place and both are achievable within a marginally small time frame. Each ley experience is individualised, each track distinct and varied (Watkins, 1922, p. 13). As such, geomancy allows for an idiosyncratic connection to and accessibility of place and nature that is readily at hand to the ley enthusiast. Geomancy provides a holistic method of bringing together man and nature under the guise of mysticism; it presents

an angle at which one can access ancient history. Of greater import still is the question of how composure is coerced by the landscape when walking the leyline; what vistas are purposefully created by the landscape, unfolding before the walker? How does the walker embody the landscape surrounding them? Both as a facet of mysticism and as a hypothesis on ancient forms of mobility, the leyline answers these questions through a placing of the body within the landscape. A placing that both engenders embodiment and through the setting up of walking as both a phenomenological process, allows for a substratum of historical knowledge to occur.

Exploring Linearly

If leylines exist then they do so dichotomously as we have seen; metaphysical pathways forged across and amongst physical landscapes. The tension between these two states of being, the material and the immaterial, is perhaps what entices one to engage with the phenomenon in the first instance. However, there is ongoing confusion between presence and absence along these spectral trajectories which causes, as Nabokov (2012) might suggest, an 'involuntarily sinking into history' (p. 01) that is impossible to overcome. The conjectured history of the ley is, for the most part, the quality that we try to reclaim when perambulating its course. That is to say, in walking a leyline one endeavours to share that same experience that the ancients felt when travelling along the very same route all that time ago. It is this very experientialism that I wish to explore in this next section, paying particular attention to the methodologies used to uncover and engage with the hidden path systems of our landscape, the traces, the 'transparent things' that mobilise these arcane cartographies.

Geomancy, moreover ley hunting, does itself provide a holistic method of bringing together people (the human subject-object) and nature under the guise of mysticism; it presents an angle at which one can access ancient history. Of greater importance is the question of how composure is coerced by the landscape when walking the leyline; what vistas are purposefully created, unfolding before the walker; how does the walker embody the

landscape surrounding them. All sites of mysticism work to the notion that what we perceive as mystical or enchanted are potentially the products of a particular way of experiencing place. Such experiences then, should not be alluded to as supernatural or paranormal but rather as being at the thresholds of the natural proper, beyond a perceived normality but not entirely outside of it. I hope to show that such sites as these are essentially preternatural; rooted to N/nature and bound up with our existentialism, our strange dwelling upon and within the world.

Engagements with leylines

It seems apparent that leylines, offer themselves as counter methodologies through which to engage with nature and the perceived mysticism within it. By counter here, I mean simply that geomancy (ley hunting) acts as an alternative method of engaging with the landscape, in that like the methods of necromancy (speaking to the dead) and the naturalist magic of Neo-Paganism, its practices subvert our understanding of what is natural. Geomancy looks to the thresholds of normality to illuminate our place upon and within nature. All three methods rest upon a particular understanding of the world as partially hidden, as occulted, and are particular ways of reading place and its origins as veiled but in the perpetual process of unveiling. The aim of my research into leylines has been to uncover their workings not in relation to mysticism, but rather of that to entanglement, that is our entanglement - the embroiling of human subject-objects with landscape, with nature and with place.

To explore such a topic, one cannot rest upon engagements with literature alone. Indeed, both the recent tracking of prehistoric trajectories across Europe by Robb (2013) and the walking of ancient pathways in the work of Macfarlane (2012), demonstrate the need for getting out onto the old routes in order to experience the interconnectivity with place that they have to offer. It would be impossible to provide a true reflection on how leylines force us to readdress our understanding of place and landscape without experiencing the phenomena for myself. Furthermore, if leylines are to be

described as preternaturalisms that exist on the peripheries of rationalised space, then a distinction must be drawn as to how ley linearisation, when complicit to mystical readings of place, differs from other forms of path finding and mapmaking. With this in mind, the decision was made to put the methods of ley hunting into practice.

The remainder of this chapter aims to deal with the ethnographic data generated from two situations involving practical work with ley lines. Both sections of the final empirical chapter are presented as auto-ethnographic response and as such read through as more prose like than critical engagement. The final report in particular, is written through in the form of an uninterrupted narrative. I am aware that such an approach is not the standard in academic engagements, however recent attempts at auto-ethnography by geographers (Cunningham, 2004; Jones, 2005; Humphreys, 2005; Wylie 2005) have shown that the method is both a valid and effective way in which to present research. There are natural flaws in the ability of such work to be so obviously demonstrable of theory as that which might be found in a standard ethnographic presentation comprising of annotated diary extracts. But the use of auto-ethnography here is not happenstance, rather it has been carefully selected as a methodological tool due a personal belief that it is the most effective way to present the empirical material gathered.

There is an argument to be made that such work offers a heightened ability for the research to engage with the reader, but that a point I wish to make here. Rather, the decision to produce these extensive, descriptive narratives has been made to provide the reader with a faithful insight into the phenomenological engagement that took place when conducting the research. Both the walking of the ley line and the experience with dowsing were heavily immersive practices and as such required a method for presenting the data that was applicable to a reflecting of the depth of that immersion. What I have attempted to do here is describe the sites and situations as they unfolded before me. Such a treatment allows me to detail my positioning and embodiment in and of the landscape so as to be precise about the manner in which the landscape became affective towards me. Both enchantment and the uncanny are processes that are felt, received and

interpreted by the body; in what follows I have strived to reproduce these emotions and composites in the hope that they speak back to the theoretical work that has gone before them, both in this chapter and the thesis as a whole.

A long walk along a short line

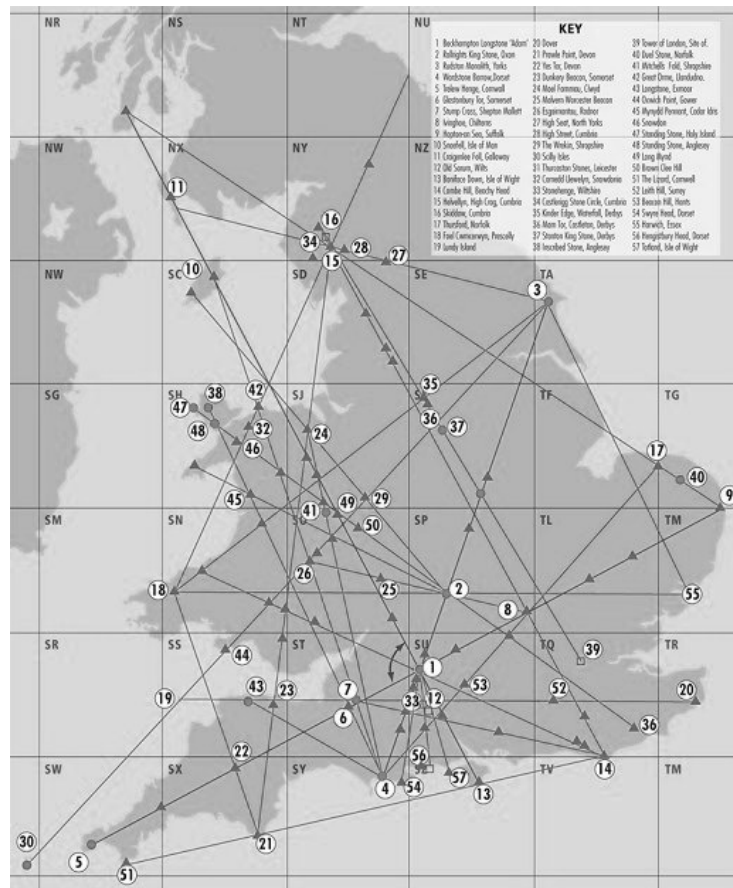


Fig. xx UK Alignment Map, taken from www.beckhampton-adam.co.uk

The map shown above displays all of the known (or rather unanimously agreed upon by dowsers) ley lines that cover the United Kingdom. The network is vast, reaching from the four corners of England and Scotland. Most of the lines are too long or complex to walk in their entirety, spanning seas and mountains; moreover, urban developments - road networks and industry - and the privatisation of the countryside means that a significant proportion of many leys are now un navigable. Access is restricted to vast

sections of the majority of the lines and so again the option of taking any ley and walking it has not been a reality for this project.

Notwithstanding such restrictions, a line had to be walked in order to answer the questions the research endeavoured to answer in the most accurate and honest manner. It is not that access and physical restrictions alone have problematised the logistics of engaging with ley lines, it has proved difficult to find dowzers who are willing to work with an academic, at least without financial reward. For the most part I have been redirected to dowsing courses either hosted or endorsed by the British Society of Dowzers (British Dowzers, 2013), but which I felt were not conducive to the aims of my research.

For Watkins there was no method for identification of leys that could not be practiced by a layman once they were out in the field. In fact Watkins had given instructions in his *The Ley Hunters Manual* (1977) in the penultimate chapter aptly named 'Working Instructions' (*ibid*, pp. 86-97). In this latter part of the text, Watkins carefully sets out the didactics of ley hunting, based upon a logical system of identifying sighting points - points of archaeological significance that correlate to a linear formation - and then seeking mark points that ley in between. Mark points, Watkins describes as including 'mounds', 'moats', 'mark-stones', 'castle keeps on mounds' and 'beacons' (*ibid*). Following the identification of mark points, Watkins then implores the novice ley hunter to look for further evidence of a ley in the form of confirmation points; 'churches', 'crosses', 'fords', 'tree rings', 'copses', 'single trees', 'camps', 'cross roads' and 'ponds'.

In his early writings, Watkins had described in some detail, the method by which one went about locating and tracking a ley, he writes;

Taking all the earthworks mentioned, add to them the ancient churches, all moats and ponds, all castles (even castle farms), all wayside crosses, all cross roads or junctions which bear a place name, all traditional trees (such as gospel oaks), marked on maps and legendry wells. Make a small ring around each on a map. Stick a steel pin on the site of an undoubted sighting point, place a straight edge against it, and move it round until several (not less than four) of the objects named and marked come exactly into line.

You will then find on that line fragments here and there of ancient roads and footpaths, also bits of modern roads confirming it. Extend the line into adjoining maps, at it will usually terminate at both ends in a natural hill or mountain peak, or sometimes (in the later examples) in a legendary well or other object.

(Watkins, 1922, p. 11)

The rules set out were extensive and detailed the precise manner in which I should set about locating the ley. There were further instructions in Watkins *Manuel*, for example photographic illustration and research of place names, however the most important instruction (given my initial failure to attract research subjects) was found under a subsection headed 'Fieldwork' where Watkins writes;

'Experience and practice brings an insight, which quickly spots a ley. Often one can be first seen on the map, but I more often see it out of doors in "the ley of the land" itself, and this before the mark points are found.'

(Watkins, 1977, p. 94)

With this in mind I made the decision to identify and 'experience' a ley. I used the alignment map (Fig. xx) to initially select a section of ley that could be successfully navigated in the course of a day and arrived upon the area spanning between points listed 17 and 40. The primary reasons for this decision were based upon the duration of the walk required (here it was approximately half a day) and the amount of the ley that I would have access to given the restrictions listed previously. Again, the section of ley spanning between 17 and 40 proved appealing as transposing the alignment guide to a Ordnance Survey map showed the ley running through forest and fields. What is more, is that the line not only looked clear for navigation but also the sighting points had already been marked for me as churches and monuments, and so as part of my experiencing the ley lines, I could look for further confirmation points. I was thus able to work between the OS map and the landscape to draw my own conclusions as to the alignment guide's validity. If the guide was right and the ley existed then I would be forced into specific composes by the linear path. Furthermore, through experiencing the line I

would be given the very real opportunity to be affected by the supposed mystical qualities of the ley, somehow authenticating the experience of the leyline as preternatural.

The ley line that I had selected and intended to analyse ran southeast from the village of Thursford in Norfolk to the site of the Duel Stone, Cawston, also a small village in the same county. The route was approximately thirteen miles in distance and between four and six hours walk without pause. The Duel Stone itself is a heritage site, commemorating the death of Sir Henry Hobart who died as a result of a duel at the nearby Cawston Heath in 1698, according to the plaque located at the site. As previously mentioned, I selected this leyline for reasons of distance and accessibility; its short distance made for a manageable journey that could be thoroughly documented. Furthermore the section of ley ran almost entirely uninterrupted and so it would be possible for one to remain as faithful to the 'old straight track' as was possible given the development of the landscape since Watkins conducted his surveys in the early twentieth century.

To my knowledge, no literature currently existed on this ley. Unlike many of those found in the west of England, this particular leyline remained undocumented. There was a greater, more obvious leyline in Norfolk connecting the sites of Norwich Castle, St. Withburga's Shrine in East Dereham, Castle Acre and Castle Rising. However, this would have covered too greater a distance given restrictions on time and the probability of conducting the survey more than once would be very low. Furthermore, this second line had been previously explored in the works of both Toulson (1979) and Timpson (2000) and thus the repetition of data and the possibility of auto-suggestion could have been problematic.

By taking a short, undocumented, yet manageable section of ley, it appeared more viable to accurately detail the trajectory, exploring the sites on which I would pass through between start and finish. Most importantly, there was no prior mysticism attributed to this track and so it was possible to navigate the route free of any predisposed influence of supernaturalism. This provided an opportunity to fully engage with the environment and gain an awareness of place(s) as essential to that landscape.

Having decided upon a leyline to walk, I took a map, compass, ruler and a copy of Watkins' *Leyhunters Manuel* (1977) and identified the relatively short section of ley between the site of historical importance (the Duel Stone) and St. Andrew's Church, Thursford. The church was chosen as the end point as no official site had been recorded or suggested in the existing literature on leylines. As there had to be an end point – a line cannot exist without one – I decided upon the church as being a probable Watkinsian 'confirmation point' along the ley's course. I mapped the trajectory of the ley on the map and saw that it ran through myriad villages, forests and copses or Mare's-nests, small groups of trees planted for commemorative purposes. Indeed, the Duel Stone itself was nestled within such a copse, which had incidentally, proved problematic in locating the start point when passing through the village of Cawston and disappointingly only coming across trees lining the roads. A short interrogation of the local petrol station cashier confirmed that I was on the right path, the stone lay just a few meters along from the Woodrow Garage on the Norwich Road.

Arriving at the site of the Duel Stone did not appear to feel of any great significance, there was some relief in having found the site before midday and a sense of anticipation as this was where the journey would begin. However, nothing particularly magical struck me about the place that I had genuinely hoped to be replete with some sort of unfathomable energies.

A tortured groan emanated from the hinges of the neglected wooden gate that acted as the barrier between the solitude of the monument and the movement of the city bound road. Moving across unkempt grass, I made my way towards the Duel Stone where I aimed to take my bearings so as to determine the direction of the ley and therefore my route of passage. I was however, unable to find North as the compass provided me with different readings at each corner of the monument. Standing away from the ley's start point (or hotspot), I managed to find my path, which headed out through the right hand corner of the monument's enclosure and into the countryside along a well a forged footpath. The grasses, nettles and weeds beaten well into submission along what appeared as an oft used course of movement.



Fig. xxi *Duel Stone, Cawston, UK.* Taken by author.

This initial encounter with the stone, as something capable of influencing my experience of the site, had proved a little unnerving. I decided that it was most likely the magnetism of the stone that had interfered with the compass reading, but even if this was the case, could there be a better beginning to a journey that was endeavouring to embed the traveller within a landscape of material agency? I was hoping to come across a landscape that could force composes, vistas, experiences upon those within it, like those I read about before undertaking the walking and the site of the Duel Stone was proving interesting from only an initial encounter.

The Duel Stone itself, a grey tombstone-like monument, was enclosed behind iron railings, was set upon a backdrop of clouded melancholic skies, endless fields and straddled by trees either side. It occurred to me that the stone, having impeded upon the action of the compass, could have been far more strange than I had first thought and there was the small matter of the

monument being guarded by not just the railing, but the trees and the perimeter fencing. It occurred to me that a lot of trouble had been spent guarding something that a person should seldom come across, let wish to damage in any way and that is if it was at all possible to do so, it was made of stone after all. I let my mind wander to the reasons for such protective measures being made as I headed towards the back of the enclosure and towards the footpath leading across the field. As far as beginnings to country walks go, this was if nothing more, a slightly bizarre one.



Fig. xxii *Confused Bearings: compass unable to find North.* Taken by author.

I followed the path northwest, away from Cawston and the Duel Stone, and through into the tree lined fields where my path was already laid before me. I took this pre-existence of the route as another one of Watkins' confirmation points; 'When at least half-a-mile of road or track of ancient name aligns on a ley, it has value' (1977, p. 90). This particular section of path corresponded with the area where the ley was supposed to be and having led

directly from a significantly old monument, I took this a good sign that this could be evidence of something more 'substantial' than what had seemed like appeared as a pathway. As I walked I found nothing to suggest anything of a greater esoteric presence and although this was not the task objective, it remained at the front of my mind due to the uncanniness of the compass incident.

As Watkins' instructions had suggested, the path did take me across a number of small ponds, long straight roads and old, if not ancient, trees. Of greater importance, was the manner in which the track composed my views, in fact at the point of reaching Salle, the second village along the ley from Cawston, the once surrounding woodland gave way to open fields and extensive vistas across the countryside. This provided me with enough of a view to see at least as far as the next three villages along the ley and moreover, their churches, which appeared to have been built in an alignment with that of my previous destination and the Duel Stone before it. If one was to follow the theoretical trajectory of settlements or sacred sites being built to a specific geometric pattern, then this offered an affirmative response to such a thought. Furthermore, it brought into contemplation, the idea that the sacred sites were connected, navigable and subsequently, placed to walk between as a network rather than independently.

The sightlines I gained from Salle did only as much to reaffirm this sense of 'connection' as the Salle's church had. Seemingly absurd in scale for such a modestly sized parish, The Church of St. Peter and St. Paul loomed over the deserted village green, a grey monolith of gigantic proportions. The building seemed out of place for a settlement so diminutive in stature with a population of noticeably few residents. Furthermore, a beacon stood in the church's shadow. For Watkins, beacons are yet another indicator of an ancient track way. The ley had begun to pick up strength in its ability to affect my perception of the landscape; I was being coerced into the networked lineation of churches and trees in order to see their connection, not just to each other but also to the straight pathway that lay before me; as an entire experience. The meshing of history (real or imagined), sacrality and nature into a single straight line was somewhat overwhelming. The ley had begun to

make 'sense' and I felt that like Watkins, I too was starting to see the relationality between place and landscape with new eyes.

Continuing along the route towards Wood Dalling, I passed a ringed moat to the side of a field; yet another possible confirmation marker. At this point in the journey things became slightly more complex. Leylines are contentious amongst archaeologists, but there is little contention for them in regards to access as leylines are not recognised as public routes of travel. Sections of a leyline may pass through public land, they might form part of a byway, bridleway or public footpath, however they predominantly pass over privately owned land. There is little defence for trespass when following a ley and so trajectories can become obscured or limited. The next field I came to was being sprayed with pesticide, the land to each side was fenced off. I was forced to head back and join the road, whereby I proceeded to follow on until the next destination, Craymere Beck via Hindolveston. At times the road itself began to take the form of a straight track, at points reaching around a mile of undisturbed length in either direction. Again, this worked to confirmed the path of a Watkinsian ley; Watkins considered straight roads to be an evolution of an original alignment (Devereux, 1994).



Fig. xxiii *Reepham Road: The old straight track.* Taken by author.

Again, the straight road that led to Craymere Beck was significant not simply because it followed the ley in a direct and more or less faithful manner, but because of the impact it had upon me as a walker. The tree-lined road produced a tunnelled vision of the world before me. Having no option but to walk straight along the path ahead, my surroundings forced vistas upon me, the unfolding landscape seemed as if it had brought me its own horizon.

Being forced by the road to follow the pathway ahead amplified the earlier feelings that the materialities around me were being set to work somehow. Like the Duel Stone, the place itself was inflecting my vision of the landscape, or at least manipulating it. I could only follow the road in one direction or the other and so my perception of the environment was being shaped for me. Having been forced onto the road by the spraying of the fields had taken me to a further point along the ley than I had thought and although missing out on the experience of having remained faithful to the route in its entirety, the trajectory of the tarmac I ended up on only re-emphasised the encounter as one of enchantment. The seemingly mundane had begun to speak to me; trees, road names, pathways and churches all provided an alternative understanding of site and of mobility. The ley no longer needed confirming through mark points; rather it was to be interpreted as a strange vitalism to the landscape that would have been overlooked in any other context other than that of the leyline. The ley, my embodiment of it, had become 'emplaced'; the site became a point of 'human experience, constructed in movement, memory, encounter and association' (Tilley, 1994, p. 15). The perambulation this route had seen me become thoroughly immersed in and along the ley-place.

The walk continued into the late afternoon. The ley passed through another two villages before completing its course at Thursford. Both of these villages contained churches that appeared to be in correlation with the leyline. On completion, the walk seemed to have passed by fairly quickly, notwithstanding the impact that it had made upon my perception of placial relationality. It had been vital to obtain first hand experience of how sites could be connected to each other through Watkinsian alignment. I had walked all but a short section of this segment of the leyline and although I

had initially been sceptical of what this might entail, it appeared that I had doubtless experienced an uncanny side to nature.

The leyline was not enchanted in any truly mystical sense of the word and yet there had been moments, if not an overall sense, of something beyond the normative. The demarcations of normalcy had been shifted and what had essentially been a thoroughly researched and lengthy ramble through the Norfolk countryside had resulted in new kind of appreciation for geomantic readings of place and space. Tracking the ley had allowed me to enter the landscape as a place 'sedimented in (both) history and sentiment' (Tilley, 1994, p. 38). There remains a sense that the walk that day had opened up a different way of knowing place and moreover, the connections between places. Furthermore, the way that the path had produced predisposed vistas and seemingly pre-empted the composing of the body, suggested something more than Watkins' evidence of a prehistoric track way; it pointed to the potential for a far more embodied experience of the landscape. This was a type of embodiment that could be explored further through those more esoteric readings of leys seen in the works of Michell (1989) and Cope (1998). In such a light, it stood to reasons that there were perhaps other ways of exploring the leyline in my research, means by which practices other than walking alone might be employed to access the vital materiality of place and that were of a far more extraordinary trajectory.

Genius Loci: Conversations with St. Anne's Hill

My second study of leys was far more bewildering than anything I had encountered on my initial experiment. Through my ethnographic work at Ankerwycke with the Neo-Pagan circle, I had met a male practitioner from Guildford named Chris. Chris was aware of my research and had often asked me out of interest about my other case studies, to which I had always replied quite honestly with 'the leyline work is hitting a dead end'. During the Spring 2011 ritual with the Ankerwycke group, Chris asked to speak to me about my research and said that he had some information that would excite me, he did not disappoint. Chris was not only a member of the Circle of

Ankerwycke but had also been a long standing member of another circle just a few miles away in Chertsey, Surrey. Here Chris worked under the guidance of a (self professed) witch named Sue Dorney and having told her about my research activities, Sue had offered to teach me not only how to command dowsing rods but also how to work an existing ley. After a brief email introduction via Chris and an exchanging of telephone numbers, Sue and I arranged to meet in nearby Egham, Surrey so as to discuss my work further and ascertain whether or not she would be able to work with me.

I met Sue the following week at a chain coffee store on a quiet, village high street. Arriving early, I bought the coffees and waited for my guest at the street side tables. Sue soon arrived and sat down. She thanked me for the coffee and proceeded to ask "What are you studying then? Chris told me you are into the 'spirit of place'?" My response confirmed my interest in the subject and I drew attention to landscape mysticism and a more general interest in how people 'worked' with ideas of land and spirit. Sue began to tell me about herself, she did so in a confluence of nouns and adjectives; "a proud witch, a psychic, a Spiritualist, a geomancer, a soldier's wife, a Mother, humorous, 'down to earth' and a little bit Catholic". It struck me that it was somewhat counterintuitive to be both pagan and Catholic and so I questioned Sue on her understanding of how the two worked together. She obliged by telling me that she had been raised Catholic, her family were Catholic and that it was important for her to retain a part of that identity. As we continued to talk, Sue offered to teach me how to dowse and said she knew a site perfect for all three of my research case studies; ley lines, magick and haunting.

We arranged to meet the following week at Chertsey train station, where Sue would pick me up and take me to this rather special site of hers. We did so, and seven days later I found myself waiting in a rather empty car park. Again, things moved rather quickly; within ten minutes of getting into the car we were pulling into the site, St. Anne's Hill, Surrey. Sue informed me that St. Anne's had previously existed as a hill fort and had consequently played host to a monastery, a scene of massacre and was reputedly haunted as well as being a long standing site of pagan worship and the intersection of a number of ley lines. The hill had ticked all of the boxes.

From a small National Trust car park half way up the hill, we made our ascent to the peak. The site seemed remote even though it was relatively close to where I had been picked up just moments before. There had been no other cars parked when we arrived and we did not pass anyone on our way up the narrow, leaf covered path. I followed Sue to the top of St. Anne's where she made her way to a clearing surrounded by trees. Here she sat herself upon a picnic bench and proceeded to unpack two L-shaped rods from her bag. Proffering the rods, Sue asked if I had held any before, "Never." I exclaimed. I was asked to walk a distance of around four meters in a straight line parallel to where Sue was sitting on the bench, gently clasping the rods in my hands, just tight enough to secure them from falling. Holding the rods loosely, as had been recommended, I began to walk. "Slower, much slower, those things can't think as fast as you" I heard. I steadied my pace in response to the direction and as I did so I felt the copper rods begin to swing, as if of their own accord. Within a couple of steps the rods started to cross; "What the hell is going on?!" I exclaimed.

"You're a natural", came the reply.

"What should I do?" I asked, "I mean they're moving on their own Sue, seriously, they are moving on their own!"

"Of course they are" Sue said calmly, "that's why we're here isn't it?" I couldn't quite get to grips with the idea that these slim metal rods were somehow responding to something, possessing their own agency or being manipulated by that of another. What should have been inanimate had become animated and I was certain that it was through no intentional movement on my part. Presently, Sue requested that I returned to the place I had started from in front of the bench. Sue continued to give me a test in dowsing rod proficiency – that is to see if I could get the dowsing rods to 'work', to detect or pinpoint Earth energies.

Sue asked me to take a number of steps back and forth creating a grid formation and at every point where she asked me to stop the rods had already crossed. Again, I was mesmerised by these seemingly mundane objects being able to react to the landscape, to identify a grid on the land

approximately two square meters in size. “What does this mean?” I asked, “I mean how did you *know* this was here?”

“It’s always here. I couldn’t tell you what it ‘means’ for the life of me though. Some things just are, I suppose.”

“And the rods always do this?” I enquired.

“Always” came the response.

Being none the wiser as to what was happening, all I could do was hesitantly record in my diary what had occurred. *Rods moved on their own* scrawled upon a page that displayed a small sketch of the grid I had traced out upon the elevated woodland floor.

My interest in geomancy had arisen, as I have detailed, out of an interest in how geomantic practices can bring about further engagements with the spirit of place, however the spirit I was looking for was more of an ontological nature than of a spectral one. Sue provided a brief history of the place we were now both standing in, she told me that she often saw ghostly figures wandering amongst the trees at the top of St. Anne’s. They were referred to by the Chertsey moot as the ancestral guardians of the area and Sue explained a lineage to me, one that purported an essentialism to place that tied everyone who used the site to it, including us. I asked if I could experiment with the rods a little longer. Having accepted the strange reality that pervaded the evening – that copper rods could move of their own accord – I was interested in gaining further experience and trying to pick up on the leyline that had been mentioned earlier in the evening. Sue agreed, asking me to take the lead and follow the rods along the forested pathways of the hill.

The air was still, in that archetypal way that only occurs in tales of the supernatural. The entire area was silent except for the breaking of twigs and dried foliage underfoot. Sue walked behind me with her staff and a map – she had dowsed the site for years and allowed me to be unnerved by the uncannily direct route the rods seemed to direct us up as we began to flank the southern side of the hill. The copper rods continued to twitch, swinging back and forth; where they crossed we would stop and Sue would make a mark upon her map, although she never revealed to me what this might be

for. To the most elevated point of the southern side stood a beacon, one of Watkins' indicators of ley existence.



Fig. xxiv *Beacon atop of St. Anne's Hill.* Taken by author.

The beacon also marked the point of a viewing platform and the assumed location of the old monastery. From here I could now see that in front of me lay two other hills; Cooper's Hill in Egham, and beyond it the foreboding silhouette of the elevated Windsor Castle. Between the two sites lay the ancient communal meeting point of Runnymede meadow and the Ankerwycke Yew, a three thousand year old yew tree and site of Neo-Pagan ritual (see Chapter V), as well as the former ecclesiastical site of St Mary's priory. Behind us was St. George's hill, Weybridge another previous Iron Age hill fort.

The strange attraction of having been led somewhere by something I couldn't necessarily explain, nor wanted to, and of having been directed by a

force of some kind to the top of this ancient mound, did of course strike a sense of the uncanny, of the enchanted, within me. But more importantly on both this occasion and the first trip I made across country, was this sense of connectivity and furthermore of movement, of places being related somehow, of the pathways forming views, of coercing the body, my body, into various forms of entanglement with its surroundings. I had been brought here by specific materialities (the dowsing rods) engaging with some unknown and unseen force. It no longer felt haphazard or explicable in any way, chance had seemingly left of its own accord; there was a very really sense that this was where the hill *wanted* me to be.

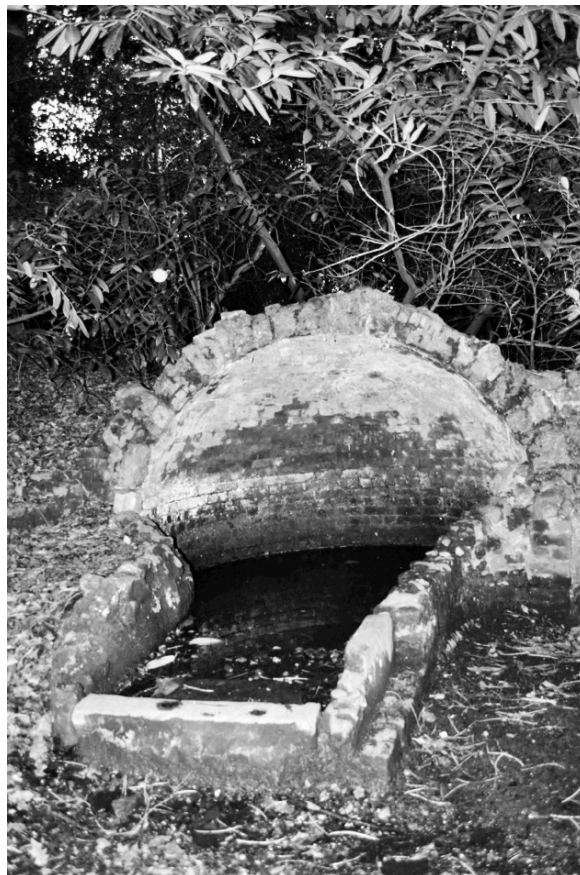


Figure xxv *The Monk's Stone*. Taken by author.

Further along the pathway that unfolded before us we came to a well. The well, Sue informed me, had been named the Monk's Stone and was a small rocky outcrop that sheltered a natural spring that emanated from the hillside. The Monk's Stone came with its own ghastly narrative, Which Sue

described as a forbidden relationship between a monk and a young girl from the nearby Chertsey. When the girl was pronounced pregnant and the father revealed as the monk, all three were executed and buried in the hillside, at which point water appeared and cascaded down the hillside. The cascades were now nothing more than a rather stagnant looking pool with a stench that hung thick in the air. The spring did not amount to anything more than a pause for a vignette of local folklore, however, like the beacon, springs and wells are both another example of Watkins' confirmation points. Ironically, it was Watkins' theory, one which he himself never claimed mystical in anyway, which had led to the eventual reading of this landscape as energised, enchanted.



Fig. xxvi *The Green Man*. Taken by author.

When descending the hill, Sue asked if she could show me one more area of the site that she felt a strong connection to. At the bottom of St. Anne's, the opposite side to the car park, there stood a large area of grass-

covered flatland positioned so that it was overlooked by the pathway above that we had walked just an hour before. Again, Sue positioned herself on a keenly sighted picnic bench in front of which stood two trees; a Pine of considerable age and scale and the upturned stump of another. The upturned tree appeared to display a grotesque caricature within its roots. Sue told me that her Moot referred to this formation as the Green Man, and being synonymous with the Pagan deity Herne, this confirmed that the place belonged to the group, that it was replete with magickal energy.

As I sat on the bench attempting to make out the face in the roots of the storm struck tree, Sue asked me to embark upon some investigatory work with the dowsing rods. I proceeded to walk the vicinity at a slow and steady pace, the rods swaying to and fro in metronomic rhythm. The majority of the area came out as unreactive or in Sue's words, "uncooperative". However the space directly beneath the Pine tree proved far more responsive with a series of long lines whereby the rods would mostly remain crossed until at some point straightening out by themselves. These lines began at the base of the tree and worked their way outwards in all directions, demonstrating that the tree was at the centre of something. At some points where the roots of the tree broke the earth, the rods would follow an identical trajectory, incorporating the roots in their path.

"Do you think I am picking up the water in the roots?" I asked

"It is more than likely" affirmed Sue. "We would have to check every tree to be sure though".

It was beginning to get dark at this point and so harder see the ground beneath me. I conjectured that if it was the case that the rods were responding to the tree's roots, it could change the nature of what was 'dowsable' and then perhaps there could be a distinction drawn between the geodetic lines posited by Underwood in his posthumous publication *Patterns of The Past* and Watkins own leylines. Sue called me back over to the bench, "Perhaps you would like to try and contact the 'Spirit of Place'?" I enquired as to how this might work.

“You hold the rods, gently, a soft grip as before. I will ask questions to the Spirit of Place. If she wants to respond she will. The rods will move as they have done all evening. Let us say that they cross for a ‘yes’ and swing outwards for a ‘no’. Are you happy with that?”

Sue began by closing her eyes, she asked me to concentrate with her, focusing in on the sounds of the trees moving in the gentle breeze that had begun to rustle the foliage around us.

“Spirit of Place, please can you let us know that you are listening. We beg you”

The rods moved, slowly at first but with a definite movement.

“Spirit of Place, thank you. Can you tell us your name?”

This particular question did not appear to be that well thought through as the rods were unable to indicate spellings, however running through the alphabet Sue managed to determine a ‘D’ and an ‘S’. I was unsure as to how this might be working, the rods moving through some sort of magnetic response to the earth is one thing and was what I had truly believed caused the rods to move previously. However, this point saw a change in atmosphere and there was a genuine sense of enchantment as the instruments appeared to communicate the unseen, unheard agency that supposedly surrounded us.

I was used to working with the *genius loci* in a theoretical sense, as a way of describing that unique character or essence that permeates certain places. This was something altogether different. Sue continued to ask questions, the rods continued to move. There was a strange interplay between that which was tangible, physical, definite (the rods) and one which transcended materiality; this ‘Spirit of Place’ to which Sue addressed the questions. The situation appeared far more like a séance than anything else. After thirty minutes Sue ended the questioning, the responses had become weaker and nothing conclusive had been derived from this part of the session. Using divining rods as a communicative device was an extreme example of how one can use occult practices to engage with their

surroundings and further proved the precarious balancing of the seen and unseen agencies that surround us.



Fig. xxvii *Dowsing rods in use.* Taken by author.

Watching the rods swing, left and right and crossover one another suggested a strange interaction between the materialities at play; the land, its earth, trees, hedges, bracken, leaves, even its accession; the vertical rising above the rest of the landscape and its subsequent correlation to three other rises in the landscape; the copper rods, and of course my own body. What is more is that the idea of the ley and the practice of dowsing provided me with views, engagements and histories that would otherwise have evaded me. There was a very real sense of something sacred and moreover of a movement between things, a transgression of sorts. Ironically, something as strict, as certain as a line, had given way to and challenged any preconceptions of place – it had brought a sense of mobility into play and confirmed what Watkins had understood to be the uncovering of a hidden knowledge, though on very different terms.

Walking back to the car I tried to summarise my two experiences with ley lines, moreover geomancy. Walking and dowsing were two very different practices, one called for vision, composure, embodiment and the other

interrogation, suspension of belief and imagination. Dowsing forced a very different type of embodiment; one that was not so much a part of nature in the holistic sense that the Watkinsian tracking of a ley required, rather the body became a tool, or an extension of a tool (the rods) in order for something to be realised. On the other hand dowsing called for an engagement with the sacrality of place that walking a ley alone did not; it required direct communication with the sacrality that permeated the location, whereas the walked ley purported connectivity between a number of sacred sites as opposed to such an essentialised *genius*.

End Note

In summary, walking a leyline, better yet dowsing a leyline, allows not just for this sense of mobility, of moving in and between the sacred. It is a pilgrimage of sorts; a way of revitalising one's connection with the environment. Dowsing offers an opportunity to enrich not just our knowledge; historical and topographical, but also our spiritual lives by promoting a definite connection with one's surroundings, forcing us to be part of something. Geomancy puts *place* and places, at the centre of our worldly encounters, of spiritual engagements with our surroundings and gives rise to opportunities to connect with and perform in the landscape. Furthermore, through geomantic traditions – the hunting, tracking, walking of leys – the landscape becomes permeated with the sensing of the past. Through a Watkinsian tradition, the environment becomes part of a vital and tangible history; the landscape comes to provide 'an ancestral map for human activity' (Tilley, 1994, p. 38)

Whether or not ley lines exist, or whether there is any scientifically justifiable evidence for dowsing them is, of little importance to a practice that can be viewed as being far more about land based opportunities than anything else; opportunities to re-place the body in nature, the opportunity to journey between sites of historical importance using an innovative guidance technique and moreover, the opportunity to question the solidity of our own perception. The concept of ley hunting, of geomantic practices in

general is one of uncovering, of digging up the not-quite-hidden past, as such it becomes something of an postprocessual archaeological method, designating 'a set of approaches to the ruined material past which foreground interpretation, the ongoing process of making sense of what never was firm or certain' (Pearson and Shanks, 2001). Indeed, as an archaeology of sorts, ley theory can get us back into place through a positioning of the past as a discernible feature of the present; material remains found in the forgotten tracks, monuments, trees, moats and various other sight points that Watkins instructs to observe. The trajectory of the ley is, as we have seen, a hollow one; suitable for the appropriation of ancient histories and or spiritualities. In his *The Old Ways*, Robert MacFarlane comments on the concept of such an empty pathway as 'promising events over the horizon', one might argue that the leyline then offers a vista beyond that point.

VII. Coda

*“What underpath is this, and how is it
for me to walk, if all its ways are secret?”*

- Alan Moore, *Voice of the fire*.

Closing case

To conclude is to quite necessarily reach an end. In thinking about the themes set within the writing preceding this chapter, to arrive at an ending would seem out of place, after all, the research delivered hitherto has been an expression of defiance, a working against finitude. One of the aims of the research has been to illustrate that endings are not terminal, rather they are the point at which things become born into new modes of being in which they might make a return. Such a position has been crystallised throughout the research case studies, all of which have engaged with either remains and or returns of some kind; physical, spiritual, conjectured. It is in this vein that I wish to frame the closing chapter, not so much as completion of a project but as a reiteration of what has gone before it. This notion of reiteration, or return, has been used to codify the entire thesis. The extended engagement with haunting, ontology and the uncanny in chapter III provided a space in which to format the forthcoming theoretical and empirical work within the remit of hauntology. Hauntology, which I will return to shortly, is the overarching conceptual framework that has woven the case studies together. The desired effect being, that instead of isolated studies or overtly connected empirical data, I have been able to present a triangulation of the constituent parts of the hauntological; absence (ghosts), presence (magick) and absent-presence (leylines).

The research has presented three case studies, all of which have evoked the preternatural in their readings of place, and have provided accounts of the manner in which mysticism, and moreover its practices, have

engendered an enchanted geography. Whilst more central schools of geographical thought have turned their attention away from the kind of geographies presented throughout this thesis, we have seen that there remains a substantial interest in occult spatiality (See Bartolini, Chris, MacKian and Pile, 2013; Dixon, 2007; Holloway, 2000, 2003, 2003a, 2006, 2007, 2010; Holloway and Kneale; 2008; MacKian, 2012; Matless, 1991, 2008; Pile, 2005, 2005a, 2012; Wylie, 2008). Building upon the already existing catalogue of research on the areas of geography and the occult, this research has broadened the foci of the unpopular geographies of spectrality and monstrosity to include what I term 'deeply topological belief systems' (magick and geomancy) bringing original case study material into the scope of *strange* affectual landscapes. In contrast to the positioning of enchantment as a set of affectual qualities that was prevalent in earlier geographical thinking, this research has demonstrated enchantment to be an integral component of place, one that is best expressed as an ontological tension between presence and absence. One of the outcomes of this work has been a reflection upon the affectual experiences received at sites where this ontological tension is most perceivable. To be sure, all places are to be viewed as an amalgamation of the material and the immaterial. However, it remains the case that only certain sites are imbued with this sense of enchantment; whether for historical, folkloric or spiritual reasons, there are sites that come to our attention predetermined as haunting/ed, whereas others do not.

Ruins are an obvious example, like those situated at Waverly discussed in Chapter IV; there is a sense that something or someone is missing. This we might view as a confrontation of the senses, whereby one is struck by the historical disjuncture of a surviving absence, a revenant structure. This partial-presence plays havoc with the imagination and we create a space for absence itself to perform. There are of course sites that do not fit this model, places that are emancipated from any sense of historical loss or temporal rupture. It begs the question then as to why modern places might also become enchanted. Again, the answer lies between place and absence. Trigg's (2012) take upon Nietzschean monumentalism goes

someway to describing how we form ruins in our minds. Nietzsche suggested that through looking to the past we can gain insights into the possibilities of the future (Elden, 2001). Trigg's view posits a phenomenological engagement with place that is based predominantly upon memory, or imagined memories. As such, he presents the notion that through a perception of reality focused upon the past, we might try and construct a present (or future) from things that are no longer there but that we believe should be. This does of course lead to a sense of haunting, of an omnipresent absence. Edensor has made similar claims of the imagined history of places in his writings on industrial ruins (2005, 2008).

Whilst the work I have presented here has affirmed the importance of memory and imagination in phenomenological engagements with place, it has also shown the necessity of accepting an ontological fracture in order to understand place as an object and thusly its capacity to haunt, to enchant. It is through the conflation of a monumentalist phenomenology and a positing of place as existing within a perpetual process of unveiling, that we can ascertain what produces enchantment, moreover what makes us susceptible to its unnerving affectual qualities. Enchantment then, can be realised in all places. The trajectories set out above make for the basis of an enchanted encounter with place. In addition to the interplay between the materialities of a site and the aurally and haptically perceivable yet invisible processes that occur there (air flow, gravity, sound), a psychology develops which supports the notion of unseen agency. The example of the chair in Chapter IV was used to work through this framework of perceptual hauntings. The sites where encounters like those detailed throughout this thesis occur, I have determined as preternaturalisms; places that seems to exist on the peripheries of what is considered normative.

Here, the preternatural describes the sensed anomalies of place that stir us spiritually; positively in the case of the magickal workings of Anckerwycke (Chapter V) or negatively, like the ghosts of The Windmill on the Common (Chapter IV). When existing as places, preternaturalisms are not so much the traditional entities invoked by the term (ghosts, witches, spirits), rather they become a composite for the affective workings of the landscape

and its combined materialities and immaterialities. Enchantment and its cognate geographies describe the inter-relationality between people and practices that occur in those places of seemingly otherworldly happenings.

Preternaturalisms are highly affective sites that, though naturally occurring, become inflected with myth. Myth, as Barthes (1972) states, is a process, which removes the origin of an object, casting it into a space where things come to mean something by themselves. In this sense enchanted geographies are self-sustaining; the preternaturalism, once perceived as such, continues to produce itself within a narrative of enchantment where factual history comes to be replaced by mystical encounters. To this end, myth itself is self-serving; practices that occur at these sites of enchantment further the psychology of something unnatural occurring there. For example, looking for ghosts in a 'supposedly' haunted building reiterates the notion that the site is spectrally active, the investigation adds to the spectral lineage. This works irrespective of an apparition being detected. The act of hunting for spirits is enough to further the notion of a haunting without evidence. Such is demonstrated in the continuous marketing of ghost hunts at properties around the United Kingdom. One could argue that the absence of a manifest spectre is more appealing to the paranormal enthusiast than the ghost itself as it leaves a void to be filled; a space to explore, rediscover and reimagine persists.

Ritual works in similar fashion; a place can appear enchanted once linked into a strand of mysticism that allows for the magical to appear there. The site at Ankerwycke remains in a state of enchantment even when the Circle are absent. The strange physicality of the tree - its age, size, scale and peculiar gnarls and markings - perpetuates a sense of the uncanny and the discarded ritual materials (corn dollies, candles, knots, ribbons, crystals, flowers) work to set the Yew within a mythical context. The objects form a strange juxtaposition against the already strange naturalism of the tree space and encourages the onlooker to project the Yew into a imagined space, one whereby the tree might be seen to be a place of spiritual interaction. Old rural folk traditions like the weaving of corn dollies work to place the tree in a previous period, a time where superstition prevailed over scientific

rationality. As such, the tree is able to perpetuate itself as an enchanted geography without a ritual occurring at the time of visitation.

Reiterations

It is worth reiterating here the specific aims and objectives of each of the three instances of landscape mysticism that I have explicated in this work and to concretise the links between them. The first case study, as set out in Chapter IV, dealt with the concept of haunting, an obvious inclusion for a work that deals with the omnipresence of absence in place but one which aimed at getting beyond the hitherto figurative descriptions of the spectral in human geography.

I

Chapter IV presented a composite (auto)ethnographic narrative compiled from twenty three separate investigations of the site of Waverley Abbey ruins, UK. The empirical material was presented as such so as to provide the reader with an overall view of the situation at Waverley, the way ad hoc paranormal investigations were taking place as a method for reengaging with a landscape of heritage. This chapter provided a detailed analysis of the practices used by investigators at the site as witnessed by the author. One of the key findings of the research was that the site was being used as a stage upon which absence could perform. The haunted narratives connected to the ruins that had developed over time, were now being used as the impetus for individuals employing a set of practices aimed at encouraging otherworldly entities to become present. The outcome of such was a memorialising of place; the projection of an imagined historical narrative(s) onto the site of the ruins, whereby the site was existing as both present and absent; straddling the past and the present. The individuals engaging with the site through occult and spiritualist techniques were thusly dealing simultaneously with the abbey as it stands now and an imagined previous version of what the abbey was. As such the site was always presenting itself as somehow

incomplete, as missing something, absent in its presence and made present by its absence. The site was constructed through a process of narrative, ritual and repetition, reinforcing its capacity to haunt. Although we can posit that the ruins themselves remain haunted whether or not the investigators are present, via a hauntological reading of place, the research emphasised the importance of embodiment in the process, suggesting that there was a necessity for a perceiver to be *in* place in order for a haunting to be perceived and thus actualised. This was demonstrated in the model illustrated earlier in the fourth chapter that showed the triangulation between perception, materiality and the immaterial that was necessary in order for a haunting to take place. In order for a haunting to be experienced, phenomenologically speaking, all three components must be in place.

Chapter IV also emphasised the role of (im)materiality in place, that through the various physical items used to engage with the paranormal the immaterial could be conjured forth. That is to say, that the haunting was augmented by the tension between the material and immaterial aspects of place. The examples set out in the case of the Ghost Club investigation, particularly that section pertaining to the spectrally inflected mirror, were demonstrative of this process. The relationship between the paranormal investigator and place is a complicated one and although the philosophical trajectories of hauntology and monumentalised spatiality go some way to describing a phenomenology of haunting, the work subject-object interaction illustrated by the case studies presented is the more measurable side of the process. As Heidegger posits, we do not notice objects until they start to behave in a manner other than that of which we assume of them (Heidegger 2003, Harman 2002). It is in such a vein that the ghosts of haunted spaces become more definite; if in terms of our perception, an object is seen to be reducible to its affects, we assume that we are able to know it through the way that it looks, smells, sounds, feels to us. We assume that we know the thing on the basis that it behaves exactly as we believe it should do. If the thing were to behave differently then we no longer know it, at least not as we thought we did. When a place begins to behave differently, or when it affects us in a way that we are unsuspecting of, then there is a repositioning of that place

against the backdrop of the uncanny. As an affectual landscape, that site becomes mobilised by enchantment in order for us to counter its strange interaction, to settle upon its indeterminacy. It is the only way to make sense of an environment that we cannot never truly knowing.

II.

Chapter V set out to deal not so much with absence, but rather with presence. It drew on findings from a twelve month period of empirical research that saw me observe and participate in Neo-Pagan rituals at the site of an ancient Yew tree in Wraysbury, UK. The work here was enframed by a more traditional reading of enchantment; magick and its ability to animate seemingly inanimate objects, affording an uncanny agency to the natural environment. Here the immaterial defines a divine spirit as opposed to the misplaced spirits or souls of the paranormal. The absence felt at the site becomes a rather more positive presence; a vital life force that dwells within the tree-place and engages with its spiritual practitioners through the process of ritual.

The research presented a selection of four ethnographies from a possible eight participated rituals conducted throughout the neo-Pagan calendar year. As detailed in Chapter V, I presented ethnographies from the four major Pagan celebratory periods; Samhain, Yule, Imbolc and Beltane. Each of the examples provided an insight into how the group utilised the landscape at Ankerwycke, specifically the Yew for the purposes of magic and worship. At each of the four rituals there was a consistency in the practices being employed; the reading of rites, chanting, smudging (the cleansing of participants with smoke), the casting of the circle, offerings to the tree and the construction of an altar space. There was an emphasis placed upon materiality and an acceptance that through a series of object exchanges and meditative practices the spirit of the tree could be communed with. The opening and closing of ceremonies, together with the casting of the circle, worked to create a place, a strategic point of essentialism through which the divine could be reached.

This sense of transference, of a moving in and between places, both of things and of people, illustrates the significance of mobility in the sacrality of the Ankerwycke site. Mobility played a key role in all forms of the ritual and its connected practices; moreover the chapter worked to show how magick, as a concept, is primarily based upon a movement or transference of (im)materiality. This suggests that not only are the facets of presence and absence integral to the positioning of the tree within a magickal enchantment but that they are fundamental in the magickal practices occurring at the site which place the tree within such a framework to begin with. Together with the strange materiality of the tree itself, the further mystification of the site through ritual works to perpetuate the role of enchantment in determining this site.

As with Chapter IV, there is an engagement with the space here, an engagement that is reliant upon materials that are viewed as being directly controlled by the immaterial, by an absent presence. Affectual landscapes like that of Ankerwycke ultimately become revered for their ability to afford place a vital materialism. They provide us with a material landscape that possesses an agency seemingly emancipated from human control. Again, we see a site constructed through narrative, ritual and repetition that moves onto become venerated for its magickal powers and unnatural agencies. This is not to suggest that such powers do not exist; my suggestion would be that like haunting, magick is a very real facet of enchantment, one that stands up to both intellectual and experiential scrutiny.

III.

Chapter VI presented the case of geomancy. It followed a slightly different format than the previous two chapters; as very little of the geomantic landscape has been surveyed by geographers, or the social sciences in general, this chapter necessarily took a different trajectory. Initially the chapter worked to provide a discussion of lines and lineation before setting out a brief cultural history of leylines, focussing in particular on the founder of ley theory Alfred Watkins and his positing of the 'old

straight track' (1922, 1946). The work here detailed a particular view of the landscape as a mappable network of ancient monuments, moats, ditches and trackways. Watkins believed that there was a hidden cartography accessible to the ley hunter through a combination of map preparations and physically scouting the landscape for clues. Watkins approach helped to push for a new strain of landscape archaeology. The idea that 'the landscape can be decoded or deciphered through careful observation and analysis of its physical characteristics' (Johnson, 2007, p. 39), was one which was later made popular by the likes of O.G.S. Crawford (1953) and W.G. Hoskins (1959, 1981) but failed to make a positive impression on the archaeological community during Watkins attempts in the 1920s. What Watkins called for, beyond the conjecturing of ancient trackways, was an applied method of alternative topological enquiry. His methods involved not only a placing of the body within the landscape but a reliance upon human perception, Such a method is not so much based upon supposition alone, as Watkins was accused of, but rather of putting faith in one's ability to understand the landscape as a human subject. In doing so, Watkins believed that it was possible to see and understand the environment now, just as it would have been by one's ancestors.

The space between the reality of the physical archaeological remains that Watkins observed and the conceptualising of these traces into linear patterns was too great for any hope of a wider acceptance beyond that of his family and the few dedicated followers that he had persuaded. Nevertheless, as Chapter VI demonstrates, the influence of Watkins work since the 1960s has been far more widespread and the very gap that led to disbelief in his work has been the exact point of appeal for those who have taken up his theories since. The ley enthusiasts discussed in the sixth chapter (Cope, 1998; Foster-Forbes, 1973; Lethbridge, 1957; Michell, 1989; Pennick and Devereaux 1989; Underwood, 1968) all offer an embodied mystification of the landscape, one that can go out and be physically experienced. To this end, I argue that the third case study draws together the variants of absence and presence presented in the previous two chapters and positions them together in an amalgamated form as the absent-presence. The enchantment

that inflects the occulted geometric geographies of leylines is arguably the most tangible form of enchantment discussed in this thesis. As the practice of ley hunting predominantly deals with both the visible and partially visible worlds, the practitioner has a method for accessing place in the measurable form of mapping and recording.

The case becomes more complex when, as discussed in Chapter VI' auto-ethnographies of ley hunting, the practitioner begins to use methodologies that are rather more faith based due to their apparent inexplicability, such as the use of dowsing rods. Similar to the Ouija Board, dowsing rods are constructed of everyday materials and yet appear to perform of their own accord, engaging with an energy that is unperceivable to the human eye other than through the voluntary movement of ordinarily inanimate objects. The description of dowsing and the affective manner in which it manifested to shape my view of the landscape whilst being practiced works to show the way materials make manifest of the immaterial and as such are instrumental in the workings of the preternaturalisms. The enchantment of both the Norfolk leylines and St Anne's Hill, came to be realised through the malfunctioning of the compass and the movement of copper rods. Again, the point can be made that we become susceptible to the workings of enchanted geographies the moment our tools-to-hand begin to behave in an unexpected manner.

This third case study then, illustrates a mysticism physically positioned by landscape in a wider searching for the affective qualities of the environment; earth energies, geodetic powers etc. Mystical narrative and its reiteration have allowed for geomantic landscapes to become mapped and so places become formed at the various points of alignment. Places that would have otherwise remained undetected are located in geomantic practices and so geomancy becomes an alternative practice for knowing landscape historically. Despite the embodied practices of geomancy, immateriality is key to an understanding of leylines. It is not only what is obviously at hand in the landscape that is important in the pursuit of leylines but also that which is not. Geomancy is equally about what we can try and retrace as is about what we already physically engage with. Geomantic sites become constructed

through narrative, ritual and repetition of practices; following lines, recording lines, theorising lines, all of which work to produce additional places of geomantic importance.

Together then, the three case studies display an interweaving of themes that both binds them and outlines a conceptual framework of enchantment that is underpinned by a hauntological reading of place. Firstly, there is the unravelling of the tensions between absence and presence and the different ways in which this presents itself, depending on the manifestation of enchantment. In the spectrality presented in Chapter IV, there is a sense of historical or monumentalised absence that produces a negative set of affects; a feeling that something is missing from a place and which drives the individual to seal the gap with ghostly presences. Absence here can be conjured, worked with and aids in the reimagining of place and creative engagements with landscape. Where there is a shift towards presence, a move in favour of materiality, we see a more manifested version of the absent where objects are willed to life by spiritual practices.

The point here is that the absence, albeit spirit or deity, is no more tangible than the forces affecting a haunting. However, the ways in which the practices of magick might engage with the absence lead to a rather different scenario. Here we do not see a searching for absent presences but rather an acceptance that they are already in place and as such are able to respond to our requests. There is a far more positive reading of placial agency where the magickal is at work. Magick relates to the nature of the practices used to invoke the unseen forces of the natural world, providing a comforting presence through the practices of an alternative spirituality. Lastly, we have a composite displayed as the absent presence; the belief, or reality, that something spiritual exists but is measurable through specific traces left in the landscape. What sets such a view apart is that there is an immediate accessibility to the trace that is not present when seeking absence or spiritual presence alone. Rather than place per se, there is a direct engagement with the landscape, a network of places and a more obvious onus on moving *through* rather than *within*. Chapter VI sees the concretisation of the

movement between absence and presence that is alluded to in Chapters IV and V.

Critical Appraisal of Experimentation

As discussed in the introductory chapter (Exordium) the research presented in this thesis has been developed through a set of experiments in the Heideggerian phenomenology of absence. Experimentation by its very nature allows for failure as much as it does for success and there are obvious strengths and weakness to taking such an approach. The following section will be broken down into two parts; the first will deal with the differences that have emerged from the different empirical investigations and their consequences for Heideggerian phenomenology, as described within the thesis. The latter part of the section will be used to reflect on the problems that remain with this experimental approach.

The research presented in this thesis has thrown up a number of issues in terms of both its approach and its findings and this is evident in the overall feel of the work. Each of the empirical case studies was used to tackle a different constituent part of hauntology: absence, presence and absent-presence. Chapter IV, the first empirical investigation, dealt with the notion of haunting and presented two ethnographies of spectrally imbued sites, Waverley Abbey ruins and The Windmill on the Common. Drawing upon existing works of spectral geographies, the research in this chapter sought to explicate the role of absence in the architecture of haunting, looking to define how and where absence might perform and analyse the practices that were used to engaged with it. The second empirical chapter (Chapter V) surveyed the magickal landscapes of Neo-Pagan ritual and worked to examine the notion of essentialism as its used in the vital materialism of alternative spiritual practice. The third and final chapter in the series of case studies (Chapter VI) was constructed from a combination of cultural history and autoethnographic practice with the aim of tackling the embodiment of an absent-presence as experienced in geomancy.

The approach taken in the research has been both mixed methodological as well as tentative. There is a twofold reason for this. Firstly, the thesis has aimed at describing experience; experience requires a qualitative approach in order to accurately detail sensory encounters with the world. Emotions, sight, smell, sound, taste and touch work together to make up our experience of place and as such are integral to the analysis of place and practices of place-making. Using a phenomenological approach allows for an embodied account of being-in-the-world and lends itself to a multi-placial enquiry. However, the counter part of the study was focused upon interrogating experiences of place that specifically occurred during practices of contemporary landscape mysticism. Positing that mysticism rests upon a system of absence-based enchantment, the research has been required to examine experiences of that which is not always tangible in our everyday encounters with the world. Such an approach is problematic in that it seeks to explore something that is seemingly non-existent, or at least unperceivable to those outside the practices and belief systems of landscape mysticism. The methodology has been required to at once deal with what is present in place as well as that which is not. As detailed above, each of the case studies involved examination of different types of enchantment, presenting variations on absence and consequently requiring different sets of tools to make their investigation possible.

The investigation of absence presented in the haunted ruins of Waverley Abbey was conducted through a combination of autoethnographic response (filtered through a Heideggerian phenomenological engagement with place), spiritual divination and participant observation. Making use of the existing practices of paranormal investigation (Ouija boards, séances) together with visual investigatory techniques, allowed for both an immersive as well as accurate account of the events that occurred in the Abbey ruins. However, the results of the research particularly the way in which the research is presented as a composite autoethnographic account, does in some regard feel empirically light. In hindsight a more critical appraisal of the practices involved, rather than an immersive account, might have brought to highlight a very different understanding of how absence was encountered by

paranormal investigators. Similarly the use of participatory investigation at the Windmill on the Common also favoured a subjective account of haunting, perhaps to the detriment of objective empirical data. The experiments with the 'haunted' mirror, and the attempts made at capturing an enchanted object on camera, underline the notion that absence is made present via material forms and would not have been so successfully achieved if I had followed a more traditional set of methods.

The work conducted with the Circle of Ankerwycke was the most traditional empirical approach, whereby a twelve-month ethnography was conducted of the rituals held at the Ankerwycke Yew over the course of a Pagan calendar year. The methodology involved in the investigation of both the site and the rituals held there was less experimental than perhaps those deployed in Chapters IV and VI as the majority of the work was conducted in a straight forward participatory observation manner. However, the inclusion of research presented from a practitioner's viewpoint offers a more nuanced approach to the subject of enchantment due to the practices that were involved; chanting, ritual spell casting, invocation of spirits. As such the work is able to provide a close reflective account of the events that took place under the tree and respond to the experiences that were had there, at least from the view point of the author.

If the first two case studies worked to investigate and participate in group investigation and ritual, Chapter VI took a rather more independent approach, providing two immersive accounts of experiments in geomancy. The first account was produced by locating and mapping a relatively short section of a Watkinsian leyline that ran through Norfolk, England. Following the trajectory of the line, I detailed the physical and sensory changes that were felt upon the body, paying close attention to the way in which (unseen) agency appeared to become ascribed to the landscape through the seemingly intentional manipulation of both vistas of the surroundings and composure of the body – the landscape appeared to force the walker into certain positions so as to gain specific views out on to the unfolding horizon. Wylie (2002) has made similar claims to those documented in this case study throughout his work on ascending Glastonbury Tor and his research serves

to underpin the unique value in experimenting with targeted walking and phenomenology.

The second part of the case study involved experimenting in geomancy, specifically working with dowsing rods so as to create a mediated space of enchantment. Again autoethnographic in nature, the writing here describes a personal account of using tools through which to engage with the preternatural. Unlike the description of walking a ley that came before it, this research was more involved in working with chance encounters with landscape than assessing and being affected by any specific form of field archaeology. The element of chance, of creating research that was led by the responses and movement of esoteric tools, led to a peculiar and (possibly) awkward set of data. Again the research was presented as a combination of autoethnography and visual documentation and proved to be the most experimental area of the empirical research.

As a consequence of the experimental model outlined above, each of the three case studies has brought to light a very different set of results. The experiments in the Heideggerian phenomenology of absence that underpin each of the empirical chapters has produced a thesis that is progressive in its approach to tackling issues of both place and experience whilst simultaneously complicating the ability to provide a cohesive set of data. The outcome of the work on absence in relation to sites of haunting has been to highlight the requirement of human intervention at spectrally imbued places. Paranormal investigation works to provide a platform on which absence might perform, it encourages a move towards asserting haunting – intentionally ascribing the notion of the spectral to a place in order to reimagine it and set it within a framework of ghostly performance. This is problematic for the research in that the approach taken was used specifically to validate the experience of haunting as felt by those involved in its investigation. If absence is being worked, coerced into performance, then the research presented here has contributed to the further spectralisation of the site and thus assumes a complicit role in the ongoing narrative of haunting that surrounds the ruins. This has a negative effect on the value of the phenomenology of absence when used to investigate haunting. As a

philosophical trajectory, such as Heidegger's phenomenology automatically seeks to essentialise the haunting of objects and thus makes it difficult to analyse things outside of a spectral framework. By ontologising absence and its emplacement within the ruins, the experientialism of the site becomes a necessarily haunted one; the concealed aspects of the site (the absences) are privileged over the social interactions and customs that occur there to form ghosts. Garcia (2014) has drawn attention to the paradox of examining absence in his treatise on things. Similarly to Heidegger, Garcia claims that the paradox of a nothing is that it is always something, thus investigating absence is rather more about examining a specific type of presence rather than absence proper.

Where magick is concerned, the focus of the research became far more object oriented, looking to produce a sense of enchantment that was developed through an exchange of materials in the context of a spiritually inscribed site. The practices that occurred in and around the site of the Ankerwycke Yew confirmed an acceptance of absence as presence and unlike the practices of paranormal enthusiasts, the Neo-Pagans approached place as readily spiritually active; viewing the tree as a divine entity in material form. The religious nature of the site required a different methodological approach to that of the unstructured and ad hoc investigations that occurred at the Abbey ruins. Rather, particular times and dates were in place so as to engage with the tree. Each of the rituals was aimed at communing with what was physically present as much as it was with that which was not. In fact the absence that surrounded the tree was of a different ilk entirely to that of the Abbey ruins. Whereas the ghosts of the abbey were made present by their absence, the magick of the tree occurred almost entirely on physical grounds. As such, the conjuring of the ancient yew produced an absence that was concerned with agency rather than missing elements. That is to say the rituals held at the tree presupposed an unseen entity that dwelt within it.

Like the ghosts of Waverley, the enchantment locale was mediated by objects and rites, which were used to confirm the presence of something that could not be seen. In order to accurately report on the experientialism of the Yew it was necessary to once again deploy an immersive methodology. Again

the result of phenomenologically enquiring into the felt absence(s) of enchanted places negated the importance of social and cultural processes that were occurring on the site, the modes of experience that made the magick possible. I have detailed these later in the Coda as they require specific attention. However, the outcomes of the study of magick do not rest upon the importance of materiality alone, another important element of the research proved to be mobility. Mobility once again placed emphasis on things and on people but also on the movement that was involved in the performance of rituals. Where as the absence of Chapter IV remained static, the presence of the magickal tree was decidedly mobile – its sacrality made manifest through procession and performance. Furthermore, there was a calling forth of absence/presence at this site, an understanding inherent in the rituals of the practitioners that an unseen agent could be manipulated into moving from within the tree and out into the tree-place.

The study of leylines in Chapter VI produced an entirely different set of results. Here the objective was to analyse the third component of hauntology, the absent present. I used this term to describe the unique way in which absence is dealt with by ley enthusiasts. Where as the empirics of the first case study worked to deal with ‘missing’ things alone (ghosts) and the second aimed at accounting for a presence mobilised by unseen agents (magick), the third and final empirical chapter looked at examples of where both elements appeared to be present concurrently. As previously discussed, definitions of leylines fall into two camps; the first asserts the ley as archaeological evidence, looking to both natural and manmade formations in the landscape in order to confirm the existence of ancient travel routes. The second supposes a more spiritual cause and claims that leys are invisible lines of energy made manifest upon the Earth’s surface. Each of the definitions produces a traceable and navigable path across the landscape but to quite different ends. Approaching leylines as examples of enchanted places, or rather networks of places, was done with both definitions in mind; for the former, the body was exploring and uncovering a concealed history much like the work of the ghost hunter; the latter was more obviously about engaging with unexplained forces and alternative approaches to spirituality.

Again the research was obtained through experimenting with both autoethnographic response and the work of existing practitioners. The results that were determined by the phenomenology here were different to those that had been obtained from the first two empirical case studies.

Leyline enthusiasts make use of both the material and immaterial simultaneously, looking to physical traces in the landscape to explain feelings of spiritual attachments. In this sense, all three of the case studies presented a similar argument in regards to the need for mediation of enchanted spaces – tools and objects were required to engage with the preternatural. However the spiritually inflected contemporary geomancy differed in that it knowingly applied an amalgamation of absence and presence to the entire landscape. It required no specific narrative on which to base its practices, rather it is capable of locating and mapping out new spaces of enchantment through the practice of dowsing. In this sense, the outcome of the chapter was not so much an engagement with a single enchanted site but instead a method of alternative topological investigation, acting similarly to way that psychogeography is used to uncover the hidden elements of the physical environment. To this end, the mystification of the landscape is somewhat intentional as it seeks to assume a level of enchantment to *all* places.

There is no specified way in which to examine enchantment and I have, in all cases, used the methodological tools that I felt were most appropriate to the investigation of the practices and sites that I researched. The differences found in the outcomes of the three empirical case studies reflect the experimental nature of the overall thesis and its approach to the subject of absence. As such certain aspects of the work were always going to be challenging. Dealing with groups of individuals who presented as marginal, in regards to their spiritual practices, was problematic from the start. In each of the three areas of study I struggled to find willing participants. This is most obviously reflected in the structure of Chapter VI where both the Thames and London Dowzers and the National Society of Dowzers refused to take part in an academic study. The solution found in autoethnographic response allowed me to tackle the subject of leylines without a group of research participants but has resulted in extended

subjective accounts of the practices used in geomancy that potentially weaken the overall claims of the thesis due to the lack of objectivity. However one cannot report on experience without being subjective and the approaches taken to examine various other forms of enchantment and their related practices in the first and second empirical chapters might equally be seen as susceptible to scrutiny.

Furthermore, the thesis has been set up as a series of experiments with Heideggerian phenomenologies of absence and although I have made attempts to outline the definition of this term in both the introductory and literature review chapters, the meaning is by no means fixed. Rather, the approaches to phenomenology and indeed absence vary between chapters and the overall feel of the research is perhaps less cohesive than I would have liked. Again, this possible lack of cohesion is a reflection of both the intangible theme of absence, of investigating that which is not present as well as the marginal belief systems that the thesis aims to represent. Another issue has been that there is a moving in and between of the essentialism of place throughout the work and again this reflects the varying outcomes of the empirical chapters. The work aims to engage with and account for this state of essentialist flux by introducing the notion of strategic essentialism(s) that appear to be present in a number of the esoteric practices discussed in the work. Ontologising place is problematic in that it assumes a vital role or inherent character of a site rather than acknowledging the social and cultural interactions that help to form it. In order to deal with place through a Heideggerian lens, one that assumes an absence within all things, it has been necessary to evoke the same type of terminology as is present in Heidegger's own writing. Experimentation might have proved problematic in regards to the cohesion and conclusiveness of the research's outcomes but more importantly it has shown that varied and untested approaches to cultural geography are capable of producing detailed and creative accounts of the lived environment that would otherwise not have been achievable. I believe this is where the thesis has been most successful and outlines the importance of experimentation in cultural geographical methodologies.

Modes of Experience

If it is possible to breakdown hauntology into its constituent parts, (absence, presence and absent-presence) so might we do the same with the modes of experience that are used to underpin it; narrative, ritual and repetition. Narrative has been used throughout the thesis to describe the local and cultural histories of the sites in which the research has been conducted. Chapter IV set the ruins of Waverley Abbey within the context of both historic and ghostloric narratives, emphasising the ways in which storytelling and folk tales drove the haunting of the ruins – the sightings of the ghost hunters and their placing of enveloping of the abbey in their records of paranormal activity. Chapter V also took the dual narrative of history and myth in which to set both the yew and the tree place within a mythologised historic context, this was encountered in both the rites that were read out at the tree during ritual and in the way the tree featured in existing historical accounts. The final empirical chapter, Chapter VI, dealt with a number of narratives, some of which were embedded within the materiality of the landscape (St Anne's Hill) and others that were inherently man made (the Duel Stone).

The examination of Alfred Watkins work clarified the way in which new narratives can be constructed to describe old, if not ancient, features of the landscape. The appropriation and recontextualisation of Watkins' work by New Age scholars further showed how historical and cultural narratives could be manipulated so as to provide a foundation for landscape mysticism and the empirical work with dowsing illustrated how entangled ley theory in particular is with other forms of topological narrative; folkloric, social and archaeological. Narrative itself featured heavily as a methodological device through which to describe and account for the experiences of place that occurred throughout the empirical research. Both Chapters IV and VI provided detailed narrated accounts of the alternative spiritual practices that were being used to enshroud place with in the mysticism of a deeply topological belief system. These (auto-) ethnographic writings have been

used to elucidate the ways enchantment is experienced by the human-subject within the remit of landscape mysticism. Furthermore, these narratives suggest an importance to the practice of (re)telling the stories of encounters with sites of (marginal) spiritual importance that have been gained from investigating them so as to reiterate the sacrality surrounding the places themselves.

The second mode that can be seen throughout the research is ritual. Each of the empirical chapters dealt with ritual in describing the practices of contemporary British landscape mysticism that were being exercised across the specific sites of study. Ritual is not only discussed in terms of an applied spiritual methodology but is moreover given over to describing a whole set of practices that are utilised to engage with enchantment. In approaching the hauntological, the practices aimed at dealing with the immaterial aspects of place. Both the paranormal investigation described in Chapter IV and the esoteric systems of geomancy illustrated in the final empirical chapter (VI), saw a specific set of methods being implemented so as to commune with the unseen. Including those rites practiced by the Circle of Ankerwycke, the methods observed (and participated in) at each of the sites were centred upon a profound and topologically based spirituality and worked to engage with and provoke an animated locale that could only be mobilised and mediated through these specific methods. As such, the work of ritual was observed to have underpinned the enchantment that was experienced at the sites discussed within the thesis, the practices themselves further enveloping the spaces in mysticism.

The importance of narrative and ritual would by no means be so relevant to the experience of place if not for the third and final of the modes, reiteration. Both narrative and ritual share a common need to be repeated. Narratives, if they are to have any influence on our understanding of place, are required to be reiterated. The ghost stories belonging to Waverley Abbey have to be repeated and retold in order to keep the site enframed by haunting. The same can be said of the enchantment of the Ankerwycke Yew, without the repetition of the folklore and historical tales that surround it, its close proximity to the 'meadow of runes', its purported magickal properties,

the tree becomes little more than an arboreal oddity. Repetition inscribes a sense of the spiritually (and sensually) weird onto sites like that of the Yew. The palimpsestic nature of these sites, their ability to be mapped out and reimagined within existing and newly formed mythologies, works to build a pre-existing sense of the sacred, which in turn allows for a strategic essentialism that can be used to augment the sites spiritual importance as well as providing the backdrop for their unseen agency.

Final Words: mobility, enchantment and place

The theme of moving provides a second connective thread between the three case study chapters. Mobility has been displayed in various forms through the movement of objects, people and ideas, the transference of energy and the movement of time. Chapter IV presented a case study of the spectral; within this chapter, various types of movement were discussed. Firstly, was the movement of the paranormal investigators in and around of the sites; the practices involved in the hunting of ghosts, such as the Ouija board, saw a movement of materials. The glass pushed around the table by an unseen entity. Furthermore, was the presenting of a perceived temporal mobility; a moving of the site and the spectre between historical moments.

Chapter V demonstrated the importance of movement within ritual; both through an embodied mobility that saw magickal practitioners moving in and around the site of the Yew but also in and out of venerated spaces. The space outside of the tree made for peripheral point and which sacrality met the vernacular. The practices themselves; dancing, procession, drumming, all placed an emphasis on a kinetic relationship with the sacred place. There was a further point of mobility found within the spiritual beliefs of the Neo-Pagan circle, a sense that spirits could move in and out of the site as well as the physical movement of the tree itself and the prescribing of a preternatural agency.

In Chapter VI, the introduction of Alfred Watkins theory of leylines displayed a dependency on movement and human mobility. At a foundational level, one can look to the leylines as being evidence of a former

mobility, a line of ancient movement. Through a New Age or archaeo-astronomical lens, the lines can be seen to function as conduits for earth energy. Furthermore, the enactment of walking a leyline provides a form of mobility in itself, a moving through the landscape that seeks to uncover historical (and spiritual) truths about the natural environment. The act of dowsing sees a movement not only of the body but also of the rods used to commune with the earth. As such, we can extend this idea of movement to the magnetic forces at work, which seek to manipulate the direction in which the rods spin.

As a theme, mobility is found in each of the case studies presented here and provides an area for further research around enchantment. The correlation between movement and landscape leads me to a third theme presented in this work, embodiment. Each of the three cases has shown the importance of the body-in-place, of positioning the participant or observer within the enchanted landscape. Reflecting on place based experiences of landscape mysticism would be impossible without positioning my own body in these sites and remaining open throughout the affective process. Almost all of the empirical work presented here has been (auto)ethnographic. The reasoning behind this is that due to its perceived immeasurability, a straight forward sociological study of people's beliefs and practices would not be conducive to an understanding of how place affects the observer in situations of enchanted geographies. Sociological investigations into the paranormal already exist (see Clarke, 2012, Davies, 2007; Green, 2003; Wiseman, 2012). What has been missing is an immersive study of the affective landscapes of this terrain, of the ways in which place comes to be viewed and act upon individuals who utilise occult practices within it. Furthermore, place itself, forms the basis for all of the research that is present in this thesis. Each of the case studies deals with how the concept of place changes in light of particular practices and specific philosophical trajectories. Places then, are the cornerstone of landscape mysticism, forming the connective points at which an interaction with enchantment can take place.

Our relationship to place, our experience of being-in-the-world, is not entirely tangible, as we have seen in the examples provided through the

empirical case studies. In all sites, immateriality works upon us; it is the thing that affects us sensually. Through the conceptual underpinnings of the introductory chapters, the case studies can be as the positioning of the work within a phenomenology of absence, a phenomenology described in more detail in Chapter III. The conception of place used through the thesis has been filtered through an Heideggerian ontology, an ontology of absence, of an ever-unknowable aspect of things. It stands then, that if all things are concealing something then it renders them a) fully unknowable and b) a space in which to project meaning. Thusly, all things, all places, must be constructed of both matter and absence. To be certain, we experience places as they reveal themselves to us and through placing ourselves within enchanted spaces we have no option but to engage with the revealing process and in turn its unknowable aspect. Hence some sites become imbued with a sense of mysticism, of magical properties and unseen agency that doubtless draws inquiring minds in for further investigation. Through a reconfiguring of Derrida's fractured ontology alongside a Heideggerian object oriented approach to place, I have been able to develop the concept of hauntology further so that it encompasses the ways that absence is made manifest in the lived, experienced environment.

It has already been stated that hauntology explains the overarching theme of absence in this work, codifying the thesis as an on going study of haunted placial experiences. Hauntology, as has been discussed elsewhere, explains the ever-present-absence that pervades the landscape and creates a philosophical standpoint from which enchantment can be seen to form. In subscribing to a Heideggerian phenomenology - an embodied experience of landscape - that perpetually encounters moments of the strange, of the uncanny, of seemingly unnatural agency, we have to deal with the unseen. Hauntology accounts for this; it situates these enchanted geographies within a more complex, nuanced realm of absence, one which is at once moving away from spectral accounts of history and yet is unable to forget them, neither physically through ruination nor emotionally via monumentalised memory work.

This thesis has drawn together just some of the instance of enchantment that occur within contemporary British landscape mysticism. It has been shown that enchantment not only exists as an affective process, or a conduit through which to analyse the placial uncanny, but additionally as something of value to us. We use enchantment to deal with the feelings that pervade the sites that are most haunted, that proffer questions we might not answer or confront us with previously unknown identities. Enchanted geographies are not confined to the realms of mysticism, where they tend to dominate as sites venerated for their obscurity or liminal qualities. Rather, enchanted geographies can be seen to describe the most potent affective spaces accessible to us, where our engagement is a prerequisite to a much wider reimagining of the landscape and where we are confronted by the questions of identity, spirituality and temporality that are present in our everyday life and forced to seek place based answers. It is in this sense that these spaces are invaluable to us and to our furthering of the geographical imagination.

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