



The  
University  
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**Women Walking Manchester:  
Desire Lines Through The “Original Modern” City**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis operates at the intersections between psychogeography, gender and public space in contemporary cities. Psychogeography is concerned with the hidden histories and invisible power structures which saturate the urban environment. Walking is considered more than an everyday activity, providing a multisensory tool to critically engage with space. The psychogeographical “dérive” is an unpremeditated wander guided by instinct and emotion. It is utilised in this research as a method to facilitate walking interviews with forty-three women in Manchester, England. Walking together aims to break down academic hierarchies, facilitating rich conversations in, with, and about the environment.

Women have often been invisible in psychogeographic literature, revealing an underlying assumption that gender has little impact on the experience of space. An intersectional feminist approach is taken which asserts the importance of gender dynamics whilst recognising “woman” is not a single descriptive category. The prevalence of everyday sexism and gender based street harassment found herein suggest that gender matters. The interruptions and disruptions experienced during fieldwork raised ethical questions about risk and safety. The importance of infrastructure and accessible design is reasserted throughout as a necessary prerequisite for engagement in public space.

Women involved in this study were deeply concerned about the impact economic forces, particularly gentrification, were having on the character of Manchester. They were angry at the erasure of working class histories and the displacement of those not deemed attractive consumers. However, women expressed a sense of ambivalent nostalgia; wanting to honour their heritage but knowing there was no golden age and prosperity was built on slavery and exploitation. They desired a more just and equal society but also welcomed consumer choice and enjoyed the bustle of the cosmopolitan city as an entertainment site. I have used the term “hipcholia” to explain the complex tangle of emotions that they shared.



# Chapter One Introduction

“A city is a language, a repository of possibilities, and walking is the act of speaking that language, of selecting from those possibilities” (Solnit, 2001: 213).

## 1.1 Overview

This research offers a portrait of women’s feelings about the urban through walking and talking with them in Manchester city centre. I conducted 43 walking interviews between February and July 2016. These were unstructured conversations where the direction of our journey was chosen by the women themselves. Through this work, I hoped to learn about their relationship with the city and to illuminate the wider social forces that impact on women’s experiences of the metropolis.

Walking is an everyday activity but one which has extraordinary resonances; it can be transformed into something more than pedestrian. Although often utilitarian and taken for granted, it also provides an opportunity for sensory engagement and deep connection with space. In *Walkscapes* (2001), Francesco Careri suggests that walking may have been humanity’s first aesthetic act because after basic physical needs are met our attention turns to exploring and modifying the landscape. Psychogeography connects to such ideas, by using walking as a tool to investigate the atmosphere and hidden power structures in the urban environment. It was initially defined by Guy Debord as the:

study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, (whether consciously organized or not) on the emotions and behaviour of individuals. (1955 / 2006 :8)

Debord sought a total transformation of society which he felt was consumed by the spectacle, a state where mediated images and consumer dreams had replaced authentic desire. Debord suggested “the *dérive*” or drift as tool for rupturing the monotony of capitalism. The *dérive* is a form of creative walking where the practitioner is guided by their senses to explore ambiances or atmospheres. It contrasts with operational walks from A to B because it has no fixed route or implicit destination. Neither is it a leisurely amble because it

aims for a critical engagement with space. In the years since Debord developed his ideas psychogeography and the *dérive* have mutated into a diverse array of practices. These have travelled in many different artistic, activist and academic directions, often with an apparent loss of their original political intentions and application, although something of his original spirit still resonates.

Capitalism has also evolved since Debord was working, and thus so too must critiques. In particular, neoliberal economic policies promote a retreat of the state, valuing private profit over collective benefit and this has an impact on the physical landscape, from the closure of public services to the growth of overseas investment in luxury apartments that are for investment rather than housing (Harvey 2007, Peck and Tickell 2002). The gaze of social media, the impact of austerity, precarious employment and increased securitisation are just some factors which have an impact on individuals, creating a sense of alienation and fear in the city (Fisher 2009). This is the contemporary manifestation of the kind of conditions Debord wanted to transform, and many recent psychogeographic practitioners have once again been using walking as way to critically interrogate, destabilize and affectively remap space (Smith, 2015, Richardson 2015).

Walking is always an act of becoming – moving between places and navigating through a landscape which will have an impact on how an individual can move. It is also a sensual, multi-sensory and somatic practice which can illicit an emotional understanding of place. Psychogeographic drifting encompasses an attentiveness that notices shifts in atmosphere, changes in occupancy and activity (including absences). It attunes the wanderers mind to appreciate details that may be overlooked during a purely functional walk, such as a commute, where one is moving with an instrumental purpose. The drift can both reveal layers of the palimpsest of the city and evoke subtle changes by adding new stories and imaginaries to the emotional fabric of place. I suggest it can provoke a narrative rupture which creates a space of opportunity for understanding, interpreting and re-inscribing the city with new ideas.

Many scholars recognise that there is an emerging “new psychogeography” identified by Richardson (2014) as being, amongst other things, heterogeneous, critical, strategic, and somatic. The richness and diversity of this movement is exemplified by writers such as Phil Smith, who discusses an “exemplary kind of walking” which has evolved into a “difficult, complex, savvy, corporeal, subversive, self-aware ... walking, part of a loose meshwork of resistant practices” (2015:4). In common with many walking artists, Smith has invented a new term for his work, which he acknowledges owes a debt to psychogeography but which has transcended its origins. Smith’s “mythogeography” and “counter-tourism” join other neologisms, including deep topography (Papadimitriou, 2012), schitzocartography (Richardson, 2015), and street training (Childs, 2007) whose work will be discussed within this thesis. However, I do not wish this work to become trapped in insular debates about terminology so I use the phrase “creative walking” as an umbrella term for walking which fits broadly into Richardson’s definition of the new, critically engaged and diverse psychogeography. The shared values between all these walking practices suggest the *dérive* has the potential to transform the everyday, to illuminate and challenge narratives of privatisation, commodification and securitisation of space, and navigate increasingly blurred boundaries between public/private spheres.

This new psychogeography underpins the sense of critical curiosity in this research and the emphasis on walking as an exploratory tool. This thesis also evokes a desire to engage with the idea of what constitutes an authentic experience of the city, to dig beneath its surface realities. It does so from the perspective of women who are rarely acknowledged in classical psychogeographic texts which strive to capture the essence of city life. Therefore, a wider body of work has also been influential because the psychogeographical canon is overwhelmingly male and haunted by the presence of the *flâneur*. A privileged white man, the *flâneur* enjoys the freedom to wander unhindered, personifying a voyeuristic gaze and the belief that the city is masculine territory (Solnit, 2001). There has long been a debate on the (im)possibility of the *flâneuse* and whether women are able to enjoy similar freedoms. Lauren Elkin strives to claim the right to walk unhindered in the city

because “space is a feminist issue. The space we occupy...is constantly remade and unmade, constructed and wondered at” (2016:286). I draw on women writers and artists who have made this fight explicit in their work as well as the work of intersectional feminists such as Audre Lorde (1984) and bell hooks (2000). This inspired me to make women the focus of my research because I wanted to (re)insert their voices into psychogeographical accounts of urban space. Therefore, my fieldwork consisted of walking interviews with forty-three women to discover their experiences of walking in a contemporary British city.

A commitment to feminist geographies has led to me not only foregrounding women’s voices but to making my own positionality as a researcher overt. I have a deep ethical commitment of care to my research participants and am entwined with my research in numerous ways. I am responsible for initiating interviews, transcribing, analysing and writing up my data. I strive to be as reflexive and open as possible but I am always present. I have lived in Manchester for almost twenty years and have been actively involved in psychogeographic explorations since 2006. I have developed my own walking art praxis and a complex relationship with my home, this is reflected in the vignettes which precede each findings chapter. These seek to both describe the geographical context of this work and site myself both within the city and my research. They follow the general conventions of psychogeographical place writing, making visible glimpses of the social and historical construction of the city. The decision to use first person here is a conscious and considered one, reflecting my belief in the phenomenological nature of psychogeographical research. A focus on affective, embodied experience means it has to be somewhat personal with each practitioner (re)inventing their own version of the city. However, within this framework it remains possible to present primary research that is robustly and objectively analysed and I discuss methodology further in chapter three.

The research is located in a particular place – Manchester – a post-industrial city in the North West of England. It is used as a conduit and case study to explore wider social processes and to draw parallels between individual and universal experiences. I am interested in everyday, mundane experiences

which are often taken for granted and over looked routines; what Georges Perec calls the “infraordinary,” (1974/2008). My vision for what constitutes a city is influenced by the work of Doreen Massey. She conceives space as a series of trajectories, individual journeys, which interconnect and create a dense web of stories (Massey, 2005). These links implicate and embed us all in communities that range in scale from the local to the global.

## **1.2 Thesis Structure**

The thesis begins by exploring the wider literature and context this research is situated within. This includes further exploration of key ideas and figures including Massey, Debord, Smith, psychogeography and walking art. It will then detail the methodology used and justify my decision to conduct walking interviews. My findings and analysis are divided into four chapters (chapters four to eight in the thesis).

Chapter four is descriptive, focusing on women’s material experiences of the city, the places they love and loathe as well as the role walking plays in their daily life. This provides a sense of the physical and emotional landscape we are navigating together.

I explore what it means to walk as a woman in chapter five. I discuss how gender mediates experiences of walking in Manchester, and the impact of everyday sexism. Many of my interviews were interrupted by men challenging the right of women to be present in the street and asserting their own perceived male entitlement to dominate public space. This precipitates a debate around ethical research and risk in the city. Women shared previous experience of street harassment and the coping mechanisms they have developed to keep walking regardless of obstacles caused by living within patriarchy.

Chapter six situates Manchester in its social and political landscape. Women wanted to talk critically about regeneration and gentrification, with many expressing concerns about social exclusion and the erasure of working class histories. The Hipster recurred as a figure of derision and I will develop a parallel between the hipster and the flâneur.

Chapter seven returns to emotional connections to Manchester and women's concerns about authenticity and fear for the soul of the city. Following Zukin (2010:3), I discuss how "authenticity becomes a tool of power." A sense of anticipatory loss is linked to anxieties around change and loss of control, particularly as unseen global economic forces change our everyday environment "creating not just an economic division but a cultural barrier between rich and poor, young and old. This is what happens when a city loses its soul" (Zukin, 2010:9). The women I spoke to also experienced the pleasures and benefits of consumerism and cosmopolitanism. They were at great pains to stress they did not oppose change and instead voiced a complicated, ambivalent nostalgia that they struggled to articulate. Nobody wanted to return to Manchester's past which they viewed as grim, exploitative and difficult. I describe their feelings as "hipcholia" and suggest a need to better understand the dialectical impact of change at a personal level.

The title of each of these chapters borrow a phrase or title from a famous work of Mancunian pop art. This reflects the wider debate about the identity of the city, but also how the popular perception of the city relates to women. I have preceded each chapter with a short personal account of a walk in Manchester. This provides an opportunity both to situate myself with the tradition of embodied psychogeographical accounts of space and to describe the physical terrain without detracting from the voices of the women I walked with.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The central aim of this thesis is to understand the role walking can play in considering how women experience and relate to urban space.

My key research question asks: What do women think and feel about the contemporary urban environment and how can walking with them illuminate their experiences?

Objectives which arise from this ask:

1. How can creative walking methods facilitate conversations about the urban environment and women's engagement with space?



2. How are wider social processes which shape the contemporary city experienced by women; do they perceive an impact and do any particular issues cause widespread concern?
  
3. Do women perceive the experience of walking through public space in the UK as explicitly gendered, and if so how does that influence their behaviour?



## **Chapter Two Literature Context**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides context for the research, explaining its concerns with psychogeography, gender and public space. It encompasses a diverse range of work, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of this study. I will provide an overview of the key social theorists whose work on urban life underpins my own, including Doreen Massey, Guy Debord, Marshall Berman, Henri Lefebvre, Michel De Certeau, Steve Pile and Mark Fisher. It will explore their influence through addressing key subjects which run throughout this research. These include the meanings, origins, uses and evolution of psychogeography, the importance of public space, the political potential of creative walking and the relationship between gender and walking in urban environments. These themes are cross cutting and interwoven throughout the analysis that follows. Finally, I will introduce the geographical context of this research in Manchester, England. Throughout, I will take as a starting point the concept that space is always socially constructed: “the physical, social, and conceptual product of social and natural events and processes” (Neil Smith 2004: 196).

### **2.2 Doreen Massey and space as stories-so-far**

The key writer whose work influences this thesis is Doreen Massey, and in particular her conception of space as dynamic, fluid, and dependant on a network of relationships. A “place” is more than a line on a map; it is a nexus of entwined stories each of which are deeper and richer than a cartographic construction. Massey sees space as being constituted by constellations of personal relationships and journeys which create complex networks beyond traditional borders. In her idea of “a global sense of place” (Massey, 1994) illustrates her theory in action by a journey through Kilburn High Street where people, policy, goods and services merge from across the world. I can demonstrate it here at my desk. My computer was made by a Japanese company, I don't know where it was actually made but Cook et al (2004) and the associated “follow the thing” project would suggest a complicated supply chain. I'm trying not to be distracted by my emails and messages from friends

around the corner and across the globe. My coffee is Ethiopian and is in a mug from a Scottish indie band, the radio is playing a band from America and I realise I have no idea what kind of wood my desk is made of. This is just a tiny corner of a single room, in one house, on a street, in Manchester, England, Europe; my feet are on the ground here but invisible ties bind me to other people around the planet.

Massey believes “Space is always under construction ... It is never finished, never closed. Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far” (2005:9). This suggests cities are always being made and remade and we collectively have the power to change at least our small role in the narrative. Massey does not mean places do not have distinct identities but she offers a generous and outward looking account of their construction because:

what makes somewhere special is not its internalised history ... but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus (1994:155).

The locus manifests as existing material conditions, however, Massey’s conception means they have the potential to evolve. Massey raises issues of social responsibility provoked by global inequalities that generates and consistently asks questions about power and justice. Her vision of space as being in flux is rooted in very material concerns and she warns that the abstract must be balanced with reality and:

amid the Ridley Scott visions of world cities ... the Baudrillard visions of hyperspace ... much of life for many people ... consists of waiting in a bus shelter with your shopping for a bus that never comes” (1994:263)

Massey’s words are quoted in a film by Patrick Keiller, *Robinson in Space* (1997), in which the fictional eponymous anti-hero undertakes a journey around Britain. This was the first of a trilogy of films, culminating with *Robinson in Ruins* (2010), the final film being part of a larger project Massey collaborated on. Keiller uses long, static shots, which focus on seemingly banal places, presenting an apparently fragmented and compartmentalised view of the world. However, the closer one interrogates the everyday the more nuanced it

becomes and a voiceover weaves together disparate narratives which coalesce to reveal the political construction of landscape.

*Robinson in Ruins* depicts a quest to understand a “great malady that I shall dispel in the manner of Turner by making picturesque views on journeys to sites of scientific and historic interest” (2010). The timing coincides with the demise of New Labour and global economic crises and the film juxtaposes languorous shots of nature sound-tracked by tales of evictions, enclosures and Private Finance Initiative (PFI) follies. We are reminded capitalism is not “natural” and neither is the appearance of bucolic English pastoral villages. For example, the countryside is shaped by factory farming and large-scale agri-business as well as land sequestered for military use such as Greenham Common, the former American air base. Dependence on oil and its derivatives makes us complicit in war and desecration on a global scale and the resulting oppression and displacement transcend local borders, nationalism and race. To get to the heart of the problem, in her essay accompanying the film Massey suggests we must “Ask not 'do you belong to this landscape?' but 'does this landscape belong to you.’” (2011: unpaginated). The question has deep historical roots as the narrator makes links between the seemingly disparate deaths of carpenter Batholomew Steer (1597, tortured for attempting to lead an uprising against enclosure and famine in and Oxfordshire under feudalism), and scientist Doctor David Kelly (2003, presumed suicide after being exposed for raising concerns about the alleged weapons of mass destruction that justified the Iraq war). The narrator tells us that:

Robinson had once said he believed that, if he looked at the landscape hard enough, it would reveal to him the *molecular basis* of historical events, and in this way he hoped to see into the future. (Robinson in Ruins, 2010).

Keiller and Massey have both expressed scepticism about the labelling and commodification of psychogeography, and the molecular basis is a cinematic conceit. However, this is a profoundly psychogeographical question as it seeks to understand the effects of landscape upon behaviour and to uncover the power structures which in turn shape the environment.

### 2.3 Psychogeography and the Situationist International (SI)

Psychogeography is a concept attributed to Guy Debord. He was the leading figure in The Situationist International (SI), a Neo-Marxist collective of philosophers and artists, active in Europe between 1957 and 1972. Their avant-garde political theories and aesthetics were part of the milieu resulting in the student uprising and civil unrest in France, 1968 (Knabb, 2006, Marcus 1989). However, Debord's interest in psychogeography predates the SI and originated in their antecedents The Letterist International (1953-1957) (Plant, 1992). Debord developed a theory of the social world, best articulated in *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967 / 1983). In this work he elaborated the idea that alienated relations are endlessly reproduced, not just through work, but also within mediated images and leisure pursuits. This means we cannot think or feel authentically because capitalism has dominated not just physical space but psychic space too. Contemporary society is deeply unhappy because, as Debord states in the opening sentence, all experience and every desire has been commodified and "everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation." (1967 / 1983:6). To use an example, the fashion and cosmetic industries promote beauty idylls which require expensive products to replicate at home, but even with great skill we cannot resemble an airbrushed and manipulated photograph. If we had never been exposed to their advertisements would we even be trying? Social media and the internet were unheard of when Debord wrote but have further entrenched his spectacle as so much of our lives is spent staring at screens, interacting with avatars and mediated representations of the "real" world. Fisher (2009) discusses the contemporary impact of this colonisation of the imagination and its implication on mental health as the constant pressure to conform and consume causes depression and anxiety.

The Situationists can be placed within a twentieth century avant-garde tradition which responded to the ruptures and chaos caused by rapid changes generated with the advent of modernity, consumerism, urbanism, and the impact of two world wars. Sadler (1999) notes that membership of the SI was fluid, in common with many radical left factions, internal disputes and frequent

expulsions often overshadowed their output. In total, eighty-seven writers and artists were official members, Debord being the only constant. There are serious criticisms of their work, notably a tendency towards colonialism (Gibbons, 2015), misogyny (Elkin, 2016) and deliberate obscurism in their work (Solnit, 2001). However, this research seeks to utilise psychogeography, a concept which has broken free from its problematic origins and can offer insights relevant today.

Debord developed a range of playful and subversive tools to attempt to break through the spectacle. The SI sought a “revolution of everyday life” (Vaneigem, 1967 / 2012) that would transform society and blur boundaries between work and play. They utilised *detournement* a “cut-and-paste” aesthetic of montage, appropriating and altering images to change their meaning. Their philosophy was shared via pamphlet and graffiti slogans such as “Poetry is On the Streets” and “No Gods, No Masters.” Another tool was psychogeography, which conceptualises walking as radical praxis, an act that combines theory and practice in an attempt to make changes to the material world around us. It is conducted largely by engaging with space using creative walking methods. The *dérive* or drift aims to destabilise conventional relationships with the urban environment to uncover underlying power relationships. This was initially defined as:

the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals Debord (1955 / 2006: 8).

This original definition is somewhat didactic and the concept has developed into an “assemblage of ambulatory and resistant practioners” (Smith, 2015:165). The value of psychogeography lies in its ability to take theory onto the streets and to provide an opportunity to engage imaginatively, critically and somatically with urban space.

The SI were vague about the structure of a post-spectacular society but echoes of their work can be felt keenly throughout popular culture, most notably in punk, which appreciated the sloganeering and ludic nihilism of the SI (Marcus 1989). The influence was unconscious for many but in Manchester,

Tony Wilson, broadcaster, writer and founder of Factory records was open about his admiration of The SI. He named the Hacienda nightclub after a line in Chtcheglov's Formulary for a New Urbanism which said:

And you, forgotten, your memories ravaged... no longer setting out for the hacienda where the roots think of the child and *where the wine is finished off with fables from an old almanac*. That's all over. You'll never see the hacienda. It doesn't exist.

*The hacienda must be built.* (1953 / 2006: 1 formatting in original)

Chtcheglov's formulary offers a surreal and poetic vision of a city built for playing, loving and constant drifting. He rallies against banality and Le Corbusier's modernist functionality, preferring instead to plan a city where districts:

correspond to the whole spectrum of diverse feelings that one encounters *by chance in everyday life*.

Bizarre Quarter—Happy Quarter (specially reserved for habitation)—Noble and Tragic Quarter (for good children) — Historical Quarter (museums, schools) — Useful Quarter (hospital, tool shops) — Sinister Quarter, etc (1953 / 2006: 6)

The impossibility of realising this vision is echoed in Constant Nieuwenhuys's "New Babylon" (1959-74) a mobile, mutable city that was never translated into an actual workable structure. Nieuwenhuys believed a radical new form of architecture could be the catalyst for a transformation of daily life. This was the ultimate aim of The SI but from their very beginning The Situationists knew they were struggling against a system with the odds stacked against them. Recuperation was identified by Debord as the process where capitalism absorbs new and radical ideas, adapting them and using them to further support capitalism. An example can be seen clearly in punk, which was initially a subcultural expression of rage expressed through a distinctive cultural style. High street chain stores now sell replica t-shirts with punk bands on them, and couture designers produce exquisitely ripped jeans. John Lyndon (nee Rotten) was the singer with archetypal punk band The Sex Pistols and recently utilised his former notoriety to sell butter in advertisements for Country Life in 2008. This is perhaps a rather crass example, but the pacifying effect of



recouperation is almost impossible to avoid under the present conditions of Western neoliberal consumer culture. Later discussions around gentrification will explore these contradictions further.

## **2.4 Contemporary Psychogeography and the *dérive***

Psychogeography itself evolved into three main directions. Broadly speaking these are:

1. Literary writing on walking through cities, as personified by writers such as Iain Sinclair and Will Self, as documented by Coverley (2006) and Nicholson (2011).
2. Activist groups, often evoking magical Marxist methods. These include Manchester Area Psychogeographic (MPA), The London Psychogeographical Association (LPA), and others discussed by Home (1997) and Bonnett (2017). Their implications for this work will be discussed shortly.
3. Creative walking as practised by the members of The Walking Artists Network (online) and written about by Smith (2015) and Heddon and Turner (2010). Examples of creative walking are intertwined throughout this text.

These trajectories will all be explored imminently, but first I will return to how exactly one becomes a psychogeographer. This is a praxis conducted on foot, using a particular form of walking – the *dérive*. Walking is an everyday multi-sensual activity with extraordinary resonances. To walk is dynamic and embodied; it is to be in a perpetual state of emergence between leaving and arriving, to be somewhere yet nowhere. Each footstep subtly alters the environment and is experienced as sensual, embodied action. Yet walking is generally perceived as mundane and unglamorous, the very word *pedestrian* is sometimes used in a derogatory sense to imply boredom and conformity. However, Solnit (2001) provides a comprehensive overview of the cultural significance of walking and the SI believed walking could become a tool for radically transforming society.

The SI utilised the *dérive*, literally translated as a drift. This experimental walking technique aims to uncover, explore and disrupt the accepted capitalist flow of the city, provoking imaginative reconfigurations of urbanity by disrupting habitual modes of travel. Debord gave no instructions to underpin the idea of the *dérive*, though it was clear he meant the *dérive* to be a reconnaissance tool, to understand space prior to reconfiguring as a catalyst for his total revolution. Contemporary psychogeographers use a variety of techniques to try and randomise their encounters with space. These may include using dice or playing cards, transposing maps, attempting to follow a line drawn across a map or looking for thematic clues, such as symbols in the landscape. Hind and Qualman (2015) offer fifty-three “ways to wander” as a provocation and inspiration for those wishing to *dérive*. The contemporary city has evolved since Debord’s experiments as capitalism has evolved into its current neoliberal form. The impact of these policies on the material fabric of cities, including gentrification, homogenisation and increased privatisation and securitisation remains susceptible to revealing itself if one is attuned to environmental clues.

The *dérive* affords an opportunity to study how and why the city manifests in the form it does, to engage in the flow of the city in a way that is intensely pleasurable and yet also has a quasi-scientific purpose. The aim of a *dérive* is:

to notice the way in which certain areas, streets or buildings resonate with states of mind, inclinations and desires, and to seek out reasons for movement other than those for which an environment was designed (Plant 1992:59).

Debord said psychogeography was “charmingly vague” (1955 / 2006: 8) and *dérives* could last for days, often including long periods of inebriation. Unfortunately, very little documentation of the SI expeditions survives; we are largely left with tools to use as we see fit rather than a full instruction manual and hagiography. This makes the *dérive* a tactic relevant to any age, because its “decoding of the demonic or alchemical in everyday life rests on no formal methodology” (Jenks and Neves, 2000:153) but a personal, affective response and a call to imagination. The SI were, however, very clear that their drifting

always had a radical underpinning and political purpose. Critics such as Smith (2015) discuss how this may have become diluted and lost due to the mutability of the *dérive*, and the enduring presence of a distinct but related fellow walker, the *flâneur*.

## **2.5 The Flâneur, the Flâneuse and critiques**

The Flâneur is associated with Walter Benjamin, whose oeuvre covers a wide range of themes pertinent to this study. Central is his sprawling, fragmented magnum opus *The Arcades Project* (1999), which remained unfinished at the time of his death in 1940. This work catalogues the spaces of nineteenth century Paris and despite its dreaminess is a powerful critique of regeneration. He also explored the impact of mechanical reproduction on what it means to be authentic, suggesting distortion increased and meaningfulness diminished with each replica. Benjamin synthesised many seemingly diverse elements within his work, being heavily influenced by both the Jewish Kabbalah and Freud's new theory of psychoanalysis. Accordingly, his method of writing was strikingly modernist; Ferris (2004) describes the symbiosis between style and intention in his work, which Benjamin himself likened to a mosaic. He often focused on minutiae, utilising self-conscious digressions and repetition in his work, echoing the experience of urban wandering.

Benjamin sought to explore the symbiotic relationship between technology, environment, the mind and body in the modern metropolis, employing a number of archetypal figures to act as rhetorical guides in his work. One of these was the *flâneur*, which personified the blasé attitude that concerned Simmel, whose lectures Benjamin had once attended. Simmel's *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903) was one of the earliest works to think about the psychological impact of urbanisation and the complexities of the crowd. For Simmel, Benjamin and many of the other writers discussed here, the city is a site of opportunity, anonymity, excitement and glamour but also alienation, loss, danger and exploitation. The *flâneur* made his own distinctive path through this labyrinth, his continued appeal celebrated by Hoffman et al (2017) who explore Benjamin's widespread influence on contemporary art.

Benjamin's flâneur appears to enthrall many psychogeographical writers such as Iain Sinclair and Will Self, who can be seen to personify a similar attitude. The flâneur was a dandy-esque figure and convention portrays him as a lone, bourgeois, heterosexual white man of education, with all the privileges that position suggests. To promenade was his pleasure, and to observe was his vocation. His "natural" habitat, the Parisian arcades, were endangered by Haussmann's redevelopment, thus his decadent thrills were doomed and his portrayal is often tinged with nostalgia which fails to acknowledge his problematic elements. The flâneur is a distant and unfeeling voyeur, exemplifying ocular and colonial power. His gaze needs interrogating and challenging as it has oppressive qualities, as Mulvey (1975) first articulated with the idea of the male gaze that objectifies women, renders them passive and conveys both threat and judgement.

Feminist scholars, such as Wolff (1985), have been particularly critical of the flâneur's gendered dimension and there has been much debate on the (im)possibilities of the flâneuse. Pollock goes as far as to state categorically: "there is no female equivalent of the quintessential masculine figure, the flâneur: there is not and could not be a female flâneuse" (1988:71). She believes in our present circumstance women cannot simply drift free from the gaze. Women do not have the privilege to freely observe because they are always being observed, constructed as an object to be watched. This objectification takes away the choice to simply roam without judgement or threat. Scalway (2002) supports this, sharing her personal anxieties and obstacles experienced walking in London. Elkin (2016) disagrees and believes that women can, have, and will walk the city, declaring herself an international flâneuse regardless of the gaze. Marcus (1999) and Walkowitz (1982) provide historical examples of women who traversed boundaries between the domestic and public spheres for a variety of reasons, suggesting a more nuanced picture.

Solnit situates the flâneuse debate in a wider culture where "Walking has become sex. Benjamin concurred in this transformation of city into female

body” (2001:209). Language often betrays the misogyny this indicates, with talk of penetrating the city and conquering, dominating space. The SI also used highly gendered and problematic language, with women (even those who joined the SI) being marginalised, mocked, sexualised or belittled. Massey criticizes the SI for their pursuit of “laddish thrills” (2005:47). If the female was considered at all, she tended to be an archetype or a stereotype rather than an individual. The SI demonstrate how the male gaze so often dominates and interrogates, making cities intimidating and often dangerous places to be a woman. The Women’s Design Service (1998) illustrate how the physical environment can reinforce this, for example with inadequate lighting or isolated public transport interchanges. Walter (2010) also outlines the breadth of contemporary sexism and Bates (2014) demonstrates the negative impact on women’s everyday lives.

The flâneur can be identified as a conduit for concerns about the changing city, a metaphor to examine what is being lost with “progress.” This perspective is supported by Sennett (1977) and Solnit who states categorically that the “problem with the flâneur is that he did not exist, except as a type, an ideal, and a character in literature” (2001:200). Benjamin’s poetic ambiguities mean he, and his flâneur, are open to many interpretations. Benjamin himself aimed to critique capitalism, although Merrifield (2002: 58) believes he was “the least practical Marxist who ever lived!” The idea of strolling is in one sense profoundly anti-modern, as to idle or take a scenic route for sheer, slow, enjoyment is the opposite of the fast-paced efficiency capitalism has us striving for. The flâneur’s enigmatic presence resonates to varying degrees through the work of the Situationists, Magico-Marxists, artists and psychogeographers whom we will meet presently.

The vagueness and mutability of both the flâneur and the *dérive* has proved inspirational for a proliferation of psychogeographic ideas, becoming an “expanded tradition” (Hanson 2007). This incorporates, most famously, writers who could comfortably be seen as latter day flâneurs with all the problems around power and the gaze that entails, such as Iain Sinclair, Will Self, and Nick Papadimitriou. The language and practice of masculinity still tends to

dominate this strand of the psychogeographic cannon (Elkin, 2016). Investigation into the problems this causes, and the potential challenges it offers, is a key aim of this research. It is currently under-theorised although Mott and Roberts (2014) provide a stimulating, and resonant, critique in their analysis of the related practice of urban exploration where they demonstrate the male body is assumed to be natural and dominant. Jane Samuels is a walking artist based in North West England who has embraced urban exploration. Her *Abandoned Building Project* stages haunting theatrical tableaux in scenes of dereliction. She makes explicit a desire to transgress boundaries both literarily and figuratively. Her work explores themes of memory, land ownership, trespass and access to space.

If one looks beyond the celebrity literary psychogeographers, creative walking is far more diverse. It thrives despite, and perhaps because of, the silencing. In 2011 BBC Radio Three broadcast a documentary on psychogeography which was entirely dominated by male voices called *Walking With Attitude*. In response, The Geography Workshop produced, *Er Outdoors* (2016) for Resonance FM (a London based community radio station). This was a series of programmes which profiled women walking artists. Guests included Lucy Furlong and Clare Qualmann. Furlong self publishes poetry maps about walking the suburbs with her family. Qualmann's prolific work includes *Perambulator Parade* (2014) with push chairs and buggies, and *East End Jamboree* (2015) celebrating foraged fruit. She is a member of *walkwalkwalk*: an archaeology of the familiar and forgotten, an ongoing collaboration with the artists Gail Burton and Serena Korda. In 2016 *Walking Women* events were held in London and Edinburgh celebrating the diversity of practice. Featured artists included Monique Beston who undertakes long treks across Europe, often highlighting environmental issues, Rosana Cade who explores difference and community with *Walking Holding*, Idit Nathan who has walked contested territory in Palestine and Israel and Kubra Khademi who walked through Kabul in a body suit to highlight issues of harassment. Khademi was forced into exile as result. For Khademi, her walking was an explicitly, and dangerously, political act and as such can be placed in a long tradition of walking as a symbolic and actual protest act.

## 2.6 Walking as a Political Act

Walking artists such as Nathan and Cade have an implicit politics to their work, using the aesthetic as a tool to illuminate the need for change. Psychogeography is a practice which Pinder (2005:400) views as enacting “demands for the rights to the city (which) require the production of an appropriate space.” However, it is important to remember walking itself is not political or subversive per se, but sometimes in a capitalist society dominated by cars it becomes so. Modernist city design emphasised efficiency and much town planning in the twentieth century prioritised the private car. Environmental issues, economic constraints and quality of life issues have changed this somewhat, with a move towards pedestrianising space (Sadik-Khan and Solomonow 2016, Speck 2012). Despite this, Hanley (2012) uses an article in *The Guardian* newspaper to suggest that walking is “dangerous to the established order of things ... binding us to our environment through the accumulation of local knowledge in a way cars cannot”.

There is another thesis to be written about large protest marches, and events of organised mass civil disobedience such as the Kinder Trespass of 1932, which used walking as a way to overtly shout a demand for change (Rothman, 2012). These surely have many qualities but I wish to focus on the radical nature of small, seemingly mundane yet quietly subversive journeys. As Hanley hints, it is the very everydayness of walking, its pedestrian nature, which makes it the perfect tool to integrate and insinuate radical Utopian visions into the fabric of mundane reality. This is a mission shared by both the flâneur and the psychogeographer. However, we must not always view wandering as emancipatory, because not all wander by choice. For the refugee, political dissident or economic migrant (amongst others) unfocused movement is far from joyful. Walking is not always a choice and may be a matter of survival. Psychogeography, at its roots, has a political and progressive function and attempts to synthesise art, activism and academic thought to improve material conditions through creative means. The potential of imagination to actually promote change is a matter of much debate, however

this conception of the *dérive* by Vannini and Vannini sums up its enduring value:

participants would gain sensuous knowledge about a whole city or a single neighbourhood. This is the type of exploration intended to create countercultural forms of mapping ... capable of reconfiguring the social and political geographies of the sites one visited with an intent to provoke new forms of engagement with cityscapes. Such “drifts” could also give life to a deeper recognition of the psychogeographical properties of place, thus allowing one to connect with invisible and intangible connections between spaces. (2017:189).

The sense of an occult power which can be harnessed by the adept walker is an enchanting thread which binds together various strands of psychogeography. There is frequently a quasi-mystical edge to *dérives* that may seem to jar with political intentions but can also be read as a way of sending coded messages or making harsh realities palatable. For example, when Iain Sinclair refers to Thatcher as a witch it appears as a literary conceit, although he has stressed in interviews he means this literarily:

You can't understand Thatcher except in terms of bad magic. This wicked witch who focuses all the ill will in society... she introduced occultism into British politics (in an interview with Jeffries, 2004).

The extended metaphor (and indeed the problematic language assuming female magic is negative) is similar to those Bonnett (2017) discusses. He focuses on the “enchanted path” followed by psychogeographers, who often utilise magic as a subversive or satirical force. This has direct relevance to the streets this thesis explores. Manchester Area Psychogeographic (MAP) claimed to have levitated The Corn Exchange in Manchester in 1996 because it was built on top of the former residence of Dr John Dee, Elizabethan alchemist, occultist and advisor to Queen Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup>. Unsurprisingly there is no evidence of the levitation taking place; the only report was written by MAP themselves who claimed some success but halted the experiment because it alarmed staff in a nearby chip shop MAP (1996). Their humour is engaging and seeks to make a serious point about what they feel is being lost through regeneration. However, the limits of satire are demonstrated by the



recuperation of the event into a story used to advertise a later iteration of The Corn Exchange as a leisure destination.

A gentler, and less satirical, occultism is displayed by Nick Papadimitriou (2012) when he speaks of “becoming” the landscape he lives and walks in, and the mystical significance of his everyday landscape. For example, he transforms concrete bollards into conduits for culture which will survive after an unnamed apocalypse destroys everything else. Phil Smith also talks of enchanted landscapes and draws our attention to a “chorus of surprises” suggesting we must “hypersensitize ourselves to the full blast of contemporary landscape’s intensity.” (2014:8) Thus esoteric symbols, simulacra and absurdities will reveal themselves in a landscape that is porous, shifting and multi-layered. Smith uses his creative walking practice of “mythogeography” to uncover secrets, stories and contradictions through performance. He encourages audience participation and supplies DIY toolkits to invite further explorations. His philosophy owes something to the conception of space Massey (2005) articulates. Smith (2015) believes walking offers an exemplary way to reveal these complexities but also to create one’s own version of everyday places and ultimately break free of the spectacles mediated constraints.

Psychogeographical work such as Smith’s is inherently interdisciplinary and can offer a bridge across the apparent divide between mysticism and materialism. Merrifield discusses “magical Marxists” who view capitalism as a fiction and use creative methods to provide alternatives. He suggests that revolutionary change will occur when there is a spontaneous overflow of a powerful feeling, to activate it requires a need to “feel the groove of insurrectional resonances around the world and around them” (2011: 76). An example he cites is the global activism and solidarities inspired by the uprising of the Zapatistas, a radical indigenous militant group in Chiapas, Mexico. Developing his ideas further Merrifield discusses the combination of political analysis and feeling needed, and stresses the need to experiment and create alternatives to capitalism urgently:

positive subversion becomes an *ontology of action*, action coupled with critique, autonomy coupled with resistance – the ordering is important...subversion becomes a *permanent condition of action*... implicitly *optimistic*, because it insists that humans can act, that humans are always compelled to act, that in the act there is always hope, and that hope always prevails in any act of subversion. (2011: 119, emphasis in the original).

The Situationists, Sinclair and his brethren and Benjamin can all be viewed as fitting this description as actively trying to subvert and improve conditions through their writing. Indeed, Jenks and Neves see the flâneur partially as a “form of resistance against a booming, and engulfing, social-economic system... (A) dance against the music of social time” (2000:15). Bayer underlines the politics to this when suggesting the various anti-capitalist, pro-democracy and social justice protest camps of the Occupy Movement are enchanted places because they evoke:

the right to dream in a system that tried to turn everybody into zombies ... mesmerized into equating mindless consumerism with happiness and fulfilment (2012: 28).

That system, is, of course another way of describing the capitalist spectacle, the psychological impact of which Debord (1967 / 2006), Fisher (2009) and Simmel (1903) have all explored. Souzis (2015) describes three artistic interventions that, although not *dérives*, were inspired by the SI. They all “attempt to create disruptions that offer a momentary liberation from everyday life ... to trigger the transformative moments”. Souzis views this work as:

firmly situated within a larger discourse of art, activism and the academy seeking to articulate and implement radical action on the streets of the world’s cities as well as our individual selves (2015:201).

This rupture of creativity evokes the work of Hakim Bey, who suggests the most effective revolt against capitalism is the construction of Temporary Autonomous Zones (TAZ). TAZ are “socio-political tactics of creating temporary spaces that elude formal structures of control” (Bey, 1991). The TAZ offers a glimpse of Utopia and realises Bakhtin’s idea of a revolutionary carnival. Such festivities are imbued with potent, subversive emotions which can be intoxicating, fleetingly transforming space and revealing its liberating potential. This may be playful but as Huizinga (1955) suggests play meets a

wide range of psychological, material and developmental needs; it also pushes limits, subverts norms and creates alternatives although is not taken seriously enough by adults. CrimethInc. Workers' Collective (2000) provide potent examples of the power of these glimpses and assert they can change individuals and thus contribute to a wider revolutionary cause, although, echoing the SI, specific details and methods remain vague. They propose a fluid, playful, everyday anti-capitalism.

## **2.7 Enchantment, imagination and hauntings**

A key question raised by exploring these issues using psychogeographic methods is whether the rupture they cause is in any way sustainable. It also raises the dialectical relationship between micro and macro level change. The *dérive* is felt on an embodied and emotional level, how does this relate to wider political processes? Can temporary conviviality and personal epiphanies actually have a significant legacy beyond the initial participants? Malbon (1999) discusses the visceral effects and emotional power of nightclubs, and Haslam (2000) links raves to new political movements. Powerful solidarities, and imaginative alternative worlds can be formed in an intoxicating atmosphere of subversive hedonism, although the impact may be limited. Pertinently for this work Haslam focuses on Manchester, but even as he celebrates dancing at The Hacienda it cannot be ignored that the building is now private apartments. When the conversion was under construction the advertising hoardings said, "Now The Party's Over You Can Come Home". This slogan appropriated lines sung by the band James, whose debut gig at the venue is now commemorated by a blue plaque. This provides an example of what Debord called recuperation as big business tames and subsumes rebellion, although factors such as changing musical trends, drug prohibition and a series of violent incidents in the club also contributed to The Hacienda closing. Perhaps this should not be surprising as Eagleton is among those who feel the carnival is a placebo or a distraction that can never change anything:

Carnival, after all, is a licensed affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained popular blow-off as disturbing and ineffectual as a revolutionary work of art (Eagleton, 1981:148).

It is apparent that none of the scholars discussed here offer a cohesive strategy to rebuild society (or space) on more equitable grounds. However, their appeals to the imagination should not be dismissed. Harvey (2000) defends the role of Utopian thought in creating alternative realities. The spatial intervention of the creative or subversive walker can add a concrete dimension according to Merrifield and Swyngedouw because:

movements against neoliberalism, like all liberation movements, are both struggles in space and also struggles for space (Merrifield and Swyngedouw 1997).

Psychogeographic space can be layered onto, and exist simultaneously with, other uses and meanings of space. For example, the artist Lottie Childs (2007) demonstrates how one can transform everyday streets into a collective playground. She practices “Street Training” where bollards are jumped over, benches are dancefloors and statues are clamoured on. However, at the same time as Childs plays on them the pavements are still being used as a site for commerce, oppression, work and myriad other everyday purposes. Childs is amongst many artists who can provide a glimpse of another city which can be viewed, according to Pinder, as a service of intrinsic value because it offers an:

expression of desire for a better way of being and living through the imagining of a different city... A loss of utopian perspectives in their entirety has disturbing political and cultural consequences, not the least of which is a narrowing of critical thought and a moving away from the anticipatory moment of critique (2002:230).

A critical social theory should have an aim to make things better in some way, not producing a monolithic Utopia but something heterogeneous, created from the grassroots up. The communal *dérive* can offer an opportunity to begin to explore its spatial dimensions. Pile (2000:85) articulates why these theories still resonate, because it is:

important to remember that neoliberal dreamings are not the only ones, nor the inevitable ones... This suggests a revolutionary practice that relies as much on imagining and mobilising better stories as on shocks to the system.

The streets may be part of an ongoing neoliberal process where they are commodified, but they are still the site of serendipitous encounters where people can meet and anything becomes possible. Of course, the footsteps of psychogeographers and walking artists do not lead directly to Utopia but they can explore the idea of enchantment and imagination in the city. Massey (2013) suggests the key task of contemporary intellectuals and cultural activists is to create an ideological crisis, to trigger imaginations and inspire new ideas. Mark Fisher (2009) notes the urgency of this need as the neoliberal hegemony dominates our language and limits our imagination, imposing a state he calls Capitalist Realism. This is somewhat similar to Debord's spectacle and means we struggle to conceive of life beyond and after capitalism. Fisher explicitly links anxiety, depression and poor mental health to the trauma of living in a brutal, individualistic society. This suggests a need to develop radical practices which can provide an imaginative spark which becomes a catalyst for new stories. Creative walking has the potential to call into being alternative public spaces, at least temporarily. Indeed, Marcus suggests the whole point of the *dérive* is to:

encounter the unknown as a facet of the known, astonishment on the terrain of boredom, innocence in the face of experience, the physical town replaced by an imaginary city (Marcus, cited in Solnit, 2001:213).

To *dérive* is to seek the mystery and beauty in every day, and to create new pathways through an environment frequently designed for more instrumental and hostile purposes. Furthermore, Barker (2012) states disenchantment is a form of social control and therefore imagination is the key to resistance. Barker makes clear the need to create new public spaces to express desire, perform resistance and actively create alternatives, linking the lack of civic space explicitly to the limited political imagination. Scholars have written about enchantment in ways that are congruent with the effects of taking part in creative walking. Bennett (2001, 4-5) states:

enchantment is something that we encounter ... to be enchanted is to be struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday ... to be simultaneously transfixed in wonder and transported by sense, to be caught up and carried

away – enchantment is marked by this odd combination of somatic effects.

Although this defines enchantment there is a problem with the duality between such moments and the everyday; there is a suggestion enchantment can only be triggered for a moment rather than becoming an atmosphere or mood. Perhaps it would be more useful to see enchantment as an imminent energy, always present but ebbing and flowing within our consciousness. It may become more apparent because of external stimuli or something internal such as day dreaming or imaginative word play. Enchantment may not always necessitate a jolt, it can also be a drift, viewed as part of the everyday energies which surround us, coming to the fore as a result of environment, interpersonal and internal factors (Stewart, 2007).

According to the spatial theories of Steve Pile, the emotional, mental, and dream work of cities is as important as other more material forms of producing space. Pile's work owes a debt to Benjamin but expands into a wider academic study of the "phantasmagorias" of the modern city, including studying the construction and significance of dreams, magic, ghosts and vampires (Pile, 2005). Echoing Massey, he makes clear there is no unifying structure; all cities are different, but crucially relate to each other and should not be viewed in isolation. His phantasmagorias are enchanting experiences which are central to psychogeographical investigation. They appear, in different guises, throughout the work of Sinclair, Papadimitriou and Smith and many others who have used these ideas to produce affective and emotive (re)mappings. Pile's phantoms are not restricted to ancient or traditionally spooky landscapes and psychogeographical explorations often discuss haunting. Laura Oldfield Ford (2011), to use just one example, documents the ghosts of punks, ravers and squatter communities in a landscape of tower blocks ripped apart and left to decay by early rounds of neoliberal housing policies. These are both metaphorical and literal hauntings as ruined structures and hungover bodies inhabit Oldfield Fords city.

In much psychogeography there is a sense of time as permeable, fractured and cyclical, disrupting the idea of progress as inevitably linear and positive.

Fisher (2014) has developed a concept of hauntology to examine popular culture and its tendencies to recycle and re-appropriate the past, creating feelings of dislocation and despair. These contribute to personal geographies and (re)mappings of physical and affective space which have blurred and fluid boundaries. Pile suggests a psychogeographical analysis can be useful because it goes “*beyond the surface appearance of things*” where:

perhaps we can also make out other (hi)stories of the city. It is the porosity of these urban spaces that evokes *both* the multiplicity of stories *and also* the many time-spaces of the city, only some of which are allowed to become real. Others become ghosts; some remain dreams (2005:15, italics in original).

Focusing on these phantoms may be experienced as unsettling and destabilising because it challenges orthodoxy. Psychogeographers seek new stories because they can provoke an imaginative leap that makes the task of transformation possible. This reconciles the apparent juxtaposition with materialist aims to uncover power structures and as Pile (2005) shows, the ghostly and enchanting persist and mingle with the secular and material in the modern city. McEwan (2008) shares ghost stories she is told by workers in Cape Town. These stories can be read in several ways and it is unclear, and in some senses irrelevant, whether the teller truly believes them or is hoping to convince McEwan to give a more generous tip for services completed. They also enable the teller to articulate feelings about poor working conditions. This protest is tacit and symbolic, reminiscent of De Certeau’s small resistances and the art pranks of MAP.

I believe the experiences of psychogeographers can be viewed as part of a more challenging and public political project than a purely aesthetic reading may suggest. There is a political dimension to the decision to focus on enchantment. Woodyer and Geoghegan offer a rallying cry to consider enchantment in an academic work, in part to counteract “the overbearing cultural narrative of a disenchanting modernity and its debilitating effects” (2013: 197). They suggest constant repetition of narratives which talk about the dominance of oppressive power structures and systems reinforce their

potency and deny personal agency. Furthermore, Woodyer and Geoghegan suggest that:

a preoccupation with reason and destructive power has imbued critical thinking with scepticism and negativity ... (Social scientists) are trained to be detached and discerning. Masterful knowing and moralistic judgement have been emphasized (2013: 199).

The creative approach, and the interpretive analysis methods this study uses, provide an alternative and antidote to this perspective and suggests the subversive power of the imagination which the *dérive* can release. Solnit (2006: online) talks about hope, and the expectation that we can be astonished; this has both a political and physical element because:

More and more I think of privatisation as being not just about the takeover of resources and power by corporate interests, but as the retreat of citizens to private life and private space, screened from solidarity with strangers and increasingly afraid or even unable to imagine acting in public.

This review will now examine the history, construction and meanings of public space, and the significance it holds for a democratic and pluralistic society.

## **2.8 Definitions of Public Space**

Public space can be defined in multiple ways, with Mensch (2007:31) suggesting it “is the space where individuals see and are seen by others as they engage in public affairs.” Worpole and Knox review research on public space and conclude that “public spaces play a vital role in the social life of communities” (2007:5) and “public spaces facilitate the exchange of ideas, friendships, goods and skills” (2007:7). This research takes an inherently positive view of the importance of public space, believing:

At their best, public spaces act like a self-organising public service; just as hospitals and schools provide a shared resource to improve people’s quality of life, public spaces form a shared spatial resource from which experiences and value are created in ways that are not possible in our private lives alone (Mean and Tims 2005:9).

Madanipour (2003) documents the various scales of space and divisions of public / private. He suggests public space is key to how people relate to each



other and their environment and explores the psychological and social impact of physical space. The public and private are interdependent and related to each other, operating on a range of scales, from the personal space of the body to homes, neighbourhoods and the city. The most private space is within the body, but even the subconscious is a product of complex sociological cultural and biological relationships. This work will focus on the construction of physical shared and communal spaces.

Public space has evolved over time and across cultures from the Greek agora to the modern city centre. The agora had civic, political and commercial functions, acting as a centre for proclamations, debates, military training and market traders at different times. The public remains a place of simultaneous happenings, and also, according to Madanipour, a stage for performance. Roles are played and masks are worn and the “constant work of human (public) life, therefore, is the management of surfaces, creating a civilised social space through a balance between concealment and exposure, between public and private spheres” (2003: 234). Madanipour presents a critical question in relation to these issues, believing that:

a central challenge in urbanism is to find a balance between the public and private realms. Two questions that need addressing simultaneously are: how can a realm be established that caters for the cultural and biological needs of a social individual to be protected from the intrusion of others? How can a realm be established that caters for the needs of all members of a society to be protected from the encroachments of the individual (2003:241).

This idea, of the conflicting needs of individuals and society, is perhaps the central challenge when considering what public realm is. Sennett (2011) outlines three main schools of thought which address this. The first is associated with Hannah Arendt who sees public space as political and open to all; a place of debate, equality and encounter, made possible by urban density and anonymity. Although perhaps idealistic, her vision of a vibrant urban centre which becomes greater than its constituent parts still resonates with urbanists. According to Sennett, Jurgen Habermas extends the idea of the public beyond the city and includes situations which provoke contact between strangers. This includes the media; Habermas saw communication

as key to the public, finding it in, for example, newspapers and the debates they stimulate. The internet extends such space exponentially and the Habermas view would suggest this is positive; more communication inevitably leading to greater awareness of other's personal identities and political interests. However, the examples of online misogyny and sexism discussed later suggests this is a rather naive and simplistic view. It also conflicts with Debord's idea that mediated representations damage authentic human connections.

Following the work of Ardent, Mensch (2007) discusses whether wider freedoms of thought, will and action require public spaces for their formation; that is, does public space generate wider freedoms to be enacted? He points out we are not born with a sense of right or freedom but gain it through encounter with the world. Interacting with others who behave in different ways to oneself develops a sense of possibility, of opportunity and personal freedom to evolve. However, the relationship between the individual and society is complex and interdependent: "Public freedom, in other words, is both the result and the cause of individual freedom. The two are irredeemably entangled" (2007:35) Finally, Sennett places himself, with Clifford Geertz and Erving Goffman, in a performative school which focuses on the minutiae of behaviour in public and seeks to influence planning of space. This idea of performance, and the social construction of space, is central to this work. It also has parallels with Butler's (1988) conception of gender as a series of performative acts which informs the feminist writers drawn on later. The need to perform – to don a mask which echoes what is considered normal and appropriate within the public sphere – becomes a way of coping with the demands of urban life.

## **2.9 Cosmopolitan Space and Gentrification**

Public space is where people mingle and within the context of this research it includes not just contemporary agora but everyday sites such as streets, bus stops and shops. Cities have always been cosmopolitan places where diverse people encounter each other in "light-touch gatherings" (Thrift, 2007:217). These encounters may not hold individual significance but their cumulative effect is an awareness of other actors in the environment that come to

“constitute a binding affective force” and sustain the cosmopolitan city (Thrift, 2007:218). Jane Jacobs (1961) vision of the street as a site of conviviality, cohesion and natural surveillance also addresses the positive emotional and material impact of sharing space. Kullman (2014) provides an example of what this means in practice by documenting children’s acts of caring, sensory engagement and “joyful attunements” to the pavement (2014:2571) on their walk to school. I believe being in the same place, at the same time, for the same reason, is a crucial element in community building. Meeting with people breaks down barriers, challenges stereotypes and turns “The other” into an individual that can be related to on a personal, human level. “In shops, in schools and on the street, conversations begin to break down barriers and build cohesion” (Webster, Blackman, Sapsford, Neil, and Chapman, 2004).

The street is space where Massey’s “stories-so-far” are in abundance. However, Jackson and Butler (2015) note that proximity does not always mean social mixing. The cosmopolitan city can be a place of conflict and segregation meaning cohesion is not a given, although many of the tensions between different groups and uses of space are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the street is a physical manifestation of social, economic and cultural forces and they do fluctuate over time. Hall (2012) provides a comprehensive autoethnography of Walworth Road in London that provides an exemplary illustration. The street is an assemblage with shopfronts demonstrating multicultural influences. Many of their interiors, such as “Nick’s Caff” provide valuable spaces of complex and variegated belonging. Local entrepreneurs provide a range of vital social functions and Hall’s case study demonstrates:

the contemporary city is more than ever a space for the intense convergence of diverse individuals who shift in and out of its urban terrains in daily, weekly and annual rhythms ...The city street is perhaps the most prosaic of the city’s publics parts, allowing us a view of the very ordinary practices of life and livelihoods, within which participations and allegiances emerge. (2012:128)

The Walworth Road contrasts sharply with the landscape of The South Bank, although they are just a short bus ride apart. This is an area of intense commercial and tourist activity and has undergone visible gentrification.

Hackworth defines this as 'the re-creation of space for progressively more affluent users' (2002: 1) and Lees (2014) has documented the "injustices" and "cruel deceptions" it entails. Hall (2013) acknowledges it poses a threat to the class diversity which is essential for a true cosmopolitan belonging. This has a direct impact on public space. Davis (1990) describes Los Angeles as a "City of Quartz" with many examples of revanchist and alienating architecture which excludes and prevents physical access to people deemed undesirable. This undesirability usually equates to poor, homeless or unable to be a consumer.

Manchester exhibits many traits similar to those which Davies describes. This includes benches designed so they are uncomfortable to sleep on and barriers preventing access to railway arches that had been used for shelter. There are many invisible barriers too; for example, in the Manchester explored in this research, extravagant and forbidding entrances send subtle signs about who is welcome. Mitchell (2003) has focused on how legal processes 'annihilate' the spaces upon which key excluded groups, like the homeless, need in order to be present in the city. Such processes can also be seen in contemporary Manchester. The Ark was a camp run by and for homeless people. There have been severe cuts to services for homeless people, and the closure of emergency provision, so they attempted to form a tent community offering mutual support. Manchester Council and Manchester Metropolitan University (whose buildings were next to the camp) both took legal action to close the camp.

The case of The Ark vividly demonstrates what De Sola-Morales (2010) calls "the impossible project of public space." He believes the term has become too abstract and contrasts the feeling of ownership people have for buildings and space in the city when they are actually in private ownership; the control people feel is illusory. Garrett (2015) expresses concern about pseudo public spaces, often referred to as POPs. Activities such as smoking, taking photographs and protesting may be prohibited in these areas although they may be impossible to distinguish from publicly owned space. Minton (2009) provides powerful evidence of the harm this erosion of liberties can cause and this research demonstrates the concern women in Manchester feel about the

threat posed to their city. Local examples of privately owned streetscapes discussed include Spinningfields and First Street. However, gentrification is revealed as a complicated process which also brings benefits. The same processes which exclude and alienate can also bring feelings of safety, security and what Zukin (1995) terms “pacification by cappuccino”. Zukin discusses the pleasures of consumerism and the women I walked with were aware they often enjoyed a city based on comfort and consumerism. To return to the language of Debord, the spectacle is deeply seductive. Atkinson (2003) discusses how the discourses offered by both Smith and Zukin can have an impact on a neighbourhood. This review will now return to examine several key writers whose work has been alluded to and which underpins much of the analysis that will follow.

## **2.10 The Right to a City With Soul**

Henri Lefebvre was never a member of The SI but had a close association with them for a time. The relationship between Lefebvre and the SI was, in his words, “a love story that ended badly, very badly” (Ross, 1997) but his work has had a continued resonance. Lefebvre argued:

Capitalism survived in the twentieth century, not by simply organising production *in* space but by orchestrating the production *of* space (Lefebvre 1974 / 1992: 210).

Urban space was transformed into surplus capital. This abstraction creates a competitive market and profit for the landowners / ruling classes in the neoliberal city. Apartment blocks built as investments for absentee landlords who accrue profits as rent increases to levels which exclude many workers, is one manifestation of this. However, the city for Lefebvre is not simply a product, but an oeuvre, or body of work, created by its inhabitants that is always in flux, always being (re)constructed. Three aspects are interwoven in the production of space: everyday practices and beliefs, representations or theories of space and the contemporary spatial imagination (Lefebvre 1974). This triad conception of space allows for a dialectical analysis rather than a simple, and artificial, binary conflict. Lefebvre made clear the right to the city is an active and complex process.

Marshall Berman also applied Marxism to the urban environment, taking theory to the streets of his home town New York. Berman developed a "Marxism with Soul" (1970) that sought to explain the dialectics of everyday experience under modernism. Berman was interested in a politics of authenticity which allowed individuals freedom to express themselves but still enjoy communal life. His writing often feels deeply romantic, personal, and rooted in the existential conditions of the twentieth century, a time of both excitement and terror when:

To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world - and at the same time that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. (1982:15).

Lefebvre and Berman did not see space as deterministic per se; rather it is the capitalist system which restricts and oppresses. Lefebvre was a sharp critic of Le Corbusier's efficiency and planned killing of the street, feeling this would reduce the city to a dead space, void of any humane contact. Merrifield summarises the importance of the street to Lefebvre as a place with

an informative, symbolic and ludic function. In the street, you play and you learn stuff ... the chaos and disorder becomes something marvellous (2002: 699).

Of particular relevance to this work is Lefebvre's concept of *The Right to the City* (1996), which explores who and what urban space is for. True citizenship should be considered not as a passive request to be in urban space but as an active struggle to reshape it, people should be more than consumers or residents, they should be able to influence their environment because:

the right to the city is like a cry and a demand ... (it) cannot be conceived of as a simple visiting right or as a return to traditional cities. It can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed right to urban life. (Lefebvre 1996:158).

The importance of being able to influence the urban environment is central to this work, as is the question of who the city is actually for and where power actually lies. This issue will be returned to, particularly with regards to whether women are able to truly exercise their right to be in urban space. Like Debord

and Lefebvre, De Certeau was concerned with everyday life and the European civil unrest of 1968 had a profound impact on his work. His key text is *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). Of particular relevance here is the chapter on walking where De Certeau offers an elegant voice illuminating the potential of pedestrianism stating: “The long poem of walking manipulates spatial organisations” (1984:101). Walking through the city is a way people can understand the urban environment and De Certeau values the role of people in bringing cities to life. Architecture shapes and is shaped by walkers, who can choose to follow designated paths or create their own desire lines across space. Contemporary examples of the impact changes in physical infrastructure has on behaviour can be seen in New York, where transport in Times Square was reconfigured to promote walking (Sadik-Khan and Solomonow 2016).

There are resonances with De Certeau in the work of Jane Jacobs who celebrates “the ballet of the good city pavement” (1961:50) describing the way people move across space, each with their own trajectory, separate and yet harmonious, together creating a narrative of the city where all involved are author, participant and audience. For De Certeau, this improvisational dance affords opportunities for digression and resistance and values individual creativity. These “tactics” of resistance subvert and complicate Foucauldian notions of power where control is dispersed but also omnipresent. Architecture is one of the discourses which produces structures to discipline and control individuals. De Certeau notes how people appropriate space for their own needs regardless of its official designation. Critics suggest De Certeau “over romanticises the liberating potential of individual action and simplifies the operation of power” (Beebeejaun 2017:5) but this research explores the symbiosis between the two. It also follows Smith (2015) in asserting the value of psychogeography as a subversive and meaningful way to assert the right to the city by creating new desire lines. De Certeau also lamented the over privileging of the ocular and promoted a multi-sensory engagement with space. Here he echoes criticisms of the flâneur and I will return to the subject of gender and urban space.

## 2.11 Gender and Public Space

The gendered experience of public space is often neglected in analysis, as with accounts of flâneurie, the male body is privileged and constructed as universal. Wilson (1991) provides a historical overview of women within the city and finds a strong thread of control of women in public space, influenced by a fear of female sexuality and patriarchal norms which seek to control the autonomy and freedom of women. Of particular relevance, here Wilson discusses Benjamin and the flâneur as a manifestation of:

sophisticated urban consciousness (which) reached a high point in central Europe in the early twentieth century, (and) was essentially male consciousness. Sexual unease and the pursuit of sexuality outside the constraints of the family were one of its major preoccupations. This in itself made women's very presence in cities a problem (1991:5).

This research shares Walby's (1990) view of patriarchy as a complex phenomenon which dominates, oppresses and exploits women through a range of social structures. Solnit (2001) discusses the very different implications of the phrase "street walking" when applied to men and women and gives many examples of cultural norms and legal prohibitions intended to limit women's access to space. Flanagan (2014) offers a stark historical example of how these manifest in practice by exploring the provision of public toilet facilities for women. In the early twentieth century, there were often violent objections to providing toilets for women because it was assumed they would be used for immoral purposes; it was made clear decent women should not be in public at all. Today, especially in the context of public service cuts, toilet provision frequently remains inadequate and becomes a very tangible way of exerting control over space and denying the right to be in the city. Although the need for sanitary facilities is shared by men it does clearly have a gendered dimension. For example, the "Piss Daleks" introduced in Piccadilly Gardens to replace closed facilities in Manchester were urinals designed for male anatomies with no additional facilities for women who menstruate and require hygienic disposal of sanitary items (Dunnico 2014).

However, women have always occupied public space in many different ways. Marcus (1999) offers examples of how women's lives often blur the divide



between public and private. Movements such as Reclaim The Night marches, protesting against violence against women, assert in a performative way a need for mobility which is enacted on an everyday mundane basis by women across the world (Mackay 2015). It should be remembered throughout this research “woman” is not a homogenous group and there are many intersectional elements to identity which can have an impact on the experience of public space, for example:

women from different ethnic minority groups have different needs from their male counterparts, and disabled women have different needs from disabled men for a variety of biological, cultural and mobility-related reasons. (Royal Town Planning Institute, 2003).

The importance of an intersectional feminist approach (Crenshaw 1989) is addressed in the methods chapter.

Fear is a key part of social control and the reasons many women feel limited in their use of public space. (Valentine 1990). This disabling emotion may not be reflected in crime statistics, which make it clear domestic violence is a far greater threat than “stranger danger” but that does not reduce its impact. Hickey (2011) explores texts that advise women on conduct in public space. She finds in the early twentieth century they emphasised etiquette but from the 1960s onwards the focus switched to self-defence and avoiding attack. Hickey suggests this reflects an increasingly negative view of the urban, but also anxieties about the changing nature of women’s roles. The view of public space “as something truly shared and at least potentially civil (has shifted to) inherently dangerous and competitive” (Hickey, 2011:79). Scalway (2002) discusses how she experiences these sensations and the limits they place on her movements. Recent campaigns such as Hollerback and Slut Walk underline the revanchist threat public space holds for women. They highlight, and protest, the abuse women frequently experience simply by being present on the street. Vera-Gray (2016) conceptualises these attacks as interruptions rather than harassment because their impact is a disruption of women’s rights to self-determination and being in space.

Work carried out by the Women’s Design Service (WDS) on *Making Safer Places* (1998) frequently found women who never venture out alone after dark.

This means that they do not go out after 4.00pm in the winter. The WDS study found that, in relation to parks and open spaces, women's fears did not seem to be related to actual crime experienced, nor to knowledge or evidence of crime taking place. Fear was related to the possibility of crime occurring, and their wish not to invite it, meaning that women often do not take advantage of green and natural spaces in highly urbanised environments. The WDS closed in 2012 after 25 years due to a lack of funding. In a climate of austerity their work was deemed low priority, reflecting the flawed idea of a post-feminist milieu where gender has ceased to impact on civil liberties. However, Snedker (2015) provides an overview of more recent work and found little change; women experienced high levels of fear because of perceived risk, often exacerbated by local environmental factors such as poor lighting or difficult relationships with the police.

Valentine (1990) also found women experience more fear in public space than men, and supported Jacobs' idea that eyes on the street can be a reassurance. She outlines design features such as subways that increase fear and should be eliminated where possible. However, she stresses that people are a more important factor than physical space when considering fearfulness. First of all, people feel more secure when they feel a sense of belonging. Even more powerfully, social control and dominance by men in a patriarchal system means women often feel they do not belong in public space. Bates' (2014) account of *Everyday Sexism* demonstrates powerfully the impact of gendered oppression that may be subtle and unconscious as well as overt and deliberate. The work of Valentine, Bates and other feminists have serious implications because:

Women cannot lead their lives if they are fearful of all men all the time, in order to maintain an illusion of control over their safety they need to know where and when they may encounter 'dangerous men' in order to avoid them. To do this they develop mental images of where violence occurs which are developed through the complex interaction and cumulative effect of first- and second-hand information sources ... Women's collective definition and avoidance of these contexts therefore creates social norms about women's appropriate use of space (Valentine, 1990: 289).

Stanko (1990) describes in detail the construction and processes of fear and makes clear that men and boys are also victims of male-dominated social systems. This will be returned to in chapter three when my choice of a feminist epistemology and gendered method are detailed further.

## **2.12 Women and The Built Environment**

The Manchester Women's Design Group (MWDG) have conducted ongoing research into how the urban environment can become more welcoming and inclusive for women, and ultimately, for everyone. They do not want to essentialise gender but want to promote consideration and improved access in the built environment. For example, the majority of childcare remains undertaken by women, but they are not, and should not, be the only people responsible for childcare. Design which considers the needs of anyone pushing a buggy or pram will also benefit those with mobility issues, large suitcases or trolleys. MWDG have argued that part of the problem is because women are also poorly represented in the professions most active in urban design. For example, Apostolova, Baker and Cracknell (2017) found just 17% of architects, town planners and surveyors are women and they are generally not in the more senior positions which are most likely to influence policy. Women therefore live, work and relax in spaces largely planned and designed by men, where the "average figure" used to conceptualise space is a man. (Manchester Women's Design Group).

MWDG assert that women use the built environment differently from men. The differences can be identified as arising from four major sources: social roles which mean women are more likely than men to have caring responsibilities and to work part time, low income groups and relative poverty that impacts disproportionately on women, physical attributes and culturally accepted norms of where women should and shouldn't go. The mission of Urbanistas Women's Network is "amplifying women's voices and ideas to make cities better for everyone". Co-founder Lisa Hartley was interviewed in The Guardian and spoke about the problems of being the only women in a professional environment suggesting that it also "gives you a little bit more of a sensitivity

to what it might be like to have another vulnerability.” She was asked how she thought cities would be different if they were designed by women:

Considerate is the word, because you can't include everyone in everything. The question is really not would cities be different if they were designed by women? It's would they be different if more voices were heard? (Rustin, 2014).

Given their desire to create a city more accessible to everyone, it is worth noting why MWDG keep a gendered dimension to their name. This has been discussed within the group several times and consensus is there remains a need to make their feminism explicit. Beebeejaun (2017:3) provides evidence that there has been a national shift within planning policy “away from politicized discussion about women's rights toward the language of creating spaces that value diversity.” This tends to be vague and abstract language that can obscure important struggles. She quotes a member of WDS who highlighted their hard-fought campaigns were now taken for granted:

we campaigned to get spaces for buggies on buses. We campaigned to get nappy changing facilities in public toilets. Before that women had to change their babies on the floor in the toilets (Beebeejaun 2017:7).

Design and planning are crucial to the experience of cities in general and public space in particular. Minton makes clear the political and economic policies which shape cities and in particular discusses how Manchester city centre has been transformed into somewhere “clean and safe” (2009:39). Ostensibly, these are positive attributes to place but Minton documents how they were achieved by ceding the public realm to public-private partnerships and how this fundamentally changes the perception and fabric of a place. These changes have impacted upon emotions with new urban barriers paradoxically often generating increased fear and isolation, rather than feelings of safety. For example, those living in a gated community may become paranoid and distressed by imagined or exaggerated threats to their lifestyle, whilst those outside become resentful and alienated (Atkinson and Blandy 2016). The wider psychological impact of securitisation and commodification is discussed, and Minton (2009) provides examples of how revanchist policies discussed by Mitchell, Smith and Davis have been applied in Manchester. The

final section of this review will focus more directly on the geographical context of this study, Manchester, England.

### **2.13 Manchester Stories**

This research focuses particularly on Manchester, a city in North West England. Its population in 2015 was 530,300 and it is one of ten metropolitan boroughs which comprise Greater Manchester, the second largest UK conurbation after London. Hetherington (2007) identifies three distinct phases of Manchester's development. During the first of these, it earned the name Cottonopolis as an epoch-making crucible when it became "*the* city of Britain's industrial revolution (1840s-1920s): a mythic time of city prosperity, change and growth." (Hetherington 2007:632, emphasis in the original). Later, between 1930s-1980s Hetherington views Manchester as "a city of grim: a city of urban decline and de-industrialisation." (2007:632). However, since the late 1980s "Manchester, more than London or any other British city, has been represented as 'cool'" (2007:632) and benefited from a range of urban regeneration policies. For a comprehensive and authoritative historical account of Manchester see Parkinson-Bailey (2000), but I believe Hetherington's analysis is astute. This research largely focuses on the contemporary city and how it has been transformed by a complex web of local, national and international processes.

Manchester has frequently been cited as "the perfect example of a city which symbolised the trajectory of progress ... from urban decay to urban renaissance." (Minton, 2009: 39). There is a popular fallacy that the catalyst for this change was the IRA bomb of 2006, the largest bomb detonated on mainland Britain since World War II. No one was killed but the bomb caused considerable damage and resulted in a design competition to reconstruct the central shopping area around The Arndale Centre; whilst it may have accelerated change, it did not begin there. Leary (2008) draws on Harvey's (1989) theory of the entrepreneurial city to explain this. Harvey views entrepreneurialism as a logical next stage in capitalism; it facilitates a neoliberal economy that favours support for business investment, private wealth generation and property speculation.

Manchester was designated a Metropolitan Borough in 1974 and has been in Labour control since. King discusses how Manchester Labour Council were committed to Socialism and funding regeneration from municipal sources until the 1987 Conservative election win. After this Graham Stringer, then Council Leader, effectively said “in a nutshell; OK, you win, we'd like to work together with you” (King, 2006: 85). Leary (2008) provides a great deal of evidence supporting this shift from municipal socialism to entrepreneurialism in Manchester, although he notes the transition is not total. Manchester Council still has concerns about sustainability and social equity. Haughton, Deas, Hincks and Ward (2016) Ward, Deas, Haughton and Hincks (2015), Quilley (2002) and Peck and Ward (2002) have all demonstrated how Manchester City Council embraced a range of neoliberal policies. These include prioritising new service sector jobs, creative industries and significantly, public private partnerships, including CityCo.

CityCo is the city centre management company for Manchester and Salford and its board includes representatives from the statutory, public and private sectors. According to their website CityCo “make our cities better places to work, visit and live. We connect businesses and public agencies, bringing together the people, ideas and projects that make great things happen.” They also manage Manchester’s Business Improvement District (BID) which “brings retailers together to strengthen the city’s appeal and create reasons for more people to visit time and again” (CityCo). Minton links this to a new culture of “authoritarianism and control” (2009:40) where democracy gives way to profit. Ward and Cook (2017) discuss how this new form of “territorial governance” has been imported from Canada.

Marketing the city as a desirable site of leisure and consumption is another key regeneration tactic. Manchester City Council employed graphic designer Peter Saville to devise a brand that would encourage tourism and he designated it “the original modern city” (Marketing Manchester 2009). This was one of a series of marketing initiatives which emphasised the dynamism of the city centre and positioned Manchester on a competitive global stage. High prestige international events, such as the Commonwealth Games Manchester

hosted in 2002 and the biannual Manchester International Festival, founded in 2007, aim to add to this allure.

Before these marketing initiatives, Manchester already occupied a particular place in the popular cultural imagination. Haslam (2000) outlines its status as a “pop cult” city, linking this to a radical political tradition. Nevarez (2013) discusses the imagery of Joy Division and the construction of a grim northern aesthetic. Bands like The Smiths built upon this whilst rave influenced “Madchester” bands such as The Happy Mondays and Stone Roses promoted a more hedonistic attitude. Television shows such as *Coronation Street* and *Queer as Folk*, and two world renowned football clubs also contribute to Manchester’s global image. At the vigil to commemorate the Manchester Arena bombing in May 2017 poet Tony “Longfella” Walsh performed his poem *This is The Place*. Originally composed in 2012 as a commission for local charity Forever Manchester, Walsh was widely praised for capturing not just the mood of public mourning but something of the spirit of Manchester. It lists historical and cultural achievements which originate in the city, and celebrates Manchester as a gritty but welcoming place full of innovation, resilience, warmth, humour and a do-it-yourself attitude. At the vigil Walsh emphasised Manchester’s diversity and urged everyone to choose love; an illustrated edition of his poem also showcases the work of prominent local artists, designers and creatives. (Walsh and Friends, 2017).

Complicating this dominant narrative, and discussing what an authentic Manchester experience might be, is a central aim of this work. It will explore the reality behind Hatherley’s claims Manchester “has neatly repositioned itself as a cold, rain-soaked Barcelona” (2010: 115) and the juxtaposition between image and reality will be revisited during this research. Manchester’s prosperity has never extended to all its inhabitants. During the boomtimes of The Industrial Revolution Engels lived and worked in Manchester and draws on many examples of injustice and exploitation in *“The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844”* (1845 / 2010). He vividly describes Manchester slums but I also draw on recent scholarship by Folkman, Froud, Sukhdev, Tomaney and Williams (2016) which questions the myth of an economically successful city. Whilst there has been an economic bonanza for

some, Manchester continues to suffer high levels of poverty and deprivation as recorded by the Greater Manchester Poverty Commission (2013). It is further evidenced by the 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation which places Manchester as the fifth most deprived local authority out of 326 in England (Bullen 2015). Hatherley (2010) is amongst the critics who have exposed the failure of regeneration policy. On a visit to Ancoats he demonstrates how “shallow” Manchester’s regeneration really is, using the Three Towers in Collyhurst as an example. These were 1960s council flats which had been in managed decline and were transformed into apartments by property developers Urban Splash. They were renamed Emmaline, Christabel and Sylvia after the Suffragettes of the Pankhurst Family in what Hatherley describes as:

a transfer of assets from the poor to the affluent ... the use of radical Mancunian history to sell Old Corruption all over again, the triad of land, property and finance given a lick of pink and lime green paint. (2010: 141)

Hatherley demonstrates how economic policies have a direct and tangible impact on the urban landscape in Manchester. This research walks with women to discover their experiences of living, working and studying within this environment and the next chapter will outline the methodology for undertaking this study.



## Chapter Three: Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to explore the relationship between gender, public space, walking and psychogeographies in urban space. This chapter details the methodology used to investigate these subjects. It introduces the underlying ideas about knowledge creation underpinning my work and my decision to foreground gender. Particular attention is given to previous research on walking as a research tool and my decision to utilise the *dérive* as a technique. It then outlines the recruitment process, participant demographics and the more prosaic logistics of the walking interviews themselves. It concludes with a discussion of ethical issues encountered.

Psychogeography is both a theory and a method, so it follows that a study which examines the potential of walking should use pedestrian methods. My background as a walking artist affirms for me the benefits of developing a symbiotic relationship between walking, thinking and researching and I would not be true to myself if I did not explore walking as my primary methodology. At a general level, such beliefs explicitly influenced the framework of this thesis in four ways:

1. My involvement in creative walking and psychogeography resulted in developing a walking methodology.
2. My feminist beliefs lead to my desire to foreground women in my research and value their diverse experiences.
3. Psychogeography is historically linked to a critique of the neoliberal city and a desire to create imaginative new worlds.
4. I have lived, worked and walked in Manchester since 1999. My connection with the city goes back longer than this because of visits to friends and colleagues in the area.

An embedded and personally involved researcher brings innate and embodied knowledge that can enrich their work. However, their entanglement within the object of their work can also be messy and problematic. One of the major challenges I faced as a researcher was to balance my sensory experience and explicitly political views with a need to listen, learn from and be true to the material collected during my interviews. The interviews were semi-structured and I took great care to avoid leading questions or influencing participants, developing a constant reflexivity where I was aware of the impact that I might be having. This persisted during the analysis stage where the data collected drove my findings, leading me down new, unexpected paths. That my conclusions were not what I had expected, perhaps, offers some degree of validation for the openness of my practices.

The nature of this investigation means an emphasis on qualitative data which is valuable for understanding “interactions that are complex and contexted ... not easily reduced to numbers” (Richards 2009: 34). The semi-structured interview, is, of course a well-established method of generating such information. Mason states qualitative interviews are appropriate if a researcher believes, as I do, that “knowledge and evidence are contextual, situational and interactional” (2002: 64). This is congruent with the literature on both place and gender that contextualises this research. Walking interviews explicitly foreground a mobile, environmental contingent, embodied perspective. They utilise elements of autoethnography, phenomenology, and sensory ethnography to create a unique, temporary shared space overlaid onto everyday streets. They also present a challenge to record and interpret something as ephemeral, embodied and multi-faceted as moving through urban space. This chapter defines both what this means in the context of this research and how emergent issues were tackled. First however it will define my epistemological and ontological perspectives, that is how I understand the world and what constitutes valid knowledge. For me, this is firmly rooted not just in psychogeography but also in feminism.

### **3.2 Gender and Feminist Geography**

Feminist geographers have a profound influence on my underlying worldview and the ontological approach directing this work. The work foregrounds women's voices because I believe to listen to them is fundamentally worthwhile and they have been largely ignored in psychogeographical research to date (Smith, 2015, Elkin, 2016, Walking Women 2016). Throughout the literature review it became clear that much relevant work is ungendered or masculine in its viewpoint and that to focus on women is an overt challenge to this. In the context of academic research, widening the scope of active participation contributes to a fuller, fairer, richer and more accurate picture of the field. It may also lead to material benefits for seldom heard or marginalised groups by amplifying their voices. I did not want to compare women's experiences to, or measure them against, male voices as I feel that this would reinforce an androcentric view of the world. Epistemologically my decision to only interview women also challenges the notion of a "real" "authentic" or primary truth which is waiting to be uncovered, as it acknowledges polyvocal narratives. As a qualitative researcher, I am searching instead for the richness of individual experiences, valuing personal stories for the insights they offer at both the micro and macro level. This is congruent with Massey's assertion of space as a "cut through ongoing histories. Not a surface but a simultaneity of stories-so-far" (2011: unpaginated). My interviews aimed to hear some of these stories-so-far about the social construction and experience of central Manchester.

My feminism is intersectional (Crenshaw 1989) because it recognises gender as just one dimension of an individual's experience, although it is given primacy within this research. Richardson (2008) provides a historical overview of the meaning of gender within research methods. She suggests Butler as a pivotal thinker who introduced the concept of gender as performative. My own work is very much influenced by Butler and queer theory in general and agrees with "the emphasis away from definitions of gender as fixed, coherent and stable, towards seeing gender categories as plural, provisional and situated" (Richardson, 2008:11). Haraway's (1988) theory of situated knowledges is

also influential here, emphasising individual experiences and understanding. It explicitly recognises that knowledge always comes from a particular viewpoint, which is itself a result of an individual's complex interactions with their world. This is congruent with ideas of space and place discussed previously, and the concept of psychogeography as a way of channelling the affective atmosphere of the urban environment. The women I walked with all experienced the same locations in different ways, according to not just their physiology but individual expectations, memories, beliefs and behaviours as well as environmental factors including as the weather, the physical environment and the actions of bystanders.

However, again echoing Massey's ongoing concerns to balance the abstract and material, I am not suggesting an entirely relativistic approach. There are material inequalities and structural forms that require challenging. We stand in a landscape shaped by a dominant political ideology which promotes individuality and profit above mutualism and co-operation. For example, neoliberalism transforms land into a commodity and homes into capital rather than personal dwellings. The focus on free trade, privatisation, market forces and maximising investments has had a direct impact on the housing available in Manchester and those able to inhabit the city centre. Many times during my interviews women spoke of the impact of political, economic and cultural processes on their lives, although they used different ways to express them. Psychogeography seeks to expose these invisible forces and the influence they exert on the urban environment, and I combine this sensibility with feminism, which recognises patriarchy as one of the most damaging of those social mechanisms.

Patriarchy refers to the continued domination and prioritization of the male and masculine at various scales throughout contemporary society. Patriarchy is viewed as another social construct, which varies across time and space, accordingly "revealing and critically analyzing patriarchies various manifestations can contribute to ending it" (Tickner 2001:1197). Stanley asserts "methodology matters then, within feminism, because it is the key to understanding and unpacking the overlap between knowledge/power"

(1997:198). As a walking artist, my method of investigation will be walking, and as an intersectional feminist, my work will aim to benefit women without reducing them to a homogenous category of “women”. I also recognise feminism is an umbrella term for a range of viewpoints, which share the aim of advocating for the rights of women.

I have followed Klein’s (1983) advice that feminist research is done for and with, and not on, women. This echoes the Disabled People’s movement dictum “nothing about us, without us” which emphasises the need to take into account the subjectivity of participants. Klein further defines feminist work:

as research that tries to take women’s needs, interests and experiences into account and aims at being instrumental in improving women’s lives in one way or another (1983:89).

I intend this work to be of practical use in several ways. The first is as a document of record, a snapshot that explores the lived experience of women in the contemporary city. This is of prima facie value in essence because female voices are a vital part of the urban cacophony. It is further hoped findings can be used to improve those experiences.

Feminist research, in common with all social science, cannot be value neutral, as Eichler makes clear, because at the very least it is “oriented towards the improvement of the status of women and is undertaken by scholars who define themselves as feminists” (1997:10). The researcher’s positionality – that is their standpoint – will always impact on their work and integral to feminism is the idea that the personal is political. This intertwining of elements is acknowledged and returned to throughout my writing. When thinking about my need to pay constant attention to positionality I have strived to apply “conscious partiality” (Mies 1983:38). This means knowing and understanding my own views and how they influence my interactions with both my interviewees and my data. I adopted a constant reflexivity that means frequently checking in with myself to ensure no obvious, overt biases, such as asking leading questions or grimacing if I did not agree with an answer. Later, this became a frequent revisiting and dwelling in my collected data to be reassured it was the data driving the direction of my conclusions. At every stage I concur with Mason’s assertion that it is always “more accurate to speak

of *generating* data than *collecting* data” (2002: 52 emphasis in original). The research process is neither neutral nor passive and there is no data simply waiting to be harvested and used *sui generis*. Research methods evolve which flow from the researcher’s epistemological viewpoint, in this case leading to an ethnographic approach.

### **3.3 Ethnographies**

Ethnography uses different methods based on “participation, observation, and writing about a field under study ... The way of writing gives the representation of the field a specific form” (Fick 2014: 536). Bridger (2013) makes clear that in any psychogeographical study the body itself is a research tool and there will inevitably be elements of autoethnography which entails “describing and systematically analysing the researcher’s personal experiences in order to understand social or cultural experiences” (Fink 2014: 534). Therefore, a phenomenological approach underpins this study as walking is multi-sensual and multi-faceted. Phenomenology concentrates on the study of experiences and emphasizes subjectivity, description, interpretation and agency as opposed to objectivity, analysis, measurement and structure (Denscombe, 2014). It must be noted the walks orchestrated during interviews are not "natural", "authentic" or spontaneous but are organised for a purpose. However, participants had agency and were able to transgress and redefine the route as they wish. The *dérive* was utilised because it encouraged exploration and an automatic writing of space by the interviewee; they were constantly required to think and feel where they want to go next. Their desires were explicitly privileged above the researcher’s and I had hoped that this would further contribute to a breaking down of hierarchies and opening-up of conversations.

This work is also influenced by (although not entirely rooted in) work which engages with affect, assemblages and embodied practice. Lorimer’s (2005) overview suggests that more-than-representational would be an appropriate term for this ontological framework which focuses on how:

life takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences,  
everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements,

precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions (2005:84).

Lorimer's emphasis on sensuality is important to this research because each walking interview is a direct, fluid, interaction with a city which is itself always in flux. The city and its inhabitants constantly move, grow, interact, decay and evolve. This is a personal, affective and adaptive process. Adams, Moore, Cox, Croxford, Refaee and Sharple (2007) document the visceral nature of the city through accounts of residents' sensory engagement, and psychogeographers such as Oldfield Ford and Sinclair share accounts of their personal immersion in the environments they walk through. Traditionally, the flâneur, and scholarship, may have privileged the ocular but much recent work expands knowledge of the role of other senses such as smell (Henshaw, 2013) sound (Schafer, 1977) and touch (Dixon and Straughan, 2010). Writers such as Tuan (1974) have explored how an affective attachment and sense of place emerges through this intensely individual and messy process. Walking together is an immersive and multi-sensory process which offers an unmediated physical connection with the environment. By definition, it engages the body, alerting and attuning it to, for example, textures beneath the feet, whether an individual is tired, aching or thirsty, and environmental factors such as the weather, illumination levels and whomever else is occupying the same location. Individual experiences can be extrapolated from and examined to illustrate wider social processes. The analysis of my research data aimed to do just this.

I did not want to obscure anyone's individual experience nor deny the impact of my own positionality, and indeed I want to make this as transparent as possible. Therefore, I precede each findings chapter with a short vignette, situating both myself and locations mentioned in the text. This draws on the ethos C Wright Mills (1959) termed the "Sociological Imagination" which extrapolates from individual experience to make explicit the connection with wider social processes. This link between personal and public concerns makes explicit Bridger's assertion that "feminist psychogeographical work means taking on a dual role in the research as both participant and researcher."

(2013:290). I am also inspired by the tradition of walking art and psychogeographers from Sinclair to Smith and beyond who channel the landscape, transforming walking into a conduit. This notion has also gained credibility with academic writers such as Edensor (2008) exploring industrial ruins and Wylie (2005) walking a coastal path. They both use personal pedestrian accounts as a way to illuminate the environment they research. To differentiate my personal derives from my empirical findings I have presented them in a style that is self-consciously different and separate from my analysis chapters. This is demonstrated not just by their physical separation on the page but a change in tone to a less academic mode of writing. This also reiterates that although I am implicated throughout I am not the main focus of this work. The personal must be situated within wider processes, and the voices of women I walked with dictate the central findings of my thesis.

A mixed methods approach offered the best opportunity to explore the range of ideas I wished to cover. At its core is the principle of action research because it is "practical and applied...undertaken as *part of practice* rather than a bolt on" (Denscombe 2014:123 italics in original). It is informed by autoethnographic traditions of "research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political" (Ellis, 2004: xix). The sensory ethnography of Sarah Pink (2009, 2015) has been particularly important to me. Pink provides a compelling argument for ethnographers to pay attention to sensory experiences if they wish to fully understand any case study. Pink also champions innovative methods and believes walking is an excellent research tool when exploring place. Joining with participants in embodied activities such as walking contributes to "the serendipitous sensory learning of being there" (2009:65), enabling an "emplaced and active participation" (2009:116) which can bring researchers closer to their participants. It facilitates a sense of mutual respect and research *with* not *on* them because "walking with others – sharing their step, style and rhythm – creates an affinity (and) empathy" (Pink 2009:111). This has been recognized by traditional ethnography, but Pink wants more attention to be paid to multi-sensory experiences. She emphasizes that working in this way



requires a commitment to self-reflexivity from the researcher as they are entangled in the field.

A growing body of work besides Pink demonstrates the benefits of expanding academic methods to incorporate walking. They are particularly helpful when eliciting stories about space and seeking to break down hierarchical participant / researcher relationships. The latter reason chimes particularly with a feminist ethos. Lorimer offers an overview of this emergent and blossoming field, suggesting it may well prosper as “a shared, interdisciplinary field of concern, uniting social and geographical research and critical arts practice” (2011:30).

### **3.4 Walking as Research Tool**

Walking can be used as a social research tool in a variety of ways and a collection edited by Bates and Rhys-Taylor (2017) provides an overview of recent work. Contributions include sociological accounts of Black History, walking with youth groups to understand their experiences of space, autoethnographic accounts of shopping centres and community participation in walks to monitor air pollution. In his contribution, Back suggests that:

walking is not just a technique for uncovering the mysteries of the city but also a form of pedagogy or a way to learn and think not just individually but also collectively (2017:20).

This research uses walking interviews, a method which “combines participant observation and semi-structured interviewing, both of which foreground context in knowledge construction” (Warren, 2016:11). Jones, Bunce, Evans, Gibbs and Ricketts Hein review three case studies of walking interviews where a variety of techniques are used to spatially locate narrative. They find “walking interviews are an ideal technique for exploring issues around people’s relationship with space” (2008:2). They report participants are often more relaxed and forthcoming because mobility removes research outside its traditional setting within an often-intimidating academy. This goes some way to breaking down hierarchies and making the research relationship more equal, so the participant feels able to determine direction and take inspiration from the environment. They conclude there is much potential for further work on the relationship between walking, perception, memory and space.

However, rather than being a totally new technique walking interviews are perhaps best seen as a spin on familiar methods, allowing for greater affordance of environmental factors and the impact of memory. Evans and Jones (2011: 849) find:

walking interviews generate richer data, because interviewees are prompted by meanings and connections to the surrounding environment and are less likely to try and give the 'right' answer.

These insights underpinned the approach adopted in this research which seeks to utilise the benefits which Evans and Jones note. There are several other studies which also resonate with this research. Kusenbach (2003) used *go-alongs*, whereby the researcher shadows subjects, probing what they are doing in situ, concluding the method helps establish a mutually comfortable relationship with participants where environmental factors provoke a naturalistic conversation. Anderson (2004) engaged in a talking whilst walking that he termed *bimbles* with environmental campaigners in the countryside outside their protest camp. His bimbles demonstrated the impact of environment on memory and how (relatively) easy it can be to share stories when walking. Both Kusenbach and Anderson reaffirm my belief that being in, and moving through, a landscape is an excellent way to facilitate conversations. I also take from them the importance of allowing participants to choose their own paths to enable conversations to be as naturalistic as possible.

Walking aids kinaesthetic learning through the engagement of multiple senses and an innate desire to "show and tell". Mobile methodologies do create problems, especially around recording data. Jones et al (2008) are critical of studies which do not attempt to physically map the places where participants make revelations, believing there needs to be a precise record of where something has been said so this can be linked with the subject. This is of direct value to many of the projects they discuss, for example *Rescue Geography*, which aimed to curate a social history of spaces before they disappeared through regeneration. Their methodology included a fixed route for each participant and/or GPS technology for precise geographical location. My research does not include tracking or recording in this manner because I felt it

would detract from the focus on conversational flow. I also felt overt surveillance could be intrusive or threatening if women chose to show me their workplace, walk home or somewhere of personal significance. On reflection, I probably overestimated the risks within the context of these interviews, and if informed consent was given I could have discreetly tracked our route. It may have been interesting to compare routes and to be able to pinpoint the location of particular features that are mentioned during the interview. A mobile phone app such as “breadcrumb” would be a discreet way of tracking footsteps with the express permission of participants. This would be a potentially useful addition to future studies, however its lack has not compromised the quality or usefulness of data I have chosen to focus on. I was not seeking to collect mapping data and prioritised qualitative data. I chose to rely on audio recording and field notes, as discussed below, and was able to generate rich and nuanced conversations.

### **3.5 The Dérive as academic method**

This research utilises participant’s local knowledge and asked them to take the researcher for a walk, discussing issues that mattered to them. It is collaborative but it would be naïve and incorrect to assume there is no hierarchy or a natural and authentic journey was being taken. Despite its conversational tone, this was an interview scenario, not a chat between friends. The women knew they were being recorded and that I would be using the information gained for my studies.

Warren (2016: 10) makes “an important distinction” between the different kinds of walking research methods because they lend themselves to different kinds of questions:

The guiding walking interview, or tour, is led by the researcher along a route that is selected because it is empirically useful in answering a pre-agreed research question... Meanwhile a natural go-along is comparable to a ‘shadowing’ technique (2016:10).

My work was situated somewhere else again on the walking research spectrum, because I was not following a pre-ordained route and did not have

a structured set of interview questions. However, neither was I simply walking with women engaged in their usual walking practices. I was asking women to construct a walk for us, to show me their city on a drift or *dérive* where they follow their instincts about where to go next. I wanted our footsteps to constitute a kind of automatic writing that flowed as unconsciously as possible. I did not want to predetermine or dominate the direction of the interview and I wanted to dissolve hierarchies as far as possible, making it clear the women could set the agenda for their own interview. I wanted to try and step beyond everyday routine walks where possible so did not ask to shadow a regular journey (although it was fine that some women chose to do this unprompted). The questions I asked were not proscribed either, as I wanted to elicit a free-flowing conversation with, and about, the city. There are problems with this approach of course, because as it makes comparison hard across bespoke data sets. However, I was particularly interested in the precise physical route taken; the walk was not an end in itself but a conduit to richer qualitative conversations. My analysis focused on themes which emerged as we talked, I concentrated on the content of each interview not the location. Without a script or pre-determined agenda women often revealed strikingly similar narratives, and I believe my analysis provides robust support for my methodological choices.

There is another wider issue around the appropriation of the *dérive* as a research tool and whether it is ever possible to truly drift aimlessly. Very little work focuses specifically on the use of the *dérive* as academic method. A rare exception is Bassett (2004) who organised a field trip using psychogeographic techniques intending to deepen his student's understanding through critical application of theories. Bassett felt his experiment, although limited by logistical constraints, was worthwhile as it provided students with an opportunity to apply theories to practical fieldwork and engage on the ground because psychogeography provides:

a way of getting students to open their eyes and ears to what is often taken for granted or ignored in negotiating urban space. It is a way of raising consciousness of urban places and rhythms. (2004:398).

The notion that the *dérive* can provide a new way of looking at and experiencing familiar territory is supported by Richardson (2013). She uses psychogeographical techniques with students to generate discussions across disciplines and suggests the biggest “surprises” about place come when they *dérive* familiar streets or on campus, because places become “transformed in the minds of the students into places for potential” (2013:38). Both studies chime at least partially with the intentions of the Situationist International and offer a twist on the traditional view of fieldwork as “participation in and critical reinterpretation of everyday life in an unfamiliar locale” (Sidaway 2002: 98).

Wider creative walking methods also have potential for academic use. Pinder documented the work of artists from the perspective of a geographer, concluding experimental arts “can play a vital role in the development of critical approaches to the geographies of cities” (2005: 385). The appropriation of space by artists creates new attachments which can challenge the dominant and conventional use of space. This can expose hegemonic power structures and suggest alternatives. It can also provide a way for a multitude of different voices to be heard and to share what places mean to them.

### **3.6 Recruitment, participants and pilot interviews**

The sampling criteria was that participants needed to be over 18 and live, work or study in Manchester. Adults were specified so I could be confident they had given informed consent and were used to independently navigating the city in a safe and responsible manner. I wanted them to be familiar with the environment we would walk in because I wanted to investigate everyday experiences in a mundane landscape, rather than gain first impressions of a place that offered novelty. The key factor I was interested in was their relationship to Manchester and I wanted to get as broad a range of views on this as possible. Therefore, a decision was made to avoid being restrictive in terms of anything other than gender. My rationale was to explore the experiences of as many women as possible and to seek commonalities on the basis of gender rather than other factors. I acknowledge the debates around essentialising gender and the legitimacy of “woman” as a category, and in

keeping with feminist theory of gender as a social construct, early iterations of the recruitment notice referred to “self-identified” women. This was also to make explicit that transwomen were welcome to participate. However, it resulted in many conversations with cisgender women (whose gender identity is congruent with their biological sex) that were confused by the terminology and unsure if they were eligible to take part. On reflection, and after informal conversations with transgendered friends, I removed the term. I felt it was distracting from my core message that all women were welcome to participate. The invitation also explicitly stated that walking could include assistive technologies so disabled women were not excluded.

Recruitment primarily took place through online communication, with support from community organisations. I initially circulated information by email in November 2015 and although I received some positive feedback nobody wanted to actually take part. I decided to postpone my fieldwork until the weather was more attractive, and in the Spring and Summer there was a much more positive response. I sent my invitation to participate to Greater Manchester Centre for Organisation (GMCVO) and the chair of Manchester Women’s Design Group, both third sector organisations I have worked with previously. They forwarded my invitation to their email networks and allowed me to post on their Facebook pages. I also directly engaged with several Facebook groups and pages which discuss the urban environment in Greater Manchester. These included Manchester Shield, Manchester Histories Festival, City Voice and The LRM (I am a moderator on the latter). I was invited to talk about my research to Greater Manchester Voluntary Sector Research Network, Manchester Histories Festival and the Mundane Methods conference and I also used this as an opportunity to share the invitation to participate. Several early participants enjoyed the experience so much that they sent the invitation around their friends and workplaces. These included Arts Council England, URBED Architects and Manchester and Salford Quakers. I also posted on my personal social media pages.

In total, I received 70 enquiries and conducted a total of 42 in-depth walking interviews with 43 women (one walk was attended by two friends, Jo and Zoe).

The discrepancy between enquires was due to logistical factors; some women declined to take part after finding out more information and some were willing to participate but unable to find a mutually suitable time to do so. One interview was postponed due to torrential rain and we were unable to rearrange as the woman then went on holiday. Two pilot interviews were conducted, the results of which have not been included in the data. These enabled me to practice using the recording equipment and refine the general structure of the interviews. It became clear that my own physical capabilities imposed a restriction on interviews as I cannot walk for longer than about two hours. I also realised the need for some prompts in the case of reticence from interviewees. Although the method is designed to be free flowing and unstructured, it became apparent not everyone feels confident simply talking and occasionally some guidance would be welcome. This proved a very useful tool as many women expressed surprise I was interested in their everyday experiences and found it hard to decide what to talk about. It also allowed a more direct comparison across interviews, and after the first few interviews I realised it was helpful to signal when the interview was nearing the end, and so I began to ask, "one final thing" which was a question about the changes interviewees would most like to see. The list of prompts is included as appendix vi, they were all deliberately open ended. I encouraged respondents to lead and self-define the topics we discussed so not every participant directly answered them. These questions could theoretically also be used if conversation drifted too far away from the interviewees' relationship with the city. That seldom happened, perhaps because I took a very wide view of what is interesting, heeding the advice that qualitative research has value when it can "treat 'obvious' actions, settings and events as potentially remarkable (Silverman, 2007: 146).

Interviews took place between March and July 2016. I was loosely acquainted with several of the participants through mutual friends or work experiences. I would consider three participants to be good friends, after walking with them due to ethical concerns I declined offers from other friends and colleagues to participate. I was concerned that interviews clouded by close personal relationships would have an unconscious bias and tell me what they thought I

wanted to hear, and also that confidentiality may be compromised. I did not feel the same issues with acquaintances, and indeed the reassurance of overlapping mutual networks may have given these women the confidence to speak candidly with me. The basic invitation was as follows (there were minor variations for some groups):

*I am a PhD student at The University of Sheffield. My current research is exploring walking and women's feelings, thoughts and experiences of public space in Manchester. I am conducting one-to-one walking interviews in Manchester city centre with women who live, work and/or study in the city. The pace, direction and subject of the interviews are set by the participants. My definition of walking includes sticks, wheels and any other mobility aids and all women over 18 are welcome.*

*Interviews are scheduled to take place between April – June 2016. If possible I would like to start in Piccadilly Gardens some time between 12 noon- 2pm but the time and location can be flexible according to your needs and interests. Interviews last between 45-60 minutes and the direction they take is up to you. There will be group walks using creative methods later in the year. (There is no obligation to take part in the second stage but all participants will be welcome to do so). This research has been approved by the ethics committee at The University of Sheffield.*

The second stage group walks never took place because I felt I had collected a satisfactory amount of data. Preliminary analysis suggested I had reached theoretical saturation, as clear patterns were developing and participants were beginning to reiterate common themes. Those emerging results were leading me in unexpected, and fruitful, directions, where I felt the creative group walks would not be helpful. My initial project idea had focused more explicitly on the potential of creative walking methods but I was always slightly fearful of a solipsistic focus on psychogeographic methods. The women I walked with were so generous with their insights I felt the focus of my work shifting in accordance to the stories they shared with me, onto the material conditions and experiences of being a woman in Manchester today. I believed a second round of data generation would prove an unnecessary demand on participant's time and could detract from the issues they revealed as being important to them.



Appendix One lists the characteristics of interviewees. My recruitment was broad and many ways my participants were a diverse group of women in terms of age, occupation, sexuality and other factors. However, it should not be viewed as a representative sample, and neither was it intended to be. My participants were self-selecting and each woman spoke about her own particular experiences. It should be noted each possessed the cultural and social capital to see, understand, and feel confident enough to respond to, my call for participants. They all possess an innate urbanity that tells them they can belong in, and to, the city on some level and are able to physically transgress many of the access barriers this research discusses at a theoretical level. They often recognised this privilege, for example when discussing sitting on benches in public squares and gardens Martha said “I’m a white middle-class looking woman so maybe it’s easy for me.” My participant’s positionality as articulate, relatively able and connected women does not diminish or dismiss their contribution to debates, but should be contextualised and viewed only as a partial account of walking in Manchester, however rich it may be.

I did not insist on collecting demographic information, although the majority of participants were happy to share relevant details. The age range of my interviewees was split almost equally across my chosen categories. Ten women (23%) were in their twenties, and the same number were in their thirties. Eleven (25%) were in their forties, meaning 82% were between twenty and forty nine. Seven (16%) were in their fifties and four were over sixty. One woman declined to answer. Eight women (18.6%) identified as migrants, having been born in the USA, New Zealand, Canada and across Western Europe. This compares to a national figure of 13% (ONS 2015). The rest were White British. None of my sample identified as part of a Black or Minority Ethnic (BAME) community; this is an absence which should be rectified in any future research.

I did not ask about disability or sexuality so the following comments relate only to women who chose to explicitly discuss these issues and no assumptions should be made about the rest of my participants. Eleven women (25.5%) spoke about their identity as a Lesbian, Bisexual or Queer woman. This is significantly higher than the ONS findings of 1.6% of women in the general

population who reported being LBT (ONS 2016). Eight women spoke about disability or ill health having a direct, sustained and negative impact on where, and how, they walked.

The employment status of my sample is particularly significant. Nine of the women worked in architecture, planning or a similar industry. Seven were members of MWDG (one of these worked in housing and was involved in her spare time due to a personal passion for improving the urban environment). This professional interest clearly influenced both their decision to participate and the language they used during interviews. These women had particular skills and professional knowledges of the built environment and urban development. However, their concerns, feelings and opinions did not differ greatly from other women. Sixteen women worked in education, including as primary school teachers, note-takers and support workers for disabled students, as well as PhD students, administrators and lecturers working within Universities. I ensured none of these academics and researchers were based in social sciences or research closely allied to my own. Other participants included two youth workers and five women based in charities or other third sector organisations such as refugee support. I also walked with a baker, a nurse and three women in office and clerical work. Two women were retired and one was unemployed, although she preferred to refer to herself as a volunteer because she placed value on that role and this is reflected in the table of participants. Self-definition was central to how I have recorded occupation. Five women worked in arts and creative industries, three of these told me they also had other jobs to subsidise this but considered themselves artists and musicians first and cleaners, pot washers and consultants second.

This hints at a rich narrative stream exploring class which I regret lacking the space to explore within this work. The range of occupations may offer clues but contemporary class is considerably more nuanced than this and I do not want to make assumptions based solely on employment in a study which values intersectionality. The artists mentioned above also demonstrate a flaw in attributing identity to employment status which can be fluid and precarious and does not reflect a holistic approach. Several women did explicitly discuss their class, frequently in relation to social mobility through education or

changing location. One of these was Maddy who told me “I’m a working-class Lancashire lass, I feel like I’m a complete fraud in many ways ... there’s a danger of not having any working-class voices at all in culture and at the universities ... doing a doctorate feels almost like a working-class act.” Maddy went on to speak passionately about the importance of public libraries and access to educational opportunities. Patti, Layla, Rennie, Nora, Sam and Kathleen also all talked about coming from a variety of traditional working-class backgrounds and relishing the freedom and opportunities moving to Manchester could bring them. Anna, Nicki, Cheryl and Jack talked about their experiences of social housing and issues with affordable homes (many more women talked about homelessness as a crisis in need of urgent attention but were not necessarily speaking from experience). Many other women expressed deep concern about the erasure of working-class voices and histories from the city centre as a direct result of regeneration, and this is explored in chapters six and seven.

### **3.7 Logistics**

#### **3.7.1 Interview Starting Point**

The majority of interviews started in Piccadilly Gardens in Manchester, which is one of the major public spaces in the city centre. It was chosen for a number of reasons. It is a well-known location and it was unlikely participants had never encountered it before. I felt a very familiar place would be a gentle way to introduce the concept of the interview and that it was a location likely to elicit some feelings, memories or stories from almost everyone. “What do you think about Piccadilly Gardens?” was the opening question for most interviews before I asked interviewees to take me for a walk. Pragmatically Piccadilly Gardens is easily accessible by pedestrians, cyclists, bus, tram and train and had benches for me to sit and wait for participants.

Many contradictions are embodied in Piccadilly Gardens. It is a central hub in Manchester and yet is also curiously liminal as a space of transit and sometimes fluid boundaries. For example, it is hard to pinpoint exactly where the gardens end on the west side because grass becomes concrete and buskers gather. The south side has a Pavilion and a concrete wall which

shields the noise of the bus and tram station. This wall, designed by Japanese architect Tadao Ando, has proved very controversial and interviewee's views are explored in depth in chapter four. Piccadilly Gardens is a transitory space – acting as a transport hub and a pedestrian shortcut– but also a destination with restaurants, cafés and bars. It is a workplace with a commercial function, yet allows visitors to devise their own mildly subversive, uncommodified leisure pursuits whilst sitting on the grass or watching the fountains. The space appears anodyne but political rallies, religious meetings and personal encounters are frequent. Despite the proximity of a portable police station and CCTV cameras, there are often people blatantly buying, selling and taking drugs such as cannabis and more recently spice (a powerful synthetic cannabinoid). Piccadilly Gardens is both spectacular and every day; being a site of festivals, protests and special events as well as mundane practices.

Physically, Piccadilly Gardens has undergone many transformations, most recently in 2002 when it was remodelled following an international design competition. This manifestation has been hailed a success by statutory bodies and the architectural press; the gardens are a key part of Manchester's post IRA bomb regeneration narrative (King, 2006). However there have been criticisms especially regarding the appropriateness of Tadao Ando's pavilion and the encroachment of commercial buildings onto the gardens. At a micro level Piccadilly Gardens illustrates many of the key debates around neoliberal development issues, consumerism and control of the city. There are no gates or overt surveillance; ostensibly the gardens are open to all. However, they are regularly patrolled and “transgressive” behaviours such as street drinking, unlicensed trading or fighting are dealt with swiftly by security. Thus, the contested boundaries between private/public, freedom/control, diversity/homogeneity and risk/ sanitisation can be traversed and something of the nuances and richness of urban contemporary street life can be explored through the conduit of Piccadilly Gardens. It provoked reactions from many participants and these are discussed more thoroughly in chapter four.

From a methodological perspective, Piccadilly Gardens did present several particular challenges. Although its complexities made it an excellent ice-breaker, perhaps the vehemence with which some women expressed their

dislike coloured the rest of their interviews. It is possible if women could start their walk anywhere else Piccadilly Gardens would never have entered their consciousness whilst we walked together, and this is an example of how methodological choices inevitably impact on data collection.

My decision to focus on the city centre probably also exerted some influence over the stories I was told. Only two of the women I spoke to currently live in the vicinity, so it is primarily a site of employment or engagement with civic buildings, commercial, cultural or leisure activities for my participants. Several women talked about the predominantly suburban areas they live in, discussing the advantages but also the need for a continued engagement with the urban core.

Starting at Piccadilly Gardens did impose a restriction on possible routes, but it remains striking that the majority chose to head into the Northern Quarter. They told me they wanted to explore this area because it holds an abiding appeal for them, and the reasons for this are discussed in forthcoming chapters. However, I cannot be sure they would have discussed the Northern Quarter at all if, for example, we had met nearer their home or outside central library. When I sat on the bench waiting for participants I was facing north – to look the other way would have meant having no view of the gardens and be staring into a coffee shop – so perhaps I also exerted an unconscious influence. The Pavilion and bus station act as a further barrier to heading south, although as I discuss in 3.7.2 several women did choose this direction.

Four interviews began in other places (All Saints Park, Manchester Town Hall, Hulme Garden Centre and an office on Oldham Street). These locations were chosen by participants for their convenience, as discussed in the section on routes below. The broad scope of these interviews did not differ greatly from those which started in Piccadilly Gardens, the same concerns such as street harassment and lack of green space were raised whichever route the walk took. Many women discussed places such as Spinningfields or other cities which we were not physically in, so whilst moving through a place focused the senses on the somatic experience it did not limit the imaginative scope of conversation.

### **3.7.2 Direction, routes, timing and duration**

The direction of each walking interview, both physically and in terms of content, was led by participants. They were, as far as practicable, discursive and fluid, although I had my prompts prepared should conversation be slow or stilted. The majority of women made apparently spontaneous decisions on which way to go, however there were a few exceptions. One woman took me on her regular lunchtime circuit of Manchester, going past her office and yoga studio. One wanted to show me the pub she met her husband in as it is due for demolition and two took me to see their places of worship and sites of historical significance. One asked me to walk with her from her workplace almost to her door. Most walks did not have a premeditated path, and I frequently had to reassure participants it was OK that they weren't sure where to go. When they asked me which direction, I repeated it was their choice. When we reached corners, junctions, or busy roads there was often a short dialogue about where to go next, and women usually opted to head towards somewhere, or something that had some significance to them. A few women took the opportunity to go somewhere they were unfamiliar with, such as Greta who wanted to explore Ancoats.

The majority of interviews took place between 12 noon and 2pm to mitigate against the impact of temporal rhythms or intrusions such as rush hour. Participants appeared very engaged and interested in the interview process and were keen to find out why I was interested in them. They were self-selecting, so perhaps it should not be a surprise they were keen to share their stories with me, however their generosity and openness exceeded my expectations. Several women walked with me on their lunch hour or in between appointments, but the majority of the others were unrushed and, had I not specified a time limit, I suspect the conversations could have lasted much longer. I believe the informal nature, conversational tone and environmental engagement enabled frank and largely unfiltered conversations. There was a reciprocal element to the interviews as implied by my use of "conversation." If a woman asked me my views I gave them but kept my answers brief and returned the focus to her as soon as possible.

Interviews lasted between 25 and 85 minutes, with the modal average length of time being forty-four minutes. The furthest points reached from Piccadilly Gardens were as follows:

East: Junction of Pollard Street and Beswick Street with Rennie 1.53km

West: Junction of Water Street and Liverpool Road with Holly 1.48km

South: All Saints Park 1.12 km with Heidi

North: Angel Meadow 1.03 km with Zoe and Jo

However, these transects do not always reflect the interviews with the longest duration. Heidi walked briskly for just twenty-five minutes whilst many women explored a relatively small area very deeply. For example, Cheryl spent forty-six minutes taking me down a variety of alleyways, across car parks and particular buildings in the Northern Quarter. At one point she invited me to sit with her on the doorstep of an old warehouse, now offices, on Lever Street to listen to her memories of the area. Similarly, Penny doubled backed on herself, going back and forth and lingering on Spear Street and Stevenson Square to admire the street art she enjoys cataloguing, looking intently into a relatively small geographical area.

Cheryl and Penny were amongst the majority of women (thirty-one or 72%) who took me for a walk into the Northern Quarter, either for part, or whole of their interview. This usually included Oldham Street, the main road which bisects it from north to south and collectively we covered the whole neighbourhood. However, many excursions into the area were concentrated within an area of approximately 36,000 m<sup>2</sup>, the portion bounded by Piccadilly Gardens, Tib Street, Lever Street and Thomas Street. Participants' attachment to this district are discussed at length in my findings chapters.

Twelve interviews (28%) did not engage with the Northern Quarter, although several of these women still mentioned the area in a positive way. The next most popular territory to venture into was Market Street, to the west of Piccadilly, although the majority of the twelve women who walked there were en route somewhere else. Nine women went through Shudehill, again often incidentally rather than as a destination although they tended to be positive about the area. Eight women crossed the Ring Road (A665) to explore

Ancoats and New Islington because they had an attraction and affection to the area despite the barrier the road represents. Mosley Street, in the opposite direction to Oldham Street, was visited by seven women, six of whom particularly wanted to show me Manchester Art Gallery, The Central Library, The Friends Meeting House or another civic building. Six women visited Cathedral Gardens with me and all were positive about the green space. The majority of these also talked about Urbis, a sloped glass building bordering the gardens. Funded largely by the Millennium Commission, it opened in 2002 and became a potent symbol of post IRA bomb regeneration. Originally designed to host an eponymous museum of the city, commercial pressures changed it into an exhibition and gallery space focused on pop culture and contemporary urban life. This closed in 2010 but was fondly remembered by several participants. It is now home to the National Football Museum about which rather more ambivalence was expressed.

Three women took me into buildings during our walks. Maddy wanted to explore the renovated central library, and she met me outside Manchester Town Hall so she could do so. Jack wanted visit to her favourite curry café, This n That, Sam shared her favourite people watching spot in the Arndale Market, and Zoe wanted to show Jo and I The Marble Arch pub. Jack was the only person to buy a drink, or anything else, in the place we went into. Barbara started in a cafe near Piccadilly Gardens because she has mobility issues.

Four interviews started outside the city centre. Kathleen and Heidi met me outside their workplaces on Oxford Road, Kathleen wandered around the University Campus with me whilst Heidi took me on part of her walking commute. When I left her in Piccadilly Gardens she walked onto the Green Quarter. Anna met me in Hulme, the suburb where she lives as did Eleanor who works in the area. Eleanor is registered blind and was concerned about talking and walking, but was very keen to take part, and so her interview was one of two which was entirely stationary. It was conducted in her office in Hulme, just south of the city centre. There was torrential rain when I was due to walk with Nora so we had a conversation in a café instead.



Despite Canal Street being mentioned by several LGBT women none of them chose to go for a walk there; the exclusionary and complex construction of Manchester's Gay Village is discussed in chapters five and seven. Notably, no-one took me for a walk through Chinatown, although several told me it was an area they liked. It is directly behind Piccadilly Tower, hidden from view from the gardens but easily reachable. I suspect this is attributable to feelings of belonging, community and cultural capital which my participants attribute more to the Northern Quarter than Chinatown. A group of Chinese or Asian women may well experience this differently and indeed the experiences of BAME women will include experiences of personal and cultural identity and related oppressions which are not reflected in my work.

A summary of routes, areas covered, and significant buildings discussed is included as Appendix ii. They are mapped by frequency as Appendix iii.

### **3.8 Recording and transcribing methods**

Interviews were recorded using a zoom H2n recorder with a windshield. This is handheld with an integrated microphone. It was chosen because of its high quality and relatively small and lightweight size. It was clear I was conducting an interview but it remained relatively unobtrusive. It was also lightweight and comfortable for me to hold. It succeeded in capturing all the conversations apart from one 5-minute section on a very busy shopping street where there was a loud band playing using amplification. A secondary recording source was used for most interviews, a small digital voice recorder with a microphone clipped onto the interviewees' lapel. I did not need to rely on this at all but felt it sensible to take a backup. I also carried spare batteries with me at all times. I chose not to use visual recording methods as well because filming seemed very intrusive and likely to interrupt the flow of the conversations.

I took detailed field notes after each interview, noting my impressions, the participants' ostensible mood, environmental conditions and anything interesting that may not be apparent from the audio recordings. I referred back to these notes when analysing and interpreting the data to check whether it reinforced or contradicted my conclusions. However, when considering the interviewees' body language and mannerisms I retained my reflexivity, being

mindful of Silverman's (2007) warning not to make assumptions from body language and to remember no direct causality between emotions and actions.

On reflection, it would have been interesting to use a GPS tracker or similar to record the route of each interview. This could have been a useful comparative tool and could have generated maps to illustrate routes taken. It could also help with transcription because occasionally comments were made about environmental features without context and so this could have been a cross referencing tool. However, this function was seldom felt to be lacking. Frequently interviewees provided a commentary of where we were or where we were headed, pointing out significant landmarks to them. Occasionally I spoke into the microphone to say where we were and provide an audio marker. There was only one incident when an interviewee commented on an architectural feature they thought was "very nice" and I could not place what it was. I revisited the approximate location, but my memory was not jogged as the area has a diverse range of buildings.

The majority of the interviews were transcribed by me using Dragon audio to text software. I listened to all the interviews myself prior to commencing transcription to get a feel for the interview and to remind myself of each women's unique experiences. I listened back to them again after the transcription as well to make sure they were accurate. This was particularly important as Dragon can make mistakes with its interpretation. This process helped deepen my relationship with, and understanding of, the interviews and meant I was dwelling in the data. This dwelling is a close, attentive, immersion which allows themes to emerge. Due to time constraints, five interviews, chosen at random, were transcribed externally. I learnt that the re-listening, and rereading, process was even more important with these interviews as I had not needed to concentrate on typing myself. I realised an external transcriber still increased my distance from the data and so I resumed the task myself, and decided the effort was worth it for the improvement in my relationship with the data.

Both myself and the transcriber I employed gave full verbatim transcriptions, including noting pauses, sighs, laughter, repetition and such like. I believe this

gives the fullest and most accurate recording of the data. However, I have on occasion cleaned up the material for inclusion in this thesis. I have not changed the meaning, or wording, of what interviewees told me but for clarity I have taken out “ums” “ers” “so...” and other verbal ticks as well as repetition or long pauses unless I felt they were intrinsic to the conversation. Within this text “...” indicates some text has been removed <words within angle brackets> is an action taken by the woman such as laughing and [square brackets denotes action taken by me, including speech]. Brackets were used to (insert information) for clarity.

Photographs have been used to illustrate key locations that are referred to in the text. These were all taken by myself in 2016 – 2017, after fieldwork had taken place. I did not want to disrupt the flow of interviews by stopping to take images, and some places only revealed themselves as significant through data analysis. Two contextual maps are included as appendices. One of these illustrates the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester, and the other depicts the districts within Manchester city centre. The vast majority of locations discussed in this fieldwork are covered within these boundaries.

### **3.9 Data Analysis**

Interviews were analysed using NVivo. This platform enables organisation, storage and analysis of qualitative data and is widely recognised as a useful tool when seeking to analysis large amounts of unstructured information. Data is broken down into thematic nodes for classification and to identify key issues, in a process described as coding. I was initially skeptical, as I feared coding words and phrases would remove context from comments; however, I mitigated against this by constantly referring back to the whole interview during the coding process. The act of organising and coding is not neutral (Mason, 2002) but I strived to use an inductive approach where the data suggested commonalities between and across interviews. Coding gathers data together and promotes synthesis across participants and I followed Richards suggestion that a good researcher should “treat the category system as the growing conceptual structure ... not a mere filing cabinet.” (2009: 175). I did not begin analysis with any preconceptions about what I may discover, and

indeed some of the findings were a surprise to me. I did not use any mechanical function to assist my coding such as searching the text for a key word, because this would miss context, synonyms and nuance that I believed only a manual approach could encompass.

During my previous career in community development, I frequently used a method called Technology of Participation, developed by The Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA). This is often used in consensus building exercises where ideas are posted onto a sticky wall and a facilitator works with participants in clustering related comments together to get at the essence of a debate or issue. I used NVivo in a similar way; finding comments which made similar points and clustering them together under the same code. The sheer quantity of data meant post-it notes would be not be practical and thus the more I used the technology the more appropriate NVIVO appeared to be. However, when I was unsure about my interpretation I did occasionally revert to the ICAs consensus building techniques. I physically cut up blocks of texts and arranged them in piles under my draft nodes because for me the materiality of paper and the physicality of re-organisation was a useful way of checking the validity of my coding.

A full list of my NVivo codes is included as appendix vii. It should be noted that some data was filed under more than one code. The challenge coding helps solve is producing a thick, nuanced description of participant's experiences. It should offer not just a snapshot of material conditions but glimpses of potential futures as well as memories and emotions. The central aspect of this study is the encounters between participants and the space they were walking through. This moves beyond triangulation, as Richardson and St Pierre (2005) suggest the crystal is a stronger metaphor than a triangle within qualitative analysis. This means multiple strands of evidence must be woven together to produce a coherent text, echoing the structure of a crystal which is a dense lattice of material extending in all directions. The crystal echoes the rhizomatic qualities of the *dérive*. The rhizome is a plant with roots which spread in many directions, allowing multiple, non-hierarchical ways to reach the stalk. The *dérive*, and indeed my walking interviews, did not have a predesigned or

logical route and did not seek to uncover a great universal truth. They aimed to explore the many ways woman experience a contemporary city.

When coding was completed, quotes needed to be selected for inclusion in this thesis. Quotations have been chosen because they are representative of, and best articulate, an idea expressed by several participants. However, occasionally quotes have been selected because they are unusual or contradictory; expressing something different to the majority. When this is the case it is explicitly stated. I was searching for evocative stories and individual interpretations of social phenomena. Denzin (1998: 99) states one interview can demonstrate an “occurrence which evidences the operation of a set of cultural understandings currently available for use by cultural members” and each quote stands for many others.

Yanow and Schwartz-Shea present a powerful argument for the power of interpretive methods because:

When done well (meaning according to its own established and accepted procedures), it is, in point of fact, carefully designed and crafted and systematically carried out. Thickly descriptive work is rich in its detail and rigorous in its argumentation. (2013:100).

Walking, as an ephemeral, embodied encounter, can never literally be transcribed onto paper but my responsibility was to provide a viable, and legitimate, route through the hours of interviews I recorded.

### **3.10 Ethics**

Ethics are central to the design of any quality research project. There are, of course, University of Sheffield Guidelines to follow and forms to complete. These state that research must not bring the University into disrepute and must comply with all relevant laws, legislation and codes of conduct. I have adhered to all these requirements and received institutional ethical approval before embarking on my fieldwork. However, I believe an ethical approach should go beyond the superficial and legal dimensions. Implicit in feminist theory is a commitment to valuing the experiences of everyone equally and a desire to treat people fairly and with respect. This is not to imply this is only territory

feminists can lay claim to, but I do not believe research can claim to be feminist if it seeks to exploit or deceive. Put simply, my desire for knowledge should never override the rights or safety of participants.

The principle of informed consent is crucial. The nature of my work was fully disclosed to all the women involved and they were given the opportunity to withdraw at any time. Copies of the participant information sheet and consent form are provided as appendices. Participants all volunteered, freely and received no remuneration or other material benefits. Another key principle is to be truthful. My ontological perspective means I am not staking a claim to The Truth but rather the truth as I perceive it, based on the evidence I collected during my fieldwork. My data was recorded as fully, accurately and mindfully as possible with all quotes and influences attributed. I took care to let the women's stories direct me and to listen to what I was being told. In short, I strived to the best of my ability, to do justice to the data. However, I lay sole claim to the authorship of this work and believe the data justifies my conclusions.

The women I spoke to all understood that the research would generate publications, including this thesis. My work will be made publicly available to anyone, including participants, through open access requirements. Participants are all anonymised, with pseudonyms used and I am confident individuals cannot be identified by anyone other than themselves. Occasionally I changed details, such as the location of employment, to further support anonymity. Names were randomly assigned, I did not make any effort to try and match them culturally or demographically. I have used quotes from many women so there is less of a sense of a journey or traceability for any individual. This may make individuals seem alienated, but I only did one interview with each woman so it would be unreasonable to expect a life history or detailed focus on one person.

All personal data has been stored safely in compliance with Data Protection laws, either on a password protected computer or in a locked cupboard which only I can access. A back up copy of my data has also been stored on an external hard drive which is kept securely with my family. This version does

not include women's surnames or contact details. It was also important that I, as a researcher, understood the limits of my ability and sought guidance from my Supervisor when I needed it. I did encounter some emergent ethical issues once my fieldwork had begun and these are discussed below.

### **3.11 Assessing risk in the research process**

Before each walk I briefed participants on the need to be mindful of obstructing pavements, not entering private property or straying onto roads. This was done in as informal way as possible as they were all adults who had volunteered to take part in a walking interview in Manchester city centre. It was, therefore, reasonable to assume they were familiar with the environment and would exercise common sense, for example when crossing roads. However, as researcher I was responsible for conducting the interview and recording the *dérive*, and had to exercise a duty of care to ensure participant's wellbeing. In terms of health and safety, this mindfulness is very important, and so I cultivated a reflexive awareness of the demands of the interview and the dangers of the environment. This meant occasionally stepping aside on a crowded pavement to ensure we were not causing a blockage or intervening to ask a participant to use a pedestrian crossing. These moments were occasional and amiable, several women found it amusing I was being so careful of traffic and told me I was obviously making a special effort because I was working.

Overall, participants were not exposed to any extraordinary risk, but there is always a need to be prudent when traversing the city. This is particularly true in specific areas, such as walking along the canal towpath, when crossing a road or encountering crowded spaces. All walks were in daylight in generally accessible public spaces. I was with each woman at all times during the interview and I ensured there was no straying into private property or areas of particular risk, such as building sites. A risk assessment was conducted prior to the first interview and reviewed periodically. I always carried a fully charged mobile phone, and made sure someone knew where and when I was going to an interview, although to reiterate this was a city centre. Following the work of Jacobs (1961) and others discussed earlier, I believe a busy street mitigates

against many risks and this was a comfortable environment for my participants. However, we did frequently encounter unforeseen risks arising from everyday sexism and street harassment, which will be discussed as an emergent ethical issue.

### **3.12 Emergent Ethical Issues**

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork reasonable measures were taken to ensure an ethical research project. However, several issues emerged whilst interviews were taking place. These were a consequence of operating in the street and can be divided into four distinct but interrelated areas.

#### **3.12.1 Encounters with By-Standers**

The nature of this research meant it was inevitable we would encounter participants on the street. They are unaware of this study and thus unable to give informed consent to participate. It would not be feasible, or appropriate to issue details to them because such incidents are happenstance and informal, a consent form breaks the flow of the day and adds a layer of complexity that could cause harmful confusion. Such contact should generally have minimal impact on bystanders and is highly unlikely to have an adverse effect within the context of a cityscape. Mitigation against harm was maximised by only engaging in conversation with non-participants when it was initiated by them. Any descriptions of such an encounter have been kept broad enough that bystanders are rendered unidentifiable.

Several interviews were disrupted by unexpected encounters with passers-by known to either myself or interviewees. These were joyful moments when recording was disrupted by greetings, chats and occasionally hugs by an assortment of friends, colleagues, housemates and ex-husbands. These were amiable and perhaps inevitable, but generally did not detract from the interview or unduly disturb anyone. Potentially, anonymity may have been compromised when interviewees explained to the curious interloper what they were doing, however as accounts are anonymized and disguised within the thesis I am satisfied there were no negative consequences.



I also experienced several encounters with bystanders whilst waiting for women in Piccadilly Gardens. These included several offers of employment, invitations to attend churches and gyms and convivial exchanges about the weather. These were non-threatening and I generally enjoyed observing the busy and diverse space. However, there were two occasions when I was accosted by men who were enquiring about my marital status and one of these became mildly uncomfortable. I was firm in my rejection of his advances and he swiftly left me alone. This inflicted no lasting harm on me but should be viewed as part of the range of micro aggressions women are forced to navigate. This is discussed more fully in chapter five. There was also another difficult incident when I became aware of a commotion around the bench next to mine. I had caught a glimpse of some frenetic movement in my peripheral vision and turned to see a man with a bloodied face. He was with several other people who all seemed distressed and were loudly discussing what to do. He looked very much like he needed medical attention and I decided I should go and see if I could help or if they needed me to call an ambulance. Before I was able to do so a paramedic arrived by bicycle so I made no intervention.

None of these by-standers had given informed consent to take part in my study. It would not have been practical or desirable to have given them a participant information sheet or consent form to sign. Their encounter with us was fleeting, and unlikely to have had any significant impact. Where I have felt it necessary to refer to someone not directly involved in the study, their details have been disguised to afford anonymity; indeed I suspect they would not actually recognize themselves in the event they should read this text.

### **3.12.2 Street Harassment**

Several interviews were interrupted by men in ways that were troubling and potentially represented an ethical issue. Their interventions ranged from vaguely amusing to explicitly threatening. I view this as a continuum, with at one end ostensibly harmless banter including a man asking if they were going to be on television and another telling us we should be talking about “chem trails” because they are the only thing that matters. (Chem trails are linked to a conspiracy theory that has various iterations but all believe that airplanes are

deliberately being used to distribute toxic substances). This was annoying but not directly harmful. Further along the spectrum the most threatening interjector was the man who ran up and shouted, “fuck her in the pussy” whilst I walked up Oxford Road with Heidi. No physical contact with bystanders ever occurred but there was also a man who came so close whilst taking a photograph his camera almost touched my hair. I discuss the meaning of these encounters more fully in chapter five. I believe they are symptoms of a deep rooted and multifaceted misogyny, linking them to accounts of everyday sexism and gendered rights to the city.

The ethical issues these events raised are about subjecting participants to harm and whether these incidents were distressing. I owed a duty of care to protect my participants wellbeing to the best of my ability. There was little pattern to when we would be interrupted, although I observed Friday afternoons seemed to be particularly popular with inebriated men on the street so I began to avoid scheduling interviews then. I spoke to my participants about each incident we experienced. It would have been almost impossible not to mention as the flow of the interview was disrupted, but I wanted to explicitly check they were alright. None appeared to be distressed and rather shrugged their shoulders and viewed the incidents as sadly inevitable. They lead several interviewees to disclose previous harassment and I frequently ascertained they were happy to continue. How these interruptions changed the shape of each interview is impossible to divine but they clearly demonstrated how:

walking practices can *expose* power including the ways in which power is structured through security and policing that the mobile body navigates in the public spaces of the city (Warren 2016:5).

Discussions were had with my supervisory team and a conclusion reached that the situation was unfortunate but the encounters were sadly not outside the realm of expected encounters. The risk of actual harm was no greater than women face every day in Manchester and many other cities. The implications of this are explored in chapter five, where I demonstrate how women navigate risk, developing a range of coping mechanisms and resistant practices that enable them to assert their pedestrian rights.

### **3.12.3 Sharing Sensitive and Distressing Information**

Several women shared stories of assault, abuse and other distressing incidents. I did not elicit these stories in any way. I listened intensively and empathetically and checked several times that the woman was OK whilst she was telling me. At the end of the interview I reiterated that if there was anything she would like to take out of the record she could let me know and I would do so. Nobody asked for any part of their interview to be censored and I believe I have treated all interviewees with care and respect. Where criminal activity was disclosed the police had already been informed so I had no conflict between confidentiality and safeguarding. The stories shared were all historic and I had no evidence any woman was in imminent danger. The support they had received was usually an intrinsic part of the story they were telling me, if it wasn't I gently asked what help they had received. No woman appeared distressed or unhappy whilst talking to me and all the evidence I have suggests they found the interview experience positive. Although some of the conversations we had contained upsetting elements I did not feel distressed or overwhelmed by what I had heard, had I done so I would have contacted my supervisor or the mental health support at the University.

### **3.12.4 Anonymity and confidentiality**

Encountering familiar faces inevitably led to discussion about what we were doing, and this could be viewed as a threat to anonymity. On reflection, I do not feel there is a risk of harm here. Interviewees knew they were in a public space and this was obvious at all times. Although they may have paused to explain what we were doing, the actual interviews took place away from direct contact with anyone else. The act of talking in the street does blur public/private space and there is the risk interviews could be overheard by bystanders. This was minimised by our constant motion and our voices being kept at normal conversational level.

Within this thesis all participants have been given pseudonyms and occasionally identifying information such as a very specific job have been changed to protect anonymity. One participant, a musician, initially objected to

being given a pseudonym although she agreed after a discussion about academic conventions.

### **3.12.5 Environmental Hazards**

Being in the field revealed the emergent and fluctuating nature of environmental risks. It was necessary to be always alert to potential issues such as traffic, street furniture and uneven pavements. Ongoing work on Manchester's tram network was a particular challenge as it closed or narrowed many pavements. Where possible I avoided these areas. For example, when we met at Piccadilly Gardens Veronica told me she was really torn between walking with me through the Northern Quarter or towards the City Art Gallery. She really couldn't decide and suggested tossing a coin, however I knew the road was being dug up outside the gallery so suggested she took my advice instead. This may have affected her sense of autonomy slightly but I only intervened when it became apparent she was genuinely conflicted. My suggestion was based on knowledge that the narrow street would be hard to navigate and the noise of drilling would mean conversation was compromised so I feel, on balance, my intervention was justifiable.

All walks took place in daylight and three were rescheduled to avoid extreme weather during a week of intense storms, which made walking unpleasant and recording difficult. Several interviewees disclosed disabilities or impairments when they contacted me so I adjusted the interview format so they were not excluded. One interview started in a café as the subject did not want to walk for very long, others took frequent breaks or specifically told me places they wanted to avoid due to feeling unsafe. Obviously, I respected their wishes.

I intervened on two occasions because I perceived a risk that was inappropriate. One participant told me during our interview she had previously undisclosed problems balancing due to Multiple Sclerosis and then that she would like to use the interview as an opportunity to explore a steep, narrow canal towpath. Another wanted to find a way through fencing onto some waste land. Both times I explained why I could not participate in this action and alternative routes for the interview were found. My own physical limitations

also had an impact, most notably on the pace of interviews. Throughout the interview process I was satisfied that no unnecessary risks were taken.

### **3.12.6 Conflicts of Interest**

I have previously outlined cases where I intervened to prevent potential physical harm, and why, on balance I felt it necessary to assert myself. Aside from this I tried to remain as impartial as possible but, especially given the conversational tone of the interview, there were a few occasions when I found objectivity particularly hard. The nature of a semi-structured interview is an ongoing interaction between two (or more) people and I strived to be constantly reflexive. I followed the advice of Mason who believes researchers must cultivate an “active moral practice” (202:101) that assesses developing circumstances. I wanted to create a comfortable environment for participants so my professional impartiality was never passivity. I verbally and visually empathised with participants throughout and did not offer an opinion, direction or leading question. However, I always answered questions truthfully if I was asked my opinion, although I kept my answers brief to ensure the focus was quickly back on the interviewee. The incidences I perceived as particularly difficult with regards to impartiality and conflicts of interest are as follows:

#### **Undue Influence and Intervention**

Zoe and Jo were very upset and angry about the density of housing around Rochdale Road, an area we walked to because Zoe wanted to show Jo The Marble Arch Pub. This was towards the end of their interview period and the lack of green space in the city had been a recurring theme for them. The area is also known as Angel Meadow, with the eponymous slum now transformed into a park situated on the street behind the one we were walking down. Both were unfamiliar with the general area and had told me they wanted to explore the environment more. I made a spontaneous decision to intervene and show them the park. This was clearly contravening my own guidelines but they both expressed delight at finding the meadow. They spent a lot of time reading the information boards and exclaimed several times how glad they were to have found Angel Meadow because they had no idea it was there. Although I kept recording until we said goodbye back on the main road, I have not used data

recorded once I started directing the walk as I feel this was compromised. However, I do not regret my decision as I feel in this instance I was able to offer a positive benefit to participation.

### **Library Walk**

Several women took me to see St Peters Square, The Town Hall or Central Library and commented directly on the closure of Library Walk. This is a passageway between Central Library and the Town Hall extension which had a link building constructed over it in 2014. This was severely criticised by all those who mentioned it, and due to the tone of our conversations I felt compelled to tell them I had led the campaign to keep the ginnel open. This was reaffirming their views, making clear my position and I did not seek to prolong this section of the interview. I did not raise the subject or seek to elicit views from women that did not mention the subject. I have omitted any discussion of Library Walk from my analysis chapters because I am so entangled and passionate about this particular place and did not want to skew the overall tone of my findings.

### **False Information**

Several women shared information they believed to be true but which I know to be demonstrably wrong. Maisie mentioned a social centre which closed before she arrived in Manchester as we went past the site she thought it had stood. I had worked in the centre but saw no benefit in interrupting the flow of the conversation to correct her perception, although I knew it was the wrong location. I felt correcting her would break our rapport and was not appropriate. There were several similar incidents during other interviews but I saw no harm in leaving mental maps undisturbed.

### **3.13 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the methodologies used in this research, and the epistemological and ontological beliefs that underpin them. It has discussed my underlying feminist beliefs and the reasons for choosing walking interviews as a research tool. Ethical and logistical challenges arising from my decisions have also been explored. The following chapters discuss my empirical

findings. These chapters are organised thematically and foreground the voices of the women I walked with, incorporating analysis as appropriate. Each findings chapter is preceded by a short account of a journey I took on my own. These are more akin to literary psychogeography, explicitly situating myself in both the text and the wider geographical context of this thesis. To clearly differentiate the modes of expression a different font is used and a first person perspective utilised exclusively during these vignettes. The first of these relates a drift from St Peter's Square, a recently refurbished plaza, to Castlefield, once the site of a Roman fort.





***Drift One***  
***St Peters Square to Castlefield, from new stones***  
***to Roman ruins***



*Plate One: St Peter's Square from Lower Mosley Street*

It's August 2017 and I'm standing on the steps of Central Library, looking out onto the plaza of St Peters Square. Last Summer whilst I conducted my interviews passage across here was filtered through temporary fencing as the new tram line was constructed. Now work is complete and the smooth sand coloured tiles make it seem surprisingly spacious. It's not really finished of course, the city never is, but the pneumatic drills have moved on now. A constant stream of people passes by and many of the benches are occupied, mostly by older people or groups with small children. Tourists are taking photographs of each other alongside the red telephone boxes which seem to delight and entrance them. The crimson metal contrasts with the cloistered arches alongside the edge of the town hall extension.

St Georges Cross stands opposite me, stranded on a traffic island between tramlines. The rest of Luytens war memorial was moved across the square. There was no hint of irony when the new location was announced; the re-erection of a tribute to the dead necessitated

destruction of the Peace Garden. This had been built at a time Manchester declared itself the first Nuclear Free City. I have a pamphlet (circa 1982) which is striking now in both its terrifying realism and blatant opposition to the Government of the day, particularly as the council collaborated in its production. It's called "*Emergency Planning and Nuclear War in Greater Manchester*" but says "*plans to help people in Greater Manchester survive a nuclear war are unrealistic.*" This was the radical Manchester that funded the first LGBT centre just as Clause 28 was demonising love and thousands of people took to Manchester streets to march against bigotry. Walking together in defiance and celebration.

I turn right onto Peter Street. There's the grand Midland Hotel. It's an urban myth that Hitler loved the building, but it is true that Rolls met Royce in there. There's a Pizza Express next door, isn't there always these days? I cut down the side, past an abandoned nightclub, and onto another plaza, this time in front of the G-Mex. Officially called Manchester Central Convention Centre now, during party political conferences a ring of steel goes up around it and security seals appear everywhere; I never thought a bollard could be dangerous till I saw one being searched in case it had explosives hidden in it. This was St Peters Field, where in 1819 tens of thousands of people gathered to rally for democracy (well, almost: votes for men). Authority was disturbed and the yeomanry were called, attacking the crowds with sabres and killing at least 17. There's evidence they targeted women and children and The Peterloo Massacre inspired Shelley to write *The Masque of Anarchy*:

"Rise, like lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number!  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you:  
Ye are many – they are few!" (Shelley, 1819).

I walked here one Sunday morning, sleepy and in a daze, when I heard a cacophony of screams. For one strange, ridiculous second I thought

I could hear the ghosts of Peterloo, but then I turned the corner and realised a talent show was being filmed nearby and the stars were staying in The Radisson. The Hotel occupies the former Free Trade Hall, which the people of Manchester thought belonged to them until it was sold. This was where the purple, green and white banner of the Suffragettes was unfurled for the first time when Christabel Pankurst and Annie Kenney interrupted a meeting. A history of heckles – it was onstage here a bootleg tape captured Dylan being called Judas. The Sex Pistols, Charles Dickens and The Dalai Llama all addressed audiences here and squatters moved in to try and hold the space but couldn't stop "progress."

On the side of the hall is a red plaque, The Peterloo Memorial campaign fought for this to replace the anodyne blue marker that failed to mention "massacre." They have been tenacious in keeping the story alive, holding vigils and workshops and meetings and hope to get what they feel is a fitting memorial before the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I carry on down Peter Street, passing The Albert Hall. This was once reputed to be the most haunted place in Manchester, with the menacing presence of a Methodist Minister, angry that people have converted his temple into a nightclub.

On the other side of Deansgate, the old Roman road now constantly gridlocked, I can see Spinningfields. There's the Armani shop that banned anti-fur demonstrators and an RBS bank built on land the council had to buy back to prevent the whole project crashing down. Those apartments nod to the radical with their name Left Bank. The lift down to the avenue of shops hasn't been repaired for years.

The glass and steel isn't for me today and I turn left, towards The Beetham Tower. It whistles when there's a storm, with an eerie banshee wail. I'm in Castlefield now, an urban heritage park, resplendent with canals and red brick and viaducts. There's the chapel pop hitmakers Stock Aitken Waterman used as a recording studio.

Funny that Rick Astley singing “*never gonna give you up*” isn’t celebrated as a Manchester classic, perhaps it’s too cheerful.

There’s a replica “Roman Fort” marking the approximate spot of the ancient Mamucium settlement. Today homeless people have pitched tents in the grounds of the faux ancient bricks. Nearby there used to be a mural featuring legionnaires, one of whom sported a digital watch given to them by an anonymous graffiti artist. Around the corner The Museum of Science and Industry has sheds full of engineering wonders. Some are hosted within the world’s first passenger railway terminus but the building of the new Ordsall Chord – finally linking Piccadilly and Victoria stations – has severed the line so trains can’t actually run here anymore.



*Plate Two: Castlefield Fort with the railway in the background*

## Chapter Four

### *Dirty Old Town: The material of Manchester*

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores how women encounter Manchester and the material qualities of space which appeal to, or repel, them. It describes, using the women's own accounts, the places in Manchester that matter to them and why, with an emphasis on the qualities of space. Piccadilly Gardens is included as a case study because it is one of the central public spaces within the city but attracted vitriolic comments. The general focus is on describing what the city means to women. It concludes with a discussion about the role walking plays in everyday life and how it changes women's relationship to the city.

The title of this chapter comes from a Ewan MacColl song, chosen because it exudes the romance of the everyday even as it describes grime:

"I met my love by the gasworks wall,  
dreamed a dream by the old canal,  
I kissed my girl by the factory wall,  
dirty old town, dirty old town." (MacColl, 1949).

Romantic as the refrain is, it conforms to a stereotype of Northern industrial grit. The conflicting feelings about heritage, class and dirt as a metaphor recurs throughout every chapter of this work as I explore complex emotional relationships. MacColl is frequently assumed to have been writing about Manchester but he was actually documenting Salford, the neighbouring city. Manchester and Salford have a symbiotic relationship and are both part of Greater Manchester. The boundary between the two is permeable and frequently traversed by many women I walked with. Earlier this year there were protests about the demolition of the Gasworks mentioned in the song, as residents felt they were an important part of local industrial heritage that should be saved and found an alternative use. The campaigners lost, although a concession was made and the wall MacColl sings of will be saved. This chapter will begin by sharing some of the places that matter most to the women I walked with.

## 4.2 Favourite places

As we walked together, women shared stories about their favourite places. Their reasons for loving somewhere were often personal significance, being linked to what Cheryl called: “lovely moments.” These could be connected to childhood and family memories, meeting friends or lovers, a job that was important or a special event. Specific pubs, clubs and entertainment venues were frequently celebrated in connection to this. Local parks were mentioned as a place of leisure and everyday pleasure. Occasionally, a place was loved for a small detail that acted as a totem. Women felt like they noticed and appreciated something easily overlooked and this was a secret which helped build a relationship between them and the city. No one called this psychogeographic but it demonstrates an attentiveness to the environment. Examples of this included Rennie who showed me a sign on a derelict building that made her smile and Veronica who enjoyed intricate wrought iron features on a gate she regularly walked past. These details were symbolic of a deeper attachment and acted as a focal point to anchor their feelings.

Many women had favourite places which had a wider historical significance, appreciating a sense of connection to the past and their local community. These included statues, old mills and the Ancoats Dispensary which will be focused on later. There was a great deal of affection for civic buildings, especially libraries because they have what is perceived as an important social function. Very few women took me into buildings but Maddy wanted to show me round the Central Library. Manchester Central Library opened in 1934 and was refurbished 2014. It is an imposing domed circular building with a columned portico entrance. It had always been important to her, and she talked at length at how she relied on the studious atmosphere and free access to books. She was the first person from her family to enter Higher Education and felt very out of place coming from a working-class background. The splendour of the Library felt very luxurious and inspiring to her and made her feel she was worth something as she could study there and make herself comfortable:

I love the library and I love the way they've done it up, libraries are great levellers ... shall we have a look at The Great Hall? It's so lovely they've not done much to that actually ... this might seem such a minor thing but it was such an important thing for me at the time <as a student> when you sat at a desk each place had a little light that you could switch on and it just felt so luxurious you know, that you kind of knew what you were doing was valued and supported ... there was a little bit of luxury.



*Plate Three: Central Library*

The refurbishment has kept the impressive reading room and several other women talked about their love of the library. However, they also felt ambivalent about some of the changes the refurbishment brought, feeling there was much less of an emphasis on books. There is a new cafe, exhibition space and film archive with public viewing pods, and these were cautiously welcomed as an opening up and expansion of the space. Fears were voiced that it was part of a creeping commercialisation and loss of public services, women asserted the importance of libraries as democratic spaces. I share some of their concerns as a regular library visitor. I have noted with dismay the contrast between the G4S security guards I've spotted roaming and the obviously over-stretched librarians who provide a pastoral service as well as professional advice. The Library is a proxy for wider issues around the state and the continued importance of public services and civic architecture. Eleanor arrived from Canada three months ago and loves the area around Albert Square, The Town

Hall and Central Library. She articulates a sense of wonder mediated through media, history and the imagination of her young daughter:

The buildings are very beautiful there ... it's just the lights and it feels very European ... (her daughter is a) five-year-old and she said it's just like *Mary Poppins* <laughs> so it spoke to something in her ... it is not our heritage but we grew up in the city, my partner and I, in a time that was dominated by British values and those were the correct values and as problematic and as colonialist as that is we still have a sense of affection for that. Our friends embody those values as well ... So, there's something very nostalgic to being here in that space, it represents and probably in a very bittersweet way, (what it) would have been like in the time of our childhood and you could really see that in the sighs of the five-year-old saying (it's) just like *Mary Poppins* ... I don't why she was sighing, I don't know what she saw that reminded her of the movie



*Plate Four: Manchester Town Hall*

Eleanor's story touches on the way that architecture embodies wider values. Manchester Town Hall is Neo-Gothic and designed partly to demonstrate the city's wealth and success. The grandeur is symbolic and ostentatious and dominates the space around it, asserting the identity of Manchester as a strong, prosperous city. The role of the council has changed and social welfare has disintegrated but the symbolic role of these buildings still has resonance.



The women wanted to feel there were buildings that belonged to them collectively, promoting a sense of civic pride and demonstrating a caring municipalism. However, despite their popularity amongst women I spoke to, somewhere else was overwhelmingly chosen as the most preferred place in Manchester. That was the Northern Quarter, the Bohemian district associated with independent shops, entertainment and creativity.

### 4.3 The Northern Quarter



*Plate Five: Stephenson Square, Northern Quarter*

The area is dominated by large red brick buildings; formally cotton warehouses, they have now been renovated and transformed into cafes, bars, shops, offices, galleries and music venues. In the mid 1990s it began to be referred to as The Northern Quarter and became associated with the creative industries, alternative culture and nightlife. It's economic importance and cultural distinctiveness has been recognised by Manchester City Council policy:

The Northern Quarter (N4) is strategically placed between the main Manchester retail and commercial core, Piccadilly Gateway, Ancoats and Shudehill. It represents a key piece in the city centre jigsaw, an area different in character and function to any other part of the city centre and of great strategic importance to Manchester as a city of distinctive quarters (MCC 2003).

Intriguingly, when Maisie told me why she loved the area she invoked a relational sense of place, but the place she chose to compare it with was an imaginary one:

I just really like the Northern Quarter because it reminds me of New York and I heard that the chap who designed downtown New York he practised it here so, the blocks and how it's on a grid, well it is actually a bit similar to New York so, in my mind, it's like I work in New York, but I don't really.

The area is frequently used as a film location and several other women mentioned this. The many back streets and alleyways are very atmospheric and many original architectural features remain. There are remnants of posters, props and mock shop fronts constructed during filming which mingle with former use and current signage, combining to produce a street collage where historical, present and fictional worlds all combine. The result is a strikingly affective assemblage where it is impossible to determine, without prior knowledge, which elements are fictional. The phantasmagorical blend adds to the appeal for Maisie. Laughing as we went, she took me past a combination of favourite cafes and bars and places she used to work, whilst trying to articulate the charm of the area:

Yes, I just like all the little streets around here, there's not too many dead ends you can get around really easily ... I guess the Northern Quarter really is one of my favourite places and I love walking around here, it has got a bit up its own arse recently <laughs> (but) it sort of takes the piss out of itself as well I think it's quite aware so that's good and everyone kind of worries about it changing things and I'm not that worried because I think it keeps itself in check ... I kind of prefer the little back streets

One particular shop, a large fabric and haberdashery shop called Abakhan, was referred to several times for its longevity, value for money and uniqueness. It was beloved by women regardless of whether they actually used it for shopping or not, and it personifies many of the wider debates about authenticity. It is perceived as harking back to a time when "Cottonopolis" was full of textile merchants, and also to a streetscape full of independent traders. However, the building Abakhan is housed in retains few original architectural features. It also has a not-so-secret identity which none of the women I spoke to realised. Abakhan is actually based in Wales, where it began as a rug

weaving company in the 1940s. It now has nine branches across England and Wales and a subsidiary company operating across Eastern Europe. Its modern facade in Manchester makes no claims to local heritage but it is perceived as a valued, and authentic, place to shop. These contradictions will recur in different forms in later chapters.



*Plate Six: Abakhan, Oldham Street, Northern Quarter*

Many women talked about the “atmosphere” and architectural details such as ornate facias and street art in the neighbourhood. Since the Northern Quarter became identified with the creative industries and alternative culture those qualities have been developed, promoted and reified by a number of initiatives. These include embedding Lem Sissay poems in the pavement and installing sculptures ranging in scale from small ceramic birds on buildings to a giant metal broom on Thomas Street. The removal of the Tib Street Horn – a giant metal sculpture wrapped around the remnants of a hat factory – caused widespread dismay and demonstrated the public appetite for these works. Street art also proliferates in this area, much of it officially sanctioned and celebrated. The aesthetic quality of graffiti is high, with the walls forming an impressive gallery of kaleidoscopic styles. This ranges in scale from tagging, spraying and stickering, to large scale public art projects. One of the most beloved of these is the Outhouse Project in Stevenson Square, where a derelict public toilet has been given a green roof and every three months hosts

a different graffiti artist. Graffiti has been transformed since the days of Situationist slogans and the commodification of street art is something of a cliché. However, many of the works are breath-taking. Penny felt street art was the key to the allure of the area and she stopped several times to examine new works:

The mosaics along there (Afflecks) by Kennedy are just incredible ... this (The Outhouse) changes quite regularly and I just love the way the artwork brings it to life ... they add things all the time so nothing stays the same, I like that.

The contradictions of Northern Quarter will be returned to in later chapters but the final word on it here goes to Jack, as we entered the main through road of the district she exclaimed gleefully that:



*Plate Seven: Oldham Street, Northern Quarter*

We are on Oldham Street and so Oldham Street to me is one of the classic roads of the world! Up there with The Castro (San Francisco), The K Road (Karangahape Road) in Auckland yeah, it's just really one of those classic streets ... I used to visit all the time before I moved here and it was always sort of seedy but exciting with Afflecks and sex shops and hairdressers. It's getting a bit more hipsterish now so the edge is gone ... but also there are (still) needle exchanges. I used to work in the needle exchange up here and there's quite a few drug and alcohol services on the street which of course bring a certain type of people so there was always a bit of, I don't know. I think it's like

Oxford Road, and to get so much on the one street is incredible.  
Tattoo shops, fish and chip shops, it's got everything.

There is a distinctly independent, quirky aesthetic to The Northern Quarter and Jack's proclamation captures some of its charms. However, it is not to everyone's taste. The Northern Quarter claims authenticity based on a very particular and limited appeal to an ersatz Bohemian clientele, it is not a spontaneous or unselfconscious assemblage. In recent years economic incentives and marketing campaigns have attracted a critical mass of businesses which create the "alternative" atmosphere. One of the pioneering shops was Afflecks Palace which opened in 1981 with the aim of supporting small and creative market traders. In 2008 it was acquired by property developers Bruntwood, who decided to make it the only part of their portfolio where they purchased an ongoing business, recognising the importance and potential of the brand.

#### **4.4 The alternative to alternative**

I met Barbara in one of her favourite places, a chain café far removed from the artisanal brews of Turner Street, although actually just around the corner on Market Street. She told me one of her favourite places in the city centre was:

Nero, this particular one, this is somewhere I've spent quite a bit of my time because I find it very friendly café, and I love all the foreigners that come in here, I really enjoy it.

Barbara was very specific. She didn't like every branch of the chain but the particular location she chose stood out from the rest for her because of the staff and the diversity of the customers. She also found it easily accessible as it is modern and many of the buildings in the Northern Quarter have steep steps and narrow entrances. This is a salutary reminder that a psychogeographer can find anywhere interesting, and indeed it is often seemingly banal locations that can reveal the best stories. Auge (1995) called transient or ambivalent spaces that offer no sense of belonging "non-places", examples of which would be motorway service stations or hotel rooms. Kate challenges Auges definition by making perhaps the most idiosyncratic choice of favourite place, however her reasons for choosing Shudehill Bus Station illuminate bigger issues of class, inclusion and performance in the city:

I like Shudehill it's a slightly odd liminal space ... Bus stations are so different from train stations, you've got the same thing of people travelling long distances, maybe connecting and changing buses or waiting for a bus to travel or waiting excitedly to meet someone, the air has that same kind of heady mixture of confusion of different emotional stuff going on you know and people's different emotional projections and concerns, they are all floating around, but they are poor ... You know you've got your Costa coffee or whatever at the station but at Shudehill Interchange it's a cheap cup of tea with the teabag barely dunked in the cup. You know that kind of thing. I like it because it's got all of that right on the edge of the city centre ... that's the other thing about bus stations, they're always tucked away around the back so this is the un-showy behind-the-scenes backstage area of this bit of the entertainment zone of the city centre.

Kate suggests that places perform as much as people do and the bus station is somehow more honest in its shabby functionality. It also provides a more democratic semi-public space than a railway station because more people can afford to travel. It offers Kate a place to watch diverse people so actually for her, what she calls "the backstage area" of the city is a stage to enjoy vicarious action. Another woman also took me to Shudehill Bus Station, although ironically, we struggled to find our way out! When we found ourselves on the junction of Thomas Street and Shudehill Rhiannon decided impulsively to cross over and cut through the bus station to admire the old co-operative society buildings on the other side. We discovered many of the doors only open when a bus is due and the footpaths were an absurd labyrinth. When we finally reached the other side, she was keen to talk about the importance of open streetscapes and wayfinding more generally.

Rhiannon is an architect and articulated a feeling many of the women expressed. She felt many new buildings do not engage with the street and thus are forbidding and alienating. Her phrase "generosity" of space encapsulates something important to many participants. Ian Simpson, whom she references here, has designed many key buildings in contemporary Manchester such as The Beetham Tower, Urbis, and One Piccadilly:

I think the biggest thing for me in Manchester is, with say an Ian Simpson building, they're quite interesting as a sculptural thing, but as a piece of sculpture to live around unless you are going into it, it feels very unforgiving. There's no generosity at an

external level. I feel that a lot. It's very hard edged in Manchester ... That's the one thing that I don't like about Manchester, it's that sort of feeling of, there's not very many spaces where you feel that they are a bit softer and you can relax a bit in them

Rhiannon compared these kinds of buildings with another we had seen earlier on our walk:

Whereas the craft centre where we just went, that little square <outside> it's not been overdesigned and it's got that sort of open feeling, you can breathe, but a lot of spaces like here (Shudehill) you feel a bit on edge.



*Plate Eight: Oak Street, outside the Craft Centre*

For Rhiannon it was the crowds and a “vaguely claustrophobic” feeling being hemmed in, that set her on edge. She didn't like being funnelled through the complicated pedestrian footpath through the bus station and felt it constrained her freedom. The square Rhiannon refers to is a paved square, separating shops from a small housing estate. It has some small flowerbeds and the craft centre cafe has a few outside tables and chairs but mostly it is used as a thoroughfare. Rhiannon felt the wider pavement was a welcome respite and made the area more inviting. It also made it a more practical direction to travel down when she had her young son with her.

## 4.5 Accessibility and infrastructure

For many women where, and how, they walk through Manchester is dictated, at least partially, by pragmatic considerations. Participants wanted, and needed, improved facilities and a cleaner, greener environment. Kate has a chronic illness which means she has mobility issues and fluctuating energy levels. She mentioned several times how more public benches would improve her experiences of the city. She was shocked at the lack of facilities in the newly refurbished Victoria Station and had recently complained to Network Rail:

There's nowhere to sit except outside or inside cafes, and you really have to pay for coffee to do that ... (there's) nowhere to be sheltered and warm which in winter is a really bad thing. That station is open, it's got a roof but no doors basically. Enough walls to hold up the roof but it's open and it's a really cold place, it's really, really unfriendly to people who need to sit down, which is most people really.

Kate's last comment hints at an important point. A city that integrated access for disabled people would actually benefit everyone. The physical condition of the pavements was a big concern to many people, whether they identify as disabled or not. Christine and Janet both mentioned tripping over broken paving slabs. Nicki is visually impaired and likened the streets to an "obstacle course". Heidi has become an advocate for access issues as a result of her work at a University. Her anger echoed that of disabled people:

Manchester streets are so <sigh> they are just really badly paved, badly done ... crossing these crossings, the place that we are about to cross, (on Portland Street) I had to stop a blind man from walking into the road, because these signals don't beep because there are so many altogether it would be too confusing. So, he was listening for a beep or people crossing and two people just went out into the road and managed to get across and he was about to follow them...so yeah it was quite terrifying really ... the thing is, it just must be so difficult for disabled people to get around particularly when they are doing a lot of work. (During) roadworks, they don't put up adequate ramps for people or they are just an afterthought, with the tiniest thinnest ramp, and then when they've got a bit of the road cordoned off so that pedestrians can walk on it, that is often not wide enough for a disabled person ... I think a lot of the time they don't really think



about it enough, how people are actually going to use and navigate their way around Manchester.

Heidi has identified a key problem: despite years of campaigning and legislation declaring disability discrimination illegal, access is not adequately considered in the design of cities. The Social Model of Disability makes explicit how the environment disables individuals, for example impairment may restrict movement so a wheelchair is necessary but a lack of ramps or lifts will prevent access to a building with stairs. MDPAG (Manchester Disabled People's Access Group) and GMCDP (Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People) are amongst the organisations in Manchester to highlight how the built environment impacts on the human rights of disabled people but this is of course more than a local problem.

Physical (dis)ability is one influence on an individual's relationship with the environment, but there are other intersectional aspects as well. Rhiannon has a baby and this has made her appreciate access issues in a different way. Stairs are a struggle with a buggy or pram and she finds ramps often inadequate and badly designed. There is also a sense that the environment takes away her choice and does not respect her identity:

I just like to go the most direct route possible and I like I said I hate guardrails so being restricted in the route that you can take, I like ultimate freedom, I like to sort of roam untamed so having to go up a really long ramp in a particular way I find really, really frustrating and I will occasionally battle with the steps to get around it.

The dignity of choice is taken away from Rhiannon because of limitations in the physical environment that is not built for prams. Although her experience may sound trivial, it is symptomatic of the way seemingly minor design choices can have a major impact on individuals. One particular infrastructure issue was mentioned many times by all kinds of women. Mia sums it up:

Toilets are a bit of an issue in a lot of city centres, well a lot of towns as well I think, access, access to toilets without having to go and buy food or drink somewhere, so there's like here (The Royal Exchange Theatre) and the art gallery where you know you can get clean toilets ... I know it's an issue, partly because, it's not just about personal use but ... obviously for older people toilets are quite a big thing and public toilets are being closed

down. I mean there used to be some really dodgy public toilets in Manchester ... they've (all) gone.

Martha is a lecturer and made the issue explicitly political and gender related.

Like Davis said in *Cities of Quartz*, in an essay I teach every year, public toilets are the Eastern front of cities and we have fewer and fewer and (it) is gross to see guys pissing all over the place but sometimes you have to go. If I were a man and it were a little more physically easy I'd probably do it sometimes too you know. It's just sometimes harder for me as a female to do that but sometimes I do wish I was a man, I would be going over in that corner.

Access to toilets is an often-overlooked factor in access issues. The fear of not being able to find a toilet may inhibit people visiting the city centre. Although toilets may be of particular significance to mothers, older people and people with certain disabilities they are clearly used by all demographics. The *Around The Toilet Project* (2016) has highlighted the problem graphically. In Manchester there is just one free public toilet left, on Lloyd Street near the Town Hall. The others were closed despite protests. A "City Loos" scheme to encourage businesses to make their toilets open to everyone was a failure with only eight places signing up. They were mostly museums, the art gallery, library and shopping centres, that have long been places many will simply pop in to use the toilets anyway. The failure of City Loos illustrates at a micro level the impact of privatisation and Dunnico (2014) discusses how spending a penny became a money spinner. A Freedom of Information request by campaigners showed Network Rail collected £435,651.30 in a year from people paying the 30p charge at Piccadilly Station (MEN 2015). Meanwhile urinating in public can result in an £80 fine in Manchester and the official police advice given to people struggling to find somewhere to go is to "tie a knot in it" (Dunnico 2014). This instruction again highlights how the universal male figure continues to dominate discourse as it appears to assume a penis to tie a knot in.

#### **4.6 Variable environmental factors**

Just as bodies have changing needs, environmental factors are in flux too. In the popular imagination Manchester is the rainy city, and probably the wettest

place in the country. In actuality, it is ranked fifteenth and Salford is sixteenth (Met Office / Freeflush 2017). The perception is possibly based on a number of things; the damp atmosphere did help the cotton industry and then later the image of an industrial town became synonymous with dark skies. The clouds were often grey from smoke, rather than rain, but the reputation for rain persists. Whilst this is not statistically true, the weather does have an impact on the mood of people and place – something not just true in Manchester of course. These interviews took place during the late Spring and Summer and this meant many felt this was the best time to be in Manchester. Pippa said: “all the redbrick, I think that can look really, really nice when there is some sun which hardly ever happens.” Eve told me:

I'm glad it's not raining today ... the rain definitely effects where I go around Manchester, most of the pavements are like ... you get water up your legs don't you if you stand on all the wonky (slabs).

The period these interviews took place also coincided with work on the second city tram crossing. This caused major upheaval, and changed the route of many walkers. For example, Janet said:

at the moment (it's) such a mess because of the work they are doing on the trams. It is quite difficult to get around...particularly as I say sometimes taking children and when you suddenly find you've got to walk another 300 yards to find somewhere to find a stop.

Nicki spoke about this being a particular concern for her as she prefers to use familiar routes if she is walking on her own. She criticised the lack of information about road closures and wished for a website that was regularly, and accurately, updated. There are several underlying issues that emerge from the data collected on (un)liked places. There is a pervasive sense that infrastructure is consistently ignored and undervalued. Poor management, cost cutting and a lack of care for people are the implications. For example, Nicki didn't think anyone was deliberately trying to restrict her access but that there was an institutional level lack of care for the impact of work upon people.

#### 4.7 **Bad character**

Logically, the places most women hated were the opposite of those they loved. Generally, places were disliked because of dense crowds, poor design and poor disabled access. Despite specific pubs featuring highly in people's favourite places they were also often disliked or avoided if they were associated with a crowd that was considered troublesome to the woman. This generally meant crowds of drunk men spilling out onto the street and representing a loud and visible threat. This illustrates the conflict the carnivalesque can provoke, as celebrations and lack of inhibition is not universal. Lack of character was also a common complaint and Spinningfields was singled out for particular vitriol, according to Nora because "it is clinical, corporate, I don't like it." Astrid elaborated on this:

Spinningfields I hate (because) I don't like places that feel like you're not really meant to be there ... Like places that are really, really clean and everywhere is a chain. It feels a bit unnerving and you feel like you're not welcome.

Astrid is a smartly dressed administrator for a well-respected charity and is probably not someone Spinningfields would deem undesirable. However, she perceives she is not welcome because the architecture feels unpleasant to her.



*Plate Nine: Spinningfields (from Deansgate with John Rylands Library)*

Spinningfields is not viewed as authentic or characterful because its construction is remembered by many of the women I interviewed. It was self-consciously designed to be a financial and business district and although it includes some public space, it is clearly inscribed. There are visible security guards and there have been many stories in the press of photographers and skateboarders being apprehended. The Avenue, the central pedestrian through road, was originally populated by high-end shops but their lack of commercial viability means they have been replaced by a range of restaurants and bars. There is a cluster of stereotypically decorated ethnic styled chain restaurants, for example bicycles and Buddha's signify Thai food. Around the corner, near the Court is the bizarre and incongruous sight of a Kentish Oast House. It is a replica used as a bar. It serves as an excellent example of spectacular architecture. Although it did not appeal to any of the women I spoke to, it is a very popular bar, especially during the Summer. A series of events such as pop-up cinemas, artisan markets and ice-rinks have worked to create a sense of place for Spinningfields. These markers of identity are clichés of international competition and place making; Spinningfields is trying to make itself distinctive by replicating what is perceived as successful.



*Plate 10: Home Arts Centre, First Street Development*

Several women extended similar criticisms to the area around First Street. Like Spinningfields, this is privately owned, pseudo public space although this is

not obvious on entering the area. It includes Home, the new arts centre which opened in 2015 on Tony Wilson Place, named after the Factory Records founder and fan of the Situationist International. They felt this area was bland and a wasted opportunity. Maisie sums this view up:

I guess I am quite disappointed, that's the word isn't it? I'm disappointed with the area around Home and First Street and all those buildings. I think they are really boring, they could be anywhere, they, they don't go oomph, that oomph that Manchester has because like with walking in the Northern Quarter it's got this heritage and it feels like it's got weight. First Street just feels like it is light and it's not gonna be there forever and it's not to anyone's taste. It's just so bland that it would offend no one, but no one is going to love it, no one loves it either so that annoys me. I think you've got to be bolshie.

The “oomph” Maisie talks about may actually be impossible to create from scratch because it is intrinsically linked to history and attachment. By definition, these cannot be conjured from scratch, however developers may often try to evoke elements of the past (see for example Holgersson 2017 and her interviews with developers of docklands in Gothenburg). The streets around Home are all named after celebrated local writers and artists, not just Tony Wilson but Jack Rosenthal, Annie Horniman and others. Rosenthal wrote hundreds of episodes of *Coronation Street*, the soap opera that depicts a close-knit community in the fictional Weatherfield, identified as somewhere on the outskirts of Manchester. The red brick terraces and cobbles feel very far removed from the shiny glass and pale flags of First Street. It would be interesting to know what kind of architecture women would prefer to see here; Maisie is in her thirties and has no memories of the terraces, Victoria is older and does recall them. She shares her disdain for the lack of atmosphere. Kathleen extended this to the wider area because:

people are just so cut off from each other and from themselves and they are just staring and consuming and I hate it, I hate it ... the worst places are the areas that have got lots of shops ... they just put my hackles up and when I see what they do to people and how they make people miserable because it's like well there is all this stuff but I can't afford any of so I'll just look at it or I will buy it but I don't really need it.

The spaces of consumption, and the alienation that they can induce, are congruent with accounts of spectacular society. However, the majority of women did occasionally use these areas out of convenience or necessity and many also spoke about the pleasure they found in them sometimes. The women I worked with were, broadly speaking, middle class, although I did not directly ask them. The majority were in employment and enjoyed much about the cosmopolitan city. Many talked about the importance of aesthetics and had an interest in architecture even if they had no technical or professional interest or knowledge. One building caused particular indignation because of the way they felt it dominated the surrounding area, and that was The Beetham Tower.

#### 4.8 The Beetham Tower



*Plate 11: Beetham Tower from Liverpool Road*

The Beetham Tower is a 47-storey mixed use skyscraper completed in 2006, and currently the tallest building in Manchester city centre. Architectural critic Owen Hatherley says it shows “a mediocre architect at the very top of his game.” (2010: 137). The tower was heavily criticised by women not for its architecture per se but for its impact on the skyline, and Linda was particularly irate:

that eyesore, the carbuncle on the face of the city, oh you can see it for miles, it's just a pimple it is a pimple that stands out, it's

like a kid sticking a big long stick into a mud pie and going this is mine.

The tower was disliked by many for similar reasons; it was seen as bullying and dominating space. It was considered undemocratic and ugly. Several noted that the architect, Ian Simpson (who Rhiannon considered to be a creator of ungenerous space) had boasted about living on the top floor. The Beetham Tower functioned as a conduit for wider concerns about inequality and public space, which we will return to in chapter six. The tower emits a loud humming noise when it is windy and it can be heard across a large area so it was also a focus for criticisms of architecture and planning policies that were seen as incompetent and harmful. However, it was its impact on the skyline that most women hated the tower for. Other buildings were disliked for similar reasons by individual women who found their favourite panoramas blocked, such as Janet and Barbara who rallied against the hotel which spoilt the view of the cathedral.

#### **4.9 Aesthetic concerns**

Aesthetics mattered to many women and a general dirtiness was noted, with litter being a pet hate of many including Mia:

Even the nicer bits of the city, because of the cut backs in cleaning and everything, street cleaning, they are looking, I mean it's a grimy city anyway but they are looking pretty grim.

This litter was distinct from the kind of rough edges which were equated with character, which will be discussed in chapters six and seven. Trash was linked to a lack of pride and erosion of community. Much contemporary architecture was dismissed as being intrinsically alienating because they were small, plain and had no communal spirit. Zoe and Jo were particularly appalled by the design of new apartments throughout the duration of their joint walk and Jo despaired on seeing another "shit" development on Rochdale Road:

How could you, could you thrive, could you live a happy life, could you be like flourishing, could you have spirituality like that, could you be human with that view you know?

Jo explicitly links environmental conditions with mental health and emotion, inadvertently evoking the psychogeographic spirit. Finally, Amanda is an



architecture student vexed by a place she would love a chance to improve. She has drawn up plans and written to the Council but hasn't heard back, she didn't really expect to do so but wanted to try because:

Do you know the bridge over the river (Medlock) which is beautiful, it is really white, it goes down to the Lowry? That bridge is so hidden and it annoys me that this is a place that I could make really good, but the Inland Revenue has the building at this the Manchester end of the bridge ... They've refused to give up the corner of their car park, which should be about a third of a car park, so that the bridge has a great big promenade from the square with no name and so you can't really see the bridge very well, you have to go down this little tiny alleyway between the fence and the car park to get there. It just annoys me.

Her skills mean Amanda can think of a tangible way to improve the fabric of the city and provide the kind of generous and inclusive space many others have wished for. I will now focus on a place which evoked the strongest feelings, Piccadilly Gardens.

#### **4.10 Piccadilly Gardens**



*Plate 12: Piccadilly Gardens, One Piccadilly to the left*

My decision to start interviews in Piccadilly Gardens is explained in Chapter three. This is a central city space which was the original site of Manchester Royal Infirmary and Lunatic Asylum. After they closed in 1910 it became sunken gardens and between 2001-3 it was transformed into its current

iteration. It is next to a major transport interchange. Participant's opinions of Piccadilly Gardens were overwhelmingly negative. Patti was particularly scathing and detailed but her diatribe speaks for many:

Patti: "I hate it here, I avoid it if I possibly can, I don't cut through, if I can go a different way I don't come through here"

Morag: <"why's that?>"

Patti: "Um ... I don't know I just find it depressing, it feels ill-considered and a bit desperate. I don't know. I feel embarrassed by it as somebody who has lived in Manchester my whole life. I'm embarrassed that this is what people come in and see and it's just chain stores ... It feels like we are in some sort of shit hole town in the middle of nowhere that nobody cares about and that is just here to process people and get people to work and get people in the shops ... It just feels it feels unpleasant and disrespectful and grim and old-fashioned and that number one (building) is horrendous. I hate the wall. I know some people like it, they think that it's Brutalist but I think that gives Brutalism a bad name. That isn't what Brutalism is about, that's just laziness and ... I find the atmosphere intimidating. I don't like being here as a woman on my own it's, because of the way it's been put together, it is now policed severely as well which adds an extra layer of dystopian horror to the place. The bus station is appalling, grim, miserable ... I hate it, I hate absolutely everything about it. This is what 21st-century Conservative Neoliberal Britain is about and it's just ironic that we have Victoria covered in pigeon shit reigning over it.

Patti has highlighted the majority of problems women discussed in relation to the Gardens. It's interesting that she was not the only person to stress she wasn't anti modernism or Brutalism but that this was a bad example in the wrong place. There have been some very high-profile campaigns in the local press and on social media to lose what is referred to in a derogatory way as "the Berlin Wall" (Pidd, 2014) The majority of these campaigns seem to want to return the gardens to their previous layout, such as Nora who told me:

like a lot of people of Manchester (I'm) very disappointed by what we've lost in Piccadilly gardens really, I think it's become quite soulless, a quite intimidating place it feels quite risky at night ... for me is more architecture about what is lost in the area I see all the wonderful pictures from the past and I think why did they do this you know? ... I'd just like it to be green, I'd like it to have some

historical connection to the past to acknowledge things like I think that was the place where the first Manchester hospital was stuff like that yet

Nora values greenery and a sense of connection to the past. However, most participants were sceptical and un-nostalgic about its earlier incarnations. Several criticised the sunken gardens for being dark and intimidating, and Daisy said:

I've got used to it being like this, obviously I remembered it as a garden which was really shabby and nothing like the pictures everyone shares on Facebook about how beautiful it used to look in Victorian times! <Laughs>



*Plate 13: Victoria Statue, Piccadilly Gardens and One Piccadilly*

Daisy was very angry about the loss in size of the Gardens, the 1992 renovation was in part funded by the sale of land to build an office block on the edge:

I've never got over my anger about that, I'm pointing at One Piccadilly, that stupid building that they put there because it's just so typical of Manchester Council to reduce public space like that wherever possible - the biggest open space that there was, they just had to chop the corner off and it really pisses me off.

This is another example of de facto privatisation of public space. Since conducting my interviews, Manchester City Council have announced that the wall is being knocked down and the gardens renovated. The details remain

vague at present but a new pavilion has been promised along with new cafes. The computer-generated images released to the press appear to show mature trees and giant advertising hoardings. It seems probable the unrestricted space will be further reduced. Several people who disliked Piccadilly Gardens still had fond personal memories of it. For many it had been, and still was an important meeting place. It was also appreciated for the diversity of people who used it, often despite the design faults. This was noted by many women, including Daisy who works with refugees and says:

it's become a hub for recently arrived migrants and so that gives it a sort of energy and vibrancy that you don't really get of the places in other public spaces in Manchester so I'm always quite curious to find out what's going on here when I come through ... particularly that Cafe Nero it's like an Arabic open-air café, I think it's nice that you can just imagine it could be anywhere in the world.

To add another more positive note, Kate felt that although she disliked the space, people appropriated it and transformed it into somewhere positive. She was also one of many people who actually like the architecture of the wall in theory but not in practice:

I am actually a bit of a fan of Brutalism, it is a newly discovered love which I only really discovered about year and a half ago, so I like the wall for that reason but I think it's misplaced. It is in the wrong place and what it does is it cuts off the gardens from quite a large chunk of the space around ... the gardens could be a much bigger open space ... I like that people use it despite how it is designed. Very few areas that people are sitting on are actually designed in, and I quite like the natural subversiveness of people to go well I'm going to sit down anyway it doesn't matter if they put a bench here, I like the way that people just use it as they want to use it despite the fact that it wasn't designed for use in that way. I think that I like that and that's what gives the space its spirit really.

The fountains were also rated very highly because of the mischief they facilitated and many people were really sad they have been broken for a long time. (They were repaired in 2017 as the photograph shows). Cheryl remembers:

it was like the seaside because all the people who were coming into town to do their shopping and stuff used to stop, get the kids

down, then let them run onto the fountains and it was like the beach really, it was like the beach of Blackpool.



*Plate 14: Piccadilly Gardens, Fountains*

The fountains were praised by many people as being fun and entertaining. In particular Cheryl also remembered times when public art events illuminated Piccadilly Gardens, including a dance piece that was:

just like euphoric, beautiful, the very loud soundtrack of this very sensual dance piece in the water surrounded by kids going hysterical from the mood of it. it was just beautiful.

Many people also recognised the design challenges of having a public space adjoining a bus station, but the consensus was the design was generally very poor. The dissatisfaction concerns not just the actual physical design but the lack of consideration for people – there is a sense the space is busy despite of itself and because of its location, rather than any intrinsic qualities in Piccadilly Gardens. It must be hoped that the next redesign does consider actual usage and takes into account access needs. Bates’ (2017) discussion of General Gordon Square in Woolwich and how “desire lines” and needs were taken into account when it was regenerated could be an instructive case study to learn from.

Only one person gave unqualified praise. Jack is a nurse whose love of Piccadilly Gardens mixes personal and communal pride, and again focuses on people and the benefits cosmopolitanism brings:

I'm a huge fan of Piccadilly Gardens, they make me very happy. It's a really wonderful meeting place for the city. When I first lived in Manchester about 10 years ago now I lived in the city centre and this was my only piece of green so I would spend a lot of time here and I love the way that even now you can just see groups of people ... People just hanging out for free and there's not many places you can do that, so people do ... they come to town sometimes even with their own butties and they spent the whole day here. It's sad that the fountains don't work anymore but when they did the kids would just love them ... over there is the Victoria statue which is in Manchester it's the equivalent of Hyde Park Corner Speakers Corner in London ... And the tree there in the middle that's a peace tree for something. Anyway, I just love the place. Yes, I spent hours here and they have music there's always live music, often the North African drummers anyway is a great place ... now we are in Ramadan come the end of the day at sunset this bench here gets covered with young people breaking the fast together young Muslim people come and they all have like fancy maybe the students whatever but they will, break the fast together.

The public and everyday cosmopolitan character of The Gardens is what Jack admires and significantly, she doesn't mention liking any particular feature apart from the statues. The function of the Queen Victoria statue as a rallying point for political demonstrations was valued by many, but there was a sense it was a benefit despite, not because of the rest of the gardens. A much more typical appraisal came from Linda. The smell she mentions is of cannabis, which is often smoked in the area and many people shared her complaint about this:

Well it's a mess, it's an unmitigated disaster ... it doesn't seem to know what is whether it is an open square or is it a garden? Is it a thoroughfare what is it? ... If I could wave a magic wand I would love it to be a big open green space with trees and places to sit with flowers nice open walkways with none of the gangs hang around here making it smell bad and unsafe to walk through after dark and I would like the fountain to be working again because that is awesome in summer when it's hot ... it could be so lovely, it could be a lovely green space with lots of trees and flowers it could have a working fountain, that is awesome in hot weather. They could expand the children's play area they've put

in it, that's a lovely little and they could make it really nice for families.

The muddled function of Piccadilly Gardens was a problem for many others as well. The name was seen as very misleading and something of a cruel trick. Although green space was a popular idea for improving it, many women recognised that this may not be practical. More important was the idea that the space remained public and open and several proposed what they felt was a more appropriate space, such as Rennie who said:

Gardens is not quite the right word for them anymore is it round here? ... (that) office block looms doesn't it, looms over everything and offers nothing. It's an eyesore. It just doesn't work, does it? I don't think grass works in Manchester very well because it just inevitably gets clogged with silt and it just gets muddied and we just don't do grass very well in Manchester so I would go for a European Plaza Square type thing.

The idea of a plaza, perhaps with a play area and some trees or greenery was very popular. Apart from Jack, everyone wanted some change and the hatred most women felt was palpable. Visit Manchester are adamant on their website that "a trip to Manchester would not be complete without a visit to Piccadilly Gardens!" demonstrating the gap between the mediated image and lived experience of space. It is unlikely many of the women I walked with would include Piccadilly Gardens on a tour for their loved ones and the concluding comments from Jo summarise why:

It is not a fucking garden (laughs) it's a fucking hellhole. I mean I suppose they're trying to make it nicer by putting up this Berlin wall type thing ... I suppose it is a real planning challenge isn't it because it is such a transit place, you've got the trams, the buses, people passing through but also the necessity of making a place that it's just pleasant to be in, to chill out in. How is it possible to relax in Manchester generally but more specifically at a transport interchange? But yeah, they need to solve that problem better than they have ... When I first came to the city (I was visiting a friend and got the train) and he said you need to catch a bus from Piccadilly Gardens. It's not a garden and it is not in Piccadilly Station, you need to walk out of Piccadilly Station and go to this concrete wasteland.

#### **4.11 Green space and nature in the city**

The disappointment that Piccadilly Gardens was not actually a garden was palpable and spoke to something much larger. Almost every interviewee spontaneously mentioned the lack of green space in Manchester as one of the biggest problems with the city. They directly linked green space to their mental health, wellbeing and a happier life. Charlotte told me:

it is super interesting walking through intricate winding spaces if you have time to appreciate (the) city but as a place to live, as a place to be in for longer, I think you do need that openness. It is more calming.

The need for green space was identified as essential to the wellbeing of many other women like Kathleen “I always feel like greenery, greenness makes the hardness of the city bearable” and Cheryl “the ease of the city is great and that buzz and fluidity but actually as an anxious person I need that downtime I need green space.” Michelle thought her local park was an amazing resource for her family and her community, with many events held there. Layla wanted more “nowhere” space that was green and uncluttered and open for all sorts of people to use as they wish. This nowhere speaks again for a desire for an open and un-prescribed public space for anyone to enjoy. This is becoming scarcer in the city centre as development continues apace.

Several women felt a lunchtime walk, preferably somewhere green, was a vital coping mechanism for them. Marion often goes for a lunchtime stroll from her office to the marina at New Islington. This part of Ancoats is undergoing rapid change and she feels the natural landscaping is key to the areas success:





*Plate 15: New Islington Marina*

You feel welcome, it doesn't matter who you are, even though it is obviously (a) massively highly gentrified area you still feel as though it is a welcome green space for people that just want to enjoy it ... there are quite a few families of geese that just are here all year round and you always meet the goslings you know, so you are going to work and you have to stop because they are crossing, traipsing across you and it's just a little, for city dwellers, there are those little moments of joy in the city ... I'm glad that we have it anyway ... it is a little bit of quiet paradise.

Those moments of peace and joyful encounters are revealed to wanderers through exploration and several women believed they made this area one of the most desirable to live in. The development at Ancoats is new and unusual locally because it includes a Marina, and recent accolades contrast with the perception a few years ago that development had stalled and would never be finished. A walk around New Islington does reveal under developed plots and pockets that are still under construction as my conversation with Rennie discussed. The new apartments border Miles Platting and an area of intense deprivation. It is hoped the Marina and shared public space will help improve relationships between the two communities and provides an example of a planned environment which is relatively unusual here. This part of Manchester sprang up in the heat and light of the Industrial Revolution and Amelia was one of several people who unfavourably compared Manchester to London,

citing historical differences for uneven development. She really loves walking in the countryside and laments the lack of greenery in Manchester:

I just feel like there is a nice balance in London between green space and buildings and that you can be walking in a really vibrant busy street but then you come around the corner and then it's an open space, it has got some greenery and I really feel like that's missing in Manchester. I think that it's very much a victim of the of the way that <we> evolved with the industry ... I just get the sense that it was just such a place to do something, with all of this cotton or these mills, that nobody really gave any thought to actually what is the city <going to> be like to live in and I feel like there's still a lot of residue of that particularly centrally.

Amelia has intuitively identified one of the reasons for the relative lack of green space and parks in the city centre. Manchester's evolution was unplanned and an entrepreneurial free for all, with land at a premium and little free for leisure. In the city centre, the majority of now recreational spaces were linked to churches or graveyards such as All Saints Park, Parsonage Gardens and Angel Meadow. Later there were some philanthropic gifts, such as Sackville Gardens and Whitworth Park, Alexandra Park and Heaton Park were acquired by subscription or municipal benevolence. These tend to be outside the city centre. It is ironic that planning is criticised so heavily when it was a historical lack of planning that has led to the city's density and juxtaposition of architectural styles. However, most criticism is for current decisions which are perceived as putting profit above anything else. Nora also feels there has been a catastrophic planning failure in Manchester:

A lot of big cities have worked hard to keep big green spaces or green spaces are built into their designs. I don't think Manchester has done very well with that ... the idea of having these sort of Piazza type things with these sort of organised private spaces where people supposedly have their lunches and all the rest of it that doesn't cut it for me. Obviously, I'm well pissed off about Pomona, what's gone on with that. I just think Manchester's had a lack of foresight, I think it's lack of foresight rather than analysis ... given the historical significance of Manchester's canals I think it's quite, quite poor really. I really think that Pomona could have been a part of that part of having a really good vision and I think it's really sad that's not going to happen.

Pomona was a dock and later pleasure gardens. As a semi-abandoned edgeland for many years, it provided a de facto green space on the edge of

the city but has now become the site of new apartments. The waterway is owned by The Peel Group (formally Peel Holdings), who have frequently been criticised for their secrecy and their relationship with Manchester City Council (Dickenson 2016). Small and often accidental green spaces were sufficient to bring some joy. Kate was very fond of “a little patch of, well, grass and wildflowers, alongside the platform going towards Bury”. It’s the edgeland’s of Shudehill station and as she named the plants she explained why she liked it:

it’s managed to hold on and survive, although of course it hasn’t survived, it only exists because a building was bought down in order to drive through this thoroughfare ... I like to come and watch its progress through the year ... nature has claimed a bit of a corner that the developers didn’t get around to.

Veronica felt a similar attachment to the community allotments in The Northern Quarter, although she is not involved with them she passes by frequently:



*Plate 16: Community Allotment, Hilton Street*

you have got surrounding it all these cars and all this pollution but somebody is trying to create some green space, so I always come in here and there is usually nobody here ... I quite like it here, and someone’s put, it looks like an EU flag which I quite like, and last time I was here, I saw a couple, a courting couple came in here, so there is definitely a need for more parks in the city centre.

The small spaces are often incidental and accidental and may be classed as edgelands, the classic territory of psychogeographers. They may be out of

place, temporary or slightly ramshackle but they offer a glimpse of something beyond and bigger than the city, which I will return to in chapter seven.

#### **4.12 Movement through the city: women walking**

This chapter has thus far focused on feelings about the city, and I would now like to concentrate on how women engage with the environment on foot. As discussed in chapter three walking interviews were deployed in this study because they offer significant advantages in relation to the examination of experience of place, encounter and social history.

Of course, this is not the only, or first time, participants have walked through the city centre. Perhaps unsurprisingly as they had volunteered to participate, interviewees were generally keen and/or frequent pedestrians. Some expressed vividly the benefits of regular walking. Fiona is adamant she will always take a lunch hour and spends it away from her desk and on foot. Sometimes she is doing chores such as shopping or putting up posters, occasionally she is joined by friends, and she has often been surprised how far she can go in an hour:

I'm happiest when I'm walking ... I don't think I'd realise until I said it how much it means to me ... walking is the one thing where I think you don't have to be good at it (unlike yoga) ... it's free, it's practical, it gets you places, its enjoyable.

Daisy primarily associated recreational walking with the countryside but has recently discovered the relaxing benefits of walking and mindfulness in the city. She was experiencing high level of stress at work when a relative told her:

you have to slow down to allow thoughts to form sometimes and (she) suggested to me that I might want to stop running and start walking just to get a different sort of pace in my life.

Daisy then replaced her daily jog with a walk and has appreciated a "sense that you can walk slowly and get, become more kind of grounded generally, wherever you are" and she has now signed up for a mindfulness course which includes walking. Kathleen reiterates the meditative and relaxing aspect of walking, she was very stressed working as a teacher and said:

I know from walking my dog that I discover so many things that I wouldn't ever see and I just find it really enriching and therapeutic

... when you're walking you have to stop and notice something or something catches your eye.

Michelle was probably the most prolific and passionate walker in the study, and certainly the most vocal advocate. Her motivation for taking part in this research was because she credits walking with making a big improvement to her physical and mental health. It began for her with an impulsive decision, which then became a daily walking commute from her home in Trafford to the city centre:

It was the day of the 2013 (football) derby ... I came out of work and saw the state of the traffic, even the buses, nothing was moving, and I thought if I don't walk I'm not going to get home until 8 o'clock and I thought it's only on the road there, let's give it a try, I found that I actually really enjoyed it and very rarely do I get the bus now.

Michelle has honed her route so that it avoids long straight roads as she finds them boring and "you don't get any sense of accomplishment." It takes her forty minutes now, roughly the same as the bus on a good day – although sometimes the bus takes considerably longer. She enjoys the autonomy of walking to work, knowing if she is late, it is her fault for not leaving the house in time. She is undaunted by bad weather, although unsurprisingly prefers the journey when it isn't raining:

It's part of me now, it is, yeah. It was hard, I struggled in the early days especially in the bad weather just getting used to it ... I go straight from working full-time and I've got a pressurised job, that 40 minutes means that by the time I get home I've thought out everything that I need to have done from the day. I've cleared my mind so that when I get home from walking I can do my other job (as a mother).

Other women also enjoy their walk to work but they are generally shorter and more functional journeys, for example Christine:

I walk from Piccadilly station and I cut through the back of the northern quarter ... I have kind of developed a "get in, get out" kind of attitude I think

and Heidi:

yeah, I always walk the same route home. I think is probably the quickest but I'm not sure, it's just the easiest to me, because I've

just done it so much I'm almost on autopilot ... I normally listen to podcasts

Walking can also be frustrating and frustrated according to Martha:

I don't drive, I don't ride a bike, particularly with the city as torn up as it is. Usually I can walk faster than I can take a bus or even a taxi ... There are too many fences and particularly private developers are very big into putting up fences. Not just to prevent you getting into the building and I can understand that, I mean I want security too, I don't want random people wandering through my building who don't have any reason to be there but you know also blocking off even the spaces around there, so even if you're going on completely legitimate business you have to keep wandering around and around and around.

Martha discusses the conflicts around privacy and security for people who can afford it. In chapter six I will discuss the wider issues around privatisation of space and the impact this has on access to the city. It is one of a wide range of environmental and personal factors that can be seen to affect the experience of walking. Lara expresses how her walk to work encompasses various atmospheres and situations. She is sensitive to changes in light, texture, space and in particular the number of other people on the pavement. Although Lara did not use the term, these are similar to the ambiances which psychogeography aims to study and document. She walks through:

streets where I feel like I just have to panic-march along and get through them and get out of people's way so you have to mentally take a big deep breath or a big sigh, when I get to the area around St Peter's Square because there is just more room and there are blossoming trees it's more of a pleasant environment generally.

The sensory nature of walking was highlighted by Barbara. She uses a stick to walk and is acutely aware of different textures underfoot, being constantly attuned to where and how she is walking:

I don't find the pavements particularly good, quite a lot of the pavements just haven't been looked after. They're not kept up so you get broken paving stones and it's really bad for somebody with, well it's really bad for anybody, but you know if you get one and they're sort of wobbly, if you stand on one especially when it's raining and you get full of water ... It's really dangerous ... I tend to just walk if I can on paving stones like this, you know that are fairly straight. If there are cobbles in parts I hate that I really hate it, it's hard work.

Barbara highlights the lack of maintenance of pavements as a major obstacle to her. She is not alone in this. Maintenance of pavements is generally seen as a low priority, particularly in a time of austerity. Enabling pedestrian transit is not viewed as an essential service compared to schools, hospitals, refuse collection and so on. I do not want to argue that pavements are more important than any of these services but I would argue all are vital aspects of a city which values all its citizens.

#### **4.13 Playful walking**

The majority of walking discussed was instrumental and functional but several participants also talked about walking as playful and or pleasurable. For several women, this meant regularly changing their route or challenging themselves to walk a certain distance quicker than they had done previously. Charlotte combines her passion for street based games with work, running games for students where she teaches, she says:

I see play very much as a form of exploration and creativity um and kind of establishing relations and interactions where you don't quite know what the outcome of that might be and whether there is any use to or not so ... I mean that's a very abstract definition of play ... it's doing something fun that is maybe unexpected.

Her games mean she knows the city in a different way to many others and students have an opportunity to explore parts of the city they may never have otherwise visited. She says of her practice:

it can make a statement or it can be sort of an intervention with a message but it doesn't have to be ... just by playing in the city you are already changing the practices that are happening so I like the ambiguity around it, that it's not being necessarily outspoken or making a big point here but just by being here by doing something you are already changing what's going on ... And also from a very practical perspective it gets me to do lots of fun things!

Layla told me about Ingress, an augmented reality game she plays on her iPhone. It encourages users to interact with local landmarks which are framed as places to engage with digital aliens. She feels it has taught her a lot about places of interest in Manchester and encouraged her to walk around places

like The Printworks (a cinema and leisure complex) which she usually avoids. Rhiannon uses walking more generally as a way to explore and understand space because:

I love wandering around the streets because I actually don't know this area very well ... I like being surprised by things and not quite being sure if I've taken the exact turning I meant to and if that's a problem or not.

Several participants have devised their own games to discover the city. For example, Fiona and her friends challenged themselves to walk the canal towpaths:

it was really good fun ... it's a city that kind of reveals more and more and more of itself and I think ... it was kind of nice to explore there and it felt really good down there you know like a sort of off the beaten track kind of thing

She has also used maps to guide play, and thinks:

walking is a way to feel confident about somewhere, so if I'm ever in a new city the first thing I do, I want to just sort of walk about a bit, get my bearings and feel like, not that you own it but you get it or there's an understanding and it makes you feel sort of safer, more comfortable I think ... when I was first here as a student it's my right to walk around, I'm going to figure this out. I'm going to understand <the city> so you feel safer.

This playful exploration is very much psychogeographical in spirit, although the women (unsurprisingly) did not identify it as such. They instinctively recognised that walking provides an opportunity for deep engagement, exploration and understanding of place. They also felt it could be fun and understood the ludic potential of getting lost.

#### **4.14 Cycling, driving and public transport**

Many participants talked about walking in relation to cycling. A detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this study but it is pertinent to briefly examine their feelings in the context of material experiences of moving through Manchester. Maisie describes herself as a cycling activist in her spare time and thinks in theory "Manchester is a perfect city for cycling because it's flat and it's quite compact." However, in practice there is a lot of work needed to improve and promote the experience of cycling. It is important to her for



environmental reasons and because cycling is “a kind of freedom.” Daisy echoed this and wanted more cycle lanes as well as a change in attitude, she felt there was a very misguided policy from the council because as she said incredulously:

there's no cycle parking on St Peter's Square because we are trying to create European city (but) we don't want it littered with bikes ... they think this is a European city and that European cities are free of bikes.

The speed and sensations of cycling were contrasted with walking in various ways. For Charlotte “cycling for me is very functional ... if I'm going somewhere more for fun I prefer walking ... I find it a lot more relaxing to walk.” However, Daisy and Astrid much preferred cycling to walking. Marion talked about the different qualities of cycling and walking and how she preferred both to driving. Despite her love of cycling, Maisie said:

when you're cycling you're just whizzing past and you miss so much, I love walking around the city and if I want to properly find out something about a little place then I would definitely walk because I think you miss things and you miss things changing as well if you just cycle.

Cars were also frequently cited as having a negative impact on the city in general and pedestrians specifically. The city centre was deplored for being “very car centric” by Marion. She was one of several women who wished the city centre was largely car free because “everybody else talks about liveable cities and walkable cities, these ideas where the people scale of the city is actually becoming primary”. She cited The A665 / Great Ancoats Street as a particularly bad example of a road which creates a barrier that is intimidating and difficult to cross:

This is one of the big oxymoron's of Manchester, it feels like it is a pedestrian and people scaled city but then you have the what I will call an old-style ring road that actually cuts off the east side and as a position that's quite threatening so it's like a really strong barrier.

Lara works in an architectural practice which does not take on any project that isn't accessible by public transport because if it's:

somewhere that can only be accessed by car then it's not a project with which we should necessarily be involved in ... it's getting to this sort of point of no return for Manchester where you just think how much more can it take? and I wonder if we are going to get to a point at some stage where we have a completely car free city centre you know just access for taxis and buses and stuff because it's almost becoming unworkable now.

Public transport was viewed as generally adequate and a benefit of living in the city. However, unsurprisingly considering previous comments bus and railway stations were generally disliked. Older participants, and those with disabilities, spoke highly of the tram system, and future work could usefully focus on how to improve access on other modes of transport.

#### **4.15 Implications and conclusions**

Many interviewees were asked what they would most like to change in Manchester if they had a magic wand and no logistical issues to worry about. The most popular answer was creating more green space, changing Piccadilly Gardens rated highly and many also mentioned better transport infrastructure. This generally entailed improving facilities for cyclists and limiting access for cars in the city centre, however these views are not necessarily representative as the women I spoke to all chose to participate in a walking interview. Many also talked about changing attitudes towards inequality and wanting to solve homelessness. There was a great deal of compassion and concern expressed about poverty and inequality which will also be explored as I connect individuals to wider social issues. The next chapter explores more deeply the experience of walking as a woman and how gender impacts upon engagement with the city.

To return to the question of material engagements with the city I discuss the issue of rights and access. Specks "Grand Theory of Walkability" (2012) suggests that four factors contribute to a successful pedestrian journey; it should be useful, safe, comfortable and interesting. This underlines a dependence on an appropriate urban fabric, and potentially a need for investment in infrastructure. Living Streets (2016) have conducted research suggesting that in Manchester only 51% of people feel safe walking and 60% have clear pavements. They highlight the personal health and wellbeing

benefits to pedestrians and argue walkable cities can contribute to economic prosperity because they encourage wandering around shops and exploring leisure opportunities.

In an indication of possible changing priorities, Greater Manchester has recently appointed its first Walking and Cycling Commissioner, former Olympic cyclist, Chris Boardman. It remains to be seen whether pedestrians will actually be a genuine priority for him. My walking interviews showed how many pavements are in a poor and potentially dangerous condition, and that they are blocked by cars, bicycles and street furniture. This clutter presents a dilemma unless a decision is made to prioritise access for pedestrians. Conflicts will arise, for example over A-Boards advertising local businesses. They provide character and instagrammable charm but also block access for wheelchairs, prams and visually impaired people. The retention of cobblestones represents another conflict. They are a heritage asset, signifying history and authenticity, issues I will return to in chapter seven. However, they also provide an obstacle for disabled people and I would like to see far greater consideration given to access issues.

This chapter discussed women's material engagements with Manchester. It found that they preferred places that felt like they were authentic, interesting and had character. Women want to feel attuned to the "stories-so-far" that Massey discusses and find it hard to listen to these in places that they feel are sterile or over prescribed. However, authenticity and independence are not always easy to identify and this dilemma will be returned to in future chapters. The need for adequate infrastructure and considerate design is also affirmed. A further aim of this work is to explore the potential of creative walking, but it is impossible to be enchanted or explore space if you are excluded by stairs or a lack of accessible toilets. These pragmatic and urgent needs must be considered if the city is truly for everyone. In the next chapter, I will discuss the impact gender may have on limiting the enactment of those rights.



## ***Drift Two***

### ***Of Creeps and Canals: From Piccadilly Gardens to The Bridgewater Hall***

I had just finished an interview in Piccadilly Gardens. There is something curiously satisfying about a circular route and I was feeling happy and excited about my research. The woman I had walked with today was fascinating and funny and I was really enjoying the fieldwork experience, especially now I was growing in confidence as an interviewer. I paused briefly on a bench to put away my recording equipment and have a drink of water.

As I got up to go a man came up to me, he was not remarkable in any way. White, average build, wearing jeans and a raincoat, carrying a shopping bag. Smiling, he made an innocuous comment about the pleasant weather and asked me the time. I told him and I turned away towards the bus station. He walked with me and started asking questions: Why was I on my own? Where was I going? Was I married? Why wasn't I smiling? I tried to ignore him but he persisted so, as politely as I could, I told him I was not interested. Still he kept on: he was lonely, would I go for a drink with him? And again: was I married? I was glad my bus was in the station and I stepped straight on, ignoring him and hoping he would not follow. He didn't, but the feeling of unease he instilled in me lingered.

I was cross that a friendly encounter soured so quickly, and then, absurdly, I worried I had been rude to him. I banished that thought but couldn't stop my mind wandering to past incidents. The man who told me my skirt was too short as I waited at the bus stop, the man who shouted about my breasts and started following me along the canal towpath, the man who jumped out of a doorway in Chinatown to flash at me, a scene that was almost comical in its retelling. I had assumed the stereotypical dirty old man in the mac was a myth. As a teenager, flashing was so mundane and frequent my friends and I

stopped reporting it to the police; they never took us seriously anyway. So many incidents I felt dizzy trying to remember. It's true some seem trivial but the cumulative impact is not. Harassment is never OK and its never excusable. There's a mental map in my head of places which trigger a high alert. One incident was worse than the others and I won't share it here but for eight years I detoured to avoid the scene. Only fifteen minutes from home but easy to avoid. Recently a friend moved nearby and I braced myself to go and visit. Just one foot after the other, broad daylight on an average tarmacked pavement. My mouth was dry and my legs shaking but I walked that path trying to appear nonchalant. Nothing happened. When I reached my destination, I tried not to cry but I couldn't stop myself.

I wasn't going to let the creep today get to me like that. I felt irritated and unable to smash patriarchy I wanted to at least change my mood. I got off the bus and went for a walk around Oxford Road Corner.



*Plate 17: The Cornerhouse Buildings*

The old Cornerhouse Cinema One has been squatted by homeless activists and colourful slogans adorn the walls. I pass the ex-galleries, now occupied by Manchester Metropolitan University, a burger bar, The Samaritans and a pub aimed at rock music fans. I go down the

cobbled slope to catch a glimpse of the last remnants of the Little Ireland slum. There's a No Loitering sign painted on the wall opposite The Salisbury Pub and I wonder how long this strange little patch will survive. The demolition rumours are rife, and as I cut under the railway arch and down New Wakefield Street I see layers of graffiti, ghosts of Eurocultured, the festival which closed the streets and warmed the heart.

There's an elaborate doorway which always catches my eye. I liked it better before I knew it was designed for a furniture showroom, my imagination conjured something far more exotic. The Student Castle at the bottom has been renamed Liberty Living, scarcely less ridiculous. The sky darkens temporarily and there's an unpleasant smell as I go through another tunnel. I cross the road, cut through a ginnel and I've reached my destination.



*Plate 18: The Rochdale Canal*

This part of the canal is saturated with stories for me. If I went right I'd go past an ancient lamppost, still standing despite everything, and eventually reach The Undercroft. A stencilled head of Andy Warhol guards the entrance as the towpath slips into subterranean darkness. Historically it's known as a cruising ground and signs prohibit "Lewd

Behaviour”. It’s closed at night now, apparently for public safety, but I suspect it has a lot to do with “cleaning things up” for the new hotels around Piccadilly Basin. A friendly policeman told me there had been complaints guests might be put off their breakfast, although I wonder how they could see anything to be offended by through the thick tunnel walls. There’s a faded mural to the Commonwealth Games as you emerge into the light again but I don’t want to head that way now.

I turn left instead, smiling at the duck houses and remembering the time a gosling jumped on my foot to hitch a ride. I was glad it jumped off before its parents reached me; protective wildfowl are the scariest thing I’ve seen down here. There’s the back of the Hacienda, I wasn’t old or cool enough to ever go to the club but I went to the opening of the apartments. I can’t remember how Lucy got tickets but there was free wine and we were curious. A string quartet played Madchester classics and we left before they ran out of canapes.

I go over the bridge and skirt the edge of The Bridgewater Hall. There are sleeping bags almost hidden from view and mushrooms growing on the canalside. Just before the office block over there was built, an old pub, Tommy Ducks, was accidentally bulldozed, conveniently clearing the site. There’s a crass class point to be made, but it’s never that simple. The traditional pub had a ceiling covered in knickers and I’ve heard tell of feminist flash mobs running in to take them down. I think about a local legend, Manchester’s Ophelia. A beautiful girl trapped under ice, waiting for true loves kiss and providing a voyeuristic thrill for ballad singers and sightseers in the meantime. She wasn’t a legend though, she had a name. Lavinia Robinson. She vanished before Christmas 1811, after a quarrel with her fiancé who questioned her fidelity. It was a harsh winter and her body wasn’t found until the Irwell began to thaw. The post mortem cleared her honour, but the shame and grief led her betrothed to kill himself too.



## Chapter Five

### ***That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore: Gendered experiences of walking in Manchester city centre***

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores gendered experiences of walking in the city and includes discussion of fear, harassment and everyday sexism. My focus is on walking as a woman, that is the facets of experience my interviewees believe are particular to *being* a woman. We did not explicitly discuss gender in the conceptual sense, and I assume no consistent essential common definition of what the category of woman means across my participants. As they responded to my advertisement I have taken for granted they identify as a woman and feel this is a valid, shared identity across differences.

The majority of gendered experiences cited were in relation to feeling scared and consequently moderating behaviour, therefore the construction of fear will be discussed. I share accounts of explicit sexism and harassment encountered, including during my fieldwork, which reinforce negative historical associations with inhabiting public space for women. I also include a snapshot of how professional experiences may influence perception and conclude with thoughts from professional women working with the urban environment – planners, architects and associated areas.

The chapter title is taken from the eponymous Smiths song:

That joke isn't funny anymore,  
It's too close to home and it's too near the bone  
more that you'll ever know (Morrissey and Marr 1985).

Many of the incidents of harassment are relatively mild and are frequently dismissed in popular culture as banter or harmless fun. Sara Ahmed (2010) exposes the construction of the “Feminist Killjoy” who is perceived to become the problem by naming an issue that can be conveniently ignored – her demand for respect and parity is wrongly perceived as depriving her oppressor or costing someone else's freedom. I argue such harassment is part of a

continuum of oppressive behaviours that operate to keep women in their allotted place within patriarchy. Mackay says:

Feminists use the P word to refer to male supremacy, to societies where men as a group dominate mainstream positions of power in culture, and politics, business, law, military and policing, for example-societies like ours. (2015:5)

This operational definition is used throughout this section of the thesis. I would also like to make clear from the start that men are also harmed by the constraints of patriarchy, and particularly its intersections with dimensions such as class, race and queerness.

Embodied, affective engagement is one of the strengths of a walking methodology and gender identity is one element of the corporeal experience of moving through the city. While the women were not asked explicitly about their identities as women, gender was an important and recurring issue that they raised as we walked around the city. However, my feminist ontology asserts that gender is socially constructed, relational and contingent; intersectionality further asserts that whilst gender is foregrounded, other aspects of identity also impact on individual experiences. That is to say that whilst gender is an important constituent of identity it is not the only, or not necessarily, the most important factor. In particular, the urban environment which we walked through together also exerted an influence on the views and ideas of the women. Here Massey's formulation is crucial to the arguments to be discussed in this chapter:

Space and place are important in the construction of gender relations and in struggles to change them. From the symbolic meaning of spaces/places and the clearly gendered messages which they transmit, to straightforward exclusion by violence, spaces and places are not only themselves gendered but, in their being so, they both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood. The limitation of women's mobility, in terms both of identity and space, has been in some cultural contexts a crucial means of subordination (Massey 1994:179).

The subordination and exclusion Massey identifies operated at a number of levels in the lives of research participants. Many told me they had complex mental maps of places to avoid because they felt unsafe. Others changed their

behaviour depending on the time of day. Those who insisted they carried on regardless still had a sense of unease. The interview experience itself also demonstrated the subtle exclusionary messages about women's place in the city. This had never been my intention but the men who interrupted our walks were, with varying degrees of subtly, telling us they were entitled to question, disrupt and potentially curtail our right to the city.

## 5.2 Walking as a woman

Veronica spoke for many participants when she discussed a sense of unease and restriction she experienced that was linked, she believed, explicitly to her gender. She had been telling me how important green space is to her and her need to connect with nature. As we walked around the Northern Quarter she mentioned the canals:

I always want to walk down there on my own (the canal) but I never do it *as a woman*. I never do that you know on my own, and I think that's the way men and women differ in terms of, *women are always having to think wherever they go*, is it safe down here? What time of day is it? who's around? I don't think men, I don't think it occurs to them. I don't know if you are interviewing men, I don't know what their experience is, around walking the city, but I think it's just a completely different experience for men and women (emphasis mine)

The canals recur as an urban danger zone and site of danger in many accounts. Chorlton and Didsbury are however generally perceived as pleasant, affluent and "safe" districts of Manchester. Veronica really wanted to explore the banks of the River Mersey which cuts across them and she could access the public footpath from very near to her work. Therefore, one day after she had finished teaching she decided to go for a walk:

Just to see how far I could get. There was nobody around and I was kind of thinking if something happened now there would be nobody that I could call so (I) was constantly looking for escape routes, where I think if you were a man you probably wouldn't be doing that, you would be walking and thinking about whatever it is a person would be thinking about

Even though Veronica went for the walk she desired, she had internalised fear and could not fully enjoy the moment. She was unable to relax and let her mind wander and she feels this is implicitly gendered because:

Walking and loitering for men and women are completely different. I think men loiter and they can do that I think, if a woman hangs around somewhere for long enough something is going to happen so I think women are constantly always on the move

Veronica identifies the main gendered difference between men and women as being related to feelings of risk and safety in the city, and a sense that she must always be alert to threats. The women I walked with are not unique in feeling this. The phenomena is well documented by research such as Valentine (1990, 1992), Pain (1997) and others but it manifests in different ways with factors that enhance or mitigate against fear. The majority of participants mentioned a temporal dimension to their feelings about whether it is safe or not to move across the city, with night time and the dark increasing fear and sometimes influencing their mobility. They were unable to enjoy the thrill of nocturnal wanders across Manchester which Dunn (2016) documents. Layla lives in the Northern Quarter and walks through the city frequently. She has developed multiple mental maps of her route home depending on when she is walking:

It's not so much bits of the town (I don't like), I think it's times ... I think everybody relaxes when they are near their home but there are some bits of the Northern Quarter like those little alleyways that can be quite dark and dreary. I've got like a map in my head of where it's okay to walk on a Sunday morning and where I wouldn't necessarily walk on a Friday night, you know like (if it's) late I wouldn't go down that way, I'd go around the long way.

Layla had previously talked about how much she loved living amidst the bustle of the city, and that she enjoyed exploring the network of passages in The Northern Quarter. She identified alcohol as a catalyst for behaviour that she found threatening, but also clarified "it's the sheer mass of people" that she struggles with rather than specific individuals. Several women also talked about crowds being intimidating, especially if they comprised largely rowdy or drunk white men. (This was usually the only time race was explicitly mentioned, when women spoke of the fear of rowdily inebriated white men and I feel this is an area deserving of much more attention). Layla and the others all told me how much they enjoyed socialising but articulated ambivalence about the role of alcohol and the night-time economy. The carnivalesque is

enjoyed up to a point where it is viewed as posing a threat to stability and fun goes too far.

### **5.3 The alcohol paradox**

Many women cited pubs as some of their favourite places in Manchester and spoke of pleasurable and fun times. However, the same women also told me they hated, and were often afraid of, the negative effect of alcohol on the streets. Holloway, Jayne and Valentine (2011) and Bell, Holloway, Jayne and Valentine (2008) discuss the paradox of alcohol and the night time economy. Excess and hedonism are widely celebrated, and more generally leisure and consumption are central functions of contemporary cities, with many often marketing themselves on this basis. Manchester music and nightlife is an integral part of the municipal identity and regeneration policies, facilitated by policies such as the Licensing Act (2003), which enabled extended opening hours. Friendships are made, relationships formed and social ties strengthened through the pleasure of drinking.

However, alcohol (and other drugs) are also a cause for moral, political, legal and health concerns and “binge drinking” is demonised in the press (Smith 2014). Holloway, Valentine and Jayne (2009) also highlight an explicitly gendered dimension to concerns about drinking and the particular harm it can do to women’s bodies. This includes negative stereotypes of drunk young women. Many of the fears are not actually about drinking per se but about women being vulnerable to attack or more likely to lose inhibitions around unprotected sex. There is often a class prejudice involved too, with stereotypes of marauding working class “chavs” and little empathy for the reasons people may wish to party. This is not a new phenomenon, as Engels (1845) documented inebriated crowds escaping the pressure of their working lives.

International attention was focused on the ambivalent and contradictory role of alcohol in Manchester as a result of a photograph taken by Joel Goodman on New Year’s Eve 2015 (Safi, 2016). His image of revellers near The Printworks leisure complex went viral. It depicted an inebriated man reclining in the road, surrounded by a supporting cast of police, concerned women and other bystanders. It was both celebrated for being reminiscent of a

renaissance painting and condemned for depicting shameless debauchery. The protagonist remained nonchalant about his fame and claimed he could not even recall the incident.

The complex attachment many people felt about pubs and alcohol is also reflected in concerns about the changing face of the Northern Quarter, which are discussed in more depth in chapters six and seven. Participants worry about gentrification and feel the latest trend in bars and clubs, which they refer to as “hipster” is alienating because, as Cheryl says: “not a lot of it is aimed at me, I’m not a bloke in tight trousers and a jaunty beard”. However, several interviewees reported a sense that the same regeneration that lured problematic drinkers to the city centre had also made Manchester feel safer over a period of years. Women felt there were positive aspects to a city centre full of people, even if some of them are inebriated. These longer-term changes are often intertwined with personal memories of Manchester when few people lived or worked in the city centre. It was recalled as a desolate, dirty, eerie and empty place. Women often linked the renewed vigour and increased occupation to the secure feeling from soft surveillance of community and eyes on the street which Jacobs (1961) championed.

As well as the threat of violence erupting, drinking is seen as coding gender in other ways too as Jo says:

I probably would feel a bit out of place in the city on a Friday or Saturday night because there seems to be a really rigid discipline about what you should be wearing or not wearing and yes, I’m totally pro people doing whatever they want obviously, and doing femininity in whatever way they want, but it does seem like you don’t see much variation from it so it makes me think it’s really disciplinary. Everywhere was like spot the woman not wearing high heels, or who was wearing a jacket, it’s basically nobody ... it doesn’t matter what time of year it is they won’t be wearing much. They’ll be staggering around laughing and it just feels like it *feels* liberatory although it isn’t.

These conversations all reify entertainment, and particularly pubs and clubs as a central function of the city, and this raises the issue of how a teetotal woman can relate to, and find a place in Manchester. Patti grew up just outside Manchester, and since her teens has visited nightclubs, concert venues and

other cultural events. She considers herself a “face” on the scene and her interview was peppered with anecdotes about pop culture and local celebrities. However, she stopped consuming alcohol four years ago and described vividly how her relationship to the city has changed:

I've gone from being very much a sort of drinker, a party animal living for the nightlife to being sober so ... it completely changes both your use and perception of the city so that whole network of bar crawling, going from bar to bar and adventuring through the place and wearing the ready brek coat of inebriation is gone ... my perception of it is that it is more aggressive because of sobriety (Ready Brek is an instant porridge and its advertising campaign in the 1970s and 80s featured children protected by a visible protective glow from their hot breakfast).

Patti finds drinkers more problematic now she is not one of them. She was open about her struggle with addiction and her involvement in trying to open a “dry” venue that did not revolve around the sale or consumption of alcohol. She believed this could benefit a wide range of people who do not drink for reasons relating to faith, culture or taste as well as pregnant women, people on medication and those with families. Although Patti was the only woman to tell me she was entirely sober, she also eloquently expresses a feeling of vulnerability shared by many women I spoke to:

I don't know that I ever feel comfortable in town really, like I'm fine, I'll go from place to place, but (I'm) always on guard, like I am looking at everything and I'm constantly ready for the next potential problem, I'm just on guard for threat at all times ... (I've) lived my whole life in Manchester and I monitor the periphery of my vision all the time like I am never not aware of whether there is something, the aggression radar and the trouble radar that you develop ... I have cut off points for using public transport, I have cut off times that I walk around.

Patti's hyper vigilance and self-imposed curfew are a response to a perceived threat. Stanko (1990) discusses this paradox of fear. Women are more at risk of domestic abuse and violence from a man they know than the stereotypical random stranger. However, given the patriarchal structure we live within Stanko demonstrates fear of attack is justified and understandable. Women deal with this in various ways.

## 5.4 Coping strategies

Patti mentions not just the cause of her unease. She shared some of the coping strategies she has developed to enable her to move safely through the city. These include a self-imposed curfew and a constant need to be alert when outside, similar to that which Veronica shared when talking about walking along the River Mersey. Many other women felt their gender sometimes made them vulnerable and they developed a range of coping mechanisms to feel safe. Pain (1997) and Valentine (1989) also report a range of similar tactics. These included a physical change in the way they walked, especially if they were alone in isolated areas at night, becoming quicker, more alert and often carrying something that could be used defensively. Several women had taken self-defence classes to enable them to feel safer.

Most express regret they needed to adapt in this way but there was sense of resilience and determination to carry on personified by Fiona who said:

when you're walking at night it does change ... I'm really just doing 360s all time, holding onto my phone in one hand, my keys in another making sure that I feel safe, I normally tell someone that I'm doing it

Rennie adopts similar tactics:

I actually run with a key in my hand, between my knuckles, you'll probably be OK but I can't risk it ... And that's a big regret I have that I feel like I can't be quite as intrepid as I would like to.

The need to project confidence was also cited, and women felt looking confident meant not only walking with purpose but not engaging with the environment except to move swiftly through. The need to observe does echo the flâneur, although he is urbane, louche and confident. The women I walked with could not relax or feel at home on the street because of a constant fear they were potential prey. They all sense the truth in Butler's warning that:

A walk can be a dangerous thing. If you go for a walk you are vulnerable socially, there's no question about that. You assert your rights of mobility and you take a certain risk in public space (2009:205)

Butler had been sharing the story of a young American man murdered because his gait was "feminine". This is a salient reminder that gender is not



synonymous with female and transgression of perceived norms may be met with hostility in many contexts. This research focuses on a group of women in Manchester UK, but women across the world often share similar concerns. For example, Ismail (2017) discusses strategies used by women in Egypt to avoid harassment, these include trying to “walk like a soldier” and not to sway their hips whilst walking, as well as wearing loose and gender-neutral clothes.

## **5.5 Perceptions of fear**

All of the women I spoke to wanted, needed and intended to continue asserting their rights to be in the city. Interviewees calculated that the risks they perceived were worth negotiating. However, fear does influence their behaviour. Fiona explained to me why she continues to walk alone at night whilst modifying her movements as she disclosed above. This appeared to be comprised of a mixture of determination, pragmatism and an internalisation of the many warnings she has received that she should be scared and modify her actions:

I've been here now for probably about 14 years, it's ... the city I know best, I've always just felt pretty safe and happy and inspired in Manchester ... very comfortable here ... I think one of the things that makes me I suppose angry, although I'm not an angry person, it's the thought that as women we are not supposed to walk when it's dark.

The warning that Fiona has assimilated is borne from a wide range of discourses. This includes news and other mediated forms; a cursory glance at TV schedules illustrates how violence against women frequently become synonymous with entertainment. Caputi (1987) provides a vivid account of how sex crimes against women are sensationalised, tracing the phenomenon back to the celebrity cult of Jack the Ripper. Debord and the SI indulged in this too, declaring that Jack the Ripper was “psychogeographic in love” and contributing to the mass of images that victimise women. Fiona and the others will also probably have had conversations, heard stories, seen public information posters and consumed literature, which reinforce the message that night time is dangerous for a woman walking alone. She continues:

I absolutely hate that, I hate that when I walk to a friend's house, and most of the time I walk through a park (to get there) and then

when it gets dark suddenly my right to walk is compromised. I get it, I understand it's for my safety but then I think it's such a weird concept to me that the colour of the sky affects whether or not I could walk in a certain way ... (it) does upset me if I'm ever not allowed to walk somewhere because that is my default, it is what I want to do, physically and mentally I just want to walk. I just want to get somewhere under my own steam and have a nice time doing it ... when that's taken away I do struggle with it.

Nora is also determined to keep walking but also modifies her behaviour somewhat. She is also trying to make sure her daughter can enjoy the pleasures of the city whilst remaining as safe as possible:

I do walk and I am quite, I don't know what the right word is, but I refuse to be scared. I really feel very strongly about that and I'm like that with my daughter, about being able to walk around and having realistic sort of feelings about what's going on around you. Not being too scared about what's going on. I mean sort of, there are certain things you'd better not do, (don't) get your phone out to phone a taxi at 3 o'clock in the morning in Piccadilly Gardens ... I always do think about how I'm getting in and how I'm going home but yeah I will walk I'm quite happy to walk the entire length and breadth ... it is just being aware, particularly if you're out drinking and stuff, quite often I'm going home on my own so I do always think about how I'm getting home, where I'm gonna get a cab from but I don't have any no-go areas really

The majority of women based their perceptions of safety on a combination of factors. These included their own experiences, conversations with friends and colleagues and media reports. They often felt external voices and news report are sensationalistic and alarmist but did not feel they should entirely disregard them. The risk of making the wrong choice could have dire consequences. Amelia finds her colleagues are often shocked that she parks her car in Hulme and walks into the city centre; Hulme is often stereotyped as a dangerous estate but she feels OK although she is aware:

some people would say well, that's just being naive and it is unsafe but I never felt unsafe and I guess some think that I might be clinging to a false sense of confidence but I've always really felt ... if you will purposely give a "don't you mess with me kind of attitude" then people don't tend to ... I think it's also the power of the media that what gets reported is a negative stuff and not the good stuff.

Valentine (1992) builds on Tyler and Rasinki (1984) to identify three factors which contribute to the fear levels felt from different information sources. These are memorability, affectivity and informativeness. Information that women can easily relate to, whether because of shared lifestyles, geography or from a trusted source, are rated as reliable and worthy of particular note.

## **5.6 Calculating risk**

Cheryl's account demonstrates how this can operate in practice. Cheryl lived in Manchester for many years and still retains strong ties to the city through work, friends and family. She moved out to a small rural town in Yorkshire and reflected on the stress of city life and how it was constructed for her:

I think for women walking in Manchester you are quite aware, when I moved to Todmorden and I work in Manchester I realised that my Mother Fox mode was constantly on high alert and I didn't really realise how much it was on until I left the city. I thought, gosh my dial is right up and I am much more relaxed in my hometown now than I was when I lived in Manchester, it's the horror stories like ... I had a friend who lived and worked, is still working, as a nurse in Manchester ... She had a horrible case, she came round to our house and she had a rape case of a young woman on a particular day which she gave me the details of and she was telling me and it was so horrible that every time I walk through Piccadilly I think of her ... that really sticks with you and I had another friend who was attacked - one of those completely random things, they are quite rare, you know when people are assaulted it is normally by somebody they know, statistics say that it's not necessarily the opportunist attacker in the street but she was attacked when we were at university in an aggressive way in the street. Left for dead, beaten and those things log in your head as a woman walking around the city and they don't ever leave you.

As well as experiences, she was told by personal contacts, Cheryl's fear was also reinforced by wider discourses which had a direct effect on her behaviour.

It was interesting when I started university, university invited the police to make a presentation about personal safety because obviously students are rich pickings aren't they? In September, there is this huge shoot up of figures of young people in an area, 18, 19, 20-year olds being mugged or attacked or being beaten up outside the pub for their wallet. The police came and made a presentation but they did a whole section on girls protecting themselves ... it was all about percentages and if you have a pair

of high heels on or if you have a pair of flat shoes on, if you have your hair down versus if you have your hair up, if you don't have a coat, if you have your purse and your phone loose in your hand and not in a handbag and if you ... it was percentages of likelihood going up, up, up to the point where I never, while I was a student, went out in a small dress with high heels on. Never. There was just no way I was going to do that you know and that was all about instilling fear in young women to avoid something as opposed to going boys, could you just not rape girls, could you just not do that ... It probably does still happen because it's the easiest way of shutting something down is to lay the responsibility with the victim or the potential victim.

Cheryl said this was about 15 years ago and she wondered if, and how, things have changed. This victim blaming is often noted and can result in women being less likely to report abuse. Patti previously spoke about how being sober had changed her thoughts about the city and she explained the complex mental arithmetic behind her choices of where and when it is safe to use the city:

I don't want to become a victim of propaganda ... but it becomes an intrinsic part of your experience and your perception and your knowledge of moving through urban space ... It is a Catch-22 really, because if you don't put yourself in a fearful situation you can't know for sure whether you would have been all right. Because you don't put yourself in the situation just to test whether your premise is correct or not, and you just assume that (if) you've not been raped or mugged much in your life then it's because you are constantly vigilant but it's not a space I can think outside of because it is so completely ingrained. I can't imagine what it would be like to just go around not worrying about aggression.

Patti highlights again that the restriction is not just physical but affects her mental health too. The need to be alert makes it difficult to relax and simply enjoy being in the city. Despite the efforts of women to carry on regardless and embody the spirit of the flâneuse, their lived experience is very different. It is clear imaginative drifting is difficult to achieve as a lone woman, as Scalway (2002) articulates with her struggle to simply take a walk-through London without experiencing a feeling of threat or dread.

## 5.7 Survivor's stories

The fear women have is a fear of violence which they are aware is usually also gendered. They understand implicitly that men are often stronger and more physically powerful and the threat of sexual assault and rape is considered as a particularly terrible weapon men are able to deploy against women. The consequences of the fear may be harmful, but so too are the consequences of becoming a victim. This is not simply about miscalculating an abstract risk; it can be an event with significant impact on an individual. Martha and Rebecca both disclosed they had been mugged, and although both found the experience horrific, they were clear they would not let their attackers curtail their movements or impact on their lives.

When Rebecca first sent an email expressing interest in my research she mentioned her attack and was keen to talk about it again during her interview:

I was determined to not let it stop me from walking. I just thought that <shouts> NO! you won't, you won't take that away from me, you won't make me scared to walk the streets because one thing has happened you know. It could have happened anywhere, it could have been anybody, it was just me on that day.

The story Rebecca shared with me was disturbing, involving a mugging at knifepoint, but she was very clear that she felt it was important to contextualise her experience and not let it change her behaviour. This was a common element amongst all the women who shared examples of abuse or attacks; they would not let it stop them walking. As my sample was self-selecting women who do walk, it is not wise to generalise, as women who feel unable to use public space were excluded from the sample. Warren (2016) conducted walks with women whose worlds are much smaller and who did not feel confident venturing far beyond a small area where they have fixed roles and known contacts. However, the resilience, resistance and determination to just keep going women demonstrated to me is worth noting and deserving of respect. There are many acts of everyday resistance, conscious and unconscious, that women enact because they have to go out. This may be driven by curiosity, desire, economic necessity or myriad other reasons but women will make a path through the city.

## 5.8 Fearlessness

A few participants spoke about a total lack of fear, but they tended to view themselves as exceptional in this respect, and saw it is a character trait that was hard won and often ambivalent. These women emphasised the performance of confidence and a feeling that they could use their wiles to escape from any emergent threat. Jack identifies herself as a “Political Dyke” and has been involved in queer activism and feminist organising for many years. She told me:

I feel safe anywhere, although that's partly me because I've lived in lots of cities since I was younger. I've always been like one of those girls in the big boots walking down the centre of the road and not letting anything frighten me and so it is my attitude as well ... when I was much younger I used sleep rough, when I was in my 20s, all round the world really, I was somebody that always felt safe sleeping rough as long as I was completely invisible in the dark, in the darkest dark, but around people. I always felt safer (in the city) than being out in the countryside and dark trees are much more frightening to me than being on a dark street ... it's a friendly conversation in the city so if its late at night, I'm a bit drunk and I'm a bit vulnerable you know, walking home on my own, if somebody started chatting to me normally you can chat your way out of all the <pause> you can chat your way out of almost anything in the city you know.

Jack's story can be used to remind us of how Wilson (1991) emphasises the pleasure and excitement the city can hold for women and how they continually negotiate and transgress boundaries. Koskela (1997) has argued that the response of some women to fear and threats is to assert an appearance of “boldness” and “spatial confidence”. Even women I spoke to who acknowledged those feelings also displayed resilience and strength in continually asserting their place in the city, something they felt came naturally to men. It should also be noted men and boys may not necessarily feel brave or strong when they are walking. They may also use coping strategies and experience fear, harassment and acts of sexual violence (Stanko, 1990). Patriarchy has a negative effect on men and boys in many ways too, not least because of stereotypes about what masculinity means. Recognising, and working to dismantle the social construction of gender, should not be viewed

as a threat to men but a liberation for everyone and an important step to creating an inclusive public sphere.

### **5.9 Intersectionality: age and disability**

The categories of “women” and “men” do not imply a static and homogenous group of traits. Black feminist Audre Lorde described the “concert of voices” inside her and had a vision of herself as a part of a “continuum of women” (1980). Her work makes clear an individual has many roles and is a complex assemblage of nature and nurture, whilst still acknowledging something important and integral to be a woman. Jack went on to say she felt any concerns she felt for her safety were moot now anyway because as she has got older she has become invisible on the street:

The thing that happens once you are past about 45 is that you very much disappear in the city for better or worse even though I’m quite a big person a big personality and wear bright colours I can be completely ignored ... I often feel like I can walk through the streets invisible really.

This reiterates the importance of an intersectional understanding of identity as formulated by Crenshaw (1989) because gender does not equate with a homogenous group or single experience. Interviewees do not walk just as women; their experiences are shaped by factors such as race, sexuality, impairment, class, family and age. Jack was not the only participant to mention age, although those that did so were all fifty or above. I suspect this reflects the dominance of younger women in popular discourse and the premium society places on relative youth. Kate spoke of the impact of both age and chronic illness on her experiences of walking in the city:

My being female isn’t the most relevant issue in terms of my difficulty in using the public space or whatever. It’s more my ability, my physical ability, which fluctuates a lot so it’s about how easy is it for me to get somewhere, how far away is it, how much walking I have to do, that kind of thing. I’m not going out partying at night anymore so I don’t worry about being safe at night on dark streets or anything which is something that I’ve always associated with being female in the city ... I think partly again its age, I don’t experience, I don’t get any attention on the streets you know - unless I’m doing something like walking along with someone with a microphone <laughs>. Otherwise I don’t get any

attention any more. No one harasses me because nobody notices me, notices middle-aged women.

Kate's tone made it abundantly clear she has absolutely no nostalgia for harassment, and as an activist she explicitly campaigns to make the city more accessible. She was particularly concerned by the lack of public seating and the impact this had on her (in)ability to visit the city centre. Physical barriers were discussed more fully in the previous chapter when I explored the material factors that lead Nicki to tell me she struggles so much that she tends to "end up seeing it (the city) as some kind of obstacle course to get through". Nicki has a visual impairment and told me she was much less likely to visit the city centre whilst work for new tramlines being installed is ongoing. Lack of clear information about which pavements would be closed, confusion about safe crossing places, and pinch points where large numbers of people were funnelled through unusually narrow gaps due to roadworks were matters of particular concern. These material problems are highly likely to impact on anyone with visual impairment or other relevant impairments regardless of their gender.

### **5.10 Children and families**

Young people and children also experience Manchester differently, as women who lived, worked or cared for them told me. Mia is a youth worker and said:

The city centre isn't really used, I can say this with quite a lot of confidence that I'm right, the city centre isn't really used much by Manchester young people.

Several of the women I spoke to were parents and complained the city centre was not particularly welcoming for families. They cited a lack of facilities and concerns about safety, although the risks were different to those of women walking on their own. Pippa told me about her fears for her young children in the city. They included elements of the physical environment, as well as concerns about crowds and the people that may be in the city. She concluded that the shopping mall was the most suitable environment to take her primary school age children to because it is more controlled, but it remains far from her ideal:



I think Manchester is also very dirty isn't it, dirty and dusty and I think the air quality is not that great ... when you are with little children you know it's dangerous. Yes. On Piccadilly Gardens, you most definitely don't want to let them run around on their own with minimum supervision because you just don't know who's there and who knows what they could be ... it's extremely dangerous you know if they are small and they fall there is a lot of sharp stuff and pointy stuff there ... you mainly end up walking in the pedestrian mall anyhow you know, but it's very busy there. I mean nobody can change that it's very busy and again you are scared that they will just get lost ... it's not very nice (for them) because they're so small and everybody is so big and they are just in a mass you know, they just see people they just see bodies all around them

The environment Pippa takes her children into is far from her ideal, but she feels limited by the options available to her. Small changes, such as improved maintenance and cleaning and softer materials, could help her to feel the city centre was a place for her children.

## **5.11 Sexuality**

The mall that represents a safe place for Pippa and her children is the antithesis of a pleasant environment for other women. Veronica spoke about how dull she found the central shopping area and that she preferred to avoid chain shops where it was possible. She also talked about feeling invisible, not because of age but because of her sexuality. Veronica felt a general normative assumption of heterosexuality and did not think lesbians are represented sufficiently in popular culture. Veronica explained she has a network of places that she described as "places of safety" where she felt welcome and found interesting things. These included bars, cafes and shops but she also had a particular attachment to the art gallery:

I used to work on Hilton Street and sometimes when, you know when you've got a hard day at work and it's not going particularly well, I'd always walk down to Manchester Art Gallery to go and see one specific painting, it was the Sappho painting, and I know I know that picture is from the male gaze point of view but sometimes I just wanted to connect with a lesbian narrative or connection somehow so I would always go and I'd go in and I wouldn't look anything else and I would just go in and sit there for half an hour and then feel refreshed and then come back to work, to carry on with my day so it was kind of like a place of safety.

Veronica is articulating something very interesting here, and it has also been expressed by Sam and others who told me how much they enjoyed people watching. Pollock (1998) felt the flâneuse was an impossibility because the male gaze is so dominant. The women I walked with often felt watched, judged and sometimes intimidated. However, they can look back too and women such as Sam explicitly extolled the pleasures of gazing. Women are not simply passive vessels and can appropriate artworks and physical space when they require it.

Veronica's place of safety was not an explicitly LGBT space but she created her haven from the art within in, demonstrating how space can become overlaid with different meanings. Eleanor also spoke about distinctly lesbian experiences, and how they might not take place where one would expect them. LGBT community groups such as Facts About Manchester Pride (FAMP) and Café Queeria have campaigned for several years for a more inclusive LGBT culture in Manchester (Wilkinson, 2015). They argue that Canal Street has become over commercialised, expensive and dominated by a very narrow and exclusive reading of LGBT. This prioritises gay men, hedonistic nightclubs and bars, and dance music. It also, conversely, attracts tourists, hen and stag nights which can make queer people feel unsafe in a space they assume should be open to them. Eleanor is working for a year in Manchester, having visited as a tourist many times before and she told me:



*Plate 19: Bloom Street, The Village*

I would always make a point of trying to stay in the queer area of the city ... that area along Canal Street doesn't hold the appeal that it once did and I don't feel particularly unwelcome there, but just I feel no sense of I should be there and I remember asking (a colleague) like where do lesbians go in Manchester? <laughs> where will I find them? And she couldn't answer that question. I think there are distinct areas in Toronto still and as problematic as that is here, there is something about not being able to find those lesbian spaces

Veronica had to find a space somewhere else because she too didn't find the bars there appealing, although she did sometimes visit for the joy of celebrating queerness in a city that assumes normative heterosexuality:

sometimes I just need to feel, if I'm feeling very heterosexualised, just have a little walk down Canal St and go Oh, OK, there's a rainbow flag, there are gay people around, you know, well there are, I know there are but it is nice to feel, yeah, to feel visible and validated in some way.

Nicki has been living in Manchester for several years and also feels alienated by Canal Street due to taste and finance:

I was like this is just (for) the teenagers and people who like loud music and even though I was only 23 or 24 I had never been one of those teenagers anyway and so I was like ... What do I do?

Nicki spoke about how she couldn't afford to go out in Canal Street and we will explore more views on the "pink pound" in the next chapter.

## 5.12 Money, class and occupation

Many other interviewees of all sexualities discussed money as an obstacle, either for themselves or people they perceived as being excluded by gentrification. They emphasised the importance of valuing working class voices and histories and several felt they needed to champion this, such as Maddy who said:

I feel like a complete fraud in many ways, but in many other ways I think it's just really important for working class women or girls ... we are in danger of not having any working-class voices at all in culture and at the universities.

Employment often affected how women used the city but it didn't necessarily change how they felt about it. Several interviewees talked about their walks to and from work and others told me how important it was for them to take a walk during their lunchbreak. This provided respite, recreation and sometimes a chance to run errands and will be discussed further in the next chapter. Mia was the only interviewee for whom walking was an intrinsic part of her work. As a youth worker, her experiences meant she wasn't scared for herself but was concerned for the young people she worked with:

I walk everywhere and my background is as a youth worker so I think it probably sounds a bit weird but I am quite confident about being out and about. I know other people are very, very cautious especially around here <Oldham Street> ... whenever I left in the evening I used to make sure that we left with the group because it was always a bit iffy for young people round here.

Mia acknowledges an important truth here that is largely beyond the scope of this study. Young men are actually at higher risk of street crime than women but do not always display or experience fear. (ONS, 2015, Hollway and Jefferson, 2000. Pain, 2001). Those males that are scared may feel the need to act tough and hide the fact. The experiences of young people, and of people whose work includes walking, would be worthwhile focuses for future research. In the meantime, I would like to focus on a specific subset of women I walked with who all worked in the built environment. This had not been a conscious decision but a result of snowball recruiting whereby several women told their friends and colleagues about my research.

### 5.13 Manchester Women's Design Group

One small but potentially significant step to improve women's perception of danger and being unwelcome in space may be re-evaluating urban design. Several interviewees were urban design professionals or had a stated interest in the urban environment. They are planners, architects or students in related subjects and the majority are past or present members of the Manchester Women's Design Group (MWDG). This had been a project of Women's Design Service (WDS) who were based in London, but closed in 2012 due to lack of funding and political support. The group in Manchester developed independently as an unfunded voluntary organisation because the women involved felt inspired to continue their work. The previous chapter integrated their ideas and experiences about the physical changes they would make to the urban environment in Manchester with those of other participants. It should be noted that their views and experiences did not differ significantly from the wider group, although their professional knowledge appeared to affect the way they articulated it. This discussion will conclude with a brief exploration of why those explicitly engaged with a gendered interest group feel a distinct "women's" design is important. Arlene summed up why she perceived a need for MWDG by telling me:

There is definitely something going on where the built environment is largely designed by men, largely commissioned by men, largely regulated by men, so there's obviously some inequality there.

Arlene felt this meant complex needs were easily overlooked, as there was an implicit assumption that the male experience was "normal." The majority of MWDG members feel their work is of universal benefit. Rhiannon is an architect who is committed to MWDG but slightly conflicted by her involvement in the group because:

I always felt like there were very few ways in which I was different to a man apart from actually physically being a woman. My whole lifestyle and all the choices I've made ... I had no real difference (with a man) apart from perhaps how people might treat me.

Rhiannon felt the problems she faced had largely been due to sexism rather than an innate difference between men and women, although her experience

had changed over time, specifically since becoming a mother. During her interview, Rhiannon had her son with her and we stopped on several occasions to feed him. She discussed the access difficulties of taking a buggy on public transport. Breastfeeding in public had not been a problem for her because she felt she was very confident but she appreciated the difficulties some women face and had been reprimanded by her own mother for immodesty. Although Rhiannon experienced these issues as a woman, she felt it was crucial that childcare and access were not seen to be purely women's work. This concern was echoed by Rita who worked in planning before her retirement. She said:

I've always found it difficult to define the things that are purely women's issues because I think those are very few. I think you have to look at it as a continuum and there are certain things, women are the majority of carers for older people and for children so issues that relate to the needs of those groups are perhaps more pertinent to women and women should be involved in discussions about them ... I was going to say there are obvious things to consider to do with size and strength and but again those can relate to some men but tend more to relate to women. Things like, you know, I've heard comments about the height of seats in bus shelters and railway stations and things like that being based on a typical 6-foot male who designed the whole thing ... *accessible design is good for everyone.* (my emphasis)

Rhiannon had felt assumptions about the kind of building she should be working on since she was at University, but the pressures were nuanced and often based on stereotypical assumptions:

The female architect <laughs> our prerogative is always residential stuff <laughs> no I have done lots of other types of building too ... the dissertation topic I chose was partly looking at feminism and so I read loads of things about feminism and then when Germaine Greer came (to visit the University) I went along to her lecture and (she asked me about my thesis which was on *The changing status of women in society and its impact on domestic architecture*). She was very scathing ... she was saying don't, female architects you shouldn't limit yourself to residential work that's terrible.

Rhiannon had not felt her decision to focus on designing homes was in any way limiting her career because, as she says "they're very important. I mean anyone who has not got a home would consider it pretty important." She

stressed that considerate design was more important than an individual's gender, but that lack of diversity within professional settings often meant a nuanced understanding was lacking:

It is all very well if the designers and the regulators and the commissioners are male, if they are taking into account women's things as well when they design, when they regulate when they commission. Potentially there could be no real grounds for considering there could be any inequality but if there is no knowledge of what women's needs are, if they are different, and in what ways they are different, then you can't know.

Rhiannon went on to explain this is why she was involved with MWDG. She wanted to ensure a range of voices were heard, and their needs met, within the urban environment. Isobelle is not professionally or personally involved in planning or architecture, but has begun to think about how they could improve her experience of the city:

You need to consider are these public places for everyone and if not, you know half of the population is losing out ... you need to think are women going to feel safe here? It's a question that needs to be asked a bit more ... I think in society, the male is the norm, you design the city and spaces with the male as the norm.

The features Isobelle and others are noticing are features like inadequate or inappropriate lighting, isolated bus stops and enclosed spaces such as subways and bridges. Others also mentioned lack of toilets and sanitary facilities, luggage racks that assume you are physically tall and strong and lifts that do not work, necessitating a struggle upstairs with a buggy. To reiterate, these improvements would benefit everyone. MWDG are acutely aware that having women in their name could consolidate the assumption that certain roles are essentially for women. That is, childcare and caring and domestic chores are "women's work" and they require the architecture to accommodate this. Every member of the group I spoke to emphasised the universal benefit of their mission and several told me there had been debate about a name change. MWDG had concluded that they felt it important to acknowledge and foreground their feminist roots. They also campaign to promote the employment of women in the build environment, where they remain under represented, and did not want to aid the invisibility of women with a name change. MWDG feel strongly that environmental determinism – limiting what

can happen in a space – is as damaging as a gendered essentialism that stereotypes and restricts. Their mission means they have many strands to their work, echoing Bowlby's (1990) assertion that stresses that making changes to the environment will not be sufficient to solve underlying patriarchal power systems.

#### **5.14 Street harassment**

Regardless of their differences, interviewees did share many commonalities. One of these was the experience of sexism and street harassment often in banal settings, termed "everyday sexism" by Bates (2014). The majority of these incidents were reported in a weary, matter of fact way. They may ostensibly appear trivial but their cumulative impact can be very damaging and many interviews linked them to wider systems of oppression and exploitation. This is articulated by Calder-Dawe:

Sexism is also routinised. Like other social practices, it becomes meaningful (and powerful) through rehearsal, through particular chains of association that have come together over time. (2015: 9)

Zoe and Jo walked together with me as the only double interview. They are old friends and had the following conversation in Piccadilly Gardens where I met them both:

Zoe: I got sexually harassed right here actually <laughs> I was meeting up with another mutual friend of ours ... I think the fact that I saw her from the other side of the street and I sort of felt very free and happy and called out to her because she hadn't seen me yet and I was like, I think I went "oooooh looking great!" You know and there was this group of men here and they saw that interaction as I ran over the street to hug her and I think they said something like show us your gash and I was like <pause> it felt <pause>

Jo: God!

Zoe: really awful, I didn't really know <pause>it's one of those things that really jolts you and <pause>

Jo: yes immediately you're like you are sucked down from the level of just being and experiencing and just being in the world to like a set of sexual organs which are potentially



under attack kind of thing ... it feels like some form of policing, like in both those cases people coming up to you and saying you're a woman, don't forget it like, you know?

Zoe: exactly it's just letting you know that you're in a public space that actually isn't really designed for you to feel completely comfortable in so it's just reminding you that you are being watched.

This whole exchange is included because it exemplifies many of the pernicious aspects of sexism. It is of course impossible to know the intention of the men who shouted out to Zoe. They may have made what to them was nothing more than a throwaway comment, a joke or a bit of bravado amongst friends. Alternatively, they have been trying to be deliberately hurtful and oppressive. It is probable they weren't actually making a literal request; had Zoe displayed her genitalia as they demanded they would have been shocked and surprised. Regardless of intent, the impact of their words was real, and damaging, and stole something intangible from Zoe's meeting with her friend.

Symbolic violence like this has an immediate impact of hurt feelings and spoilt moments but also contributes to a more serious longer-term damage. The sense of being watched, of being subtly controlled and signalled that there are certain things a woman just can't be allowed to do came through very strongly during this research. It became clear the notion of equality, or the idea of a post-feminist city where gender does not matter is an illusion. Faludi describes the "backlash" against feminism and how the fear of women becoming powerful has resulted in gendered repression whose "workings are encoded and internalised, diffuse and chameleonic" (1992:16). Calder-Dawe illustrates how:

Contemporary sexism flourishes as 'retro', 'hipster' or 'ironic', or else passes unnoticed... When sexism is routinely presented as harmless, its harms become difficult to see and speak of, even as they accumulate around us. (2015:89)

The comment Zoe received was blatantly sexual, unwarranted and aggressive. Other harassment in public can be subtler and excused as mere banter; women who complain are "feminist killjoys" (Ahmed, 2010). Vera-Gray suggests we should call such encounters interruptions rather than harassment, suggesting this better reflects the reality that the legal term which

implies direct and obvious harm. It allows for women's autonomy and acknowledges the "sudden feeling of being pulled outside of yourself, without wanting, without warning." (2016xiii). Vera-Gray's framing accounts for the unease, borne of lived experience, that limits the majority of women's movements. This is part of a complex of violence that percolates throughout lived experiences. Pain makes this explicit by comparing domestic violence and international warfare because, although they operate at different scales both work along:

emotional and psychological registers ... perpetrated, negotiated and resisted by individuals and groups ... framed through gender, race and class and refracted through the history of places (Pain, 2015:64)

Given the attentiveness women told me they need to cultivate, and the fear they feel, the lack of carefree flâneurie is very easily understood. The symbolic speech or gesture generated in street harassment does not detract from actual physical dangers women face or other feminist demands, for example equality in employment, for provision of health care or the recognition of domestic work. Rather, it should be seen as part of a wider struggle with many aspects. It should perhaps come as no surprise that oppression has mutated and diversified to camouflage its persistence. "If there is one thing which has most certainly demonstrated its flexibility in an age which as a whole is frequently accorded that epithet, it is sexism" (Massey 2005:2012).

### **5.15 Flexible sexism and the built environment**

The majority of women I walked with spoke of their lived experiences of (flexible) sexism at some point. Although the words they used differed all expressed combinations of sadness, resignation, anger and despair. These feelings transcended differences, and were articulated particularly powerfully by Isobelle. She was one of the youngest of my participants and is a student who also works part time in a bar. Her words also reiterate the ambivalence around alcohol and excitement in the city. Many of her favourite places were pubs and clubs and she talked about walking confidently through Manchester but she also told me that her mobility was often conducted with a demeanour that was defiant, fearful and tinged with rage. She linked the physical

environment and her personal experiences to the feelings she has about space:

When I see street lighting not working properly in parks and stuff it makes me fucking pissed off, you know it is like, yeah fair enough, guys and groups walking through its fine, but for me that means I can't walk through ... it's another sign that the city isn't for women really. I think also, particularly down towards Piccadilly gardens there are other (places) - across Oldham Street - I know there have been a few sexual assaults there quite recently so a string of men groping women, which nothing was ever really done about it ... that is absolute bullshit.

Isobelle told me she usually gets a taxi home after finishing work in the bar because the area it is in can be "eerie" and men shouting at her from cars made her feel "vulnerable." Some of her wariness comes from being assaulted whilst visiting another city last year which has given her an acute awareness of "the very fragile male violence sort of thing that definitely can erupt on a night out like for no good reason." However, the essence of what she says was also articulated by women who did not disclose any experience of physical violence so prior victimhood does not seem a significant factor in her view. I have chosen Isobelle's quotes as exemplary because she says so much so passionately and succinctly, not because her views are exceptional. She experiences her fear as gendered, feeling targeted and harassed primarily on the basis of being identified as female. She feels angry that the men she cares about cannot fully appreciate this:

I can almost get a bit annoyed at my boyfriend when he's being very not careful out because I'm like, do you know I have to live like this, in this world where I always have to be vigilant, I always have to be careful. I can't just stand around at a bus stop chatting to strangers, but men aren't aware of that and that always makes me almost a bit frustrated. Because the world is so much for them isn't it and they are not aware of stuff, the danger that women have to negotiate ... they don't realise what it's like, not feeling like public space is for you.

Isobelle's voice here resonates across time and space, echoing historical stories Wilson and Solnit share as well as fears expressed by artists such as Helen Scalway (2002) who discusses the anxiety that prevents her truly drifting across London. Walking artists Alison Lloyd and Monique Beston both undertake long distance solo walks across various locations in Europe, and

their work may not immediately betray fear. However, they have expressed feeling unease and receiving warnings from other women which can colour their expeditions (Walking Women, 2016).

### **5.16 Interrupting interviews**

The sense that public space is not for women was underlined by the many interruptions experienced during interviews. These have been discussed in the methods chapter in terms of the ethical dilemmas they represented. I describe and discuss them here because they illustrate the endurance of restrictions upon women's use to public space. Interjections from bystanders often appeared to be harmless banter. The young men along the canal who joyfully shouted questions about if we were on TV or radio were certainly not experienced by myself or the participant as a direct threat; we smiled and walked on, but in the back of my mind was an awareness that they were in a large group and had clearly been drinking.

Rather more annoying was the man near Piccadilly Gardens who got agitated at us, saying he did not want to be on film (quite where he thought the camera was is another matter). Another took it upon himself to interrupt my interview with Pippa and ask why we weren't talking about chemtrails – the idea that the government are poisoning us by using aeroplanes to release toxins which subdue and repress the population. In his opinion, this was the only issue worth debating. His insistence and entitlement to interrupt us and tell me how to do my job was audacious. More disturbing was the man who started taking photographs of Penny and I in the Northern Quarter. He came so close to me his camera was almost touching my hair, and he did attempt at one point to touch my necklace for a closer look. We discussed street photography, and indeed he was technically right. It is legal to take pictures of people without consent. However, there is also a moral and ethical dimension and he was clearly invading my personal space and making us feel uncomfortable. His reasoning was that he liked bright colours and he could do what he wanted. He interpreted my magenta hair as an invitation for him to be able to use me as an object. When I challenged him about the implications of this he changed the subject to ask about *Dr Who* (I was wearing a necklace in the shape of a

character from the television series). I made my displeasure clear and did not prolong the conversation, as I was keen to minimise the disruption to the interview.

The most troubling incident happened on a busy stretch of pavement on Oxford Street at teatime when a white man who appeared to be in his early twenties came running up to Heidi and I, shouting into the microphone “fuck her in the pussy.” This was at first startling; - a violent jolt. As he ran off it became confusing and uncomfortable. We stood, shaking our heads and trying to make sense of it. There was a little nervous laughter and I checked how my interviewee was feeling. She was happy to continue but also somewhat bewildered. This was an unpleasant and uninvited intrusion; the language used made it clear it was also resolutely gendered. I relayed the incident later to a male friend who had expressed surprise at how many times fieldwork had been disrupted. Apparently, he told me, the insult was linked to some “comedy” on YouTube which does little to explain and even less to excuse the perpetrator. Assuming this was a “joke” there is, again, a gulf between the action and the impact it can have.

With the exception of the last encounter, these events were not surprising to my participants; they all live in an environment where such annoyances are commonplace. It is hard to imagine the gender and power dynamics at play are an accident. It is equally hard to merely shrug their effects off; it is a cumulative voice that constantly nags at women telling them they are not welcome. There are a few points that should be clarified however. There was one interruption by a woman, and this was a polite, considerate self-effacing question. We were standing behind her waiting for the lights to change at a pedestrian crossing and she apologised in case her conversation had interrupted our recording (it had not). There is also no intended implication that all men are guilty of harassment or complicit in directly harming women. Patriarchy damages men and boys as well, they are limited through stereotypes, restricted in different ways, and more frequently the victims of actual physical violence on the street. The experiences of transgender and non-binary people are also harmed by patriarchy and gender. Feminists do not seek to continue, deny or replace these oppressions in any way. As Mackay

(2015:6) makes clear “feminism is a movement for change, not a changing of the guard.” That movement incorporates a wide range of tactics, including direct action and mass demonstrations.

### **5.17 Reclaim the night and everyday sexism**

Mackay describes Reclaim the Night (RTN) as:

one response to male violence, a direct action, public, highly visible and creative mass demonstration against rape and all forms of male violence, but it was not the only response (2015:52).

RTN originated in the USA in 1975 where “Take Back the Night” marches were held in various cities to protest attacks on women and to memorialise victims. The first UK events were held in 1977 in response to the Yorkshire Ripper and advice from the police for women to stay at home and be safe. The marches are a display of defiance, solidarity, strength and community and assert a literal being in space. Mackay documents how they have evolved over the years and, in tandem with the wider women’s movement, dealt with issues around trans rights, male allies and changes in global politics. Other feminist marches such as Million Women Rise, Slut Walk and more recently The Women’s March (against Trump) have also used women marching together as a tactic. Mackay notes however that compared to other similar non-feminist political movements such as Occupy, RTN is relatively undocumented:

despite this movement being a global protest and being just as colourful, creative and angry. Perhaps because it has traditionally been and often still is currently, women only, this method of protest has been considered too controversial or niche for scholars who often to readily settle on examples of male, perhaps matching, political heroes (2015:14).

RTN is a spectacular protest that creates a temporary mobile space of resistance and confidence building. There is something very powerful about being able to physically dominate space, and the carnivalesque is evoked. The atmosphere can be joyous, empowering and invigorating and responses from bystanders may be very positive. Nora told me she heard an RTN march pass by whilst she was at a talk in the Whitworth Art gallery. She and her friend were inspired to join the throng and ended up having a drink with some of the

event's organisers. However, the abuse and fear women talked to me about is not necessarily reduced by actions such as this. The incidents we all experienced were usually mundane, banal and seemingly accepted as an inevitable consequence of a patriarchal society. Micro-aggressions and hegemonic disruptions that make up the majority of experiences discussed with me by women are documented by "The Everyday Sexism Project" (Bates, 2015). The accounts Bates has collected demonstrate how women's right to be in the city is continuously challenged, threatened, mocked and eroded. Everyday Sexism is one form of challenge and "male violence against women is not biological, it is political. And if it is made, then it can be unmade; if it is learnt, it can be unlearnt" (Mackay, 2015:11).

## **5.18 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored explicitly gendered experiences of Manchester. Women have spoken about their feelings walking through the city. These are influenced by experiences of symbolic and actual violence and every day, sexism. On a personal note, I was shocked and dismayed at the prevalence of harassment and the influence it has on women's life, and indeed the course of this research. I probably shouldn't have been surprised. From its inception mainstream psychogeography and creative walking have been coded as male, so much so that that Elkin notes it appears "As if a penis were a requisite walking appendage, like a cane" (2016: 19). A range of discourses from planning, religion and popular culture reinforce the historical association with the domestic that makes women in the city a threat, a problem. However, women walking artists challenge this even though they experience fear. Jane Samuels and Kubra Khademi are amongst those who make this explicit in their work, as does Helen Scalway who feels "I have no sovereign space in the street. I walk on a margin." (2002: unpaginated). The women I walked with also sense danger but they adopt a range of tactics to make their own paths through Manchester. To conclude a return to Massey seems a pertinent summary:

places, and our senses of them (and such related things as are degrees of mobility) are gendered through and through. Moreover, they are gendered in a myriad of different ways, which

vary between cultures and overtime. And this gendering of space and place both reflects *and has effects back on* the ways in which gender is constructed and understood in the societies in which we live. (Massey 2005: 186)

The challenge is how to enable places to be more open, accessible and safe for everyone. Dismantling misogyny is part of the problem and Nottinghamshire Police have begun to record it as a hate crime (BBC 2016). Bates (2016) reports the result has not been (unsurprisingly) a rash of spurious claims but a perceptual shift that takes gender based violence seriously. The Women's Design Service and MWDG have produced research on material changes that would improve the built environment for everyone. This needs to be implemented if the city is truly to be a place of welcome and enrichment for all. In the next chapter, we will explore other social, cultural, political and economic forces that shape women's lives and their relationship to Manchester.



### ***Drift Three***

#### ***A wander around Ancoats and dreams that never came true.***

I'm at the northern end of Oldham Street, facing the ring road that cuts off Ancoats from the rest of the city. It's a noisy barrier but I'm crossing it. This used to be called New Cross and there were once food riots where now there are traffic lights. There's been a pub on the site since 1736. The Crown and Kettle seems to have more than its fair share of fabulous stories, even by pub standards. No one seems quite sure why its architecture is quite so extravagant; the idea it was once a courthouse has been dismissed. During the Second World War, there was the remains of a zeppelin decorating the walls and it became a favourite place for American GIs of colour to relax. It was renowned for its welcoming and open atmosphere. Sad to learn in the 70s it became linked to the National Front and closed its doors. It opened again in 2005 and today it's a diverse and friendly boozier, selling the neighbourhoods de rigueur artisan pork pies and local craft ale.



*Plate 20: Great Ancoats Street*

Next door is the old Daily Express Building, striking in its art deco modernism, a replica of its Fleet Street brethren. It's one of my

favourite buildings around here, shiny, sleek and impenetrable. I was a bit disappointed when I had to go inside for a meeting recently; it's just another unremarkable office conversion. I turn left at Deros House, a curious mock Tudor construction, once a hostel for destitute women. The street names here tell a story: Jersey Street, Cotton Street, Cutting Room Square. Red brick mills dominate and there are a few rows of neat terraces. Anita Street was formerly known as Sanitary Street, the name changed when a toilet became a source of embarrassment rather than pride. Nearby Radium Street changed its name too, it was Germany Street until the war. Victoria Square over there was one of the first ever social housing developments; they didn't put skirting boards in because they feared they would be ripped off and burnt.

It wasn't all textiles, here's the old ice factory. In the square are large images of abandoned factories, glimpses of nature reclaiming space, watching silently as those buildings are brought back to life as apartments. From industry to leisure. If you look carefully you might see a brass spyhole on some walls, peer inside and if you are lucky there's a wonderful optical issue; a ticking clock, a factory punch card, a rotating relic. These are Dan Dubowitz's *Peeps*, a subtle and quietly magnificent public art project. It's a shame that as the area comes back to life they are dying, being taken down or abandoned, but maybe that's what the artist would want.



*Plate 21 One of the Peeps by Dan Dubowitz*

I bear right into New Islington. For a long time, the strip of houses with the decorative facades looked out onto a wasteland. Round the back was an inexplicable, and somewhat neglected, topiary dinosaur. Construction work stopped when the economy crashed in 2008 but now it has recommenced and the cranes have come back to life. On Old Mill Street the lamps look like whalebones and pedestrians still get confused by the shared space there. The drain covers and bus stops had exquisite attention to detail paid to them when they were installed. The designs are embellished with symbols harking back to the Cardroom Estate that stood here before. CGI images covered billboards proclaiming a new, stylish, affluent future and those fancy kerbstones were just the start. However, the visions they heralded never did manifest and only now, years later, is the marina complete and the new school opening.

On the canal side is Will Alsop's Chips Building, incongruous with its design embellished with yesterday's news. Go left along the canal to Bridge 5 Mill, an eco-centre built by volunteers and unemployed workers on training schemes. Some of the internal doors used to smell of peppermint because they were made of recycled toothbrushes. As

you head out of the city centre snatches of drumrolls and percussive beats catch the air; the old mills contain labyrinthine rehearsal and recording spaces. The external walls showcase local art. I'm the only person on the towpath here but I did pass some anglers earlier. The autumnal light is making leaves glow and my world, here, now, feels peaceful, shimmering, illuminous. On a match day, it's a different story as football pilgrims head to The Ethiad Stadium. Home now to Manchester City, it was part of the Commonwealth Games infrastructure. I've been asked many times if I'm Red or Blue but I confess the beautiful game holds no interest to me. There had been plans to build a Super Casino round here too but the vision was thwarted, another dream of a future that never quite was.

## Chapter Six

### ***Champagne Supernova: The hipsters dérive***

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter explicitly links women's experiences of walking in Manchester with wider political forces such as gentrification, privatisation of public space and austerity. It will begin by explaining the policy context in Manchester before discussing the idea of hipsterism as a form of contemporary flâneurie, linking back to Debord's theory of the spectacle and the contemporary relevance and potential of psychogeography.

The title of this chapter is shared with an Oasis song, (Gallagher, 1996), which came to personify the cultural atmosphere of ebullience and optimism following the election of the first New Labour Government (1997). It was during this era that Manchester became the focus of a wide range of neoliberal policies aimed to promote regeneration and economic prosperity. Oasis was fronted by Liam and Noel Gallagher, brothers from Burnage, Manchester, who became global superstars. They personified a laddish swagger and a thuggish hedonism borne of northern grit. They were celebrated as much for their brotherly conflicts, blokishness and council estate background as their guitar driven, Beatles influenced sound, which was heralded as a return to authentic, real, music. The press took great delight in positioning them in a conflict with Blur who were stereotyped as their opposites: southern, educated, soft and somehow fake (Chaudhary and Ward, 2015). There is an irony here as both were equally self-aware and constructed as products, and Britpop itself was in part at least a reactionary movement. It failed to reflect the diversity and dynamism of contemporary Britain and celebrated nostalgia. This frequently included a celebration of gender roles that often-condoned sexism, framing it as ironic and irrelevant in a (supposedly) post-feminist world. The music was often apolitical and accepting of New Labour rhetoric, championing individualism and consumption, because, to borrow another Oasis lyric from Supersonic: *"you can have it all but how much do you want it?"* (Gallagher, 1994). This rhetorical question masks structural inequalities and inherited privileges that load the race to prosperity from the start. It demonstrates why

the *Champagne Supernova* is a seductively packaged and snappily titled but ill thought through fizzy cocktail with a bitter aftertaste. It leaves most folk with nothing but a terrible hangover. This chapter examines the aftermath of the party by considering the result of this phase of regeneration as it impacted upon the women who participated in this research.

## **6.2 The Manchester boomtimes**

Manchester was born in the heat and chaos of the Industrial Revolution. The city became the heart of the textile trade and thrived as warehouses, mills and factories were built. The population expanded rapidly and it was celebrated as Cottonopolis. Disraeli (1844) said Manchester was as wonderful as classical Athens. The boom brought massive prosperity for the new industrialists but great poverty and squalor to many more. Engels' *Conditions of the Working Class of England in 1844* (1845) documents some of the worst excesses and areas such as Angel Meadow and Little Ireland became terrible slums. This is the foundational narrative of what came to be rebranded as "The Original Modern City" by Peter Saville.

Today in the popular imagination, Manchester holds a particular and slightly peculiar place. Kitchen sink dramas like "*A Taste of Honey*" (1961) and metropolitan stereotypes that it is grim up north still combine to create the image of a grey, foreboding landscape. The grit and humour of *Coronation Street* add to this mix, with later television portrayals such as *Shameless* and *Benefit Street* contributing to the demonization of working class chavs. (This is not just a Manchester issue of course, as Jones (2011) illustrates). However, there are strong counter narratives too. Manchester has long been a nexus for, as a film about the city suggests, *24 Hour Party People* (2002). Particularly pertinent to this study, The Hacienda nightclub (1982-1997) and Madchester music scene was linked to a hedonistic rave culture whose legacy still lingers. Indie guitar music, from The Smiths to the swagger of Oasis, has deep roots here too. Football and sport are also now multi-million pound place-making businesses (Edensor and Millington, 2008). Saville was employed by Marketing Manchester as part of the city's regeneration, because echoing cities across northern England, Manchester had suffered industrial decline in

the latter half of the twentieth century and subsequently relied on entertainment, leisure and consumption to revive its fortunes. Tony Wilson was the broadcaster, journalist and founder of Factory Records who contributed much to the countercultural cool image of the city. In later years, he became an enthusiastic champion of Richard Florida's (2005) theories about the regenerative powers of the creative class. When Wilson became ill with renal cancer his famous friends set up a fund to pay for treatment he could not afford. He died in 2007 and his headstone describes him, with characteristic chutzpah, as a "cultural catalyst".

Manchester was at the forefront of the "New Urban Renaissance" begun as a major policy initiative under the 1997 New Labour government. Richard Rogers led an Urban Task Force whose vision was of "cities based on the principles of design excellence, social well-being and environmental responsibility." Their report, 'Towards an Urban Renaissance' (1999), and the subsequent White Paper (2000), provided the framework for the urban regeneration policies we are concerned about. It entrenched neoliberal rhetoric of public-private partnerships, national and international competition between cities, and prioritising new financial, service and cultural sector jobs above traditional manufacturing. In many ways this was a success and post-Industrial Manchester saw a remarkable change in its fortunes. In 1990 there were just 90 people living in the city centre, by 2005 there were 25,000 (Rogers 2005). In 2003 Think Tank Demos declared Manchester the most Bohemian city in Britain. (Carter 2003). However, despite the shiny new apartments and glittering nightlife Manchester still ranked as the fifth poorest place to live in the 2015 indices of multiple deprivation (Bullen, 2015).

Today Manchester is part of the Greater Manchester conurbation, made up of 10 metropolitan boroughs: Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan. The boundaries between boroughs are often contested by residents and in lived experience are fluid and permeable, although some boroughs have a very strong sense of local identity. Some residents of Oldham, for example, insist they are actually in Yorkshire and inhabitants of the townships such as Hyde, which were bundled together into Tameside in 1974, often avoid use of their borough name. Ward

et al (2015) discuss the policy context and positioning of Manchester and how the City Council has placed itself at the heart of the region. MCC have succeeded in dominating discourse and attracting investment to the urban core rather than the periphery. Therefore, in general conversation, Manchester is often used synonymously with Greater Manchester, although this research does focus on Manchester city itself.

### **6.3 Witnessing change**

The experiences of individual women are influenced by processes of change across the city and beyond. Many reflected on this, observing huge redevelopment that they feel has been both a blessing and a curse. The IRA bomb in 2006 was often noted as a catalyst for change. Although in reality social policy had already begun to reshape the city centre, post-bomb there was a visible acceleration of their adoption and the rupture ended up acting as a visible break point. Mia is a youth worker who has lived in Manchester all her life and told me:

Predominantly it all stems from the bomb. Not that I would advocate violence of any nature but it was probably the best thing that ever happened (to the city) ... I suppose you could say that in essence it spurred the regeneration of what was effectively a dying city, dying because ... it wasn't until after 1996, people did not live in Manchester before then. This whole area was abandoned effectively. The regeneration of the Northern Quarter didn't start until the early 90s.

Mia was careful to be sensitive and be clear she did not want to glorify the bombing but she voices a truth that local politicians have often hinted at but been reticent to clarify because they do not want to be seen to be insensitive (King, 2006). An important distinction should be made here; reactions were very different to the Manchester Arena bomb in March 2017. This caused considerable loss of life and was clearly intended to cause human as well as financial damage. This atrocity took place after my fieldwork interviews and so women's comments about the IRA bomb and security should be interpreted in this context.





*Plate 22: New Cathedral Street*

New Cathedral Street exemplifies many of the changes in the city since 1996. It did not exist before the redevelopment of the Arndale Centre and is positioned between Selfridges and Harvey Nicholls, neither of whom had a presence in the city centre before the bomb. This new cultural infrastructure clearly targets an affluent, aspirational audience. There are large tree planters at the Market Street end, adding a decorative touch to the “secured by design” staple bollards and a plethora of security cameras. Overt security is minimal but the absence of buskers, begging and litter suggests a limit to permissible activity. This is a hard street to relax in, there are no benches and it feels a place of transit apart from when the annual Christmas Market takes over and the pavement becomes an extension of the shopping mall. One of the shops has an artificial shop front, complete with fake plastic pigeons, sanitised behind a glass pane. The northern edge of New Cathedral Street leads onto Exchange Square, a key part of the post-bomb redesign. The internationally renowned designer Martha Schwartz has since criticised how clutter and poor maintenance have ruined her work (King, 2016). She has also complained about changes to the seating design which she feels are an attack on skateboarders and a way of limiting spontaneous movement. In contrast to the shiny glass new-builds, juxtaposed at the edge of the square are the remains of “The Shambles”. A medieval house is now a pub, rebuilt brick by brick to

accommodate the new developments; it survived the bomb but in moving location its claim to continuity and authenticity is questioned.

Cheryl reflected on the changes she had seen since moving to Manchester in the 1990s. She was attracted by the sense of a creative city and came to study drama at university. The area she chose to live in is in itself a case study of contemporary ideas of progress and social housing. Hulme lies at the southern edge of the city centre. The terraced housing was cleared and The Crescents, a huge modernist social housing development, was opened in 1972. At the time, it was part of an idealistic Le Corbusier-inspired vision of a Utopian city but a combination of factors leads to its demise, as discussed by Hatherley (2010). These included substandard building, lack of maintenance, lack of consideration for families and evidence that the police would not patrol these streets in the sky. The Crescents later became a creative enclave after the retreat of the council and an influx of squatters. They became synonymous with alternative culture; music, art, and politics. Discussion of this era arouses passion on both sides and illustrates the limitation of historical accounts. Many remember the Crescents fondly but others celebrated their demise. They were demolished in 1994 and replaced by a mixed scheme including private, social and co-operative housing developments. Cheryl lived on The Bentley House Estate, also known as The Redbricks, which is one of the few places of continuity in the area as it was built in 1947.

It's massive change, isn't it? ... I measure it by the cranes, from our flat you could just see cranes across the city and I remember when we first moved in there wasn't that many, and by the time we were leaving it was just like 20 cranes across the city ... that whole time they were making the city centre ... I think that the bomb probably didn't help in that respect. When you wipe something out you just put a clean palette in don't you.

Cheryl spoke with a sense of wonder about the scale of change, but her last comment adds a note of caution and concern. She was one of many women who suggested that something was being lost and that progress is not always all positive. Her use of cranes as a measurement echoes Graham Stringer, leader of Manchester City Council 1984-1996, who referred to the "crane index" as a measure of prosperity. He cited the number of construction sites

as a sign of success in attracting funding to the city. Stringer was at the vanguard of MCC's transition from municipal socialism to neoliberalism and entrepreneurialism (Quilley, 2002).

#### **6.4 Regeneration**

Regeneration of Manchester began as a response to the post-industrial decline the city was experiencing. There is widespread consensus that something had to be done to a city that was suffering unemployment, deprivation and decay. Although this research takes a critical lens I do not want to give an impression of a wholly negative process. Zukin (2010) and Lately (2017) demonstrate regeneration does have many material pleasures and the women I walked with all enjoyed the vibrancy and variety offered in the regenerated city centre. However, the most common reaction in my participants was an ambivalence that Christine personifies. She had been telling me that as a teenager in Salford she would often catch the bus into Shudehill Bus Station and walk across the city to meet her friends in the Hulme Crescents:

It's good to see Manchester busy and there are more jobs here. That walk I just described probably feels a bit safer than it did back then when it was a patch of wasteland and there were not many people around, whereas now it's just always busy ... But it can feel quite claustrophobic I think these days with the amount of buildings that there are. (The city centre) is not somewhere that I really want to come into that much and I think some of that is because I work part time now so I don't have a lot of disposable income ... I don't have the money to spend to come out to bars and restaurants that I used to have.

For Christine, the city has always been a site of consumption and entertainment but her ability to take part has decreased as she has work responsibilities and limited money. She went on to tell me it was not just about cash though, as many of her favourite places like the art gallery were free and she enjoyed bargain hunting for a: "champagne lifestyle on a lemonade budget." She told me she felt the city was becoming too busy and oppressive and she found the atmosphere frequently alienating. Martha summarised the changes that many participants discussed as she shared her first impressions of Manchester with me and compared them with how she now feels about her adoptive home:

When I moved here in 2000, I had been here about four days before that, I think it was 95, it was before the bomb and I remember thinking 'God who would ever live here' < laughs>. I came to do some research at the John Rylands Library and I remember back then seeing everything other than pubs closed at six, there weren't many places to eat in the city centre and other than going to the Rylands for research all I can remember doing is going to the Cornerhouse to eat and watching the film *Interview with a Vampire* at the old Odeon on Oxford Road. I remember sitting in my hotel room and watching *The Buddha of Suburbia* <laughs>. I wasn't that positive when I moved here in 2000 but the city has advanced a lot of ways since then ... More people are living here in the city, not just living in the city but using the city for their leisure time. More tourism of various kinds, more live music venues, more art venues, more restaurants, bars, maybe too many bars, more shops

Martha identifies the key differences women told me about and is generally very positive about her adopted hometown now. However, her comment "too many bars" eludes to a potential problem. Women balanced the advantages of improved consumer options with the perceived inconvenience of crowds, and generally felt this was a positive change. The postmodern city has been redefined for leisure and consumption and my participants were able to enjoy these new opportunities, as Marion says of Manchester when she first moved here:

It was a city that was about working and I really clearly remember that around five or six o'clock the city will go dead. It was all just offices and even the simple things like lights, it would be dark in the city centre so I think that in that way the city has come alive in the last 18 years.

However, there were some concerns about the negative impact of change. Concern was expressed about the encroachment of chain stores and franchises which may erode the city's identity. This was discussed previously with reference to Abakhan and a love of supposedly local independent shops. There was also widespread unease about the negative social effects of regeneration, particularly in relation to how it increases inequality and emphasises exclusion. Many expressed concerns that there was a lack of consultation or consideration when decisions affecting the city centre were being made. They felt their sense of communal ownership and belonging was threatened by rapid and uneven change that they had no influence on.

Members of MWDG were keen to stress their belief in a meaningful consultation that allowed for a range of voices to influence the shape of the city. For example, an emphasis on apartments as the preferred residential option and a lack of infrastructure such as schools, doctors and parks meant families and older people often struggled if they wanted to live in the central area. Marion is a MWDG member who works in central Manchester and also teaches at the University. Although she expressed delight at the “coming alive” of Manchester she feared that many people are being left behind and feel as if they are at the mercy of forces beyond their control:

There is a feeling amongst people that they are getting a really raw deal in Manchester and with the talk of devolution as well a lot of people, a lot more people, are really asking questions like what does that mean for us? How are you including the most vulnerable? How are you including the least wealthy?

Marion was one of many to mention lack of consultation and involvement. She cited local campaign groups such as Manchester Shield and social media as crucial ways to try and make voices heard, especially if they are speaking inconvenient truths to power.

## **6.5 Grimy history**

An ambivalent feeling about the redevelopment of Manchester included for many people a dislike of homogeneity and sanitisation. The next chapter discusses further the issue of authenticity but here I wish to explore how this reiterates the feeling that roughness and ‘grot’ are an essential part of the city’s historical fabric. It also underlines the belief that listening to voices seldom heard is an important civic function. Cheryl says:

I don’t understand why we are so attached to the Manchester grottness really, because it is grotty and it is about poverty and it is about deprivation and what was hard for the people, but ... by wiping it out (regeneration) wipes out the history of it as well and that’s not fair. It’s not fair to just rewrite the history of the city without asking the city.

Cheryl does not appear to be fetishizing or romanticising poverty. In fact, she would go on to tell me what she had learnt about the horrific conditions for workers in factories and mills. She was deeply touched by a recent play she

had seen about The Scuttlers, a notorious Victorian gang and she drew parallels with contemporary youth crime. The hairstyles and fashions of The Scuttlers are indeed strikingly modern looking. The Scuttlers is now used as the name of a local wine bar – an act of recuperation and sanitisation which appears to pay homage to history but ignores violent truths. We also discussed a recent immersive theatre show Angel Meadow which we had both seen, and that left a lasting impression with the horrors it depicted. Cheryl was emphasising the importance of history to a sense of place, and in particular to paying attention to working class and marginalised voices. To deny those stories is to commit an injustice and to fail to acknowledge the true cost of our cappuccinos. Those stories include violence, horror and messiness, which we are in some ways complicit in, and they disrupt and complicate our relative peace and prosperity. The networks of relationships Massey (2005) uses to conceptualise place stretch back over time and include power relationships that, however complex, remain connected to flows of capital. There was a palpable sense of frustration that “progress” has not bought prosperity for all and that the city was becoming more polarised and alienated. Sam articulated frustration about the lack of real influence many people feel about they are able to exert upon their physical environment. She remembered the Manchester of her childhood as dark and dirty and she had worked in a sweatshop, so had no desire to move backwards. Sam has been involved in a range of campaigns to create community spaces and improve engagement. She told me:

People change all the time and we should be able to change the city as well. It's not just up to planners and developers how we should live in our physical environment ... There's not enough opportunities for us to be able to change that even at our real ground level ... There are quite a lot of buildings that need to go right. It's actually more of an attitude I want to change really, it's the attitude of the people who have the money and the people who are the developers who don't care. It's the developers and also the politicians who just think yes, let's keep developing Manchester. For God's sake have you not seen what they are doing to London?! We don't have to do that, we can learn from their mistakes. It's more of an attitude of wanting people to be conscious about what we have. Slow down, let's just go slow you know, take time and think about things and it's not a conservative, small c obviously not big c, it's not a conservative attitude ... I'm

not trying to preserve it (the city) in aspic or turn it into a museum. It is just about saying 'hey let's consider this', let's involve everyone, let's have proper conversations

Sam speaks for many here in sharing a sense of impotence and alarm about the scale and speed of change. There is a palpable sense of frustration at disenfranchisement from planning processes and political decision making. There is a sound rational basis for this concern. Regeneration has not brought prosperity for all and the trickle down economic theory has been proved to be a fallacy. Folkman et al (2016) provide an analysis that shows Manchester is a city divided around pockets of deprivation. The Greater Manchester Poverty Commission (2013) shared harrowing testimonials of people suffering and austerity has continued to bite. Folkman et al (2016) also detail the building of a "parallel new town of offices and flats" where:

the central city and inner South-West around Salford Quays were rebuilt on a high-rise logic of profit as private developers turned square footage into cubed rental value. (2016:3)

This combination of rapacious development, a decrease in public services and globalised, diffused power structures have led to a feeling of helplessness and alienation. Women feel like they cannot change the course of what feels like an irresistible force. Places that they feel matter, and in some affective way belong to them, are being reconfigured without any consideration. The "cry and demand" Lefebvre (1996) believes central to the right to the city cannot be heard.

## **6.6 Gentrification**

Gentrification was not always explicitly named, but its practices were described by many women I spoke too. They told me how they had seen established residents become priced out and alienated within their neighbourhoods, and several told me they themselves had to move for economic reasons. They also talked about businesses closing and the character of the city centre changing. They pointed to the ubiquity of, in some areas, homogenised global chain shops that were making Manchester just like anywhere else. However, in areas like the Northern Quarter new creative and bohemian businesses were taking over. Ostensibly, this should be positive as

many women spoke fondly of independent businesses, however the affordability and atmosphere of these new “hipster” places were excluding people on grounds of cost and price. These processes are not unique to Manchester, Atkinson (2008) talks of “the almost total influence of gentrification in many central city areas ... gentrification is by definition a problem” but it manifests in particular ways in different localities. The process does not immediately feel brutal and may be welcomed but uncomfortable juxtapositions are created as Martha says:

It is becoming (so) the so-called unattractive or undesirable residents are cheek by jowl with all the new people, the new young hip professionals, and I think that it is going to be interesting that clash. I think there are clearly demarcated zones aren't there and there may not be fences but they are there

She is describing a conflict between established residents, particularly those on a low income, and the new creative class. The unattractive and undesirable residents Martha talks about are synonymous with being working class, older, poorer and unfashionable. Manchester, like many other places around the world, has worked hard to attract the new creative classes Florida (2005) suggested would be the saviour of declining cities. His theories were adopted wholeheartedly by New Labour and their unintended legacy is now visible. Even Florida himself has admitted he may have been wrong and perhaps what has happened is the already privileged have colonised new territories. One consequence has been the invisible barriers Martha describes. They are similar to those in Davis' prophetic *City of Quartz* (1990) and they are created in various ways in Manchester. These are just two examples encountered during walks:

1. The newly refurbished central library is still open to all, but a G4S security guard stands in the lobby that leads directly into a café space rather than a reading room.
2. There is a path connecting Piccadilly Gardens to New York Street which goes through City Tower. A useful shortcut and respite from rain it has some comfortable seats and tables which I have never seen anyone sit in.



The pubs and bars on Oldham Street exemplify the change and Lately (2017) provides crass examples of co-opting a working-class past. This includes bars disguised as pawn shops, laundrettes and shebeens and the prevalence of industrial styling and shabby chic. Sam predicts there is a conflict looming. She had already wondered where people would go when the city no longer felt welcoming to them, and had raised a case that had been widely discussed in the local press. Residents living above Night and Day, one of the oldest live music venues on Oldham Street, had complained about the excessive noise. This provoked derision that someone would move to a bustling urban area and be unprepared for a lively atmosphere but also dread as the change seems inevitable:

I think there's going to be more tussle. I think for creative people who want to use Manchester as a kind of a creative space and maybe the people that live here, who have got to get up in the morning, you know they don't want any noise ... I'd like to see more free spaces. Maybe even more vacuums if that's possible, just like a space to let something happen, to sort of see what happens with the space rather than kind of making it into something like a new hipster commodity bar ... Just that kind of the under layer that's so often gets forgotten and then when it's not there anymore everybody's like where did all the creative people go? Well they got priced out! Damn ... I think it's that ownership thing that just pisses me off a bit, yes, we are here now, we own this, and if you can't afford it do one ... But then I don't know maybe that's just me. Maybe it's just because I am always skint you know, I don't know, I just find something really weird about all that kind of hipster thing but it's like buying into something isn't it.

Sam highlights several important ideas. What she calls a “vacuum” space resembles an un-proscribed public space where multiple rights to the city can be enacted. Berman (1986) talks about the need for an “open-minded” public space that can include the poor and dispossessed, even if their presence makes the more affluent uncomfortable. Sam firmly believes sites for imagination, creativity and free association are vital. She has spent time volunteering in squats and social centres trying to manifest this vision. She feels the pricing out of creativity is an inevitable consequence of gentrification processes and feels this loss acutely. Sam identifies capital as the central culprit, as land is transformed into a commodity and becomes an investment opportunity people

are displaced. She identified artists as victims rather than instigators of this system. Sam felt angry about how gentrification recuperates and commodifies character and creativity rendering the landscape dull and smooth. She was not alone in articulating a belief that messiness, grit and conflict are essential components of place character but not happily assimilated into a business model. Sam concluded by making a comment about her personal circumstances; she is in her fifties and identifies as an artist, supporting her creative work through working as a cleaner, receptionist and any other precarious work she can find. This complicates the stereotypical idea that creativity is the sole province of the young and trendy – what she calls the “hipster thing” – which she feels now dominates the aesthetic sensibility of the city.

## **6.7 Social cleansing**

The rise of the hipster was a concern for many women. It was linked to the rise of a monoculture, and particularly the loss of working-class culture. It was articulated by Patti, who was talking about traditional pub culture when she identified reasons for its demise:

that old man pub thing, that's been dying since the smoking ban, hasn't it? ... the smoking ban, the taxes on alcohol, incredibly cheap alcohol in supermarkets, all sorts of things that have put pressure on that.

However, Patti goes deeper in her explanation, citing changing trends and the tendency to market Manchester on a global stage as part of wider economic trends:

people's expectations of what is aesthetically acceptable have gone in such a strange direction in the last 20, 30 years now really. Isn't it since the 90s when students were still scruffy and they still just wanted a cheap 75p pint then but they've completely changed what they want. Everybody's chasing the hip, the happening, the being part of this idea of Manchester as another New York or another Berlin or whatever and the audience for normal working-class places as well as the rent that you have to pay to occupy a space now ... It's gentrification which is social cleansing isn't it by another name. Those places will soon cease to exist I suppose as a result of that and it's a loss of richness I think, even though this does seem quite higgledy-piggledy and maybe it still is a little bit.

If you look around this street (corner of Thomas Street and Tib Street) you see an old sandwich bar next to a pawn shop next to vinyl shop <laughs> but you know I don't know how long this will last.



*Plate 23 Tib Street, Northern Quarter*

The idea of gentrification as social cleansing is a powerful one and writers such as Lees (2014) and Minton (2009) have demonstrated the harm it can do. Lees (2016) recently visited Salford with the Institute of Urban Dreaming and drew parallels with what she had witnessed in London. The positionality of the women who expressed these concerns are varied. Sam and Patti both told me they grew up in traditionally working-class environments and were the first of their family to go to University. They both have eclectic cultural tastes and consider themselves happy and successful although not financially affluent. They expressed concern for the destruction of their roots and their culture even as they spoke of transcending it; their concerns were communal as well as personal. Women who did not grow up in Manchester, and who had a range of educational and occupational experiences also shared their sentiments. I had wondered if age was significant and thought perhaps there was a nostalgia for a personal youth culture, however younger women also worried about erasure. The class dynamic was not often expressed in classical terms but money and its signifiers were consistently identified as problematic.

The Northern Quarter is seen as a key front on the cultural battleground for many reasons. There was concern that its independence, quirkiness and character was threatened by chain stores, apartments and rising rents but also that it itself was a threat to the rest of the city as it expands. Cheryl explains:

You wouldn't ever have as a student have gone beyond Matt and Fred's on Oldham Street, any further north of Oldham Street you (were) getting into fairly dodgy territory, whereas now it stretches all the way up to the Marble Arch on Oldham Road and there's money like ... there is a big exclusion for being in this area. It is money, so that there is big money and you can see there's money and you can see the hipsters and their beards and their nice Carhart shirts and then you can see people looking for money and there is nobody in between. It is like either end of the spectrum is here, which wasn't really the deal when we were kids.

Cheryl once again highlights poverty and inequality as the key issue. Walking through the city it is striking, and deeply troubling, to see an obvious increase in rough sleeping over recent years. Latest figures from Shelter show a 33% increase since June 2016 and they suggest their figure of 4,428 homeless people in Manchester is a conservative estimate (Smithers, 2017).

## **6.8 Housing and homelessness**

Homelessness was a very important concern for many of the women I spoke to. We passed many people who were sleeping on the street and this was met with compassion and concern, as well as anger that the system has failed so many people. Mitchell (2003) powerfully documents how the demonization, exclusion and removal of homeless people operates within neoliberal cities that wish to emphasise their safety, desirability and cleanliness. The Manchester Evening News has documented cases of how these operate locally, including evicting squats (Butler, 2015 and many others), throwing away sleeping bags (Bardsley, 2016) and installing spikes to stop rough sleeping (Bardsley, 2017). However, the women I walked with would rather see a more caring approach. Barbara was talking to me in Piccadilly Gardens as we saw a PCSO approach a man sat on the ground with a sleeping bag. She said:

Something I find sad is when they move on people who are obviously homeless. I find that very difficult, because where do

they move to? There's nowhere particularly for them to go is there ... there is a lot especially in the shop doorways, you notice quite a lot of people there with the little beds they've made. In fact, I notice it a lot on Sunday morning when I come in. I suppose because it's quiet you notice those people just lying there sleeping, it's really bad and they didn't used to be there, you know a number of years ago you wouldn't have seen them I'm sure.

Amelia echoed this when she told me that the thing she disliked most about Manchester now was:

The quite depressing thing is the number of homeless people that has increased quite dramatically recently ... at the moment you see so many homeless people.

Her recognition of the problem was borne of being forced to confront the issue every day. Walking necessitates an encounter of some kind, an acknowledgement, whether or not women choose to engage with individuals. No one framed homeless people as a problem to them, or identified them as threatening or harmful, but they saw their presence as a collective failure to provide social support. They wanted action at a statutory level but many also helped personally as well, whether by donating money, supporting local organisations or simply talking and engaging with homeless people. They felt a human connection and asserted, in a variety of ways, the right for everyone to be in the city regardless of circumstance. Many women had ideas on how to solve the problem, and Rennie shared her solution with me along with her astute diagnosis of the cause of the problem:

when you are literally stumbling over people in the street it is hard to avoid it isn't it ... I do think it's a landlord problem, it's a problem with the system, it is not a housing shortage. I often dreamt about, fantasised about, how I would help given one of these crumbling buildings ... I don't think this city has got a problem with homelessness, I think we've got to deal with landlords because I spent a great deal of time wandering around looking at empty buildings and there's a lot of them.

Rennie was not the only woman to comment on the high number of derelict and unoccupied buildings she had seen across the city. There is also a juxtaposition between the types of accommodation being built and what is actually needed. Women were alarmed at what they saw as a proliferation of high end, luxury apartments rather than affordable or social housing. They also tend to be aimed

at young, affluent professional individuals or couples rather than families. The academic Jon Silver (2017) has begun tracing property ownership in several Manchester neighbourhoods. He found a complex international web, designed to maximise profits for developers. His work is supporting concerns voiced not just by the women I walked with but organisations such as Greater Manchester Housing Action (GMHA). It was at an event organised by GMHA in July 2017 that Silver shared his concerns. They were echoed by Greta, who works in planning and says at the moment that she has noticed that:

I think it's just a land grab before the high-rises going up. I don't think high-rises are necessarily the way forward ... there's an organisation in London called Create Streets and it's all about anti-high-rise and it's all about more terraces, more sorts of traditional houses even in built-up areas ... I just think you could have more families in cities but why would a family want to live in a flat because you need space for kids to run around ... *nobody is doing it now, nobody is interested in constructing social housing*".

Amanda is training to be an architect and hopes to be able to work on solving the problem. She has some constructive ideas:

I love Manchester but there are a lot of empty spaces. I think I would see more residential uses upstairs in buildings that are derelict, well not derelict but empty upstairs with something on the ground floor so people could live in it. That would be a good, a better use of space. There is so much wasted space, there are so many people without houses like the homeless problem I think it's in the (whole) country but I've seen in Manchester every five years it's got so many times worse, the number of people that sleeping rough, it's so many people

These women can see what is happening, to walk is to observe and engage with uncomfortable truths. Poverty and inequality always have a spatial dimension; Engels was able to write such a vivid portrait of squalor and exploitation partly because he too walked these streets and marked what he saw. *The Conditions of The Working Class in England in 1844* is at times striking in its geographical specificity and when Ewan McColl first came to the city he claimed it as his Baedeker (travellers) Guide.

## 6.9 Heritage

Heritage and processes of historical debt and responsibility were evoked by many women. Janet is a Quaker with a keen interest in local history and she told me:

I'm reading a book by Jeanette Winterson who is of course from this area, and she's saying that until the First World War 65% of the cotton of the world was processed in Manchester ... one thing which I found quite interesting was that Quakers were there right at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution because Quakers weren't allowed to be lawyers or to go to university or anything like that in Parliament. So, their way forward was in business and they became really big business people, mainly businessmen, and so in a sense we've got a responsibility for where we are now which is in the middle of a crisis caused by this industrialisation.

Manchester has always been an international city, indeed its claim to be the first industrial city makes it somewhat complicit, although how such historical debts can be quantified and redressed are a debate for elsewhere. Poulter, (2011) is one of the few writers to make explicit the link between our splendid civic architecture and slavery. Much of Manchester's prosperity originated from Cotton, largely sourced from plantations in the southern states of America. The Cotton Bud sculpture in St Ann's Square does not even hint at this historical horror. Architecture displays the mores of its time and Victorian Manchester was proud and boastful of its wealth. Under present conditions of austerity, Nora laments the decline of public services and sees the crisis reflected in the fabric of buildings:

I get really depressed as well when you see old municipal buildings like going past the old Minsall Street courts, look at the beautiful gargoyles and carved stones and anti-windows and if you think about Victoria Baths and people used to think that it was worth spending the money on the building that people would use, just because it was going to look nice for normal people, and now like all the new schools, there have been quite a lot of new schools ... there is about three or four plans depending on the PFI company that built them and they are just these boxes that are designed to last 25 years until they are depreciated and then they will get knocked down and re-built and there's nothing about them ... why does it have to be so boring ... If you go to Victoria Baths people thought it was worth spending money and I know a lot of it was civic pride but it was ... public works were built to last

and were built on the assumption that you could make nice things, you would make things that look good for normal people.

Nora is concerned about the lack of decorative architecture, but actually her core concern is the decline of public services. She believes everyone deserves good design and beautiful things. Her words echo the sculptor Mitzi Cunliffe who lived in Manchester and believed in art that was integrated into everyday life. This vision of an egalitarian Utopia is one that will haunt later pages of this research as I untangle the complex emotional attachments of the women I walked with.

### **6.10 The value and loss of public space**

Within the civic realm public space was explicitly mentioned by several participants who saw it as an essential part of a tolerant and successful city. Maisie is an architect, stating firmly:

Public space is super important. It's like the sort of ultimate democratic bit of the city ... so I think it's really important for architects to think about all the real variety of how you might use that space ... if they don't start thinking then we've got nowhere you know ... they will just be used for coffee shops and that isn't public space.

Maisie was very explicit in her beliefs and talked about the influence writers like Jacobs and Sennett had on her work. However, it was not just urban design experts who valued public space and it was a need clearly expressed by many others. The current climate is one where pseudo public space is becoming increasingly prevalent (see Garrett (2015) and Minton (2009)). Nora is a teacher and said:

I'm concerned about spaces becoming private spaces because there are implications about that in terms of political organisations, in terms of being filmed and security and just the clinical way that those spaces evolve, with for example with the Home building ... I like the Home building but don't like the space around it. It's a private wind tunnel and only people like Pizza Express can afford to have a unit there. It feels like we're just going to have more and more spaces with the same sorts of corporate things you know.



First Street is the development around Home Arts Centre and includes a plaza surrounded by retail units, including bars and restaurants, a hotel and an office block that was described in Chapter Four. This was identified by many as a bland and boring space which was only quasi-public. It was sold by the developers Ask to PatriziaUK in 2015. Tony Wilson Place can be used for expressive and communal events but they have to be officially sanctioned. Ironically, in the Summer of 2017 this included the installation of a statue of Friedrich Engels by the artist Phil Collins as part of Manchester International Festival. This was after the fieldwork period, but I suspect this would have provoked some interesting comment from my participants.



*Plate 24: First Street Development*

Amongst the criticisms of Piccadilly Gardens, there was at least praise for its role as a highly visible gathering point for protests and a tolerance of simply being. The enclosed environment around Home makes this a much less attractive space to hang out whether or not it would be permitted. The nature of the space means lingering is less appealing. Charlotte is a student who thinks:

there's a lot of things to be said for allowing people to use the city for expressing their ideas whatever they may be. I'm thinking very mundane, it doesn't have to be a big statement. I'm talking about things like using street chalk, like chalk on the ground which you are not allowed to do in Manchester.

Charlotte had been reprimanded for using pavement chalk during her street games, although a walk through the city shows, that like other forms of graffiti the practice has not been totally eradicated. However, the threat of policing made her feel inhibited. Daisy works with LGBT women and refugees and thinks that unrestricted public space is:

very important because if there are no public spaces where people can just sort of be, you know without particularly buying something or doing a specific type of activity, then I don't know, it doesn't make for a good atmosphere ... a space like that everybody uses it in a different way and that is really interesting you know ... That spontaneity maybe livens the city up, that's what I like about it and I think that's really important.

Charlotte reiterates the link between income, consumption and citizenship. She is clear that lack of wealth should not restrict or define an individual's right to the city. She also emphasises the pleasures of cosmopolitanism and a lively, interesting city. The reverse of this; a closed, uniform, alienated city was evoked as a negative and several interviewees walked past gated communities and apartment buildings that appeared to withdraw from the public. Atkinson and Blandy (2017) discuss the implications for civic life where affluence means a retreat and an insulation from life on the street. Layla lives in a flat in the Northern Quarter which was originally council housing that faced straight onto the street. She was unhappy that a fence had now been erected and a locked gate installed. She didn't like the fact people couldn't knock on her door anymore, even though anyone seldom did she missed the sense of connection. Layla mentioned the measure was taken because residents reported being bothered by people leaving nearby pubs and told me she once encountered a homeless man sleeping on her doorstep. She was troubled, not by him as an individual – she made him tea and researched services to help him – but was outraged by the fact he had nowhere else to sleep. Layla was clear that a gate would not solve the root cause of the problem or make her conscience feel better. Zoe and Jo were the most explicitly political women I walked with and as they chatted together they were loud and angry about the plethora of new developments. Together we wandered into the courtyard of The Skyline Apartments off Rochdale Road, which they found distasteful but to their surprise oddly seductive:



*Plate 25: Skyline Apartments Sculpture*

Jo: “Is this office buildings or, yuppie flats or both?” <I think it’s flats> you know I find it so dystopian ... it’s like a calm oasis is actually quite nice actually but the thing that stops it from being really nice is that it’s incredibly. it looks like private space that you’re not actually allowed to be in ... you don’t experience this kind of calm and quiet in Manchester very much”

The pleasure expressed here was because we stumbled on an unexpected courtyard full of green space and water features in a quasi-public area. The importance of green space and the delight it evokes has been explored previously and is captured by this comment by Kathleen who told me she liked to try and find small spaces in the city where she could breathe and relax for a moment:

For city dwellers, there are those little moments of joy in the city ... I think that when it’s your place and you are rooted here and you know that you have places where you can have these encounters it just makes you feel happier in the place that you live.

This highlighted the importance and value of public space, particularly where it allowed room for spontaneous encounter and was not didactic in its available uses. Referring back to discussions around safety a good public space should feel safe and accessible as well. Discussion around Piccadilly Gardens

demonstrates that public space is not automatically valued unless it is carefully designed and well used.

## 6.11 The role of the university in the city



*Plate 26: Birley Fields, Hulme*

The space Kathleen was walking through when she told me this was a patch of grass on the University of Manchester campus off Oxford Road. Many of the problems discussed in this chapter are exemplified by attitudes towards new student developments across the city, and in particular the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) Birley Fields development in Hulme. This was built on a brownfield site that was left after the post Crescent redevelopment. As a patch of wasteland, it was used in a variety of ways by members of the community. It was popular with dog walkers and frequently used as a short cut. It was also the site of community festivals and events. On one occasion, a replica of Guantanamo Bay was built by art collective UHC as a social experiment; local people volunteered to be prisoners or wardens and the result was a disarmingly powerful performance piece. (UHC / Redman 2003). Women told me they missed the last green space in the neighbourhood, even though it was wild and scrappy. However, their major concern was the nature and impact of this particular development. Anna told me she was deeply uncomfortable with the fractured relationship the campus had with the surrounding community:

Their residences are all fenced in that's one thing that really makes me cross, because it's like us and them and they are told not to mix with us. So, you think that there would be loads of students in the area and they would like to mix and the area would be vibrant but then it's not because they are told not to. They are told the area is dangerous the police put all those signs up about danger which is really horrible and unpleasant to see and then that's the message that they get all the time so they live in these fenced in enclosures discouraged actively from being part of the local community so they don't use the local pubs.

Anna is resolutely not anti the University per se, she and her children all studied there and she has occasionally worked as an administrator for them. However, she is deeply sceptical about their dominance of space and links it to wider processes as "so much land is being privatised". She cites the problem in Hulme beginning with duplicity over blocking a right of way and "ruining" the Salutation Pub. For her the problem was exacerbated by high density student halls that are segregated from the wider community and where there is a culture that promotes excessive drinking, especially during Freshers week. Anna also felt there was some unfair stigmatising of Hulme by the universities, because it is perceived as a working class, deprived and racially mixed area. She believed students were actively discouraged from mingling with local residents. However, her concerns about segregation were echoed not just by other women who lived in Hulme, but also by those in Withington and Fallowfield, other areas associated with students. They all felt the transitory nature of student accommodation, and isolation from their neighbours created a problem. To return to Birley Fields, parts of the campus are open; a right of way has been retained and there is a small "community woodland." The size of this plot made Anna laugh ruefully and she noted the contrast with images that were circulated by MMU during the consultation period. Several other women also mentioned this consultation and derided it as a sham:

I was worried about the loss of public space and stuff because they showed us all these pictures about how it would be lovely and open and everybody could use it and that's fine but you see I've got son who is now a teenage boy and teenage boys are the ones who fall foul of security guards because of looking teenage in a public space, especially if he is with any of his buddies, who are black or African ..., so I have all those concerns about private

policing really ... this area is privately policed with all the security guards and their faux police cars ... it is not about being anti-student it's about the effects on the area.

MMU was also criticised for the active role it took in evicting the Ark homeless camp that set up under the shelter of the Mancunian Way, near the entrance to its buildings. They felt compassion and support should have been offered and that it was callous to be unconcerned about the fate of the people who were living rough. Women who had been students at Manchester regretted how small their student world was, being concentrated around Oxford Road and particular roads that felt "safe." Several women commented on the lack of permeability of campuses and told me that although they found them attractive, they did not feel they were places they could wander. Martha particularly disliked the University of Manchester buildings on Upper Brook Street although she enjoyed her work teaching in them. She felt architecturally they turned their back on the surrounding community. Kathleen works as a PA to a disabled student and really likes the ambience of the campus, including the small green space she mentioned previously. However, she still felt she did not belong there and feared she would be asked how could she dare to simply stroll in the grounds. If Universities want to be part of their local communities, as their rhetorical statements suggest they do, there are some important messages here about improving their environment and communication methods. Despite this, women I spoke to were clear they valued students and did not want to demonise them. There was only one figure constantly evoked as damaging to Manchester and that was the hipster, who was frequently linked to gentrification, alienation and unwelcome change.

## **6.12 The hipsters *dérive***

The hipster recurs in many accounts, undefined but somehow recognised as a space invader and herald of unwelcome change. For example, Anna was very clear that she preferred places that were "not totally gentrified and smartened up and hipsterfied" because they had more character, allure and authenticity. Jack worried about the Northern Quarter losing its charm because "it's getting a bit more hipsterish now so the edge is gone." Patti found "that hipster lifestyle...quite disturbing" and Sam warned of conflicts over

space as yet another “new hipster commodity bar” drove out indigenous communities who couldn’t afford to be there. Cheryl was very clear that hipsters are easily identifiable, wealthy and symbolise a growing inequality dividing the city because “you can see the hipsters and their beards and their nice Carhart shirts and then you can see people looking for money and there is nobody in between.” The hipster is clearly perceived as a threat, and this section will explore exactly what fear of the hipster represents.

It is first necessary to attempt to define who, and what, the hipster is. A modern stereotype of artisan bread, expensive coffee, moustache wax and a seductive cool that prices out the original community wherever he decided to set up his (ever so chic) shop. The hipster is one of the most visible contemporary trends in many urban areas, yet it is somewhat difficult to understand what they actually signify unlike, for example, the nihilism of punk or the rebellion of rockers. Indeed, Michael (2013) suggests it is not a label anyone chooses to adopt, because, to be seen to be following trends is shallow and inauthentic. To be hip is to be unique and individual, just like everyone else. Perhaps fittingly Maly and Varis (2016) can only identify the visual signifiers of what is meant by a hipster; they acknowledge hipster-ness is a multi-faceted trend with local variations with universal codifiers being “vintage clothes, skinny jeans, an ironic moustache and big glasses” (2016:640). This description appears to match the hipsters described with concern and derision by women I spoke to. They did not ascribe any overt political beliefs or belligerence upon them although felt the consequences of their taste was damaging Manchester.

I would like to suggest a parallel can be drawn with the flâneur whose spirit haunts so much psychogeographical literature. The flâneur is an urbane wanderer, knowing, aloof, critical and privileged. He passes unseen, drifting through the arcades. He haunts not just the writings of Benjamin and Baudelaire but so much literature on walking. He represents a type; a rich, straight white man with enough wealth and privilege to be able to pass unseen and knows he has the right to take up space. He looks like a dandy and enjoys the finer things. Perhaps the hipster is not so very far removed. He takes up space, changes, colonises it, because it is his implicit right to do so, his

unquestioned privilege. There is something about the hipster that is unlike the majority of subcultures; he is not rebelling or opposing anything much and it is hard to know what he stands for.

Defined by what he consumes, not what he believes, the hipster is hollow, superficial, vain and privileged enough not to care. He is what he buys, all style no substance. Rather more kin of the flâneur than he may want to admit. No one ever admits being a hipster, and few can even articulate what the term means. Slippery, vague and stylish. The flâneur who wanders the arcades is a window shopper bored and disconnected, the hipster is behind the glass of those shops. He is alienated and mocked. They also share a doomed, romantic sense of nostalgia; when Benjamin wrote of the flâneur he was already vanishing with the arcades. The hipster is also seemingly out of joint with mechanical reproduction as he rails against mass production. Perhaps consumer choice can be reconfigured as a political act and paradoxically acquiring the perfect fair-trade skinny soy flat white is the only way to make a statement against commodity capitalism. However, this is a system we are all embroiled and implicated in, and perhaps there is a shade of the hipster within many more of us than it is comfortable to admit.

The reality is rather more nuanced than my deliberately employed rhetoric may suggest. Neither the flâneur nor the hipster as described above actually exist except as stereotypes, idealised and aspirational. Wilkinson (2017) convincingly argues they are a construction not a subculture because their beliefs are apolitical and varied. He suggests their visibility, and often comic appearances makes them easy to blame for problems they did not cause. The hipster acts as a scapegoat for wider social unease; embodying global and decentralised processes that are complex and hard to fight. Also, significantly facial hair may be a universal signifier of being a hipster but you do not need facial hair to be a hipster. A beard or moustache are coded male, but females are not excluded from this trend and there is no heated debate about the hipstress or suchlike because there is no doubt she exists. Indeed, there is probably at least a trace of the hipster in all of us who find pleasure in the self-consciously quirky and “alternative” commercial spaces in rapidly changing places like the Northern Quarter. She may be overshadowed in terms of the



cliché but the female hipster has equal space within the cafe and in style magazines. Hipster is a gender-neutral term, in itself reflecting contemporary mores regarding performative gender. I have used the male pronoun to underline similarities to the flâneur but perhaps that was disingenuous as a neutral pronoun may have been more truthful.

Furthermore, the platonic ideal of a hipster may be an illusion but the forces they personify are a reality. Fashionable consumption does play a significant role in branding and marketing cities and the wider post-industrial economy (Florida, 2005 and his many devotees, including Tony Wilson and Manchester City Council). Pritchard, Jost, Harling and Allinson (2017) have condemned the practice of “artwashing” where artists are co-opted – sometimes unwittingly – into promoting gentrification. They make places appear more appealing and this raises property prices. Within Manchester this process is currently highly visible as, for example, Rogue Studios and Hotspur House are amongst artists’ studios evicted or forced out by rising prices. Many of us are complicit in these destructive processes, and we should take care not to scapegoat or stereotype as we use notions of taste to reinforce our distinction. Zukin (1995) and Smith (1996) allude to another uncomfortable truth. The hipster is not inherently evil and is often forced to move into an area through their own displacement. As Sam told me to remember “it’s not the artists fault.”

### **6.13 Conclusions**

This chapter has complicated the narrative of regeneration in Manchester by evoking the voices of women concerned about changes to the city. The financialisation of space operates at many different levels, not all local, as property and public space become matters concerning investment portfolios rather than civil rights. Neoliberal politics suggests individual profit is everything but women I spoke to seek value in mutualism, art and compassion.

The idea of authenticity has emerged as important to women who want to feel connected to the true essence of the city. What this means is a wicked problem: “We think authenticity refers to a neighbourhood’s innate qualities (but) it really expresses our own anxieties about how places change” (Zukin

2010:220). Hall has talked about how neoliberal policies “project an attitude to objects, people and places, thereby procuring legitimation for intervention or regeneration” (2012:4) but the collective voice of women now seems to be saying “Enough!” They do not want social cleansing or erasure of people and histories that are difficult, and instead are calling for compassion and sensitivity. It remains to be seen if this will translate into a political will to change. Atkinson (2017) sounds a cautiously optimistic note that a tipping point may have been reached. Andy Burnham has recently been elected as Mayor of Greater Manchester, with tackling homelessness one of his key promises, and the current political rhetoric is of a “Northern Powerhouse.” It is unclear, and beyond the scope of research, to divine whether devolution will add anything new to the sense of what the soul of Manchester means.

The dilemma of authenticity has been at the heart of psychogeography from its inception, when Debord (1967) recognised the impossibility of evading recuperation by the spectacle. We can see this all around as graffiti sells space now, and we face aesthetic battle for not just the soul of the city but individuals as well. Smith (2017) talks about a “war on subjectivity” as the new iteration of the spectacle. Psychogeography has become commodified and associated with a brand. However, there can still be creative and radical potential in using space in resistant and contradictory ways. Walking, playing, dreaming and creating in quasi-public space can add new stories to space and act as a personal catalyst, although we should not overstate its importance at a structural level. It is very much in the spirit of De Certeau’s tactics but we must strive to find other ways to protect and enhance public space and tackle social injustices at the same time. An imaginary roof is no consolation to a family made homeless through displacement.

I began this chapter with a vainglorious quote from 1995 and would like to finish a decade later with another folly. The B of the Bang was a giant sculpture commissioned to celebrate the 2002 Commonwealth Games, themselves a key part of the Manchester’s regeneration fairy story. The title of Thomas Heatherwick’s artwork was taken from a quote by athlete Linford Christie describing the moment he starts to sprint during a race. It stood near the stadium (now home to Manchester City) on the edge of East Manchester,

geographically close to the shiny core of the new Arndale Centre but still an area with high levels of deprivation. Building overran so the artwork wasn't unveiled until 2005. Even before the opening ceremony structural problems were observed but ignored. Spikes became loose and dangerous, and various lawsuits were filed by Manchester City Council. In 2009 The B of The Bang was dismantled and put into storage, then in July 2012 the core was sold as scrap for £17,000. The B of the Bang is seldom referenced now, but it makes a potent symbol not of the benefit of regeneration but of its dangers and the peril of putting style over substance.



## ***Drift Four***

### ***A Drift Around The Ghosts of My Northern Quarter***

I've just got off the bus at Piccadilly Gardens. The sun is shining today and I sit down on a bench for a moment to watch the world go by. I'm just a tiny bit territorial about this particular bench, it's in front of Café Nero and near the memorial tree. I realise that slight possessiveness is irrational, I don't really even like it here that much. My attachment is because of the time I have spent here, waiting for people, including most of the women I walked with for this research. It's a good spot, easy to find and with a clear view all around now the Ferris Wheel has been moved.



*Plate 27: Piccadilly Gardens, West Side*

I think about the many times I have walked through the Gardens, mostly unremarkable, going to or from somewhere. A few particular times do stick out though. A midnight pizza picnic for a friend before he moved to Australia, it felt transgressive but fun. The day The EDL marched through town and we joined in the demonstration; we almost got kettled in the gardens by the police who wanted to keep the protestors at a distance. We ended up on Oldham Street shouting our

displeasure as they walked by; their blatant racism shook us all up and made me question my belief that the streets belong to everyone. In 2008 I danced in the fountains when Helen Stratford visited to make a film about architecture. She and her partner Diane had been talking to people sat in the gardens when a security guard told them they needed a licence to ask questions!

I walk what the architect called the catwalk and up onto Oldham Street. So many ambiences in such a small space. At this end it's crowded with bus stops, bookies and chip shops so I cut down Back Piccadilly. There's an old substation sign left from Woolworths. The shop closed after a fire in 1979 that killed 10 people and changed the law on flammable furniture. It's a supermarket and hotel now. Woolworths never opened another store in Manchester and the whole chain has since gone into liquidation, vanishing in 2009. The Turner Prize was won in 2012 by Elizabeth Price with a soundscape about the inferno.

There's Mother Macs, a "proper" old fashioned boozier down a back alley. I've always found it much friendlier inside than it might appear from the exterior, there's usually a table full of smartly dressed retired women near the door who make you welcome. The barman gets his dinner delivered on a plate covered in cling film. Toby jugs and trinkets fill the picture rail and fading newspaper articles are framed on the wall. These include disturbing accounts of a murder on the premises. In 1976 the landlord killed his wife, her three children and the cleaner before starting a fire that killed him too. A reminder domestic violence is a real horror.

Round the corner is a sign that reads No Parkin. The misspelling makes me smile as I think of illicit ginger cake crossing the border from Yorkshire. Nearby is The Castle. This was my first local in Manchester, I'd go for a drink every Friday night when Helen worked in an office nearby. The backroom had a pool table and an excellent jukebox. I

preferred the snug, a good place to conspire and always full of “characters”. It rained in the toilets and got shabbier and shabbier, I was sad but not shocked when it closed. What was surprising was its reinvention; it’s been scrubbed up and feels a wee bit of a theme pub but it smells better and the beer is good. There’s a small brass plaque commemorating the old landlady Cath, the definition of formidable as I recall. I don’t know what happened to the mural of her that was behind the bar, allegedly her ashes were mixed in with the grouting.



*Plate 28: The Northern Quarter*

I turn left onto Stevenson Square; there’s a bar pretending to be pawn shop and another that’s trying to look like a speakeasy. The one I find in the very worst taste is disguised as a launderette on Shudehill. I turn right onto Lever Street and see the old Watts Brothers Building. In the basement now is Hyper Island, digital marketing experts, but I remember when it was just called The Basement. It was an anarchist social centre, the near derelict space rented cheaply to us because of the state it was in. I was part of the collective who renovated it on a shoestring, using idealism, Sellotape and cheap red wine mostly. We had a vision of a non-commercial, radical meeting place with a bookshop, library, meeting, gallery, open access computers. We made

it happen, but never reconciled the irony of a shop that promoted revolution. I won't idealise that time as it was bloody hard work and we were all devastated when we closed due to another fire. (There was a proper renovation after that and we couldn't afford the rent any more). However, I spent many happy hours behind the counter, dispensing drinks and discussing politics. It was in The Basement that I first heard the word "psycho geography", met some of my dearest friends, and believing that another world really could be possible. Meals were free if you volunteered, we ate endless bulk purchased soya ice-cream and I learnt how many espressos it takes to make me wired. To us back then a Vegan cafe seemed radical, a political commitment, not a fad, but with an involuntary shudder it occurs to me that perhaps we were the hipsters of our day.



## Chapter Seven

### ***Love Will Tear Will Tear Us Apart Again: Wanderings in hipcholic landscapes***

#### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores emotional connections to, and memories of, Manchester, revealed during walking interviews. Many of the women articulated a fear the city was losing its “soul” and talked about a need for “authenticity”. This fear is linked to wider economic processes as discussed in chapter six. However, they expressed an ambivalent sense of nostalgia as they know the red brick mills they have an attachment to are also implicated in a colonial history of slavery and exploitation. I have struggled to find an adequate term for this affect so I have dubbed it “hipcholia” and I will explain the genesis of this neologism. The idea of a singular *genus loci*, or spirit of place, in a diverse contemporary city, is discussed and found wanting.

The title of this chapter comes from a Joy Division song (Curtis, Hook, Morris and Sumner 1980) which conveys a claustrophobic gloominess and heartbreak. The band are now synonymous with a cliché of the post-industrial Manchester landscape but that does not diminish the emotional resonance of their music. This was a track I first heard as a teenager on a mix-tape made by a penfriend. I loved its drama and grandeur and when I saw a page of Ian Curtis’s hand-written lyrics in an exhibition this year I was surprised at the shivers the artefact gave me. I wasn’t the only one who felt this, a crowd of reverential fans were gathered round the display case, paying their respects.

In the Summer of 2017, Manchester City Art gallery hosted two exhibitions that both illustrated and reinforced the stereotypical depictions of Manchester and two different, but related, nostalgic moments for the city. The first was *True Faith* which explored the legacy that Joy Division and New Order have left for visual arts and culture. It was part of the bi-annual Manchester International Festival (MIF), whose publicity proclaims it as “the world’s first festival of original, new work and special events.” Meanwhile, in another part of the gallery. *Women*,

*Children and Loitering Men* by Shirley Baker showcased her stunning portfolio of street photography from 1961-1981. The poignant images depict strong communities in post war Manchester and Salford. Some have ruins as a backdrop but the majority feature back-to-back terraces. Many of these communities were destroyed during the slum clearances. Several of the remaining streets have been transformed through gentrification, including Chimney Pot Park, which property developers Urban Splash claim on their website offers “The best bits of the classic Victorian terrace redesigned ... your very own, very modern Coronation Street.”

The juxtaposition of these two exhibitions was striking, especially as MIF is marketed as an event which brings huge numbers of visitors to the city. Instead of focusing on new or contemporary artists there was a reworking of clichéd Manchester tropes. The Baker exhibition was not part of the festival and I have not been able to find out how many visitors saw both, however the two occasions I visited the audiences appeared strikingly different. The Baker exhibition was probably the biggest crowd I have seen in the gallery, with many older people, especially women, and families with young children all discussing loudly what they could see. There were also groups of students looking closely at the images. Upstairs *True Faith* was full of couples, individuals and small groups of people, mostly looking like they were in their forties and fifties. They were generally smart or trendily dressed and there were more men than women. This is perhaps fitting as with Joy Division at least:

Whether it was intentional or not, the wives and girlfriends had gradually been banished from all but the most local of gigs and a curious male bonding had taken place. The boys seemed to derive their fun from each other (Curtis, 1995:77).

What the two groups of visitors had in common was an obvious delight in sharing their own histories. Both galleries were full of people exchanging anecdotes and looking for something of themselves on the walls. People were pointing at places they knew, reminiscing about where they were and who they were with. Manchester Art Gallery had chosen to look backwards, rather than

forwards, and to privilege a nostalgic black and white view of the city where art was made amongst ruins. This clearly has a huge appeal.

Nostalgia has been an element of psychogeography since its earliest days. Alastair Bonnett has given considerable attention to what he terms this “dilemma of radical nostalgia” claiming “psychogeography was born with a sense of loss for the city ... framed and informed by the confluence of revolutionary and nostalgic sentiment.” (Bonnett 2015: 75). His work will be returned to as I untangle the complex entanglements women have with the city. This chapter explores how they deal with the cognitive dissonance and ruptures as they bear witness whilst the:

deindustrialised English north is in the course of being tortuously re-narrated as dynamic and cosmopolitan ... Manchester has become the post-industrial renaissance city par excellence with the flourishing of new consumption spaces for loft-living, shopping and “alternative” lifestyles. (Wallace, 2015:521).

## **7.2 Attachment and Community**

My participants related complicated, often contradictory feelings about the city, and as discussed in the previous chapter the material conditions of Manchester often leave much to be desired. During interviews, most women were highly critical of Manchester and wanted to make quite profound changes. The interview experience, and format, perhaps lends itself to these kinds of reflections rather than celebrations, as it provides an opportunity to reflect. However, women always tempered this with a declaration of love for Manchester as well. This was usually expressed as an attachment to their home, a sense of pride for their community and affection for specific people or places, described as topophilia (Tuan 1974). Marion first came to Manchester as a student, and returned here after a few years working in Leeds. She grew up in Rome, her partner is from Sheffield, and both have professional jobs that could enable them to find work in many places. They actively chose to settle in Manchester with their young daughter. Marion spoke for many as she explained why Manchester is home:

I love the place a lot ... I go through moments where I really do question whether I've exhausted my time in Manchester but then

when I do assess other options and opportunities, it's really hard to find it somewhere else ... I wouldn't live anywhere else in the UK because Manchester offers so much. It is the right size to be able to walk everywhere, it offers a lot in terms of arts and culture ... we have our heart in the North ... I feel like (I'm being) quite negative about Manchester (during the interview) despite of all its problems I do love being a Manc because you can't imagine living anywhere else.

Marion couldn't quite explain what "it" was that had captured her heart but it was more than amenities and convenience. Several participants echoed Tony Wilson's declaration that Manchester is the perfect size for cross pollinating ideas, and the sense of being part of a community within the cosmopolitan bustle had a powerful allure. Rather than being lost in the city people found opportunities to forge bonds based on interests and taste, and Patti articulated this by telling me:

One thing I do like about Manchester generally is that you can't go anywhere without bumping into people, that really does mean a lot to me ... there so many people that you see all the time, it's like a village and everybody knows everybody, certainly if you're into particular scenes, they all crossover.

Patti talked about the value of a critical mass of friends, acquaintances and Jacobs (1961) "familiar strangers" who make her feel part of something. This provided a counterbalance to the fear she expressed in the previous chapters. This interconnectivity was underlined by the many interviews that were interrupted by friends and colleagues of the interviewee. The sheer number of serendipitous bumping-intos made me too feel an enhanced sense of convivial connectivity; it is surprising and delightful how visible the crossed trajectories Massey discusses are made visible. This contrasts with the negative disruption of the street harassment previously discussed.

Cities have long been recognised as places of creativity and the formation of new bonds, as Berman (1982) articulates, individuals can thrive in the space a city offers. Manchester offers many chances to find kindreds and Linda spoke of the relief when she moved from a village to a place where she could meet people who shared her interests. She attends polyamorous, pagan and fetish meet ups that she says simply wouldn't be possible outside of the urban environment. She described her style and taste as "alternative" and relished

the combination of an anonymous mass combined with opportunities to find anything and anyone she desired. Heidi goes to dance classes, self-defence classes and has formed an improvisation troupe in the years since she moved to Manchester and said:

I think there's a lot of really interesting art stuff happening as well, and people seem to be really engaged with a lot of political things, environmental things, everybody seems quite switched on about what's going on in the world whereas where I grew people don't really care about that kind of thing, they're not really that involved in it.

Jack has lived in Manchester for ten years and her interview took place on the penultimate day before a move to Wales. I hadn't realised this when we arranged to meet but she had viewed the interview as a chance to say farewell, to revisit and think about what Manchester means to her. Her main reason for leaving was pragmatic, she and her wife wanted to buy a house but were struggling financially. She had been offered well paid work in an area where property is more affordable. I asked her how she felt about leaving and she said:

Mixed - there is no city like Manchester really. It's been so good to me, from making friends and being happy and opportunities and so on, it is a great city so yeah ... (what I'll miss most is) the friendliness and the mixed-ness of it, there is all sorts of people and everybody is kind of just, it sort of boodles along ... here they actually like each other <laughs> and they do, they really do, people chat and have discussions with people from all over.

Jack was the only woman who talked about being displaced out of Manchester entirely due to the rise in housing costs. Many other women had changed neighbourhoods or were anticipating potential issues but were generally more concerned about the impact on others, as discussed in the previous chapter. The relationship between income, taste and class and an individual's relationships with the city was not explicitly discussed during my interviews but was an undercurrent bubbling under during many walks.

### **7.3 Diversity and cosmopolitanism**

Women I walked with explicitly valued the cosmopolitan character of the city. There was a co-mingling on the streets that they felt was valuable, although there are wider debates to be had about whether superficial, fleeting

encounters really make any difference to cohesive bonds (Valentine, 2013). For the women I met these moments were overwhelmingly positive, making them feel at home in a diverse but cohesive city. Even a place that was intensely disliked from a design perspective, such as Piccadilly Gardens, was praised for its inclusiveness. The pleasure is illustrated by a comment from Sam when she described seeing:

people coming together or colours or creeds you know ... I'll have a wander into town, Market Street on a Saturday and to me it's like a Saturday matinee where you can go and get all this entertainment free entertainment ... there seems to be all kinds of people that use the space which is quite enjoyable.

Sam relished opportunities for people watching, and took me into the Arndale Market to sit at her favourite place to simply watch the world go by. It would be tempting to view this as a detached gaze, similar to the flâneur, although Sam was very much embroiled and involved in the communities she also enjoyed watching flow past her. Sam spent a lot of time walking between cleaning jobs and felt very much part of the life on the street. She engaged with buskers and beggars, telling me she gave when she could, and loved feeling she was in the midst of somewhere that drew so many people into its bustle. This thrill of the city resonates with Wilson's (1991) account of the contested, complicated and alluring pull the metropolis holds on women. Layla's account of her love for Manchester compares it to the small Yorkshire mining town where she grew up that has a timeless quality:

(it) was built around coalmines and now there are no coal mines so it's quite deprived, but also there's a strong sense of community which is dead nice in some ways but it was quite stifling for a teenage girl. Like if you fell over in the village your mam had heard that you fell over in the village by the time you got home ... everybody talks about everybody else like they are not themselves, they are part of their family ... I really like the anonymity of the city, like you know all these people, I don't know them and I like to wonder about the lives, where they're off to but I like that they don't know me and they are not going to bother me or judge me or go there is Doreen's girl you know, her inner monologue just intruded on her thoughts and she is talking to herself again ... and I like the random encounters you can have as well, it's part of city living

Layla feels the relative freedom and anonymity Manchester brings means she can become herself, separate from her family, although she spoke movingly of her parents and remains emotionally close to them. Her escape was not a running away or a rebellion but a psychic need to discover who she could become. These positive encounters are in contrast with the fearfulness and negativity related to gender and harassment, which Layla herself had spoken about. Living in the city centre, she had learnt to take a different route home on a Friday or Saturday night to avoid places she associated with groups of rowdy men. She saw this as a sadly inevitable price to pay for the pleasures of city life. Layla recognised the tensions between different needs and uses of the city centre, but as previously discussed, was angry that limits were imposed on her movements because of a perceived threat of gender based violence.

#### **7.4 Queer communities and the pink pound**

Accounts of gender also stressed the importance of intersectional identities and multiple factors that affected individual's relationship with the city. Queer, Lesbian and Bisexual women I spoke to often felt disappointed by or excluded from Canal Street which is at the heart of Manchester's Gay Village. Community organisations such as Facts About Manchester Pride (FAMP), and Café Queeria have been campaigning against the commercialisation of the area for many years. They want better community services amongst the bars and clubs, which all tend to cater for a particular pop aesthetic which revolves around alcohol, drugs and dance music. Women I spoke to also felt they were hyper sexualised and male dominated, providing something of a microcosm of wider issues across the city. Wilkinson (2015) has discussed the market led regeneration of Canal Street which "marketed the allure of a particular place, creating the illusion of a self-contained world." This borrowed not just from queer histories of persecution and resistance but the hedonistic drama of the successful television series "Queer as Folk" (1999-2000) which used Canal Street as its setting.



*Plate 29: Canal Street*

The Village has evolved into an ostensibly queer friendly zone outside heteronormativity but often feels like it duplicates the male domination of the public sphere. There is only one dedicated lesbian bar amongst the clubs and bars, and advertising posters generally feature conventionally handsome young men or drag queens. We previously heard from Veronica who talked about the importance of visible queerness and a lesbian identity in a heteronormative city. Although she sometimes visited Canal Street to see rainbow flags and feel her presence acknowledged, she preferred to go drinking in more traditional pubs because they were much more “her style”. Women are of course much more than their gendered bodies and sexual preferences; age, income and taste in music are amongst other salient factors.

Eleanor has been visiting Manchester for many years and has recently moved from Toronto to take up employment. She spoke in chapter five about the lack of lesbian spaces in Manchester compared to Toronto. She also felt as a mother, and an older woman, that Canal Street wasn't for her. This sense of being alienated from an environment ostensibly for you, was a recurring theme. Nicki talked about the importance of her identity as bisexual but that having a limited income meant she was restricted in her ability to interact with the commercial LGBT scene. Nicki had been unemployed for a long time and explains:



I used to go to social support group for bis (bisexuals) and once some kind of researcher came to interview us ... we talked about identity and if you feel comfortable in lesbian and gay spaces like Canal Street. ... I was like, well the village is really expensive and we are poor. The pink pound turns out to be the pound that they've added onto the price of all the beer rather than just go to Tesco and get some drinks and go to somebody's house ... she wanted to hear all about how we felt and what was important about our identity and we were just like the village isn't very good!

Nicki was alienated by what was ostensibly "her" part of town partly because of money but also because of taste. There are wider discussions to be had about the need for inclusivity within LGBTQ places that are beyond the scope of this research, but for examples see Doan and Higgins (2011) and Stone, (2013).

## **7.5 Heritage and culture**

Culture, entertainment and consumption were often important to an individual's identity and experiences of the city. The art gallery was a favourite place for many participants who talked about visiting it over many years with their parents, children, grandchildren and friends. There was a deep and abiding concern for public heritage and a collective memory held within the cities buildings. One of the major concerns about regeneration is what will be lost and here public and private histories intertwine, asserting that history is "essential to our identity and wellbeing (Madgin, 2010:30).

Greta has been involved in a campaign to preserve Oxford Road Corner, which is threatened by work to improve railway infrastructure. This cluster of buildings includes the former site of The Cornerhouse cinema and arts centre, several pubs and a small cobbled area which was connected to the Victorian slum area known as Little Ireland. Greta linked this specific site to a city-wide geography of memory and loss:



*Plate 30: Oxford Road Corner*

There seems to be a lot of buildings disappearing and we are in danger of just losing our past ... people like the (old Cornerhouse) buildings for so many different reasons, and a lot of it is personal, (they remember) spending time there or relationships or things that have happened in there as well the building is a local landmark. There's so many different reasons to want to keep them.

An attachment to history and heritage was expressed in many ways. Most participants admired civic architecture and statues that we passed during our wanders were frequently commented on. The statue of Abraham Lincoln, which commemorates Manchester's support for the abolition of slavery, was cited as a particular favourite and a source of civic pride amongst women who were often very critical of social policy today. Janet noted apart from this example that:

I'm afraid the memorials don't really very much recognise the radical history <no> ... (the statue commemorates) a massive petition to end slavery, although the Manchester people were really suffering from the cotton famine, they couldn't get cotton because of the Civil War but they were antislavery so that's quite moving actually.

The inadequacy of statues out of context, and the fallibility of memory was also highlighted. One participant was grateful for an AIDS memorial, which she didn't realise actually remembers civilian war deaths, and several people misplaced

the location of now demolished buildings. These places were clearly of intense personal significance and the misinterpretations demonstrate the difficulty of public memorials. Many people pass statues every day without knowing what they are actually commemorating. They are also necessarily selective, smoothing over and erasing complications.



*Plate 31: Lincoln Square*

The statue of Abraham Lincoln mentioned by Janet offers a striking example. It was never actually intended as a gift to Manchester, but London deemed it too scruffy. The inscription on its side was taken from a letter thanking the working men of Manchester for their support for the abolition of slavery but was changed to the more inclusive 'working people'. It is true many in the city supported the struggle to end slavery and many mill workers suffered during the cotton famine. However, the memorial ignores the uncomfortable truth that not everyone agreed with the cause (and many workers may have had no choice but to suffer). Some mills flew confederate flags and local factories made weapons for both sides of the American civil war. Manchester thrived because of global webs of exploitation and there is little explicit recognition of this. In St Anne's Square, there is a fountain in the shape of a cotton bud with no inscription at all, and indeed many may not even realise the shape has any significance. Historical suffering becomes part of the decorative landscape, although folk memories and stories women shared with me hint at an acknowledgement of deeper,

darker remembrances.

## **7.6 An Ambivalent nostalgia**

Personal memories and emotional ties deepen an attachment to Manchester, but there was very little pure nostalgia. Participants were deeply ambivalent about the past. This was exemplified in the discussion about Piccadilly Gardens where people did not like the redevelopment but rejected the idea of an idyllic past when it incorporated flowerbeds. This attitude was also apparent in discussions about the rest of the city. Sam returned to Manchester ten years ago, having spent her childhood in Salford and says:

When I was a kid I would come into town, get the 59 bus and I would get off the bus roundabout on High Street, I never knew any of the names of the streets back then ... it just was a big place of factories and quite dark skies I seem to remember. It was very dirty, rubbish everywhere and rubbish blowing around and people just pouring out these sewing factories

Later Sam worked in one of those factories and formed lasting friendships despite the very poor working conditions, which she said was “basically a sweatshop”. Cheryl moved away from Hulme to rural Yorkshire three years ago. She still works in Manchester and retains a close attachment that was evidenced as she enthusiastically showed me around the Northern Quarter. She told me she missed the city very much but because of the internet and virtual communities, she still feels part of her old neighbourhood. She says:

it was very much home for a long time but you have to be realistic and go actually let's not be nostalgic about it, it was really hard to live beside a dual carriageway with a smack dealer on the ground floor.

Both Sam and Cheryl refused to romanticise their pasts but cherished the positive human connections made. Running throughout many interviews, was a deep and abiding sense that the city is haunted by its past, on a personal and collective level. Psychogeography can be a tool to channel these latent energies and to pay attention to the affective power of the environment. Drifting together did enable conversations provoked by glimpsing visible fragments of the past, such as ghost signs or industrial relics and I was surprised how often wider historical processes were cited. However, women experienced this frisson at

other times and did not need to dérive to sense the immaterial forces Pile (2005) calls phantasmagorias. Several spoke of an ongoing visceral and emotional connection to the city's histories. This was most vividly articulated by Kathleen, a teaching assistant who admired red brick grandeur but was aware that our riches are intertwined with capitalist exploitation:

when I walk through the city centre and I see the really big buildings which are similar to this I kind of think, I get a ripple inside and I think about the slave trade and the funding that the slave trade bought to the Victorians. The phrase that I use is there is blood oozing out between the stones

With this powerful account, Kathleen has tuned into the unacknowledged horror of colonialism that made Manchester prosperous. If we were truly to embrace our past it would uncover not just the horrific conditions for workers in the mills and factories but also the fact "we must face the ultimate contradiction that our free and democratic society was made possible by massive slave labour" (Davis 2006:6). Massey's constellations of "stories-so-far" (2005) form a web that reaches through time and space and implicates our present narrative in an ongoing network of power relations.

## **7.7 The stories the city tells itself**

Throughout this work I have referred to Manchester branding itself as "the original modern" city, a phrase credited to Peter Saville whilst he was employed by Marketing Manchester in 2010. This references the city's role in the Industrial Revolution. Martha is a lecturer and she articulates the complexity and problems with the stories the city tells about itself; the dominant narratives exclude much:

I think the image of industry (persists but) I don't think there is much reality of industry any more, what industry we do have tends to be up this way (Ancoats) in what are probably basically sweatshops, it's not heavy industry any more. But I think Manchester still sees itself as an industrial town and a place for self-making

<what do you mean by that>

well whether in terms of coming and making money, coming in and getting an education or establishing oneself maybe as an artist or a musician, people come here... I mean in some ways it's

very much a second city in that a lot of people won't move to London because they can't afford it or because they just find it overwhelming and intimidating ... I wish that the story that Manchester told about itself was a little more varied because ... It seems like we have the steam engine and then we have Joy Division and the story is really, really white which annoys me a lot. It doesn't really have women other than the Pankhurst's and I think there are so many great places that people could get interested in but they're just not ever told that it is interesting.

Martha articulates one of the key tensions around space emerging from these interviews, and reiterates Hetherington's (2007) summary of Manchester's development as commonly understood. Holgersson (2017) notes how fashionable storytelling has become when marketing redevelopment, but that only certain narratives are perceived to sell. The stories Martha retells reflect hegemonic society where one woman becomes a symbol for many and the uncomfortable truths of slavery and empire are occluded.

## **7.8 People power and Ancoats Dispensary**

There was a more optimistic, inclusive sense of communal history expressed by some. Several people cited the Ancoats Dispensary as an exemplar. The building was threatened with demolition during the development of New Islington and is the oldest building left in the area. It is intertwined with the development of the NHS and universal healthcare and the volunteers campaigning for its restoration want to develop a facility for the local community, focusing on health and wellbeing. They have linked creativity, community support and healthy living with mental health. Marion is not directly involved but says:

I have really high hopes for the dispensary because ... it has been supported by people all around ... it has been taken over by people of the community ... that could be a really fantastic hub of activity and maybe will also become a landmark that people feel that they have got a piece of themselves in.



*Plate 32: Ancoats Dispensary*

The Ancoats Dispensary has taken on a symbolic meaning as a site of community interest and a struggle to retain a stake in a changing neighbourhood. The Cardroom estate, which occupied much of the surrounding area, was demolished but redevelopment stalled after the 2008 crash. Hatherley (2010) documents the landscape where two architecturally distinct areas had been completed in consultation with former residents, and although he holds these up as exemplars, he is scathing about the wasteland they were marooned in for several years. Developers Urban Splash were demonised locally for failing to complete their promised regeneration and there were accusations that they removed the roof of the dispensary so it could be deemed fit only for demolition (Kaye, 2012). A community group was formed, which held regular vigils alongside campaigning and engagement activities and they have now acquired ownership of the building. For them the dispensary is a powerful link to a municipally benevolent past and a potential meeting place in an area with no physical community centre. They aim to transform it into a wellbeing centre, and their plans emphasise a contemporary spin that also makes claims to historical continuity.

## **7.9 Hauntology and time slippage**

Throughout many of my interviews is a sense that the past matters but also that it is not at rest, it impacts on the present. There is acceptance that the city will

continue to develop and some heritage will vanish, although traces will remain and citizens can tune into this. I would like to evoke the concept of hauntology, as used by Mark Fisher and Simon Price. In an interview with Bob Fischer, Price says:

It has all these associations with Derrida, which are interesting ... but it doesn't really apply here. I just like the *word* because haunt obviously deals with ghosts and the idea that memories linger and creep into your thoughts without you having any control over them (2017:13)

Fisher (2014) links his hauntology to a society ravaged by free market capitalism and nostalgic for a time when there were collective visions of a brighter future. These are half remembered dreams of an imagined Utopia. They can be likened to those moments of authentic desire that may be glimpsed through gaps in Debord's spectacle. Fisher illustrates his concept using examples from popular culture where time is experienced as fragmented and non-linear and art has a deep affective resonance in the consumer. These spectral forces are kin to the phantasmagoria that Benjamin (1999), Pile (2005) and Oldfield Ford (2011) conjure and which psychogeographers have long claimed to attend to. A combination of memory, imagination, folklore and material remains, they can have a tangible affective impact. A hauntological state encompasses presence, absence and never-was; an uncanny, dynamic *mélange* of spectral visions. Describing his walking art, Roy Bayfield says that he has been:

making real walks, to, in and around unreal places. The places I moved through were of course physically, prosaically real, as was the body doing the walking. However, the more I walked, the more I experienced landscapes as being undercut with unreal elements: stuff that isn't there but nevertheless has an effect (2016: 115).

For Bayfield, these elements include the phantom smell of a remembered but long-gone bakery or the warnings of a folktale. For women like Kathleen, who told me about blood oozing from the redbrick mills, they include an empathetic understanding of the suffering of those whose labour contributed to her everyday environment. Kate moved to Manchester from Oxford earlier this year. She told me that her move felt "inevitable" because she has so many friends here and enjoys an itinerant lifestyle where she regularly moves to a new city. She paused near Shudehill bus station to look at the landscape. Kate found a



richness in this everyday vista, echoing other participants who valued a juxtaposition of architectural styles and time zones:

You are looking at the sides of buildings that were once there, there used to be another bit of terrace joined on that has now been pulled down. You're looking at such a mixture of buildings here that have clearly gone up at different times but are glued on next to each other. And then you've got this gleaming tramway going through it and then the Manchester Arndale which is very, very modern. On this one corner it's such a jumble, a jumble of roofs and styles and times ... I'm standing here and I know that all of these past times are happening right now at the same time. ... It feels really, it's like place of transition and you know that none of this will last either, it will all go. In a patchwork kind of a way, in an unsystematic disorganised sort of a way, this building will get replaced by something else and that one will, and then that corner will be redesigned, and then something will happen over here and who can say what?

Kate then said she felt "foreign" on this corner because she didn't know the historical facts behind the development; she was too new to have heard the stories. However, she took pleasure in noting the traces of demolished buildings and the layers of development, and revelled in the sensation she was in a maelstrom. Feeling like a tourist or foreigner in familiar territory is one of the functions of a *dérive*, but many of the women I walked with could feel this disorientation without utilising any particular tactics. They may not be physically lost but they often transported to an imaginative or enchanted city whilst simultaneously existing in their material world. They could sense, and channel, both the here and not-here, the uncanny dynamics of hauntology.

A physical representation of this blurring of histories, imaginaries and materialities can be demonstrated by a portion of the building on Dale Street shown in plate 33. It's in a grade two listed building, a former small warehouse, probably built mid nineteenth century according to Historic England. On the window is a sign advertising a school of music; the typeface suggests it has been established a long time. However, there is no teacher within, the letters were applied by a prop dresser from the Captain America movie that was shot here. To the left is a genuine "ghost sign", the term given to the actual remnants of a lost business; today J Harrop Ltd are no longer trading at number 68 but the building is still used by a yarn merchant. Between the real and imagined

past is a contemporary hieroglyph in the form of a graffiti tag, probably not considered “art” by most people, unlike some of the other vernacular creativity in the Northern Quarter. More prosaic signage tells of parking restrictions and thus, the everyday landscape unravels multiple layers of meaning and emotion.



*Plate 33: Dale Street: music lesson sign from Captain America*

## **7.10 Mental maps**

Women develop mental maps of “their” city and the places that matter to them, which do not necessarily relate to the physical map (Lynch 1960). This was discussed previously in relation to fear and how, as Layla puts it:

I’ve got like a map in my head of where it’s okay to walk on a Sunday morning and where I wouldn’t necessarily walk on a Friday night.

These maps include places that are now gone, for example Nicki described somewhere as: “just the other side of what I still think of as Kro even though I know it isn’t there anymore.” Mental maps like these can be practical strategies for navigating through the city, although Heidi explains how difficult this can be:

I’ve got really bad mental geography. I find it really difficult to follow instructions and directions. It doesn’t come naturally to me at all so basically the past two years (since moving here) it’s just been me trying to get a map in my head of how Manchester actually works, because there are bits of it in my head are very different to how they actually are. Like in my head, Oxford Road and

Deansgate run parallel but they don't in real life ... it's only through a few times of actually walking the route I was like actually "so that's where everything is" so now I know how to get places a lot quicker.

These maps and the changes they incorporate underline a range of attachments. Nicki has been in Manchester almost ten years and remembers clearly a time when:

I saw some building being built and I was like oh look at that new ugly building, that's just silly, I was like Manchester is starting to get really - and I went wait a minute, what am I doing? I have actually been here long enough to know that I feel like there is some Manchester in my head that is now different and that is a weird kind of milestone. I have been here long enough now that I have opinions about stuff and I call things by the names they used to have.

For Nicki she felt like she belonged in Manchester when she had an internalised vision of the city and had an attachment to places, which meant changes were noted and often felt like an attack on somewhere that mattered to her. She told me about her reaction to the BBC studios on Oxford Road being demolished. Something of a landmark, they were near her husband's workplace that she had frequently visited and so although she felt no love of the BBC complex from an aesthetic point of view she felt:

devastated and I thought why the hell do I care? why do I have such an attachment? ... One of the first things I remember doing (when I moved to Manchester) is getting on a bus and saying I'm getting off by the BBC.

Nicki spoke about people calling the space left behind The BBC and we wondered how long it would live in the collective memory. Place names do seem to matter to people as a tangible connection to the past. Anna walked with me through Hulme, a residential area that has undergone redevelopment twice in living memory. She says: "There's all sorts of local names for places that aren't on any maps (but when they rebuilt Hulme) they didn't give them the old names, they gave them new planners names." Anna wanted to tell me the old names because she feared they would fade away and something would be lost. She felt there was a rebellious, political, radical spirit to Hulme that she experienced visiting The Crescents before they were demolished. She talked

to me about her involvement in the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign. Mendis was a Sri Lankan Tamil who claimed sanctuary in a local church for two years and became a focus for human rights and anti-deportation work. Anna now lives in a housing co-operative and wants to keep alternative histories alive because they reflect and contribute to the essence of Hulme.

### **7.11 The soul of the city**

Many other women hinted at an essence of the city, something that makes Manchester uniquely Manchester. When trying to describe this essence, quasi-spiritual terms such as spirit or soul frequently occurred, even from participants who do not discuss faith as being an important part of their identity. What exactly is meant by the spirit or soul of the city? Concern, even grief at its loss was frequently cited, usually in connection to concerns about homogeneity, commodification and the dominance of huge corporations. Pile (2005) discusses how the supernatural persists in the contemporary city; his ghosts and vampires haunt an uncanny landscape not in a literal sense but through the city's subconscious and the stories it tells itself. The term *genius loci* is traditionally used to mean the spirit of a place, but it is associated with the rural or natural world. A *genius loci* protects a specific feature such as a river or ancient tree and it is difficult to apply to a contemporary city. Most problematic is the fact that the *loci* is essentialist and has a fixed identity defined by the place it is bound to and thus is not suited to a diverse, dynamic, fluid city. A more appropriate mythical figure could be a Golem, an inanimate mass given life by the intention of its human creator. Again, however, this is unsatisfactory as a singular deity cannot personify a diverse mass. Massey's conception of space as a constellation of stories, simultaneous and unfinished, is useful here. Myths interweave and the city's soul is constantly rewritten and reinterpreted by all those who travel through it. If there ever were geographical deities, I propose they are likely to resemble those portrayed by Neil Gaiman in *American Gods* (2001). They are a nebulous grouping of thought forms, given life only through belief in them, and are struggling in a modern context where they are out of time and place.

Genius Loci banished we can consider individual perceptions of Manchester,

which showed a surprising level of congruence amongst women I walked with. The city emblem is a worker bee, representing toil, co-operation and interdependence, and this seems to be considered an apt metaphor. There was also consensus that Manchester was not pretty but hard grafting, self-made and up for a good time; it is proud to work and play hard and welcomes all kinds of people. Jack exemplified this with comments she made on her penultimate day living in the city:

It's not a green city, it was never really designed as a city for living in, it's always been a working city for working people and so I won't miss the everlasting concrete of it, the poverty ... it is very friendly, no one ever had a bad night out in Manchester <laughs> you will have a very good night out and people always come back.

The city is not seen as superficially attractive, and Jack was one of several women surprised by the growth in tourism in Manchester. However, the idea of roughness and adversity contributing to character was frequently emphasised and will be returned to. First though, I would like to share this comment from Rennie who drew an explicit link between geography, climate and character:

I wonder if it's just to do with the climate and the geography of it (Manchester) and the sort of claustrophobic nature, the lack of green space, ... surrounded by the Pennines which is quite a looming, quite oppressive thing, I think I mean is great to get out there but on a day-to-day basis there is not much green space. It's not a relaxing city. I think it can be a very stimulating city which is great but I just think it's it feels aggressive in ways ... I tend to think a lot of it is the climate and the geography and the layout of it encourages a kind of interior, heavy drinking kind of culture ... I don't really think Manchester does its well-being, very well.

Rennie was exceptional in making the topographic link, but her comments illuminate wider points made by many women about Manchester's character. It is a hard, grey city of work. You can get things done but you have to graft. This was seen as typically Manchester, and a source of pride as well as frustration. Tony Walsh's poem "This is The Place" (2017) articulates many of the particular features residents, and popular culture, most frequently associate with Manchester.

## 7.12 What does Manchester mean?

Participants were asked to define Manchester, and the answers echoed wider preoccupations. Dirtiness, roughness and grit were all mentioned, as was the history and cultural products which Manchester is associated with in popular consciousness although, harking back to Massey again, there was an understanding that actually the stories are more complicated and diverse. As Zukin (2010), Massey (2005) and others make clear, there can be no one authentic or essential meaning of space because no matter how much uniformity is imposed the multitude of stories will always be hovering beneath the surface. Rennie is a musician who saw sharp contradictions between image and reality because:

Manchester particularly likes to trumpet on about its independent past and its musical history and so on but it seems to be doing everything in its power to close those new stories down ... Manchester itself is becoming a museum, isn't it? ... as much as I love the music, and I've talked about a lot about it myself in the past, I've never talked about as if to say those are the only stories ... There are new stories new voices to be told. Manchester doesn't just belong to Joy Division and Oasis.

Rennie criticised the blokishness of the stereotypes and the constraints they impose on artists who operate outside of them. Recent arguments about the building of a Manchester Music Museum have made these debates public and focused on questions about who, and what, heritage is for. Tourists would probably be disappointed if none of the very famous names were represented – they want the maracas Bez flourished when he danced with The Happy Mondays and the duffle coat Liam Gallagher wore when Oasis were *Top of The Pops* – but imposing a narrative necessarily flattens and erases other stories. The Manchester District Music Archive is an online resource formed in 2003 and that works to include artefacts from a much broader range of music, with recent exhibitions focusing on reggae and dub in Moss Side and the WW1 experiences of students at the Royal Northern College of Music. Their website is a fascinating treasure trove of other histories and begs the question whether the perception of Manchester would be different if other musicians had achieved success instead. There is a complicated semiotic relationship with perceptions of place and aesthetic representations. Nevarez (2013) provides an example by

exploring how Joy Division came to “sound like Manchester.” I would add the pride felt in the city’s idealised nostalgic grime could be considered partially an assimilation of spectacular stereotypes. Nicki thinks about these stereotypes and how she would describe Manchester to someone:

If they hadn’t been here and they were British I think I would probably say it’s not the things that you think it is. Because when people hear Manchester they think of football and they think of music from the 90s basically and those are just not things that have any bearing on my life at all ... The part of Manchester that I live in, (Levenshulme) people in other parts of Manchester are a bit snide about sometimes, either in that it’s dodgy and gross or that it’s getting gentrified and we have people at the same time complaining about pints being too expensive and about fly tipping in the middle of the street ... it’s kind of everything ... You seem only ever to see a very small slice of it and it is one of those things like that old story about the blind guys touching different parts of the elephant one of them thinks that he’s touching a tree and one of them thinks they are touching a hose.

Psychogeography can help to connect those fragments, as demonstrated by the *Robinson* films of Patrick Keiller (1997-2010). At first Keiller’s films appear little more than a succession of beautifully framed images but slowly and thoughtfully, they reveal the impact of policy on physical space, the pavements left broken because they are not a priority in austerity or the diversion caused by broken water pipes in an infrastructure organisation privatised and owned by many different stakeholders.

### **7.13 A relational sense of place**

When they tried to describe Manchester, many people compared it to somewhere else, demonstrating what Massey would recognise as a relational sense of place. Identity is most meaningful when compared to another place that is not Manchester. Perhaps understandably, as it is England’s capital city, London was most frequently mentioned. Several participants admired and envied the green space and heritage in the capital but discussed a compelling economic rationale for moving to Manchester despite this. Janet said:

London was becoming a much more uncomfortable place really, only for the rich and Manchester is a radical place and is very much more for everybody I should say but ... London is more beautiful city actually.

Kate was very concerned that her adopted hometown must learn from London, echoing back to fears about economics and inequality:

what I hadn't appreciated before I came here was the extent to which it (the development of the city) really is all about economic growth. I mean I don't know why I didn't think that, maybe because London is such an extreme example. London is so much about supporting the city of London to be a financial powerhouse and make loads of money at the cost of everything else, culture and history and at the cost of London's people. I mean only a tiny percentage of the people who live in London are involved in the city of London and yet it seems that everything now is geared towards making their lives better, nicer, fancier and I've noticed that there's a flavour of that in Manchester. I'm actually quite sad about it, a bit disappointed. I think I sort of assumed that in the North that be a bit more grounded and sensible.

Kate felt there was a high risk that Manchester was going to lose its identity. London was framed as a cautionary tale by many women because it is perceived by them as somewhere gentrification has gone too far and they were fearful Manchester was on a similar trajectory. Atkinson (2017) explains it has become polarised as a result of property speculation. This has led to "lifeless" spaces, dominated by vacant investment properties that have a "corrosive" effect on public life. Manchester has not suffered this fate yet but there are growing numbers of prestige developments which are owned by absentee landlords and Silver (2017) is amongst those echoing Kate's warning.

Salford was another important point of comparison with Manchester. The neighbouring boroughs have a symbiotic relationship and the border is easily traversed. In places it may not be obvious where the boundary is, and Salford is often being overlooked for, or conflated with, its neighbour. However, Salford is older and women often perceived it as more "real" and "authentic", terms which will be examined later. Layla lives in Manchester but walks to church in Salford several times a week:

It's really interesting how Manchester and Salford connect. I think it (Salford) has a different feel, it feels older somehow. (It's got) a bit more of a working-class idea of itself where Manchester is kind like it's being marketed as a very shiny city, a party city, a city for business, a city for blahblahblah whereas Salford isn't doing that all. It is just carrying on being Salford.



Christine grew up in Salford, but now works in Manchester where she lived all her adult life until moving to Derbyshire three years ago:

To me they feel quite separate, they are quite different. Salford doesn't really have a centre to it, you know there's lots of sort of little centres which are shopping precincts effectively and you know there's never been the money spent that there is in Manchester, yes, it's definitely like Manchester's poor relation in that way. This is one thing I don't like about Manchester, there seems to be constant building work, it feels never-ending actually.

There is a scepticism about Manchester's regeneration narratives and because Salford has not benefited as obviously from these policies it is viewed as more "real". Paradoxically, this also means there is some resentment and regret that Salford has been overlooked and allowed to go into what is interpreted as a managed economic decline. Sam lives in Salford but spends much of her time in Manchester because:

Salford unfortunately doesn't have much of a city thing going on. I don't know why that is, I think it's just maybe historical and also geographical. They've moved their civic centre into Swinton which is not really reachable for people, it is a bit out of the way so I gravitate towards Manchester city centre because I know it so well ... sadly I think the people have still got the heart. I think it's just they are missing a body <laughs> they are a heart missing a body really so it's a bit strange.

This lack of an obvious city centre, and identifiable borders, adds to Salford's perceived relatively ambiguous identity. Traditionally the River Irwell marked a dividing line but this doesn't seem to be widely acknowledged. Layla asks:

Where is this border? If you had to draw it ... Like you can get hold of the map and see where Salford starts and when Manchester finishes, that's a thing you can do, but if you went up to someone who lived round here and went "can you draw a line from a where Salford starts and Manchester starts" they probably wouldn't be able to do it.

Layla demonstrates the permeability of the border, which is traversed every day. Local independent media *The Salford Star* have been voicing concerns about the lack of recognition for the separate identity of their city, complaining about the rebranding of Salford Quays and The University of Salford to mention Manchester in their names. This supports the description of place making Ward et al (2015) identified within Greater Manchester. *The Salford Star* also rallied

against the demolition of markers of the city's industrial past such as the cargo cranes at the docks and the gasworks McColl sang about.

#### **7.14 Pop culture and DIY revolutions**

Many of the quotes so far suggest consumption of art, music and other cultural products is a key appeal, and identifier, of Manchester. As Christine says: "art and music is one of those things Manchester prides itself on and rightly so." Dave Haslam (2000) connects the pop culture history of Manchester with its political evolution and illustrates how music both shapes, and is shaped by, the environment. A common refrain is that Manchester is somewhere to make things happen, and there is an abiding DIY ethic, linked to the adaptability, availability and resilience of empty warehouses and industrial buildings. This is often constructed as oppositional to London, which is positioned as dominant and draining resources; Manchester needs to create its own scenes as Jack illustrates:

I invented an organisation called Queers Against Cuts ... (Manchester has) got along interesting sort of scene history (and a) more alternative and political scene ... everyone just seems to try their hardest to work together and I think it's a very creative community. I always think the thing about Manchester compared to London, London has all the best shows about everything but it's a place where you go to watch things but Manchester is a place where you participate, you don't go to see bands, you put bands on or you make a band. It's a really participatory place this.

This ethos was enabled partly because of a landscape that included lots of old industrial spaces that could be occupied cheaply. Patti moved into one of the squats at the Hulme Crescents, which became an alternative artistic hub before their demolition. She later worked in various venues and took me past one of them which closed in 2015.

We are just outside what was The Roadhouse on Newton Street now and I worked here in the mid-90s for many years and now its closed down so ... It's going the way of a lot of smaller music venues and clubs and other independent places are going in Manchester. They haven't been able to continue with their leases because the rents got so high ... It's the same for homegrown gigs and community activities generally I think. We used to have a lot of empty space being a post-industrial landscape and that, it's the same all over the world, isn't it? It's the same in London, all the

stuff that's happening in Soho, it's been happening in New York, Berlin is getting really problematic now

Nora also misses The Roadhouse:

It meant a lot to me in my social life and I was incredibly upset to lose it last year, and even more upset and angry about how events have unfolded because it hasn't turned into what it was supposed to turn into (a restaurant). It is now lying empty. I'm concerned about that end of the Northern Quarter and I feel like the Northern Quarter is very obviously losing its identity as an alternative space and it's becoming less independent, it's not what it should be, so my feelings about the Northern Quarter are shifting. ... I am concerned that we are losing music spaces you know the city centre living thing is impacting on music spaces and that that really is a concern.

The Roadhouse isn't the only venue women feel attached to, and apparently prefer to the newer "hip" bars and clubs. Linda feels an anticipatory loss so she took me to see her favourite place in Manchester; it faces an uncertain future and rumours about closure is looming because of the HS2 high speed train plans:

The Star and Garter is a very run down seedy little place but it's a lovely venue and it has a lot of memories for me because it's where I met my husband all that way back in September '97. They could do it up, they could renovate it and make it lovely, but instead it's a marked for demolition because I know they want to expand Piccadilly station and turn into this massive European mega station with lots of shops. They want to make it more like an airport, now I can see the benefits and advantages of that massive transport hub in the centre of one of the biggest cities in the country but I think that losing so much as they did to that, they could preserve it, they could make it a little island amidst the modernity.

As a professional musician, Rennie feels deeply affected by the changes and the rampant consumerism of the city centre because it impinges on both the physical and psychic space she needs to create:

when I was making my (album) I found myself going to the outskirts and actively seeking, turning away really from the city centre and all the activity. I really needed to just turn away and walk out to the outskirts and I think even within a mile radius of the city centre there is loads of overlooked empty spaces which are worth exploring before they get built on which they inevitably will ... Because obviously the city centre is just geared around buying

stuff and that is not enough is it? I sort of needed more nourishment really and somehow I found it out there and as well as that it's the only landscape that I've got really so have to, I have to use what we've got and be resourceful.

The contradictions of gentrification reveal themselves again. Artists such as Rennie need affordable places to create. She comes from a working-class background and supplements her creativity with seasonal catering jobs and her small flat is not suitable to rehearse in. She, and her colleagues, seek places that are affordable, usually in peripheral, run-down and neglected areas. However, they then (usually unwittingly) contribute to an area becoming attractive and they become priced out. The mass of people attracted by the opportunity to consume kill the means of its creation. It is not art, artists or those that seek artistic inspiration that is the real problem; it is the global forces of capitalism which commodify taste, recuperate innovation but actually does not care which style of art is popular as long as it sells. The challenge to escape its tentacles – to evade the spectacle – is seemingly impossible, especially as its embrace is so delicious (Smith, 2017).

### **7.15 Back to the Northern Quarter**

The pressure to consume, to wear the right clothes, and the commercialisation of culture was a concern to the vast majority of my interviewees. Many were especially concerned about the demise of the Northern Quarter, which has been associated since the 1990s with creativity and alternative culture. This concern was shared across age ranges so is not simply regret for a lost youth. Patti told me:

I find the commercialisation and exploitation of this hipster as it's known now hipster lifestyle, that's quite disturbing ... because you can't have grassroots scenes that grow by themselves and grow organically through natural networks and communities without them immediately being hyped up as you know the next big thing.

Graffiti and street art were cited as examples of resistance and excitement, although many are actually commissioned artworks and as such demonstrate overtly the Situationist idea of recuperation. This does not negate the pleasure women find in street art though and Penny was particularly vocal about this.

She had a camera with her and our walk often paused so she could take photographs, telling me:

each time I come in I discover new artworks both supposedly public and the street art all of that in inverted commas ... this changes quite regularly and I just love the way the artwork brings it to life.



*Plate 34: Graffiti, Spear Street*

The work of buskers also adds to this, and again there are fears that licencing and regulation will lead to a loss of character and texture in Manchester. Sam was a particular connoisseur:

because I'm in town nearly every day ... sometimes I notice things other people don't and I really enjoy the kind of busking and things like that. I remember when there were no buskers or they'd be just the occasional one you know so I really like them. If I've got any money I'll go give them a few quid or something just to encourage them because you know we need you people. We really do. I think it makes this such a pleasant environment and it's great, really, really good.

Independent shops were very frequently cited as an important and very valuable asset to the city. Such places contribute to a unique place identity, and often make individuals feel much happier in their consumption. They are also often vital cornerstones of the community, as Hall (2012) argues. Martha explained that:

Independent shops are very important to me, because otherwise you could be anywhere. I mean I do shop at Boots and you know M&S and such but sometimes you get the sense, I mean not just in the UK, even in New York everything is just identikit toy town high streets.

The New Economics Foundation (2007) report on Clone Towns illustrates that this is not unique to Manchester. Sometimes the masquerade of chain shops causes confusion as women try to shop as ethically as they can, and as Abakhan shows ownership is not always obvious. As we passed a small deli she hadn't seen before Donna said:

I have no idea whether they are independent or not any more...I mean obviously I go to chains, I'm not trying to be, I'm not above that I'm just if I have a preference I try not to ... it's hard to know, the kitsch and the styling and the design of places in today's world is such where I find it very hard very difficult to distinguish.

Daisy used bookshops to illustrate the ethical problems she faces:

I always seem to come towards Waterstones, because much as I would like to support independent bookshops I'm usually, (thinking) it's somebody's birthday that day ... if I've got time to go to Chorlton and then I find that they don't have the book I want I have to come to Waterstones.

She consoled herself with the thought that Waterstones is better than Amazon. The most popular independent shops, mentioned by several people, were the aforementioned haberdashery, Abakhan, and the traditional "rice and three" curry shops. These are small, sparsely furnished cafes which offer a range of cheap, tasty, home style curries. There is usually a daily special and a set price for your choice of three dishes with rice, hence the colloquial name. There is a now rather anachronous cluster around the Northern Quarter, as well as in Cheetham Hill and other neighbourhoods associated with the cotton industry. This phenomenon is an illustration of the evolution of international trade as they were started by Pakistani families to feed workers in the textile warehouses. They are a distinct regional variation on a now international cuisine, "rice and three" being the particular local iteration. There is heated debate about which café is best, and each woman who mentioned them had a different favourite. The colour and variety that independent shops add to the street was seen as a vital buffer against homogenisation. However, women were fearful they were

threatened and although they cannot stop an economic tsunami, independent shops provide a symbolic consolation.

## **7.16 Authenticity and public space**

The concept of “Authenticity” permeates this work. In an era of artisan bread and online connections, it is increasingly hard to imagine any experience unmediated by capitalism. This is how I chose to define “authentic” and I question whether it is even possible to achieve. Berman felt the concern for authenticity “grew out of a loss of political faith, hope and love” (1970:33) and that there is an urgent need to reconcile the needs of the individual with support for the communal. He called for “Marxism with Soul” and I suspect this would appeal to many of the women I walked with. They yearned for a city that felt non-commercial and compassionate, and the definition of authenticity celebrated roughness, resistance and un-sellableness. Rennie summed this up as she took me on a walk towards Miles Platting:

there is almost a sense of when we get there, what are we looking for, what we come for, it's kind of invisible really. It's about what's in your imagination as well and the whole point of a city centre is it's not geared around imagination, is it? It is geared around buying stuff so after a while that just becomes not enough ... there's a sense of the threshold and you can visibly go ... Here's what I want and you are over the threshold and you're out there into the wilderness. I love that, I think it's an exciting feeling.

It is perhaps easier to define what is inauthentic, for example as Rennie told me:

developers pick up on things like bits of history, bits of character, bits of you know architecture here and there and then they take that surface idea and use it to sell their shit apartments whilst erasing all the bits of character that were what made it in the first place so they use it and then they don't value it.

“Fake pubs” and “fake history” were cited many times as problematic. Lots of dissatisfaction was voiced towards quasi-public space, for example in Spinningfields as Pippa said:

It strikes me as quite an artificial area, all new buildings. I'm not sure how it is managed but it reminds me a bit of Berlin Potsdamer Platz and that is basically a semi private area actually. It is not really publicly accessible but it looks like it, (its) patrolled by these

private security firms and is still technically owned by the, those businesses and so I think Spinningfields is a bit like that if I'm not mistaken.

Spinningfields has recurred as a place that women really dislike. It epitomises a newly constructed neighbourhood, which Leary says embodies

the rhetoric of entrepreneurialism has been translated into the reality of place marketing ... new aestheticized entrepreneurial landscapes of cultural consumption and social control. (2008:223)



*Plate 35: Spinningfields*

In Spinningfields the attention to design and purpose is explicit, and the commercialisation of space is signified by glass offices, tall apartment blocks and the striking Civil Justice Building. It does not have the “ad-hocness” or jumble of the Northern Quarter. Within the Bohemian district business incentives, marketing and a range of policy discourses have long been utilised as place making tactics but the aesthetic appears more spontaneous. Additionally, Wallace (2015) demonstrates that reconceptualising and regenerating an area can take a long time and previous uses are apparent. The physical basis of the two districts is very different. Spinningfields was a tabula rasa following the demolition of offices which previously occupied the site. Meanwhile, the Northern Quarter (and other areas) retained large industrial buildings. These were solid and physically resilient constructions, their size, capacity and construction making them viable to be adapted to a



range of uses. Many original features, such as bare bricks, were retained during renovation, often for economic as well as aesthetic reasons. Today that roughness is highly valued as being authentic Manchester and this offers a paradox as participants do not want things to be filthy, just rough enough to be interesting. Maisie described why she moved to Manchester: “I don’t know why I just thought I really like Manchester, it’s a bit grubby <laughs> I just looked around and thought yes I’m gonna come here.” To her the grubbiness made the city less intimidating and more malleable, she felt there was a freedom and she could be herself here. Maisie arrived as a student and never left, her first instinct that she could make Manchester her home was proved correct. Charlotte also came to study and then stayed on, moving from Germany because:

there’s a slight sort of roughness around the edges that I quite like, so Freiburg in Germany was a pretty city you know, a super nice area, very eco-friendly, very green, on paper it sounded lovely but I was really bored ... this has never happened to me in Manchester, if anything it is the exact opposite here. ... It’s a bit more, a bit dirty. Now I don’t like dirt per se but there is something about it, I don’t know, but it gives it a few edges and corners, there is a certain energy here. People like to make things happen.

Charlotte alludes to the way dirt instils a need to do things yourself. This sounds similar to a neoliberal rejection of the nanny state, an idea that if street cleaning and other services are done for citizens they will become lazy. This is unlikely to be the underlying intention of Charlotte’s thoughts as she also called for improved social services, but it does underline the idea that excessive sanitation and shine is viewed as repressive. Anna links sanitisation explicitly with social policies that she does not like:

I’m just concerned about privatisation of public spaces and also, do you know what, I like things that are a bit grimy and run down. Not everywhere, I wouldn’t like everywhere to be grimy and run down but I was at Castlefield yesterday for some Sunday lunch and I remember when I first came to Manchester it was like this urban decay and I quite like that, I like a bit of grime on the edges ... because to me I suppose for me partly it goes with everything being privatised ... you know that everything becomes uniform and the same ... I like Oldham Street again because it’s on the edge of the trendy bit of the northern quarter and also on the edge of the slightly shonky Manchesteriness and is not totally gentrified and smartened up and hipsterfied but it’s on the edge of that hip

area so it has a little bit of that flavour but is not all sort of smoothed out. Its roughness is really visible.

This ambivalent, romantic attachment is expressed in many ways. Rennie consciously seeks out urban wastelands, picturesque ruins and other liminal spaces as inspiration for her creativity:

Oh, let's go down there actually ... Into the heart of darkness as I like to call it ... I say it with affection, you know it is weird, the whole mill thing because you shouldn't, I'm not trying to romanticise them because they were sites of suffering really and exploitation so ... but I think it's just being in that kind of I think raw industrial space it automatically opens up a kind of portal I think to the imagination in a way that carpet box rehearsal room it puts me off entirely ... so I've always used rooms like that spaces like that and I've actively sought out a certain amount of [laughs] I don't know bleakness I suppose you could call it in the landscape but again over time it's something that I've, I use it like it's a material that I work with.

This is similar to the accounts from Eve explaining her love of urban exploration, Sam wanting blank spaces for imagination and Maisie using empty warehouses for events which are discussed elsewhere. Psychogeographers are often drawn to these abandoned places (see, for example the art of Jane Samuels) perhaps because the surface is thin and traces of the past are more visible. Zukin suggests an uncomfortable parallel with the hipster and the flâneur who find themselves drawn to the romance of ruins. Nobody I spoke to was fetishizing poverty and decay but there can be a troubling tendency to celebrate "ruin porn" which gazes on, and takes pleasure in, decay. There is a level of cognitive dissonance sometimes when celebrating the rough as Maddy illustrates talking about the canal:

it's really quite pleasant, it was always a bit more of a neglected but quite romantic beautiful industrial landscape, probably massively scruffy to a lot of people ... if there is any water or any green I will always gravitate to it but then my mind will edit out the rubbish, I sometimes get a shock when someone points out that where we are a bit of a scruffy rundown because I'm so good at editing it out you know.

Nora also explores this contradiction in the Printworks, a leisure complex:

I kind of like the fact that they did use the old because it did used to be a Printworks there, it used to be big printing place, I like the

fact that they used the building rather than just knock it down, but it is pretty grotty around here ... nothing ever seems to change it.

There are echoes of the industrial past throughout the Printworks and they jar with the cinema and theme pubs inside. Nora wonders about the people who worked there and what they would think, probably they would enjoy watching a film more than working hard. Holgersson asks similar questions about Gothenburg docklands where “commercial storytelling is always about smoothing out a marketable past ... (who) do you interview about the good old days when everyone has been displaced” (2017:80). The printer’s professional skills are becoming obsolete now, and letterpress is just the kind of artisan chic that hipsters appreciate.

### **7.17 More favourite places**

Women talked about their attachment to specific places and where they feel a particular sense of ownership and belonging to the city. This was often linked to those liminal spaces that have resisted or escaped development, perhaps because change happens in a way that feels very hard to control. To illustrate this I will return to Rennie, who showed me a very specific place that she feels an intense attachment to despite having no functional or economic link:

This little patch this bit of fence, that mill it’s all very it is something I feel very territorial about this patch, this walk ... I really object to the excessive fencing off of wasteland so that you can’t wander it ... people are crying out for a bit of space particularly in Manchester but you’re not allowed to wander around and just do something that isn’t buying something ... I feel like a part of an invisible or other community, you know when you come out to these spaces and you are sort of working rehearsing or writing whatever, the other people there are around you tend to be churches of various denominations (or) just walking past (or) prostitutes ... it’s a kind of another community of people that inhabit these outskirts type places.

Kate and Sam both spoke about their fondness for a specific patch of wasteland covered in grass and flowers. This was in a banal setting and doubtless frequently overlooked by passers-by, but for them it provided a small sliver of enchantment. Kate described it, before going onto identify individual flowers to me:



*Plate 36: Shudehill edgelands*

it's near Shudehill (bus) station and there's a little patch of grass and wildflowers, alongside the platform going towards Bury and I really, really like it and I'm not quite sure why. I think it might just be because it's managed to hold on and survive, although of course it hasn't survived, it only exists because a building was bought down in order to drive through this thoroughfare this now tram. I like it because of the diversity so I like to come and look at it and see how it's getting on.

These are small spaces and perhaps the scale helps identification and facilitates attachment. This piece of land offers a visible symbol of resistance to change, a survival and a respite from seemingly unavoidable and unstoppable "progress". The flowers embody feelings of unease and hopes for the impossible – a private space in the midst of a crowd and a glimpse of something real, something that survives, thrives, against the odds beyond and outside but somehow right in the very centre of, capitalism.

### **7.18            The lost beach and ambivalent nostalgia**

These flowers that blossom through cracks in capital redevelopment, like the collage of signs and street art piled on top of each other, suggest the idea of the city as palimpsest. The concept of space having layers is well established but it should always be remembered they leak into each other, the strata are messy and uneven and their borders merge. Knabb (2006) documents Situationist graffiti and the slogan "*Sous Les Pavés, La Plage*" (beneath the

pavement, the beach) provides a useful spatial metaphor and here I will expand on its relevance for contemporary Manchester.

The original refrain refers partly to material conditions as Parisian cobbles were laid on sandy ground, so literally ripping them up led to the exposure of a glimpse of another beach-like world. As a metaphor it also represents a Utopian vision that if we destroy the banal restrictions of capitalism we can reveal a world of leisure and play presented by the beach. In Manchester today, most of the cobbles are covered in tarmac, although on some that has worn away and they peek through, the past re-emerging literally to haunt the future. In other places the cobblestones have been retained as a heritage feature to appeal to a market searching for authenticity. Where this occurs they also represent an obstacle to access for many people, symbolising the physical limits of the rights to the city for many people not willing or able to be model consumers. Ian Brown said: "Manchester has everything except a beach" and his words are, perhaps inevitably now emblazoned on commemorative t-shirts. However, perhaps, with imagination, another city can be uncovered, and perhaps other worlds are possible if we know where and how to peel away the surface distractions.

I have been trying to find a word that conveys the complex nostalgia many women discussed. They felt an acute sense of loss linked to gentrification and rapid change in the urban environment. However, they also understood that that there was no golden age; they didn't want to literally go backwards in time. Almost all of them talked about the benefits change had brought to Manchester and their experiences of it. These included recognition that a busier, more populated city centre felt safer and provided many opportunities for entertainment, leisure and pleasure. They appreciated this but still felt a yearning for something lost, something supposedly more "authentic" and unmediated by capitalism. They also felt uncomfortable about inequality and displacement caused by gentrification and wanted to make sure the city did not lose its soul.

Bonnett (2009) discusses how nostalgia should be embraced by the radical left and not merely dismissed as inherently conservative. He also believes it is

important to acknowledge loss, for example of the post-war optimism which promised social housing and healthcare for all. I agree with Bonnet's suggestions and believe there is value in the idea that lack of optimism is a key problem, this also relates to Fishers "capitalist realism" (2009) and our collective inability to see beyond, and through, the current system. However, nostalgia does not ultimately feel like the right word to express these feelings, something else is needed.

### **7.19 Hipcholia: a conclusion**

Nostalgia has come to mean a powerful yearning for times past, and may be a bittersweet pleasure or a heart wrenching pain. It is experienced on an individual basis. The origins of the word combine the Greek words nostos, which translates as "homecoming", and algos, which is pain or ache. Literally it means homesickness and was initially a Seventeenth Century medical diagnosis given to soldiers who were stationed abroad. Overtime it acquired romantic associations and has come now to imply a belief that the past was better. This is why it is not the correct term for the feelings women shared with me. Regardless of their age or class they did not simply look back to an imaginary Albion, they expressed a much more ambivalent nostalgia and also celebrated the pleasures of their present.

The women I spoke to expressed fear for the future of Manchester and an active sense the city was losing something special. The closest word I found was Solastalgia (Albrecht, 2005). This neologism combines olacium (comfort or solace) with algos. Albrecht coined this to describe the distress felt by victims of climate change and other environmental disasters such as forest fires or the damage caused to their landscape by actions such as mining or fracking. The feeling of harm caused by manmade actions does resonate, and the women I spoke to felt a lack of control or agency about changes to their landscape. However, Albrecht is largely concerned with natural landscapes rather than the urban and his work does not allow for ambivalence; it is hard to see any benefit these changes in circumstance bring to those affected.

I played around with words and thought about the idea of mancholia, combining the feeling of sadness commonly called melancholia with

Manchester. Melancholia as a mood or affect is gloomy but also has some romantic associations. I felt this suited the colloquial “rainy city” very well; fitting with the seductive miserabilism of The Smiths and Joy Division whilst anchoring unease to a specific geographical location. I also enjoyed knowing that the name Manchester is widely acknowledged as deriving from *Mamucium* meaning breast shaped hill, thus foregrounding a feminine influence which has been suppressed in the mainstream contemporary associations with the city. However, on reflection this is too tied to a specific place. I strongly suspect the sorts of feeling I want to convey are found in many western cities undergoing processes of gentrification - indeed, it may actually be a global affect, although it would be inappropriate to extrapolate wider from my interview data. Casual conversations with colleagues in Leeds, London and Glasgow do suggest some commonalities and so I wanted something less rooted in one specific place. These feelings are both particular in that they are clearly related to one’s sense of belonging, but they are also unexceptional being a widespread and dispersed result of global processes. This means the actual physical location is mutable.

Therefore, I have settled on “hipcholia” echoing melancholia but also invoking the figure of the hipster who recurred as an equivocal presence in this work. I have discussed how the hipster represents gentrification, both as an appealing consumer choice and a troubling social cleansing but their roots are deeper than contemporary fashion. Etymologically “hip” means “in the know”, a usage recorded since the 1920s. This fits the knowing complicity in many of the processes that are causing distress amongst the women I spoke to. It also lends itself to an embodied sense of both repulsion and attraction comparable to Zukin’s (1995) “domestication by cappuccino.” Money and consumption lies at the heart of the neoliberal city and no matter how hard we may try, we remain entangled within it. I feel “hip” also emphasises that these changes are human made, not natural or inevitable disasters and they are not experienced equally or with similar intensity by everyone. It highlights the dilemma about what constitutes authenticity and value within the contemporary city. I also appreciate “hip” has a double meaning as a body part. Hips are engaged whilst walking and indeed swaying hips are characteristic of the feminine gait – one

of the key reasons Butler says: “a walk can be a dangerous thing.” (2009: 205). Predominantly I use hipcholia to describe a search for the soul of a city which has no essential genius loci. It is another consequence of the spectacle which makes authenticity an enigmatic presence, equally desirable and elusive.

Hipcholia is a yearning for something that never quite was, and future lost before it was more than a shimmer in the shadows. Hipcholia is a dynamic, emotional force that paradoxically embraces both attraction and repulsion. It's a discomfort in the relative luxury you enjoy, knowing your pleasure is complicit in historical trauma. Hipcholia is the quixotic quest for the heart of a city and the paradoxical urge to stop it beating because the flux that causes you concern is the motion that keeps the metropolis thriving. Hipcholia is an ambivalent nostalgia that everyone I spoke to tried to describe. It is the search for an impossible authenticity; an essential soul that cannot ever, and has not ever, existed beneath the pavements of the city. The Situationists claimed “sur le pavés, la plage” (Knabb, 2006) but beneath the pavements are the ruins of older human constructions and deeper still nothing but inert rock. It's the same rock we all wend our own interweaving and occasionally enchanted paths across, regardless of gender, facial hair or income and wherever we choose to wander.



***Drift Five***  
***Everything is connected. The suburbs from***  
***Whalley Range to Mayfield***

I've finished my fieldwork and I'm working at home but need to get out and remember what actually walking, instead of talking, writing and thinking about walking, feels like. My house is in Whalley Range, just south of the city centre. As I wander up my street I can feel change in the air and I know I can't stop it even if I wanted to. The pub on the corner is being transformed into apartments and my favourite chippy has become a nail bar. Estate agents now call the area Cho Bo (Chorlton Borders) although Moss Side borders would be more truthful if less appealing to the bourgeois market.



*Plate 37: The Whalley*

It's mutated many times before of course. There was once a tollbooth and cinema on this road but the big houses began to crumble when they were transformed into bedsits. In *Miserable Lie* Morrissey asked ruefully "*what do we get for our trouble and pain? Just a rented room in Whalley Range.*" When I moved here, there were sex workers on the street corner and an off licence with bars at the window. Now there's a Tesco Express and people moan about car parking not kerb crawling. Sex work, like so much else, is retreating behind closed doors, into massage parlours and onto computer screens. There's a residents

group on Facebook who organise community clean-ups and celebrations. Every so often someone posts a complaint there about the bookies because it doesn't fit their idyll of a "nice" street. I despise horseracing but find myself arguing in its defence.

A woman knocked on our door a while ago, she lived here in the 1970s and had learnt about the history of the house. We know between the first and second world wars Dr James Kite lived here, offering alternative therapies, and she told me they think he held fake séances as renovations uncovered an ectoplasm machine. I wish I could find her contact details as I would love to know exactly how they discovered what the contraption was. Later, a housing co-op was formed and the house was part of a network of activist dwellings, possibly under surveillance, definitely full of determination to change the world. She told me about making Reclaim the Night placards when women took to the streets together to protest about police instructions to women to stay home for fear of the Yorkshire Ripper. I smiled at the serendipity but frustrated by how little has changed in some ways, we shouldn't still be fighting this battle. More prosaically I wished I'd had a chance to tidy up before her son saw my bedroom, the place he was born.

Walking to the bus stop I say hello to neighbours I pass on the way; the retired teacher at no 23 and the man whose name I have forgotten or maybe never knew. I do know he is a Falklands veteran and Nottingham Forest fan who loves curry, reads The Daily Mirror and holidays in Bournemouth. Within a ten-minute walk I could find a Sikh Temple, an Islamic Heritage Centre, a Hindu Temple and Methodist, Spiritualist, Catholic, Polish, Chinese and Evangelical churches. I share a faith with none of them but somehow this peaceful co-existence pleases me, although I don't know how much these groups actually interact with each other. I walk into Hulme, past the community garden centre and the derelict Hippodrome music hall. There are squatters in there now, trying to reclaim the space for community use. They are plotting amidst faded glamour and the

ghosts of parties past. I wish them luck. Opposite is Homes for Change, the yellow brick co-operative housing complex designed by displaced residents of The Crescents. I see the bridge Joy Division stood on in the snow but have no desire to retrace their footsteps.

I pass a blue plaque commemorating Charlotte Bronte. Incongruously she began writing *Jane Eyre* whilst visiting the city, worlds away from Howarth and the desolate moors her family are more usually associated with. I'm at All Saints Park now, there's the workhouse where Emmaline Pankhurst was a Poor Law Guardian and here's the site of the 1945 Pan African Congress where so many seeds of independence were sown. It's all part of the university now. I cross over and head down Grosvenor Street. Tenants in the flats here are fighting for better fire safety. I can see The Mancunian Way and remember older people telling me about the blitz and slum clearances. They still miss the neighbourhoods they lost, even after all these years.



*Plate 39: Ardwick Green*

Ardwick Green is on my right now, there's a glacial erratic in the park that used to be labelled as a meteor. The skatepark under the motorway is busy and I catch a glimpse of the River Medlock, mostly culverted and adding to the myth of underground Manchester. The old abandoned Mayfield Railway Station is ahead. Years ago, some friends and I wandered up there when the gate was open, disingenuously

claiming we didn't know we shouldn't. We stood on the derelict platform and tried to conjure images of trains but instead the Transport Police appeared. The site is now hosting regular pop up street food events in a car park and there's a giant illuminated sign. It says: "everything is connected" and it's impossible to divine if its art or advertising.

## **Chapter Eight Conclusion**

### **8.1 Introduction and summary**

The central finding of this thesis is that women experience contemporary Manchester as an alluring but haunted landscape. Gender is of primary significance in their relationship to the city and central to their experience of walking through metropolitan space. Women express an ambivalent attitude towards central Manchester, feeling both attracted and repelled. They are deeply concerned about the impact of regeneration and gentrification, whilst also enjoying the consumer pleasures and comfort they can bring. I also detected a nuanced sense of ambivalent nostalgia which I have termed *hipcholia*. This incorporates an empathetic connection to a past which is understood as harsh and a paradoxical sense of loss. *Hipcholia* attempts to reconcile the desire for authentic, unmediated experience with the complex reality of life in a neoliberal city.

The research underpinning these conclusions was an extended engagement with women who I walked with in Manchester city centre. The main aim of my work was to uncover their thoughts and feelings about the everyday urban environment they live, work and study in. I wanted to problematize and fill the lacuna in existing research on the presence of women in public spaces. Together we explored the city and shared rich and candid conversations. I was interested in their holistic experiences, and in particular, how drifting together could provide an opportunity to discuss what Manchester means to these women. My methodology was inspired by a strong interest in the value of psychogeography as a diverse enterprise that seeks to energise and extend our experience with space. This research was also devoted to developing the role of walking as a tool for critical engagement with space, helping with our understanding of how the built environment generates affective impacts on those within it.

This conclusion will reiterate my key findings and contribution to knowledge. It will then discuss methodological issues and issues of material concern before examining how this thesis could be the catalyst for future research.

## 8.2 Key Findings: Gender matters

Gender has a continued and profound impact on women's embodied experiences of the city and how they navigate through it. This thesis builds on work by Wilson (1991) Valentine (1990) Pain (2001) Bowlby (1990) and others, demonstrating profound relevance to contemporary Manchester. Of primary significance is the evidence that women experience encounters with the city as explicitly gendered. They identify sexism, misogyny and gender based oppression as a key factor in their everyday lives. The embodied, somatic experience of being a woman makes it extremely difficult to conceptualise a space free from these concerns. Women develop a range of survival strategies and also find much to relish in the urban, but, as Isobelle told me, it is impossible to truly relax, to inhabit flaneurie because "the city isn't for women really... I always have to be vigilant... the world is so much for <men> ... they don't realise what it's like, not feeling like public space is for you."

Feminism is an integral part of my epistemology, and I assert the voices of women, so often ignored or excluded, offer valuable insights into the urban experience. Gender was viewed within this thesis not as an essential category but as a social construction, both constitutive of, and constituted through, experience, constantly remade and reinforced according to context. "Woman" is not a single descriptive group and there is no one essential narrative that women must adhere to. The women I walked with were heterogeneous and analysis looked for subjects, experiences or concepts shared across women, so I focused on commonalities whilst always honouring individual experience. Central Manchester provided the backdrop for their performances.

I followed Massey's definition of place, which recognises pre-existing material conditions but also views place as being, like gender, socially constructed. She states:

Identities are forged in and through relations (which include non-relations, absences and hiatuses). In consequence, they are not rooted or static, but mutable on-going productions (Massey 2005:5)

These relationships impact on the construction of places and people and the stories we tell about both. Dominant place narratives betray a complex web of power relations, and my interviews uncovered some of those that are manifested in the cityscape. Much literature on walking is either ungendered or dismissive of women; it assumes a heteronormative white man as the default position. This erases difference, silences diverse voices and ignores power relationships such as the experiences of women under patriarchy. It imposes an essentialist vision of space which is as damaging as an essentialist model of gender. This research challenges orthodoxy and contributes to an emerging, and growing, body of work by women walking artists and academics such as Elkin (2016), Richardson (2015), Heddon and Turner (2010) and others who all seek to extend discussions about psychogeography and creative walking.

To distil one of the core aims of this thesis, I wanted to explore what it means to walk as a woman. I swiftly dispelled any initial arguments that perhaps a genderless account could suffice, supplemented by a discussion on the importance of inclusive language and a summary of changes since Debord wrote his *Theory of The Dérive* (1955 / 2006). During fieldwork I was frequently reminded there are hazards integral to a merely being a female with the audacity to desire a presence on contemporary streets. Interviews were frequently disrupted by men, and women spoke of a need to be alert to threats and a constant underlying sense that the city privileges a certain kind of masculinity. Since Wilson's (1991) documenting of the historical evolution of the pleasures and perils of the urban environment for women, it seems that too often women are still "sphinxes in the city," complicating, challenging and contradicting the dominant narrative of the place. I demonstrate the continued relevance of Wilson's work and the need for a continued and sustained campaign to change the status quo.

There is a continuum of gender based violence, and fear of violence, that limits women's ability to inhabit and enjoy public space. This includes the frequent occurrence of street harassment, or "interruptions" (Vera-Gray 2016) which intrude on women's ability to experience the pleasures of the city. Many of these interruptions may appear trivial and ostensibly harmless but I contend

they have a damaging, cumulative impact on the psychogeographical landscape and to challenge everyday sexism is important Feminist work. Street harassment is a symptom of a wider lack of respect for women and a historical desire to keep them in what a patriarchal order offers them as their primary place, the private domestic sphere. (Of course, domestic violence means this has its own dangers beyond the scope of this research.)

At the other extreme of the spectrum from street interruptions are rape and murder, crimes that are frequently fetishized and sensationalised by the media. This is despite the majority of violence against women being perpetrated by men known to their victims. Again, Feminist work must include challenging not just actual violence but the system that transforms and commodifies women's suffering into entertainment. "Stranger danger" is a comparatively rare occurrence, although it generates a great deal of fear amongst women, which has an impact on their behaviour in the city. It should of course be acknowledged that the experience of crime and the fear it instils is not unique to women. Stanko (1990) discusses the pressures masculinity and male violence place on men and boys, who can themselves be victims and are harmed in multiple ways by patriarchy. However, the majority of gender based violence is directed at women and their fear is both logical, and justified as Stanko states:

Women's heightened level of anxiety is born of an accurate reading of their relationship to safety. It is not a misguided paranoia. Women's life experiences – as children, adolescents and adults – are set in a context of ever-present sexual danger. Worry about personal safety is one-way women articulate what it means to be female and live, day-in and day-out, in communities where women are targets of sexual violence (1990:86).

There is an urgent and compelling need for a cultural shift and an end to both real and symbolic violence against women. In the meantime the women I walked with employed a range of coping strategies to manage risk and minimise their feelings of dread. These included walking in a performative way to portray speed, confidence and purposefulness. Some carried keys or defensive items in their hands, wore specific items of clothing or operated a self-imposed curfew. Wilson and others demonstrate the attempted



containment of patriarchy has always been challenged and women have always been actively engaged in public space despite the obstacles. Many of the women I walked with spoke about engaging a state of hyper-vigilance in the city where they were always alert to possible threats.

Women developed complex cognitive maps of safe routes, based on their personal experiences and wider societal messages. The routes they chose often had a temporal dimension with many places such as alleyways or places that attracted lots of drunk men avoided at night. There was an abiding, and alarming, sense of Manchester as a masculine place; as one woman told me “the city is built for them, not us.” However, she and the other women I spoke to were determined to make paths and create space for themselves; we should celebrate the resilience and strength of women even as we dismantle the system that makes these innovations necessary.

The perception of a city not made for women is being challenged in a number of ways. High profile campaigning groups such as Hollerback and The Everyday Sexism Project have emerged in recent years and Reclaim the Night marches have undergone a resurgence. Nottinghamshire police have begun recording misogyny as a hate crime, acknowledging its seriousness and encouraging increased reporting. Women walking artists such as Jane Samuels, Khubra Khadhemi and Laura Oldfield Ford are producing work that challenges and destabilises the status quo. Manchester Women’s Design Group work to influence the built environment, making it safer, more pleasant, and increasing access not just for women but everyone. Since my viva the #metoo movement has emerged, too late for inclusion in my analysis but another sign of hope, and change, as brave women stand up and shout about the need to end abuse

All the women I spoke to were determined to keep walking in the city, demonstrating (consciously or not) an everyday practice of resistance. They refuse to be constrained by an emotional cartography that is partially shaped by fear. Their personal journeys resist and challenge these boundaries despite the threats implicit in patriarchy. De Certeau would consider these to be resistant tactics, although for the women I spoke to they were simply mundane

ways of being, and surviving, in Manchester. The feminist slogan that *the personal is political* remains pertinent here as women made space for themselves on the streets. They experienced public space not just as a site of abuse but also a place of joy, entertainment, serendipity and conviviality. Women asserted their right to be, and to enjoy, public space and recognised that being present in such places enriched their lives.

### **8.3 Key Findings: Hipcholia, Identity and Gentrification**

The women I walked with had powerful, affective relationships with Manchester City Centre. Their lived experience of regeneration is nuanced, contradictory, fluid and contingent on many factors. This is poorly reflected in polemic across much literature, from didactic anti-gentrification tracts to neoliberal economic “success stories”, place-making strategies, tourism, heritage and marketing material. It is clear there is a wide spread concern that current policies and practices are in grave danger of creating a city that is unequal, homogenous and alienating. To borrow a phrase from several women I walked with Manchester is “losing its soul”, although I believe the metaphor of a single essence to be inadequate for an assemblage as heterogeneous and nebulous as a city.

The women I spoke to were mostly working in professional roles but even those in precarious jobs were relatively comfortable and had solid support networks. Several talked about social mobility and their working class family backgrounds. They were all literate, confident and had sufficient social and cultural capital to feel able to engage with the city centre. Despite the gendered interruptions and oppressions they were able to make a connection and enjoy the pleasurable aspects of city life. In many cases they talked about the benefits regeneration and gentrification have brought to the city, as discussed by Zukin, (2010) and Smith (1996). They revelled in a new cosmopolitanism, improved leisure options, a renewed sense of vibrancy and safety which attracted them to Manchester City Centre. Despite this they also felt deep unease, expressing anger, fear, and dismay about the negative effects of neoliberalism alongside compassionate care for those suffering at the sharp end of austerity. Their unease is well founded as Folkman et al (2016) and The

Greater Manchester Poverty Commission (2013) demonstrate the catastrophic failure of regeneration policies to address issues such as poverty and homelessness. Locally, women often suggested small-scale remedies to these problems such as requisitioning property from absentee landlords, but they felt unable to actually influence real change as they felt at the mercy of wider social and economic forces. This lack of agency is, I believe, a major contributory factor to the complex feelings expressed during interviews.

Participants demonstrated a sensitive attunement to the hidden histories and marginalised voices within the city. They read clues in a fluctuating landscape they hold a deep attachment too. Although Sam was the only participant to use the word “psychogeography” in many ways many women were channelling the energies Debord, Sinclair, Smith and so many others write about. There was a telescopic sensation of seeing the city differently and of unravelling the layers of the palimpsest. Women recognise how the city is shaped by, and gives shape to history; a symbiosis between form, function and the manifestation of power. For example, mills and warehouses were constructed as huge, open plane spaces to accommodate industry. When they declined they were perfect for adaption by emerging creatives who were, in turn, succeeded by property developers and ‘industrial chic’. Women also recognised how the maintenance of mundane infrastructures, from public toilets to drinks prices in certain clubs, feeds discourses of power and exclusion.

The financialisation of space has a tangible impact. Contemporary power takes shape as shiny glass and new luxury apartment blocks. It also manifests physically in the proliferation of rough sleepers and beggars at ground level. Women were acutely aware, and opposed to, gentrification processes they identified as social cleansing. They often spoke of a paradoxical attachment to grime, edgelands and seemingly overlooked places which have escaped incorporation into the neo-liberal dream scape. There was a desire for spaces of imagination, potential and experimentation. Blank places that are yet to be colonised and over proscribed; small spaces of resistance and hope. Perhaps they also represent a sense of agency. Diffused economic forces mean any sense of ownership over public space is slippery and often illusory; to return

to Massey's question we should "Ask not 'do you belong to this landscape?' but 'does this landscape belong to you.'" (2011: unpaginated). If your street is always changing, and access to public space is ever more restricted, a communal sense of connection becomes more difficult.

Any sense of nostalgia women felt was as ambivalent and nuanced as views about regeneration, but included a desire to honour those whose labour the city was built on. They felt the presence of the past in complex, emotional and ambiguous ways, often experiencing fragmented and disjointed temporal experiences, akin to Fisher's (2012) concept of hauntology or Pile's (2015) visions of ghosts. Women questioned the concept of progress and feared for what was being lost during regeneration processes. However, they had no belief in a Utopian past and instead expressed an ambivalent nostalgia. They understood the trauma and injustices of slavery and the Industrial Revolution that had built the red brick warehouses they were so attached to. This terrible legacy was visualised by Kathleen as blood oozing out of walls of her favourite buildings. She knew implicitly their aesthetic beauty was also a symbol of wealth borne of exploitation.

I couldn't find a word for this complex assemblage of feelings and so described it as "hipcholia." This neologism encapsulates a complex, ambiguous nostalgia and is intended to refer to the knowing, free-floating unease linked to the gentrification of, and other changes associated with, these central urban areas. The root cause of these emotions is easier to identify than remedy. Capitalist realism is what Fisher (2009) describes as the acceleration of neoliberal capitalism that we are living through, and suggests it is hard to see past or through this mind set because our very imaginations have been colonised. Fisher himself can be placed in a line of critical thinkers about the mental impact of urban life under capitalism which also includes Debord and The Situationist International. The revolution the SI promised has yet to manifest itself, and indeed as Fisher suggests, the spectacle has instead gained in power. Smith (2017) goes as far as to state there is a "war on subjectivity" accelerated by social media where we become both consumer and producer of our own alienated image. I discussed Situationist graffiti and particularly "Sous Le Pavés, La Plage". This hints at an underlying space of

emancipation, in the form of a beach, appears more and more a kind of mirage. The slogan is available on a promotional tea-towel that commemorates a future that never had a chance. The past and the future are smoothed over, turned into stories of economic success. They ignore the voices of those who suffered to mine the stone that made the cobbles and are never allowed to get close enough to realise how uncomfortable they are to stand on.

Hipcholia is linked to a fearfulness of losing one's identity and a sense of a claim to belonging. The erasure of traditional working-class industries and culture is one key to the painful hipcholic sensation. However, occupation is too simplistic a determinant for contemporary class and many of my participants embodied social mobility and complex relationships between background, education, taste and labour. The dismantling of civic infrastructure, the financialisation of space and dominance of market forces under neoliberalism are other important factors. Women experienced gentrification at an affective, emotional and physical level. They can see its impact on the streetscape but it was also felt as a personal, social and cultural loss of an intangible richness and diversity. Hipcholia is a symptom of this malaise.

The hipster emerged as a symbol of, and a scapegoat for, wider social and economic forces. Parallels can be made with Benjamin's archetypal flâneur although there are significant differences, not least the pan-gendered and pan-sexual nature of the hipster. They attract and repel in equal measure, although the hipster is mocked and reviled many also admire artisan industry, independent style and covet a delicious treat or two. In a sense every woman who told me how much she loved the Northern Quarter was displaying hipsterish traits. To walk through the city is to witness, to be implicated and embroiled in these complex interactions. Women I walked with feel this entanglement deeply and profoundly at a visceral, emotional and intellectual levels. The ground they walk on is an equally dense tapestry; Massey's trajectories of power and simultaneous "stories-so-far" (2005) stretch out beneath, and beyond, individual journeys and so we must tread with care.

The women I walked with embody a multifaceted landscape and to dwell within it is to be a complication but also to create new paths. The desire lines of my title are paths made by walking; literally the birth of new ways to move. I will not, cannot, accept change is impossible. For all the heartaches shared, women also told stories of love and hope. Their relationship with Manchester is complicated and nuanced, like the city itself. I return again to Marshall Berman writing about The Bronx he remembers before the destruction wrought by Robert Moses and his expressway. Berman (1982) acknowledges the city as a place of movement and mutability; attachments that will, must always change. His Marxism with soul found joy and much to cherish in his New York despite the eviscerations and injustices. To be in the modern world is to live with, and find a way to thrive in, flux. (This is not to suggest Berman did not seek to combat injustices of course). The processes Manchester is undergoing are, on the surface, much less extreme and appear less brutal. However, it still results in, as Patti told me, “social cleansing ... losing voices.”

This is, I hope, where psychogeography can help. The *dérive*, like a scrap of waste ground, can provide a space for imagination, a rupture and a channel for new ideas and collective dreams. This is not about a singular, objective vision of the city but one that is inclusive, heterogeneous and dynamic. Smith (2015) believes a “space war” is always inevitable in a society with both private property and public space. Actively using, and asserting, a right to be in space changes, at least on a micro level, the reality of that place. What the *dérive* cannot do is find the soul of the city because, ultimately, there isn't one. What it should set as its task instead is to reinsert voices, and to create new ones, adding additional layers of subversive enchantment to the palimpsest.

This mission, and indeed this research, synthesises Massey's trajectories of power, dense networks of journeys through space, with work on the poetry of the pedestrian. It offers new insights into debates about the nature of the city. There is symbolic and actual violence inherent in the production of urban space and it listens to the stories of women who live within this system. The palimpsest is not simply layers of time, it is stratified power which varies in strength, visibility and vulnerability. To recognise this, to hear and give voice to multiple narratives, is one micro-level chink in the spectacle. Hovering over

these small walks are fundamental questions of who and what the city is for. Lefebvre asserted that the right to the city is a cry and a demand; in a place governed by global capital it can feel as if our voices will never be heard and so we must scream loudly and in unison to manifest a city we can all feel welcome and secure to belong in.

Much prosaic work needs to be done too. These walks were a walk of witness, cataloguing the problems caused by current policies, gendered encounters and wider systemic forces. There is a challenge to design cities that balance emotion and pragmatism, heritage and the futures. There are many conflicts that need addressing. These include, for example, an attachment to cobblestones, which represent the past and provide character in many people's opinion but impede access to wheelchairs. There is an urgent need too for affordable housing, support for independent businesses, truly public space and interesting streetscapes, all of which need serious attention. Writers such as Hall (2012) Minton (2009, 2017) and Lees, (2014, 2017) illustrate what is lost through gentrification and privatisation and there is a need for alternative ways to quantify a successful city. Folkman et al (2016) document the "unrecognised and unintended consequences of Manchester's transformation" demonstrating the flaws in merely celebrating growth as measured by GVA and call for an urgent "policy reset (which should) reflect the city and economy as it is ... renewing the civic offer" (2016:3).

If Manchester truly wants to honour its radical traditions and position as the "Original Modern City" it should start by rejecting the myth of trickle-down economics and consider innovative ways to develop the city. What an inclusive city, which remembers past injustices and strives to eliminate them, might look like is a tantalising question. This is just one potential future direction for this research as policy implications are beyond the scope of this thesis but I would like to see how the visions for the city women shared could be manifested.

#### **8.4 Methodological and Material Issues**

As a woman I am not immune to street harassment and have personal experience that has shaped me. However, as a middle-aged woman, relatively comfortable and confident on the streets of Manchester, such incidents are

comparatively rare and I had assumed this meant the situation had improved more generally. I had mistaken my relative invisibility and my blasé attitude with a sense of progress and feminist victories. I soon realised I was wrong, not just because of the stories women shared with me but the interruptions we experienced in the course of my fieldwork.

The sight of two women and a microphone appeared to be irresistible to a number of men who felt compelled to question, comment, mock and disturb us. This was irritating but also raised some serious ethical issues. Was I endangering my participants or myself by exposing us to unacceptable risk? Is it possible, practical or ethical to conduct interviews in situ on the streets of Manchester? I considered these issues carefully and discussed them with my supervisor. We concluded that the risk was commensurate with the everyday experiences encountered on the street and several mitigating factors were cited as minimising any likelihood of serious harm. These included the informed consent of participants; participant's familiarity with the environment; and our locality, which was a busy, daytime, city centre. I practiced a reflexive and ongoing duty of care to my participants by remaining alert to threats and continually checked that interviewees were comfortable and happy to continue if we were disturbed. It is regrettable that these experiences only served to reinforce my findings on the prevalence of street harassment.

I believe that walking interviews provide a powerful tool for eliciting meaningful conversations about space. The informal setting helped to reduce (but not eliminate) hierarchies and awkwardness and inspire candid sharing of stories. There remains a conundrum about whether I can call these walks *dérives* in the true psychogeographical sense. This implies a drift guided by the unconscious and an explicit rejection of any pre-ordained route. It also suggests a lack of instrumentality, which my need for data seems to contradict. However, there has always been an inherent purpose to the *dérive*, since its inception it has aimed to understand and document the urban environment so in this sense I was true to its intentions.

The *dérive* is partially about getting lost, and Benjamin (1999) reminds us this is a skill in the contemporary city. I did not know where I would be taken during



an interview but neither can I know why women chose the routes they did. Although I urged spontaneity and improvisation, it was clear some walks had been planned in advance by my participants. Interestingly these generally yielded data which was similar to a heritage tour, and generated fewer of the affective revelations quoted in my findings chapter. Risk management and a number of environmental factors such as roadworks and women's desire to avoid certain areas also mitigated against a totally uncensored roam.

A wider philosophical debate could be had about the (im)possibility of a true *dérive* but I will settle for Debord's reassurance it offers a "pleasingly vague" instrument. It is now over sixty years since he wrote his original theory of the *dérive* and changes in society mean direct replication would be impossible today (indeed if it ever was in the first place) but I think this work remains true to its spirit. Smith (2010) reminds us the constraints actually focus the walk and can be beneficial and the limited other work on psychogeography as a research tool (Bassett, 2004, Bridger, 2013, and Richardson, 2015) support the validity of this emerging method.

Philosophical debates about walking scarcely matter if there is no adequate infrastructure to enable pedestrian engagements. Throughout my interviews, there was a recurring demand for better pavements, more benches, more public toilets and accessible public transport. In the current economic climate, these subjects have often been marginalised or ignored but they are of utmost importance if we want a city that truly values everyone and which embodies the idea of a right to safe participation and respect for all.

The social model of disability demonstrates how the environment restricts and discriminates against people with impairment. This theory can be applied in a wider context too. Accessible design benefits everyone and should not impose a burden on anyone. Some women I walked with also worked as planners, architects and members of the Manchester Women's Design Group and all made similar points that crossed gender divides. Streets that can accommodate wheelchairs also suit pushchairs and it should not be assumed childcare is always a woman's responsibility. Similarly, visually impaired

women expressed a desire for better waymarking, sign posts and notice of roadworks; this would be good news for everyone.

There is an urgent and compelling need to integrate access and respect into every stage of planning, building and managing the cityscape. Although there are policies, promises, and in some cases laws in place it is clear they are not being adhered to rigorously enough. Pavements should, perhaps, be seen as more than pedestrian. Streets are the site of all kinds of community building and should be valued. Jacobs (1961) provides the classic text but more contemporary work such as Hall (2012) extends and enhances a belief in the importance and value of a diverse and interesting streetscape. The physical infrastructure needs to be maintained to a standard that means they are open and accessible for everyone to experience and explore their potential.

Women I spoke to also articulated a passion for green spaces and “unofficial countryside” (Mabey, 1973). They were unequivocal in their belief that green space was of benefit to their physical and mental wellbeing and evidence supports their assertion. This presents a challenge in an urban area such as Manchester with limited space, however imaginative solutions are available. Women took pleasure in small patches of grass, community allotments and scraps of what were ostensibly wasteland. These contributed to a sense of connection and delight in nature that should be both valued and encouraged. The cultivation of wildscapes, the maintenance of edgelands and the promotion of green initiatives should not, however, be seen as just a gendered issue. As with inclusive design, a focus on flora, fauna and growing in the city could have far-reaching benefits for everyone. The Incredible Edible network, for example, provides evidence of positive impacts on social, health and wellbeing factors as well as the environment. Community projects such as this may also play a role in tackling food poverty, inequality and alienation, which are identified as key problems in the city. Cultivating such places can also promote a sense of belonging, welcoming and collective ownership of the city.

There is a constant tension between poetic enchantment and material conditions that strikes at the heart of psychogeography. The two may be more symbiotic than it first appears. I believe public space, and accessible

streetscapes, are vital to a thriving city and we must fight to ensure their survival. Reports of the end of walking are premature and women I spoke to enjoyed the sensations and serendipity of simply going for a walk, but there are serious and pressing concerns about the threat to what Berman terms “open-minded” space. We must resist the imposition of singular, restrictive, exclusive narratives of place no matter how appealing they may appear. If we do not preserve places that are unproscribed and available to all regardless of income and consumption habits there will be nowhere to assert the right to be in space and much will be lost.

I have encountered several of the women I walked with since their interviews, although I have not actively kept in touch except to update them on the progress of my research. One emailed me to say she was going to use walking interviews in her own PhD studies and I met another at a public geography seminar. Both told me these decisions were influenced by their participation in this study. Several have told me they have been walking more frequently and thinking about the environment in a different way, noticing and appreciating details. This is an unintended and positive outcome and points to the future potential of walking methods.

## **8.6 Potential future research**

I am excited by the potential future opportunities this research suggests. It raises many interesting questions and I believe the methodology could usefully be applied elsewhere. I am particularly keen to think more about class and taste; a more rigorous class based analysis, potentially drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984). This could explore the wider implications and meanings of the places women feel attracted to and repelled by, and offer new insights into hipcholia. I also want to focus more on intersectional identities and to learn from women who are marginalised or who have seldom heard voices. It could be particularly valuable to walk with women for whom the streets have very different meanings and who develop cognitive maps that would contrast with the women featured in this research. These could include women who are refugees and asylum seekers and who are unfamiliar with the terrain. Women who are sex workers or homeless also experience the city in

particular ways. There are also women who do not walk in the city; they may choose to live in a gated community or remain inside for a variety of reasons. It would also be instructive to interview men to understand how gender affects their experience of the city and to compare their thoughts and feelings.

I would also like to apply the methodology in different locations. In the first instance this should include leaving city centre Manchester and walking in the suburbs, particularly those in the east and north, such as Harperhey, Moston and Blackley which have largely been ignored in regeneration narratives and which often appear alienated from the city centre. It would be beneficial to test my hypothesis that hipcholia is a universal, free-floating form of ambivalent nostalgia, not specific to Manchester. It would also be interesting to note the different dynamics as a researcher in an environment I am unfamiliar with. I think a comparative study across locations could offer valuable insights. This work included women who were White British, European and North American and learning from walks with women from different backgrounds would also be instructive.

I believe there is potential to explore further what it could mean to design an inclusive city that retains its historical character and embeds stories explicitly in its architecture. What would this, could this look like? Is it possible or will it be another unrealised Utopia? There is potential here for some creative, participatory research that includes workshops, focus groups and imaginariums. These could include a mixture of interested people, including residents, architects, designers and planners. I would also like to further explore the ideas of Manchester Women's Design Group which are, as yet, undervalued and under studied. I believe this could be of real and lasting benefit to the cityscape. There is scope too, I believe, in further exploring the meaning of "Manchester" particularly through the lens of popular media or an autoethnographic study of a particular place, perhaps the much-maligned Piccadilly Gardens. Land ownership, enclosure and financialisation of this space would also add a valuable layer of information.

I think there is also scope for extending the use of creative walking methods in academia. There has been limited research on the *dérive* as a form of

pedagogy. I would like to better understand how it can be a kinaesthetic teaching and learning technique, promoting a more inclusive, participatory and less hierarchal focus in fieldwork. I feel a group *dérive* could function as a mobile focus group. It could also be instructive to use methods such as dice walks or transposing maps during walking interviews to see if they changed the perception of space, however for the purposes of this research I feel this would have been a distraction.

There is a philosophical debate about what a *dérive* actually is, and whether it is even possible to *dérive* during an interview. I can't be sure the women I walked with had not planned where they were going or were really acting on instinct. Furthermore, there remain questions about the continued political relevance of psychogeography. I was keen to avoid such solipsistic questions here but a deeper interrogation could yield interesting thoughts. The debate around whether the *flâneuse* can thrive, or indeed even exist, has not yet been categorically resolved. Writers like Elkin (2016) and Oldfield Ford (2011) may adopt her role, however the hypervigilance and everyday sexism described in this research suggest she remains in large part a fantasy. Women do not often feel the sense of relaxed privilege, free from fear and outside surveillance from the gaze, that means they can truly be *flâneurs*. Perhaps a compassionate, embodied and active movement through space would be more desirable than an aloof stroll anyway. I feel a more interesting project would be to move beyond the stereotypes and focus on what would make streets safer and more accessible for everyone.

Finally, I would like to explore more creative methods of disseminating the data collected during my interviews. This could build on the attempts of walking artists to portray the embodied nature of a *dérive* and contribute a new layer to the urban palimpsest. Possibilities include soundscapes, digital maps with site specific stories, walking tours telling stories or in situ installations which share women's experiences of a particular location.

## **8.7 Concluding remarks**

Manchester is, as The Smiths sang, a "humdrum town" in the North of England. It is, like many English post-industrial cities a site of everyday

cosmopolitanism and diverse experiences; people live, work, play, love and die here all the time. The city is also saturated with ghosts and haunted by economic and ideological failures. Psychogeography forces you to engage with this environment, it challenges you to look closely and feel the ambiances of the city. This is an explicitly political challenge as Smith states “embodied and hypersensitised walking ... is the antithesis of the Spectacle. The feeling body, alive with thoughts, is a resistance” (2015: 4).

Creative walking can unite personal experiences with wider forces in a way that crosses disciplinary boundaries, provoking conversation and revelation. I have suggested elsewhere that the *dérive*:

affords the opportunity to rupture the banal and disrupt the monotony of capitalism, (re)connecting with space, (re)mapping according to personal affect and (re)creating with multitudinous new stories (2015:161)

This thesis affirms my belief. My research has taken psychogeography into new directions, with its primary focus on gender and a nuanced exploration of the embodied experience of regeneration. It has uncovered power structures and struggles and the violence – both symbolic and physical – which lurks beneath the shiny façade of an ostensibly successful neoliberal city. My contributions to knowledge include empirical work that asserts the primary importance of gender to women’s contemporary experiences. It also explores their complex attitudes to regeneration and affective relationships with urban space. I develop the theoretical concept of *hipcholia*, an ambivalent nostalgia, providing new insight into emotional (psycho)geographies.

Walking with women in central Manchester has provided micro level insights into what it actually means to navigate contemporary urban landscapes and dispelled essentialist notions of gender and geography. Together we have marked changes, observed progress and lamented erasure, sharing experiences, memories, challenges and dreams. We have traced desire lines through our everyday landscape, wandering, wondering, and affectively asserting our right to imaginative and material space in the “Original Modern” city.

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## **10 Appendices**

- i List of participants
- ii Table of routes and significant buildings
- iii Frequency of areas covered maps and notes
- iv Map of Greater Manchester
- v Map of Manchester City Centre
- vi Interview prompts
- vii NVivo code list
- viii Participant information sheet
- ix Participant consent form



## i List of Participants

Name	Age	Occupation	Relationship to Manchester / GM	Interview Date and duration	Notes
Sam	50-59	Cleaner and Artist	Lives in Salford Works in Manchester Grew up in Salford Leisure time in Manchester	15 <sup>th</sup> March 50.54	Went into Arndale Market for part of the interview to show me her favourite place
Rennie	30-39	Musician and caterer	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Grew up in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	12 <sup>th</sup> April 54.27	
Christine	40-49	Senior Admin	Works in Manchester Grew up in Salford Leisure time in Manchester Lived in Manchester until 2015	30 <sup>th</sup> June 21.04	Lives in Derbyshire
Linda	40-49	Teaching Assistant	Lives in Bury Works in Manchester Studied in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	18 <sup>th</sup> March 34.63	
Penny	40-49	Ex-Teacher, art therapist	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	23 <sup>rd</sup> May 49.21	

Eleanor	40-49	Researcher	Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester Lived in Manchester for 3 months	10 <sup>th</sup> May 1.25.02	Is on 12-month sabbatical from Canada Now staying in Calderdale Interview in her office
Anna	40-49	Teacher	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	31 <sup>st</sup> May 50.55	Met in Hulme
Amanda	20-29	Trainee architect	Lives in Manchester Studies + Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	16 <sup>th</sup> May 48.47	
Kate	40-49	Artist and consultant	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	10 <sup>th</sup> June 49.33	
Nora	50-59	Youth worker	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	20 <sup>th</sup> June 25.51	Torrential rain, interview took place in Northern Tea Power
Janet	60+	Retired	Lives in Manchester Worked in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	27 <sup>th</sup> May 43.34	
Maisie	20-29	Architect and teacher	Lives in Manchester Studied in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	19 <sup>th</sup> June 40.00	



Daisy	30-39	Refugee support	Lives in Manchester Studied in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	8 <sup>th</sup> April 44.11	
Veronica	40-49	Teacher	Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	6 <sup>th</sup> July 41.48	Lives in Liverpool Met friend who loves walking every day
Patti	40-49	Senior HE admin	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	21 <sup>st</sup> March 1.4.38	
Nicki	30-39	Museum volunteer, unemployed	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	24 <sup>th</sup> May 56.24	Grew up in the USA
Charlotte	20-29	Freelance Researcher	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	17 <sup>th</sup> May 38.01	Grew up in Germany
Rhiannon	30-39	Architect	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	21 <sup>st</sup> April 1.5.23	Bought Son (one year) with her
Donna	50-59	Baker	Studies in Manchester Leisure in Manchester	20 <sup>th</sup> April 45.12	Lives in Derbyshire Grew up in the USA

Heidi	20-29	University admin	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	10 <sup>th</sup> June 25.42	Started at All Saints Park and walked to Piccadilly (daily commute)
Rita	60+	Planner (retired)	Worked in Manchester Volunteers in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	31 <sup>st</sup> May 12.13 + approx. 20 minutes	Lives in Derbyshire Was uncomfortable with a mic and so notes taken after 12 minutes
Marion	30-39	Architect and lecturer	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	2 <sup>nd</sup> June 48.47	With daughter (18 months) Grew up in Italy
Mia	50-59	Youth worker	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	29 <sup>th</sup> February 57.08	
Liz	30-39	Architect	Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester Family in Manchester	22 <sup>nd</sup> June 46.09	Lives in Liverpool
Layla	30-39	Community building manager	Lives in Manchester Works in Salford Leisure time in Manchester	31 <sup>st</sup> May 46.04	
Maddy	40-49	Council admin / Student	Lives in Manchester Studies in Manchester Works in Liverpool Leisure time in Manchester	5 <sup>th</sup> July 42.48	Went into Central Library

Amelia	30-39	Social care	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	23 <sup>rd</sup> May 49.24	Grew up in New Zealand
Martha	50-59	Lecturer	Lives in Salford (moved from Manchester last year) Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	14 <sup>th</sup> June 29.19	Grew up in the USA
Greta	40-49	Planning consultant	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	18 <sup>th</sup> May 50.43	
Michelle	30-39	Professional office	Lives in Manchester Works In Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	4 <sup>th</sup> May 28.00	Walking commute / walking advocate
Kathleen	60+	P.A.	Lives in Tameside Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	16 <sup>th</sup> May 46.43	
Fiona	40-49	Arts administration	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	6 <sup>th</sup> June 40.09	Started at her office in the Northern Quarter
Isobelle	20-29	Student	Lives in Manchester Works + Studies in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	27 <sup>th</sup> May 24.36	

Jack	50-51	nurse	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	14 <sup>th</sup> June 37.95	About to move to Wales
Cheryl	30-39	Actress and musician	Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester Lived and studied in Manchester	6 <sup>th</sup> June 45.56	Lives in Calderdale
Zoe	20-29	Carer student	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester Studied in Manchester	7 <sup>th</sup> March 1.02.49	Joint interview with Jo
Jo	20-29	Note taker / PA	Leisure time in Manchester Lived and studied in Manchester Wants to move back	7 <sup>th</sup> March 1.02.49	Joint interview with Zoe Lives in Nottingham
Pippa	40-49	Researcher	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	8 <sup>th</sup> June 41.55	Grew up in Germany Part of interview in a café due to rain
Astrid	20-29	Charity admin	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	23 <sup>rd</sup> June 26.07	
Arlene	50-59	HR / housing	Lives in Bolton Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	5 <sup>th</sup> May 47.13	

Lara	undisclosed	Urban design	Lives in Manchester Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	23 <sup>rd</sup> June 44.19	
Barbara	60 +	Retired	Lives in Bury Worked in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	22 <sup>nd</sup> June 26.62	Started in Café Nero on Market Street
Eve	20-29	Infrastructure consultant	Lives in Stockport Works in Manchester Leisure time in Manchester	3 <sup>rd</sup> March 39.07	



## Appendix ii Table of Route Summaries and Significant Places

**Key:** Significant places were all liked and discussed in positive terms apart from those in *italics* which were disliked. An asterisk\* indicates a place not reached during the interview but still mentioned in some depth.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>Finish</b>	<b>Route Summary</b>	<b>Significant Places</b>
Sam	Piccadilly Gardens	Market Street	Oldham St, Swan St, back into NQ (Turner St, High St) into the Arndale Market, Market Street	Market Street
Rennie	Piccadilly	Vivid, Ashton Canal	The Northern Quarter (Lever St and Newton St), Ancoats, Rochdale Canal, New Islington, Miles Platting, Ashton Canal	Wellington House The Canals Miles Platting Several derelict buildings and patches of wasteland we passed Stubbs Building <i>The Ring Road (A665)</i>
Christine	Piccadilly Gardens	Manchester Art Gallery, Mosley Street	Piccadilly Mosley Street (much of the interview was in a café at Christine's request)	St Johns Gardens* Salford* Northern Quarter Manchester Art Gallery
Linda	Piccadilly Gardens	Nexus, Dale Street	Piccadilly to Fairfield Street, The Northern Quarter (Newton Street and Dale Street)	Star and Garter pub Fairfield St Northern Quarter Outwood Trail (Bury)* London Road Fire Station Afflecks* <i>Beetham Tower*</i>

Penny	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	The Northern Quarter (Oldham St, Turner St, lots of back alleys and behind buildings on Lever St, around Stevenson Square)	Angel Meadow Afflecks Canal Street* Grassroots books (closed)* The Cornerhouse* The Palace Hotel*
Eleanor	Birley Fields	Birley Fields	We stayed in Eleanor's office because she is visually impaired and did not feel comfortable in a walking interview	Granby Row* Northern Quarter* Castlefield* Albert Square* Town Hall* <i>NOMA</i> * <i>Canal Street</i> *
Anna	Kim by the Sea, Hulme	Kim by the Sea, Hulme	Hulme, (Birley Fields, Loreto Estate and Stretford Road)	Site of the Crescents <i>Birley Fields</i> Northern Quarter*
Amanda	Piccadilly Gardens	Deansgate (Spinningfields)	Northern Quarter (Oldham St and Thomas Street), Market Street, Deansgate, River Irwell, Bridge Street, Spinningfields	Thomas Street The Dance studio she goes to <i>Market Street</i> Oxford Road Corridor* London Road Fire Station Trinity Bridge and <i>the area around it</i>



Kate	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Northern Quarter (Oldham St, Tib Street, Thomas Street and various alleyways), Shudehill and back	Abakhan and Clarke Brothers shops Thomas Street Buddhist Centre (NQ) Manchester Craft and Design Centre River Mersey* Shudehill Bus Station <i>Victoria Station</i>
Nora	Northern Tea Power, Tib Street	Northern Tea Power, Tib Street	None, the walk was cancelled due to torrential rain	<i>First Street*</i> Hulme and Birley Fields* The Roadhouse* (gig venue) Lincoln Square and the statue* Pomona The canals* Masonic Hall, Bridge Street*
Janet	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Mossley Street / St Peters Square, Albert Square, Lincoln Square, Cross St, Market St	Friends Meeting House (member of) Manchester Art Gallery Library Walk and St Peters Square St Ann's Square* <i>dislikes hotels blocking the view</i> Lincoln Square Cross Street Chapel

Maisie	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Northern Quarter (Newton St, Dale Street, Stevenson Square, Thomas Street), Shudehill, The Wonder Inn, Withy Grove, Market St	Café Maharaba (rice and three café) The Wonder Inn, Various former workplaces Contact Theatre* LGBT Centre, Sydney Street* <i>Home / First Street</i> <i>St Peters Square</i>
Daisy	Piccadilly Gardens	Waterstones, Deansgate	Market Street, St Ann's Square, Deansgate, Parsonage Gardens, Deansgate	Parsonage Gardens Alexandra Park Kendalls <i>Cross Street*</i> <i>Balloon Street*</i> <i>St Peters Square*</i>
Veronica	Piccadilly Gardens	Tib Street	Northern Quarter (Oldham St, Hilton Street, Dale St, Stevenson Square)	This n that Manchester Art Gallery* Britons Protection* The Castle pubs Canal Street River Mersey NQ allotments <i>Moston*</i>
Patti	Piccadilly Gardens	Cathedral Gardens	Northern Quarter (Newton St, Dale St, Thomas St, Tib St) Shudehill, Victoria Station, Urbis	Tib Street Urbis Victoria Station The Roadhouse <i>Deansgate*</i> <i>Market Street*</i> <i>Printworks</i>

Nicki	Piccadilly Gardens	Peter Street	Mossley St, St Peters Square, Peter St, Quay St, Castlefield, Liverpool Road, MOSI, Water Street, Spinningfields	MOSI Highfield Country Park St Peters Square AMC Cinema BBC studios* (now demolished) <i>The Arndale Centre</i>
Charlotte	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Northern Quarter (Oldham Street, Stephenson Square, Ducie Street), Piccadilly Basin, Ashton Canal, Piccadilly Hub, Portland Street	Longsight* Albert Square* Market Street* Northern Quarter Oxford Road*
Rhiannon and her baby in a pushchair	Piccadilly Gardens	Sadlers Yard	Northern Quarter (Oldham St, Craft Centre, Thomas St) Mackie Mayor, Shudehill and Bus Station, Danzic St, Balloon St, NOMA/ co-op buildings, Sadler's Yard	Manchester Craft and Design Centre Mackie Mayer building, Ayton Street Dole Office (now demolished)* Old Co-Op buildings cluster around Balloon Street / Danzic St <i>The new Co-Op HQ</i>
Donna	Piccadilly Gardens	Vivid, Ashton Canal	Northern Quarter (Newton St, Dale St) Piccadilly Basin, Rochdale Canal, New Islington, Marina, Chips Building, Ashton Canal	Canals
Heidi	All Saints Park	Piccadilly Gardens	Oxford Road, Portland Street, Piccadilly (this is part of her regular walking commute, continuing on to the Green Quarter)	Freemasons Hall, Bridge St* Crown and Kettle* Northern Quarter* <i>Cheetham Hill*</i> <i>Strangeways*</i>

Rita	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly, Portland Street. Much of the interview was sat down in the gardens as Rita did not feel confident with the microphone	<i>Portland Street</i> <i>St Peters Square*</i>
Marion and her toddler in a pushchair	Piccadilly Gardens	Stevenson Square	Northern Quarter (Oldham Street), Ancoats, Rochdale Canal, New Islington and the marina, Ashton Canal, Fairfield St, back through NQ	Northern Quarter Levenshulme* Ancoats Ancoats Dispensary New Islington Marina
Mia	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Northern Quarter (Oldham St, Thomas St), Shudehill, Cathedral Gardens, Urbis, St Ann's Square, Dalton Passage, Lincoln Square, Albert Square, Central Library, Mosley St, Piccadilly Tower	Young peoples' centres Libraries: Cheethams, John Rylands, Central, Portico Royal Exchange Dalton Passage Smithfield Buildings <i>Piccadilly Tower</i>
Liz	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Northern Quarter (Oldham St, Thomas St) Shudehill, Victoria station, Urbis/ Cathedral Gardens, Cross St, Market St	Abakhan Cathedral Gardens Corn Exchange The Ritz (nightclub)* Oxford Road* <i>Spinningfields*</i> <i>Printworks</i>

Layla	Piccadilly Gardens	Corn Exchange	Northern Quarter (Tib St, Thomas St), Shudehill, Urbis, Cathedral Gardens, River Irwell, Greengate Salford, Exchange Square, Corn Exchange	Exchange Square Warehouse near Piccadilly Corn Exchange Catherdral Gardens River Irwell Kings Arms Pub*
Maddy	Town Hall	Town Hall	Albert Square, Central Library (we into the Library), St Peters Square, Oxford Road as far as the Cornerhouse buildings and back on the other side of the road.	Central Library Albert Square Grassroots bookshop* (closed) The Cornerhouse, Manchester University <i>Spinningfields</i> <i>National Football Museum</i>
Amelia	Piccadilly Gardens,	Grindsmith, Deansgate	Northern Q, (Oldham St, Tib St), Mosley St, St Peters Square, Peter St, Deansgate	Coffee shops: Takk,* Grindsmith, Idle Hands* The Royal Exchange* Alexandra Park* Midland Hotel Library walk <i>Trafford Centre</i>
Martha	Piccadilly Gardens	Crown and Kettle, Great Ancoats St	Northern Quarter (Oldham St) Ancoats, Cutting Room Square,	Salford* Ancoats Derros House (Great Ancoats St) Midland Hotel* Manchester Town Hall* <i>Upper Brook Street*</i> <i>Oxford Road*</i> <i>Chorlton*</i>

Greta	Northern Tea Power, Tib Street	Piccadilly Basin	Northern Quarter (Tib St, Thoas St, Lever St), Ancoats, Victoria Square, New Islington, Ancoats Dispensary, Ashton Canal to Bridge-5 Mil, Chips, Paradise Wharf, Piccadilly Basin	Chapel Street* All Saints Park* Cornerhouse* Oxford Road Corner* Ancoats Ring Road (A665)
Michelle	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Northern Quarter (Oldham St, Tib St, Thomas St, Craft Centre, lots of alleyways), Mackie Mayor Building, Shudehill, back through NQ	Northern Quarter <i>Parsonage Gardens*</i> <i>Hulland Park*</i> <i>The canals*</i> <i>Market Street*</i>
Kathleen	Oxford Road (Manchester University)	Sydney Street LGBT Centre (off Oxford Road)	We wandered around Manchester University Campus, including The Quadrant, The Dental Hospital and around the Museum, crossing Oxford Road and explore around the central hub and Kilburn Building then south to Sidney St	University Campus Albert Square* Library Walk* Ginnels off St Ann's Square* John Rylands Library* <i>Market Street*</i> <i>Deansgate*</i>
Fiona	Lever Street, NQ	Lever Street, NQ	Northern Quarter (Thomas St) for her daily task of putting out an A-Board then New Islington/Ancoats, Cutting Room Square, Ashton Canal, Port St, NQ Dale Street	Her yoga studio Thomas St The Canals Library Walk* Fletcher Moss Park* Deansgate* <i>Portland Street*</i> <i>The Ring Road (A665)</i>

Isobelle	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Northern Quarter (Oldham Street, Stevenson Square, Port Street, Dale Street, Newton Street) Piccadilly	Pubs: Beermoth, Gaslamp,* The Castle, Port St Beer House, Knott Bar* Chorlton*
Jack	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Northern Quarter (Oldham St, Tib St, Craft Centre, Thomas St, Turner St, then into “This and That” and back	Oldham Street This n that Afflecks, Abakhan
Cheryl	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Northern Quarter (Lever St, Stevenson Square, Port St, Faraday St, China St, various back streets, sat on the steps of a building on Lever Street)	Albert Square* Little Lever St Faraday Street Library Walk* Friends house on Port Street
Zoe and Jo	Piccadilly Gardens	Angel Meadow	NQ (Oldhams St, Thomas St, Smithfield Buildings), Shude Hill, Rochdale Road, Skyline apartments, Marble Arch Angel Meadow	River Irwell Central Library* Highfield Park* Marble Arch <i>New apartments on Rochdale Rd</i>
Pippa	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Northern Quarter (Oldham St, Craft Centre, sheltered under a porch on Thomas St, Turner Street, Tib St)	Whitworth Art Gallery* Manchester Craft and Design Centre, Piccadilly playground Castlefield* <i>Spinningfields</i> <i>Media City</i>
Astrid	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Northern Quarter (Tib St, Turner St, Thomas St, Oldham St, Newton St, Dale St) Piccadilly	Whalley Range* Chorlton Water Park* <i>Spinningfields</i>

Arlene	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Oldham St, Turner St, Shudehill, NOMA/ Sadler's Yard, Cathedral Gardens, Urbis, Cross St, Market St	Bridgewater Hall* Corn Exchange Northern Quarter Cathedral Gardens Town Hall*
Lara	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Mosley St, St Peters Square, Peter St, Deansgate, Spinningfields, Lincoln Square, Albert Square, Mosley St	St Peters Square Castlefield* Canals* St Johns Gardens* Oxford Road Corner* Chinatown*
Barbara	Café Nero, Market Street	Piccadilly Gardens	Market Street Piccadilly. Barbara has mobility issues and we spent much of the interview sat in the café or on a bench.	Friends Meeting House* Spinningfields* Media City* Café Nero (Market St branch)
Eve	Piccadilly Gardens	Piccadilly Gardens	Northern Quarter (Tib St, Thomas St) Shudehill, Exchange Square, , Cathedral Gardens, Deansgate, St Ann's Square, Cross St, Mosley St, City Tower	Northern Quarter Piccadilly Basin* Great Northern Warehouse Royal Exchange River Irwell* London Road Fire Station <i>Market Street</i> <i>Arndale Centre</i>

Places of note are specific sites that individuals spent considerable time talking about, or went out of their way to show me. Other sites were mentioned briefly. Some women spoke more about general themes rather than individual places. I have excluded Piccadilly Gardens from this list as I asked a direct question about it.





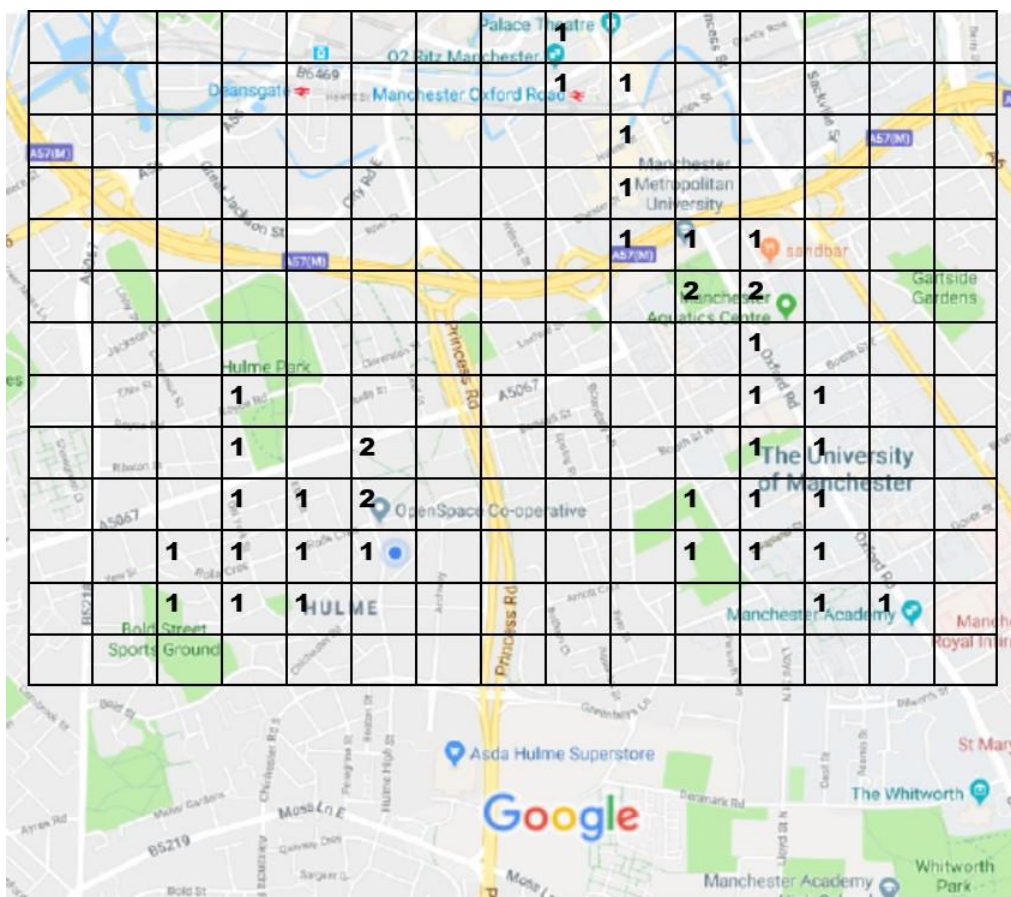


### iii Notes

The map overleaf illustrates the routes taken during the majority of interviews 39 out of 42.

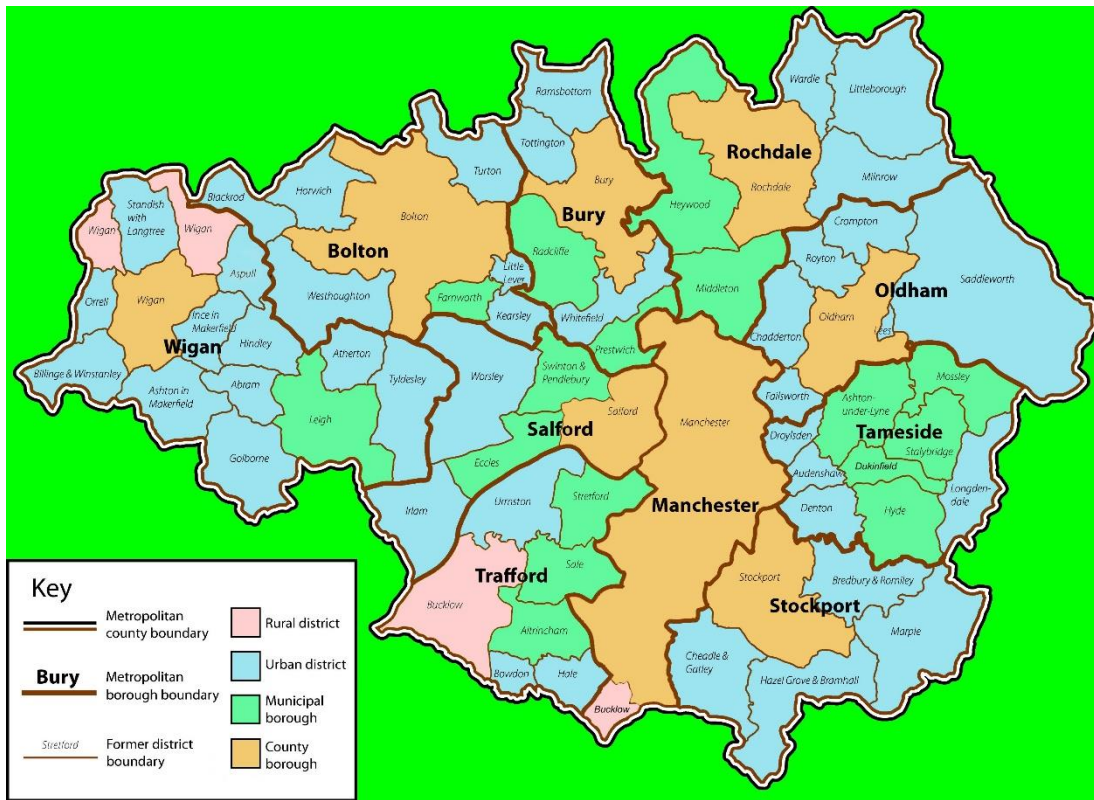
#### Notes:

1. The figures refer to the number of interviews which entered each square so that the results were not distorted by the joint walking of Zoe and Jo.
2. Zoe and Jo also walked one square north to the tip of Angel Meadow.
3. Each square was recorded only once per interview, even if it was returned to several times.
4. Three interviews took place entirely off this map, covering the area around Oxford Road and Hulme and these are illustrated in the map below. One walk ended in Piccadilly Gardens and thus the maps overlap.



Map data from Google Maps, extracted under educational non-commercial license.

#### iv Map of Greater Manchester



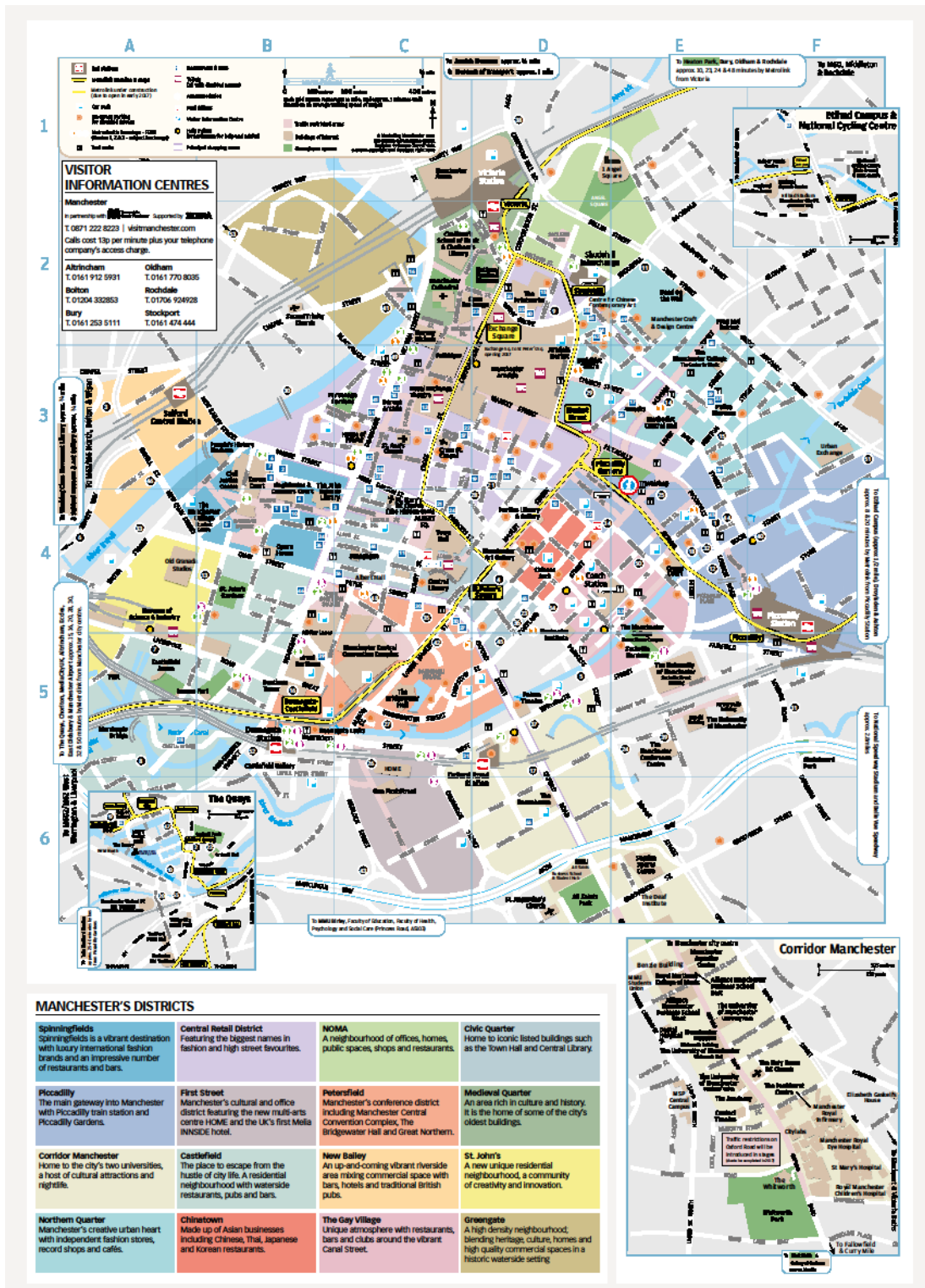
A map of the metropolitan county of Greater Manchester with the status of the former local government districts which now lie within its county boundaries

Jhamez84 (2008)



# v Manchester City Centre Map (extract)

## Marketing Manchester and Ordnance Survey (2016)



## **vi Interview prompts**

What do you think about Piccadilly Gardens?

Where would you like to go now?

Why have you chosen this way?

How do you feel here?

Do you have any favourite places in Manchester?

Is there anywhere you dislike or avoid in Manchester?

Do you enjoy walking in the city?

Do you think Manchester has changed whilst you've been here?

If you had a magic wand and could change things in Manchester what would you do?

Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

NB these were not used in all interviews and were general prompts in cases where conversations were not flowing.

## **vii NVivo code list**

Architect, planner or professional urbanist  
Architecture  
Arts, Culture etc  
Attachment  
Authenticity  
Cars  
Changes in the city  
Children, family, caring responsibility  
Community  
Comparison to somewhere else  
Consumption and shopping  
Cycling  
Deciding where to go  
Disability / access  
Diversity  
Emotion  
Experience of walking  
Fear and Safety  
Gender  
Gentrification  
Green Space  
Harassment and sexism  
Heritage  
Housing and Homelessness  
Identity (of city)  
Identity (intersectional of woman)  
Independent Shops  
Inequality and exclusion  
Infrastructure and built environment  
Interruption to interview  
Litter and dirt  
Magic Wand / what would you change?  
Materiality  
Memory  
Mental maps and navigation  
Miscellaneous interesting  
People  
Piccadilly Gardens  
Play / fun / explore  
Pubs, alcohol, nightlife  
Public Space and Ownership  
Reason for being in Manchester

Regeneration: ambivalent  
Regeneration: negative  
Regeneration: positive  
Roughness  
Specific place: Love  
Specific Place: Hate  
Street Art  
Time and rhythm  
Transport  
University  
Weather



## viii Participant information sheet



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

### **University of Sheffield Department of Urban Studies & Planning Participant Information**

**Project Title:** Women Walking Manchester

**Researcher:** Morag Rose

#### **Introduction:**

You are invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether to take part it is important to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.

#### **The purpose of the project:**

The aim of this project is to explore the idea of psychogeography, which is all about understanding people's thoughts, feelings and memories of public spaces in Manchester. It does this by walking and talking together, both one-to-one and in small groups. I want to learn what your experience of Manchester city centre is, and how you feel about it. I also want to see if a walk around the city using creative methods, such as throwing a dice, instead of simply walking from A to B, can generate new perspectives on the city.

#### **Who are the participants?**

All of the participants are women who live, work or study in Manchester.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

**No** - It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form). You can withdraw at any time without it affecting you in any way. You do not have to give a reason.

#### **What will happen if I take part?**

I will contact you to arrange a convenient time to conduct a one-to-one

walking interview in central Manchester. We will walk together and I will ask you about your thoughts, feelings and memories of the place we are walking. The interview will be recorded, and will last as long as you wish but not longer than 90 minutes. We will move at a pace set by you, and will visit places you want to talk about.

For the next stage you will be put in a small group with three other participants and I will arrange for the group to go for a walk together starting at the same location as before. This will be a *dérive*, or drift, which means the direction of the walk will be decided by throwing a dice (for example, throw a one and turn left). We will walk together for approximately 60 minutes and will then discuss the experience of the walk together. I am interested in whether you noticed anything different about the place.

After a month I will contact you by email or telephone (your choice) to talk a little bit more about your thoughts, feelings and memories of Manchester and the walks I organised.

### **What are the possible benefits and risks of taking part?**

There are no financial or material benefits to taking part, but I would hope that you enjoy participation and find it interesting. Your contribution is valued and may help improve understanding and appreciation of Manchester. I will reimburse travel expenses to the walk locations and provide refreshments after the group *dérive*.

The risks are those associated with walking in the city. As a researcher I have a duty of care to ensure we do not enter any specifically hazardous places (eg building sites) or trespass onto private property. Common sense should be used, for example, when crossing roads. I believe the risks are minimal if we do this.

### **What if something goes wrong?**

If you are unhappy with any aspect of this research please tell me as soon as possible and we will work to fix this. If you are still unhappy, or wish to make a complaint, contact Professor Rowland Atkinson [Rowland.atkinson@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:Rowland.atkinson@sheffield.ac.uk) All complaints will be taken seriously, and dealt with promptly, but if you are still dissatisfied you can contact the head of department who will escalate the complaint.

### **Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?**

Audio recordings and possibly photographs will be taken of this research. These will be used only for analysis, for illustration in presentations and lectures and possibly in publications. No other use will be made of them

without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

**Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

Yes. All data you provide will be kept securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act and your contact details and other personal information will not be shared with anyone. Your contribution will be anonymised and will not be identifiable. If you say something that means you could be identified, or there is a photograph where you are identifiable, I will contact you to explain what it is. This identifiable information will not be shared without your specific permission.

**What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The results will be used for a number of publications, including my PhD thesis and potentially journal articles, blog posts and books. They may also inform art work, including exhibitions and performances. If participants have ideas about how they would like the environment we walk in to be improved this may be shared with the council and other statutory or policy making bodies.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research is being organised and conducted by Morag Rose, a PhD student at The University of Sheffield. She has received funding from the ESRC (The Economic and Social Research Council).

**Who has ethically reviewed this project.**

This project has been ethically approved via The University of Sheffield's Department of Town and Regional's Planning ethics review procedure. The University's Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University's Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

**Contact details for further information**

Lead Researcher: Morag Rose email [mltrose1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:mltrose1@sheffield.ac.uk) tel 079749 29589

Supervisor: Rowland Atkinson email [Rowland.atkinson@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:Rowland.atkinson@sheffield.ac.uk)

**Date: 10.11.2015**



## ix Consent form

University of Sheffield  
Department of Urban Studies and Planning

Title of Research Project: Women Walking Manchester

Name of Researcher: Morag Rose

**Participant Identification Number for this project:** **Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 10.11. 2015 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. Contact: Morag Rose email [mltrose1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:mltrose1@sheffield.ac.uk) tel 07974929589
3. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research. If any particular quote or image means I am identifiable I will be given full details and will be asked to give additional permission for it to be used for specified purposes. I am free to decline to give this permission and for this information not to be used.
4. I agree for anonymised responses to be used in academic journals, presentations, community based exhibitions and other non-commercial uses which the researcher deems appropriate.
5. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research
5. I agree to take part in the above research project.

_____ Name of Participant <i>(or legal representative)</i>	_____ Date	_____ Signature
_____ Lead Researcher	_____ Date	_____ Signature

*To be signed and dated in presence of the participant*

Copies:

*Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the projects main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.*

Contact for further information

Morag Rose  
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tel 079749 29589  
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