

Research Extract

Lines

Throughout my research, I have understood that lines exist in many different forms. Tim Ingold in his book *Lines*, states that lines are 'open-ended' (Ingold, 2016: 174), which suggests to us that they hold limitless potential and are often open to interpretation. This concept alongside the ideas of philosopher Andrew Benjamin, have heavily influenced my enquiry. Benjamin states that:

Despite appearances lines are the evidence of conceptual systems. Perhaps, in order to avoid a theory of expressionism, which results in reattributing a form of neutrality to the line, it is necessary to go further and argue that lines are, ab initio, conceptual. (Wingham, 2013: 208)

My Genealogical Line

For this part of my discussion, I want to investigate, how do lines exist in my personal work? When beginning my practice-led-research, I decided to focus on the line most relevant to me, the genealogical line. I would like to use Balentine's definition of the genealogical line for the purposes of this research:

Genealogical information providing more than two generations can be called a "genealogical line". (Balentine, 2015: 391)

When beginning to look at genealogical lines, it can hold all aspects of lineages, family ancestry and descents. Whether it takes the form of a family tree, a photograph, or stories told to you, all 'lives' are influenced by the paths they cross with other 'lives'. Each of these 'lives' can be represented by a line that is constantly influenced by our personal histories and the people around us. Ingold ties these concepts together by describing our lives and the lives of those around us, as a 'meshwork' of lines, each point of contact has a profound impact on the other and thus forms a deeper intertwined and interconnected community, that is stronger and larger than any one individual (Ingold, 2016: 103).

My personal line therefore, can be understood as a singular interminable thread. A line that holds all my personal histories within it, intrinsically linking me and my family together. Within that I would argue, are the traces of memories, history, politics, migration, poverty, privileges and love. For me, the line links my past, my present and future; a link that connects me to the rest of my family and where I have come from. Our lines of lineage and life are forever moving forward, but they inherently connect us to the past. As Marshall McLuhan states in *The Medium is the Message*: 'We look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future'. (McLuhan, 1967: 67)

In the context of my own performance practice; my primary interest in the genealogical line is to understand ideas of nostalgia; a term that suggests 'remembering the past', and as Paolo Magagnoli states in *Critical Nostalgia in the Art of Joachim Koester*.

Nostalgia is frequently defined as the opposite of history, or what is considered an objective and well-documented account of the past. Whereas history entails critical distance, nostalgia is seen as an ideological distortion, a shaping of history according to subjective interests and desires. (Magagnoli, 2011: 100)

This notion proposes that my understanding of nostalgia, is a positive 'ideological' vision of my own personal history, but by implying that nostalgia is not always about idealising the past, perhaps it is a way for me to comprehend the feeling of empathy that my present self holds for the lived experiences of my family members. As Julia Bennett states in *Narrating Family Histories: Negotiating identity through tropes of nostalgia and authenticity*, 'Where there is a loss of connection to the past then looking back can become nostalgic.' (Bennet, 2015: 451) This is supported by Ingold's idea that 'Retracing the lives of past lives is the way we proceed along our own' (Ingold, 2016: 122) To further this, to re-trace my family's lives, is a way for me to discover who I am and how I make work.