RACHEL WHITEREAD:
CASTING AND COLLECTING CHILDHOOD

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Contents

List of Illustrations 3
Abstract 6
Declaration and Copyright Statement 7
Acknowledgements 8

Introduction 9

Chapter One:
Closed Childhod, Closet (1988) 34

Chapter Two:
Siblings and Seriality, Untitled [One Hundred Spaces] (1995) 71

Chapter Three:
A Photographic Portrait of House (1993-94) 105

Conclusion: Mothers and Boxes 142

Bibliography 158

Illustrations 167

Word Count: 69,516 inc.
List of Illustrations

Introduction: pp. 166-167

Fig.


2. Lynn Hershman-Leeson, Home Front - Cycles of Contention (1993-2011), dollhouse, dual-channel video, paint, custom electronics, 62.2 x 44.5 x 68.6 cm. Photograph: © Lynn Hershman-Leeson.


Chapter One: pp. 168-174


5. Miroslaw Balka, How It Is, Unilever Series, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern. Photograph: © David Levene

6. Doris Salcedo, Unland: The Orphan's Tunic (1995-98) [detail], wood, cloth, hair and glue, 31½ x 96½ x 38½ inch. Photograph: © Doris Salcedo


   ii. Francesca Woodman, Space2 Providence, Rhode Island (1975–1976), silver gelatin print. Photograph: ©The Estate of Francesca Woodman


Chapter Two: p. 175-176


**Chapter Three: pp. 177-187**

14. Rachel Whiteread, *Parts 1–4 of House Study, Grove Road* (1992), correction fluid, pencil and watercolour on colour photocopy, 29.5 x 42cm. Photograph: © Rachel Whiteread


Conclusion: pp. 188-191


31. Rachel Whiteread, *Ghost Ghost 1* (2008), polyurethane, 77 x 87 x 60cm. Photo: © Rachel Whiteread, Gagosian Gallery
Abstract

Responding to the works of artist Rachel Whiteread (b. 1963), this research aims to interrogate the social and spatial experiences of childhood, starting from the personal, childhood memory. Whiteread offers a curious collection of objects, furniture, toys, utensils, photographs and junk. Casting and collecting are Whiteread’s primary methods of artistic creation, of creative play, and these processes are at the centre of this thesis. Casting and collecting transforms objects – their uses and forms, and thus subsequent meanings and associations. Melanie Klein (1882-1960) was an early pioneer of child analysis, developing her distinctive method of the play technique. A key founder of British objects relations theory, Klein’s method incorporated creative play with objects and toys. Klein and Whiteread hold objects in common; play sits alongside casting and collecting.

I use Klein’s theories to open up the childhood house of Whiteread and her methods of casting and collecting. The three chapters of this thesis, Closeted Childhoods: Closet (1988); Siblings and Seriality: Untitled [One Hundred Spaces] (1995); A Photographic Portrait of House (1993-94), draw on different aspects of Kleinian and psychoanalytical theory in response to Whiteread’s own childhood memory-work. Kleinian themes addressed include destruction and reparation, guilt and envy, loss and mourning, with the conclusion returning to that first object, the mother, and the presence of the maternal in Whiteread’s works. Primarily, I argue that Whiteread’s sculptural casts and installations are those materialised secrets of hidden and concealed childhoods denied by a mythology of familial unity. Significantly, I consider how the autobiographical childhood remembrance holds relevance for wider concerns of social and spatial experience – public and private.
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Introduction

My very first show consisted of casts from a wardrobe, a dressing table, a hot water bottle, and the bed, \textit{Shallow Breath}. These four elements sat in a gallery as though it were a bedsit. I’m not from a wealthy background, and it was simply a memory of my childhood, of my grandparents and my parents. Some of those early works were autobiographical and very much to do with my childhood and my father dying. Over the years it still comes from there.\footnote{Ina Cole, “Mapping Traces: A Conversation with Rachel Whiteread”, \textit{International Sculpture Centre, Sculpture Magazine online}, last accessed 6 January, 2014, \url{http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag04/april04/WebSpecials/whiteread.shtml}}

(Rachel Whiteread, \textit{Mapping Traces})

Rachel Whiteread (British artist, b.1963) offers a curious collection of objects, furniture, toys, utensils, photography and junk. These objects are often transformed through a process of casting, or are hoarded together, intact, to form installations or museum-esque cabinet displays. At other times she casts whole spaces, not just the objects contained within them. Casting and collecting are Whiteread’s primary methods of artistic creation, of creative play, and these processes are at the centre of this thesis. Casting and collecting transforms objects – their uses and forms, and thus subsequent meanings and associations. Previous authors writing on Whiteread’s works have highlighted the intrinsic human subject at the centre of the artist’s oeuvre, with the domestic sphere and its activities tied up with the objects selected by the artist. Whiteread herself has offered personal anecdotes and storytelling of childhood experiences, of objects and spaces, and the influence of this upon the final created works (cast or collected). Responding to Whiteread’s \textit{House} (1993-94), art historian Jon Bird argues that childhood is a ‘fundamental’ theme in Whiteread’s works,\footnote{Jon Bird, “Dolce Domum”, in James Lingwood, ed., \textit{House: Rachel Whiteread} (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), 112.} but little academic attention has been given to interrogating this aspect of her oeuvre. This thesis examines the childhood(s) offered by Whiteread’s works and the relationship with processes of casting and collecting.\footnote{Whiteread’s artworks have, to-date, been considered by authors in relation to an emergent minimalism within female artistic practices; the uses of the domestic space within art; the 1980s-1990s “Young British Artists phenomenon” and Saatchi patronage; Freud’s theory of the uncanny; and themes of memory and absence. Key texts on Whiteread’s work include: Charlotte Mullins, \textit{RW: Rachel Whiteread} (London: Tate Publishing, 2004); Lisa Saltzman, \textit{Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006); Chris Townsend, ed., \textit{The Art of Rachel Whiteread} (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004); Anthony Vidler, \textit{Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture} (London: MIT}
Whiteread is frequently categorised alongside London based artists who made up the Young British Artist generation working from the late 1980s through the 1990s: artists such as Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, Sarah Lucas, Michael Landy, Gary Hume, Abigail Lane, Gillian Wearing, Jake and Dinos Chapman brothers, and Marc Quinn – who were all promoted by collectors Charles Saatchi, Jay Jopling and the contemporary White Cube Gallery.\(^4\) Gallerist Gregor Muir sets the scene in ‘urban, grey and bleak’ London in the shadow of 1980s Thatcherism; a city ‘forlorn and decaying’; the inner city an ‘empty, destitute playground.’\(^5\)

Muir argues that the Young British Artists responded to the despondency with an air of positivity and brashness that shocked people into seeing the exciting possibilities of contemporary art in Britain.\(^6\) The period saw a revival in interest in sixties and seventies pop culture; discourse on ‘Cool Britannia’; an anything-goes attitude to art, with Britpop ‘the soundtrack to an era of hedonistic success.’\(^7\)

Although Whiteread is of this generation of artists, she was not part of the Goldsmiths’ set, nor did she collaborate very frequently with the artists within that set. Her main link to the group was through Saatchi’s purchase of Ghost (1990) and the 1997 exhibition Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection, thus Whiteread was somewhat independent

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\(^4\) An internationally acclaimed artist and a Turner Prize winner (1993), Whiteread’s work can be viewed as a development of the New British Sculpture of the 1970s and 1980s, which refers to the loosely associated group of artists including Gormley, Cragg, Deacon, Kapoor, Wentworth, Wilding, Woodrow and Houshiary. Other critics have aesthetically aligned her work with American Minimalism or with the “anarchitecture” of Gordon Matta-Clarke. My aim here is not to categorise Whiteread’s work in terms of “movements” and so forth, as a great many influences abound. Discussion of Whiteread’s relationship with Minimalism is discussed by Briony Fer, On Abstract Art (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1997) and by Lynn Zelevansky, Sense and Sensibility: Women Artists and Minimalism in the Nineties (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994). Anna C. Chave presents an interesting discussion on the so-called conflict between (auto)biographical narrative and American Minimalism Anna C. Chave, “Minimalism and Biography”, Art Bulletin, LXXXII: 1 (March 2000), 149-163.


\(^6\) ‘It was out of this environment of low employment and inner-city neglect that a generation of young British artists began to emerge. These were the bad boys and girls of British art. Swaggering provocateurs, throwing themselves about town and flaunting their talent in front of high-powered collectors. While businesses buckled under the weight of recession, young artists played the situation to their advantage, achieving initial success through a series of group shows held in derelict buildings and independent spaces, scouring the industrial wastelands of Docklands and South London for studios and exhibition venues, relentlessly promoting themselves at a time when contemporary art had little hope of popularity.’ (Muir, Lucky Kunst, 3-7).

\(^7\) Muir, Lucky Kunst, 9. It should be noted that Muir’s book on the era is self-indulgent, as much a project in constructing his own identity and role in this period as an historical text documenting this art generation. Muir, now appointed as Executive Director at the ICA, began his career as a gallerist in the late nineties, founding the Lux Gallery in Hoxton Square, London, in 1997, and going on to work as a contemporary art curator with Tate Modern, and Director of Hauser & Wirth Gallery. Muir is extremely well connected with the YBA generation of artists, thus there is a certain element of self-promotion in his writings on the 1990s London art scene.
of the group dynamic. Muir reflects upon Whiteread’s output: ‘Unlike her YBA contemporaries, Whiteread studied at the Slade School of Fine Art […] she was considered a thoughtful artist. Throughout the nineties, Whiteread remained both an insider and an outsider […] She produced objects that represented a remarkable transformation of the ordinary, but was never sensational in her choice of subject matter.’ Her non-sensational subject matter has been described as ‘one-liner art’ by Julian Stallabrass, artwork which has been ‘consistent in the pursuit of a single idea’, namely the casting of domestic spaces. Whiteread’s primary technique of casting sets her aside from other YBA artists – ‘For Whiteread, casting acts as a process of mapping a building, a way of getting to understand the building, its features and idiosyncrasies.’ Casting, unlike any other technique, allows for the sculpting material to envelope the original object or space, to seep into its walls, fill its crevices; it is an intimate process in which the new form is the inverted shadow or fossil of the original object, displaying all its nooks, markings and traces, ‘all the little bits of history’.

The visual presence of childhood in Whiteread’s works is overt with some pieces such as Place [Village] (2006-2008), an installation of dollhouses, than others such as Closet (1988), a black geometric cast structure. Place [Village] initially encouraged my own curiosity of such childhood associations, but Closet offers an alternative and less visually suggestive materialisation of childhood (childhoods dark and contained). Memory-work by the artist informs an oeuvre lacking in whimsy and sentimentality, conveying instead a certain unease and tension. Whiteread’s sculptural casts and installations are those materialised secrets of hidden and concealed childhoods denied by a mythology of familial unity. This thesis prises open that relationship between casting, collecting and theories of childhood.

Melanie Klein (1882-1969) was an early pioneer of child analysis, developing her distinctive method of the play technique. A key founder of British objects relations theory, Klein’s method incorporated creative play with objects and toys. I use Klein’s theories to open up the childhood house of Whiteread and her methods of casting and collecting, to reveal narratives of destruction and reparation, sibling anxiety, mourning and loss. In particular, I

8 Muir, Lucky Kunst, 43-44.
13 In 1926 Klein moved to London from Berlin where she lived and worked until 1960.

A key question then is why use psychoanalysis to interpret art, and – most importantly – why use Kleinian psychoanalysis? Whiteread herself acknowledges that her pieces are about objects and the memories they evoke. I consider how the artist’s oral and written storytelling and memory-work materialises through processes of casting and collecting. Psychoanalysis – a theory and science of the self – is intrinsically bound up with narratives of childhood, and those suppressed desires and anxieties. Childhood and psychoanalysis are perceived to be ‘a couple.’ 22 Psychoanalysis, as Carol Mavor comments, ‘could not have developed without childhood as imagined and severed from adult life […] Born in the Victorian era, psychoanalysis asks us to lie down on the couch (if only metaphorically) to remember, to account for one’s life, to discover the heart (the childhood) of one’s psychosis.’ 23 Anthony Vidler’s application of Sigmund Freud’s theory of the Uncanny in response to Whiteread’s House (1993-94) lays the groundwork for a psychoanalytic approach in attempting to make sense of Whiteread’s often obscure forms. Notably Klein did not develop a fully-fleshed theory of aesthetics. Her pupil Hannah Segal ‘developed a systematic theory of creativity and aesthetics based on Klein’s insights […] art critic and historian Adrian Stokes (an analysand of Klein) successfully integrated Klein’s account of infantile experience into his aesthetic criticism. Thus it was largely through the work of Segal and Stokes that Kleinian aesthetics

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23 Mavor, Reading Boyishly, 105-106.
became fully established as a coherent approach to the visual arts.’

However, Klein’s interest in art and literature is demonstrated in her paper ‘Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in a Work of Art and the Creative Impulse’ (1929), where she addressed visual creativity and art as an expression of reparation. Nicola Glover and Fred C. Alford in their respective texts offer a full analysis of Klein-inspired aesthetic theory, acknowledging the weaknesses in using psychoanalysis for understanding and interpreting material objects. However, as Alford recognises, ‘to take Klein seriously is not necessarily to take her literally.’ It is possible to disagree with Klein, and challenge her methods, yet utilise certain aspects of her psychoanalysis to illuminate artworks. My use of Klein is inspired by both Lisa Tickner’s and Mignon Nixon’s articles which site Klein in relation to their analysis of visual art. Nixon turns to Klein’s theories of destruction and reparation to analyse the sadistic desires displayed in the work of Louise Bourgeois, and to also briefly consider the repetition and solidity of Whiteread’s pieces. Lisa Tickner offers a brief but illuminating reflection on Whiteread’s memory of an episode of childhood aggression – in which Tickner recognises specifically Kleinian overtones. Notably, in each of these texts by Vidler, Nixon and Tickner, neither Freud nor Klein is used to psycholanalyse the artist, but applied to interrogate the art object and its associated memory-work.

Childhood’s connection to psychoanalysis was there at the onset. Yet it was not until the emergence of object relations theory in the 1920s, principally through the work of Melanie Klein and then Winnicott, that children themselves were seriously analysed. Naturally, by taking on children both Klein and Winnicott draw heavily on mothers and their role in children’s lives, if in radically different ways. Both played with the mother’s body: Klein tore it to pieces; Winnicott glorified it.

D. W. Winnicott’s object relations theory does not privilege destruction or Freud, unlike


Klein. Notably, Klein drew on the child’s psychic interactions with toys and playthings to unveil the anxieties of the mind – the toy acting as stand-in for mother, father and siblings. Klein and Whiteread thus hold objects in common; play sits alongside casting and collecting. The process of casting is analogous to that Kleinian coexistence of destruction and reparation. Whiteread’s work does not seek to make childhoods whole but continues a process of splitting and unmaking childhood. Casting begins with liquidity, a pouring, dripping, expulsion of thickening fluids, which eventually suffocate and solidify around the innards of the parent-object. This parent-object is then split open, destroyed as it gives its new form to its new (child) object, (the mother’s body is torn to pieces). Destruction through creation. What continues to exist is that new, strangely familiar (but different) object. Casting not only sets up an interesting vertical (parental) relationship between the object and its cast, but it offers the possibility of a lateral (sibling) relationship between other serialised casts.

Whiteread’s casts and strange accumulations of objects are also fantastical. The fantastical in literature is of the excessive and extreme; of transformations and metamorphosis; subversion, inversion and perversion. It is a narrative form which is unhappy with society and cultural forms “as is”, and takes on a radically political dimension in its attempt to overturn expected and existing norms. The fantastical offers an inside-out version of so-called “reality”. Rosemary Jackson writes, ‘themes of the fantastic in literature revolve around this problem of making visible the un-seen, of articulating the unsaid.’ Transgressive behaviours, suppressed anxieties, unconscious desires, doubling and splitting, are all facets of the fantastical as well as the psychoanalytic. The fantastical text is often populated with replicas

29 The fantastical is concerned with that which is deemed “fantastic”, alluding to the imaginative, illusory, strange and supernatural; pertaining to, or of the nature of, a phantasm; fanciful, impulsive, capricious, arbitrary; that which is eccentric or odd, with its qualities of neurosis, the psychedelia and madness posited as the antithesis to an assumed “reality”. Significantly, the fantastical in some way transgresses or is above the norm. As Tzvetan Todorov highlights in his significant text The Fantastic it is a genre which ‘seems to be located on the frontier of two genres, the marvellous and the uncanny,’ taking inspiration from the gothic. The fantastic, according to Todorov, is defined by the following: indecision, hesitancy, uncertainty; that which is ‘in-between’ the uncanny and the marvellous; tensions between reality and the imagination, or illusion. The fantastic in literature challenges accepted binaries, with such constructions proving useless in trying to make sense of supernatural happenings or displacement of the self from the known world of logic and rationality. The stability of sensory perception, vision, and therefore interpretation come under close scrutiny. The very nature of what constitutes “sanity”, and a sane experience of a so-called “reality”, is placed at the centre of the fantastic. Tzvetan Todorov, The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), 41.

30 Rosemary Jackson, Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion (London: Routledge, 2003), 48. See also Marina Warner, Fantastical Metamorphoses, Other Worlds: Ways of Telling the Self (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Warner recognises that splitting and doubling are themes and processes of the fantastical narrative; I argue they are Whiteread’s methods of the sculptural fantastical.

31 An example of a fantastical text is Angela Carter’s The Magic Toyshop (1976), a modern fairytale of fading
and doubles, objects, photographs, and shadows. Whiteread’s works share these traits, and project them through inanimate objects which have, in turn, been subverted, cast, doubled, and split. Like narratives of the fantastical, casting as a creative process makes visible the usually invisible (such as psychoanalysis attempts to gain access to that which is usually suppressed): ‘By attempting to make visible that which is culturally invisible and written out as negation and death, the fantastic introduces absences.’ Whiteread’s domestic casts are described by Mavor as ‘The solid nothingness of childhood lost […] nothing gauzy nor light’. Foreboding, dense and unrelenting, Whiteread’s childhood memory-work is heavy in its materiality, claustrophobic in its suffocating solidity. Her sculptures offer a type of memory-work in keeping with those darker and more problematic childhoods which hang like heavy shadows to any example of sentimentality. These objects and sculptures of childhood spaces and objects introduce absence and loss, or the possibility of (culturally) absent and lost childhoods.

Absence, bereavement and loss of the first object (the mother) is the starting point for Klein. Notably, the loss of the parental is the catalyst for early and later projects by Whiteread. Commenting on Whiteread’s House, Jon Bird argues, ‘If the first lost object is the mother, then the first lost space is the maternal space.’ Whiteread continues to return to that lost maternal space throughout her oeuvre. The space and objects of the maternal thus link Whiteread with Klein, with each of their created childhoods serving to contest the authority of the parental and imposed spatial hierarchies.

Whiteread’s works can be complex and sometimes terrifying in their symbolism and materiality, conveying the anxiety and sense of melancholy discussed by Klein. The three chapters of this thesis, Closeted Childhoods: Closet (1988); Siblings and Seriality: Untitled [One Hundred Spaces] (1995); A Photographic Portrait of House (1993-94), draw on different childhood and disenchantment is played out through spaces of the domestic sphere and the toyshop. The magic of Carter’s tale is a dark magic which breathes life into inanimate objects, and reveals subconscious desires and impulses, and usurps familial expectations. Whiteread’s works resonate with Carter’s feminist perspective on imagination and childhood.

Lucie Armitt summarises Freud’s position on uncanny ‘devices’, (which also populate the fantastical): ‘an apparently precarious dividing line between animate and inanimate objects, as is frequently conveyed by the presence of puppets, waxwork figures and clockwork toys […]The presence of doubles in the form of identical twins, mirrored reflections of shadows […] Involuntary repetition’ and ‘“omnipotence of thoughts”, or apparently bringing into being or into our presence something/ someone that we have dreamt up or spoken about […] he argues that “an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality”.’ Lucie Armitt, Theorising the Fantastic (London: Arnold, 1996), 50.

Jackson, Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion, 69.

Mavor, Reading Boyishly, 107.

aspects of Kleinian and psychoanalytical theory in response to Whiteread’s own childhood memory-work. Kleinian themes addressed include destruction and reparation, guilt and envy, loss and mourning, with the conclusion returning to that first-object, the mother, and the presence of the maternal in Whiteread’s works. The writings of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (queer childhoods), Sigmund Freud (the double), Susan Stewart (objects), Juliet Mitchell (siblings and seriality), Annette Kuhn and Simon Watney (the autobiographic and memory), and James Kincaid (the child and sexuality) are also relevant to this project, and referred to throughout. Klein’s theories offer the basis for an aesthetic psychoanalytic reading of Whiteread’s sculptures, but these authors help to further illuminate and support a reading of childhood in Whiteread’s works. Each author offers a different method for reading childhood, but they each hold “memory” and the autobiographic narrative in common. The queer theory of Sedgwick and reflections of gay rights activist and art historian Simon Watney are engaged with throughout. Whiteread is not a gay artist nor do interviews and writings of the artist directly reference themes of sexuality. However, queer discourse opens up a pathway for the acknowledgement of culturally repressed and contained childhoods.

The Child

The child (as an idea) is never a neutral construct. Kincaid argues that, ‘the child enters into discourse as an article for inquiry and concern, as a visible image of expansion and degeneration, of happiness and play, misery and exploitation, of the future and the past, of faith and death, of the existence of class lines and their dissolution.’

Writings (and artworks) on the child and childhood work in ‘exposing our own constructing apparatus […] What the child is matters less than what we think it is and just why we think that way.’ How we perceive childhood is thus a reflection of cultural attitudes and adult interactions. The child is constructed by the adult – through laws, literature, visual art, and psychoanalysis. Kincaid argues, ‘the whole unit [the family] is fastened together by way of the projection of parental fantasies onto the child’. The child and the domestic sphere are significantly entwined as ‘the child gradually came to define what the home and family were and how they would

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37 Kincaid, *Child-Loving*, 62. Likewise, this project will never conclusively present a full and succinct portrait of twentieth century child. Instead, I lift the veil upon how the child can be read within selected works by Whiteread and what is perhaps revealed about the society in which these child(hoods) are constructed.

38 Kincaid, *Child Loving*, 83.
function.\(^{39}\) However, the family unit is itself ‘unnatural and historically accidental to begin with, is riddled by unending warfare between this artifice, the child, and the parent, this modern “parent” being as much a concoction as the “child’’.\(^{40}\) Significantly, Whiteread’s creative process attacks those material objects representative of the domestic sphere and its associated family unit.

In Philippe Aries’ early history of childhood, the child and childhood does not come into cultural existence until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (among the aristocracy), with two defined attitudes of the ‘coddled’ child: an object of adult amusement and relaxation, versus the child who should be morally instructed and educated, and treated as separate from the adult.\(^{41}\) Histories of the Victorian child reveal conflicting desires for the child as an image and body de-sexualised and innocent, yet also a body requiring regulation and control through adult authority. The child of the nineteenth century in both its physical and conceptual form looms large over the shoulder of the child of the mid to late twentieth century.\(^{42}\) An uneasy history of a “loving” of and for the child, as discussed by Kincaid, creeps into writings (and artworks) of the child, conveying ‘an erotics of loss. Though loss is itself a function of change, its particular dealings with the child tend to freeze any moment, to create a kind of effective tableau, one in which the child always is (and always is fixed) but always is beyond reach.\(^{43}\)

The fervent hope to catch the child and hold it, even at a distance, suggests, I think, a well of desire deeper and more unsettled than anything either purely natural or simply escapist […] fixing them at a distance, and then longing for them.\(^{44}\)

The creation of the “adolescent” is crucial to the project of freezing the child, and averting

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\(^{39}\) Kincaid, *Child Loving*, 83.  
\(^{40}\) Kincaid *Child Loving*, 84.  
\(^{42}\) Kincaid outlines the historical positioning of the child, emphasising the child (as we perceive today) to have evolved from, and responded to, nineteenth century constructs: ‘Aries concludes that what we think of the child was not there, that “the child” became a conceptual and thus biological and social category much later, flowering in the nineteenth century […] [and] Peter Coveney’s observation on the unimportance of the child in literature until the last decades of the of the eighteenth century, and Deborah Gorham’s tracing of the rapid development of toys and books for children during the same period […] If we think of Victorian culture and Victorian constructions of children as shifting, various, and mysterious, we have some hope of catching a glimpse of where our own unwarranted certainties come from.’ Kincaid, *Child Loving*, 61-63.  
\(^{43}\) Kincaid, *Child Loving*, 67.  
\(^{44}\) Kincaid, *Child Loving*, 67.
loss, for it provides an “other” to that of the child, its opposite, by which we can then define and regulate our desired category of “child”.\textsuperscript{45} For females, although age and sexuality are conjoined via the onset of menstruation, it is problematic to work to such definitions. For example, a menstruating ten year old is not to be considered a woman within (legal) age categories of “child” and “adult” – yet the child is culturally defined, in the West, ‘by purity, an absence, and an incapacity, an inability.’\textsuperscript{46} As Kincaid argues, it is thus more interesting to consider how childhoods are created, in what form – particularly through visual culture.

**Casting, Memory and Minimalism**

Childhood is ever present in Whiteread’s interviews, writings, and projects, yet it is somewhat veiled and contained within her sculptures. There is a distinct tension between the minimalist aesthetic of early works and the memoir filled narratives which lie hidden beneath the surface of her plaster, latex and resin casts. Works such as *House* (1993-94) and *Closet* (1988) usurp our sense of ease, our desire to remember nostalgically, sweetly. Crucially, these childhood(s) are situated within the domestic sphere. Art historian Gill Perry argues that the domestic sphere as a topic is prevalent amongst works of female artists from the 1960s onwards, a ‘distinguishing feature of the practice of many women artists working in the UK at the end of the twentieth century, including Whiteread, Hatoum, Parker, Emin and Lucas.’\textsuperscript{47} Both Whiteread and Carter situate their visual and literary storytelling within the domestic sphere, a space ripe for Kleinian deconstruction. The domestic objects and spaces selected by the artist readily lend themselves to narrative interpretation, ‘memory of this object slips in and out of experience of the sculpture. Looking at Whiteread’s sculpture entails a kind of mapping of the remembered on to the present. It involves the viewer in a relationship with the object […]the artist asks us to go back to beds from which we have risen, rooms we have left, chairs on which we have left our traces … [we] become entangled in the sequence of imaginative transactions.’\textsuperscript{48} Whiteread is not alone in producing works which are steeped in autobiographical narrative, or, as Joseph Cornell summarises, desire to express the ‘dreams of childhood houses, photographs, and documents like playing cards … this urgency to “go back”

\textsuperscript{45} Kincaid, *Child Loving*, 69.
\textsuperscript{46} Kincaid, *Child Loving*, 70. ‘Child corpses, a cynic would say, are far more satisfying aesthetically and erotically than a child grown out of childhood and into a gangly, be pimpled adolescent’, Kincaid, *Child Loving*, 82.
to earlier days … “threads”.

However, Whiteread’s autobiographical offerings are not thread-like, but solid, with dreams replaced by nightmarish inversions.

The process of casting is both creative and destructive. The original cast object is prized open, splintered, damaged, drilled through, stripped of its contents, and then discarded – producing an ethereal other but not identical replica. The cast competes with the object; the artwork versus the original. Desire to preserve and create anew are in conflict. Early career experiments saw Whiteread casting parts of her own body (which she felt were too private to exhibit). Later works became more concerned with the traces left by bodily interaction with surfaces, and the detritus of human existence in the domestic sphere, such as skin, hair, dust, flecks of paint, strips of wallpaper; traces of being, of past life, as well as producing casts evoking spaces of death such as the mortuary and cemetery.

Whiteread’s casting creates unknown doubles. Displacement is evoked through the feeling of alienation from the everyday. Something familiar and connected to family, to childhood, becomes unfamiliar, distorted somehow and fragmented. Shadow-like duplicates mirror the originals but exist as entirely separate objects, ripe for new connotations and associations to take hold. Essentially, Whiteread lets us close to her childhood, but not that close. We are viewing memories and objects turned in upon themselves, they are twisted and contorted; arguably all memories of childhood share this sense of contortion, as the fragmented is pieced together over long periods of time, inevitably undergoing some form of transformation or infantile amnesia. Essentially, there is conflict between the seen and unseen; between the remembered and embellished.

The child continually enters here as a metaphor, perhaps not simply because the child is in some physical sense a miniature of the adult, but also because the world of childhood, limited in physical scope yet fantastic in its content, presents in some ways a miniature and fictive chapter in each life history; it is a world that is part of history, at least the history of the individual subject, but remote from the presentness of adult life […] We imagine childhood as if it were at the other end of a tunnel – distanced, diminutive, and clearly framed.

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51 Susan Stewart, On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection (Durham:
The child we remember is from that fantastical world of in-between where what constitutes the real and the imaginary exists as a state of uncertainty. To engage with memory of childhood is to engage in an experience which we can no longer deem “reality” – we imagine childhood, it is distanced. A viewer of Whiteread’s works finds themselves locked in a hesitant moment of in-between; a transformation and re-imagining of time and space through the casting process being central to Whiteread’s sculptural pieces. Juliet Mitchell emphasises that the Freudian relationship between the self as adult and self as infant is structured through ‘an amnesia that covers our infancy [indicating] the construction of memory […] Infancy is a perpetual present. This could be linked with the small child’s extraordinary memory – which is not memory, but a continuous actuality’. However, Klein (and Mitchell) perceive such divisions between past and present problematic, with time and space always in flux, and moulded by spatial relations: ‘Freud’s historical imagination examines the present (the adult illness) and from it reconstructs a hypothetical past determinant. For Klein the past and the present are one […] time is spatial, not historical.’ Therefore works of art and literature concerning the child and childhood (produced by the adult) are always a materialisation of both the past and present-ness of the child as read through the body of the adult.

Distortions and displacements are facets of memory. As Freud says of screen memories, ‘No one doubts that our earliest childhood experiences have left indelible traces on our inner selves; but when we question our memory as to what impressions are destined to influence us till the end of our lives, it comes up with either nothing at all or relatively small number of isolated recollections, often questionable or perplexing significance.’ What, then, to make of the artist’s (Whiteread’s) own account of her work? What status do anecdotal narratives have alongside, or in relation to, the material object? What is the relationship between Whiteread’s minimalistic aesthetic and the autobiographic memory? Artist “memories” should not be read as the source of definitive meaning or origin; Whiteread herself argues ‘she does not want the value and meaning of her work to be constrained by a

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53 Mitchell, The Selected Melanie Klein, 27.
54 Mitchell, The Selected Melanie Klein, 28.
55 ‘Instead of being a recovery of the past in the present, it always involves a revision, reinscription, or representation of an ultimately irretrievable past. The past ceases to be the proper referent of memory; rather memories “refer” […] to the unconscious. Memory, then, becomes a mode of reproduction.’ Mary Jacobus, “Freud’s Mnemonic: Women, Screen Memories, and Feminist Nostalgia”, Michigan Quarterly Review: Women and Memory, 26: 1 (Winter 1987), 119.
biographical reading.’ Freud has queried the very authenticity of memory: ‘It is perhaps altogether questionable whether we have any conscious memories from childhood: perhaps we have only memories of childhood. These show us the first years of our lives not as they were, but as they appeared to us at later periods.’ But that is not to argue that so-called (auto)biographical fragments should be discounted as a valid route into a work. The personalised anecdote and memory, ‘is at one and the same time literary and real’, it occupies that hesitant in-between space in which self and identity is continually constructed and deconstructed through language. In discussing the artist’s “anecdotal” memoirs of play, hiding, and mutilation of toys and objects, analysis focuses upon the tension between the unstable memory of childhood – what is hidden and concealed. If memory is a mode of reproduction then Whiteread’s sculptures should be read as memories-reproduced: objects which embody the loss of a certain irretrievable past, but also that (subconscious) contradictory desire – ‘not the wish to remember, but the wish to forget.’ Anecdote and memory offered by the artist does not define interpretation, but adds another layer to the sculptural cast created from a process of layering; the process of “forming” memories akin to the formation of the art object.

Whiteread’s works are considered to continue a certain Minimalist aesthetic but the relationship between the Minimalist art object and artistic anecdote and memory is historically fraught. The 1994 exhibition Sense and Sensibility: Women Artists and Minimalism in the Nineties (The Museum of Modern Art, New York), presented works demonstrating an increasing engagement with Minimalist concepts amongst female artists (and included work by Whiteread). Curator Lynn Zelevansky discusses the conflicts and tensions posed by works of female artists in their response to a presumed American-male dominated aesthetic. These artists position themselves in that ‘between’ space, in which absence and presence, abstraction and narrative, painting and sculpture are not clearly defined; the artists abstaining from binary positions and categories to define their work as purely Minimalist or non-Minimalist. There are significant recurring traits amongst the group of artists selected by

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57 Tickner, “Mediating Generation: The Mother-Daughter Plot”, 43.
60 Jacobus“Freud’s Mnemonic”, 119.
61 ‘Memories of childhood did not emerge, as one is accustomed to saying, but were formed.’ Freud, “Screen Memories”, 21.
62 Artists chosen to exhibit included Polly Apfelbaum, Mona Hatoum, Rachel Lachowicz, Jac Leirner, Claudia Matzko, Andrea Zittel, and Rachel Whiteread.
63 Zelevansky, Sense and Sensibility, 24.
Zelevansky: uses of narrative and autobiography; use of the fairy tale or folk tale symbolism; experimentation with colour; a privileging of the mother-daughter relationship; the body and its activities; the appropriation of found or “junk” forms; the use of the grid and repetition; an exploration of the sensuality of materials. Zelevansky tentatively suggests that the use of themes and materials by these artists reflect a new feminist response to both Minimalism and the Women’s Movement of the 1970s.\(^{64}\)

Examining the interaction between so-called Minimalism and (auto)biography, Anna C. Chave cuts into the mythology of Minimalism as an aesthetic and critical movement which is depersonalised, rejecting the biographical narrative of the artist or the metaphorical in favour of form and materiality. As Chave argues, the development of Minimalism is curiously bound up with the personal interrelations between early espousers of Minimalism, such as Rosalind Krauss and Robert Morris, and with personal narratives of femininity being offered by Eve Hesse, Simone Forti and Yvonne Rainer.

Hesse tendered forms more idiosyncratic, more suggestive of the body, and more patently open to those metaphoric valences that the Minimalists claimed to abhor – forms more expressive, in a word, and in that sense, more aligned with values that society codes as feminine. Where the canonical Minimalist object would typically have an alienating or distancing effect on viewers, Hesse’s sculpture would generally compel a more complex dialectic, as of attraction and repulsion or seduction and alienation.\(^{65}\)

Whiteread’s works continue this ‘complex dialectic’, as they invite yet also reject narrative interpretation; her domestic forms ‘try to touch the collective consciousness’,\(^{66}\) yet they also exclude the viewer from a shared sense of overt meaning. The form and structure of a work such as Closet (1988) is visually hard to penetrate; any attempt at interpretation is purely skin-

\(^{64}\) Zelevansky notes that many of the artists selected for the exhibition have feminist artistic mothers – such as Whiteread. Commenting in relation to Rachel Lachowicz, she says, ‘like a number of women of her generation, has questioned certain interpretations of the 1970s Women’s Movement.’ Commenting on Whiteread, she notes ‘Born to an artist mother, Whiteread resisted becoming an artist herself’, Zelevansky, Sense and Sensibility, 18, 26. Whiteread’s response to the 1970s Women’s Movement, and feminism in general, is somewhat ambivalent, perhaps more in line with what is described by Andrea K. Scott as ‘a new silence palatable in the work of a number of young women artists: an eloquent silence, resistant to dualities and fixed designations […] This silent aesthetic privileges the experiential; it celebrates the visceral without denying the visual.’ Andrea K. Scott, ‘An Eloquent Silence’, Tema Celeste, (Autumn 1992), 81.

\(^{65}\) Chave, ‘Minimalism and Biography’, 156.

deep – literally, informed by the skin of the work. Its black-felt darkness and harsh geometry offers little clue as to the autobiographical anecdotes attributed to the work by the artist. However, Whiteread’s pieces are all the more intriguing due to their abstractness – which in turn invites free-association from the viewer (in line with Fried’s observation of the theatricality and heightened drama of minimalistic forms).67

The ‘autobiographical asides’68 divulged by Robert Morris and Carl Andre offer some form of ‘infantile origin’69 on their selected works: they suggest the childhood lure towards certain spatial forms which have persisted into adulthood,70 and the influence of parental craft and production in an industrial landscape of childhood.71 Whiteread’s work should be read as a continuation of Minimalism’s complex interaction with the metaphorical, the bodily, and the (auto)biographical. With regards to the role of the viewer, Chave argues that ‘an unprecedented foregrounding of the role or status of the viewer is increasingly cited as the most radical innovation, even the keystone, of Minimalism.’72 The body of the viewer and their participation in the construction of meaning, threatens to conflict with the authorial voice. However, the authorial voice of the artist is not always compromised by the body of the viewer, but works in a kind of conversation to create a multilayered interpretation. Whiteread’s works do not go as far as Hesse’s to invite touch or seemingly allude to actual bodily parts. Instead, Whiteread’s works draw attention to the body (and memories) of the perceiver through uses of scale, and through the casting of everyday objects and spaces.73

The autobiographic is contained, secreted beneath the skins and shells of Whiteread’s casts (fossils) of everyday objects, furniture and spaces. Author Angela Carter once commented that: ‘all attempts at autobiography are fraught with self-deceit and narcissism.’74 There is, then, a deceit at the heart of every retelling of the self. To use Walter Benjamin’s metaphor, we must go digging (like archaeologists) to uncover the spoils of the id and ego: ‘language shows clearly that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past but its theatre.

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68 Chave, “Minimalism and Biography”, 155.
69 Chave, “Minimalism and Biography”, 157.
70 Chave, “Minimalism and Biography”, 155.
71 Chave, “Minimalism and Biography”, 157.
72 Chave, “Minimalism and Biography”, 156.
73 Whiteread comments: ‘This work also had this lip, like a clitoris’ – this is one of the most direct connections made between the female body and the domestic object – in this case, the mattress. Whiteread also talks of surfaces ‘bleeding’ into the plaster of sculptures. The domestic space, traditionally feminised, is also a sensual space, where the female subject discovers her own body and its own ‘secret spaces’. Whiteread in Debbaut and Essink, Rachel Whiteread, 8, 13, 9.
It is the medium of past experience, as the ground is the medium in which dead cities lie interred. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging.  

He also argues that ‘reminiscences, even extensive ones, do not amount to an autobiography […]. An autobiography has to do with time, with sequence and what makes up the continuous flow of life. Here, I am talking of a space, of moments and discontinuities.’

Whiteread’s works engage with the problems of autobiographical continuity, with the sculptures themselves simply fragments of spaces and moments which in turn evoke fragmentary narratives of remembrance. Importantly, recollection as Benjamin views it is not ‘the stuff that life is made of’, thus narratives of childhood (it could be argued) do not present the “realities” of childhood experience, only alluding to possible experiences and perspectives. Like half-forgotten dreams childhood memories are incomplete histories.

The tensions apparent within Whiteread’s works also stem from the artist’s suspicion of so-called intentionality or the autobiographical. Writing in 1994, Zelevansky comments: ‘In the beginning, [Whiteread’s] quasi-Minimalist forms were imbued with strong autobiographical content, as the objects cast often directly expressed the artist’s personal history. Fossil-like, they are, quite literally, traces of the past. Recently however, this has begun to change […] Less nostalgic and increasingly abstract, these objects are that much

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77 Benjamin, “A Berlin Chronicle”, 612

78 Benjamin, “A Berlin Chronicle”, 613

79 How is childhood memory treated in contemporary art? How are viewers to translate objects and spaces? Can it be considered a genre, such as Richard Coe suggests for the written narrative, the ‘Childhood’? This then raises the issue of the language – oral or written – we apply to the discussed subject, object, space or person, and the aesthetic language used by the artist to translate oral or written narrative into a visual work: what happens in that translation? How can memory and childhood(s) be evoked, or presented by sculptural works? There are several narratives taking place: that of the artist, the viewer of the work, the writer of a text, the reader of that text, and the response to the original work via the reading of the interpretive text. The childhood remembrance is never definitive or finite. It metamorphoses as it flows from one reader to the next, from one context of reading to the next. Richard Coe, When the Grass Was Taller: Autobiography and the Experience of Childhood (London: Yale University Press, 1984).

80 Whiteread herself demonstrates an ambiguous attitude to autobiographical readings of her work: on the one hand insisting works are about form, or collective rather than personal memory, dismissing an over-theorisation of the works, and conveying a suspicion of the nostalgic and sentimental; and yet she offers many autobiographical “insights” to her works within interviews and photographic-essays. This thesis is in part a continuation of the discourse on authorship. As my thesis structure conveys, Whiteread’s works become increasingly personalised, with the minimalistic principles of form and purity (and supposed non-autobiography) completely dismissed (or abandoned) within her collection installations. Whiteread’s most recent large work, Boathouse (2010) in Røykenvik, Norway, is her first permanent concrete sculpture within a non-urban environment. Its peaceful and solitary existence (and permanence) within the landscape positions it as the antithesis of House. However, although seemingly a return to form away from the intimate or biographical, interviews with the artist once again refer to her relationship with her father, and his influence as a geographer.
closer to works by Minimalism’s originators.” Zelevansky suggests Whiteread attempts (post-House) to move away from autobiographical references within her works. However, it is overtly clear from recent installations and exhibitions that personal narratives and objects have not been rejected by Whiteread, and play an increasingly significant role in her practice. Childhood and the daughter-mother relationship emerge as a key focus; found and collected objects are incorporated into her oeuvre; and images and motifs can be read in light of myths and tales. Notably, Whiteread’s sculptural pieces attempt to connect memory and narrative to past kinaesthetic and sensory experience (an approach encouraged by Klein through her use of play techniques). The materiality of sculpture and the tactile experience of spaces and objects are linked through an engagement with the body which exists in a remembered past and a corporeal present.

Arguably, all attempts at autobiography should be considered a fiction of some kind. In Family Secrets Annette Kuhn examines the relationship between image and textual narrative: ‘Although we take stories of childhood and family literally, I think our recourse to this past is a way of reaching for myth, for the story that is deep enough to express the profound feelings we have in the present.’ Kuhn argues that ‘telling stories about the past, our past, is a key moment in the making of our selves.’ To make is to build and construct, therefore suggesting that our identities are never whole, or complete, but always added to, embellished, transformed, and altered. In constructing narratives of our child selves, we are in fact attempting to make whole the identity of our adult selves; the child we narrate is both an imaginary and real body which merges to produce something we call “memory”: ‘Such

Zelevansky, Sense and Sensibility, 26.
Barbara Steiner and Jun Yang in their assessment of the autobiographical in art argue that ‘autobiographical narration typically displays a good deal of omission and interpretation, situating it somewhere between real events and the embellishments or supplements of memory,’ Barbara Steiner and Jun Yang, Artworks: Autobiography (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 11. Steiner and Yang emphasise that autobiography has its roots as a literary genre, reaching far back into early centuries, whereas the notion of autobiography in visual art has only truly emerged within art history since the 1960s and 1970s onwards, in conjunction with the onset of feminist and post-colonial critique – although I would argue that autobiography has actually been present within art long before academic recognition. The notion of what determines “autobiography” is itself contested. In their text, Steiner and Yang do not focus specifically on narratives of childhood within art, suggesting that boundaries between past and present selves, and childhood and adulthood as presented in visual art are far more unstable and undefined – the visual art of autobiography cannot be as easily categorised, as with a possible literary genre of childhood. For example, the work of artist Christian Boltanski confuses the “real” and the “imagined” within childhood, Boltanski commenting that, ‘for various reason I had major problems with my childhood, and so I invented one or rather so many that I no longer have a childhood. I blotted it out by inventing a lot of fictional experiences. An artist plays with life – he no longer lives it.’ Steiner and Yang, quoting Christian Boltanski, Artworks: Autobiography, 69.
Kuhn, quoting Thomas Moore, Family Secrets, 1.
Kuhn, Family Secrets, 2.
narratives of identity are shaped as much by what is left out of the account – whether forgotten or repressed – as by what is actually told’. In discussing her own text, Kuhn emphasises that: ‘None of the essays in this book is a work of autobiography, but they all emerge from a critical interest in a genre of writing that might be called ‘revisionist autobiography.’ Kuhn offers a narrative response to photographs of specific events, people and memories of her childhood. However, in claiming the essays are not works of autobiography suggests that a “true” work of autobiography is achievable, but surely all autobiographical accounts are ‘revisionist’ in some way? Kuhn is attempting to stress that her text does not conform to the traditional bündung with an identifiable beginning, middle and end; the essays flit from one event and memory to another, there is a lack of strict order and chronology. Kuhn’s own text in a sense mirrors Whiteread’s approach to the sculptural retelling of memory and childhood – fragmented and responding to “moments” rather than chronology.

Dolls and Dollhouses, and Collecting

The child, the domestic sphere and the doll find their relation to one another through Whiteread’s childhood memory:

[A] memory of sitting inside wardrobes as a child. My parents had this wardrobe that was full of clothes and boxes full of fabric. You could be in this place that was incredibly comforting and dark, totally surrounded by material. There would be a little chink of light, but essentially it was black, and it was totally enveloping. I wanted to make that experience tangible [...] happy places, I suppose, where you went and dreamt. Places of reverie. And where you’d mutilate your dolls, cut their hair and everything.

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86 Kuhn, Family Secrets, 2.
87 Kuhn, Family Secrets, 147.
88 Significantly, Kuhn comments that ‘since the mid-1980s, a number of books of a broadly autobiographical nature have appeared, written by intellectuals of my own generation [...] a collection of girls growing up in the 1950s [...] most of the writers seem uncomfortable with the idea of an ‘autobiographical self’, certainly to the degree that this carries connotations of the transcendent ego of bourgeois and patriarchal individualism, of the power and authority of the authorial voice.’ Kuhn demonstrates that a growing body of literature and art in this period (when Whiteread starts to produce her artworks) was increasingly autobiographical in nature, responding to the changes and disruptions to identity in the late twentieth century. In particular, these changes are examined by authors through the subject and metaphor of childhood, with childhood used as the basis for demonstrating the alterations in customs, ideology, uses of space, and expression of the body. Kuhn, Family Secrets, 148.
According to Tickner, ‘This is a recognizably Kleinian scenario of aggression and reparation. The aggression projected in mutilating the doll is present, residually, in the essentially reparative acts of preserving, casting, binding and remembering in Whiteread’s oeuvre.’\(^\text{91}\) The body of the doll, as mutilated by the child-self recalled by Whiteread, is that Kleinian play-object of aggression. In the child’s unconscious the toy stands for a parent or sibling.\(^\text{92}\) A desire to repair psychically destroyed objects emerges in later adult creativity – casting and collecting being processes which seemingly attempt to restore. However, as conveyed by Whiteread’s sculptural objects and installations, such as *Place [Village]* (2006-2008),\(^\text{93}\) reparation through art is tinged with anxiety, secrets and melancholy.

Rejecting the solid singular cast of her earlier works, *Place [Village]* (fig.1), an installation of collected dollhouses, emphasises the “collection” with all its possible incoherent and non-linear histories. It suggests remembrance of the bought, played-with, abandoned, and discarded objects of childhood. The installation continues to engage with the domestic sphere; the spaces “within” giving form to all her works.\(^\text{94}\) Whiteread acknowledges she desired *Place [Village]* to ‘have the feeling of abandonment’;\(^\text{95}\) placed in a gallery environment, the dollhouses are dislocated from their original domestic settings. They are laden with past histories of other people’s lives and physical interactions. Having developed a visual vocabulary of the domestic sphere, *Place [Village]* is merely the next phase in the ideas explored in her previous works. For *Place [Village]*, light not concrete or plaster, is the artist’s casting material. In darkness, the interiors of the dollhouses are more prominent than the exteriors; viewers are invited – or forced – into a voyeuristic game of imagining the activities within the lit rooms.

The installation evokes memories of childhood play with miniaturised worlds. As

\(^\text{91}\) Tickner, “Mediating Generation: The Mother-Daughter Plot”, 11.
\(^\text{92}\) Klein, “The Psycho-Analytic Play Technique: Its History and Significance”, 41.
\(^\text{94}\) Whiteread’s work can be read as a continuation of the theme of the domestic sphere within feminist art, as discussed by Lucy Lippard, *From the Centre: Feminist Essays on Women’s Art* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1976; Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, eds., *Framing Feminism: Art and The Women’s Movement*, 1970-1985 (London: Pandora, 1987); Gill Perry, “Visibility, Difference and Excess”, *Art History*, 26:3 (June 2003), 319-339. The project ‘Womanhouse’ (1971, California Institute of the Arts) makes for an interesting case study in comparison to Whiteread’s treatment of the domestic sphere. Notably, Whiteread’s mother, artist Pat Whiteread, was involved with the Women’s Art Movement in London (as mentioned by Parker and Pollock), with an archive of her work and contributions held at The Women’s Art Library [MAKE], Goldsmiths, and the British Library Sound Recordings Archive. (I discuss Pat Whiteread’s work further in the conclusion).
anthropologist Margaret Yocom comments, dolls and dollhouses also return adult viewers, writers, users, back to complex narratives of family relations and gender expectations:

Being a woman fieldworker and studying dolls is both a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing because my own childhood experiences with dolls undoubtedly helped me pay attention to the dolls and their clothing. The curse comes with the complicated associations that dolls call up. Dolls revive childhood memories. They stir up feelings about our mothers and out relationships with them. Ultimately, they urge us to question who we are as women. In a doll’s face, we see ourselves as children, as teenagers leaving dolls behind, as women having or not having children, and as women. They are mirrors of our souls. They invite us to turn inward. Studying dolls, like studying housework, involves women fieldworkers in a long and sometimes joyous, sometimes painful journey home to visit and, perhaps, embrace another part of our selves.  

The doll is an object to be played with, manipulated, and desired. Memory-work through such objects is both joyful and painful, as acknowledged by Yocom. The collection – such as Whiteread’s dollhouses – contains the desire to remember but also to forget. Hoarding (one step more obsessive that the collecting of specific items) is considered a disorder, an act which must be restrained. Whiteread’s amassing of dollhouses heightens those complex relations tied up with the familial, and childhood narratives may overwhelm the viewer observing the façades of Whiteread’s collection. As a viewer I have my own complex relationships tied up with histories of dolls and dollhouses, those connecting back to the maternal.

97 When six years old my mother (pregnant) and her father designed and built a dollhouse for me, partly to house my ever-increasing collection of dolls, but to also pacify the likely jealous feelings of a six year old, provoked by the birth of a new sibling. It is a structure of three levels: the lower level a diner-living room, a bathroom and kitchen on the second floor, and a large bedroom in the roof space; a neo-Georgian facade, with white window frames and pale-pink, plaster effect exterior ply-walls. A delicately cut balustrade staircase winds its way through each level; the roof panel decorated with individually cut tiles, laid in a fish-scale type arrangement. The decor, a scaled down version of the real-life family house décor: floral, peach coloured paintwork, carpet sourced from DIY off cuts, and accessories to match. An object displaying bourgeois taste and materialistic aspiration, the child-I would often wonder if it was an object for ‘mute adoration’ rather than rough play. The dollhouse now sits in the corner of a bedroom – a thing of display; evidence of a mother’s desire, patience and talent in producing a gift for her daughter; of a father-daughter collaboration; of the desired pacification of a jealous sibling. As a young child I was always intrigued by the miniature model villages my Grandparents would take me to visit on the Kent coast. A giant amongst the Lilliputian, secret whispers and muffled shuffling would dance around my ears. Little faces of static wooden figures peering out from stone windows would follow my lumbering (little girl)
Eerie miniaturisation embodies anxiety and claustrophobia – ‘like clowns and marionettes, there’s something faintly sinister about the tiny houses built for tiny artificial people.’

A space within a space, a miniature replica house located within the real-life domestic house, the dollhouse structure is one of ultimate interiority and containment.

Transcendence and interiority of history and narrative are the dominant characteristics [...] the dollhouse not only presents the house’s articulation of the tension between inner and outer spheres, of exteriority and interiority – it also represents the tension between two modes of interiority [...] the dollhouse’s aptest analogy is the locket or the secret recesses of the heart: centre within centre, within within within. The dollhouse is a materialised secret.

It is also a structure of contradictions and conflict. An object of dual purpose, the dollhouse is exposed to adult adoration and whimsy, it is to be looked at and fawned over; but it also exists as a plaything of children who enjoy the games of miniaturised fantasy as much as the adults who enjoy constructing controllable miniaturised worlds. Similarly, my dollhouse acted as a space in which familial tensions could be silenced. Klein’s use of the toy proved otherwise. Her child patients would animate the toy to mimic human interactions and recall suppressed anxieties, not hide them.

There is uncertainty of the intended user; is a dollhouse more appealing to child or adult, and if a dollhouse is constructed or bought, is it to fulfil and enact out the fantasies of domestic existence from the perspective of the adult or child? ‘It must be remembered that the toy moved late to the nursery, that from the beginning it was adults who made toys, and not only with regard to their other invention, the child.’

Use and play value is pitted against display value; the dollhouse acts as ‘a monument against instability, randomness’ enabling its curator to manipulate time and space, suppressing displacement and fragmentation through the illusion of systematic orderly placement. Miniaturisation enables us to create an alternative microcosm, in which dreams, fantasies and fears can be acted out without fear of reprisal or

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footsteps, careful not to tread on six-inch wide manicured front lawns; displace the skittles on the village green; accidentally knock over the dog standing near a park bench. I knew that as I turned away they would shift rapidly between houses, the Bakery and Grocers; thinking I wouldn’t notice, of course. If you stared long enough, you would see one blink. Even toy figures have to let down their guard sometime.

unbalancing the status-quo. Play, as an act of anarchy or transgression, or as an enactment of aggression as read through Klein, can destabilise a sense of order; static perfection undone. The neutral space of display becomes vulnerable to imperfect desire and fantasy, hidden secrets and rituals. In her role as an artist, Whiteread engages in “play”, shifting the boundaries of mere display to one of sensual and emotive, aggressive and transformative engagement with objects.

The duality of the dollhouse and its embodiment as a space and object of “secrets” is excellently captured by the video-installation piece Home Front - Cycles of Contention (1993-2011) (fig. 2) by artist Lynn Hershman-Leeson (b.1941):

[Home Front] operates as a miniature soap opera that is set within a grey dollhouse fashioned in the American style of Carpenter Gothic. Telling its story on two screens, one set within a kitchen and another positioned externally, the relationship of a married couple takes focus. The story of their presumed idyllic Saturday morning slowly erupts into a scene of domestic violence […] Two viewpoints of this narrative are examined: an objective private moment and a subjective recounting of this action afterward – bringing up conflicting memories. An unseen psychologist in the exterior world probes each character to remember the event differently, and eventually a pledge is made to remain committed in the relationship. Repeating in a 26 minute loop and positioned to contrast the fiction of memory with actual events, this installation enacts a drama reflective of destructive behavioural cycles, in which one continually vies for power.

Here the familial tensions which are usually secreted within the walls of the normal-sized

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102 Klein, “The Psycho-Analytic Play Technique: Its History and Significance”.
103 Home Front - Cycles of Contention (1993-2011) by Lynn Hershman-Leeson, [http://www.lynnhershman.com/?s=Home+Front](http://www.lynnhershman.com/?s=Home+Front); description and video of work, accessed 6 January, 2014, [http://vimeo.com/27492701](http://vimeo.com/27492701); Latin-American artist Maria Adelaide Lopez comments on her Dust Houses (2004-2009) series: ‘Childhood memories mixed with the stories of others gave context to the project. Houses that represent the “American dream”. Generations that lived and inhabited the space but only their dust is left to see. Dust as a witness of the living. Only memory. The pieces are doll houses covered with vacuum cleaner dust. The architecture of the houses is carefully selected to match them with familiar urban landscapes. I take them apart and discard some of the decorative elements, so these houses end up almost as a sketch of the original or as a new house in the process of been built, with no doors, no windows, and no flowers. When the dust comes, the whole house and the windows and the flowers are being replaced by dirt. The houses are fully covered, so they began to have a grey scale quality, they look monochromatic almost like a block, minimal, but once you start getting closer you begin to first smell, then to see the hair, the skin, the lint, the debris … you have a physical experience, you realise that there is so much poetry in such ugliness’, accessed 6 January, 2014, [www.dusthouses.com](http://laotracasa.tripod.com/id89.htm); [http://laotracasa.tripod.com/id89.htm](http://laotracasa.tripod.com/id89.htm)
domestic sphere have been miniaturised and concentrated to heighten the sense of claustrophobia and violence, with the dollhouse acting as a container of problematic memory. With Hershman-Leeson’s dollhouse, the secreted has been unveiled through the video projection and imagined exterior psychoanalyst. The violence and anger of the inhabitants has become too large to be contained – within within has been forced outward. Whiteread’s dollhouses, however, are not so revealing. Interiors are lit up within the Place [Village] installation, but like an abandoned village, its inhabitants are nowhere to be found. Or they are in hiding.

The doll reappears elsewhere in Whiteread’s oeuvre. The Print Storytime (2008) (fig. 3) also contributes to that discourse on the “fairytale” or fantastical narrative in visual culture, and demonstrates Whiteread’s interest in the discarded junk item, and the collected object. A seemingly innocent image, in Storytime an extended family of miniature dolls congregates in front of the fire around Granny, with her hooded dress and red-leather bound book, like a toy version of a contrived domestic photograph you would find in post-war home decoration magazines. The interior is a modern, white-walled box of a room, but the dolls themselves are a shabby collection. The “child” dolls are dirtied and soiled, and of varying scales; the adults are little more than stitched rags, their faces painted on; their smiles inky and crooked. They are in a state of decay. Storytime is a disconcerting visual narrative; we are presented with a quaint scenario of family loving, discussion, sharing, but all is silent and rigidly motionless. The dolls, objects of human disposal and manipulation, are forced into participating in a communal family event; child-figures bounded and constrained within their high-chairs stare forward as adult-figures, tired and worn, slump in their spaces; all dutifully play their part in this tableau. The family unit is disintegrating, but Granny continues (seemingly oblivious), delivering the storytime narrative which binds these figures together. Storytime is thus a continuation of Whiteread’s works’ themes: the domestic sphere, objects and collections, narratives of the family, narratives of the child. It also acts as a pictorial

snapshot of Klein's uneasy domestic, familial unit; one seething with secreted desires and aggressions.

Chapter Outline

Childhood in the work of Whiteread is read through three specific sculptures: Closet (1988), Untitled [One Hundred Spaces] (1995), and House (1993-94). Chapter One argues that Closet (1988) alludes to secreted, denied or actively suppressed childhoods and behaviours. I utilise Sigmund Freud’s essays ‘Screen Memories’ (1899) and ‘The Uncanny’ (1919), and Melanie Klein’s ‘The Psycho-Analytic Play Technique: Its History and Significance’ (1955) and ‘Love Guilt and Reparation’ (1937) to draw out a relation between the secret spaces of childhood and those subconscious (or conscious) aggressions and desires “closeted” by the child. Significantly, Whiteread’s use of the term closet has implications for discourses on containment. The chapter also emphasises the psychological and emotive connotations of domestic objects, with a certain free-association encouraged by such objects. Likewise Whiteread’s final sculptures hold the form (and thus symbolic associations) of such domestic objects, with colour and materiality encouraging yet further interpretations.

Chapter Two examines “sameness” and “difference” in childhood through the multiple cast installation Untitled [One Hundred Spaces] (1995). The chapter applies Juliet Mitchell’s Siblings: Sex and Violence (2003), and aspects of Klein’s ‘Mourning and its Relation to Manic Depressive States’ (1940) and ‘On the Sense of Loneliness’ (1963) to consider the significance of lateral sibling and peer relations (as opposed to the usual psychoanalytic focus on vertical power hierarchies). Sibling theory opens up interpretation of seriality and repetition in Whiteread’s methods of sculptural installation, casting and also photography, considering the collection of art objects in opposition to the singular art object. Notably, both chapters One and Two initially respond to the childhood memory from the artist of being locked in a wardrobe by her elder twin-siblings – Whiteread as the younger, more excluded third child. In this “memory” a sense of destructive desire and sibling tensions emerge – initiating a Kleinian reading.

The Third and final chapter looks to that space which is the container of such objects and familial relations – the domestic sphere. In Chapter Three I argue that House (1993-94) points to missing and absent narratives of childhood, and conflicting memories of the domestic sphere. The chapter interrogates the notion of the domestic sphere as a structure, site and symbol of inclusive familial relations – summarised by
Mary Douglas’ comment: ‘As to those who claim that the home does something stabilizing and deepening or enriching for the personality, there are as many who will claim that it cripples and stifles.’ Significantly, within this chapter discourse on childhood and memory is placed within a specific socio-political context of East End London, referring to the sociological and anthropological studies of Michael Young and Peter Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (1957;1986) and Anthea Holme, *Housing and Young Families in East London* (1985). Analysis returns to writings on photography and memory (in response to the photographic archive of *House*), particularly those of Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (2002), Simon Watney’s essay ‘Ordinary Boys’ (1991), and Susan Sontag’s *On Photography* (1979), to critique notions of the photograph as a source of “evidence” of the familial, its experiences and spaces. Kleinian destructive drives return with the demolition of *House*, with the symbolic site of childhood eventually pulled down.

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Chapter One:


Whiteread’s first response to childhood appeared in 1988 with the work *Closet* (1988) (**fig.4**); a solid-looking, rectangular shadow mass, a cast of a wardrobe covered in black felt, with geometrical wooden strips inserted into the crevices and indents of the structure. The work has been discussed by authors as Whiteread’s key “childhood piece”. Inspired by childhood memories of hiding in wardrobes, *Closet* represents a space of play and imagination, but also one of fear and temporary blindness. Charlotte Mullins calls the work ‘an uncomfortable experience’, interpreting the representation of childhood as traumatic and claustrophobic; *Closet* evokes the ‘memories of the absolute fear of solid blackness often experienced as a child’.

Originally *Closet* was about trying to make a childhood experience concrete: I came to it from that angle. I was trying to think of a material that was as black as childhood darkness, which is fundamentally frightening because you don’t know what’s in that darkness. I was trying to use a material that would suck the life out of light […] black felt seemed to be the right material.

The use of felt was also partly informed by my memory of sitting inside wardrobes as a child. My parents had this wardrobe that was full of clothes and boxes full of fabric. You could be in this place that was incredibly comforting and dark, totally surrounded by material. There would be a little chink of light, but essentially it was black, and it was totally enveloping. I wanted to make that experience tangible.

[. . .] happy places, I suppose, where you went and dreamt. Places of reverie. And where you’d mutilate your dolls, cut their hair and everything.

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Whiteread’s works encourage both a phenomenological reading and a psychoanalytical reading. The two main elements of Closet – of being cast from a wardrobe and its overall blackness – invite such dualistic analysis, offering a reading of childhood which is connected to bodily sensation and the subconscious. The autobiographic and anecdotal origins of the piece, as suggested by Whiteread in interviews and exhibition catalogues, connects the process of sculptural casting with the bodily and the psychoanalytical, with Klein’s theory of destruction and reparation coming to the fore. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s reading of the “closet” and closeted childhoods and Kathryn Bond-Stockton’s analysis of the queer child offer ways in which Closet can be read as a space of concealed childhoods, desires and aggressions; Closet as a ‘materialised secret’ of childhood. Whiteread’s works (and writings and interviews) never directly engage with discourses of “queerness” or sexuality, and she is not a gay artist. However, “queerness” is evoked both by the title of her piece – Closet – and the nature of the original object as a container and space in which things are hidden. Thus the “closet” as a metaphor of the concealed holds significance for childhood identity. Sedgwick and Bond-Stockton centre their analysis specifically on gay histories and experience (in adulthood and childhood) but they also emphasise that such discourse is relevant to all childhoods and cultural constructions of bodily-experience.

**Encountering Closet**

When not on display, sculptures are hidden away, wrapped up like babes and placed in their wooden crates and protected in gallery basements. Actual physical encounters with Whiteread’s works are sometimes impossible. House (1993-94) was destroyed; Embankment (2005) melted down post installation; the dolhouses of Place [Village] (2006-08) once again subsumed back into the personal collection. Closet had been rather elusive until Whiteread’s Drawings exhibition – one of two sculptures to be included in the Tate Britain showing. Drawings not only part-documents the progression of Whiteread’s career to date, but includes the most intimate and undisclosed expressions of the artist. Her illustrations, collages, and

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personal collections offer a fascinating contrast to her most well-known works. Likened to the pages of a diary, Whiteread’s drawings are a prolific aspect of her practice, but are rarely displayed. They may well contribute to the development of a piece, but they also exist independently of the sculptural artworks.

Divided into sections – Tables and Chairs; Floors; Beds and Mattresses; Baths and Slabs; Room, Stairs; Doors, Windows, Switches, and so on – the exhibition emphasised the centrality of the domestic sphere to Whiteread’s works, but the body and memory of the child haunted this exhibition. The drawings and illustrations ran along the walls of the gallery, with two sculptures interrupting the flow of the space, finishing with a cabinet containing postcard and object collections. The exhibition read like a pilgrimage through childhood, alluding to spaces and furniture infused with childhood memories, and presenting collected objects reminding her (and us) of the (lost) mother and father.

The exhibition was awash with colour, with drawings produced in correction fluid, ink, varnish, watercolour, and acrylic, often reminiscent of oozing bodily fluids. Multi-coloured and sweet-like, Whiteread’s painterly illustrations experiment with candy pinks, powder blues, butter yellows, sharp reds, and stinging oranges – all framed by moss-green coloured graph paper, opaque tracing paper, or layered photographic collage. The drawings offer a more delicate and playful rendering of her robust sculptural pieces. Her drawings of torsos are not violent but quietly and beautifully tranquil. A lone image illustrated Whiteread’s transformation of a hot water bottle into a flesh-coloured torso cast, like a child’s swollen belly waiting to be cradled. Struck by the booklet description, “My child pieces are the Torsos: the casts of hot water bottles, my headless, limbless babies” (I shuddered a little). Whiteread fragments the child’s body. Her illustration Heads (2000), created in pencil and correction fluid, decapitates; child-like shaped heads float in a neutral wash of cream; no eyes, no mouth, the body is represented in its most basic and foetal form.

Placed in the exhibition entrance space, the resin cast Table and Chair (1994) was like a giant jelly sweet into which I could sink my hands; I noticed the small fierce labels: “Do Not Touch the Sculptures”. Running my finger over the dents and notches on its surface; sculptures invite caresses. (I am reprimanded by the invigilator). Under the glare of the false light, the colours alter between amber, orange, khaki green, yellow. An object once leant upon, drawn upon, ate upon – with its surface knocks and dents so visually apparent – is now rendered untouchable. The domestic sphere as a space of the controlled and controlling, child
freedom of movement and expression limited by certain expectations and rules,\textsuperscript{115} with those rules somewhat repeated by the gallery space.

The second sculpture in this exhibition, \textit{Closet}, stands on guard, throwing its shadow onto the wall. An oddity in the duck-egg coloured room with its light wooden floor, its darkness is overwhelming; it has an eerie feel, its presence a depth. It is a solitary object, singular, somewhat disconnected. Like an intimate secret has been unveiled, stripped bare, and in this case, turned inside-out; \textit{Closet} acts as an uncomfortable juxtaposition to other areas of the exhibition (it seems every candy coloured house must have its dark corners). Looking upon \textit{Closet} with its heavy blackness and rough-looking felt surface, the body (or at least my body, I cannot vouch for others) was impelled yet also repelled; confronted and comforted. The gallery the visitor is not invited to physically engage with the work; the sculpture exists only to be perceived, not caressed, from a (close) distance. A forbidden fruit with a constant reminder of “do not touch”, its crevices and indents, its skin, appeal to the tactile sensory desire. Whiteread’s other works such as \textit{Embankment} (2005), with its maze-like arrangement, seemed to endorse and encourage a physical response. Images of \textit{House} (1993-94) prior to its destruction also show a physical interaction with the piece, as children and adults climb its steps, stroke its walls, and violate its surfaces with graffiti. With touch disallowed, \textit{Closet} evokes intense scopophilia, as we stare intently, attempting to penetrate its outer surface; the eye interrogates its indents and corners, with its blackness suggestive of darkness and temporary blindness. The body in childhood is considered a key determiner of experience and sensory probe by phenomenologists Stephen Smith\textsuperscript{116} and Edward Casey,\textsuperscript{117} with the body of the child \textit{in} the present acting as trigger for memory; the ‘physical connectedness’\textsuperscript{118} to the child reminding us of a time when, of specific places events, and sensory experiences. (In the gallery a small boy suddenly comes across \textit{Closet}. He contorts his neck backward to take a full length glance up and down the object; he wobbles slightly, and hurriedly returns to his mother. In that moment, I remembered my own desire (and fear) of wishing to explore darkened spaces as a child).

As a ‘materialised secret’ \textit{Closet} points to the space ‘within within’,\textsuperscript{119} a container, a holder of \textit{something}. In this case, the artist points to the memory of hiding inside wardrobes;

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{118} Smith, “Physically Remembering Childhood”, 12.
\textsuperscript{119} Stewart, \textit{On Longing}, 61.
\end{flushleft}
however, on viewing *Closet* it is apparent that the space “within” no longer exists, with the “secrets” of the inner-space no longer contained but forcefully placed on show. A violent action has taken place where the private, the closeted, has been revealed. Whiteread’s memories of hiding are reversed; the darkness, a secreted fear, now projected outward into a public realm, into a lighted space.

A glass cabinet containing numerous objects for storytelling concluded the exhibition; a hand-sewn rag-doll, a cast of an ear, a fossil collected on the beach with her father, these ‘evocative objects’¹¹²⁰ invited the viewer to contribute their narratives to those evoked by Whiteread. Childhood, in its various forms, haunts Whiteread’s works; *Drawings* subtly revealed this fascinating aspect, presenting a certain darkness of childhood with *Closet*, alongside illustrations and fragments of seemingly cutesy candy-coloured girlhood.

**The Importance of Furniture**

Can things be, or tell, stories?¹²¹

(Mieke Bal, *Telling Objects*)

[Whitread’s] scale’s constant referent is human, involved with objects that people can hold, use and inhabit […] a fascination with things that have been designed by humans for human use.¹²²

(Fiona Bradley, *Shedding Life*)

Human beings and objects are indeed bound together in a collusion in which the objects take on a certain density, an emotional value – what we might call a ‘presence’. What gives the houses of our childhood such depth and resonance in memory is clearly this structure of interiority, and the objects within it serve for us as boundary markers of the symbolic configurations known as home.¹²³

(Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*)

Whiteread casts spaces and objects where perception and imagination meet. For Whiteread, using furniture was ‘at first, an autobiographical impulse, using something familiar, to do with my childhood.’\textsuperscript{124} Notably, Closet belongs to a group of early works with titles alluding to possible narratives beyond the materiality of the object – Closet (1988), Mantle (1988), Shallow Breath (1988) and Torso (1988); inside-out structures revealing the innards or inside-skins of domestic objects. Significantly, Whiteread cast a wardrobe and named it Closet. Closet is thus both a wardrobe (in relation to a piece of used furniture) and a closet (offering a possible metaphorical reading). A wardrobe, says Gaston Bachelard, is a space which inspires ‘daydreams of intimacy\textsuperscript{125} […] with all the other hiding-places in which human beings, great dreamers of locks, keep or hide their secrets\textsuperscript{126} […] Does there exist a single dreamer of words who does not respond to the word wardrobe? […] the inner space of an old wardrobe is deep. A wardrobe’s inner space is also intimate space, space that is not open to just anybody.’\textsuperscript{127} The wardrobe acted as a secret corner for Whiteread as a child; like the dollhouse, a space within a space, in which to enact out her storytelling fantasies, or perhaps to spy, unnoticed, in the forbidden parental bedroom. C.S. Lewis’ Pevensie children found their dream spaces through the back of a wardrobe; for decades they remained in Narnia, to return to find, once having left the wardrobe, that time, space, and objects reverted back to their original state.\textsuperscript{128}

The wardrobe is a space and object inherently connected to the body; it is a container of clothing, with unworn clothing signifying the absent body. Bachelard considers it to be a space in which things (objects and ideas) are contained, but the wardrobe also doubles as the body. Architecture and the body are thus treated as one; the container, spaces of secrecy and the body are entwined. Notably, as Laura Mulvey comments, the female body in psychoanalysis doubles as a container or a space of secrecy: ‘an “inside” space may generate connotations of a maternal femininity (the womb, the home), but may also link to the enclosed, concealed space of secrecy (a box, a room). These associations, one feminine, the other secret, link further to the topography which splits femininity into an inside/outside polarisation.’\textsuperscript{129} Thus curiosity combines with the ‘dialectics of inside and outside’\textsuperscript{130} to

\textsuperscript{124} Jan Debbaut and Selma Klein Essink, eds., Rachel Whiteread (Amsterdam: Van Abbemuseum, 1993), 8.
\textsuperscript{125} Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1994), 78.
\textsuperscript{126} Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, 74.
\textsuperscript{127} Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, 78.
\textsuperscript{129} Laura Mulvey, “Pandora’s Box: Topographies of Curiosity”, in Laura Mulvey, Fetishism and Curiosity (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 56.
contribute to the ‘myths and iconographies of the feminine’, and a ‘motif of secrecy that is associated with the female body.’ Bachelard and Freud argue that we all subconsciously desire to return to the safe space of the womb, symbolically represented by the house interior. Whiteread’s sculptures answer the desire to be eternally locked in, turning desire into reality by solidifying interior spaces and rendering them permanently visible. Freud, comments Mary Jacobus, is anxious of wardrobes and cupboards. As Jacobus proclaims in her reading of Freud, ‘the mother is both inside the cupboard, its shut-up or repressed content, and the cupboard itself – the “inside” that contains the baby (inside inside).’ Freud says that as a child he was ‘full of mistrust and anxiety that his mother’s inside might conceal yet more children. The wardrobe or cupboard was a symbol for him of his mother’s inside.’ Both fear of and desire for the interior space fills the child’s mind. The lost or absent mother is depicted as both contained and container; either way, the female form is always interiorised. Whiteread overtly engages with this concept of the interior and the role of the body within it; but given that her sculptures continually attempt to reveal the interior, the artist de-mythologises a space which has been deemed private, mysterious and inaccessible.

To engage with objects is a bodily, sensual experience. Settled dust suggests abandonment, but a finger mark reveals a recent interaction. Domestic objects contain histories of possession, use, and neglect; an artist (such as Whiteread) reuses them to reproduce new art objects. The notion of living through objects in order to create, or to confirm one’s identity, and the interrelated dialogue which takes place between the house and its contents, is the focus of Csikszentmihalyi’s and Rochberg-Halton’s influential study, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (1981). A project combining anthropological empirical research with psychological and sociological reflection, the authors surveyed over three-hundred people, who were members of eighty-two families (from Chicago, U.S.A) to reflect upon objects which were considered “special” to them and why. Interviews were conducted in people’s homes, so discussions centred on the objects that were part of people’s everyday lives. The authors first assess different philosophical or psychological perspectives on objects and their meanings. Interestingly, they conclude that the

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130 Mulvey, “Pandora’s Box: Topographies of Curiosity”, 54.
131 Mulvey, “Pandora’s Box: Topographies of Curiosity”, 54
132 Mulvey, “Pandora’s Box: Topographies of Curiosity”, 57.
134 Jacobus, “Freud’s Mnemonic”, 123.
specific meanings of individual objects and the personal symbolic meaning of an object is an area understudied in psychology, which instead focuses on the object as abstract, not specific. Thus Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton look to theories and positions in sociology and anthropology to further understand the social meanings of specific objects; the human interaction with things being much more complex and flexible than the psychologist positions allows. They argue that little research has been undertaken to assess patterns of thought and emotion in relation to objects, although such studies are today more numerous, with Daniel Miller contributing a great deal to this area of research.

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton not only assess the meanings of different object types but they engage with the concept of autobiography and narrative, focussing on the domestic sphere as a space for object-narrative interactions: ‘Past memories, present experiences, and future dreams of each person are inextricably linked to the objects that comprise his or her environment.’ The authors recognise that responses to objects are highly individualised, with ‘vast differences in the range of meanings that people derived from the objects with which they interacted.’ The study also allows for the differences in responses between men and women, and between adults and children, and between boys and girls. Likewise, age ranges between younger children and adolescents are taken into account. In this sense the study is not an attempt to discover a generic response to objects, or to draw definite conclusions on object preferences for gender and age groups – although this does form part of the study – but the aim is to move discussion towards a notion of the evocative object, and to recognise the importance of objects in memory recollection and identity construction. ‘When a thing “means something” to someone, it is interpreted in the context of past experiences’, thus meaning and memory are inextricably linked. And, most importantly with regards to Whiteread, the memories and narratives inspired by objects are more often than not linked to physiological experience; senses of smell, touch, taste combine with the visual to present a sensory and sensual experience of objects. The materiality of objects is crucial, and

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thus significant for discussions of sculpture: ‘Material artefacts are the most concrete things that surround us in our homes: we can point to them, look at them, touch them, sit on some of them, sometimes we even bump into them and thus are forcibly reminded of their materiality’. Whiteread both responds to the material experience of domestic objects alongside the psychological evocations of these physical interactions.

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton list furniture, visual art, photographs and books as the top four categories of most cherished possessions by the participants, with furniture, beds, visual art, sculpture and collectibles forming the top five male and female combined percentages. Memento and Recollections form the top two categories of meanings associated with special objects. Furniture is the most frequently mentioned of special objects in the home. Crucially, the house is deemed “naked” without its furniture; the house acting a metaphor for the human body, with the furniture as its clothing. The house is itself a collector of “things”. Traditionally perceived as symbols of stability, status, wealth, furniture as discussed by the respondents takes on the role of signifying absent bodies – mirroring Whiteread’s own comments on furniture: ‘There are all sorts of stories related to the pieces I make. When you use second-hand furniture it’s inevitable that the history of objects becomes part of the work.’ The traces of physical engagement with an object and its surface “evidence” are crucial to Whiteread’s work – not simply the shape or structure of an object. ‘I think my work is more physiological […] my works are very much connected with the body and with the human touch. Whether it’s my touch, or someone else’s, or a whole family’s touch, they’re about a piece of furniture that has been used’. The new objects created by Whiteread ‘symbolise objects which symbolise us’. ‘I use furniture as a metaphor for human beings.’

The texture of hair; the stuck gum; the smells and stains and bodily fluids which accompany second-hand furniture; all taboo traces of bodily waste are an intrinsic part of the work, conveying the presence of everyday living. The body of the spectator and the bodies of past owners and users are connected through the pieces; the selected objects are universal – ‘everyone can react to them.’ The artist is no longer interested in using her own body in work, as she did in early university works, instead she engages with objects that we

147 Mullins, RW: Rachel Whiteread, 34.
148 Mullins, RW: Rachel Whiteread, 73. Italics my emphasis.
149 Mullins, RW: Rachel Whiteread, 73.
150 Debbaut and Essink, Rachel Whiteread, 30.
151 Debbaut and Essink, Rachel Whiteread, 10.
have designed for our bodies and that leave evidence of our physical engagement with spaces. Whiteread’s sculptures invite a psychological interaction between the viewer, the artwork, and the memory of the active body.

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton acknowledge that organisation of furniture and the surrounding spaces also contribute to the geographies of childhood:

The meaning of kitchen furniture for this youngster revolves around the active experiences he can have by interacting with the thing; the accent is on the utilitarian, enjoyable characteristics of the objects, and the outcome refers exclusively to the respondent’s own personal self.152

The child is depicted as somewhat narcissistic, with his or her responses largely concerned with the experience of the self in connection with objects. This is supported by Whiteread’s own reflections upon childhood experience, as in relation to Closet, where experience of space and objects is presented as intimate, private and individualistic. ‘The female gaze of curiosity’,153 as discussed by Mulvey is particularly interesting here:154 ‘The woman’s look of curiosity is associated with enclosed, secret and forbidden spaces […] it relates to the enclosed space of secrets that echoes the interior/ exterior topography associated with a particular mythology of the feminine.’155 The child will go in search of the secret spaces of the house; the spaces cast by Whiteread are often the ‘favourite hiding spaces of children’156 – under beds, in cupboards, under staircases, behind bedroom doors. These spaces of intimacy, away from the eyes of adults, appeal because of their capacity for secrecy.

Childhood is the period when the boundaries between self and other, body and space, inside and out, are in the process of formation. Children constantly make places (dens or tents) or discover places within the home for solitude or escape – from parental authority, sibling rivalry, unwanted friends – utilising cupboards, wardrobes, beds; the marginal spaces beneath, between, inside the object world.157

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154 For the child’s gaze, see also Carol Mavor, Reading Boyishly: Roland Barthes, J.M. Barrie, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Marcel Proust, and D.W. Winnicott (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
156 Debbaut and Essink, Rachel Whiteread, 3.
Significantly, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton perceive a change in the child to the adult, or more specifically, the female adult. The authors highlight the emphasis placed by women on the importance of past events, and on ties to family and to other people. For children it seems the significance of objects is determined by the here and now, by present uses and experiences – understandable given that long term memories and experiences of objects are largely underdeveloped at this point. Men are largely interested in the utilitarian aspect of objects, and to past examples connected with status. Women are thus presented as the key proponents of memory narratives associated with the emotive and the personal. Arguably, these conclusions support gender stereotypes, yet Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton argue that the results are perhaps not overly surprising, given that the domestic sphere is still largely the domain of women, with women forming greater attachments to the contents of the house and play a greater role in determining what that contents will consist of (particularly when we consider the study being first published in 1981, with research being undertaken during the 1970s).

Susan Stewart emphasises that narratives of objects are inherently ‘the narrative[s] of the self’, therefore a notion of autobiography being imperative to any object discussions. Akin to the sociological and anthropological writings of Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, Stewart highlights ‘the capacity of narrative to generate significant objects.’ The importance of objects thus evolves from the narratives associated with them; objects themselves do not generate their own significance, the personal narrative gives them meaning. Significantly, the souvenir ‘expands the personal’ making the significance of the object, and narrative, collective and public. With Closet, I argue that the object of the wardrobe, and the colour black invoking darkness, are the motifs which appeal to an idea of a “collective” consciousness, and which do not rely upon the narrative of the author to offer some meaning. Gallery director Bartomeu Mari comments: ‘The familiarity of the object, the idea of its everyday intimate use, allows access to a universal language of private, basic, almost a-cultural functions. The object is personalised by this language, its connection with the private and direct contrast with the perceived public anonymity of architecture and constructed

Press, 1995), 121.


Stewart, On Longing, xii.

Stewart, On Longing, xi.

Stewart, On Longing, xii.
This presumed ‘universal language’ of domestic objects is the founding idea of Whiteread’s work – that we can all relate to wardrobes, bathtubs, mattresses, chairs, the things which are perhaps overlooked as they are so commonplace within everyday experience.

Whiteread’s works convey a complex and contradictory relationship between memory, narrative and objects. Aside from the playful reveries invoked by the artist, Whiteread (in a less often quoted interview) reveals how Closet also signifies a desire for destruction, mutilation and violent play (the mutilated doll). A certain revenge is unlocked and enacted out upon the body of the doll by Whiteread in her childhood narrative; a manifestation of the violent crisis of puberty and the hysterical girl-to-woman body. The doll is not unlike the furniture upon which a similar process of disfigurement takes place during the casting process. Here, the child, the object, and the domestic sphere come together through a remembrance of desired destruction. Notably, darker narratives of destruction or negative remembrance are not accounted for by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton – these being suppressed (“closeted”) in favour of the heimlich.

Casting

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton’s study focuses upon those objects which connect to fond memories, or memories which support Stewart’s notion of nostalgia: aligning the desire for the object with that of loss and a longing for another or an experience which is impossible to access in the present. Crucially, it is a theory which emphasises the emotive and non-functional value of the object. According to Stewart, nostalgia is a ‘social disease’, one

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164 In the little girl’s unconscious phantasy, her mother’s body is full of babies[…] it is an everyday observation that little girls play with dolls as if these were their babies. But a child will often display a passionate devotion to the doll, for it has become to her a live and real baby, a companion, a friend, which forms part of her life. She not only carries it about with her, but constantly has it in her mind, starts the day with it and gives it up unwillingly if she is made to do something else’, Melanie Klein, “Love, Guilt and Reparation” (1937), in Roger Money-Kyrle, ed., Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works (1921-1945) by Melanie Klein (London: The Hogarth Press, 1981), 317-318.
166 Stewart, On Longing, ix.
which reflects ‘the desire for desire’: 167

Nostalgia is sadness without an object, a sadness which creates a longing that of necessity is inauthentic because it does not partake in lived experience […]

Nostalgia, like any form of narrative, is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as felt lack. 168

Nostalgia is embodied by the object; through it we long for the time, place, people, and experiences. If nostalgia is a ‘disease’, Stewart’s analysis surely suggests that nostalgia is something we should rid ourselves of. The wardrobe, and furniture, comes to represent a lost and desired event. However, reading Whiteread’s Closet as “wardrobe-nostalgia” offers a very different object to the one which actually confronts the viewer. The sculptural object thrusts its heavy blackness and seeming solidity into nostalgic reminiscing. Objects and spaces relating to childhood are especially prone to being read via melancholic wistfulness; Closet is the opposite of such an approach. The austere façades of Whiteread’s early works offer little comfort to those seeking a narrative of childhood longing, instead offering sober geometric forms which draw attention to the significance of materiality, rather than the details of personal, (auto)biographical narrative.

Recalling Freud’s reading of the uncanny as something familiar yet unfamiliar, the casting process creates a new language by which to respond to domestic spaces and objects; a language which is profoundly destructive and sensual. The cast can be read as an object of the fantastic; a captured likeness, a fossilised shadow which both is and is not a double of the original; a duplicate, a mirroring of another structure or being, but one which is categorised in that Todorovian in-between space of hesitancy. We recognise the new form, yet it also presents something which is unfamiliar, foreign, “other”. As Tickner argues, the process of casting is perfectly suited to that desire to create objects which defy pure taxonomical definition:

Whiteread’s work is calculatedly ‘and-and’ and ‘neither-nor’. Casting is neither carving (virile) nor modelling (‘feminine’), neither fully form (sculpture) nor fully surface (painting), not quite abstraction or figuration, reproductive yet inventive,

167 Stewart, On Longing, 23.
168 Stewart, On Longing, 23.
simultaneously iconic and indexical (like the photograph) and this undecidability the collapsing of these oppositions is […] what Whiteread’s work most fully is.\textsuperscript{169}

Whiteread’s usual method of casting reveals an obsession with attempting to capture evidence of objects and their use, which have associative memories; the artist’s casts produce solidified shadows, preserving the unseen voids and in-between spaces in which we enact out our day-to-day existence. If not presenting the actual original object, then a sense of the original object is created or captured by Whiteread through the casting process. \textit{Closet} is indexical of both a physical object (a wardrobe) and an interior space, the experience of which can only be remembered through the body. To this extent, \textit{Closet} is a certain material rendering of Freud’s concept of the screen memory: ‘instead of the memory image that was justified by the original experience, we are presented with another, which is to some extent associatively displaced from it.’\textsuperscript{170} A strange double is created during the process of remembering (or forgetting) as with the process of casting. As Freud reflects in his discussion on the phenomenon of the double, ‘the ‘double’ was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an ‘energetic denial of the power of death […] the ‘immortal’ soul was the first ‘double’ of the body. The invention of doubling as a preservation against extinction.’\textsuperscript{171} Freud argues that “doubling” stems from a narcissistic desire for self-preservation (‘the same desire led the Ancient Egyptians to develop the art of making images of the dead in lasting materials’).\textsuperscript{172} However, ‘the double, from having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death.’\textsuperscript{173} Historically, the childhood is lost; we can only reflect upon our representations of that loss. There is also the point as Freud highlights that ‘the double has become a thing of terror.’\textsuperscript{174} To repeat, recreate or represent childhood events, is not necessarily desired.

Art historically, casting is considered a lowly craft; ‘carving, modelling, even construction, are seen to require the active and inventive deployment of resistant materials. Casting was traditionally a technical process of duplication, of transcribing surfaces or

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Tickner, “Mediating Generation”, 35.
\item Freud, “The Uncanny”, 235.
\item Freud, “The Uncanny”, 235.
\item Freud, “The Uncanny”, 236.
\end{enumerate}
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producing multiple copies for clients or the studio.' Concerned with the creation of doubles, the cast relies upon a parent object to give it form, to enable its reproduction. The casting medium (with Closet, plaster) welds itself to the original object (the wardrobe), making contact, and taking its impression from its frame and skin – like Aristotle’s wax signet ring – creating a resemblance, but new, altered form. Like the child to its parent, Closet to wardrobe takes on certain (genetic) traits, but Closet is a very different being to wardrobe. For Whiteread, casting the interiors of objects and spaces enables the transformation of ‘something that exists [...] That’s what I like, that you can subtly change people’s perception of the everyday.’ But in being the impression of another object, the cast conveys a certain death. At the same times as being a remaining fragment which preserves or retains elements of that which is lost, its creation has only come about through an initial process of destruction.

In using objects ‘which symbolise us’ with ‘furniture as a metaphor for human beings’, Whiteread’s casts present a sensual anthropomorphic object – ‘anthropomorphism’ being particularly disliked by Fried in his analysis of twentieth century Minimalist aesthetics.

I simply found a wardrobe that was familiar, somehow rooted in my childhood. I stripped the interior to its bare minimum, turned it on its back, drilled some holes in the doors and filled it with plaster until it overflowed. After the curing process the wooden wardrobe was discarded and I was left with a perfect replica of the inside. The pumping, overflowing plaster evokes those abject bodily fluids which are contained and hidden beneath the skin. There is a necessary and violent destruction of the wardrobe carcass, with the stripping off and exposing of the unadorned fresh sculptural surface. The interior is

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175 Tickner, “Mediating Generation”, 44.
176 Regarding early theories of memory in Aristotle and Plato: ‘This analogy with an imprint in wax represents the first model of memory as inscription [...] Plato teases us with the problem arising from his treacherous model of memory as an imprint in wax: How is it that we misremember? How is it that we seem to recall things that haven’t happened? How is it that we forget?’, Peter Collier, Olgar Smith, and Anna Magdalena Elsner, “Introduction”, in Peter Collier, Olgar Smith, and Anna Magdalena Elsner, eds., Anamnesia: Private and Public Memory in Modern French Culture (Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 1.
177 Tickner, “Mediating Generation”, 45, (quoting Barber, “In a Private World of Interiors”, pp. 7-8)
178 Bradley, Rachel Whiteread: Shedding Life, 73.
179 Debbaut and Essink, Rachel Whiteread, 30.
remade as an exterior skin; a container of clothing now clothed in black felt. The Closet cast thus stands for the physical body renewed, with the parent-object filled, split, destroyed, and discarded.

**Love, Guilt and Reparation**

The casting process mirrors violent and destructive desires, as conveyed by Whiteread in her memory of the wardrobe space. When forced into the wardrobe she becomes a plaything for her sisters; in turn, Whiteread learns to love the darkness, proceeding to mutilate her dolls, enacting out in her artworks what Tickner describes as ‘a recognisably Kleinian scenario of aggression and reparation. The aggression projected in mutilating the dolls is present, residually, in the essentially reparative acts of preserving, casting, binding and remembering in Whiteread’s oeuvre.’

The casting process also echoes parent-child relations – the cast wardrobe coming to represent that (suppressed) desire to destroy the object which is both loved and hated in equal measure, ‘linked up with everything [s]he experiences – good and bad alike.’

The wardrobe as maternal body (as read by Jacobus) is a concealing secreted space of comfort, yet a secret desire to enact out aggression takes place within its walls. Stuart Morgan comments: ‘It seems that the serenity of [Whiteread’s] sculpture is concealing a pact with the forces of violence […] a set of manoeuvres more suited to a slaughter-house […] Sterility and silence serve as powerful reminders of the fate of the human body.’ Notably, the child can only progress beyond “child” through certain conflict with the adult body; the child must replace its parent. The (parent) wardrobe is destroyed, and (child) Closet emerges.

Klein comments, ‘We all know that if we detect in ourselves impulses of hate towards a person we love, we feel concerned or guilty […] We tend to very much to keep these feelings of guilt in the background because of their painfulness. They express themselves, however, in many disguised ways, and are a source of disturbance.’ Guilt drives the desire to recreate anew, to piece fragments together to make whole once more; to create an object of remembrance which repairs the initial mutilation act (evoked by a desire to destroy the parent or the sibling). The body of the doll, as mutilated by the child-self recalled by Whiteread, is that Kleinian play object of aggression. In the child’s unconscious the toy stands for a parent

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or sibling.\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Closet} is thus that materialised secret representative of the “closeting” of such aggression or unwanted behaviours. Significantly, Kleinian destruction of the object is an attempt to deal with the realisation that ‘the individuality of the child may not correspond to what the parents wished it to be;’\textsuperscript{187} the child eventually closeting undesired aspects of the self.

\textbf{Black/ Darkness/ Blindness}

The surface of the sculpture provides the site of exchange between destruction and creation, the oscillation between what is known and what is other. It is the surface which locates the viewer in relation to the sculpture, physically and mentally.\textsuperscript{188}

(Fiona Bradley, \textit{Rachel Whiteread: Shedding Life})

Nostalgia, the vice of the aged. We watch so many old movies our memories come in monochrome.\textsuperscript{189}

(Angela Carter, \textit{Wise Children})

A Kleinian reading of \textit{Closet} is initiated by Whiteread’s own memoir. So what is the relation between the cast object and a wider collective understanding of memory and childhood? There is an assumed universal language of the domestic objects cast by Whiteread; we all remember tables, chairs and cupboards from our childhoods, and we are expected to relate to these recognisable features of the domestic environment. Visual recognition of the domestic object activates other sensory memories – of touch, smell, taste, movement; the kinaesthetic experience connects the past, present and future bodily activity within the domestic interior. Our ‘body memory’\textsuperscript{190} which is at the root of our response to spaces and objects – our memory of how we use such things, how they feel when we hold them, press against them, or walk around them – distinguishes for us the difference between objects, locates the individual within time and space, and enables us to identify specific roles and functions of the human body. When such objects feel different to our touch or the body cannot

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\textsuperscript{190} Casey, \textit{Remembering: A Phenomenological Study}, 146.
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function sufficiently to operate them, we are, as Casey points out, ‘reminded of how pivotal and presupposed body memory is in our lives.’\textsuperscript{191} Casey refers to body memory (not memory of the body) as ‘how we remember in and by and through the body.’\textsuperscript{192} Arguably, with Closet, both our body memory and memory of the body are called upon in our response to the sculpture: ‘body memory is in turn the natural centre of any sensitive account of remembering.’\textsuperscript{193}

However, Closet does not represent, nor it is perhaps recognisable as, an everyday piece of furniture. An inversion and mutilation has taken place. The once dark, private space has been forced outward; the defined sides, corners and grooves serve to emphasise the small and somewhat claustrophobic proportions of the space in which the body used to crouch and double-up. The soft fabrics remembered by Whiteread have been pulled tight to form a felt skin over the inside-out frame. As Mullins recognises, Whiteread’s process actually witnesses the destruction of ‘the furniture she associated with childhood.’\textsuperscript{194} The remembrance in question is a physical action: the act of climbing into a wardrobe space and playing, sitting, hiding. What follows is remembrance of how the body and mind seemingly felt and thought within that space. It is an enactment of desire, the attempt to make the intangible tangible. However, the final work displays the tensions between desire and the material representation of that desire. The space remembered is transformed into a solid object, and the existence of the body within that space is physically denied. In the act of attempting to preserve memory, the space remembered is filled in, and the original object is violently destroyed as it is cracked open to reveal mummified air. The final object actually reveals the impossibility of attempting to render intangible memory tangible. In the case of Closet, form subsumes narrative; memory is hidden in the depths of the blackness and is inaccessible to the viewer.

Whiteread’s Closet memory of darkness is black. Art historian Briony Fer argues that black, white and grey are colours, but they hold a complicated status as non-colours, ‘or alternatively, as marking absence of colour.’\textsuperscript{195} As black absorbs all light, all colour, it presents ‘death of colour by colour’,\textsuperscript{196} but in that sense – through its absorption – it becomes all colours. Discussing Eve Hesse’s work Fer states, ‘From Manet to Reinhardt, black has proved the most sensual and least uniform of colours … [Hesse] uses it to render the depth of bodily

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Casey, \textit{Remembering: A Phenomenological Study}, 146.
\item Casey, \textit{Remembering: A Phenomenological Study}, 147.
\item Casey, \textit{Remembering: A Phenomenological Study}, 148.
\item Mullins, \textit{RW: Rachel Whiteread}, 14.
\item Briony Fer, “Eva Hesse and Colour”, \textit{October}, 119 (Winter 2007), 22.
\item Fer, “Eva Hesse and Colour”, 28.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
and corporeal experience in sculptural form.\textsuperscript{197} Perhaps, then, black is the colour of physicality, of feeling, just as Whiteread herself argues that black felt was the material to most accurately represent her remembered bodily sensation of childhood. Even when trapped within the darkness and blackness of the wardrobe, the material which surrounds the child in Whiteread’s memory would be splashed, sewn, printed with colour. Although the wardrobe space was seemingly colourless, the soft, tactile material, sensually draping itself over skin also draped its colours over the body. In our own garments we may sit in darkness clothed in colour.

The colour black and its association with darkness hark back to early Greek mythology:

In the beginning was the night […] Nyx, Goddess of the night, the daughter of Chaos […] Her dwelling place was a cave located far in the west; she withdrew there during the day before crossing the sky, clothed in black and mounted on a chariot drawn by four horses […] the horses had black wings.\textsuperscript{198}

Beyond heaven and earth, Nyx, a chthonic divinity, gave birth to numerous entities […] all of whom were more or less closely associated with the colour black: sleep, dream, anguish, secrets, discord, distress, old age, misfortune and death.\textsuperscript{199}

Black is the colour of fantastic myth. Commenting on Rothko’s series of black paintings, Blake Gopnik recognises that ‘Blackness […] must always come saddled with the weightiest of connotations: it’s never just a tone; it’s always a kind of placeholder for something else, bigger and deeper and more “profound” than itself.’\textsuperscript{200} It carries with a history of blackened spaces, skins, skies, and myths. Gopnik argues we should strive to look beyond the clichés of black, beyond its ‘existential angst’ and ‘depressive mood’, and recognise that blackness can be joyous, energetic, sensual, and complex.\textsuperscript{201} Whiteread’s other black works, \textit{Black Bed} (1991) and \textit{Black Bath} (1996),\textsuperscript{202} allude to objects on which and in which the body sinks and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[197] Fer, “Eva Hesse and Colour”, 31 – I am utilising Fer’s reference to Eve Hesse’s use of black.
\item[201] Gopnik, “National Gallery exhibit challenges traditional view of Rothko Black Paintings”.
\item[202] It’s worth noting that both these works were actually left untitled, unlike the metaphorical titles given to earlier
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floats. We imagine bodies which ‘lie on black sheets’, but a ‘sexy Soho black’ is dangerous, like lying on tar or charcoal, hot and burning. *Black Bed* and *Black Bath* are enticing, yet the body could be sucked into their centres, burying and suffocating. Whiteread’s black works usurp our understanding of spaces and objects because they deny clear distinctions between desire and fear, curiosity and denial. Artist Anish Kapoor notes ‘the propensity of colour to induce reverie’; black, the colour of darkness, the colour of dreams, may induce reverie in the viewer. We dream (or have nightmares) of blackened spaces. ‘Black is boundless, the imagination races in the dark. Vivid dreams careering through the night. Goya’s bats with Goblin faces chuckle in the dark.’ In Jan Svankmajer’s fantastical film *Down to the Cellar* (1983) an old magician man dressed in black haunts the underground cellars and tunnels beneath an old house (other hidden, secret spaces). He makes his bed upon a charcoal mound; it slowly covers him, weighing him down. He beckons to the wandering, curious girl-child to lie beside him on a bed covered in netting, entrapping her within this darkened space; she runs. Running, running, shadows chase her through dark passageways, the child is all but blind; the green eyes of a cat flash and fear turns all inanimate, animate. What begins as a chore, a task for the young female child to fetch potatoes from the cold store, evolves as a challenge to overcome fear of darkness and blackness; the body must prevail and continue on its mission despite the mind turning on itself, and playing tricks with vision.

Caverns, grottos, chasms and underground passages – places deprived of light – are spaces of darkness; the wardrobe can be added to this list. We may retreat from shadows, but eyes deliberately seek out other eyes in the darkness.

The darkness of *Closet* – with its thick, black, impenetrable skin – is often described in terms of childhood fear: ‘typically small and dark [the closet] is a space where things – not people – belong.’ However, the darkness is not always feared by the child; it can be comforting. Like the thick black sky has wrapped around itself, stare at *Closet* for long enough and you might see stars. Whiteread vividly remembers ‘the smell and sensation of the darkness she experienced as a child.’ Similarly, Julia Kristeva’s memory of childhood is

204 Jarman, *Chroma*, 141.
206 Jarman, *Chroma*, 139.
predominantly spatial and sensual: ‘From that time in my childhood, fragrant, warm and soft to the touch, I retain only a memory of space. Nothing of time. The smell of honey, silk and velvet under my fingers, on my cheeks. Mama. Almost nothing visual – a shadow that plunges into blackness, absorbs me or disappears in a few flashes of light.’ Visual memories appear and disappear in flashes; the visual memory is uncertain. Memories, as Carter says, appear in monochrome, with the ever-present threat of being sucked back into the blackness of amnesia.

_Closet is touchable darkness; the felt-covering a tactile rendering of what we may imagine darkness to feel like if we could only grasp it between our fingers. A child’s room which in the daylight may be a playful den of toys, books and dress-up, in the night is an alien, shadowy place in which the eyes of dolls glint, odd shapes and bulks seem to appear from nowhere, and the silence increasingly fills with murmurs and creaks. E.T.A. Hoffman’s Sandman lingers near. The darkness provokes fears of the inanimate; the night reduces objects to smudges and blurred shapes, nothing retains a single form. We blink and our eyes tell us that an object has morphed into something else, or it has slid across the floor; ‘the simplest objects can be the most unsettling because they remind us that the world is full of apparitions. Every object sees us; there are eyes growing on everything. In daily commerce we don’t think about objects, but a half dream or a childish fear or an old man’s lonely mind can bring back their power.’

Darkness transforms space. It is experienced in varying degrees – thick, suffocating darkness, the kind that is present only when there is no chink or strip of light straining through a crack or hole in a wall or doorway, is rarely experienced. It is the darkness of nightmares. Of panic. Darkness is usually penetrated by some small grain of light. The darkness of the cityscape creates sculptures of people, trees, walls, buildings and signage, as car and street lights dazzle and glint their rays upon all objects and creatures. The darkness creates new secret spaces of those corners where the light fails to fall; spaces usually hidden in daylight are now revealed. Interior spaces once dull and obscure, and ignored, now blink their orangey glow to other blinking interiors, their windows frame domestic scenes. This is not darkness to be feared for there is still a great deal of light, albeit man-made and fragmented, breaking up the landscape to create a night-time patchwork. The only true darkness to be found when walking up a city street is in the sky above; its stars and moon caught behind a veil of smog.

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fail to glint their silver; the city’s night sky is a heavy pool of black-purple pressing down on the street lamps. Elkins fears the darkness of the wood, with its numerous eyes: ‘after ten or fifteen minutes in the dark, I can’t see anything in it. I know where some trees are, and I think I can pick out their shapes, but I can’t be certain. How many creatures might be able to see me in their different ways, with their various eyes, in their alien minds?’ It is the fear of the unknown watching back which plays upon his mind – the glowing eyes of spiders, all looking his way.

Some children love the woods, although others may not linger too long after the darkness begins to creep up trunks and hang like a thick canopy across the branches. Olafur Eliasson’s installation *Forked Forest Path* (1998) weaves together silver birch saplings to create an interior forest, plunged in darkness; visitors sway and trip and cling nervously to its edges. Looking eagerly through the branches towards jagged light, a man-made moon-shine throws its shadow across the path; hands cling to other hands and eyes search out other eyes. The darkness draws bodies closer together. ‘Forests are primal, Jungian, beautiful, ancient wilderness; they can scare you or draw you in. They are the location of fairy stories, hunts, temptation, solitude, melancholy […] The forest is where the dark things are […] the gothic woodlands of Anne Radcliffe, […] the darkness of Red Riding Hood, […] the loss of Hansel and Gretel.’ It is in the darkness we find such dualities; it frightens yet also seduces the imagination. Eliasson’s installation reminds me of Elkins’ childhood tale of trying to read a book outside after sunset; ‘the best players […] would continue the game by taking the book into the woods to shade themselves from the moonlight […] their disembodied voices crying out the words they managed to see.’

Conquering blindness is a childhood game. Hoffman’s *Sandman* (the focus of Freud’s theory of the uncanny, and gloriously and grisly depicted by Paul Berry’s 1992 puppet animation) and Henry Selick’s recent animation *Coraline* (2009) both pose the threat of child-blindness if the child dares to desire, or to be curious; to quote Mulvey, ‘curiosity projects itself onto, and into, space though its drive to investigate and uncover secrets, carrying with it connotations of transgression and danger.’ Blindness, or its threat, is thus a key mode for controlling and ordering the child’s body, and

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212 Elkins, *The Object Stares Back*, 47
216 Mulvey, “Pandora’s Box: Topographies of Curiosity”, 60.
its curiosity. However, Whiteread’s *Closet* somewhat destabilises this threat, with the child eventually finding comfort in the darkness. If fear is overcome, the threat no longer exists (in the child’s mind).

Naomi Schor focuses upon literature and film in which chief protagonists are blinded, or born blind.217 Blindness is treated as literal and metaphorical, it is both a moral and physical infliction. The moral blindness of characters is positioned as the antithesis of the physically-blinded individual who demonstrates possible truth, clarity, and honesty in response to the material (and unseen) world around them. Loss of sensory function thus activates a system of binaries: blindness and sight; dark and light; black and white; truth and falsehoods, (adult and child may be added to these).218 As Schor examines, the metaphor of blindness is not necessarily to be perceived in the negative, as a deprivation, but blindness creates an alternative type of moral “vision”, or, as with love, blindness sets the mind free to respond without prejudice, enabling us to “see” past physical attributes.219 The dark, a place of temporary blindness and unfamiliar shadows, also enables freedom from the prejudice and illusion of vision; the child as a social construct is shaped and fashioned through such imposed vision.

Whiteread’s *Closet*, as with many of her other works, is concerned with revealing, or drawing attention to those sights, those visions to which we are socially, morally, or culturally blind; ‘blindness is a strange, insidious thing […] It happens while we are seeing […] There are things too boring to see, too normal or unremarkable to ever catch the eye, things that fall through the cracks of vision.’220 Whiteread’s sculptures capture these ‘boring’ and ‘normal’ sights of the domestic sphere, fossilising them in layers of concrete, resin or latex. Her sculptural objects are monuments to the unremarkable. Likewise, her later *Monument* (2001) – a cast of the fourth plinth, placed on the fourth plinth – created an art of something which is usually denigrated to the mere supporter, unvalued base, of “great” art. The plinth upon which sculpture has relied to make visible its stature and significance was flipped upside down, undertaking a humorous headstand to highlight that which is usually ignored.

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218 Schor, “Blindness as a Metaphor”, 80.
219 Schor, “Blindness as a Metaphor”, 84.
Closet: A (Queer) Metaphor

Closet is not a wardrobe. The process of inverting the body of the piece of furniture, of covering it in felt, of entitling the piece “closet”, most definitely calls for an interpretation, a metaphorical response to the new object which destroyed the old one. It cannot, and should not, be read purely as an object which acts as a ‘signpost(s) for pointing elsewhere’, to the past life of the old structure, as Rosalind Krauss suggests. Whiteread’s sculptures announce their incompleteness and insufficiency to fulfil a desire “whole” and unified reading. Closet is a body-memory rendered material, yet the object is ambiguous in its significance. It invites interpretation through a certain free-association (of blackness, darkness, blindness), but it also excludes the viewer from its specific meanings. These contradictions are held together by the term “closet”, itself a word pregnant with meaning and suggestions of the concealed and contained. A problem of psychoanalysis, as highlighted by Sedgwick, is its ‘sleked down […] elegant operational entities as the mother, the father, the preoedipal, the oedipal, the other or Other.’ Closet stands alone. It is not titled “the Closet”, reinstating it as part of a generic categorisation or grouping; nor is it “a Closet”, suggesting specificity of experience. In all Whiteread’s titled (and more frequently) untitled pieces, the object is simply a noun, yet it is also imbued with a sense being a signposted directive such as (here is the) “Toilet”. Closet invites us to imagine walking to, or within a space of “closet” and partaking in some action or activity.

For Bachelard, memories come crowding in when we stand before a wardrobe; not only can the wardrobe be a body, but it can also be the mind – the wardrobe is memory; we store our pasts ‘on the shelves of memory.’ Closet demonstrates an attempt to recreate a memory in sculptural form, but the work actually evokes that sense of exclusion from memory; the impossibility of rendering material that which is fleeting, subjective, transitory. Closet, then, is not so much a work depicting a singular experience of childhood, but depicts the distortion of childhood in the social collective memory. The wardrobe of nostalgia is destroyed through the casting process; memory is revised and reinscribed (as argued by Jacobus) and is replaced by an ambiguous, blackened object which alludes to the ambiguity of childhood identity itself.

Once cast and stripped from its outer skin and chrysalis, Closet emerges as an entirely

223 Bachelard, Poetics of Space, 79.
different object to its wardrobe parent. The wardrobe object is abandoned, and it is the air within which takes on form; only the indents and ridges of the wardrobe surface remain. The origin of the term “closet” is late Middle English denoting a private or small room, from Old French, diminutive of clos “closed”.\textsuperscript{224} A closet is a cupboard or wardrobe, especially one tall enough to walk into; a small room for storing things or for private study; a hidden or secret place, retreat, recess; the referral to a state of secrecy or concealment of homosexuality; and the verb (closets, closeting, closeted) means to hide something or someone away.\textsuperscript{225} Sedgwick’s OED definitions date back to 1370, with the closet as a private space, an inner chamber: ‘there are stage-sins and there are closet-sins’; ‘a skeleton in the closet’,\textsuperscript{226} come out of the closet; a closeted supporter. The closet is a space of secret anxieties, of hidden phobias; a space which contains and conceals.

As a physical space, the development of the closet was initiated by the desire to order and purify space, to remove the presence and evidence of the unclean body. In Mark Wigley’s analysis of the gendering of space and the suppression of sexuality, as presented in Leon Battista Alberti’s fifteenth-century text On the Art of Building in Ten Books (with particular focus on book five and the private spaces of the home), Wigley notes:

The mechanisms of detachment, from sewers to toilets, would become known as ‘closets’. They literally closet away the abject domain from the spatial representation of pure order. Eventually, the supplementary closet that had made the order of the house possible became the new order of the house. A new kind of space emerged in which distance is no longer the link between two visible objects in space but is the product of a mask whose surface is scrutinized for clues about what lies beyond it.\textsuperscript{227}

As argued by Wigley, the Renaissance house and its spaces of intimacy were designed to control and order the body – specifically the female body – with sexuality and sensual pleasure hidden and veiled, interiorised, and cut-off from purified spaces of the house, so not to pollute them. As Wigley emphasises, in its purification and ordering of space, ‘the role of

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[224]{OED online; entry closet, n., : \url{http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/34625} , accessed 6 January, 2014.}
\footnotetext[226]{Sedgwick, Epistemology of the Closet, 65.}
\end{footnotes}
architecture is explicitly the control of sexuality, or more precisely, women’s sexuality, the chastity of the girl, the fidelity of the wife.228 Architectural historian Aaron Betsky comments,

What is the closet? It is the ultimate interior, the place where interiority starts. It is a dark space at the heart of the home. It is not a place where you live, but where you store the clothes in which you appear. It contains the building blocks for your social constructions, such as your clothes. The closet also contains the disused pieces of your past. It is a place to hide, to create worlds for yourself out of the past and for the future in a secure environment. If the hearth is the heart of the home, where the family gathers to affirm itself as a unit in the glow of the fire, the closet contains both the secret recesses of the soul and the masks that you wear.229

The closet is a space we inhabit physically and psychically, compartmentalising subjectivities and desires.230 A closet is two things: it is both a material space, and ‘a spatial metaphor’;231 a place where material things are hidden, but it is also a metaphor of oppression and concealment.232 Significantly, twentieth century discourse on the closet is framed by a metaphors of vision and blindness. Michael Brown argues that ‘even within queer studies [the closet] space is often relegated to the metaphorical […] the closet is a term used to describe the denial, concealment, erasure, or ignorance of lesbians and gay men. It describes their absence’.233 Wigley comments that the closet represents ‘an economy of vision founded on a certain blindness’.234 The black felt skin of Closet evokes the literal blindness, or part blindness, experienced when locked within an unlit space. Temporary non-sight and the experience of nyctalopia (night blindness) may inform a fear of the dark. Taking oneself and sitting within a darkened space is, in reality, self-inflicted blindness; an overt desire to experience darkness. There were instances when Whiteread’s sisters would deliberately lock her in the wardrobe, with the darkness being enforced upon her235 – this perhaps determining

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228 Wigley, “The Housing of Gender”, 336. ‘Women are to be confined deep within a sequence of spaces at the greatest distance from the outside world while men are to be exposed to that outside. The house is literally understood as a mechanism for the domestication of (delicately minded and pathologically embodied) women.’ Wigley, “The Housing of Gender”, 332.
230 Brown, Closet Space, 8.
231 Brown, Closet Space, 1.
232 Brown, Closet Space, 2.
233 Brown, Closet Space, 1- 4.
234 Wigley, “The Housing of Gender”, 345.
whether the experience of darkness is remembered as one of terror or reverie. As Elkins comments, although ‘blindness belongs in the future of illness and death’, and with ageing, the child in infancy also experiences blindness – not only physical blindness, but also blindness to those sights and experiences hidden from the child by the adult; those things which are closeted, contained.

The child in its development must learn to navigate the politics of social blindness, 'taking the visual world in is a process of loss: learning to see is training careful blindness.' It must negotiate the domestic sphere with its closet spaces in which the abject and unwanted are contained. Behaviours of the child are also ruled by the politics of vision: ‘An unhappy child was and is unnatural, an indictment of somebody […] the child was not to be unhappy; or not, as a severe child-rearing manual put it, to be seen as unhappy.’ Like the materialised secret of the dollhouse the closet acts as a space within within, a container, a holder of secrets; those actions and desires which should not be seen. Wigley does not continue his analysis to consider the control or containment of the child’s body within the domestic sphere, but the closet space can be read through the body of the child, whose bodily drives must also be repressed through closet-like structures and rules. Arguments posed by Sedgwick in relation to the “closet” of gay men and women are significant for opening up a discourse on the cultural and biological expectations of children. Whiteread’s Closet, then, can be read as signifying those suppressed childhoods which hover beneath the surface of family photographs, and which hide in the corners of a child’s bedroom. In the act of mutilation, Whiteread-as-child-remembered was such a “queer” child, with her destructive episode contained and hidden from view.

Sociologists Sarah Holloway and Gill Valentine present the British home as ‘a space which is constituted through familial rules and regulations which demarcate appropriate ways for children to behave’, thus an initial interpretation deems “home” a space of control.

The argument hinges on the question of sexuality, its presence, absence or acknowledgment. Children are children because they lack sexuality, this is the defining line. Of course, as Wigley highlights, ‘the exclusion of sexuality is itself sexual.’ Engaging with a notion of queer childhood is not necessarily concerned with the “outing” of certain gay childhoods, but instead offers a potential reading of childhood(s) which defies enforced child behaviours. Simone de Beauvoir begins to offer an early “queer” reading of the child in her acknowledgment that in early childhood (prior to the aggressive acculturation of children) infants cannot be engendered as either boy or girl, as they share similar habits and drives. Society then splits girls from boys via a predetermined sense of appropriate gender behaviour and needs. Notably, it is the feminine which is discussed by Sedgwick as being that trait which is the target of a “normative” acculturation agenda – to be eradicated or suppressed in the boy-child. She discusses the pathologising labelling of children (particularly boys) with Gender Identity Disorder if they demonstrate an “unusual” interest in the past-times or attire of girls, and the stigmatisation – ‘effeminophobia’ – of effeminate boys. Queer theories of the child and childhood are thus concerned with the problem of naturalising gender. Those children who fit into neither “normative” heterosexual categories, those children who fall into the gaps, create their own closet spaces internally and externally. Arguably, each child has an internalised closeted identity; a psychological (closet) space into which s/he crawls, hiding those aspects of him/herself which are culturally undesired by adults or other children. Desires, hatreds, fears, longings, they are all secreted here, which may manifest themselves through certain behaviours, such as Kleinian destructiveness.

Regardless of whether Whiteread intended the title Closet to chime with any gay or queer associations, the piece appears during the 1980s at the height of homophobic panic during the AIDS epidemic. Sedgwick’s theories of the closet offer a particularly significant angle in relation to analysis of closeted childhood(s), and the issue of nature versus nurture when it comes to gender and sexual-object choices. Different sites of sexuality and identity (including childhood) can be viewed as either in or ‘coming out of the closet.’ The metaphoric of blindness are most appropriate here, particularly in relation to the ’squalid train
to childhood experience of spatiality.

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241 Wickley, “The Housing of Gender”, 328.
245 Sedgwick, The Epistemology of the Closet, 72.
of lies' to adults to children as to why they must go into therapy, with the desired outcome that of the erasure and suppression of the proto-gay behaviours (as expressed through effeminacy): ‘It was “not to prevent you from becoming homosexual,” he tells one young man who had been subjected to behaviour-modification, "it was because you were unhappy,” (remember, children are not to be seen to be unhappy). The wish for gay people not to exist is endemic within these psychiatric therapies; the final desired outcome being the denial or suppression of a certain queerness. There is also the assertion that parents have the right to control the child’s body; its desires, motivations and needs. The parent controls what is to be conveyed and displayed (turned outward), desiring that the child keep hidden and from view those unwanted and “abject” behaviours. The child’s identity must be continuously interiorised if he/she is to conform to parental expectations.

A notion of the split self is suggested by the metaphor of the closet. There exists an identity of the interior (private, secreted) in opposition to the identity of the exterior (public, accepted). A certain “closeting” takes place as adults demand certain ideas of childhood; other unwanted childhoods are banished to the proverbial closet (or perhaps to the literal closet): “Out of sight and out of mind”. The closet acts as space in which things are ‘separate, hived off, invisible and unheard’. Not only are secrets kept from children, but they are also kept by children – secrets of the body, of longings and desires. Remembering the secret spaces of childhood, Bachelard comments, ‘no one sees me changing […] who sees me? I am my own

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250 Confused, fractured and suppressed identities and various doubles and pairs emerge in the space of Carter’s Toyshop. Each character conveys a performative self (that which is shown publicly) but within secret spaces of the house (normally the space of the bedroom), alternative identities and desires are expressed. The bedroom, that space of sleep and dreams and nocturnal growth is the place in which Melanie’s wardrobe stands, which holds the mirror that led to her “discovery” as self as distinct from the mother. It is the space from which she observes (and is observed) through a secret spy-hole, into the room of Finn – the male of the household who inspires sexual curiosity and indifference. ‘It can be said that a child’s room, replete with all its belongings and its ability to provide sanctuary from the control of parents, is a place of disproportionate significance to the child’s development of place identity and therefore in self-identity.’ Thomas G. David and Carol Simon Weinstein, eds., Spaces for Children: The Built Environment and Child Development (New York: Plenum Press, 1987), 28. As Lewis Carroll’s Alice once asserted, it is the space where the child may discover its queerness: ‘Dear, dear! How queer everything is today! … I wonder if I’ve been changed in the night? Let me think: was I that same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different.’ Lewis Carroll, Alice and Wonderland, and Through the Looking Glass (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1993), 26.
251 Brown, Closet Space, 7.
hiding place.' The body and the domestic sphere double-up as one. As Bond-Stockton states, ‘One can remember desperately feeling there was simply nowhere to grow, what would become of the child one feared oneself to be?’ Every child thus grows (sideways) within its own metaphorical closet. Simon Watney talks of closeting his queer childhood. Patricia Holland’s and Jo Spence’s publication *Family Snaps* collates together essays and projects responding to domestic photography. Watney’s essay queries that perception (often negative) the child may have of itself in contrast to the perception others have of him. The family photograph presents the official remembered “reality” of childhood, but (and as discussed by Annette Kuhn) the captured images of childhood (often taken by an adult) conceal those secrets, those closeted Kleinian childhoods of love, hate and guilt. Those secrets, guilty actions or desires which sting a child so sorely; like a hot poker refusing to cease stoking a fire, knowledge of another hidden self is turned again and again. The child may try to suppress that which it knows s/he should not be (because it is bad, of course). The child fails to fulfil parental expectations. Displacement rules the experience of childhood: of never quite getting it right; never quite being what others want it to be. ‘Many people will have memories of this order, memories that signal some kind of dysfunction between oneself and one’s parents’ expectations.’ Childhoods are contained and hidden within the frames of domestic photography.

These are images which I had completely forgotten – as completely as I had forgotten the person I was and the world of childhood to which they offer a few moments of fragile, ambiguous access […] I am shocked to discover that the picture reveals nothing of the terrible secret that drove me so deeply into myself for so many long irrecoverable years – years that, without photographs, do not exist.

Watney makes the connection between the experience of childhood as displaced and dysfunctional with the space of home. The domestic sphere is deemed adult space, one in

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which the child’s body is ordered and ruled by the desires and expectations of the adult: ‘And then we leave home, though home is always there in our head, as we struggle to break with the immensely powerful role models offered by our parents, to ourselves.’ All children, then, perhaps have their own “closet” spaces within the domestic sphere; spaces – either real or imaginary – in which they hide their other non-conforming selves. Children are to be seen and not heard; in this case, never to be seen, never to be heard. It is when the closeted selves break free (and shout out-loud), refusing to be contained, that the placid, obedient, and innocent image of child becomes tainted and thus scorned by adults: ‘Gay children […] we learn many ways to hide our cloven hooves, often at personal terrible cost […] We are there, and we are not there.’ Bond-Stockton argues that ‘the child from the standpoint of “normal” adults is always queer,’ with notions of the gay child impacting upon concepts of “the child”: ‘What might the notion of a gay child do to conceptions of the child? What might this ghost have to say about its peers? […] As it emerges as an idea, it begins to outline, in shadowy form, the pain, closets, emotional labours, sexual motives, and sideway movements that attend all children however we deny it. A gay child illuminates the darkness of the child.’ ‘Children grow sideways as well as up […] in part because they cannot according to our concepts, advance to adulthood until we say it’s time.’ Significantly, to acknowledge queerness in children is to acknowledge sexuality which children are not deemed to possess until a particular (legal) age. ‘The child is even defined as a kind of legal strangeness. It is a body said to need protections more than freedoms. And it is a creature who cannot consent to its sexual pleasure or divorce its parents, or design its education – at least not by law.’ It is this framework of legality – of actions allowed and disallowed – which gives the adult body his authority. The child has no voice within this system (reinforcing origins of the term ‘infant’ as being one without speech).

Concealed knowledge is at the centre of Miroslaw Balka’s How It Is (2009) (fig.5), offering an interesting comparison to Closet. A giant grey steel structure with a vast dark chamber, thirteen metres high and thirty metres long, the work presents darkness at its most sinister, recreating the tension, fear and anxiety felt in bodies when boarding the trucks bound

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260 Bond-Stockton, The Queer Child or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century, 6.
261 Bond-Stockton, The Queer Child or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century, 2-3.
262 Bond-Stockton, The Queer Child or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century, 6.
263 Bond-Stockton, The Queer Child or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century, 16.
for the Nazi concentration camps. The container’s interior is lined with black velvet, ‘to create a blackness blacker than any you have ever known.’ How It Is is the materialised experience of the spatial darkness that Closet alludes to: to quote Balka, ‘Step by step, you will start to touch darkness. You will come to the border where you will say whether you want to go farther or not, and touching the subject of disappearing to create the question mark, how far I can go …’ In the work’s accompanying film, Balka touches upon the reason for fearing darkness: it is the fear of disappearance within darkness, that there will be no way out from it once we find ourselves trapped within it. Darkness, if it consumes bodies, must then also consume histories, memories, sensations, evidence. Once lost to the darkness, histories may be irretrievable. Balka’s interest in Otwock’s Jewish history is attributed to his lack of knowledge as a child, as adults deliberately concealed information from him; he was kept in the dark, uninformed about the role his Polish hometown played in the ghettoisation and transportation of Jews in Poland. Not unlike the squalid lies told to the queer children, as revealed by Sedgwick, it is a forgotten history, a blank history. As an adult, and artist, Balka attempts to retrieve and preserve what he can of such histories.

In the accompanying Tate film Balka reflects upon a hole in the kitchen linoleum floor, a hole made by his mother’s praying on the same place, day upon day. He says of this mark, ‘When I die, who will know of this trace?’ The fear of forgetting, of disappearance, is what fuels the desire to preserve, or represent a memory from childhood, as if in retrieving this personal memory, all collective memory will somehow be resurrected, saved, from a blackness of forgetting. The childhood acts as an initial starting point for remembrance. As Balka says, the personal experience, or memoir, is not the actual focus, it provides inspiration, but he, and as I argue, Whiteread, creates sculptural situations which offer significance for others. Curator Lizzie Carey-Thomas argues that ‘Whiteread’s motivation for making a work derives from somewhere quite personal and specific, but once realised as a sculpture holds a very different resonance that touches on a more collective sense of memory, rather than necessarily trying to communicate the initial encounter.’ The childhood remembrance, the personal and domestic narrative, is utilised to comment upon the changing and transitory nature of communities and

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267 Miroslaw Balka, The Unilever Series: Miroslaw Balka, How It Is.
268 Email comments to Jenna C. Ashton, Lizzie Carey-Thomas, 26 October, 2010.
social groups, and so-called collective memory. Otwock for Balka, and the East End of London for Whiteread, these places provide geographical specificity for much of their work; their childhood landscapes leak into their interrogation of wider social and historical concerns. Whiteread’s work then, like Balka’s, not only reflects upon how we remember, but also how we forget and ignore histories (of childhood – those closeted histories). According to Elkins ‘seeing and memory go together’, 269 but if the visual can be illusory and misleading (such as the family photograph), and history is largely informed by the visual, memory and history are also, therefore, illusory. As Balka says of history, it is ‘not so simple, history is never black and white; it’s so many shades of grey. History is only grey. Only grey.’ 270 Closet, then, through its metaphors of the hidden, enclosed, and darkness, not only presents a certain rendering of childhood memory, but it also poses questions of how wider “memories” of history are constructed and understood. The amnesia of childhood comes to represent ‘the gradual forgetting of all history.’ 271 But to attempt to recall the child or childhood is to bring about its inevitable death; memories of childhood plunge into darkness; it remains a ghost. 272 And as expressed so poignantly by Watney, closeted childhoods do not vanish with the onset of adulthood – they continue to haunt: ‘everywhere I go, the little boy on the beach who I was goes with me. I am still trying to make up to him for what he went through, trying to make amends.’ 273

Other Closets

The artist-as-adult destabilises a certain myth of childhood, or at least challenges the way in which the child is expected to experience domestic spaces. Closet, in its revealing the interior, critiques the closet as a metaphorical space in which things are hidden, contained and suppressed. It suggests that the closet should be split wide open, forced in on itself, and (as the casting process allows), destroyed.

Three other female artists – Claude Cahun, Doris Salcedo, and Francesca Woodman – also offer works which utilise the wardrobe (or closet) space, transforming its interior by

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270 Miroslaw Balka, *The Unilever Series: Miroslaw Balka, How It Is*.
272 See also Carol Mavor, “A is for Alice, for Amnesia, for Anamnesis: A Fairy Tale called La Jetee” in Peter Collier, Olger Smith, and Anna Magdalena Elsner, eds., *Anamnesia: Private and Public Memory in Modern French Culture*. The protagonist of *La Jetee* (1962) yearns to return to a haunting childhood memory, in which he believes he witnessed a death, only realising (too late) it was his own death he witnessed. His desire to return to childhood brings about his own death once more.
filling it with materials or bodies. Salcedo’s politicised furniture-artworks inflict a certain wounding or process of destruction upon objects – similar to Whiteread’s casting process, but Salcedo does not discard the parent object. ‘In Salcedo’s untitled concrete furniture, the body is evoked through a kind of multiple exposure […], at once displaced (preserved, imaginatively) and grounded (made vulnerable), humanised (clothed and cared for; wounded) and objectified […] an imagery of equally doomed thickening, of spaces muffled with concrete until they are irredeemably mute.’\(^{274}\) Salcedo’s works are specifically concerned with grief, trauma, violence, survivors of genocide and war, and the problems of memorialising conflict. Salcedo once commented that traditional public monuments ‘are the very failure of memory.’\(^{275}\) The ritual of offering a visual public space for mourning veils and suppresses complex and uncomfortable histories, favouring a unified and contained space for designated remembrance. The ‘agonized physicality’\(^{276}\) of her sewn, stitched, concretized, slashed, chiselled and punctured furniture returns us to Csikszentmihalyi’s and Rochberg-Halton’s study which likens furniture objects to absent bodies. Salcedo attacks and mutilates the skins of her objects, drawing attention to our own skin as both a container and protector of our interior yet also that organ which exposes us, and is most at risk, most vulnerable to assault. And skin remembers: ‘skin surfaces record our personal biographies, however imperfectly. The skin is also spatial in the sense that it expands and contracts […] The skin, as bodyscape, is inhabited by, as well as inhabiting, the space of nation and landscape.’\(^{277}\) The skin bears witness; in attacking the surface and skins of objects, Salcedo is commenting on that survivor-as-witness who has been rendered similarly mute through societal denial, forgetting and blindness. Salcedo comments: ‘I’m not interested in the visual. I have constructed the work as invisibility, because I regard the non-visual as representing a lack of power. To see is to have power; it’s a way of possessing. At least from where I stand, I cannot conceive of human beings as all-powerful and knowledgable. We are just human beings, without memory.’\(^{278}\) Like Whiteread’s *Closet*, Salcedo’s altered furniture with its denial of everyday use and inaccessible interiors, engages with the metaphors of blindness and those historical secrets held and withheld.

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\(^{275}\) Princenthal, “Silence Seen”, 78.

\(^{276}\) Princenthal, “Silence Seen”, 78.


The image of the vulnerable child also haunts Salcedo’s works, particularly in the piece *Unland: The Orphan’s Tunic* (1995-98). Here, the (table) object reflects the child as witness to an atrocity, the murder of her mother, which she continues to relive through her only wearing the tunic (that outer layer, outer protective skin) which her mother had made her only days prior to the killing: ‘the dress as a marker of memory and sign of trauma.’\(^{279}\) The child which has lost, or fears losing again, clings to that item which covers and conceals the body, perhaps protecting it from such an attack. Salcedo embroiders her own material-like tunic to the surface of a cracked domestic table, embroidered with human hair (fig.6) – the table indexical of that safe domestic space of the (lost) mother; the tunic that offers protective covering which stops the table from further damage; human hair as that literal fragment, trace, of bodily covering which entwines itself with skin, and is one of the last elements of the human body to rot away once we are dead. I return to Whiteread’s memory of sitting in the wardrobe space, surrounded by the textiles and clothing collected by her mother. The rough, felt black skin of *Closet* is representative of the comforting (maternal) textiles, but also a reminder of the eventual loss of the parental; we all, eventually, become orphans. Salcedo’s wardrobe piece *Untitled* (1998) (fig.7) is the opposite of Whiteread’s *Closet* in that rather than revealing the interior and turning it inside-out, the wardrobe frame remains and its interior is filled with concrete mixed with fragments of clothing and cloth. The space inside, the air, is suffocated, filled and solidified. The child-as-memory trapped within.

In Claude Cahun’s *Self Portrait [in Cupboard]* (c.1932) (fig.8) the surrealist adult artist, dressed in child’s attire, has crawled into the cupboard space, seemingly in deep sleep, perhaps dreaming (not so) innocent dreams. Cahun as an innocent, feminine, passively sleeping child conflicts with her artistic, androgynous, and queer adult identity. This constructed self-portrait is akin to those family photographs discussed by Watney and Kuhn; the child captured is always innocent, always what the adult behind the lens wishes to preserve. Cahun’s child-image is a subversion of this tradition; the artist captures her own child-image retrospectively, as if viewing from the side of a dream, with the artist taking control of how the child is to be framed, positioned, posed. Child and adult become one in the image. The adult’s body just managing to squeeze into the narrow space, an arm draped out and over the side of the cupboard. Cahun seemingly crawled into the space as a child, and emerged years later as adult. All Cahun’s self-portraits play with notions of identity and

gender; *Self Portrait [in Cupboard]* is that reiteration of the queer child through the absolute presence of the queer adult in the image. Queer children exist; they are just sleeping, or are building cupboards and wardrobes around themselves to protect their secret identities.

Francesca Woodman, an artist who had not long left childhood and adolescence before she took her own life, strips herself and her wardrobe (closet) bare. In her absence, Woodman is that mythologised child-woman; a female body trapped on the cusp of adulthood through death. Yet her self-portraits convey a profound corporeal presence. *Space2 Providence, Rhode Island* (1975–1976) (fig.9.i) is an image of spatial intimacy, yet also one of confinement. The glass cabinet into which she climbs – much less recognisable as an everyday piece of furniture – is a minimal container, a museum display case. Woodman’s naked body presses against its walls, her skin and the glass appearing as one. *She* is the object now on display, not the furniture. The geometric corner of the display case serves to frame the female body; like Cahun’s draping arms from within the cupboard, Woodman, too, reaches outside the space of confinement to make sure there is an exit, an exterior space outside this if she wishes to escape. Woodman’s image, then, concerns vision and how the body is revealed and clothed through different spaces. A second image in the series blurs the body (fig.9.ii). It appears to quiver and shake; it is a darkened, grey mass – an adolescent body on the cusp of transformation (or eradication). Woodman also returns us to those monochrome memories, those images in black and white which are somehow timeless, unreal, in their blanking out the richness of colour. To this effect, Woodman still conceals herself within the grainy, grey layers of the photograph’s surface: ‘History is only grey. Only grey.’

**The White Sibling**

Scientists tell us that when all the colours of the spectrum are blended together they make white. True light is white, not coloured. What we perceive and what is in fact the reality, are two opposing concepts. We look at white and may think of purity, but may also think of emptiness; a literal blank canvass onto which we project ideas and images from our consciousness. But even then a canvass has landscape created from a dimpling of the surface, or a crease or fold in the corner. White walls are walls undecorated, unadorned. Naked. Bare and exposed, they are easily dirtied or pockmarked by poking fingers and hand smudges. White walls seem like the colour of life has been drained from them, like a body with no blood.

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280 Miroslaw Balka, *The Unilever Series: Miroslaw Balka, How It Is.*
– ‘sterile […] white, white and clean, clean, clean.’

Whiteread’s black Closet has a sibling, a white sibling, Untitled [Wardrobe] (1994) (fig.10). The cast object which is itself a double has yet another which mirrors it, but radically splits from it. Untitled is another wardrobe space, but one which now serves to both illuminate and confront the darkness and blindness invoked by Closet. Untitled is a cast of another wardrobe, but its plaster has been left bare; its original skin left unclothed. Very little is written on Untitled; it does not hold the same connotations of childhood fear, or of the artist’s remembrance of darkness; the significance of Untitled as a sibling cast only emerges in relation to Closet. In being left “untitled”, Untitled also denies that presence of the blackened, dark closet, that queer space which its sibling alludes to. Its whiteness simply projects outwards: nothing is concealed here.

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Chapter Two:
Siblings and Seriality,

*Untitled [One Hundred Spaces] (1995)*

[Whiteread] vividly remembers the smell and sensation of the darkness she experienced as a child when one of her sisters locked her in their grandmother’s wardrobe.  
(Charlotte Mullins, *RW: Rachel Whiteread*)

So how did she get to this unlikely place? Where does she get her huge ambition? She is not keen on answering such questions – she is not really keen on being interviewed at all – but she once gave me a massive clue when she volunteered that the key to her personality is that she is the younger sister of twins – moreover, twins who spoke their own private language – so she was born into a two-against-one situation and has been fighting her corner ever since. She may be quiet but she is stubborn – as she has needed to be to get her big projects built.  
(Lynn Barber, “Some Day my Plinth Will Come”)

Sojourns into the childhood narratives of the artist do not serve as evidence of artistic intent, nor do they confirm the presence of childhood within the works themselves. However, in relation to Whiteread’s own musings on the influence behind *Closet* (1988) – that of her sisters locking her in a bedroom wardrobe – there is a continuous suggestive presence of sibling relations within the writings and interviews surrounding the work. Sibling theory opens up Whiteread’s sculptures: seemingly minimalist forms offer a possible analogy to sibling, peer and lateral group relations, with installations of grouped casts offering an illuminating visualisation of sibling theory. Significantly, Whiteread’s sculptures do not suggest an immediate connection to siblings, and the artist makes no claim that her serialisation offers a direct connection to the child or childhood. The cast spaces are not figurative portrayals of children. In offering an analogy between siblings and sculptural seriality I shift focus away

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from the singular, lone child as discussed in relation to *Closet*, and instead turn attention to the role of that singular child in relation to other children – siblings and peers – with sculptures specifically considered as group pieces, rather than monumental, or individual works. The sister sibling relationship has a lingering presence with Whiteread’s *Closet*, with her twin sisters locking her in wardrobes seemingly inspiring the creation of this very early ‘childhood piece.’

The artist’s curiosity of her elder twin-sisters’ strange bond – their doubling and supposed secret language – and the role of the third child in this familial seriality is reconsidered through Whiteread’s casting process. Sisterhood is (anecdotally) present in her first substantial sculpture; concepts of sibling-ness open up Whiteread’s sculptural pieces by framing them precisely within that discourse of the many – repetition and seriality – rather than the singular.

Responding to Juliet Mitchell’s study of siblings and Briony Fer’s discussion of the tendency toward repetition and seriality in late modern and contemporary art, this chapter argues that a notion of siblings which emerges with works such as *Closet* and *Untitled [Wardrobe]* (1994), comes to the fore with the installation *Untitled [One Hundred Spaces]* (1995) (fig.11). Reminiscent of Bruce Nauman’s concrete cast of the area under his chair of 1965, Whiteread’s installation consists of a series of resin casts of the space underneath chairs – like giant coloured jelly sweets or building blocks, their multi-coloured skins glinting and glowing (fig.12). Whiteread’s works offer both seriality and repetition in different forms – although these terms need to be further deconstructed in light of both siblings and Whiteread’s uses of casting. Each art object is “unique” by the very nature of the casting process, but it should be viewed as a “sibling” to all other accompanying casts: ‘seriality has to do with something that is not identical but is related […] it is the *same* but different.’

Seriality within siblings and within a process of sculptural casting concerns the relationship between

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284 Mullins, *RW: Rachel Whiteread*, 19. As argued in chapter one on *Closet* (1988), interpretation is not defined by artist anecdote or autobiographic snippets, but adds another layer to possible interpretation.
287 Siblings are also central focus of Carter’s narrative (with siblings, and thus seriality, often a key feature within many traditional folk and fairy tales). *The Magic Toyshop* revolves around the interactions between three siblings groups: Melanie, Jonathon and Victoria; Francie, Finn and Aunt Margaret; Uncle Philip and his sister (mother of Melanie, Jonathon and Victoria). Violence, incest, the desire to both destroy and mirror the sibling are the “closeted” narratives of childhood unveiled by Mitchell, and are prominent themes in Carter’s narrative. Margaret and Francie’s incestuous relationship, a pertinent symbol of the romantic mythologising the adolescent Melanie is often prone to undertake, is the ‘last taboo’ signifying the total breakdown of so-called normative nuclear family relations. Carter’s text has therefore been very useful for considering the representation of sibling relations within the domestic sphere, and how they can serve to disrupt presumed hierarchical relations between adult, parent and child.
the singular to the group dynamic. Thus in considering sibling seriality, as posed by Mitchell, in relation to seriality within art, as discussed by Fer, I aim to convey how an analogy can be drawn between familial (and peer) structures and Whiteread’s installation *Untitled [One Hundred Spaces]* (1995).

**Siblings and Twinning**

Analysis of *Closet* (1988) in Chapter One focuses upon the child-parent relationship, defining the child in response to the vertical generational struggle. However, Juliet Mitchell offers an alternative reading of the child through a psychoanalytic reading of siblings, and those significant lateral relationships which are often considered secondary to biological parenthood and the ‘law of the father’. One of Mitchell’s most intriguing revelations is that of the post-war responses from children who were evacuated and removed from their families during war-time. She notes: ‘Answering the questionnaires, the children don’t say they most miss their mothers: what they mention is their cats, their dogs, their toys and, above all, their siblings.’ And teachers also noted (alongside the expected homesickness and a decline in school concentration), unexpected ‘improved health and personal appearance, but better relationships with teachers and peers, a widening of interests and a tremendous increase in self-reliance.’ The positives of child development away from the parental home were not acknowledged by post-war theorists and policy advisors advocating the return of women and mothers to the home, to care for their children. Mitchell aims her critique primarily at the

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work of John Bowlby and his analysis of separation anxiety when the mother is not in the presence of the baby. Post-war anxiety on the lack of the maternal is seen most overtly in William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* (1954): ‘It is, I believe, the result of explaining faulty sibling relations in terms not of potentially good sibling relations, but in terms of failed mothering.’ 292 The responses from evacuated children clearly pose implications for the ‘mythical nuclear family’. 293 This serves to frame my reading of siblings in relation to Whiteread’s cast objects: child development as informed not by the presence of the vertical, parental relations, but by their absence and replacement by lateral sibling or peer influences.

According to Mitchell, our understanding of the relationship between siblings impacts upon our perception of “strangers”, as they are defined in opposition to the structures of sibling relations. Mitchell argues that the sibling is a stranger who then becomes friend or foe – there is no prefigured relationship between siblings in which they are “natural” friends. Trauma, as initiated by the desire to destroy the sibling triggers the change from stranger to kinship, friend or foe. Initially the sibling looks to the new baby as an extension of itself, ‘imagines a new baby as himself reproduced’; 294 but the new sibling in fact replaces it, replaces the baby it once was. 295 Anticipating the new arrival with narcissistic self-love, the new sibling is received as an unknown stranger, an intruder into a pre-existing familial structure, which up to this point has for elder the child only consisted of vertical rather than horizontal relations. The child believes the new sibling indicates a certain annihilation of the self, as it believes s/he is to be replaced. The birth of a new sibling also brings to the fore the sexuality of the mother and father, whereby the possibility of yet another sibling is always present. 296 Significantly, siblings challenge binary structures and introduce seriality. And seriality plays a key role in childhood; we go from child to children, from lone child to being a brother or sister; to the group, the mob; and back full circle to the family structure in which the vertical and horizontal play out their roles.

Mary Jacobus argues that as a child Freud was ‘full of mistrust and anxiety that his mother’s inside might conceal yet more children.’ 297 Klein also comments that ‘the aggression against phantasied brothers and sisters, who are attacked inside the mother’s body, also gives

295 Mitchell, *Siblings*, 64.
rise to feelings of guilt and loss. The aggression towards the sibling, and resulting guilt, are
in both cases projected through the maternal body, with siblings somewhat ‘phantasied’
others. The psychic attack upon the sibling is also an attack upon the mother. However,
Mitchell’s analysis of siblings assesses the actual physical interactions between siblings,
which should be read independently of the parental and vertical Oedipal struggle. She
comments, ‘It seems that our concentration on the child since the seventeenth century has been
exactly that – an adult focus on the child and the analytic modalities which see the child within
the context of the adults on whom it depends or is made to depend. This surely is, in part at
least, why siblings, even as children, have been missing from the picture – they can get on
with it on their own but they are not visible except in the presence of adults.’ The vertical
relations between the parent and child have been at the forefront of psychoanalysis, but it is
these lateral sibling relations – which then have an effect upon peer relations – which are the
focus for Mitchell. She emphasises that child sibling relations are significant for the adult, as
s/he continues to be enmeshed within these lateral relationships.

In families you’ve got two sets of laterality. You’ve got child siblings and adult
siblings […] two gangs, and two relationships: the bad and the good – warfare and
care and protection – and the two possibilities on horizontal axis along the wife-
husband-sibling line and on the children-sibling line […] One way that we’re
trapped in the vertical is that we can’t think of that mother’s brother as the
mother’s brother. The mind instantly makes him a substitute father.

We are also dealing with phantom siblings, those ‘older, shadowy’ figures whose
relationships lay the foundation for younger children and siblings.

However, there is a certain absence within Mitchell’s analysis which opens up the
absence within Whiteread’s works. For example, within Mitchell’s analysis there is a lack of
discussion of the third child in relation to twin-siblings. If twins are analogous with the
seriality of cast objects, what happens when duality and pairing is added to, to create the ‘two-
against-one’ scenario as highlighted by Whiteread’s sibling situation? But why does this

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298 Melanie Klein, “Mourning and its Relation to Manic Depressive States” (1940), in Juliet Mitchell, ed., The
299 Mitchell, Siblings, xiv.
301 Flanery, On Sibling Love, Queer Attachment and American Writing, p. 9.
matter for sculpture?: it matters in that installations of grouped objects are somewhat naturalised; there is little discussion of the relationship between the singular cast object and the many cast objects which sit alongside one another to form an installation piece. Whiteread’s remembrance of her sisters locking her in wardrobes, and her exclusion from the secret language between them302 – the specificity of twins rather than just “everyday” siblings – is presented as the key problem in this sibling relationship, the ‘two-against-one situation.’ Mitchell acknowledges she is both ‘fascinated and intellectually inhibited by the thought of twins; wanting to understand and not knowing how to think about them at the same time.’303 John Lash offers a full and detailed overview of the cultural mythology of twins, focusing in particular on its expression within visual culture – which no doubt could be updated with further contemporary examples. 304 A social and psychoanalytical curiosity also revolves around “identical” (monozygotic) twins (the result of the actual splitting of the zygote) – their duality coming to represent the psychoanalytical split-subject, and the “universal” twinning that belongs to the splitting of the ego in the paranoid-schizoid phases of the small baby in all of us.305 The twin sibling pairing is often aligned with a psychological split state. Rather than the similarity of twins being the focus, it is their possible differences or a notion of a split subject (as discussed by Mitchell) which frames discourse surrounding their doubling. Alessandra Piontelli outlines the complex relations between twins – in particular, monozygotic twins – and the subsequent possession, jealousy and rivalry which (as Mitchell outlines) is present between siblings, but is heightened with twins. Notably, it is the existing social and cultural response to monozygotic twins – their presumed “identical” identities, ‘cuteness’, and

302 See Alessandra Piontelli, Twins: From Fetus to Child (London: Routledge, 2002). Piontelli again notes the romanticised and mythologised intrauterine behaviour of twins: ‘the “mystical” union so often ascribed to them is frequently considered to date back to prenatal life.’ Piontelli’s analysis goes someway to critiquing the assumed active communication between twins in the uterus at a very early foetal stage. Constant sensory-motor feedback is present, but complex social and emotional patterns belong to post-natal life. Significantly, ‘intrapair stimulation before the tenth or eleventh week can be considered a fairly exceptional event […] Twins are usually too distant, the space within their amniotic sacs too big, the membranes dividing these two sacs too thick and their movements too weak for them effectively to reach their co-twin.’ However, ‘from 11-13 weeks intrapair stimulation can be observed as a progressively more frequent event […] and they are very responsive to the other’s movements at 20-22 weeks.’ Piontelli, 31, 35-38. Whether this can be considered active communication is still doubted. 303 Mitchell, Siblings, 232.
305 Mitchell, Siblings, 233.
‘magic bond’\textsuperscript{306} – which draws considerable attention to them, and creates a context in which usual sibling relations have to be reconsidered.

\textit{Closet} (1988) and \textit{Untitled [Wardrobe]} (1994) allude to the child as a split subject, the two faces of the culturally constructed child – the (undesired) Dionysian child versus the (desired) Apollonian child.\textsuperscript{307} But binaries such as this are split open by serialtiy (to use a casting referent). Together, black \textit{Closet} and white \textit{Untitled [Wardrobe]} form a couple, a pairing, and can be read as a sibling pair: the cast object which is itself a double has yet another which mirrors it, but radically splits from it. Siblings offer a mirror onto the self, in that they are similar to the self, but are also different. Siblings help to define who we are not, as much as who we are. The significance of \textit{Untitled} as a sibling cast emerges in relation to \textit{Closet} and its blackness. Although a vertical relationship exists between the original parental object (the wardrobe) and \textit{Closet}, a different relationship emerges in relation to its “other” – that \textit{Untitled} sculpture which is the same, but different. Duality is created; a notion of seriality begins to evolve, and there is a focus upon art \textit{objects} as opposed to the singular, dominant art object.

In relation to Whiteread’s familial structure, twinning forms part of a sibling triad. Whitread is the third child – the sibling which is absent in Mitchell’s limited analysis of twin-relations. The fetishization of twins, doubling, and pairs in some Western and non-Western cultures\textsuperscript{308} is blind to the third child – the child ‘fighting her corner’ to be seen and heard above the desired unification of the two halves that make a whole.\textsuperscript{309} Absence within seriality is that feeling of self-as-excluded, or being absent from specific lateral relations – whether it be biological sibling or peer groups. The self is a unit within seriality, but standing on the outside looking in, rather than looking along the lateral line – and overriding sense of difference, rather than sameness. As Mitchell queries, is the anti-social child, the lone individual looking in on the lateral, always to be considered a patient of psychopathy?\textsuperscript{310} Or is this a more common occurrence in sibling and peer relations – exclusion rather than inclusion?

Mitchell argues that the existing child’s fear of annihilation initiates a destructive impulse, ‘the mother is always negotiating between the children […] the child when a sibling comes along, wants to be in one of two places. The child feels banished and wants to be either

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{306} Piontelli, \textit{Twins: From Fetus to Child}, 131-132; 21; 91-92; 93-94.
\item \textsuperscript{307} Chris Jenks, \textit{Childhood} (New York: Routledge, 2005), 62-70.
\item \textsuperscript{308} Lash, \textit{Twins and The Double}, outlines various cultural examples of twins as taboo and fetish, 82-83.
\item \textsuperscript{309} Lash, \textit{Twins and The Double}, 50-51.
\item \textsuperscript{310} Mitchell, \textit{Siblings}, 184.
\end{itemize}
the baby that has replaced it – wants itself back as the baby – or wants to be the mother that has had the baby.311 Mitchell notes,

I think it is normative, or normal even, for displaced siblings to feel violent towards the person who displaces them. So you get that oscillation between an extension of your narcissistic love for a friend and your violence towards a person who has displaced you […] The ability to reverse into the opposite feelings of love and hatred can be seen vividly in children.312

However, Mitchell does not account for the introduction of a new sibling after twins to create a new triad. Likewise, Piontelli in her study of monozygotic and dizygotic twins comments on the child born prior to new twins, but she makes no comment on the new sibling entering the family as the third child – the stranger who is pitted against two similar, or near-identical others. This child has no “identical” other, and may be prone to creating an imaginary twin.313 Although Mitchell argues that the elder sibling will feel displaced, in this case it is the younger sibling which feels most displaced in the presence of the elder twins (who have a well-established unity). Notably, in place of the ‘secret language’ shared by the artist’s sisters, and in order to fill a void initiated by a feeling of exclusion, Whiteread projects her own sibling seriality, creating her own “twins” and further siblings through a language of casting. The cast object can be recreated, offering seriality with each new cast (sibling). However, in creating a new art object there is an acknowledgment of lack, that the previous work did not satisfy a yearning, a need, or fill that absence. Likewise, the creation of a new child, a new sibling, is seemingly representative of a “lack” in the existing child (this one is not enough). The process of casting mirrors the heterosexual reproductive process; its recreations (children) are the desired future product.314 To reproduce, to create a series of siblings, is the aim of the casting

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313 In relation to loneliness, and the longing to understand oneself, Klein comments: ‘One expression of this longing is the universal phantasy of having a twin – a phantasy to which Bion drew attention in an unpublished paper. This twin figure as he suggested, represents those un-understood and split off parts which the individual is longing to regain, in the hope of achieving wholeness and complete understanding; they are sometimes felt to be the ideal parts. At other times the twin also represents an entirely reliable, in fact, idealised internal object.’ Klein, “On the Sense of Loneliness” (1963), in Melanie Klein, Envy and Gratitude and other works 1946-1963 (London: Vintage, 1997), 302. The paper referred to by Klein is “The Imaginary Twin” (1950), in Wilfred R. Bion, Second Thoughts: Selected Papers on Psychoanalysis (London: Karnac, 1984).
process. And like the reproductive process, seriality is at its core: seriality presenting objects which are the same (but different). Crucially, ‘chromosomal discrepancies and aberrations occur during the early splitting of the zygote’; the so-called identical physical and emotional attributes of monozygotic twins is a falsehood, they are similar, but not identical. The cast object, despite attempts to repeat, to create a pure double, will never be an identical other. This is reassuring for the third child who fights her corner against the myth of the identical. Closet and Untitled [Wardrobe] as a pair (of wardrobe spaces), also emphasise the impossibility of the identical in casting, and Whiteread’s desire to reject the identical in favour of difference and variation. The third child is very much aware of her difference to the two near-identical others that are her sisters.

Whiteread’s anecdote of her sisters locking her in wardrobes locates her sisterhood relations in the domestic sphere, with the bedroom framing the sister sibling relations – a which conceals the ‘closed world’ of sister siblings.

It can be said that a child’s room, replete with all its belongings and its ability to provide sanctuary from the control of parents, is a place of disproportionate

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315 Piontelli, Twins: From Fetus to Child, 21.
316 Christine E. Coffman, “The Papin Enigma”, GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 5:3 (1999), 331-359. The case of the two French maids, Christine Papin (8 March 1905-18 May 1937) and Léa Papin (15 September 1911 - 2001) who brutally murdered their employer’s wife and daughter in Le Mans, France, February 1933, has fascinated artists, filmmakers and psychoanalysts alike (including Jean Genet, Jean-Paul Sartre and Jacques Lacan) – all attempting to penetrate the ‘closed world’ of the sister siblings. The suggested incestuous affair between the two sisters has been the focus of much analysis – with the suggestion of their ‘depraved’ sexuality being the cause for their murderous acts. The problem with any presentation of the Papin sisters is the blurring of same-sex desire with incestuous desire – the two become conflated under a label of depravity and immorality. The boundaries of familial sisterhood and social sisterhood become indistinct: ‘With their psyches on trial in the pages of Minotaure and their murderous blows illustrating the perils of incest, the Papin sisters become the working-class embodiment of bourgeois anxieties surrounding sexuality in the family. Thus it is significant that their chambre de bonne was located literally under their bourgeois victims’ roof, where the Freudian family romance was uncomfortably at home. For bourgeois spectators, the sisters’ mysterious chamber serves as the site of otherness that provokes both fascination and anxiety – as the place, both comfortably distant and disturbingly close, at which to pose and evade the unsettling question of their own desires’, Coffman, 572. The chambre de bonne, the bedroom, is thus the focus for projected anxiety – perhaps unsurprising, given that the sisters, post-murder, were found hiding in the bedroom. The film Sister My Sister (1995), directed by Nancy Meckler and written by Wendy Kesselman (based on her own play, My Sister in This House), emphasises the role of the claustrophobic, bourgeois house in shaping the relations between the sisters, and between the sisters and their employers. In the film’s closing scene the camera pans the exterior of the house; its windows (all but one) shuttered and in darkness; only a single flickering light suggestive of human presence. The single shot is evocative of the sealed interior of Whiteread’s House (1993-1994) but also reminiscent of the interior-lit dollhouses later displayed with the installation Place [Village](2006-2008). These are all mysterious interiors which offer a seemingly serene and silent exterior to the outside world, but their interiors contain secrets, and in the case of the Papin sisters, murder: a murder intent and incestuous acts – both of which defy the familial bourgeois ideal. The camera turns to the interior, winding its way through the darkness and the blood covered stairs and walls to focus upon the closed bedroom doors, leading into the Papin sisters’ bedroom, in which they sit huddled, unclothed, shaking with fear and gripping tight to one another.
significance to the child’s development of place identity and therefore in self-identity.\textsuperscript{317}

Here an assumption is made that, firstly, the child’s bedroom is in fact a sanctuary, and secondly that such a space symbolises protection from the parental only. Mitchell’s theory of siblings is perhaps most significant in that it breaks open the unchallenged myth of sibling unity against the parental. She emphasises the power struggles – sexual and violent – which exist between siblings, with the space of the bedroom sometimes the setting of incestuous abuse. Likewise, the bedroom for Whiteread as featured within the opening anecdote attached to \textit{Closet}, is the space in which her sisters conspired – two-against-one – to lock her in the wardrobe, evoking her later projection (through \textit{Closet}) of fear and anxiety of the darkness. It is worth noting that all Whiteread’s works have been concerned with revealing the interior, making it impossible to be trapped within. A turning inside-out suggests that such interior spaces – including that of the bedroom – should not be assumed a sanctuary from other exterior threats; the interior is not always a safe protective space.

Whiteread herself makes a direct connection between the domestic sphere (specifically the bedroom) and the female body. Commenting upon a cast mattress, \textit{Untitled [Black Bed]} (1991), she notes – ‘this work also had this lip, like a clitoris.’\textsuperscript{318} She also talks of surfaces ‘bleeding’\textsuperscript{319} into the plaster of sculptures; the domestic space, traditionally feminised, is also a sensual space, where the female subject discovers her own body and its own ‘secret spaces’.\textsuperscript{320} For Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, the bedroom is an eroticised space of sisterhood:

Bedroom scenes are not so commonplace in Jane Austen’s novels that readers get jaded with the chiaroscuro of sleep and passion, wan light, damp linen, physical abandon, naked dependency, and the imperfectly clothed body. \textit{Sense and Sensibility} has a particularly devastating bedroom scene […] We know well enough who is in this bedroom: two women. They are Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, they are sisters, and the passion and perturbation of their love for each other is, at the very least, the backbone of this powerful novel. But who is in this

\textsuperscript{318} Jan Debbaut and Selma Klein Essink, eds., \textit{Rachel Whiteread} (Amsterdam: Van Abbemuseum, 1993), 8.
\textsuperscript{319} Debbaut and Essink, \textit{Rachel Whiteread}, 13.
\textsuperscript{320} Debbaut and Essink, \textit{Rachel Whiteread}, 9.
bedroom scene? And, to put it vulgarly, what’s their scene? It is the naming of a man, the absent Willoughby, that both marks this as an unmistakably sexual scene, and by the same gesture seems to displace its “sexuality” from the depicted bedroom space of same-sex tenderness, secrecy, longing, and frustration. Is this, then, a hetero- or a homoerotic novel (or moment in a novel)? No doubt it must be said to be both, if love is vectored toward an object and Elinor’s here flies toward Marianne, Marianne’s in turn toward Willoughby. 321

As sisters, they openly share their desire, but the object of desire is absent; the sister comes to stand-in for this object. There is a sharing of desire, frustration and secrets. The locking of Whiteread in the bedroom wardrobe is suggestive of an exclusion from certain sisterly closeness. Instead, the third child is left to her own company, pleasure and desires, in the blackened dark space. Sibling relations, then, should not be presumed to be unequivocally close or intimate as suggested by Sedgwick’s reading of Austen’s bedroom scene. And Sedgwick does not discuss the secret desires which are withheld by Elinor from her sister Marianne – Elinor offers her a suggestive lead into her desires for Willoughby, but not all is revealed to Marianne, or to the reader. Likewise, the third child is exterior to the intimacy of her elder sisters – their twin sisterhood. The bedroom (for Whiteread-as-child-remembered) may signify exclusion and trauma, rather than inclusion. According to Winnicott, exclusion from the mother’s breast leads the child to transitional objects – dolls, dollhouses, toys, furniture. Winnicott’s theory may also be applied to a notion of exclusion from sibling relations, and other sibling bodies. Collecting can be read as a performance, a method for projecting difference – a psychological practice. Winnicott suggests the object substitutes the mother; the practice of serial casting (not dissimilar in its desire for the “collection”) thus offers possible substitutes for these other “lost” objects – siblings. They are physical forms which act as stand-ins for absent bodies. Given that Whiteread uses chairs – furniture pieces specifically designed to hold and support the body – then an anthropomorphic reading of the sculptures is not unjustified. The object is a replacement for the absent body; the object is anthropomorphised and is the body. My analogous reading of cast spaces with a notion of siblings, is emphasised by the identifiable repetition and serialisation present with One Hundred Spaces. The grouping and collection alludes to the congregation of sibling bodies

and peers, and a certain psychology behind reproduction which relies upon the desired creation of many, rather than a satisfaction with the singular.

Casting and Seriality

Untitled [One Hundred Spaces] (1995) is the culmination of Whiteread’s (serial) fascination with casting the space underneath chairs, primarily ‘wooden seats of the kind found in church halls and schools, old dining rooms and public institutions.’ The earlierUntitled [Six Spaces] (1994) (fig.13) offers uniquely individual pieces, with each a resin cast bearing the physical strain of an individual’s human weight. The presence of personal physiology is marked out by the dipping of the seat area, or a slight lop-sided tilt of a rim. ‘Lined up like an identity parade’, each of the six pieces has its own shade and colouring, ‘indigo, slate, tea, lime, antique gold, rose.’ The unassuming (invisible) space beneath a seat is transformed into a resin jewel, reflecting and refracting the light; or like amber, trapping air bubbles and dust and other possible organisms in it centre. It offers the possibility of something else within; it has become its own secret space: ‘One experiences a strange sense of being drawn into the dense matter, whereas the plaster pieces are very much to do with the surface.’ The tension between the interior and exterior is again heightened with these pieces. As casts formed from the air around the furniture object, a newly formed space emerges which emphasises matter, where matter did not previously exist. Resin also evokes orality: chew toys, bottle nipples; early objects of childhood are often resin-based – these to be later replaced by a desire or fantasy for colourful boiled sweets and jellies. An evocation of the oral-object also alludes to a destructive process of biting, chewing, consuming, and then discarding and finally ejecting from the body. Orality in childhood is framed by the tension between interior and exterior. Mignon Nixon in her essay ‘Bad Enough Mother’ focuses upon the intimate and destructive qualities of orality, considering the biting and chewing fantasies as described by Klein’s analysis, in relation to Louise Bourgeois’ expressions of oral-sadistic fantasies against the Father-figure. Notably, these oral destructive desires from Bourgeois are considered a replacement for speech, and are emphatically sexual: ‘The little girl’s desire to speak and her frustration at being silenced is transposed into another desire for oral power and pleasure – the desire to bite, to cut, to devour the one who oppresses with his speech […]

325 Mullins, RW: Rachel Whiteread, quoting Whiteread, 72.
desire to turn the social ritual of the family meal with its sublimated conditions of cutting and biting into a cannibalistic ceremony in which the Father’s powers, his words, are consumed and incorporated by the children in the eating of his flesh. Whiteread’s works address destructive fantasies and desires differently to Bourgeois’ erotic forms. In terms of a sculptural scale of Kleinian destruction, Bourgeois has reached a level of full expression, whereas Whiteread’s works are still at the stage of repressed thought.

The domestic space is the setting for familial rituals – the family meal being one such ritual. The father, acting as “head” of the table is thus the focus for Bourgeois’ aggression, as he is perceived to be the figure who both controls the domestic setting and keeps in check the expressions of the child. However, in contrast to the aggressive oral fantasies which are verbally and visually expressed by Bourgeois, Whiteread’s sugar-lump(esque) casts evoke a certain pleasure in the oral, or the pleasurable anticipation of sweet taste. The rigid regularity of an installation such as Untitled [One Hundred Spaces], which is suggestive of enforced restrictions, contrasts with the expressive colouration of the individual units. This tension between regularity and difference is first displayed with Untitled [Six Spaces].

Unlike the impenetrable exterior of Closet (1988), the translucence of the objects allows us to see through and around the interiors, although the view is somewhat blurred and distorted. Each of the six cast-spaces is similar to the others, but offers something different (‘we each had a tremendous stake in our difference’). Lined up horizontally, rejecting the vertical, this is not any identity parade, but a sibling parade (my memory flashes to the popular sibling line-up of Von-Trapp children, seven in fiction, ten factually, all waiting to be berated by their domineering father). Each cast piece represents an individual body; the space takes on a physicality: short, tall, squat, slim, indented, smooth; each resin skin with its own markings from the setting process. But they are identified as a collection; they cannot exist as pieces outside of the group dynamic. They are tied into all being Untitled, just six spaces; their identity as sculptures only comes from being displayed, positioned and cast together.

Jane Gallop, Anecdotal Theory ( Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2002), 139-140. Gallop is referring to her sister-sibling relationship. In the chapter “Econstructing Sisterhood”, Gallop uses her own anecdotes of sister-sibling relations to reflect upon a wider political interpretation, and use of the term ‘sisterhood’. She comments, ‘I was nonplussed by the celebration of “sisterhood” around me […] my relation to Judi does not seem at all like feminism. What it did seem like was sibling rivalry […] Within feminism, I heard rosy tales of the closeness between sisters, sister bonding together against abusive parents, against an abusive world. But Judi and I were not close. It was not just that we were different – different interests, different values – it was that we each had a tremendous stake in our difference.’ Gallop, 139-140.
I’m referring to an early scene in Robert Wise’s film version (1965) of Rogers and Hammerstein’s musical The Sound of Music (1965) when Maria meets the Von-Trapp children, and their father, for the first time.
The timing of the creation of Untitled [Six Spaces] (those small, six children) emerged in 1994 as House (1993-94) – that dominant parental space – was being (or was under threat of being) destroyed. The parental domestic space, which acts as container for furniture pieces, is reduced to a mass of grey concrete rubble, and in its (metaphorical) place emerge smaller, coloured casts. The relationship between the sculptures is not one of verticality – between House and Untitled [Six Spaces] – but laterally, between the six separate pieces. It cannot be predicted how Whiteread’s process or focus would have progressed had House remained standing, but the destruction of this dominant public work seems to have evoked a desire to return to the smaller-scale, or to the serial project as opposed to the singular monument piece (for the time being, anyhow). Untitled [Six Spaces] is itself the start of a new pattern of serialisation, with this installation being followed by Untitled [Twenty-Five Spaces] (1994), and then Untitled [One Hundred Spaces] (1995); groups of objects framed within a series of installations, within, within, like Russian Dolls or the dollhouses of Whiteread’s later installation, Place [Village] (2006-2008).

Briony Fer’s study of seriality and repetition aims to ‘revitalise the term series’ in relation to early Minimalist examples or understanding of seriality: ‘to show, whilst in no sense being exhaustive, how repetition splintered into multiple registers, no longer mainly pitched against the aura of a single, unique artwork so much as against its other selves. Repetition could be partial or infinite, redemptive or destructive.’ Fer contextualises her discussion in terms of a ‘shift that occurred in the late 1950s […] a shift from a collage aesthetic to a serial one.’ The singular work is that parent-object to which all others are compared; the serial objects are the siblings, those artworks which offer lateral relationships to one another, rather than the usual vertical relationship to the singular artwork. The child being read in relation to its ‘other selves’ as opposed to its parent defies Freud’s Oedipal reading and instead embraces an alternative model for the construction of identity, sexuality and desire. This marks a significant shift away from the Oedipal parental structures which have

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329 It is likely that Whiteread began working on these smaller casts during the period following the completion of House in 1993. Notably, House was always intended as a temporary sculpture, despite the heated arguments surrounding the possibility of it remaining as a permanent structure. Thus, the dating of Untitled [Six Space] works symbolically to suggest a temporal relationship between the art objects – given our knowledge of House’s destruction.

330 ‘… the dollhouse’s aptest analogy is the locket or the secret recesses of the heart: centre within centre, within within within. The dollhouse is a materialised secret’, Susan Stewart, On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1993), 61.

331 Fer, The Infinite Line, 2-3.

332 Fer, The Infinite Line, 2.

333 Fer, The Infinite Line, 3.
dominated psychoanalysis, instead posing the question (as offered by Mitchell) – ‘did Oedipus have a sister?’\textsuperscript{334}

Following \textit{Untitled [Six Spaces]} Whiteread produced \textit{Untitled [Twenty-Five Spaces]} (1994); more translucent in colouring, these spaces are like watery jellies, with the clearest blocks replicating ‘the dancing light of surface water or melting ice.’\textsuperscript{335} A key change in process emerges; Unlike \textit{Untitled [Six Spaces]} there is no such individuation in the shape and size of the twenty-five spaces – they are distinctive only through their alternate shadings. The ties between these sculptures are even more sibling like, as they – quite literally – share the same parental cast. These two different approaches of capturing both sameness and difference through casting is repeated with the final chair-spaces installation, \textit{Untitled [One Hundred Spaces]} (1995), first exhibited at the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, and then again in Charles Saatchi’s \textit{Sensation} exhibition, Royal Academy of Art (1997).

It was a series of one-hundred chair spaces, nine different chairs, three different types of resin and three different types of catalyst. By mixing and changing the catalyst I could change the colour without changing the pigment […] It is about a kind of purity, I suppose, in material.\textsuperscript{336}

There is something alchemically mysterious in the slow production of the resin– a layering of materials as opposed to a quick replication. Each piece has to be carefully and tenderly brought into life, ‘resin was poured at an excruciatingly slow pace of 2.5cm a day.’\textsuperscript{337} Fer argues that ‘seriality is a time-based strategy that privileges time over space.’\textsuperscript{338} The artist (as parent) rears her sculptural children through a process of steady and stable care and gentle nourishment, avoiding the pitfalls of rushing, making them grow too quickly, risking an overheated explosion. ‘The slow process enabled her to work at minimising the pour lines’;\textsuperscript{339} according to those psychologists criticised by Sedgwick, ideal motherhood should also work at minimising those cracks and unwanted joins in the child (those aspects which are to be closeted).\textsuperscript{340} The objects created by Whiteread are not identical in any way – they each share

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{334} Mitchell, \textit{Siblings}, 32.
\item\textsuperscript{335} Mullins, \textit{RW: Rachel Whiteread}, 63.
\item\textsuperscript{336} Mullins, quoting Whiteread, \textit{RW: Rachel Whiteread}, 72.
\item\textsuperscript{337} Mullins, \textit{RW: Rachel Whiteread}, 70.
\item\textsuperscript{338} Fer, \textit{The Infinite Line}, 68.
\item\textsuperscript{339} Mullins, \textit{RW: Rachel Whiteread}, 70.
\end{itemize}
traits of shape and process, but they offer difference, rather than sameness. The separate cast units of *One Hundred Spaces* are lined up in rows, all equidistant from each other, the regimentation of the grid emphasising the voids between the casts (fig.10). Empty spaces seem to require filling; a lack of close intimacy between the objects is evident. The individuality of each cast defines it from all its other sibling-casts, undermining a sense of unification of objects, of bodies, under a single banner of siblinghood. (A sense of being separate from or different to siblings, rather than feeling united against those vertical, parental authorities can be read here). The installation is a collective of units, bodies, cast spaces, but within that grouping each object it pitted against another, as it attempts to direct the viewer’s eye towards its own individuality. The ‘kind of wholeness that can be achieved through the repetition of identical units’[^341] (the seeming wholeness of identical twins), is here undermined through the theatrics of the singular and the individual – that third child which transforms twinning and doubling into multiples. Crucially, the possibility of numerous “others” poses a threat to the ideology of twin siblings as a two-against-one force. Whiteread, as the “one” offers the possibility of multiples through casting, which lessens the isolation of the single unit, the third child.

Significantly, if ‘seriality and subjectivity are inextricably bound’[^342] within art, as suggested by Fer, then so too is the subjective identity or image of the child with his/her sibling others. Importantly, seriality allows for such subjectivity, highlighting it and pointing towards it, rather than denying it. The subjectivity of the child – its identity, sexuality, desires and dislikes – is at last accounted for in a theory of seriality. And, as emphasised by Fer, the visual aesthetic experience of seriality – particularly in the mode of the installation – should be considered as a (positive) disruption to presumed ways of looking, as seriality attends to ‘the cuts and dislocations that are a *condition* of viewing.’[^343]

If we see repetition not only producing disintegrating effects but as generative, then how does the new get made out of repetition? If the new is a form of repetition, then could we imagine repetition as invoking not only the always ready-made of memory but also, in the same breath, the possibility of making the new? Could it be that art is one of the very few places in culture that allows a margin of

freedom within repetition rather than a place exempt from its demands? All the more exhilarating, perhaps, because it is only provisional and temporary.\(^{344}\)

Generative, provisional and temporary, the status of the child as singular is reliant upon these indefinites. The lone child always figures within the prospect of seriality – there might be another about to be created, you might be the child which followed the present (or absent) other. For twins, there is the already known prospect of repetition of sameness, and then the possibility of difference in addition to twin duality. Seriality and repetition is provisional and temporary within art, as sequences may change or evolve, or the presentation of the art objects (within an installation) may differ from space to space. Repetition and seriality within art poses the threat of disruption and change, and difference, challenging that which is static. Whiteread as the third child to enter the family structure after her twin-siblings is that new unit which disrupted the sameness, the seeming “identical” repetitions offered by her sisters’ twinning. The third child is that physical evidence of difference and subjectivity.

Mitchell’s theory of siblings not only opens up the relationship between art objects, but also that relationship between artists. Whiteread’s quasi-Minimalism suggests a conversation between artists which should not necessarily be read as an inter-generational (vertical) conversation, but one between artist “brothers” and “sisters” who share similar aesthetic ideals and concerns. In particular, Bruce Nauman can be viewed as the brotherly rival to Whiteread – that older sibling(esque) figure who is admired yet is also a rival.

When I made *Untitled [One-Hundred Spaces]* is was actually about confronting Nauman. I had to do it […] My work is more physiological, and Nauman’s more psychological, conceptual.\(^{345}\)

There is clear irony here; Whiteread’s attempt to reject the psychological ultimately frames her relationship to Nauman through a certain subconscious rivalry. He as the “genius” male artist of Minimalism, she as the younger female artist attempting to aesthetically confront her elder “artist-sibling”; the relationship between the two is not so much intergenerational as sibling rivalry. The younger sibling (Whiteread) respecting her elder (brother), yet also desiring to outshine, outdo, replace him, points her artwork in a similar but different direction.

\(^{344}\) Fer, *The Infinite Line*, 4.
\(^{345}\) Mullins, *RW: Rachel Whiteread*, quoting Whiteread, 73.
Whiteread’s response to her material may be physiological, but her relationship to Nauman is psychological. Rather than fully embrace the continuous reported links between Nauman’s and her own work, Whiteread (as younger “sibling-artist”) actively seeks to distance herself from direct comparisons with his work – in particular, his piece *Cast of the Space Under My Chair* (1965-68), a singular cast unit. Firstly, she moves away from the single cast unit to focus upon a collection, of either art objects, inspirations, and practices, as represented by *Untitled [One-Hundred Spaces]*. Secondly, Whiteread chooses to cast her chair spaces in resin, rather than Nauman’s plaster; and, notably, she overtly rejects the ‘My’ of Nauman’s piece, leaving the work ‘Untitled’. In doing so she draws attention to the materiality of space and the possibility of numerous “others”, as opposed to the (lone) singular self. Whiteread’s piece alludes to the lateral, those extending relationships beyond the vertical, unlike Nauman’s work which calls attention to the vertical authority of the (parental) artist through the singular object. Nauman asserts his ownership over the space and over the cast. *Untitled [One-Hundred Spaces]* rejects the naming process which determines identity, unlike *Closet* (1988) and *House* (1993-94). These lateral relations can be broken down to the smallest of encounters, from the grouping of the casts and their relation to one another, to the chairs which provided their forms for moulds, and to the bodies which once sat upon those chairs. Nauman’s lone object (lone narcissistic child) is now accompanied by Whiteread’s colourful one-hundred space siblings.

**The Classroom**

School is a world in which intimacies are always betrayed.  
(Lauren Berlant, “Two Girls, Fat and Thin”)

The chair, like the wardrobe, is a key piece of furniture from the domestic sphere, but also an object from the communal public space. It is the space beneath the chair which offers its shape for *Untitled [One Hundred Spaces]* (1995). At Whiteread’s first solo exhibition at the Carlisle Gallery in Islington, alongside *Closet* (1988) the artist also showed *Shallow*

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346 Perhaps Joseph Beuys and his *Fat Chair* (1964) – just pre-dating Nauman’s – is the elder “brother” to both, with his layers fat on the space above the seat flipped by both Whiteread and Nauman.

Breath (1988), the cast space beneath a mattress, and Mantle (1988), the cast spaces beneath a dressing table. At this point Whiteread had not attempted to create chair casts, so Mantle is missing its furniture partner – but the absence of the chair does, in fact, raise awareness of its usual presence (in conjunction with a table). Whiteread later created Table and Chair (1994), reuniting the furniture partners (or furniture siblings).

Outside the domestic sphere, that space of parental, vertical authority, the school is the space where siblings merge with peers – lateral relationships being at the centre of the school experience. In the classroom and in the playground, lateral relations are further sexualised and violence now extends beyond the familial. The height of Whiteread’s chair-casts is that of a small child, reminiscent of outsized toy building blocks – the physicality of One-Hundred Spaces is child-like in that sense. However, there is something unnerving – like Closet – about these regulated and ordered casts. Mullins identifies them as ‘miniature regimented troops across the gallery floor, the grid-like arrangement reminiscent of a military graveyard’, like ‘souls hovering at knee height’ – childhood and death (from cradle to grave) are intertwined. I interpret Closet (1988) through its blackness and its allusion to blindness, and the “closeting” of childhoods.Untitled [One-Hundred Spaces] is gloriously technicolour in comparison; the piece reflects a certain fragmentation, but also a desire to regiment that fragmentation and difference through the imposing of the grid formation. The casts were not placed in the gallery at random.

School – second to the domestic home – is the space most occupied by the child and which serves to attempt to regulate and control its physical, emotional and intellectual development. Whiteread’s casts conjure up the regimental grid-formation of furniture and the authoritative structures in place within such institutions. Schooling and educational policies, like policies surrounding child sexuality, have undergone numerous revisions, with a shift from the child-as-worker to child-as-learner. Radical changes have been made to schooling system since the nineteenth century, with the school leaving age in England set at eleven in 1893; twelve in 1899; fourteen in 1921; fifteen in 1947; and sixteen in 1973. The 2008 Education and Skills Act raised the ‘education leaving age’ to eighteen.  

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348 Mullins, RW: Rachel Whiteread, 63.
Sociologist Brenda Simpson argues that,

A school is a locus of discipline, control and power, some manifestations of which are more obvious and clear-cut than others. In the everyday life of the school, the most overt display of power is that of teaching staff in relation to pupils, but, beneath the surface of school life, many other power relationships are apparent. Pupils, for example, possess the ability to resist their teachers and also to wield different forms of power over their peers; boys dominate girls and *vice versa*; and hierarchies of autonomy exists between pupils in varying age sets.\(^\text{350}\)

Simpson acknowledges that hierarchies and power relations are not set just vertically, but also laterally between peers – as in the case of siblings. Significantly, it is the body of the child which is the site for regulation and surveillance: ‘The teacher is advised to subject the pupils to a series of ‘status-reducing exercises’ – insisting they stand up straight, remove their hands from their pockets, fasten their ties and maintain eye contact; in other words, maintain *an appropriate bodily demeanor*. The teacher is assured that utilising these strategies will demonstrate that s/he holds the power.’\(^\text{351}\) The maintenance of the vertical-power relationship of teacher-to-student relies upon teachers ‘gaining control over pupils’ “unruly” bodies.’\(^\text{352}\)

And, as noted by Michel Foucault, schools of yesteryear (and those of today) give the impression ‘that sex was hardly spoken of at all in these institutions. But one only has to glance over the architectural layout, the rules of discipline, and their whole internal organisation: the question of sex was [is] a constant preoccupation.’\(^\text{353}\) Schools, through their imparting of knowledge also impart a sense of controlled sexuality – overtly and covertly. Space, its design and arrangement, monitors activity. The public and private conduct of pupils in secondary schools comes under particular intense scrutiny due to students’ burgeoning sexuality (there is a certain misplaced belief that pre-secondary pupils are sexuality free). The space of the school, like the domestic sphere – that space of ‘tyranny’ according to Mary Douglas – works to control child bodies through an imposing of (adult) hierarchies and rules. However, Mitchell’s theory of siblings, which she argues is relative to peer relations, unpicks


this assumption that the child is a passive receptor of such hierarchies, instead suggesting that
the child is an active participant within lateral power structures.

With the abolition of corporal punishment in state schools in 1986, and in independent
schools in 1998, the control of the child’s body relies upon techniques of surveillance, which
has also extended to the child’s behaviour outside the school grounds. Surveillance in
school takes many forms: the movement around the school buildings; the presentation of the
body through uniform; the regulation of verbal and physical encounters; the attempted de-
sexualisation of older school pupils; the examination and testing processes which offer “proof”
of pupils’ adherence to the rules, methods and expectations of learning. Notably all these
surveillance techniques attempt, as Simpson comments, to structure and regulate bodily
behaviour in line with a notion of appropriateness. There is therefore an assumption that the
body of the child must be controlled, that without these structures the child and his/her peers
would be naturally unruly or corrupted – the (undesired) Dionysian child must be transformed
into the (desired) Apollonian child.355

Marina Warner’s thesis on ‘Thatcher’s children’ responds to what she terms ‘a tragic
deterioration over the decade in the condition of childhood’ under the economic policies of
the 1970s and 1980s. Her argument that a notion of childhood deteriorates under mid-twentieth
century policies makes for an interesting comparative argument to Mitchell’s reflections upon
the freedoms or controls experienced by children during the evacuation process (mentioned
earlier). Warner’s comments are in light of the (then) forthcoming Convention on the Rights
of the Child (1989/1990), which declares ‘the right of every child to a standard of living
adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.’ She
notes, ‘children are loved for not being like adults.’ Controlling the child’s body, through
punishment and surveillance, seemingly ensures that the child does not attempt to mirror the
authority and status of the adult, as assumed by the vertical hierarchy. Warner suggests that it
is the excessive controlling and surveillance of the child which is to part-blame for the

354 For Foucault, Jeremy Bentham’s ‘panopticon’ is the symbol of all-seeing power and surveillance, and that
transfer from bodily punishment to the control of the mind (which in turn then controls the activities of the body).
See chapter three “Panopticism”, Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (London:
355 Jenks, Childhood, 62-70.
357 Warner, Into a Dangerous World, 5.
358 Warner, Into a Dangerous World, 7.
359 Warner, Into a Dangerous World, 58.
‘deterioration’ of childhood. However, Warner frames her argument within the vertical power relations between “adult” and “child”. Warner does not allow for lateral relations and how these may (or may not) have altered, and in turn contribute to a so-called ‘deterioration’ of childhood (as an ideology and concept). Arguably it is group peer relations which adults attempt to regulate, as they pose the constant threat of anarchy to an ideal image of the child, (the order of the classroom must not be disrupted). The classroom also reminds us that – akin to Mitchell’s analysis of evacuee children – peers, siblings, and children in groups can fare very well without the parental, and the school playground offers evidence of this. The vertical authorities of school and home may conflict over who surveys, regulates, and punishes the child’s body, but there are sibling-peer relations enacting out their own forms of regulation and surveillance – particularly in the context of the playground where rules and regulations between children are managed only in part by teachers.

Because of our preoccupation with vertical relationships we believe that it is parents and their substitutes who must restrict violence. We also argue that violence is primarily against the authority figure who has the power – the mother, the father, the teacher. Yet, of course, in schools, in South Sea island children’s republics, boys fight each other and girls get their own back […] We have minimized or overlooked entirely the threat to our existence as small children that is posed by the new baby who stands in our place or the older sibling who was there before we existed360 […] Everyone fears to be dethroned in childhood – is a core experience of playmates and peers.361

Hierarchies emerge between children themselves. Again, Mitchell draws us back to the significance of difference rather than sameness within child-lateral relations – the need to assert the self above others, to promote individuality above cohesive unity. If ‘everyone fears to be dethroned in childhood’, then an assumption that children are natural and willing playmates, or are somehow unified against adult authority, is a myth which serves to frame the child within the parameters of passivity. ‘For most of us, when our conscience is putting us down, making us feel inferior, the voice we hear is reminiscent of the tauntings not of adults,

360 Mitchell, Siblings, xv.
361 Mitchell, Siblings, 2.
but of other children.’ Such taunting can be fuelled by sexual curiosity. Sociologist Lisa W. Loutzenheiser highlights a particularly perverse playground game entitled *Smear the Queer*, whereby a ball is thrown among pupils, and when landing in the hands of a particularly unpopular child its peers cry out ‘smear the queer!’, and pile on top of him: ‘Often the pretence of the ball was given up altogether, and "Smear the Queer" was hollered, and a, usually smaller, student was jumped on by many (generally boy) students. Having been in a pileup or two myself, I know there was nothing fun about being on the bottom, or anywhere in the pile except on the very top of that wriggling mass of children’s bodies.’ Playground games such as this, she argues, unveil the attitudes of schools towards any open discussion of childhood sexuality. This seeming silence and repression of sexuality in the officially controlled spaces of the school results in playground “play” through which misunderstandings, fears and desires are expressed, but sometimes in violent ways. Children are here seen to be regulating each other’s behaviour; they are laying down the rules for acceptable and non-acceptable bodily expression. But it is the school, as a space of control and surveillance, which encourages such peer-to-peer regulation.

The game is analogous to the ways in which schools treat the issues of gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals. The rules of the game are sanctioned by the school culture. There is a sense that it is all in fun, not a game where the name-calling or "piling on" (physical and verbal harassment) puts any student in danger. There is little or no recognition by the school or teachers that the (gay, lesbian, or bisexual) child at the bottom of the pile is in need and deserving their protection. There is no understanding that the (heterosexual) child in the middle of the pile is often part of the harassment but is also damaged. The school looks the other way, assuming that this childish game has few ramifications for any of the participants; in this game all children are the same (heterosexual) and can stand up to its rigors.

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365 Loutzenheiser, “How Schools Play ‘Smear the Queer’”, 59.
Loutzenheiser uses the playground game as reflective of attitudes towards child sexuality and child difference, and the imposed exclusion placed upon some children due to their “difference”. The individual casts of Whiteread’s *One Hundred Spaces* look all the more isolated, rather than a unified collective; each unit separated from the other by an imposed regimentation – an attempt to confine the difference of each cast unit within a grid-formation. There is sculptural and bodily difference here, but it does not go unchecked.

The primary aim of the school institution is the imparting (or imposing) of knowledge to students. This is itself another form control, regulated by the vertical relationship of teacher-as-knowledge-giver, with student-as-knowledge-receiver. Although there have been pedagogical changes to the education system, firstly recognizing that there are different types of learners, and secondly, encouraging pupil-centered learning theories; the basic framework for student-teacher hierarchies is set, with students having little control or say over the curriculum or subject-area content. The traditional classroom continues as a representative space of the school authority which attempts to survey, regulate and impose knowledge. Although *Untitled [One-Hundred Spaces]* alludes to that which is specifically material – rows of regimented seating, as found within most school classrooms – Whiteread’s casts actually present that which is usually unconsidered, the space beneath the chair. Particularly Foucauldian in tone, *Untitled [One-Hundred Spaces]* alludes to the materiality of spatial control but, more prominently, those rules of restriction which are seemingly invisible, or unsaid. Rules of school demand children remain rooted, pinned to the spot in their classrooms, as visually rendered in Maurizio Cattelan’s *Charlie Don’t Surf* (1997) – an installation of a child mannequin seated at a school desk, his hands pinned to the table by two pencils (although his hands cannot write, they do not threaten to wander).

The chair is that visible representation of restriction, but the space beneath and around the chair offers the possibility

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366 The piece is reminiscent of Tadeusz Kantor’s (1915-1990) *Children at their Desks* from marionette and live-theatre production "The Dead Class" (1975): ‘DESKS in The Dead Class. Desks always stand in a classroom. But it was not a classroom – a real place. It was black emptiness, in front of which the entire audience stopped. To make it even more ridiculous and strange the barrier was just a piece of thin string. There must have been another barrier – much stronger and much more terrifying. In this black and hopeless emptiness the DESKS were a prominent example of BIOOBJECT. On those desks bodies were sitting, leaning or standing; they provided the space for all human emotional states - for suffering, fear, love, for budding friendship, compulsion and freedom. The desks imposed order and discipline on the human organism (alive and natural, still exhibiting a tendency to “utilise” space in a disorderly way). They as if constituted a matrix, in which something new and unexpected came into existence, something which was struggling to reach beyond the desks into the black and empty space but was withdrawing and returning to them (the desks) as if they were its home - its matrix!’. From cricoteka archive (Centre for the Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor), Tadeusz Kantor, *Wielopole*, Kraków-Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Literackie (1990), 13, accessed 6 January, 2014. [http://www.cricoteka.pl/en/main.php?d=plastyka&kat=21&id=151](http://www.cricoteka.pl/en/main.php?d=plastyka&kat=21&id=151).
of anarchic disruption. If regulations are abided by then the four legs of the chair should remain on the floor, and the child remains seated upon the chair; if the space beneath the chair is no longer restricted with legs turned upward, then anarchy has erupted at some level. Chairs should never leave the floor; the space beneath should not become apparent. However, Whiteread withholds these literal links to childhood and schooling that Catelan encourages. The actual bodies of children are absent, only the cast spaces remain. Although still in grid formation, the materialisation of the space-beneath suggests the chairs of *Untitled [One-Hundred Spaces]* have been discarded elsewhere; it is one step towards the dismantling of classroom regimentation. The children have left and taken the chairs with them – only a ghostly resin remnant of their possible (past) presence remains. Examples of actual chair installations by Marc Andre Robinson, for example, take the physical chair and displace it, removing it from the floor. Instead of it remaining on the horizontal, the chair is hoisted up to the vertical, it is given height; it is turned up-side-down and rammed or connected to other chairs to create monstrous pieces which defy its original purpose. Whiteread instead shifts attention away from the physical chair itself to the unconsidered space – thus drawing attention to the actual physical absence of the chair which demands “you sit here”. Ai Weiwei’s *Fairytale* (2007) returns chair legs to the ground; an installation about Chinese displacement, a collection of one-thousand-and-one Ming and Qing dynasty chairs were installed in regimented rows at Documenta 12 in Kassel, Germany – one chair for each of the one-thousand-and-one Chinese travellers Ai Weiwei brought to Germany. Ai Weiwei reverses the logic of Whiteread’s absent chairs, instead making overtly visible the past heritage which continues to be remembered in and by the body of the displaced Chinese traveller.

The mild anarchy of the absent chairs with *Untitled [One-Hundred Spaces]*, in enacted out through the collective – the one-hundred spaces suggesting numerous bodies, peers, in resistance to vertical authorities. ‘The classroom can be seen as a battleground, with both sides striving to capture the high ground.’ If the classroom is a battleground, as suggested by Simpson, it positions adults on one side and children on another; but again this hierarchy ignores the complex battling which may also be taking place within the peer group itself. This

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367 Furniture installations by Marc Andre Robinson include *Myth Monolith [Liberation Movement]* (2007) and *By Themselves And Of Themselves* (2008). It is also worth noting Doris Salcedo’s chair piece, *Installation at 8th International Istanbul Biennial* (2003). Salcedo’s work is imbued with a greater sense of political urgency than Whiteread’s *Untitled [One Hundred Spaces]*, but both have in common that significant absence which is attached to the unused piece of domestic furniture. Both Salcedo’s piece and Whiteread’s installation allude to the individual and collective body, and the anonymity which haunts such overt absence.

368 Simpson, “Regulation and Resistance”, 77.
returns us to Mitchell’s siblings theory which holds significance for school peers and friendship groups as well as biological siblings. The surveillance techniques applied by the school rely upon the vertical relationship, the teaching playing a substitute parent. The threat of splitting the group dynamic is wielded as punishment by the teachers – whether this be physical removal from a classroom or space, so be placed elsewhere, or the more psychological splitting of seemingly studious pupils from rebellious and nonconformist, with a rewards system operating for those students who do “conform”. However, the school authority does embrace a notion of the collective peer-group, so long as it is under the banner of the school. The controlling of the visual appearance of students through uniform partly achieves this. Children’s bodies are expected to conform ‘both visibly and behaviourally.’

Personalisation of uniform through an amendment of clothing or additional jewellery, make-up and extravagant hair styling is disallowed, or at least not encouraged. Whiteread’s casts are the antithesis to this. Although a set of nine different casts are used to create the one-hundred, each of the colours is unique. Thus despite the grid formation and attempted regulation of a fragmented collection, each piece stands alone as colourfully singular, emphasising difference. However, the individual colours find their strength and greatest effect en masse (particularly in the white gallery space); this is very much a group, peer, sibling installation. The child, then, can be at its most beautiful in a group (when regulated), but it is also at its most threatening to adult authority when uncontrolled. Likewise, the installation as a method of art production somewhat threatens the individual, singular art object – returning to that visual dialogue taking place between Whiteread and Nauman.

**Cloning: Sameness and Difference**

The scientific process of cloning mirrors that similarly false reproductive process of casting, re-framing childhood through non-biological reproduction. Using an object (or bodily tissue and cells in the case of science-cloning), the original object is only useful in that it offers the opportunity for “others” to be created – it is not important for itself, as a unique

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369 Simpson, “Regulation and Resistance”, 64, 68.
371 The riots of August 2011 in various parts of the UK served to highlight a certain breakdown in the methods of surveillance and bodily control. Notably, the riots did not comprise of purely ‘Dionysian’ children, but young people not usually considered “trouble-makers” took part – a certain mass hysteria driving groups to challenge those structures of authority which have previously never been challenged. The riots raised many sociological issues, particularly questions surrounding the controlling of bodies. Despite the UK being a country with considerable surveillance methods, the riots somewhat proved that Foucauldian methods of control are only affective if those being controlled acknowledge those rules set down by the “vertical” authorities.
artefact or thing. Its purpose has come to an end once the numerous others have been created. Its value is only maintained by its necessity within a process of cloning, repetition or serialisation. Crucially, singular individuality is perceived to be under threat through cloning. Uncontrolled cloning is a monstrous mimicry of the natural reproductive process, which gives rise to fears of a resulting abnormal or abject clones which are (perhaps) unstoppable in their multiplication. And the science fiction clone complicates the set biological boundaries of the parental and sibling (cloning in the sci-fi sense is taken to be abject or threatening to the natural process of biological reproduction).³⁷²

The mixed desire and terror of sameness that is offered by an idea of cloning or repetition is considered by Adam Phillips in his essay ‘Sameness is All’.³⁷³ Phillips’ essay allows for an intriguing comparison to be made between the issues of sibling and peer relations – as presented by the anxiety surrounding the birth of a new child or the attendance of a new school – and that of “artificial” reproduction through cloning.

An Eight-year old girl who was referred to me for school phobia – which began a year after her sister was born – told me in her second session that when she grew up she was “going to do clothing.” I said, “Make clothes for people?” and she said, “No, no, clothing … you know, when you make everyone wear the same uniform, like the headmistress does … we learned about it in biology.” I said, “If everyone wears the same uniform, no one’s special.” She thought about this for a bit and then said, “Yes, no one’s special but everyone’s safe.” I was thinking then, though couldn’t find a way of saying it, that is everyone was the same there would be no envy; but she interrupted my thoughts by saying, “The teacher told us that when you do clothing you don’t need a mummy or daddy, you just need a scientist. A man … it’s like twins. All the babies are the same.” … I said, “if your sister was exactly the same as you, maybe you could go to school,” and she said “Yes”, with some relish. “I could be at home and school at the same time … everything!”³⁷⁴

³⁷² Jackie Stacey’s analysis of the Alien films highlights the significance of temporality in providing such definitions, as the character Ripley ‘is connected backward and forward in time to her kin.’ Stacey comments that the character is both mother and sibling to the Alien to which she gives birth – this only being possible as temporality has been entirely disturbed. Jackie Stacey, The Cinematic Life of the Gene (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2010), 50.
³⁷⁴ Phillips, “Sameness is All”, 89-90.
This child’s misinterpretation of cloning, and the confusion with clothing (and specifically, school uniform) unites those two sources of anxiety: the fear of being displaced by a sibling and the fear of being ‘dethroned’ by school peers. ‘You lose your place in the family when your sister arrives, then you begin to experience your school uniform as the ultimate proof of your loss of individuality.’ Cloning is perceived psychologically by the child as the possible solution to these anxieties – with the narcissistic desire to clone the self, eradicating the threat of difference. It would seem, then, that a child desires peers and siblings, so long as they offer sameness and fulfil that fantasy of the phantom twin (as mentioned by Klein and Mitchell).

Notably, it is the lone male scientist ‘at the head of a system in which similarity guarantees safety (the absence of envy) and duplication overcomes the problem of displacement by a younger sibling.’ Significantly, the scientist and his lab replace the need for biological reproduction, thus altering those presumed vertical relationships; however, lateral relations may still continue despite the seeming lack of the parental. Phillips suggests that cloning is a solution to the competition for parental attention (as sibling sameness eliminates difference which affords attention), with cloning also undermining the pre-occupation with parental sexuality. Cloning, argues Phillips, ‘seems to be a final solution to the problem of otherness. And, of course, the end of any continuing need –at least in the mass production of animals – for two sexes in the task of reproduction. In one fell swoop, cloning is a cure for sexuality and difference.’ However, this is to suggest that sexuality is inherently tied up with reproduction and seriality – which denies the possibility (and actual reality) of a sexuality which rejects the process of reproduction. Cloning, then, rather than offer a cure for the anxieties of sexuality and difference, in fact further removes children’s sexuality from those presumed future reproductive roles, and offers the possibility of greater different outside of reproductive sexual binaries. If sexuality no longer governs reproduction, but the scientist, then surely ‘difference’ in sexuality rather than sameness is actually more likely? Phillips states, ‘children have a new role model on their horizon’, one which isn’t bound up with vertical power hierarchies of the parental. Peers and sibling relations become more prominent, and sexuality as separate to reproduction is promoted.

375 Phillips, “Sameness is All”, 90.
378 Phillips, “Sameness is All”, 89.
379 Phillips, “Sameness is All”, 89.
The complex status of reproduction and seriality within socio-political discourse is challenged by Lee Edelman in his diatribe on the child in *No Future*.\(^{380}\) Political and social discourse is embedded within the language of procreation which is succinctly defined from sexual ‘fucking’, as Edelman argues. Fucking and procreation are not (politically) one and the same thing – one is engaged in by heterosexual couples (preferably married), with the sole aim of creating children – the ‘future’. Fucking is indulged in by couples (generalised as homosexual by the State) who have no investment in the ‘future’; children do not feature as a symbolic aim or objective within such bodily activity. Fucking is defined as pleasure; procreation is the duty of State citizens. Fulfilling one’s duty in order to maintain the continuum of future generations (who, in turn will support the State through taxes and so on) is part of the political language indulged in by those who run the state. Only heterosexual couples are thus afforded the status of those who are invested in (and invest in) the ‘future’ of society.

The child is an indicator of infinity, or at least it signifies the future, the seriality of a species. Edelman’s text is an attack upon the social and political investment in the child as an image of such reproductive seriality. In investing in the “future of children”, society is effectively rejecting the non-reproductive, which Edelman theorises in relation to queerness. The child thus finds itself in a position of being an image of the future, yet also the possible destroyer of the future if s/he rejects heterosexual reproductive patterns. A notion of the child as future (seriality) limits the role and identity of the child as one which is firmly set in the future; their importance as individuals only coming into play once they are bodily adult and subsumed into the modes of seriality. This is damaging for the child-as-present (not past or future); the child is either memorialised through the adult, or projected into a future as adult. The child-as-present exists on that in-between plane of neither or.

Fer argues that within art ‘the thing about infinity is that it is not a thing: it exists only in the imagination […]it exceeds representation and so has to be abandoned.’\(^{381}\) The idea of the child is suggestive of infinity, or the projected desire for infinity; without children there exists ‘no future’ (to quote Edelman); but, in that sense, everything is invested in an imaginative projection. The child carries the weight of such expectation, of such imaginings, as it becomes an imaginative figure of a projected future. The allusion towards the absent-child’s body in Whiteread’s pieces underlines that social transformation of the child from bodily reality to

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\(^{381}\) Fer, *The Infinite Line*, 58.
figment and projection in the mind of the adult. However, infinity – or the possibility of infinity, as suggested by reproduction (and Whiteread’s casting process) – does support the continuation of siblings, which, in turn promises the possibility of non-reproductive lateral relations. But the lateral relies upon the vertical for its existence. Likewise, Whiteread’s casts cannot be reproduced without the initial parent-object. The site of the first maternal body (and cast object) once again comes to the fore.

The possibility of cloning on the one hand challenge’s Edelman’s account of the child in political opposition to queer subjectivity, given that – as argued by Eskeridge and Stein – ‘gay people have always in engaged in mutual sex without reproduction, a pattern now typical of straight people as well; with cloning, gay people (and others) would have the option of engaging in mutual reproduction without sex.’ \(^{382}\) The child, due to scientific interference with heterosexual reproduction, can now be fixed within a “queer” future. However, cloning still takes the same heteronormative position of the child as future, but perhaps more dangerously so. The child becomes property of the State, and a notion of the family-unit is entirely enulled. Cloning also confuses direct sibling relations – can a clone be considered a sibling? More specifically, cloning responds to that desire for a phantom twin, but self-identity now lacks clearly defined vertical or lateral relations. With cloning, parameters of sameness and difference are no longer a psychoanalytical problem, but one of DNA, as siblings do not compete for parental attention. The original parent-object becomes defunct and unrequired in a process in which the child reproduces itself. Cloning, then, is a rejection of the vertical in favour of increased (and extreme) laterality. So where does this leave an analogy between sculptural casting and reproductive seriality? Whiteread’s later installation *Embankment* (2005-2006) can be seen as the next stage in this comparison – her sculptural version of the cloned object which – akin to the removal of the parental in favour of the scientist – sees a shift from the crafting and alchemical creation which was necessary with *One Hundred Spaces* replaced by a mechanised reproduction line, undermining the parental role of the artist. The figure of the mother is entirely banished.

Memory and Seriality

Memory is itself experienced as a series of dislocations; as scattered fragments and scenes pieced together. The separate units of One-Hundred Spaces are akin to the tableau of memory as suggested by Jacobus and Freud; the solitary cast units each alluding to a separate object, a separate body of remembrance. The seriality of Whiteread’s works serves to act as a thread of memory made up of such fragments, of cast objects which all allude in some way to an anecdote, or aspect of memory. Fer argues that memory is an act of repetition, but, as argued by Jacobus, the original event can never be entirely repeated. Memory is a revision, and memories belong to a process of seriality (they are the same, but different to the original event). Memory then, does offer repetition, but it never appears in the exact same form – akin to the casting process which attempts to offer a repeated motif, but produces objects which are similar but not identical. Repetition – either biological or artistic – does not signify sameness, but likely difference.

There is an interesting connection between the nature of installation and memory. Recalling Brian O’Doherty’s essays ‘Inside the White Cube’ for Artforum from 1976, Fer quotes ‘that avant-garde gestures “have two audiences: one which was there and one – most of us – which wasn’t.”’ Memory completes the work which at the time of its happening is necessarily incomplete; “photographs restore to us the original moment, but with much ambiguity” […] The photograph plays an important but curious role, then, as a kind of primordial fact of experience that is necessarily past – and often lost.”

Reflecting upon Eve Hesse’s pieces, Fer continues, ‘works stick in the mind. But when you try to remember what it looks like, it is hard to keep an image in check […] its intense material presence.’ The process of remembering the installation is akin to the process of remembrance in general. I acknowledge that my “viewing” of One-Hundred Spaces is via various photographic reproductions. One Hundred Spaces, those cast units analogous of child sibling relations or the spaces of childhood peer-control, are, like the anecdotes and remembrances which inspired them, one hundred fragmented memory-objects now only to be accessed through the ‘serial multiple’ of the photograph. A repetitive medium serves to reproduce objects that were themselves reproductions.

383 Fer, The Infinite Line, 57.
385 Fer, The Infinite Line, 88-89.
386 Fer, The Infinite Line, 117.
387 Mignon Nixon, “Posing the Phallus”, OCTOBER, 92 (Spring 2000), 115.
It is almost impossible to imagine a history of installation without photography to document it. The photograph can turn everything into a picture, and whatever history we give installation is represented through a photographic narrative. Some key moments had no photographs to document them.  

The photographic recording of the *One-Hundred Spaces* (that sibling group) mirrors the photographic recording of the familial – we rely upon the photographic to turn all events into a picture, to make sure no key moment goes undocumented (as in the case of installation art). Significantly, the collective family photograph attempts to convey a projected unified whole, with all individual family members coming together for one purpose of creating a frozen image of the family. The image of the installation is regulated and limited by certain angles and by the flatness of the photograph, as opposed to the variable physical experience of viewing and walking through and around an installation. Similarly, the family photograph (as described by Watney and Kuhn) is regulated by a particular vision which denies (is blind to) any queerness in the child, or edits out (through its flatness) underlying, seething sibling rivalries or conflicts. The photograph is remembered differently by all family members. The one hundred spaces of *Untitled [One Hundred Spaces]* glint and glow in the confines of the photograph’s edge, but the body of the viewer is excluded; the viewer can only imagine, project him/herself into the space. Like memories of childhood peer and sibling relations, the collective casts of the installation, in this group, with this positioning, are confined to an archive. The absence alluded to by the cast chair-spaces is a literal absence, post-installation.

Photographer Nicholas Nixon’s series of images entitled *The Brown Sisters* brings together sibling seriality with its analogous partner, photography. Nixon has photographed his wife and her three sisters once a year, every year since 1975. This specific repetition of an action which records the ageing of the siblings interests Henry Sayre, primarily because of it being a record of the familial, but he gives little attention to the relevance of the *siblings* as a subject, or the significance of siblings to a notion of repetition – despite their analogous relationship to the repetitive act of photography. Sayre is more concerned with the

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390 This to be further developed for the next chapter on *House*, which is analysed through the remaining photographic archive of the destroyed sculpture.
photograph’s role as a type of mirror which reflects episodes, a type of pictorial documentary which is problematic for its apparent ‘directness of vision and clarity of presentation.’ The problems of photographic vision are relevant to any photographic image, but here the familial photographic portrait records and serialises biological seriality. Whiteread’s obscure cast objects and the photographic image hold another thing in common: the absence and loss of the private and personal narrative (of siblings). As with the subjects presented in photographs, the viewer is only offered intimations of the stories which lie behind Whiteread’s sculptural objects. Sayre argues that ‘photographs […] exist as violent testimony to the ways in which the public venue empties out our lives of meaning – or, perhaps, better, transforms the meaning of our lives into something else, something other than its personal and private significations […] one way these photographs transcend the personal and private is as formalist objects.’ Sayre argues that Nixon’s photographs of the Brown Sisters do not, in fact, offer us anything but a repetition of a formalist composition. The images do not reveal or enlighten the viewer as to the relationship between the sisters, or offer any actual glimpse into the personalities and characters of the individual’s themselves. Repetition does not automatically signify revelation or the unveiling of character, meaning or narrative. Sayre comments, ‘The desire to rid art of subject matter, to claim for it an autonomous self-reflexivity, has long been one of the primary concerns of the modernist enterprise.’ Nixon’s images, despite the actual visual presence of sibling bodies, are no less ambiguous (or withholding) than Whiteread’s cast units – the viewer in both cases is excluded from the intimate relations or narratives which may have inspired each artwork’s creation. Likewise, both Nixon and Whiteread offer sibling groupings, but at a remove – the sibling groupings are collectively unified against interpretation.

Sayre argues there are two kinds of repetition: ‘One, which we might call Platonic and which is the basis for mimetic theory in the West, believes that the original is unaffected by its repetition. It is a theory of correspondence and sameness and is the means by which we usually approach photography […] the second […] form of repetition, in which representation is no longer grounded in sameness, but in difference. Here, repetition generates “simulacra”, not copies but traces of an “original” which has never been.’ Nixon’s Brown women fit into

392 Sayre, The Object of Performance, 40.
393 Sayre, The Object of Performance, 41.
394 Sayre, The Object of Performance, 65.
in the latter, ‘our sense that we are potentially witness to an “acting out” of the “idea” of the family rather than the embodiment of the family per se. They not only ask what is the family, they ask us to contemplate whether the family is itself only a simulacrum [...] Here, in this terrain of difference, we can begin to locate the postmodern as a whole.’395 The repetition of casting spaces also conforms to the latter – with the repetitive act of casting a performance of difference, rather than sameness. Whiteread’s repetition, though, does not amount to a reinforced normativity, as the resulting art object radically undoes, and literally turns inside-out, normative spaces and objects. And casting enables liberation from narratives of nostalgia, as Whiteread’s new objects leave little clue not only of their origin or “parent” object, but of the personal sibling narratives which may be bound up with them. To this end, the closed-off and secret twin-sibling language the artist initially reacted against once again makes an appearance, but this time serves to exclude the viewer from Whiteread’s self-created (cast) sibling collective.

395 Sayre, The Object of Performance, 65.
Chapter Three:
A Photographic Portrait of House (1993-94)

An entire past comes to dwell in a new house [...] We bring our lairs with us. 396
(Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space)

The now demolished House (1993-1994) was a concrete cast of the interior of a Victorian terrace, 193 Grove Road, East London (fig.15). The aim of Whiteread’s sculpture was not to recreate a habitable space but to ask questions of what such a space consists of, and query our conceptual and physical relationship to the “house” structure. In January 1994 House was destroyed; within an hour the rubble was pulverised, and the remains buried on site and grassed over. A photographic portrait of House is all that remains. Three-thousand five-hundred individuals signed a petition to save Whiteread’s sculpture from demolition. The sculpture had become endowed with a symbolic significance which struck a chord with the public psyche, namely that of the house/home structure – with House the last piece of material evidence of a condemned row of terraced houses. East End historian Gary Haines argues that ‘the work was seen by many as a memorial to the East End family home and the space they lived in.’ 397 Perhaps this is why the Council were keen to tear down the structure; its presence and role as ‘memorial’ disrupted the modernising regeneration agenda desired for the area – it seemingly looked back rather than forward. As a physical barrier to regeneration plans the Council could have worked around the structure which, in reality, only took the space of one house. To quote Whiteread, ‘We ended up renting the ground that House was on from the council, so it could stay up an extra month or so. I suggested we make a children’s park there, and they said no, they didn’t want any memory of the piece.’ 398 193 Grove Road was already condemned to demolition – that outcome was inevitable. Whiteread’s work merely acted as a temporary landmark, a final salute to the lost houses of the street, but it was never created as a permanent fixture. Whiteread herself commented, ‘I don’t think I would

have liked to see House as a permanent piece because it wasn’t made with that in mind." A wealth of material has already been written on House, in particular a number of essays specifically for the accompanying House catalogue: Ian Sinclair interrogates the urban geography of East London and its transformation; Doreen Massey emphasises the politics of location; Richard Shone analyses the physical qualities of House; Anthony Vidler offers an uncanny reading of the sculpture in response to Freud; Simon Watney reveals House as a site for contemporary iconclasm and iconophobia; Jon Bird makes the connection between nostalgia, memory and loss within Whiteread’s oeuvre; and Neil Thomas offers technical notes. Somewhere, located in between the writings, is John Davies’ photographic essay, a series of black and white images of House specifically commissioned by Whiteread and Artangel – the official visual archive.

House is a fascinating piece in its absence as much as it was in its short presence. Little academic attention has been given to the archive of imagery left behind post-destruction, created by Davies and others. The accompanying photography capturing the process of creation and final demolition of House has been treated as incidental. However, given the sculpture no longer exists in solid form in its location of Grove Road, the imagery, and related newspaper clippings is all we (I) have left to reflect upon. House now exists only in a world of ephemera, on the transient plane between physical presence and fragmentary memory. The sculpture’s history: as a Victorian terrace house; a skeleton structure of iron girders; a concrete skin; an inside-out sculpture; rubble – is all archived in the photography produced during the various stages of the project. Perhaps no other sculpture’s “life” has been so well recorded. A piece that was once considered contemporary has now fallen into the category of historical monument, itself archived and memorialised.

House is similar to the photographic in its state of reversal. As Andrew Graham-Dixon comments,

To visit House or (as many will do) simply to come across it, isolated in a scrubby patch of parkland at the corner of Roman Road and Grove Road, is to be suddenly

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401 Film footage was also captured, with a Video produce in 1995 by Artangel and Hackneyed Productions, VHS release 1998, DVD release 2005. Film can be accessed here: http://www.artangel.org.uk/projects/1993/house/video/video_rachel_whiteread_house
402 “The photograph does not necessarily say what is no longer, but only and for certain what has been”, Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography (London: Vintage, 2000), 85.
and disconcertingly transported elsewhere. It is to be taken to another world, like and yet completely unlike this one: the world of the photographic negative, with its phantom-like reversals of known fact; the world that Alice enters through her looking glass; the world that lurks behind the molten silver mirror in Cocteau's Orphée, where normal relations between objects have been summarily suspended.  

The process of casting is likened by Graham-Dixon to the negative for its sense of reversibility (and fantastical quality), but there is a more complex photographic status that has yet to be interrogated – that which links both photography and sculpture to the familial. An analogy can be drawn between the remaining photographic archive of House and notions of the family photograph in order to interrogate the mythologies of family, childhood and the domestic sphere which are bound-up with House. In particular, there is a tension between the house as a space caught up with narratives of childhood, and the conspicuous absence of the child with Whiteread’s House. Like the sculptural “memorial”, the photograph ‘can be the site of conflicting memories’, leading us to the question ‘whose memory is to prevail in the family archive.’ Annette Kuhn and Simon Watney offer thoughts on the status of the photograph within the construction of familial relations and childhood memory. Crucially, the house as a place of childhood is the site of such conflicting memories. As acknowledged by Klein, the domestic sphere is a place in which certain desires, hates and aggressions may manifest in response to siblings or parental relations, with the house itself seemingly turning upon the child. House, with its formidable concrete skin and sealed windows and doors, leads the viewer to query what childhoods exist here; what memories of the domestic sphere are invited or denied by House; what secrets are projected or introjected? With House we witness a certain ‘scooping out’ and ‘devouring of the contents’ as the interior space is destructively turned inside-out, with the private space exposed.

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403 Andrew Graham-Dixon, “This is the House that Rachel Built”, The Independent, 2 November, 1993.
Symbol, Site and Structure

Symbol, site and structure: the house is not one, but all three of these components.408 The house is the symbolic place in which father and mother, in “straight” union, aim to reproduce, raise and protect future generations of children who will then find partners, house spaces, and continue to reproduce. The child features in patterns of reproduction which signify the future, with anything contradicting such seriality deemed an opponent of the future-drive.409 The domestic sphere is the place in which such seriality is to be protected. The house is perceived as a maternal “womb”, containing and guarding the future of such reproductive patterns; to disrupt the symbolism of the home, the house, is to disrupt the mythology of such familial and gender roles. But where are the children with House? They are conspicuously absent. The house space – with all its symbolic gestures towards the familial, the safe private sphere of the child – is here concretised, stifled.

‘Always container, sometimes contained’,410 the domestic sphere holds mythologies of the maternal, and often symbolically doubles for the mother’s body; a maternal womb for Bachelard in his daydreaming of house-spaces; for Roland Barthes in his remembrance of the photograph and of the mother he has lost;411 for Louise Bourgeois, woman-is-house.412 To an extent, House is a rejection of this maternal mythology – the house as a place of maternal security, comfort and protection. How can a house protect if its walls are turned outward, its rooms filled in, its doors and windows inaccessible? The child has been excluded from the protective space; the childhood daydreaming embraced by Bachelard is not welcome here. Bachelard desires “home” with its maternal strength and power to protect its inhabitants. But the child as artist, as creator, transforms the maternal space, and in doing so destroys the fabric

410 John Stilgoe “Foreword”, in Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, viii.
of its mythology as a protective space. Traditional notions of woman-mother-as-house are suffocated under layers of concrete rendering. House is the familial space undone.

In the essay ‘Missing Kitchens’, 413 sisters Susan Bordo, Binnie Klein, and Marilyn K. Silverman return psychologically and physically to the spaces of the childhood house, and attempt to map out its structure and rooms, and the activities and relationships which took place within them. This probing into spatial memory is initiated by the loss of the parental. 414 ‘Like neighbouring monarchs mapping disputed territory, we prepared to do a gentle battle with the truth that is each of our “truths”.’ 415 Narratives of childhood spaces implicate others that exist within those same spaces. Parents or guardians, the adults of the house, leave ‘intimate imprints of their absence and presence’ 416 on the psyche of the child; adult control over space often defines the spatial experience of the child within the house. Although primarily concerned with examining childhood remembrances of spatial experience, their narratives and reflections also raise more complex issues of post-war dislocation, fragmented and isolated family structures, and cultural diaspora – ‘writing this piece, we began to see how reflective our family’s history was of a certain cultural trajectory of loss and disorientation.’ 417

The bubble of personal childhood is set down in time and place; childhood is thus an overarching theme or metaphor which serves to highlight other aspects of societal and cultural experience. For example, the histories of these authors’ “remembered” childhoods also provides us with an account of their parents’ domestic existence, and the roles played by the mother and the father in the house set-up.

With House we witness a lost space from a particular place and time – with only the imprint of its walls preserved. The hub, or “heart” of the house, the kitchen, is missing; it is lost within, somewhere amongst the girders and steels bars and layers of concrete. Binnie Klein talks of disappearing kitchens; in each of the sisters’ initial sketches of the childhood house space, the kitchen is forgotten or hazily recalled. Binnie puts this down to the kitchen being a space of the mother, whose needs, desires and dreams are subordinate to those of her husband and children. The mother’s body is offered out to all; she is consumed before she can tend to her own cravings. Mother as dependent, passive and entrenched within the domestic

414 The death of Whiteread’s father in 1988 is said to be the inspiration behind Shallow Breath (1988); the death of her mother in 2005 was a key factor in the development of Embankment (2005).
417 Bordo, Klein and Silverman, “Missing Kitchens”, 75.
sphere resides within her kitchen, but it is not the space of the husband, nor particularly that of the child. Thus it is forgotten. Excluded. Encased within concrete. The mother’s kitchen reimagined by the sisters is tinted with 1950s television images of the archetypal housewife-mother who trudges on, not despairing of her situation, but happily twirling and swirling in her cotton dress, immaculate in her presentation, keeping the peace between the family members as she serves out home-made pies. Images and rituals of the past which do not convey the reality of experience, nevertheless infiltrate the “memory” of mother’s real kitchen. Notably, ‘if mother is of the kitchen, and the kitchen is missing, then mother is missing.’ In fact, with House many more narratives are missing than are actually present. House, then, represents the missing narratives of history – voices which, as Lisa Saltzman argues, that have been lost ‘in the archives of modernity.’ Here Saltzman is talking specifically of the female experience of the domestic sphere, but voices of the child should also be included. Whiteread’s focus on the domestic sphere, Saltzman argues, ‘commemorates those subjects of history who bear no literal trace.’ But House itself was eventually demolished, with only its literal traces contained within the frame of the photograph. With Klein, the mother is not forgotten, but actively destroyed (in phantasy); the mother's body being split into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ parts, scooped out and emptied. For Klein, the child projects its aggression onto the mother. Reading through Klein, House is not a commemoration of the missing maternal, as suggested by Saltzman, but an active destruction of such mythologising of the house-as-mother, mother-as-house.

Jennifer Mundy describes the old 193 Grove Road as an example of a ‘familiar and humble form of home.’ Sociologists Sarah Holloway and Gill Valentine consider the British relationship to child rearing in the home, emphasising the specificity of a country’s social and ideological traditions. Not unlike Mary Douglas, Holloway and Valentine present the British home as ‘a space which is constituted through familial rules and regulations which

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418 Bordo, Klein and Silverman, “Missing Kitchens”, 78.
420 Saltzman, Making Memory Matter, 90.
demarcate appropriate ways for children to behave’, thus “home” is fundamentally a space of control. Douglas assesses the rules, regulations and repetitive processes of the domestic sphere as a form of oppressive tyranny. At some point, most individuals leave the so-called safety of the parental home – signifying a transition from childhood dependency to adult (economic) independency. The house space exemplifies duality of purpose – protection, but also containment; safety, but also suffocation; shelter, but also possession. The exit from the childhood home is a balancing act of exclusion and escape from the hierarchies of the familial structure.

Whiteread’s *House* raises the issue of what constitutes a “home” and a “house”. Wherein lay the difference: is *House* stripped of all the relevance and meaning of “home”? Is *House* akin to the naked self, without objects or possessions, reflecting the homeless – the home, or the human self, less of its content and meaning, an empty shell? Home is also perceived as a key source of ‘rootedness’ and ‘belonging’, a fixed space of geographical certainty. However, postmodern concepts of spatiality which focus on the ‘decentred identity’, assert that ‘movement has become fundamental to modern identity and an experience of non-place an essential component of everyday existence.’ Thus the relationship between identity and fixed locale has been challenged, suggesting this has significance in ‘appreciating the complexity of modern experiences and practices in the late twentieth century.’ This reconceptualisation of space thus holds significance for notions of “home”. Whiteread’s *House* challenges the supposed fixity of the home space, its final destruction presenting the ultimate deconstruction of such concepts of rootedness and belonging.

Where, then, does childhood experience fit into this discourse, if fixity and rootedness are challenged? The child is deemed vulnerable in that he or she is dependent on the house as shelter for its survival. The home is perceived to be a space which is nurturing, caring, educational; such childrearing within Whiteread’s *House* impossible. Davies’ images of the completed *House* offer a vision of a home, a house, seemingly devoid of family, of childhood. As Massey argues, *House* ‘exposes the normal, comfortable mythologising of ‘home’ [...] It

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425 Holloway and Valentine, *Children's Geographies*, 140.
426 Holloway and Valentine, *Children's Geographies*, 140.
427 Holloway and Valentine, *Children's Geographies*, 140.
428 Holloway and Valentine, *Children's Geographies*, 140.
429 Holloway and Valentine, *Children's Geographies*, 140.
430 Although this could be disputed within an assessment of children’s street culture, for example see Hugh Matthews, Melanie Limb, and Mark Taylor, “Reclaiming the Street: Class, Gender and Public Space”, in Holloway and Valentine, *Children's Geographies*. 

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is not merely physical space which it turns inside out but the whole burden of meaning and metaphor which this space has so often had to carry.\textsuperscript{430}

The origin of the private-public dichotomy is rooted in the severing of women and children from the exterior space. As Don Slater comments: ‘Women (and children) are restricted in belief and practice to the private world of the family which is subordinate to and ruled (through the male breadwinner) by the public sphere. This exclusion has very direct material consequences: being confined to the private sphere means having neither the power and independence nor the status and equality that go with having money or property.’\textsuperscript{431} Slater gives a thorough overview of the development of the public-private dichotomy,\textsuperscript{432} outlining its origins within Greek and Roman society, it being bound up within economic and political discourses, and its significance in relation to the division of productive labour (outside the home, and paid) and reproductive labour (inside the home, and unpaid). This in turn is bound up with the gender division of labour ‘which is exacerbated over the modern period as women are increasingly excluded from the public sphere of paid work and associated with the unpaid labour of maintaining the domestic sphere.’\textsuperscript{433}

\textit{House} caused anxiety (amongst its critics) as the protective “private” sphere was suddenly made “public” through the process of casting. A presumed safe space was now (symbolically) vulnerable to the spaces of risk. Don Slater comments,

\begin{quote}
The idealisation and defence of the private sphere has been a central theme of modernity […] One starting point for this is the idealisation of childhood from the eighteenth century onwards […] The private sphere is now meant to nurture and defend the child’s innocence against the corruption of public life while the child comes to symbolise the innocence and beauty of the private sphere of the family itself […] In Victorian society, this idealisation comes to be central to a cult of the family, to the cloying sentimentality through which the ‘pure’ child (and pure
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{432} ‘The public/private distinction largely registers the separation of the ‘household’ from institutions which represent general or collective social interests […] For ancient Greek and Roman society, the public sphere – the \textit{polis} or \textit{res publica} – was the realm of free association between free citizens. It was in public that men (and only men) could be their true selves and achieve virtue and fame through competition in such things as sports and rhetoric. Men were deemed free in the polis not because it was unregulated but because it was kept rigidly separate from the private sphere of the household and domestic economy (\textit{oikos}): the domestic sphere was regarded as the realm of physical reproduction and therefore of the compulsion and slavery of needs (particularly bodily), of immersion in the trivial, industrial and ‘merely’ private.’ Slater, “Public/Private”, 138.  
\textsuperscript{433} Slater, “Public/Private”, 144.
\end{flushright}
woman) is to be utterly separated and defended from work, sexuality, knowledge, evil.  

*House* in its original Victorian incarnation as 193 Grove Road was a physical embodiment of these values, this division of public and private; a Victorian terrace in which women and children were confined in spaces of idealised purity and innocence. The domestic sphere, by Victorian standards, is (inappropriately) considered de-sexualised. Of course, this is misguided. Siblings, the parental and “others” who may be invited into the so-called safe space of the house are all potential threats to the child. And given that the domestic sphere is the place of reproduction, sexuality is ever-present and reaffirmed by the presence, or possible future presence, of siblings. If the domestic sphere is deemed the most suitable space for the child then in revealing the interior, as *House* does, it forces the child into the public domain, challenging both the presumed safety of the house and those restrictions placed upon the “public” child.

*House*, with its concrete heaviness and sealed windows and doors, is the materialisation of the suffocating and crushing domestic space as experienced by some boys and girls. Simon Watney’s text ‘Ordinary Boys’ offers one such narrative. Watney’s essay (written from his perspective as a gay man) queries that perception (often negative) the child may have of itself in contrast to the perception others have of him. The family photograph presents the remembered “reality” of childhood, but the captured images of childhood (often taken by an adult) conceal those secrets, those closeted childhoods of love, hate and guilt.

Watney comments, ‘many people will have memories of this order, memories that signal some kind of dysfunction between oneself and one’s parents’ expectations’—these expectations being expressed within the domestic sphere. ‘And then we leave home, though home is always there in our head, as we struggle to break with the immensely powerful role models offered by our parents, to ourselves.’

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434 Slater, “Public/Private”, 145.
436 There are several ways in which the child is controlled in the public sphere: formal and legal restrictions; parental restrictions; management of children’s behavior; the designing of public amenities primarily for adult use in terms of physical size.
438 Watney, “Ordinary Boys”, in Holland and Spence. Watney’s essay was referred to in Chapter One, but is worth revisiting here.
439 As discussed in Chapter One.
Photography and Sculpture

The photographic archive of House captures the sculpture in its different states of creation and final demolition. Whiteread’s collaboration with John Davies to produce the official photographs of House contributes to a long history of interaction between photography and sculpture:

Sculpture has long been a subject for specialised professional photographers working for or with sculptors, curators, art historians, and art book publishers […] Images of sculpture have played an important role in the history of photography. Equally significant, but perhaps less obvious, are the ways in which such photographs have influenced our understanding of the history of sculpture. Photographic reproductions in art books and slides projected in lecture halls have been crucial to the formation of art historical canons and have affected the reception and display of ancient, modern, and contemporary sculpture produced in Western and non-Western cultures.\textsuperscript{442}

The photographic image not only communicates a three-dimensional object, but transforms the object – the photograph is not simply a two-dimensional reproduction. The photograph itself needs to be decoded: ‘the photograph itself acts to construct the meaning or meanings attributed to the objects under consideration.’\textsuperscript{443} Davies’ images, then, should not be considered mere representations of House, but images which contribute to the construction of meaning and interpretation, of House.

The photographs of House are both documents and supplements of a place and sculptural object. The photographic imagery comes to replace that (now lost) event of the creation, temporary existence, and final destruction of House. Davies’ House images are not

\textsuperscript{442} Geraldine A. Johnson, “Introduction”, in Geraldine A. Johnson, ed., Sculpture and Photography: Envisioning the Third Dimension (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 7-8. ‘Images of sculpture have played an important but often unexamined role in the history of photography. In fact some of the earliest photographic images made during the 1830s and early 1840s by Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, William Henry Fox Talbot, and other pioneers in the new medium depicted marble statues and plaster casts […] More recently, artists […] have used photography in new and provocative ways to challenge our understanding of what it means to depict “sculptural” objects and bodies in a two-dimensional medium. […] For artists such as Eva Hesse and Joseph Beuys, photographing their interactions with sculptural objects was a crucial component of their performances, with the resulting photographs becoming essential elements in the afterlife of these events.’ Johnson, “Introduction”, in Johnson, Sculpture and Photography, 1.

\textsuperscript{443} Johnson, “Introduction”, 8.
simply peripheral supplements which ‘bear witness to the making of the object’ — they eventually become the object. As David Green and Joanna Lowry argue with regards to documenting temporary art works, ‘the supplement is both additional and integral, both marginal and central, both inside and outside, and both superfluous and necessary.’

Likewise, Davies’ images fulfil a dual purpose of being a supporting act for the main sculpture, and yet – particularly now *House* is destroyed – they are central to creating an afterlife for the work, with the photographs now the focus of attention. But photographs of sculpture should not be interpreted as mere substitutes for that which is now absent; the framing and style creates an altogether new two-dimensional *House*.

Despite claims to the contrary, there are many disadvantages involved in relying on photographs for “objective” information about three-dimensional works of art: one photograph or even a series of photographs of a statue or relief can never be actually “the very impress of the object” […] the shift to two-dimensions is particularly problematic: no matter how many angles of a statue are photographed, it is impossible to capture the sensation of seeing it fully in the round, for only then does one experience it as an assertive, three-dimensional presence whose appearance shifts constantly with changes in light and shadow as well as the viewer’s own position.

Davies’ (and others’) images need to be considered on their own terms, as photographs containing and producing their own meanings – not as peripheral records of a sculptural object, or mere substitutes for a missing original, (despite photographs being deemed just that – substitutes for missing or absent objects or bodies).

*House* poses a complex spatial relationship: that which exists between space and architecture and its sculptural rendering, and that between a sculptural artwork and its photographic copy. The house (193 Grove Road) is transformed by these two different materialisations (in sculpture and photography). Within each, the original object which gives its form and acts as the subject, becomes increasingly absent, increasingly distant. With *House* (as sculpture) space and place is at least still experienced, although in its transformed state.

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193 Grove Road ceases to exist, but the air which was once contained within its walls becomes seemingly present, or apparent; the unseen and invisible made visible. Like a photographic close-up of a microscopic detail, casting offers a similar method by which to interrogate further, to promote a new way of seeing; it offers a different form of perception. Casting reveals what was once lost to vision and the visual, it renders present that which was once absent from view, or hidden and contained. Casting attempts to reveal secrets. A photographic rendering of a cast object thus transforms the visual once more, as it turns the overly three-dimensional into the plane of two-dimensions. The space of the original object (193 Grove Road) is flattened, and is made painterly. *House* and its setting is offered up as a muted, silenced landscape into which we cannot interact, play, or converse.

**History of a House: An East End Sculpture**

*House* was surrounded by a political and media storm, largely due to the location in which the artwork was set. It was very much as site-specific artwork which provoked debate locally and within the general British art scene around topics of housing, identity, memory, and ownership of space. The political tensions seething within the council, and between it and its local MP, made *House* ripe for becoming the face (or space) of everything that was either “wrong” with the modern East End or everything that used to be “right” with the East End – it was hi-jacked by political discourse and ideological manifestos. In reality there were two battles being fought: that on the ground between people deciding whether they liked, or not, Whiteread’s sculpture, and that in the media which concerned itself with a political and social agenda – arguments surrounding *House* were not merely about the artistic qualities of concrete. ‘Angry art lovers’, students, artists, and ‘youths’ were chaining themselves to the railings in order to prevent the demolition. ‘Unemployed’ Karl McCarthy argued: ‘we’re doing this because *House* represents the destruction of not only homes but whole communities in the East End of London … this has become a tomb, a headstone to the houses that were here.’

Jon Bird contextualises *House* (1993-1994) in light of post-war loss: the sense of a society fractured; the loss of neighbourhood and community patterns; the ‘longing for the lost spaces of childhood and the rhythms of street life that characterized a certain image of London’s East End.’

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nostalgia’, and contribute to a myth of a unified working-class East End or “lost” childhoods.

The studies of Young and Willmott, and Holme offer an insight into the changing post-war social and geographical context of London's East End into which House later appeared. Notably, Young and Wilmott highlight the house as the central structure in family and kinship relations, in post-war, East End working-class culture:

Many of the yards are packed with clothes hanging on the line, prams, sheds, boxes of geraniums and pansies, hutches for rabbits and guinea-pigs, lofts for pigeons, and pens for fowls. The only difference between the houses is the colour of the curtains and doorsteps which the wives redden or whiten when they wash down the pavement in front of their doors in the morning. Dilapidated but cosy, damp but friendly, in the eyes of Bethnal Greeners these cottages are the place, much more so than the huge blocks of tenement buildings standing guard, like dark fortresses, over the little houses. On the warm summer evening of the interview, children were playing hop-scotch or “he” in the roadway, while their parents, when not watching the television, were at their open windows. Some of the older people were sitting in upright chairs on the pavement, just in front of their doors, or in the passages leading through to the sculleries, chatting with each other and watching the children play.

The East End of London has undergone radical social changes largely due to the post-war rehousing policies inflicted upon areas such as Bethnal Green. Significantly, ‘people in Bethnal Green had shown strong attachment to the neighbourhood, in which most of them had spent all their lives, and strong family bonds and between the wider kinship groups.’ These close knit communities were split and sent to new housing estates in Essex, disrupting family and kinship ties. Other families were rehoused in tower blocks, radically altering patterns of movement and social interaction. Holme comments on the state of Bethnal Green in the 1980s: ‘Poverty obtrudes; a sense of despondency prevails. There is nothing here for middle-class

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452 Young and Willmott, Family and Kinship, 38.
453 Holme, Housing and Young Families in East London, 1.
observers to romanticise [...] a general air of decay broken up by pockets of council estates and grass islands.\textsuperscript{454} Young and Willmott’s study was first conducted in 1955, with a final edition reprinted in 1986. They trace a connection between the post-war re-housing policies and the subsequent changes to family and kinship structures – the two are interlinked. For the child, changes to housing and to the family structure are affecting; in particular Young and Willmott comment upon parental expectations for the child. Some parents have ambitions for their children (mostly sons) to enter into white-collar occupations. Other men of Bethnal Green expect their children (again, mostly sons) to follow them into manual and agricultural labour, to continue a tradition of “masculine” East End occupations. However, given the changes to the labour market and the increased movement of young families away from the East End, these pre-war expectations are emphatically disrupted; there is no certainty that the child will mimic the parent, or indeed conform to traditional expectations which once sustained the working-class family.

For social-geographer Doreen Massey, the ‘politics of location’\textsuperscript{455} is significant to any interpretations which attach themselves to \textit{House}:

On the one hand is the enormous freight of meaning – and of different meanings – which the very words ‘the East End of London’ bring with them. On the other hand is the wrenching disruption of this space in the recent past. The docks have closed, their use and meaning is being quite consciously re-worked; to the south Canary Wharf rises on the obliteraton of a past which is drawn on only to add a touch of local colour to the new, global developments. And in September 1993, at the very time when \textit{House} was being constructed, the British National Party won a seat on the local borough council.\textsuperscript{456}

\textit{House} is born in a moment when British identity in all its complexity is also being exposed, challenged and caught within a destructive tussle. Notably, Watney comments that \textit{House} ‘was taken by its opponents as itself a species of unwanted, illegal immigrant.’\textsuperscript{457} The blank neutrality of \textit{House} – its lack of signifying objects or paraphernalia, or decoration which

\begin{footnotes}
\item[454] Holme, \textit{Housing and Young Families in East London}, 21.
\item[455] Massey, “Space-Time and the Politics of Location”, 41.
\end{footnotes}
points to “Englishness”, with its roof space sliced away – also places it in the category of immigrant other, with no discernible local identity. Massey continues,

*House* was conceived and made in the context of the East End of London. And the East End is an area which oozes meaning as place, both locally and in the national psyche. The meanings are, however, varied and much contested. This is the home both of Alf Garnet and of the constantly-added-to ethnic mix; of the battle of Cable Street, Brick Lane and dockers marching against immigration. It is a locality in which notions of community and of constructing that ‘we’ […] and the communal identifications […] are at the very heart of politics and daily life. A reference to ‘tradition’ in the East End can bring to mind radicalism and ethnic diversity or racisms and community closure. In such a context is becomes particularly important to ask how the evocation of memory is working and what effects – social and political – it is producing.  

As Sinclair comments, ‘Grove Road had the lot; a terrace house with three exploitable sides (and a sitting tenant), a hyperactive local politico, anarchist squatters, post-Situationist rock stars looking for the grand gesture, and wide-eyed psychogeographers prophesying war.’

Wennington Green on Grove Road – the space upon which *House* would be built – was a space of contention: East End heritage clashing with the requirements of modernity; a necessity of housing versus the Council’s desire for “green spaces” and open parkland – ‘an Arcadia for the underclass’ in the middle of Bow. *House* joined the ranks of those now unseen, lost spaces; just another East End myth in the making.

*House* took the place of Sidney Gale’s childhood home. The seventy year old ex-docker and war hero supposedly denounced the project as ‘disgusting.’ Sidney was representative of an era and generation gradually sliding into the archive of “a time when”. His childhood home, 193 Grove Road, was the last remaining space which reflected and contained his identity. The ex-docker also fought the bulldozers which flattened the neighbouring houses. His supposed disgust was aimed primarily at the cost of the project, his view being

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that the fifty-thousand pounds should have been put towards building new houses, not casting old ones. The anger vented at the ‘Arts and Crafty’ funders Artangel was no doubt a reflection of the anger felt by many other ex-dockers and working class Londoners at the ongoing transformation of their social, cultural and historical spaces. Whiteread’s casting of 193 Grove Road may well have been viewed as another political or middle class take-over of East End London, rather than as a monument to those concerns.

*House* also reflected that the East End had always been a fighter, and a survivor, and supporters of the sculpture wanted a monument to represent that survival. With the houses now pulled down that even Hitler’s bombs failed to flatten, *House* stood as a defiant last post, solitary and proud, a structural epitaph for the lost row of Grove Road. More than six-thousand people visited the sculpture the weekend after Whiteread won the Turner Prize, and three-thousand five-hundred signatures were collected by Whiteread’s then agent, Karsten Schubert, backing the sculpture. Bethnal Green resident and anti-*House* activist Jacqueline Morris collected three-hundred signatures against the work, apparently all from the local area – she questioned the authenticity of Schubert’s petition, although Schubert argued that one third of the pro-*House* signatures came from those living within Tower Hamlets.

*House* is a unique sculptural object loaded with meaning. Some of the existing discourse on *House* firmly places it within the politics of the East End. The sculpture metaphorically and, in the end, literally, collapsed under the weight of such responsibility to its location. Its eventual demolition in the context of political wrangling overshadows some of the more nuanced and subtle interpretations surrounding materiality and casting as a process. Certainly the photographs by Davies and others have not been discussed (dismissed as peripheral, perhaps). Likewise a more intriguing issue of *House* as a nostalgic object is worth revisiting and re-evaluating – particularly through the photographic lens. This is not to suggest that the political and geographical context should be side-lined (far from it), but there are

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462 Kloster, “They’re Taking The Wee Wee”.
463 Kloster, “Have an’ Art Bow!”.
464 I am attempting to find the whereabouts of both petitions. Ironically, although the political battle seemed to refer to Thatcher’s policies of East End redevelopment, the political wrangling was actually played out between the left wing parties: Tower Hamlets Council was led by the Liberal Democrats, with Chairman Eric Flounders, and conflicted with the Labour MP for Bow and Poplar, Mildred Gordon, who put her proposals for a public consultation on the fate of the sculpture to the House of Commons. Alongside the wider political and social commentaries on *House*, there was an entirely separate battle taking place within the art institution itself, with a new generation of British artists attempting to assert their authority on the landscape, abandoned buildings, and gallery spaces around them. *House*, it would seem, was the perfect sculptural allegory for all these battles – perhaps best conveyed in Whiteread’s winning of both the Turner Prize and the prize for the worst artwork of the year from arts guerrillas the K Foundation.
likely to be hidden histories of the East End, relevant to a sculpture which peels away the façade.

The East End in sociological and anthropological studies is typically written about in terms of its “masculine” occupations, histories of hardship and narratives of poverty yet close social networks. The child features as a figure either to be pitied because of its monetary poverty and low status in the familial hierarchy, or admired for its escape from such a background through “self-improvement”. Notably, the narrative of the working-class child (in both fiction and non-fiction) is relayed by observing adults. The child’s voice is not so much suppressed, but moulded to fit a certain perpetuating idea of how and where the child features physically and spatially in this environment. For art historian and critic Andrew Graham-Dixon (a fervent supporter of House),

[...] *House* is a sculpture that memorialises, in its transfiguration of an ordinary person's home, the ordinary lives of ordinary people (ordinariness, it suggests, is one thing we all have in common).465

What is meant by the term ‘ordinary’ perhaps requires further unpacking, but Graham-Dixon suggests that the sculpture memorialises the ‘ordinariness’ of those subjects discussed in Young and Willmott’s studies – working-class families that would once have inhabited the terrace houses of Grove Road. *House* is not a house, not a space, but an indented, imprinted sculptural structure. It’s certainly no longer ‘ordinary’ in the sense that Graham-Dixon perhaps suggests: comfort, a space of the unified nuclear family, a space in which “everyday” familial transactions can be acted out. What kind of memorial to the ‘ordinary’ would exclude the familial and the visualisation of childhood? Instead, *House* serves to emphasise the missing or hidden childhoods of Grove Road, and the absence or transformation of the family unit.

A notion of romanticised nostalgia, a golden age of time past, does not sit easily with Whiteread’s hard, cold concrete cast. Anthropologist Jo Tacchi in her essay ‘Nostalgia and Radio Sound’ returns to the Greek definition of nostalghia as the ‘desire or longing with burning pain to journey. It evokes the sensory dimension of memory in exile and estrangement; it mixes bodily and emotional pain and ties painful experiences of spiritual and somatic exile to the notion of maturation and ripening.’466 This type of nostalgia ‘evokes the

465 Andrew Graham-Dixon, “This is the House that Rachel Built”, *The Independent*, 2 November 1993.
This does not infer romanticised memory-work, but a state which is more akin to Susan Stewart’s interpretation of nostalgia – that of a longing and melancholic mourning. To mourn and to acknowledge absence is not to necessarily romanticise places, spaces and people – to distort and sentimentalise the past (‘bad nostalgia’), but it is to recall them with a view to critically reflect (‘good nostalgia’); to consider how the past has a significant relevance on the present.  

Nostalgia does not have to signify whimsy. ‘Perhaps surprisingly, through its anxieties about the future and disaffection with the present, nostalgia can offer a critical perspective. Because it revalues elements of a despised past, nostalgia can question myths of progress and offer the perspective of users, the powerless.’  

Michael Landy’s house sculpture Semi-Detached (2004) seemingly embraces ‘bad nostalgia’ as its mimetic ambition does little to challenge or interrogate its subject, offering only an exact copy of the parental home. It sets it up as an art object, relocating it to a gallery space. It serves to reinforce an existing idea of the domestic sphere, not turn it inside-out as Whiteread does with House, or indeed dissect it as Gordon Matta Clark does with his spatial “splitting”. Notably, House cannot be accused of acting as a ‘fetishized remnant’ of the past, given that is does not attempting to preserve-as-identical a sense of the old Grove Road. It was this lack of overt sentimental nostalgia which angered 193 Grove Road’s former inhabitant and drew criticism from others. House was not 193 Grove Road: terrace brick was replaced by a concrete skin; the roof had been sliced away in a seeming nod to modernist aesthetics (actually, an engineering requirement); devoid of “homely” interior decorative details (although upon closer inspection the walls of House did bear the imprint of wallpaper markings). House did not aim to sentimentally replicate or mimic; the sculptural cast presented a desire, a longing, to remember the house-spaces of Grove Road, but it radically reinterpreted the space, along with the accompanying symbolism of the domestic sphere. Nostalgia was not called upon to conjure up mythologies but to critically rethink the meanings of house and home (old and new) within the location of the East End.

Press, 2003), 287.
Tacchi, “Nostalgia and Radio Sound” 289.
The Family Album of House

‘I think my work is about recording’, comments Whiteread. Firstly her sculptures record (or do they?) memories of past bodies and past histories – such as photography attempts to. Similar to Barthes’ discussion of the death of the original subject in photography, we witness the death of the original object in Whiteread’s sculpture, but something (some record) has been retained; an impression, a negative. But exactly what has been recorded is still ambiguous. Cast walls “record”; photographic images “record”, but the meanings of their content (value, memories) remain unfixed. So to this extent Whiteread’s work is about the problems of recording, its futility, and the absence and the tensions of memory-work. Secondly, as a recorder of memories Whiteread is also a collector of photographed spaces and objects – recording and collecting being part of the artist’s process. The photographic archive of House acts as a family album, offering the viewer a portrait of a space-now-destroyed. Unlike family photographic albums in which houses form the backdrop, a mere setting to familial narratives, here the space becomes both object and subject.

Family photographs are quite often deployed – shown, talked about – in series: pictures get displayed one after another, their selection and ordering as meaningful as the pictures themselves. The whole, the series, constructs a family story in some respects like a classical narrative – linear, chronological.

Susan Sontag argues that many artworks are now created in order to be photographed, with works only being known by the photographic image – such as Christo’s wrapped landscapes. Crucially, ‘the photograph is not, even ostensibly, meant to lead us back to an original experience.’ Not unlike the family photo album which contains so many images of houses and homes, and of selected activities which take place within them, the photograph cannot lead us back to an ‘original experience’, it can only make an artwork of it; render it beautiful; proclaim its value as something worth looking at, but it cannot recreate an experience. The photograph can provoke a new experience within the viewer, but the activity taking place at the moment of its

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471 Jan Debbaut and Selma Klein Essink, eds., Rachel Whiteread (Amsterdam: Van Abbemuseum, 1993), 11.
472 Barthes, Camera Lucida.
capture is lost. Likewise, Whiteread’s casting method does not aim to reproduce or recreate experiences and objects – casting, like photography, offers a different way of perceiving “reality”. Both Whiteread’s casting and Davies’ photography should be viewed as challenging realities and presumed universal experiences, rather than reaffirming mythologies of house and home.

Whiteread’s initial use of the photograph is destructive. Her “album” of *House* begins with a set of altered photographs – an early experimentation in splitting the subject-object. Four separate studies of 193 Grove Road show the structure in its final stages of decay, prior to Whiteread’s intervention (fig. 14). The windows are already boarded up, the walls on either side have come away (this is a house with no neighbours), the roof has fallen in, and junk litters the ground where a yard or garden may once have been. Whiteread assaults the property further, applying correction fluid to create thick whitened blocks on the surface of the image (the whiteness reminiscent of her later project, *Embankment*). Ambiguous white absences appear as if sections have been neatly carved out of the building’s façade. A violent blanking out of the original structure has taken place, an attempt to (literally) whitewash over a past object and offer a new object in its place. Visually there is a clear divide between the old derelict, unloved and abandoned 193 Grove Road, and the clean regimented lines of a beautiful and new loved object.

Photography and the altering of the photograph is part of Whiteread’s drawing process, the creation of new images – like her cast pieces – emerge from a layering of substances, of fluids upon solids. But this creation comes at the price of obliteration. Photography is similar to the cast object in that it is a reproduction which takes its image, its subject, from an original parent object. Both photography and casting are formed from layers. With concrete and resin, the fluid-like substances fill the original (parent) object, and congeal and harden to form a crust, a skin. With analogue photography, gelatin or emulsion coatings swell and thicken; both emerge from an atmospheric transformation of their (al)chemical components.

The white abstract masses layered onto the photographic studies foretell the demolition ear-marked for 193 Grove Road. In its place the Council planned for a blank, open space – Whiteread merely experiments with her own blanking out with whiteness. The overall pink tinge of the photographs creates a decorative quality – despite the destructive ruination which has befallen the structure. Whiteread presents beautiful ruins; the white correction-fluid acting like a veil, or white cloth (similar to the wrappings of Christo and Jean-Claude) which emphasises the angles, ridges, protrusions of the building, unifying its separate fragments.
through a wash of white. A familiar landscape transformed. Commenting on Christo’s wrapping method, Susan Stewart notes that the process raises ‘issues of authentic closure and access’ to structures (much like Whiteread’s own casting methods). And rather than perceive Whiteread’s correction-fluid as defacement, perhaps it acts like Christo’s wrapping in that it is ‘an invitation on the level of hand-held apprehension. The bound blanket around an infant, the shroud wound around the corpse, are gestures of care which maintain the integrity of the body and claim its singular identity.’ Are Whiteread’s altered photographs thus destructive or protective? Is 193 Grove Road being smothered or blanketed? In the first of the images faint pencil-lines mark out what would become the façade indents of *House*. A ghostly projection of a sculptural structure imagined, but now destroyed, overlaid onto a photograph of the demolished 193 Grove Road. This image is full of haunting, of ghosts; of structures and spaces which have all been materially eradicated and pulverised. This first image acts as a reminder of both *House* and its original object 193 Grove Road: the ghostly image of the (sculptural) child forcibly covering, replacing, its parent.

**Photographing the Street**

*House* is particularly concerned with vision, or with visualising that which is usually hidden. The structure itself plays with concepts of interior and exterior, public and private – those binaries perpetuated by the domestic sphere. With *House*, although we fear suffocation, of being locked in the interior, we are in fact locked out of the house space. Rooms are not simply inaccessible, but cease to exist. The domestic space is in a state of reversal, viewers are standing on the outside of an interior space turned inside-out on itself. This sculptural space undoes, turns inside-out its object of origin 193 Grove Road, and with it the myths and expectations it once harboured.

Davies captures the sculpture’s short life in a chronological set of eleven shots. Early photographic studies from Whiteread are very different to the official images of *House*. Davies’ series projects a very different type of space, with the disordered and junk-filled 193 Grove Road being replaced by solitary, cleansed shots. He documents the stages of *House*, framing its life within its location, conveying the initial conception, to creation, presence, destruction and absence of *House*. The images capture a moment in which this specific part of

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the landscape is in flux. Davies’ black and white photographs can be understood as emerging from a British tradition of post-war “street” and documentary photography. Pioneered by photographers such as Roger Mayne and Nigel Henderson, their images capture the activities of the working classes and are framed by space and place. Crucially, location and architecture do not play a secondary role to the bodily, the two are interconnected: space and place and the human form are intertwined socially and culturally. The “street” is treated as a theatrical setting; buildings and their fragments are props and playthings for the body; representations of spaces are beautifully heavy with atmosphere and the grittiness of life activities.

In 2007 a touring exhibition photographs from the Arts Council Collection collated together photographs of this British “street” tradition – including works by Davies. The exhibition and publication title No Such Thing as Society responds to Margaret Thatcher’s claim of there being no such thing as society ‘there only individual men, women, and their families’; which “starkly articulated a contemporary movement away from the public sphere and towards a new emphasis on individualism.” In 2007 a touring exhibition photographs from the Arts Council Collection collated together photographs of this British “street” tradition – including works by Davies. The exhibition and its catalogue bring together a series of images in which photo-documentary captures society through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s coping with ‘the strains of economic restructuring and policies of monetarianism’; photography concerning itself with a changing Welfare State, and ‘memory, loss and spectacle’. As (then) Head of the Arts Council Caroline Douglas comments, ‘photographs are an extraordinary testimony to the tensions of the period.’ Such tensions are wrapped up with ideas of identity and “belonging” – racial, gender, and economic factors bubble and simmer in each grainy or starkly defined black and white shot. When electric brazen colour begins to creep in in the late nineteen-eighties, the images take on yet another element of ‘violence and insolence’ not yet seen in British photography. Davies’ black and white images appeared in the exhibition under the theme of Wastelands (1976-82) – imagery considered a ‘pictorial goodbye to former imperial and industrial cultures and communities.’ The imagery is ‘harsher and more bitter’; Davies offers ‘elegiac images of spectralised cities […] akin to the eighteenth and nineteenth-century notion of the sublime, in

479 Mellor, No Such Thing as Society, 6.
480 Mellor, No Such Thing as Society, 6.
481 Mellor, No Such Thing as Society, 6.
482 Mellor, No Such Thing as Society, 6.
483 Mellor, No Such Thing as Society, 6.
484 Mellor, No Such Thing as Society, 6.
485 Mellor, No Such Thing as Society, 6.
486 Mellor, No Such Thing as Society, 6.
487 Mellor, No Such Thing as Society, 131
488 Mellor, No Such Thing as Society, 109.
489 Mellor, No Such Thing as Society, 109.
its sweeping aside of the human.\footnote{Mellor, No Such Thing as Society, 110.} Taken from high vantage points, Davies’ urban panoramas are chillingly deserted; economic and civic factors culminating in swathes of depopulated landscape which were once at the heart of a bustling manufacturing industry (fig. 17 & 18). It is this socially and politically motivated aesthetic which drew Artangel and Whiteread to select Davies as the official photographer to create an equally unsettling family album of *House*. Distance, absence and emptiness are the basis of Davies’ visual narratives, with this emphatically carried through into the *House* project. Here, Thatcher’s claims of ‘no society’ is also implicated in the personal space of the home – with economic and industrial restructuring of the working-classes spilling over into the familial space (as sociologists Young and Willmott emphasise).

Grayson Perry’s recent exhibition *Unpopular Culture* (2008) continues in the same vein as *No Such Thing as Society*, once again taking inspiration from the Arts Council collections as he collates together a selection which avoids certain projected stereotypes of “Englishness”, instead looking to the hidden visual narratives of society which don’t fit into a perceived criteria of middle-class tastes and fashion. A sense of the gritty, “grim”, and socialism, guides Perry’s choices – not mainstream, middle-ground politics, or brash sensational contemporary art. Perry selects works from an earlier period which could be characterised as ‘subtle, sensitive, lyrical and quiet’.\footnote{Grayson Perry, *Unpopular Culture: Grayson Perry Selects from The Arts Council Collection* (London: Hayward Publishing, 2008), 7.}

Artists speak eloquently of Britain in a time between the trauma of the Second World War and the onset of Thaterite Selfish Capitalism, a time between the Blitz and the contemporary bombardment by media and marketing […] an age before our experience of ourselves was muffled completely by the commercial and sophisticated intermediaries of television, advertising and digital communications.\footnote{Perry, *Unpopular Culture*, 8.}

This is not art courted by money-spilling patrons and a thirsty but cynical press, or embraced by official art histories. Whiteread’s *House* is an interesting example of contemporary art, as it emerges on the cusp of a society and art market soon to explode and move away from the like offered in Perry’s selection. And yet, *House* – with Whiteread’s casting method and presented
through Davies’ monochrome pallet – would not feel aesthetically or conceptually out of place alongside such earlier works of an “in-between” post-war period. The artists selected, claims Perry, demonstrate the ‘working classes at play [...] glimpses of a lost world of close-knit communities but also gritty domestic horrors.’ Poverty and intolerance clashes with ‘fêtes’ and holiday ‘jolly sing-songs’. An ambivalent and somewhat confused society in transit, rather than a unified “whole nation”, is captured. And crucially, ruined buildings appear frequently.

With House, Davies’ images offer a new spin on “street” images. They are reminiscent of the vast streetscapes of terraced housing as photographed by Roger Mayne, John Bullmer or Humphrey Spender, but something is amiss (or missing). The terraced housing is now absent, demolished; the street no longer a place for communal meeting or hustle or bustle as it has been largely cleared of its working-class architectural heritage. The street is quiet, silent. Davies captures an urban landscape emptied. His images are not politically neutral; within their emptiness lingers a critique of how social interactions and communities have altered and transformed in the wake of political interventions. Architecture is representative of the community which once occupied Grove Road – both its terraced housing and residents have dispersed, with only House left standing. Quite the opposite of wanting to depict the house space as populated, absence and loss is the overarching theme of Davies’ images. Described as a ‘narrative landscape photographer’, Davies’ black and white photographs of House also contribute to a larger series of landscape monochromes taken between 1979 and 2005,

[showing] the vast, complex and majestic scenery of post-industrial and industrial Britain. He establishes centered and classical geometries within his unique vision that take on an almost a magical and mystical appeal. His works are coolly detached and highly seductive in their display of rare moments of calm and quiet amidst the inevitable change of these modern landscapes.

Images of House, as offered by Davies, are not photo-journalism documents, but a deliberate framing of a space through classical detachment and an allusion to a mystical landscape. Whiteread was specific in her vision for the images as black and white, deliberately selecting

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489 Perry, Unpopular Culture, 9.
490 Perry, Unpopular Culture, 9.
Davies for his well-known “style”. Davies did create images which were populated with people, but Whiteread and Artangel selected the more sparse photographs. Mirroring Whiteread’s own neutral pallet with *House*, Davies’ images are ‘free from the distraction of colour’; in this sense they are deliberately at a remove from the busy and chaotic realities of the city space. The forms, lines and walls of the sculpture become the focus (fig. 15). The images attempt to offer a certain picturesque space; the sculpture is captured in its initial conception and final absence – neither the graffiti-sprawled walls nor the actual destruction process is shown in these images. But a mystical landscape is not entirely achieved, despite the attempt to rid the space of colour and of the busy-London scene. *House* is, after all, the subject of the image – a thing, an object which disrupts the sense of calm of the monochrome landscape.

There is a tension between the desire to almost purify the East End of its rough edges through the photographic image, and *House* itself which refuses to be smoothed. Davies’ photographs, with their leanings towards an idealised decluttering of place – distractions largely removed – are not unlike those rigidly poised images sometimes found within family photograph albums, with all family members taking their correct positions and offering suitably content facial expressions. In offering images of a domestic space, of some sorts, Davies’ photographs contribute to that vast photographic archive of the familial and its spaces. Notably, photographic technology was initially developed with the domestic sphere (and family) in mind; a response to those desires and demands of a well-off upper and middle-class, ‘the camera is part of a lifestyle based on house, garden and car which moulds the aspirations of the suburban nations of the prosperous West.’ Davies’ images of *House*, then, are less ironic and actually expected – of course there would (should) be a photographic portrait, as indeed produced by all houses and homes. However, with most domestic photography, it is the family which is the subject of the image, but they are missing from Davies’ photographs; the inside-out *House* has banished them from the private sphere. *House* stands proud, but its inhabitants are nowhere to be seen. Its purpose as a site, structure and symbol of the domestic sphere is not only lost in the casting of the interior space but ceases to house and frame the familial. It would seem that this *House* has no family.

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492 With thanks to John Davies for his email discussions, October 2009 and April 2010.
493 Artist’s page, *Michael Hoppen Contemporary*.
Significantly, a traditional culture of “the street” in the East End depended upon the proximity of housing in which family relations often live close by to one another – often with children, now married, living next door to their parents. As Young and Willmott comment, the accumulation of family living around and next to each other was also partly due to the mother’s influence with landlords and rent collectors – ‘a tendency for residence to be matrilocal’; the mother keeping her ‘ear to the ground’ as to when a house vacancy may arise. ‘The culture of “speaking for” relatives (as it is called) is backed up by a body of sentiment in each street and block.’ The street becomes a space and place for the family, given that a large number of residents may be intimately connected. But as Young and Willmott comment, this tradition does not continue in the new public housing and tenement blocks:

Although any day you can see a large round mother standing with her slim anxious daughter behind her at the counter of the Housing Department, in this sphere her voice cannot gain priority for her children. Kindly administrators do their best to see that members of families get rehoused close together. But it is much rarer for Council tenants to be clustered in families, for the mother has none of the special influence with the local authorities that she does with the private rent collectors.

The absent family missing from Davies’ House album reflects that social and spatial transformation in East End familial relations. Children move away from the area to seek work elsewhere; surrounding neighbourhoods and housing become populated with “outsiders”; spaces are demolished, or regenerated for a wealthier resident. The lack of familial representation with Davies’ House images mirrors the reality that the family of 193 Grove Road was eventually evicted.

The photographic landscape is fantastical; it is as space and place of non-existence, of imagination. This place cannot be experienced “in reality”, as it only exists photographically: no people, no traffic (grey, only grey). House transformed 193 Grove Road; the photograph

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495 Young and Willmott, Family and Kinship, 42.
496 Young and Willmott, Family and Kinship, 41.
497 Young and Willmott, Family and Kinship, 42. Today most local councils operate “bidding schemes” for their limited housing which relies upon a points system, rather than personal recommendation. Such schemes are thought to aid a fair distribution of housing taking account of specific needs and requirements, rather than personal favouritism. However, such schemes will fail to produce estate communities which thrive from an embedded culture of local family and kin.
transforms *House* and it becomes a new object once again. 193 Grove Road is entirely lost. Davies’ images offer an alternative reality which is almost post-apocalyptic (perhaps post-nuclear) – is this what has become of all houses? Where are the people? Has everything been concretised, greyed, and covered in ash? Photographs of *House* in a bleak landscape offer a vision of what we already know to be true: large-scale demolition of East End housing; the dispersal and break-up of communities; a blanking, a flattening, a greying of East End history and culture. Davies’ photographs are thus closer to a not so hidden “truth”: the transformation of a working-class neighbourhood into something eerily silent and unrecognisable. The images are cleansed and neatly contained. Significantly, any evidence of the political conflict surrounding *House* is all but eradicated from the calm black and white stills produced by Davies. The anger and bile projected through written and verbal communication on *House* is suppressed.

“Evidence” of the Familial

The concrete façade of *House* is not gleaming, but a patchwork of dirty-greys, of scratches and pot-marks; its dirty door-step very much on show. Davies’ images may attempt to purify the space of its rough edges, of its dirt, colour and difference, but the sculpture itself refuses the romantic nostalgia of monochrome. The written histories of the East End make good use of the black and white photographic archive, but here something is amiss. The conspicuous absence of family and children from the photographic album of *House* splits open the assumption that the photograph helps to maintain the unity of the familial; Davies’ images merely serve to emphasise absence, and those missing children.

Aesthetically, *House* couldn’t be less like a Victorian terrace. 193 Grove Road gave its form and spaces to *House*, but the radical visual transformation split public opinion. However, the space within (the space in which familial transactions take place) had not been lost, but simply encased within a concrete shell. *House* is a conceptual as well as a material engagement with space, a questioning of how place and space can (or cannot) be preserved materially. Davies’ photographs reinforce this idea, undoing the myth of preservation through visual manifestation. As Sontag comments on photography, and what can be understood from a destroyed sculpture such as *House*, is that the photograph is a questionable document of evidence, as is *House* as a physical object of the familial. If space is read as temporal, and if meanings of space only emerge through human interactions which are performative and not static and bound, then the photograph which attempts to capture and fix is not a technology to
offer space in its entirety – only in fragments. It offers a literal “snap-shot”, but, as argued by Sontag, ‘photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, they also help people to take possession of a space in which they are insecure.’498 Images taken of space and architecture then, including those which find their way into family albums, are not necessarily motivated by a desire to depict space in its “truth” (which cannot be limited to one view), but work to reassure the photographer of his or her role within such environs. A photograph is a gesture of the photographer; it does not evolve independently of his or her framing. The needs of the viewer are in fact secondary. The photographer is the one who controls his or her visual scene, its editing and cropping, its frame and content, transforming an incoherent and unmanageable mass or people, architecture and interactions into manageable chunks of vision. The photographer deliberately excludes in order to take possession.

Only the successes of familial hierarchies are captured by domestic family photography, they are as equally contrived as those well-framed shots of House. ‘Where is the evidence of struggle?’499 comments Lorie Novak in response to viewing images of her girlhood self. ‘Images of awkward moments and unflattering poses that are often more revealing than the ones framed on the walls and presented in photo albums’;500 these images are kept hidden away in drawers, under beds, perhaps eventually discarded. The ever present question of what was not photographed? lingers under the surface of all familial images. And we are not the sole owners of memories; ‘memory work is a practice of unearthing and making public untold stories’,501 but this unearthing can be conflicting or contradictory to someone else’s version of the same narrative. In discussing a photograph from her own childhood, Annette Kuhn believes her mother to have ‘misremembered’ the events surrounding the image; when people remember, they can ‘force others’ memories in line with their own’, it is a ‘capricious piece of power-play.’502

Family photographs never depict abuse or betrayal, anger or spite, desires or secret wishes; they are not designed to reveal the realities of relations which take place within the house space, they are simply designed to capture events and situations which seem to conform to expected cultural “norms”. However, as both Kuhn and Watney emphasise, there is no

501 Kuhn, Family Secrets, 9.
certainty that the memories provoked by such family photographs will be those which support
a mythology of family unity or contentment. For Kuhn there is a dispute between her own
memories of an event depicted in a childhood photograph and her mother’s memories of the
same event. Kuhn concedes that both sets of memories are tainted by emotions which are
projected onto the image, which do not necessarily correspond to the actual activity taking
place in the photograph. These emotions relate to what is outside the picture frame, out of
shot, and intimacies and jealousies which will never be caught on camera, for they do not
make for a suitable image for the photograph album. For Watney, he remembers the secret
desires and fears of the little boy in his family photographs; the little boy who had to hide his
sexuality from his parents, who had to lock away parts of his identity in order to conform to
the ideal “son”.

The family photograph served to act as a shield and a prison; it helped to
create and continue a lie, a myth of “normative” boyhood, girlhood, and familial relations.

Photographs are full of pretence and performance, not “truths”. Photographs are a
gesture of selection and manipulation. Preserving the family unit in celluloid signifies the
(desired) death of those unseen, un-photographed events and relations; it renders them
permanently invisible as they never become part of a process and system of observation and
vision. As Sontag comments, photography is the ‘creation of a duplicate world, of a reality in
the second degree, narrower but more dramatic than the one perceived by natural vision.’

Whiteread’s casts share this impulse towards duplicity, but, as Graham-Dixon comments, they
are like the negatives rather than the final print – more dramatic in their take on “reality”
of space. And, like the photograph, Whiteread’s casts offer something ‘as a message from a
time past’ but they also deny a definitive reading: photographs and cast objects do not offer
clarity, but confirm visual perception as one of complex disorder and ambiguity.

Alternative Photographic Histories

Events and people external to the family unit disrupt the ideology of the perfect
family through their influences and possible transgressions: ‘in our daily lives the bonds
of family are crossed by many others, and even our familial experiences are by no means

503 Watney, “Ordinary Boys”.
Culture, 10:3 (December 2011), 279-293.
505 Sontag, On Photography, 52.
506 Sontag, On Photography, 54.
confined to the small, nuclear group. For the child, this may shape and mould identity into something which radically challenges or compromises parental authority. Watney talks of his Extended Family Album, those collections of photographs in which no stable concepts of “family” can take hold. Stephen White’s colour photograph of House is similarly disruptive to the ideal family album of House, as it offers a contrasting image of House (fig.16). The black and white photographs by Davies are heavy and filled with burden and melancholy; stripped of their pigment they render colour invalid, suppressed beneath layers of grey. They seem to allude to a time when the world was grey with duty, rationality, poverty, a time when clothing was made from cotton or wool, make-up was sparse, technology in the house in its infancy; the world of advertising had not yet exploded onto billboards or into magazines. Then comes the invasion of riotous colour: an exhausting attack of primary reds, blues, and yellows. The coloured photograph by White offers a different street scene, one not so bleak in its outlook, as the silence and absence is filled with the visual noise of the numerous visitors to House. A new community has emerged; play has resumed. Instead of the emptied roads, still surroundings, neutral palette, White’s photograph shows the hustle and bustle of Grove Road. Cars are parked and blocking both sides of the street; the patchy colouration of House is conveyed and the crispness of an Autumnal day evident in the sunken but clear light in which the image was taken. Notably, photographs capturing out-of-doors play and human interaction with and around House are not published in the “official” family album of House – mimicking those editorial decisions taken with family albums.

Crucially, White’s photograph is populated – the children have returned to House. They play around its base; they climb its stairs and stroke its walls; the adults look on, and take more photographs.

The artworks and photographic images by artist Janet Brooke offer another archive which differs from Davies’ representations of House. Printmaker Brooke lives and works in the East End. She began photographing the remaining three houses of the former Grove Road terrace in 1993 (fig.19). Brooke comments: ‘The middle house [193 Grove Road] was still occupied, under protest, at the time and it was turned into the sculpture, House, by Rachel Whiteread. I planned to make a print of these houses before I knew what was going on; I’ve

had a fascination with bricked up doors and windows for some time. The decay and dilapidation of 193 Grove Road is captured by Brooke’s illustration *Hearth and Home* (1994), but also (and more crucially) in the various photographs documenting 193 Grove Road prior to Whiteread’s intervention (fig. 20). Nowhere in the official Artangel archives is 193 Grove Road depicted in its “homely” state (someone still obviously inhabiting the space). All images collated show the building very much derelict; in Brooke’s images we can still view the net-curtains, the painted exterior, Sidney Gale’s defiant sign demanding the viewer to acknowledge the wrong-doings of the council (fig. 19). Brooke’s images humanise the space. The artist took an interest in the site prior to Whiteread’s project: ‘When I first started photographing this block of derelict houses I had no idea that the middle one would turn into Rachel Whiteread’s *House*, it was just part of my ongoing collection of material for my work on urban decay and dereliction. I lived down the road near Mile End and at the time my daughter went to a primary school very close to *House* so I passed that area regularly.’

Brooke’s images are concerned with capturing the details of 193 Grove Road and offer something different to Whiteread, which is possibly rooted in Brooke’s close relationship with the East End. Brooke seems to want to capture and document 193 Grove Road as a surviving structure, rather than create something new in its place (as Whiteread does). One of the criticisms levelled at *House* was its seeming eradication of 193 Grove Road, with Whiteread’s casting process leaving behind an empty shell, and imprint, which did little to capture the home which Sidney Gale and others remembered.

**Absent Photographic Histories**

The photograph and the inscriptions point to this ‘something else’ only in what they leave out. What happens, then, if we take absences, silences, as evidence? (Annette Kuhn, “The Child I Never Was”)

Family photographs attempt to make up for that which is missing, and yet overtly exclude in the same instance. Despite efforts to hold the photograph in place of the original,

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508 Print *Heath and Home* (1994), H 660mm; W 501mm (paper), held in storage in the Museum of London, Collections and Archives. Thanks to Janet Brooke for email communications, April 2013, and access to unpublished artworks and photography.

509 Email communications with Janet Brooke, April 2013.

the original is always lost, absent. The child is conspicuously absent from Whiteread’s sculpture and its official “imagery” by Davies, mirroring the absence (or missing narratives) of childhood histories of Grove Road. Returning to Kuhn’s comment: ‘a photograph can be the site of conflicting memories, whose memory is to prevail in the family archive?’\textsuperscript{511} who decides which histories of the East End and 193 Grove Road are to be preserved and communicated? The photograph is presumed (misguidedly) to offer visual “evidence”, but when such evidence is missing, how then are other histories to be firstly found and then depicted? That which is out of shot, just beyond the frame, also concerns interpretation, but little time is given to its consideration.

Two images of Grove Road: the first from 1910, the earliest image to be located thus far (fig.21). The Grove Road terraces were constructed c.1866-1870, but no image appears in the archives until 1910 (histories are already visually absent). The second image, a view in 2012, looks up Grove Road, with similar framing to that of 1910 (fig.22). Markedly absent from the latter image is the row of Victorian terraces, of which 193 Grove Road was one; in their place a wide open space of greenery, a parkland for local residents. The buildings situated opposite the Grove Road terraces are a significant aspect of the landscape, and are a consistent feature within images of Grove Road. Again, much like the photographic archive as a whole, little attention has been given to these structures which have remained a constant in the flux and change of Grove Road. They have outlived both the Victorian terrace and House; survived war bombing and post-war regeneration. Sheppard House, 182 Grove Road, also known as The Children’s Fold, faced House across Grove Road. On its exterior a small blue plaque reads: \textit{Historic Buildings of Bow. 182 Grove Road. From 1888 to 1911 ‘The Children’s Fold’ or ‘Sheppard House’. One of Dr Barnardo’s Children’s Homes.} The building has since been renamed ‘The Driftway’ and is now a series of flats for lease.

The building was once a Barnardo’s house for crippled boys placed in the home because of their disabilities. These were children who found themselves leaving the parental home, to instead live in a building in which a new extended family would emerge among peers and other residents of the Fold. Susan Omerod’s photograph of House (fig. 23) effectively superimposes the sculpture onto the façade of Sheppard House, merging the two buildings into one. A House which has excluded the child through its turning inside-out of its walls, mirrors, and almost merges with, a structure which once took in destitute children who were absent

\textsuperscript{511} Kuhn, “The Child I Never Was”, 19.
from their own house spaces.\textsuperscript{512} The symbolism is overt enough. The reversed rooms of \textit{House} remain secreted and contained, within within; the activities of the Fold remain securely guarded within Barnardo’s archives, with the building itself giving nothing away.

It is the status of \textit{House} as an immigrant structure which links the sculpture more deeply with this other house space and its soon-to-be immigrant children. In time, the Fold took on a new purpose which is not announced by the blue historic plaque. In 1907 Sheppard House became a check and registration point for children being transported to Canada, as part of a project titled ‘Home Children’.\textsuperscript{513} Even in 1891, this was considered a controversial programme.\textsuperscript{514} In East London the transportation of children was partly co-ordinated by promoter of child immigration, Annie Parlane MacPherson.\textsuperscript{515} Sheppard House closed its activities in 1907, but the deportation of children to British colonies continued well into the post-war period, as late as 1970, with reports of severe abuse, separation from siblings, and misinformation regarding the whereabouts of birth-families. In 2010 an apology was issued by the British Government for this activity.\textsuperscript{516}

This narrative and history of Grove Road, of childhoods fractured and displaced, is not material for the family album. No photographs exist of the Fold’s Barnardos boys (or at least are not for public viewing); these are childhoods which have been split from the familial ideal.

\textsuperscript{512} Due to Data Protection I am unable to gain access to specific case studies.
\textsuperscript{513} Between 1869 and the late 1930s, over 100,000 juvenile migrants were sent to Canada from Great Britain during the child emigration movement. Motivated by social and economic forces, churches and philanthropic organisations sent orphaned, abandoned and pauper children to Canada. Many believed that these children would have a better chance for a healthy, moral life in rural Canada, where families welcomed them as a source of cheap farm labour and domestic help. After arriving by ship, the children were sent to distributing homes, such as Fairknowe in Brockville, and then sent on to farmers in the area. Although many of the children were poorly treated and abused, others experienced a better life here than if they had remained in the urban slums of England. Many served with the Canadian and British Forces during both World Wars.
\textsuperscript{514} With an anonymous journalist commenting, 'The attention of the Dominion Government has been drawn to the fact that the children sent to Canada from England are street waifs and workhouse paupers, and that the professional philanthropists engaged in the work are largely prompted by mercenary and not charitable motives. A demand will be made that parliament should investigate the matter before voting any money to promote this kind of immigration.' Anon, “Child emigration to Canada”, \textit{The Star}, 18 April 1891.
\textsuperscript{515} Annie Parlane MacPherson (1825-1904) was a Scottish evangelical Quaker and philanthropist who pioneered child emigration to Canada. 1868 she opened the Home of Industry at 60 Commercial Road in Spitalfields. In the 1870s, she organised that Home children were sent to Canada from her Home in London, and also had arrangements with Barnardo’s Homes of Dr. Barnardo in London. A full biography can be found here: Judy Collingwood, “Macpherson, Annie Parlane (1825–1904)”, \textit{Oxford Dictionary of National Biography}, Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed 6 January, 2014, \url{http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50744}
\textsuperscript{516} The UK is the only country with a sustained history of child migration - over four centuries: In 1618, 100 sent from London to Richmond, Virginia. In total 130,000 sent from the UK to Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) and Australia. Post-war, 7,000 shipped to Australia and 1,300 to New Zealand, Rhodesia and Canada. [Source: \textit{Child Migrants Trust} “Gordon Brown Apologises to Child Migrants Sent Abroad”, \textit{BBC News}, last updated 24 February, 2010, accessed 6 January, 2014, \url{http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8531664.stm}
This is not to claim that the childhoods of the Fold were unloving, that this system of care was not suitably giving. Indeed, similar to The Foundling Hospital, there are many positive narratives which emerge from the Barnardos houses, and the later migration programme. However, these are narratives of childhood with links back to the parental home largely severed. Omerod’s photograph unwittingly connects the symbolism of House, as a space disrupted and excluding the child, with Sheppard House, a space which does not conform to the traditional family unit. The viewer is challenged to question their own presumptions or expectations of house and home, and the presence or absence of the child within that space.

**Destruction**

Omerod’s photograph calls into question the circling mythologies of the domestic sphere and family structures. The final demolition of House is the end-stage in the collapsing of a bourgeois ideal. The house is the ultimate consumerist object; a bourgeois myth which ‘empties reality’ and thus enables the domestic sphere and its “family” to proceed as a ‘natural and eternal justification’ A myth ripens because it spreads […] A ceaseless flowing out, a haemorrhage. The disruption of the house (via casting) and then its destruction is a violent stopper to such a haemorrhage. The mythology of the house as straight, upright and rational order, the bourgeois’ most prized possession, is smashed and pulverised along with Whiteread’s sculpture. The stability of the family unit – initially shaken by Whiteread’s inside-out confrontation – further extinguished.

Dalya Alberge was in part correct to predict that the existence of House ‘will be no more than a memory.’ As Sinclair comments, and is evident from any visit to Grove Road, ‘all the provocations of memory have been deleted. This is a field of voluntary amnesia.’ Wennington Green is just that – a “green” with no evidence of House, or of the Grove Road terraces. Only a single wooden bench now occupies that

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519 Bathes, Mythologies, 117, 169.


space – only notable to those who remember *House* (fig.27 i & ii). However, the ghosts of *House* continue to linger, due to the remaining photographs. *House*, in its absence, continues to haunt. The vilified Councillor Flounders and his supporters were misguided in their belief that memory is dictated by visual presence alone. Histories of “the street” (and Grove Road) do not only exist through the visual. As with the sociological and anthropological studies of East London by Young and Willmott, photography comes to life through an oral retelling. To an extent Whiteread’s temporary works such as *House* (and later *Embankment*) challenge and question the reliance upon the visual for memory-work. The visual takes no account of gossip, of discussion, of tales told and retold, of spoken encounters which bind communities together. Notably, Davies’ image of the empty space in which *House* once stood, proves the point that histories of place and space do not evaporate with the loss of visual materiality; *House* and its East End setting continues to be discussed, written about, and still photographed despite the demolition. The opposite side of the road continues to exist with little change – these structures acting as witness to the destruction befalling the buildings around them. Sheppard House – a place containing hidden narratives of childhood – is now formalised by its small blue plaque. Grove Road was thus a suitably relevant place for the temporary existence of *House* – it too being finally driven from view.

Stephen White’s coloured photographs of the ensuing chaotic destruction contrast greatly with Davies’ serene and rather surreal empty black and white stills. Davies’ final shot in his series of eleven images frames the empty green; the back of white car disrupts the clean lines of the foreground, an elderly gentleman – slightly hazy as he is caught in the time-lapse of the lens shutter – wanders past the fencing in the middle-ground (a ghost of the old terraces, perhaps) (fig.24). Sparse trees are dotted over the green, with the bright gleam of the 1960s tower blocks coming into view in the far distance. But no *House*. All traces have vanished. There is a peaceful calmness to Davies’ final image, unlike White’s photographs displaying the smashed fragments of the sculpture and the jutting and sharp edges of the concrete mass; the wire framework which supported the concrete weight now twisted and cut, threaten to pierce those who step too close. The graffiti-smothered sides which Davies conceals within his images (instead presenting the sculpture in its pristine state) shout out aggressively from the intensity of the mangled mass: “WOT FOR? WHY NOT!” The McGrath Boss digger tears through the wall-sides and blocked windows and shut-up doors (fig.25).
The images of demolition witnessed here are no different to those witnessed across the East End – *House* eventually suffering the same fate as those old terraces.

Whiteread collated her own images of East End demolition with the series titled *Demolished*, black and white photographs taken between 1993 and 1995 – spanning the period of the creation, destruction and post-*House* existence. These images record the demolition of tower blocks on three housing estates in the borough of Hackney. Whiteread’s black and white photographs serve as an intriguing sibling series to Davies’ images, both sets recording and creating photographic archives of the changing physical landscape. Together, the two sets of photographs document the instability of the house space, whether a traditional terrace or a modern 1960s tower-block. Whiteread’s images are more apocalyptic as they quash any sense of hope for the future of the East End, leaving the viewer with ambiguous clouds of dust which threaten to spread beyond the edges of the photograph (fig.26). The destruction present with *House* and with the *Demolition* series confirms a fear that undesirable house spaces which represent something other than traditional notions of the familial are rapidly removed from the visual field. *House* is thus a memorial to that which is unseen, hidden, or purposefully eradicated.

The photographic archive left behind from *House* is a mixture of the cleansed (Davies), the colourfully disruptive (White), the symbolically layered (Whiteread and Omerod), and reassuringly inhabited (Brooke). Each photograph contributes to a possible narrative of *House*, of Grove Road, of childhoods, of familial inhabitants. Together they create a diverse family album and portrait of *House*. These images are now the only lens through which we can “remember” *House*; a space, an object, a sculptural child fraught with tension and controversy as its parent object 193 Grove Road was pulled down around it. The *House* family album is similarly fraught: the eerie stillness and absences of Davies’ images conflict with White’s playful, messy colour; Whiteread’s correction-fluid filled photographs are counteracted by Brooke’s revealing detail. Omerod brings into focus hidden and suppressed histories of The Children’s Fold.

which confronted *House* across Grove Road. My own recent images can only be those of absence, of empty space, of nothingness and air (fig. 27 i). Each photographer brings with them a different perspective, view, of *House*; each in their turn excluding something which another may capture or witness. Each image on its own conveys something of the complexities of the photographic *House*; together they offer the possibility of unlocking fresh and newly conflicting memories of a space transformed.
Conclusion:

Mothers and Boxes

My mum died very suddenly [...] it was a year before we could face starting to clear her house. I was doing it with my two sisters, and it was a really incredibly emotional thing to do [...] She’d lived there for about ten years [...] but a lot of stuff that she’d never unpacked from before just stayed in the basement.524

(Rachel Whiteread, “In Conversation”)

My purpose in writing this thesis has been to repair an exclusion – in this case, the exclusion of childhood narratives in analysis of Whiteread’s works.525 More significantly, the absence and exclusion of destructive narratives of childhood, as read through the lens of Kleinian psycholanalysi. The lingering presence of the maternal has also not been thoroughly acknowledged or discussed, yet the mother (that original lost object) is returned to frequently: Place [Village] (an early curiosity of dollhouses was encouraged by her mother); Closet (the parental wardrobe); Untitled [One Hundred Spaces] (sibling casts, mimicking maternal reproduction); House (that lost space of the maternal). The above remarks from Whiteread on her mother’s possessions and death are some of the most personal and intimate regarding the influence of the autobiographical in her works. The temporary Tate Modern Turbine Hall installation Embankment (2005) (fig. 28), returns to that Kleinian first lost-object – the mother. Created soon after her mother’s death, the memory of the maternal is thus placed at the centre of the work’s “origin”. Embankment emphasises the significance of the connection between people and objects, and how the seemingly mundane (and that which is often condemned to the rubbish pile) can hold so many associations and evoke a range of narratives connecting the personal and collective consciousness. As with dollhouses, Whiteread is a collector of boxes: those which have been discarded in the street; the boxes of purchased dollhouses; those which accompany us on moves from one house to another; the boxes which hoarded objects in her mother’s house, and an artwork created by her mother documenting a box and its broken contents. People’s lives are contained within boxes; as an object it carries, protects, hides,


525 To appropriate a comment from Anne Wagner from her book The Mother Stone, ‘My purpose in writing this book has been to repair an exclusion,’ from the final chapter on Lost Objects. Anne Middleton Wagner, Mother Stone: The Vitality of Modern British Sculpture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 246.
conceals. Its contents are both nostalgic and painful: ‘there was layers of stuff down there that was very peculiar going through. All our toys. All very mouldy. Everything I looked at looked like a still from a film. A film of my life. And I felt I was going mad. Because every single thing had a significance – connections and associations which you couldn’t stop […] I really was thinking: I can’t live the rest of my life having to repeat these memories.’

*Embankment* was thus a cathartic piece, a way of dealing with the sadness and fondness attached to the hidden collection of her mother. Significantly, the work’s seeming “origin” supports my argument (and a psychoanalytical assessment of memory) that the artist’s work starts from ‘where all [her] work’s always come from’, the ‘smell [and touch] of [her] childhood.’

*Embankment*, with its overwhelming geographical scale and sublime whiteness gives little away in terms of intimate familial details. The object of the box is a container of things and objects of childhood, but most significantly it acts as a reminder of the maternal. The ultimate connection between past and present motherhood was made through Whiteread and her son playing hide-and-seek amongst *Embankment*’s surreal box-landscape before it opened to the public. Critic Lynn Barber argues that Whitread’s work has altered due to motherhood, ‘there’s a new lightness to her work’, with Whiteread herself concluding that: ‘I’m sure motherhood has changed me. I think there’s a playfulness that wasn’t there.’

Allowing her child into the studio when she is working is something Whiteread shares with her mother: ‘It’s something I used to do when I was a child, playing around my mother, sharpening her pencils.’ The central focus of Whiteread’s works – objects and domestic spaces – are unaltered, but perhaps there is now an added perspective: that of the child turned parent.

Whiteread’s artist mother, Pat Whiteread (1931 - 2003), a socialist and feminist, was a founder member of the committee organising the feminist art exhibition *Women’s Images of Men* at the I.C.A., London, (1980-81). Politically and socially she was a great influence on her daughter. However, Whiteread’s quick and evolving success in the art world overshadowed her mother’s less commercially successful career.

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528 No doubt alluding to the influence of her Geography-teaching late Father.

529 Barber, “Boxing Clever”.

530 Barber, “Boxing Clever”.

531 Barber, “Boxing Clever”.

532 The landmark exhibition toured Arnolfini Gallery; South Hill Park; Bluecoat Gallery; Third Eye Gallery; and Dublin Projects Art Centre in 1981.
Whiteread has been contradictory in her desire to reject an overly autobiographical reading of her works (putting her at odds with a psychoanalytical approach) yet also to offer narratives of childhood and of the familial. The presence of the child and childhoods in Whiteread’s works, however, can be read as a continuation of her mother’s politicisation of the child and childhood within her earlier feminist art. In contrast to the commercial success of her daughter, Pat’s work is not held within any public or gallery collection, being collected only by private buyers with surviving works held by the Whiteread estate. Pat’s work in itself requires a separate and as yet unwritten publication or thesis, but here I conclude this thesis on the daughter’s works by looking back to the mother’s, to determine how the child and childhood(s) have emerged in the work of Rachel Whiteread.

**Embankment**

A small cardboard box, once used to pack rolls of Sellotape, was the modest starting point […] The box, recently rediscovered by the artist […] had been part of her domestic environment since he was a child. Whiteread remembers it from as long ago as when she was five years old. It has been used to store her things, and its small size makes it charmingly perfect for such a function.533

(Catherine Wood, “Embankment”)

As a large-scale project of both casting and collecting, there are motifs and concerns repeated with *Embankment* which have been read in *Closet* (1988), *Untitled [One Hundred Spaces]* (1995) and *House* (1993-94). Like *Closet*, the installation of stacked box-units looks once again to the container, spaces in which to hide, play, and contain “things” which help to construct identities: ‘All the latent secrets locked away in the rest of the boxes, hinting at an infinity of untold narratives.’534 Similar to Laura Mulvey’s observations on feminine mythologies of containers and curiosity,535 Catherine Wood comments,

The concept of the box […] is rich in such mythological and cultural associations […] Pandora’s Box tells of its capacity to contain malevolent powers, and boxes of

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all shapes and sizes feature in literature and film to represent the keeping of a secret, of storing or hiding personal possessions, from the rude surprise of the jack-in-a-box to the ‘box of delights’ or the chest of hidden treasure.  

Visually, a specific connection is made between Closet (discussed in Chapter One) and the box units of Embankment in a photomontaged print created by Whiteread. The Closet and Boxes (2005) collage combines both child and mother, the Closet (being the space of the child’s body) now holds, caresses and protects, the ragged worn box (the container which for Whiteread represents her mother, and her collecting, protecting habits) (fig. 29).

Embankment also returns to the themes of siblings and seriality as explored with Untitled [One Hundred Spaces] in Chapter Two. Whiteread acknowledges a certain level of conflict with her elder twin-siblings over their mother’s possessions.Sibling rivalry over authorship of memories can come to the fore with loss and absence of the parental. Returning to Klein’s comments on the ambivalent feelings towards siblings, ‘Infantile death wishes against parents, brothers and sisters are actually fulfilled whenever a loved person dies […] death, however shattering for other reasons, is to some extent also felt as a victory, and gives rise to triumph, and therefore all the more to guilt.’

Death of the parental therefore once again gives rise to lateral power struggles and conflict. And most relevant to Whiteread’s sorting through her mother’s possessions, Klein notes, ‘Some people in mourning tidy the house and rearrange furniture, actions which spring from an increase in obsessional mechanisms which are a repetition of one of the defences used to combat the infantile depressive position.’

‘Obsessional mechanisms’ and seeking comfort in repetition are overtly present with Embankment. The installation displays a complex seriality; the final box units are ‘casts of casts […] an excess of phantom replicas, repetitions of the solid, cast originals that were taken from individual boxes.’ As Wood comments, this seemingly uncontrolled seriality presents ‘a dream or nightmare of over production.’ The fear of the mother’s body containing many more children emerges as a nightmarish reality, with no perceived reproductive limitations.

38 Klein, “Mourning and its Relation to Manic Depressive States”, 158.
41 Freud says that as a child he was ‘full of mistrust and anxiety that his mother’s inside might conceal yet more
This seriality also connects back to Whiteread’s collection of dollhouses, with dollhouse boxes being used to cast initial prototypes. Two collections – one of boxes, the other of dollhouses – merge through Embankment, with both collections linking back to the body of the mother. As Whiteread recalls, ‘When I was about three-and-a-half years old, we went to the Museum of Childhood (Bethnal Green), and my mum would always say that she’d never seen a child’s eyes open so wide. I was just amazed at the miniautureness of it all. You know how these childhood stories leak into your adult life. Maybe that’s why I am still fixated on these objects.’

Both Embankment and Place [Village] allude to the relations between parents and children. The death of her mother – and the early death of her father – is the context in which we can view Embankment and Place [Village]; they are an expression of a child mourning the loss of her parents, of an artist offering replacement, physical objects in place of those original Kleinian “lost” objects.

The theatrical and dominant use of a single colour with Embankment (an opaque white) contrasts with Whiteread’s other serial cast projects, such as Untitled [One Hundred Spaces]. Here difference is emphasised by shape and arrangement only. Similar to the nature of memory, Embankment as a landscape emerges from a series of fragmented and somewhat displaced (and certainly not regimented) units, like ‘isolated recollections, of often questionable or perplexing significance.’ Whiteread’s use of the domestic box continues her spatial interrogation of the objects and places of the house: ‘it was especially poignant to regain possession of this ephemeral object after more than thirty-five years, and she has spoken of how, when opening it after so long, it contained inside it the smell of her family home.’

Whiteread comments on the many things left unpacked in her mother’s basement, containing toys, photographs and other such useful or useless paraphernalia. Like House (discussed in Chapter Three), Embankment was a temporary installation, with the boxes eventually melted down and the material put to some other industrial use. And as with House (and more obsessively so), Whiteread created an archive of images and literary snippets relating to “the box”. The photograph in particular serves to offer varying histories of the box

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544 Wood, “Embankment”, 25. On numerous occasions I have packed and unpacked boxes – and packed them up once more when moving houses. Each time I have rediscovered objects I had forgotten were hidden away in drawers and cupboards; at other times during the transferral of items between boxes, things have gone missing, or have been discarded, and with these losses regretted much later on (during another phase of unpacking).
in different social and geographical contexts: boxes used as containers; boxes discarded in the street, or on local dumping grounds; the box as a shelter – box cities of the homeless; memory boxes created by African mothers diagnosed with HIV; boxes in which children play; boxes for archives; boxes as art; boxes containing human remains.  

Thinking Through Our Mothers

One explanation for the particular pleasures offered by the literary fantastic derives from a prevalent awareness of loss. This frequently articulates itself in relation to the mother [the] image of the maternal body as a crucial determinant of the way in which we, as a society, perceived the Other as alien. The maternal, as our first site of licence and prohibition, takes on territorial identity.

(Lucie Armitt, Theorising the Fantastic)

Psychoanalysis, argues Mary Jacobus, is a continuous ‘game of hide-and-seek for a lost object’ (usually the mother). Are Whiteread’s sculptures then, in light of Jacobus’ reading of Freud, memory and the maternal, acting as mnemonic objects attempting to undermine the inevitable process of forgetting? Or perhaps, in their ambiguity and inversion of spatial arrangement, they embody the inevitable process of loss of both the original object (the mother), and the child we aim to preserve or recall.

Through this thesis I have argued that Whiteread’s sculptural forms are tied up with narratives of childhood. I have also argued that casting, in particular, is Kleinian in its physical symbolism and physical enactment. Reading Whiteread’s works through the autobiographical lens suggests, as Kleinian psycholanalysis argues, that memory – and that which informs creativity – stems from childhood, and the need to recover and repair destroyed objects. Following the Kleinian model: artwork and creativity is a method for addressing childhood anxiety and loss. In Rachel Whiteread’s case, process is entwined with a cathartic (therapeutic) expression of memory. Casting and collecting are psychological as well as physiological processes for engaging with memory (consciously or subconsciously). The following

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545 Whiteread creates a visual essay from these photographs for the catalogue.
discussion of Pat Whiteread’s work takes this model of Kleinian-aesthetics and applies it to other mediums and processes, other than casting and collecting – considering the mother-artist’s use of the child in light of the artworks produced by the daughter-artist. The thesis has focused specifically on two artistic processes – sculptural casting and object, image collecting, but can a Kleinian reading transfer to other mediums? If so, how, and does it alter understanding and representations of childhood(s) and memory?

The child is present in Pat Whiteread’s works both anecdotally and visually, but the central idea of casting as destruction and reparation as argued with Rachel’s casts cannot be applied here. Instead a different type of Kleinian reading has to take place – one which engages with an idea of destruction, of continual loss and absence, but also returns to the more intimate narratives to be found within psychoanalysis. Pat’s work embraced new technologies of visual and sonic art, using painting, photomontage, video, sound art, tape-slide, and also live performance – somewhat in contrast to the more traditional casting methods employed by her daughter Rachel. The Women’s Art Slide Library (Goldsmiths, London) holds selected slide-images of Pat’s works – photomontage and video stills – but the location (and even survival) of other film and slide works is currently unknown. Access to Pat’s works – as with Rachel’s destroyed sculptural pieces – relies upon an archive of cuttings, short catalogue essays, and a very limited visual record. However (and most suitable to the significance of the linguistic register to psychoanalysis) there exists a series of nine audio cassette-tapes each sixty minutes in length, containing in-depth interviews between Pat Whiteread and academic Gillian Whiteley. These fascinating tapes – some of which also contain sound-clips from Pat’s film pieces – are very intimate and revealing in their discussions of family and childhood experiences. I will not outline the entire content of the nine cassettes – this is a separate task altogether – but each tape (usually split into two parts across sides A and B) covers topics including the relationship with parents; pregnancy, childbirth and frustrations of motherhood as an artist; environmental fears and concerns; the inclusion of images of children (her own and others’ in her works); and the attitudes of her own children (including Rachel) to the mother-as-artist.

Visual “evidence” of Pat Whiteread’s works may be scant, but the artist and her

549 Held in the British Library Sound Archive, the cassette-tape interviews have been digitised and are available via the Sound and Moving Image Catalogue, located under the category Art, Photography and Architecture, and collection group NLSC Artists’ Lives. The recordings were taken during dates 28 February 2002; 1 March 2002; 31 May 2002.
preoccupations have been preserved in nine hours’ worth of audio material. Accessing an artist and her work primarily through the sonic rather than the visual offers a very different engagement with the artist’s own views on the artwork, and on the socio-political and psychological concerns driving individual pieces. The interviews were conducted in the artist’s home (the same in which Rachel and her sisters found the various unpacked boxes in the basement). Created only a year prior to Pat’s death, the tapes offer a poignant record of an artist not so much famous for her own artistic contributions, as for the success of her daughter. Always introduced as ‘The Mother of Rachel Whiteread’, as an artist Pat Whiteread has been overshadowed by her child. The tape interviews create a small but considerably in-depth audio space amongst the numerous printed articles discussing her daughter. The Kleinian situation of the child usurping the parent (a “killing off”) of the mother figure in order that the child may take her place is played out here through the process of creativity. Art and creativity enable the child to find her voice in response to the mother. An oppositional position is adopted psychologically through the significant choice of artistic material – with Whiteread rejecting painting and other technologies in favour of sculpture.

There is a beautiful start-stop quality to the analogue tape interview: the shuffling of papers; the electronic rewinding, fast-forwarding and locating of relevant sound clips; awkward silences in-between questions; the logging of time before the cassette-tape cuts off; the checking of ‘Ready?’, ‘Yep, I have the tape on...’; brief interruptions from visitors; the faded presence of exterior street noise; and those unprofessional asides: ‘We’ve only got one microphone between us [both giggle].’ Given Pat’s use of the audio within her own works, and the significance she places upon the retelling of anecdotes and personal memory for understanding history (for example, her father’s tales of World War I), remembrance of the artist through the cassette interview is highly suitable. It also encourages an analysis of artworks “beyond sight”; we must rely upon her description and narration of her film pieces and tape-slide projections to conjure-up absent artworks.

images of her family, with sound-clips of Margaret Thatcher’s speeches on nuclear issues. This audio-visual work was projected in a symbolic bunker tent-room containing an armchair, an empty wine bottle, and a broken family photograph. All was painted grey; the only light source and colour emanating from the slide projectors. The piece conceptualises the artist’s fears for the survival of the human race and the planet itself – and conveys a deep cynicism of politicians to protect its nations and families. The piece – much like Whiteread’s House – refers to the domestic setting in order to address a wider political concern. The family and specifically the image of the child are invested in politically as an image of the future.\(^{550}\) The use of the child in this piece questions the stability and certainty of that future if politicians embark upon an agenda which may endanger future generations.

*The System. Reforms 1* (1993) ([fig.30](#)), one print in a series of four images, is similarly scathing in its questioning of “the system” of politics which is intended to serve the country and its peoples’ needs. The stark and shocking print shows the ghostly outline of a newborn baby in an incubator, resting in the dirty sink of a flooded hospital ward in Hackney. The image was created during a period of NHS healthcare reforms, under which the very young and very old seemed to be suffering. The body of the lone child here conveys the vulnerability of a nation – Pat’s left-wing politics coming into play in all her pieces.

The artist’s short film *The Beach* (c.2000) is a simple observational piece, rather than being politically motivated. The film opens with scenes of varying sea-forms – shallow water, a calm rock pool, the middle of crashing waves. Different sounds of the sea and its sonic textures are also captured, along with the changing light as it falls upon and carves up the different waters. During filming she also captured the image of a small child with red hair in a pale blue top; the child appears briefly in the distance, as do the sounds of children’s voices. The artist developed this further, deciding to create a piece focussing on children’s beach play (she comments upon her wariness of its possible ‘corniness’). Setting up a camera on a sandy Norfolk beach, she proceeded to film ‘the detail and beauty of the child moving in a red costume ... Looked like a Renoir child, all plump and dark with black hair … a great big mother and grandmother moved into shot … Handbag dripping with water.’\(^{551}\) Pat also took a great deal more footage of “youth”


\(^{551}\) Pat Whiteread, Tape 8, Side A, *The Beach* (c.2000) is not available visually, only via Pat’s descriptions.
when on holiday in Spain, also filming scenes of the elderly walking up and down the beach. She comments how she intended the two films, with their soundtracks of music and natural sounds of children’s voices, to be shown together. This work points to how the child and its activities are perceived and captured by the adult, with Pat conveying a certain desire for the idea of the child – all plump and Renoir-esque in its serenity and innocence, and unaware of the watching adult eye. Pat comments, ‘She was so absorbed, so I wanted to absorb her as well … Getting really close up to the ear, neck, and hand.’

The artist describes a very painterly composition, using film to soak up the movements of her child-subject. She comments how when the two are shown together, the tone of the films become increasingly dark, but she doesn’t explain this further, such as whether there is a shift aesthetically or if the soundtrack alters, or indeed whether the juxtaposition of young and old raises certain issues concerning the desired and undesired body.

The artist’s own childhood, of experiences during WWII (of terror, of collecting shrapnel, of living with and around the detritus of war), and of the tales told to her by her Father of the horrific WWI trenches, left a lasting impression on the artist which she developed into two film pieces – WARWORK 1: The Soldier’s View, and WARWORK 2: The Women’s View (c. 2000). She submitted a proposal for the WARWORK films to be shown in unison at the V&A, and also at the Imperial War Museum – this unrealised before her death in 2003. Another “phantom”, unrealised project to be titled Survival Situation 1942 (prepared between 1985-88) was to project a soundtrack of collected English and German anecdotes from individuals who were children during the war, alongside an original poem by the artist ‘Song of Innocence’ commemorating the young child of the war (and read by Pat during the cassette interviews). Significantly, the project was concerned with listening to histories forgotten.

The location of the WARWORK pieces is currently unknown, however part of the production soundtrack is captured on cassette – an eerie disembodied collection of noises which the listener must imagine being played during a dissolving set of images of soldier’s facial war wounds, of hospital beds, and (again) personal images taken from

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552 Pat Whiteread, Tape 7, Side B.
553 The WARWORK pieces were dedicated to her Father, and his often secret thoughts on his war experiences.
554 Song of Innocence read by Pat Whiteread on Tape 3, Side B.
The soundtrack opens with a newsreel announcement mingling with East End male and female speaking voices; a female singing voice interrupts the chatter, slowed in order to create a certain spatial distance between the different audio layers. Tinkling, faint piano music can be heard; the singer has a strong vibrato, but muffled and echoing as if projected in a large empty room. Other voices emerge, relaying anecdotes, but they are unclear and difficult to decipher. There is an underlying sense of tension created from the different layers and tones. It soon becomes clear that the female singer is repeating a well-known song chorus: ‘You are my sunshine, my only sunshine ... You make me happy when skies are grey .... You never know dear, how much I love you … Please don’t take my sunshine away ...’ On a loop, and becoming increasingly louder and emphatic, the song does not comfort but heightens the tension. A male East End voice comments: ‘Crying was very easy … Tears come very easy.’ A nightmarishly circular and claustrophobic soundtrack envelopes the listener. Suffering is projected through the grating and almost forced vibrato of the singer, a heavy warble which gurgles, almost drowning and gasping for air, finally coming up for breath to repeat once more the same chorus lines. No break, no relief. This is Pat Whiteread’s representation of her childhood experiences of war: unrelenting, confusing, full of noise, and tears.

The child in these selected works appears in fragments, as audio anecdotal snippets, or as a temporary, almost vanishing image. Significantly, the child is offered as a symbolic idea – innocent and pure, as with The Beach films, or as a victim of political and social “reforms” or wars. The child does not determine her own fate, nor does she seem to have a strong voice or identity away from the adults who accompany or surround her. She is vulnerable to the decisions and enactments of others (adults). This child, then, as presented by the mother-as-artist Pat Whiteread is a very different child to the one suggested by the daughter-as-artist Rachel Whiteread: a child of secret aggressions and anxieties, of complex sibling relations, and a participant in conflicting familial narratives.

555 WARWORK soundtrack, Tape 4, Side A.
556 Song lyrics from “You Are My Sunshine”, a popular American song first recorded and released in 1939.
Mother as Artist

Pat Whiteread’s revealing thoughts on the angst and tensions evoked by motherhood mirror Klein’s reflections on the mother-child relationship in essays ‘Love, Guilt and Reparation’ (1937)\(^557\) and ‘Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in a Work of Art and the Creative Impulse’ (1929).\(^558\) ‘Love, Guilt and Reparation’ is initially concerned with the baby’s ‘first object of love and hate – his mother – [who] is both desired and hated with all the intensity and strength that is characteristic of the early urges of the baby.’\(^559\) However, Klein also offers theories of the mother’s emotive and psychological attitudes towards the child (in light of the mother’s relations with her own mother and siblings).\(^560\) Klein considers the cycle of love, hate and reparation to continue well into adulthood and is then transferred onto the mother’s own children. Notably, there is an assumption from Klein that later adult love relations are largely influenced (though not entirely) by those sibling and parental relations experienced in childhood – (although Klein may not be justified in aligning good childhood relations with successful adult relations, as other external factors such as lateral friendships come into play, as she later acknowledges).

Possessiveness, envy, guilt are tied up with feelings of love and reparation. These are reactions, argues Klein, stirred by the mother’s familial childhood experiences: ‘There are many threads which link the relationship of the mother to her child with that of her own relationship to her mother in babyhood.’\(^561\) Notably, Pat’s relationship with her own mother was problematic – she did not wish her daughter to pursue an artistic career, she was a “difficult” presence in the family, and (as Pat comments in her interviews) her mother was no help during her problematic pregnancy and birth of twin daughters.\(^562\) The artist confesses to ambivalent feelings towards her twins in the initial period following childbirth – largely due to the poor care offered by the hospital (concerns to later resurface in photographic piece The System. Reforms I).\(^563\) Describing

562 Pat Whiteread, Tape 1, Side A and B; an intimate discussion of pregnancy and childbirth, Tape 2, Side A.
563 The hospital initially refused to accept that Pat was pregnant with twins (despite a familial history of twins on her husband's side); she was then kept in hospital for ten weeks as she could not walk properly: ‘I had to be quiet, not move, keep still … afraid of having them too soon or hurting them. So I just stayed there on my own … it
the isolating conditions she was kept in, Pat comments, ‘[they] took them straight to the
nursery and didn't put them in my arms […] a terrible practice. I couldn’t walk … they
didn’t think to come and take me to the babies. I've never forgiven [husband] Tom for
that. He didn’t do anything about it.’

Pat admits to using art as a creative escape from her traumatic experiences of
childbirth, and later feelings of being trapped by motherhood. When daughter Rachel
was six months old, motherhood was beginning to frustrate her: ‘I was thinking … I
can’t stand this anymore, I’ve got to do something for myself otherwise I’ll go mad … I
felt so isolated.’ In the second half of Klein’s essay ‘Infantile Anxiety Situations
Reflected in a Work of Art and the Creative Impulse’ (1929), she recalls the actions of
artist Ruth Kjar – a woman with seemingly no pronounced creative painterly talent, and
susceptible to deep depression and melancholy. She uses Ruth’s narrative to explain the
depressive position of the girl (previously using Ravel’s operetta L’Enfant et les
sortileges, to exemplify the anxieties held by the boy). The artworks created by Ruth
seem to fill the ‘empty space’ felt internally. The removal of a painting from a wall in
her home left a physical blank space mirroring this internal emptiness: ‘the empty space
grinned hideously down at her. She resorted to trying to fill the space herself (her
husband thinking “that whatever daub she made would not be too monstrously ugly”).
Without explanation for her sudden appearance of talent (only that it had been
suppressed all this time), Ruth paints a masterpiece, and several more after this: “She
was on fire, devoured by ardour within. She must prove to herself that the divine
sensation, the unspeakable sense of happiness that she had felt could be repeated”.
Klein comments: ‘Now, what is the meaning of this empty space within Ruth, or rather,
to put it more exactly, of the feeling that there was something lacking in her body?’

Ruth’s narrative reflects Pat Whiteread’s own sense of emptiness following
pregnancy and childbirth of three children; her creativity repairs her identity and body as
separate to those of her children and husband. Klein argues that the artistic act is one of
reparation, the desire to ‘make good the injury psychologically done to the mother and
also to restore herself – this also being the basis of Ruth’s ‘compelling urge to paint

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564 Pat Whiteread, Tape 2, Side A.
565 Pat Whiteread, Tape 2, Side A.
566 Klein, “Infantile Anxiety …”, 91.
567 Klein, “Infantile Anxiety …”, 92.
568 Klein, “Infantile Anxiety …”, 92.
these portraits of her relatives.\textsuperscript{569} I have already commented on Pat’s conflicting relationship with her own mother, which may be read through a Kleinian lens. However, here Pat’s reparation through art responds to her attack upon the idea of motherhood and possible subconscious aggression towards the children which stifle and constrain her. The paintings Ruth creates restores the image of the mother, ‘drawing and painting are used as a means to make people anew.’\textsuperscript{570} The blank space inside is finally filled once Ruth depicts her mother in a painting. Likewise, Pat’s inclusion of the child, and specifically images of her own children within her works, may act to ‘make good’ the injury psychologically done to her children and to an idea of the motherhood bound up with the child.

Rachel’s \textit{Embankment} is certainly not a portrait in the traditional sense, but it does serve the same purpose in restoring the memory and artistic image of the mother. The box is the object, container, of “mother”, connecting child to parent, artist-daughter with artist-mother. Notably, Pat Whiteread commented that to her daughters – including Rachel – she was ‘primarily a mother … I don’t think they like to think of me as a successful artist.’\textsuperscript{571} Pat notes, ‘Rachel likes to remember me as a child … doing little paintings and drawings, rather than video … she likes to remember me doing that because it was part of her childhood.’\textsuperscript{572} When Pat suggested her daughter select any artwork as a gift, Rachel chose a small watercolour of a landscape. The daughter-as-artist chose not to remember her artist mother through more radical political works, or through Pat’s more technical and modern film, photomontage and tape-slide mediums. The political mother is somewhat denied and closeted (as visually suggested in Rachel’s \textit{Closet and Boxes} collage). A certain innocence and passivity prevails through the watercolour. Pat comments how she identified with the work of Barbara Hepworth, the sense of being grasped and grappled and pulled in different directions by her children. Rachel’s choice of an early watercolour painted by her mother prior to the acknowledged struggle against motherhood, denies such tensions. It denies her mother’s use of the creative act to escape her children, or at least reassert her identity away from motherhood. Such as the parent may have certain expectations of the child, so too may the child of the parent, fixing their image in relation to their own desires and needs.

\textsuperscript{569} Klein, “Infantile Anxiety …”, 93.
\textsuperscript{570} Klein, “Infantile Anxiety …”, p. 93.
\textsuperscript{571} Pat Whiteread, Tape 3, Side B.
\textsuperscript{572} Pat Whiteread, Tape 3, Side B.
Once again, the childhood lens of the daughter-artist serves to frame and mould (cast and collect) objects, siblings and the parental.

**Reparation**

The findings of Psycho-Analysis have led to the creation of a new Child Psychology. They have taught us that even in their earliest years children not only experience sexual impulses and anxiety, but undergo great disillusionments. Along with the belief in the asexuality of the child has perished the belief in the ‘Paradise of Childhood’. 573

(Melanie Klein, *The Psychoanalysis of Children*)

This Paradise of Childhood also comes under scrutiny within Whiteread’s works. Possible tensions and anxieties are suggested through the nature of the casting process and aesthetic, with rigid and starkly geometrical objects emerging from concrete, plaster and resin. Emphatically ambiguous in some senses, yet their forms are also suggestive of domestic histories and narratives. The anecdotes and childhood tales offered by Whiteread are not those of sentimental reflection, but allude to those anxieties and disillusions suggested by Klein’s reading of childhood. Notably, the urge to make good those destructive Kleinian phantasies is still not achieved with *Embankment*; reparation through art is temporarily offered, but not lasting. The installation – like most of Whiteread’s works – withholds the personal, rejecting the figurative and literal, in favour of colour and form. The sheer scale of the work, responding to Tate’s Turbine Hall, is overwhelming; a seemingly impassable landscape, glacier, or mountain range. The pure, crisp whiteness still throws its shadows; the opaque units, like stretched skins, not quite revealing but not completely hiding their interiors (fig. 28). The personal narrative of the mother is eliminated from the surface of the work, and entirely lost in its final melting. The desire to forget, rather than remember is seemingly reinforced.

Elsewhere in Whiteread’s oeuvre emerges a different childhood, one of playful non-aggression. In 2008 a candy-coloured girlhood of intimate scale was revealed in the galleries of the Gagosian, Beverly Hills. 574 These casts of boxes and other junk are lighter, fresher; the

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melancholy of *Closet* and *House* has evaporated and the regimented seriality of *Untitled [One Hundred Spaces]* has been disrupted. Junk is transformed into sculptural toys, giant jellies and candied sweets; stacked on top and around one another, these casts inject a little colourful magic into an oeuvre which has not often been perceived as magical (or only offering a darker magic). The collection also returns once again to the dollhouse, with *Ghost, Ghost 1* (2008) (fig.31), a transparent lavender polyurethane cast of a dollhouse taking centre stage, with these other candy-coloured forms growing up around it. The dollhouse has been transformed, rejecting the unnervingly secreted interiors of *Place [Village].*

Whiteread’s later *Drawings* exhibition also reveals far more than it conceals. The glass cabinet of various collected objects, an expression of Whiteread’s self-confessed hoarding, is vastly different to those early sculptures which are nervous of offering too much, of connecting to the personal too publicly. The tension of trying to prise open sculptural meaning in order to reach the narratives beneath the surface is virtually absent from this parade of physical, and mostly un-cast objects. Destructiveness is limited. Significantly, this display of collecting, similar to the process of casting, is a performance through which categories can be “made” and “unmade”; collecting being a psychological impulse through which notions of the child and childhood can be created and destroyed.

Notably these lighter childhoods follow *Embankment*. If continued to be read through a Kleinian lens, these childhood objects are reparation for the mass-melting of the gigantic *Embankment* installation. New objects emerge which still look back to that lingering presence of the mother but attempt to repair rather than revel in destruction. The colourful photography, paintings and film-work of the child-artist’s mother creep out from behind the concrete and black shadows of *House* and *Closet*. Collections of smaller, entwined and stacked casts seemingly forgive those sibling rivalries. The watercolour taken by Whiteread from her mother returns, in essence, in the displayed watercolour drawings described by Whiteread as like pages of her diary. Childhood frustrations and anxieties are finally superseded by a sense of reparation and reverie.

Bibliography


Illustrations

Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.
Fig. 3.
Fig. 4.
Fig. 5.
Fig. 7.
Fig. 8.
Fig. 9.i & ii
Fig. 10.
Fig. 11.

Fig. 12.
Fig. 13.
Fig. 14.
Fig. 15.

Fig. 16.
Fig. 17.

Fig. 18.
Fig. 19.
Fig. 20.
Fig. 21.

Fig. 22.
Fig. 23.
Fig. 24.
Fig. 26.
Fig. 28.
Fig. 30.
Fig. 31.