



# The Corridor of Our School

the development of a practice appropriate  
to  
the study of everyday space

by Nicholas Beech

University College London

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It is the study itself which is marginal with respect to the phenomena studied. The landscape that represents these phenomena in an imaginary mode thus has an overall corrective and therapeutic value in resisting their reduction by a lateral examination. It at least assures their presence as ghosts.

De Certeau

# The Corridor of Our School

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# Introduction

## **“Everyday space” a theoretical and historical framework**

Interest in the “everyday” within the arts and humanities is almost as ubiquitous as the subject itself. For some time now it has been not only unsurprising, but positively expected that research be conducted into the apparently banal activities and effects of the everyday world. Architectural history and theory does not fall behind in this development. However, just as our everyday lives are diffuse and various, so too are the aims and approaches of those who study it. In this introduction I hope to offer a concise view of some works that have been influential in the development of the report. It is not my intention to investigate the cited works in full, but only to “flag” them for attention. This “flagging,” or laying down of markers, will continue throughout the report.

I begin with those works that have influenced the conception of the everyday in this report in the broadest terms. So – Sigmund Freud, Henri Lefebvre and various feminist writers have predominantly offered an historical and conceptual bracket (1901 – 1986) to the report. I then discuss the influence of Walter Benjamin, Michel de Certeau and Jane Rendell in terms of the development of a practice appropriate to the study of everyday life. Before beginning the report proper, I discuss issues arising from the choice of “subject” – the corridor of Wates House.

## **Psychoanalysis: The Psychopathology of Everyday Life and Intentionality**

The earliest influential work is Sigmund Freud's *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*.<sup>1</sup> Here Freud distinguished various forms of everyday pathologies, such as forgetting, bumping into things, mispronouncing, etc. and illuminated how these are not simple "errors" on the part of the person who has displayed the behaviour, but the result of a conflict of repressed intentions.<sup>2</sup> Freud suggests that though we are absent minded in regard to everyday life - greeting, walking, meeting, posting letters, etc. - this does not mean that we are in a passive relationship with it; our overt goals and motivations are bedded within desires and traumas. He reveals this through a series of case studies, the majority of which engage a description of spatial details.<sup>3</sup> There is an implication in these apparently straightforward descriptions that a relation exists between parapraxes and everyday material such as doors, chairs, corridors, locks, window latches, etc. In this sense the everyday environment is not a simple exterior, but is psychically charged and negotiated.

## **Lefebvre: The production of space**

With the rest of Western Europe, post-war France saw a great transformation of economy and geography, one in which the powers of productivity were altered by the growth of consumption. Consumers, once seen as passive and subordinate to the processes of production and the owners of the means of production, were understood to be more influential than previously supposed. This societal change encouraged radical historians, philosophers, and critics to

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<sup>1</sup> I have used Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, The Pelican Freud Library: Volume Five trans. Alan Tyson, ed. James Strachey and Angela Richardson (London: Penguin Books, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> This is not to be confused with Freud's remarks on the forgetting of conscious intentions, Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* pp. 203-14. However, that conscious intentions are forgotten "...demonstrat[es] the thesis that, in itself, lack of attention does not suffice to explain parapraxes." Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* pp. 203.

<sup>3</sup> For examples see Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* pp. 90-2, 187-8, 216-8.



examine the everyday life of people outside of productivity.<sup>4</sup> On the left Henri Lefebvre led a revitalisation of Marxism, encouraging students and colleagues to transform the passivity of the consumer. It is in the wake of the May '68 attempt at revolution, spearheaded in part by Lefebvre, that the most relevant (for this report) theoretical development on the everyday occurred.

Lefebvre offered a new conception of historical materialism, reconfigured as spatial (rather than temporal) dialectics.<sup>5</sup> Lefebvre pulled “space” out of an abstract category and discourse and by doing so was able to describe the specific and contingent. In this way everyday life became not just a subject but also a foundation for the development of Marxism. Lefebvre encourages us to not only think of how a landscape is produced by planning (before it is built, whilst it is being built and during its inhabitation) but also how a landscape is produced by daily practices, and how it is produced as an experience.

**Feminism: marginality and the critique of heroism**  
Architectural history has for some time catalogued buildings and spaces that might be considered banal, ordinary or everyday, such as factories, streets, or workers housing. However, it is with the influence of feminism that we see serious consideration of spaces occupied by a largely silenced people. Feminism implicitly questions the architectural canon, the primary discussion being not around that of a male mythos - the heroism of planning, foresight, and rationalism by a singular visionary<sup>6</sup> – but around the production of space in the margins, often deconstructing categories such as interior/exterior, public/private, or domestic/political and calling into question the colonisation of everyday space by

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<sup>4</sup> Not only those historians of Marxist or far-left bent – see Ferdinand Braudel, *The structures of everyday life : the limits of the possible* trans. M. Kochan (London: Collins, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> I am referring to Lefebvre’s conceptual triad, see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991) pp. 33, 38-46.

<sup>6</sup> See the classic Elizabeth Wilson *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the control of disorder and women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

exclusive or elitist avant-garde acts.<sup>7</sup> The domestic or small act is given significance, as are everyday buildings of homes, hospitals, schools, and shopping centres. With this critique comes a questioning of the voice of authority, not only extinguishing the abstract male gaze, but positioning the critic, theorist, or practitioner as an embodied, contingent subject.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Mary McLeod *Everyday and "Other" Spaces in Architecture and Feminism* eds. D. Coleman, E. Danze, and C. Henderson (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996). for a concise over view of feminist thought on the everyday and a precise turn over of late twentieth century architectural avant-gardism.

<sup>8</sup> See for example Helene Cixous and Mireille Calle-Gruber *rootprints* trans. Eric Prenowitz (London: Routledge, 1997).

## **The development of a practice appropriate to the study of everyday space**

### **Benjamin and Adorno: Literature and History**

“Do you not fear – I’ll say it outright – that the phantasmagoria will survive unmediated in your work, or even that the work itself might take on a phantasmagoric character? A profound and thorough liquidation of the phantasmagoria can succeed only if it is conceived as an objective category of the history of philosophy, but not if it is conceived as the “view” of social characters.” Theodor W. Adorno<sup>9</sup>

“The non-differentiation between magic and positivism, as you aptly formulate it, must indeed be liquidated. In other words, the author’s philological interpretation is to be sublated by dialectical materialists in the Hegelian manner. – The philological approach entails examining the text detail by detail, leading the reader to fix magically on the text [...] which it is left to philosophy – here, the concluding part – to exorcise.” Walter Benjamin<sup>10</sup>

The central problems that faces the researcher of the everyday - how do we show the everyday without transforming it (making it fantastic) and therefore hiding it once more? Is the

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<sup>9</sup> This is an extract from the famous correspondence between Adorno and Benjamin, over Benjamin’s work “The Paris of The Second Empire in Baudelaire”. The correspondence has been published in English translation a number of times, I have not used the Harry Zohn translation (in Ernst Bloch et al *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1980) pp. 110-141), nor the Nicholas Walker translation (in Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin *The Complete Correspondence 1928-1940* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999)) but the Edmund Jephcott and Michael W. Jennings translation in Walter Benjamin *Selected Writing, Volume Four: 1938-1940* eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 2003) pp. 100. This is for no reason but consistency, all subsequent references to Benjamin being from that series of Volumes published by the Belknap Press.

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin *Selected Writing, Volume Four* (2003) pp. 107-8.

purpose of research into the everyday simply that of showing it? What is it to comprehend it? These questions are reflected in the correspondence of Adorno and Benjamin over the construction of the historical/dialectical image<sup>11</sup> concerning the extent to which phenomena need to be fragmented and mediated in order to yield to the construction of that image.

There is not room here to go through the various issues at play between Adorno and Benjamin's differing views on the requirements of the dialectical image.<sup>12</sup> What is important for this report, and the development of an appropriate practice, is my reading of Benjamin's reply as suggesting that the construction of the dialectical image should engender an experiential process for the reader and also the writer - "Amazement, you write [...] is "the deepest insight into the relation between dialectic, myth, and image." [...] I think the sentence ought to read: amazement is a primary *object* of such insight."<sup>13</sup> In this way Benjamin allows "a wide-eyed presentation of facticity"<sup>14</sup> because it is held within a structure that shows not only the contradictions of the object but also of facticity itself. Benjamin describes almost a journey, in which the reader (just as the scholar) is first bewitched by the presentation of facts in their self-containment, only for that bewitchment to be shattered through realisation, brought about by the structure of the work.

### **De Certeau: Deploying the tactics of everyday practice**

Michel de Certeau offers a practice that, like Benjamin, deploys the subject of study within his critique, but in terms of anthropology rather than historiography. The practices of everyday life that de Certeau describes, such as *la perruque*

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<sup>11</sup> The terms I use here are as drawn in Susan Buck-Morss *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute* (Hassocks, England: The Harvester Press, 1977), in particular pp. 90-110.

<sup>12</sup> This given the extent to which the debate hinges on Adorno's criticism of Benjamin's theology (as opposed to outright materialism), see Theodor W. Adorno *Negative Dialectics* trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1973) pp. 18-19.

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin *Selected Writing, Volume Four* (2003) pp. 108.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin *Selected Writing, Volume Four* (2003) pp. 107.

("the wig"), walking, or reading,<sup>15</sup> are not only descriptive of an anthropological subject, but are practices that critique the very operations of anthropology. In his critique of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, de Certeau describes an envelope condition for theory, outside of which extends the field of the everyday world.<sup>16</sup> To speak meaningfully of this "ocean" of which "there are no longer any discourses" de Certeau cuts out a space within the discourse of theory providing an area for common practices. By doing so de Certeau describes the manner by which the "common man" evades oppression - the oppression of micro-powers and the oppression of scientific discourse.

With this de Certeau brings to light questions on the relation between theory and practice. Here, he introduces the Kantian tightrope walker,<sup>17</sup> who must not only hold equilibrium on the outside (crudely -theory on the one hand, practice on the other) but also within. For de Certeau, to bring everyday practice into discourse is to pull ones own speech into question.

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<sup>15</sup> See for examples, respectively, Michel de Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) pp. 24-28, 91-110, xx-xxii & 165-176.

<sup>16</sup> See de Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) pp. 61

<sup>17</sup> De Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life* pp. 72

**Rendell: The analysis of a space between** <sup>18</sup>

**“ favourite books. I too have had addic-**

**BASIC WORKMANSHIP:**

Build walls in stretching half lap bond when not specified otherwise.

Lay bricks/blocks on a full bed of mortar; do not furrow. Fill all cross joints and collar joints: do not tip and tall.

Rack back when raising quoins and other advance work. Do not use toothing.

Are architectural and psychic elements, processes and structures analogous? *14*

**tive relationships with food and travel.”**<sup>19</sup>

Describing a site between apparently stable opposites (such as theory/practice, autonomy/polity, subjectivity/objectivity or science/aesthetics) Rendell suggests that theory does not explicate where practice is mute, nor that practice performs where theory observes, but that practice and theory are part of a “scene,” a field of relations, within which an act – of writing, of architecture, of art – can both mark and remark.

By occupying the between Rendell extends the project of theorists such as Benjamin and de Certeau, questioning the distinction between artist and critic and calling for an attention to specificity, not only of location (or site) but also of discipline. By engaging in interdisciplinary practice, Rendell contends with the problem of the dialectical image of

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<sup>18</sup> This section is based on my reading of Iain Borden and Jane Rendell *From Chamber to Transformer: epistemological challenges in the methodology of architectural history* in *The Journal of Architecture* Vol. 5, Summer 2000, pp. 215-228, Jane Rendell *Subjective Space: A Feminist Architectural History of the Burlington Arcade* in *Desiring Practices: Architecture, Gender and the Interdisciplinary* eds. D. McCorquodale, K. Ruedi and S. Wigglesworth (London: Black Dog Publishing, 1996) pp. 216-233, Jane Rendell *between two* in *The Journal of Architecture* Vol. 8, Summer, 2003, pp. 221-237 and through conversation with Jane Rendell.

<sup>19</sup> Rendell *between two* pp. 235-6

Benjamin and the tightrope walker of de Certeau in what she refers to as critical spatial practice.

**“My hope is for writing that is architectural in form as well as in content: writing as walls rather than writing about walls.”<sup>20</sup>** This is not to say that a piece of writing should be treated the same as a building, but to suggest that writing and reading are spatial acts. For Rendell critical spatial writing should be considered neither privileged - because able to give meaning to, nor marginal – because dependent upon, architectural practice, but considered as a potential mode within an expanded interdisciplinary praxis. This praxis is demonstrated by her work **“Confessional construction”** (quoted from above) in which different written materials – of building specifications, of personal diary entries and Freud’s psychoanalytic writing are cut and joined, much as a series of walls might.

With praxis comes transformation, again placing the writer in the position of the tightrope walker – just as literature, architecture, writing and buildings are treated as a field of relations, so historiography, history, researcher and researched, enter that field. The researcher and the report must develop that art, or praxis, of tightrope walking.

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<sup>20</sup> Rendell *between two*, pp.231

## The Corridors of Our School

### The choice of subject

Before entering the main body of the report it is worth taking a brief look at the choice of subject. Part of this subject – the corridor as an architectural element – has been discussed before in architectural history, most famously by Robin Evans in his essay “Figures, Doors and Passages,”<sup>21</sup> in which Evans traces the influence of privacy on the domestic interior. Key ideas for this report, such as the need to incorporate non-architectural material and the careful analysis of common or ordinary assumptions, are developed by Evans in relation to the history of the private corridor.

This investigation of the role of the corridor in the ordering of domestic architecture has been taken up by John Bold, who has drawn out the typology of the domestic corridor as it emerged in England.<sup>22</sup> But to the corridor in public buildings little attention has been paid. Adrian Forty<sup>23</sup> and Andrew Scull<sup>24</sup> have both illuminated how the formation and application of corridors can indicate the social hierarchies that have produced them, but only briefly and not as the primary material for historical analysis.

In these works the main concern has been to tease out how the corridor has developed as a means for control. It is my interest

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<sup>21</sup> Robin Evans *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays* (London: Architectural Association, 1997) pp. 55-117.

<sup>22</sup> Primarily in Bold, John *Privacy and the Plan* in English Architecture Public and Private: Essays for Kerry Downes eds. J. Bold and E. Chaney (London: The Hambledon Press 1993) pp. 107-119, but also in an intriguing paper - John Bold *The Design of a House for a Merchant, 1724* in Architectural History vol. 33, 1990, pp. 75-82.

<sup>23</sup> Adrian Forty *The Modern Hospital in England and France: the social and medical use of architecture* in Buildings and Society ed. King (London: Routledge, 1980).

<sup>24</sup> Scull, Andrew *A Convenient Place to Get Rid of Inconvenient People: The Victorian Lunatic Asylum* in Buildings and Society ed. King (London: Routledge, 1980).



to develop a history of the corridor, or a corridor, not in terms of an explicit critique of a dominant authority or discourse, but an implicit critique, in terms of those who would otherwise remain silent – those who produce the corridor on the level of the everyday.

If this suggests that I have spied a gap in the field, it may still be queried - why I have chosen a topic so close to whom, i.e. my school? When the subject is the very ground on which we walk, is it not possible to mistake our footprints for Friday's?<sup>25</sup> I would argue that it is precisely this challenge – of developing a practice that can maintain a critical distance whilst expressing the exoticism of the ordinary - that is appropriate to the study of everyday life. If there is a danger that the report only reiterates an already articulate discourse (on the everyday) and fails in questioning an always inarticulate reality (of the everyday) the fault will lie not in the choice of subject, but in the methodology of the research.

### **The structure of the report and the succession of images**

If I am to produce writing that “is” a corridor as well as “about” a corridor, what structure will the work have? As I follow the work of Freud, Lefebvre, de Certeau and others, who posit a space that is socially produced, I consider the corridor not so much a static built structure, but more an ever produced experience. The report is structured then as a succession of images that articulate a progress of experience<sup>26</sup> – not through the corridor itself (at Wates House, Gower Street, London) but through the practices that produce it (of those, including me, who inhabit it) and through those theories that are brought to bear upon it.

These images are constructed from the voices of those who produce the corridor, a montage of fragments - of voices (recorded by me), writings (either in letters, meeting minutes

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<sup>25</sup> I refer here to de Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life* pp.154-156

<sup>26</sup> Much like Georges Perec's work, see in particular Perec *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* trans. John Sturrock (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1997) and Perec *Lieux* trans. A. Leak, in *AA Files* No. 45/46, Winter 2001, pp. 32-76

or simply marks on the wall), and actions (directly through behaviour observed and indirectly through changes in the environment).<sup>27</sup> The decision to sustain a parity between material comes from my reading of de Certeau, in particular his description of the arts of theory being akin to that of pastry making – the cut out and turn over.<sup>28</sup> To use my own metaphor, I see the construction of the following images as a process akin to the ploughing of a field, both a levelling off and a churning, thus holding what was once successive (the tip held by the stem of the root in the ground) in new relations. At the forefront of the investigation has always been – how does what is said in common speech and everyday actions place into question what is presumed by theoretical and specialised language and *visé versa*?

The images are not totalising, there is always more to be said, but are (I hope) suggestive of the content of experience in the corridor. Tackling this problem, of the ever more to be said is at the heart of the history of everyday literature from Laurence Sterne to Daniel Spoerri, the predominant mode being that of allusion and annotation, the peculiar gravity of everyday experience encouraging an elliptical arc of reference and counter reference.<sup>29</sup> There remain gaps between each fragment within the images and between the images themselves. Rather than fill these gaps I hope I have left them open enough to be filled by the reader. It is this sustained fragmentation that I hope allows for the presence of, what de Certeau refers to as, ghosts.<sup>30</sup>

There is an attempt to demonstrate that oppositions – between the present and history or the person and the plan - are only oppositions to a degree, and only from a certain point of view. They are (in a levelling exercise) shadows that fall across the practices that we are always engaged in. This has meant a questioning of the dominant narrative structure of beginning, middle and end - the trajectory of the well shaped argument;

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<sup>27</sup> See the bibliography for a brief discussion on these source materials.

<sup>28</sup> See de Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 62.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel Spoerri et al *An Annotated Topography of Chance* (London: Atlas Press, 1995), being perhaps the most obvious, but it is a technique employed by others, not least Perec *Life, A User's Manual* trans. David Bellos (London: Collins Harvill, 1988).

<sup>30</sup> De Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pp. 41.

**we are returned to the question of how specialised language (the writing of this report) is contested by everyday practices (in the corridor of Wates House). The order and succession of images has been designed so as to reflect this contest. The images in each major section are compounds of those that precede them, as well as offering new constellations of phenomena. There is then an order of experience, this is described in a number of introductions at the beginning of each section.**

**Returning to the question- how am I to produce a writing that “is” a corridor? It is not my intention to provide a replica of the product of everyday practices, but to induce in the process of reading those practices that are engaged in the corridor.**

**What follows appear like pieces of a puzzle (perhaps not so expertly cut as those of Gaspard Winkler), encouraging the reader to construct his/her own argument, hopefully illiciting the possibility of fixing a position, only to dispell it. This desire comes not only from my reading of the theoretical material but from the praxis that is evident in the production of the corridor itself.**

**Nicholas Beech, 2005**

## **Anticipation or Abstract**

## **Anticipation or Abstract**

**The following four images illuminate four core themes for the whole of the report.**

**First - the contest over space, not only in terms of an historical contest enacted in the corridor, but in terms of the historian's practice as being engaged in that contest.**

**Second – classification and contradiction, being the application of classification in the evolution of the corridor, thoughts and ideas as classification, and the limits of classification.**

**Third – the act of standardisation (power): of space, of language, of practices.**

**Fourth – the act of interpretation (weakness): the extension of the interior and the incompetent performance of standardisation.**

**These themes act in and on each other throughout.**

## Anticipation or Abstract

**“From thence a Curridore, or priuate way, to his Castle of Saint Angelo” (1620) <sup>31</sup>**

Have you read the Evans essay?<sup>32</sup>

You’ve read the Evans essay?<sup>33</sup>

I was wondering about what this was for, but it’s actually really interesting. I’d like to know more.<sup>34</sup>

The history of the corridor as a device for removing traffic from rooms has yet to be written [...] as Italianate architecture became established in England so, ironically enough, did the central corridor, while at the same time staircases began to be attached to the corridors and no longer terminated in rooms.<sup>35</sup>

Palladio lays down one excellent rule; which is that in all buildings, the most beautiful and noble parts should be placed most in view; and those of a meaner kind as much concealed from sight as possible.<sup>36</sup>

[...] theory, in this case as in so many others, followed practice.<sup>37</sup>

The workshop is always at the end! Hah! In the dark!<sup>38</sup>

The thieves stole what is mine! Mine! I say they stole into my place!<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Oxford English Dictionary.

<sup>32</sup> File 2.

<sup>33</sup> File 9.

<sup>34</sup> File 3.

<sup>35</sup> Evans *Figures, Doors and Passages* pp. 70.

<sup>36</sup> Ware “A Complete Body of Architecture” (1756) quoted in *Bold Privacy and the Plan* pp. 107.

<sup>37</sup> *Bold Privacy and the Plan* pp. 112.

<sup>38</sup> File 6.

<sup>39</sup> File 6.

The history of the corridor is a military history. It is a history of separation, of enclosure, of rights and of ownership. The history of the corridor is a history of territory, of practices of territorialisation, and of resistance to it.

**CRISIS IN THE SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES  
THE GRAFFITI SCANDAL HAS EXPOSED THE CRISIS IN THIS SCHOOL.  
THIS AFFECTS ALL OUR FUTURES - STUDENTS AND STAFF ALIKE.  
THERE WILL BE AN OPEN SCHOOL MEETING ON TUESDAY  
14<sup>th</sup> 1.15pm IN ROOM 216<sup>40</sup>**

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<sup>40</sup> Unindexed archive.

## Anticipation or Abstract

**“doing all the good in his power to his brothers,  
sisters and servants”<sup>41</sup>**

North’s watchwords were ‘convenience’, ‘decorum’ and ‘economy’.<sup>42</sup>

Think/classify

What does the fraction line signify?

What am I being asked precisely? Whether I think before I classify? How I think before I classify? Whether I classify before I think?<sup>43</sup>

What are the functions of a corridor?

To provide a place to work without interruption by those who want to be somewhere else (?)

To provide places to hide things in (?)

To allow unhindered access to those areas required for working (?)

To hinder access to some areas for those who should not be accessing them (?)

To provide access from individual rooms to staircases and lifts (?)

To prevent direct access from individual rooms to staircases and lifts (except in country houses, castles and adventure films) (?)

To allow the free movement of large numbers of people throughout a large and complex building (as required by an organisation) (?)

To allow the free movement of small numbers of people throughout a small and simple building (as required by a family) (?)

To prevent entrapment by fire (?)

To prevent embarrassment (?)

Many of the strong feelings expressed by the School have related to the circulation system and it is in this field that the organisation of the building will perhaps have the greatest influence on people – at least the difference between a good and a bad plan will be great here.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> On Cotton Mather, New England Puritan, quoted in Evans *Figures, Doors and Passages* pp. 75.

<sup>42</sup> *Bold Privacy and the Plan* pp. 112.

<sup>43</sup> Percey *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* pp. 189.

<sup>44</sup> Report 1 of the Expanded Wates House Committee 24/03/72 pp. 8, from unindexed archive.



So deeply ingrained has this essentially modernist category become that for most of us it requires a positive act of mental effort to think about architecture without 'circulation'...it satisfies a wish to see buildings as enclosed, self-contained systems against all the evidence to the contrary.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Adrian Forty *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames&Hudson, 2000) pp. 94.

**“the skimped, the airless, the small, the mean, the shrunken, the very precisely calculated”<sup>46</sup>**

Today, the economic logic of standardization is universally accepted as being fundamental to the achievement of an improved standard of living for all, and existence of standards is often taken for granted [...] Why was the ‘standards idea’ so late in developing? [...] Above all, there was a prevailing spirit of competition, suspicion and jealousy.<sup>47</sup>

In 1901 the Institutions of Civil Engineers, Mechanical Engineers, Naval Architects and the Iron and Steel Institute created a committee, to standardize iron and steel sections for bridges, railways and shipping.<sup>48</sup>

#### 4.1

- (a) standards should be wanted
- (b) standards should be used
- (c) standards should be planned
- (d) standards should not be duplicated<sup>49</sup>

There are specific rules for drafting standards that must be adhered to. The rules aim to ensure that standards meet their aim of providing, for common and repeated use, rules guidelines or characteristics for activities. They are founded on usability, verifiability and commonality<sup>50</sup>

““The art of war is the art of throwing away all ones well made plans” is what he said, I think, something like that anyway.” My father told me, in Trafalgar Square.

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<sup>46</sup> Percey Species of Spaces and Other Pieces pp.89.

<sup>47</sup> C. Douglas Woodward *BSI: The Story of Standards* (London: BSI, 1972) pp. 1.

<sup>48</sup> [www.bsi-global.com/NSB/About/history.xalter](http://www.bsi-global.com/NSB/About/history.xalter).

<sup>49</sup> BSO: Part 1: 1981 (BSI).

<sup>50</sup> [www.bsi-global.com/NSB/About/history.xalter](http://www.bsi-global.com/NSB/About/history.xalter).

We do have to obey Fire Regs. For most of the corridors you can't be too strict because there, there's not enough space in this building, um. For the RECORD, we are very strict and we do keep all the corridors very clear.<sup>51</sup>

All utopias are depressing because they leave no room for chance, for difference, for the 'miscellaneous'.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> File 1.

<sup>52</sup> Perec *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* pp. 191.

## Anticipation or Abstract

**“Glimmering through the dusky corridore,  
Another lamp chequers o’er the shadow’d floor”<sup>53</sup>**

Problems.

Overheated, under lit corridor. Too many people and too little sleep.

Carelessness.

Distraction. Easy distraction.

Procrastination

of –

intended

unintended

wanted

needed

unwanted

No acknowledgment of the unnecessary.

No rigour.

Slop.

Interference leading to loop.

Problems.

Lighting – poor, illumination – zero.

Screens.

Serial screening – attempts at production through screen.

Too warm/comfortable (?) leading to discomfort and irritability.

Time –

ALWAYS too short

or too long,

NEVER just right.

Going past daily and monthly way too fast,

hourly and by the minute (minutely?) way too slow.

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<sup>53</sup> Lord Byron *The Corsair, A Tale* (London: Thoma Davidson, 1814) IIIrd Canto, Verse 20, Line 1761.

Things not done or undone.

Childishness. Boredom. Fear. Lack of direction OR certainty.

Easily led. Possibly weepy, restless/jittery. Over-ambitious given qualities. Blithely metaphysical. Keenly aware of faults in self AND OTHERS.

Few goals.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Taken from observation notes, September 2004.

## **First Steps**

## **First Steps**

**The following describe the first move into Wates House and the theoretical material – the distinction between the two collapsing.**

**The first begins storytelling, establishing and calling into question the boundary: between the known and unknown (or spoken and unspeakable), the theoretical and practiced, the interior and exterior.**

**The second describes the force or dynamism generated in the corridor by the requirement for a constant redrawing of boundaries – the process of drawing out.**

**The third mimics the contradiction that occurs by the corridor's dependence on signs – the limit of the break between signifier and signified.**

**The fourth compounds the preceding three images and can be said to be the first step.**

### **The Last Major Building of the Annan Years**

Stories are actuated by a contradiction that is represented in them by the relationship between the frontier and the bridge, that is, between a (legitimate) space and its (alien) exteriority.<sup>55</sup>

I remember a very small triangle (isosceles) of land, over the lane from our house, hidden by hedgerow and trees, through which ran a tiny stream. A friend and I took command of it, named it (I can't remember what) and placed, in the only known entrance to it, an old, rusting trap. It was with great distress that I heard that the longed-for entrapment, that would prove our kingship, had crushed, not the ankle of an intruder, but my own dear friend.

15-22 Endsleigh Gardens  
22, Gordon Street  
The Wates Building  
Wates House  
S.E.S.  
The Bartlett School of Environmental Studies  
The Bartlett

#### **SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES**

##### **REFERENDUM**

**FEBRUARY/MARCH 1972**

(51% of the school represented in the returns)

[question] 3. The present designs for the Wates Building are generally unsatisfactory and should therefore be reconsidered fundamentally.

YES: 215

NO: 8

ABSTAIN: 6<sup>56</sup>

There was a very council like canteen on the ground floor run by a rather, um, sulky lady who sold Penguin biscuits and bland tea.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> De Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life* pp. 126.

<sup>56</sup> Unindexed archive.

<sup>57</sup> File 1.



What is it to enter a so-called place, in which our own fantasies are afforded the opportunity to be projected, so that we might see them crumble into reality? How do we negotiate that first opening of the mouth? That first step? For how long do we clear the ground?

The act of entering is not an act of penetration. Before the public building, there is not an intent projection on to its edge, as might occur before the triumphal arch. Instead, we find ourselves retelling and recounting our story. This process of story telling does not stop “at the first hurdle” of the gate or doorway, because the ground we enter is filled with boundaries, other peoples stories, other peoples acts of story telling, that we can only cross by telling our own. The corridor is this ground where we tell our stories, and in this way becomes a site of both farce and horror.

Most people, now, most people are in the habit of it, they know what to do. It’s always harder in the first few weeks and in the last month. In the first weeks, obviously, there are a lot of new people; there are new struggles, over space, especially as there’s so little, and it can be a little bit tense. It soon calms down, but it takes a little while. <sup>58</sup>

In the first steps that we take, we assume a mastery that we do not have. Often we bring a clutch of markers – names, numbers, times, plans, projects – that we recite to legitimise our story. A tentative story is iterated boldly and it is then that we are reminded that these markers are bound in with the stories of those who are also, and already, there.

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<sup>58</sup> File 4.

### Lostness

| Within the frontiers, the alien is already there, an exoticism or sabbath of the memory, a disquieting familiarity.<sup>59</sup> | The thing is that until I'd done, until I'd started this job, I didn't really have a proper idea of the building, like most people don't. You know I was getting lost in the building...i.e. not knowing which staircase I was going up, even after seven years. Um.<sup>60</sup> | It was when I visited my mother in London, at the age of nine, perhaps. We had arrived at Victoria Coach Station and having passed along the Buckingham Palace Road we had entered Victoria Tube Station. And there I was before the sliding doors of the train, watching my mother and brother closed in behind as it rolled off to some place I didn't know. I was horrified at my abandonment, realising now was my chance to create a life unfettered. | It is in everyday life that this painstaking labour of selection and unification unfolds. Everyday life is the native soil in which the moment germinates and takes root. Nature appears to us like a gigantic wastage of beings and forms, like a frenzy of creation and destruction.<sup>61</sup> | Lostness does not come from either a complicated or simple environment. Lostness comes from within; it is our first act of founding. In our lostness we are encountering not only the edge of our own known but also the boundaries of other peoples stories. And what is the corridor but an endless iteration of stories? | Yes. People say that. I don't have a problem with this building at all. I know that visitors do. They're always getting lost. But no, I have never had a problem.<sup>62</sup> | Yet I had studied these corridors for eight months, recording voices, observing practices noting marks on the wall, counting door numbers. And I had received an e-mail suggesting that our meeting would be in a room, the number of which I had never heard of. There I was walking around and around on the second floor, entering and exiting the same central space filled with strangers, again and again. It had been raining that day and I had a small hole in my shoe, so that with each left step it gave a little squelching squeak. | But it's always the case that when you take visitors round the building, from the ground up to the top and back down again, you know that once you've reached the end, they don't have a clue where they are.<sup>63</sup> |

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<sup>59</sup> De Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life* pp. 129.

<sup>60</sup> File 1.

<sup>61</sup> Lefebvre *The Critique of Everyday Life, Volume 2* trans. J. Moore (London: Verso, 2002) pp.357.

<sup>62</sup> File 9.

<sup>63</sup> File 4.

### **The Guidance of Signs**

The positioning of signs does not seem to have been considered in the design of the building.

Has no provision at all been made in that part of the budget that allows for door nameplates?<sup>64</sup>

G

It would not be true to say that the walls of the corridors of Wates House are free of texture or specificity. What signs are there? The beadle at the entrance, the turnstile, the rotation of exhibitions, black and white photographs, results lists, posters, announcements, refreshments at times, mounted on the smooth ply panelling. [There is to be a C.C.T.V. unit mounted in the entrance, with a monitor above the beadle's desk. Where is it to be placed? In the centre? No, no. This is an architecture school, to the left of centre please – find the edge] There are finger marks on white painted walls, paint splatters and glue on the studio doors. There is the spray paint on the floor – like the calcite shadows found in limestone. Masking tape, biro marks on torn, blue lined paper. Printed messages declaring the absence, presence, movement of particular people or groups. There are sale notices, with their frayed bottoms, tear marks where details of seller have been taken. "Instruction in English Essay Writing Required?"

#### **ROOM 129**

To locate oneself within the building simply observe the succession of numbered doors.

For instance if before 101 = exited stair 1, at Level 1, facing S.S.E.

If before 135 = exited stair 2, at level 1, facing W.N.W.

N.B. There is no 'circuit' of numerical succession, numbers begin on the left and run to the right if plan is held with North pointing to

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<sup>64</sup> Appendix 74/8/6A EWHC, in unindexed archive.

the bottom left hand of page. So that if before 101 = Top left, if before 135, bottom right.

#### **FIRE POINT**

Corridors are not streets. The signs in a corridor are, on the whole, inverse to those of the street. The far greater portion of signs on the street inform as to where you can go – London 23 M, Turn Right for A23 – or what you can buy – Samsung - when you can see – Coming to Hyde Park - what will happen in the future – Road Closed at – they are concerned with what might be. The signs in the corridor are concerned with where you are – 110, 405, etc – or what things are – Gentleman Toilet, Fire Hose, Exit. Or, to make the contrast clearer – the only time we are before a street sign in the corridor is during an event (a party or a large gathering such as a conference) when we come across a piece of A4 paper (landscape), with the words “TOILET THIS WAY” printed on it in bold capitals.

#### **PLEASE LEAVE – WANTED J**

Usually a little note to me will do, then I know what's happening and whether I need to go to that person and find out what's going on or not.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> File 4.

### **I've Been Here (?) Before**

In that lostness, where our guides are reduced to signs, we submit to our past, recalling those other moments when our intentions were clear, and our position suddenly murky. I am at school, it is September, and the nylon uniform with the green and purple badge (an icon of the School Tower, already vanished) has passed from that symbol of pride and expectation (so excited!) to that of contest and consternation. I am before the corridor again, not quite as in a film, in which the depth of the unknown is shown through a shot of one point perspective (a tunnel of light) but more, as before a notice board of incomprehension.

And memory affords a quick escape into another place of knowing.

You see, the village where I used to live, which I don't do anymore, I moved, the village where I lived previously, well, that's not important, the point is when I lived there, there were a number of people, not huge, but a number of people, and you would say hello to them, I mean not all of them, not all the time, but you would say hello. <sup>66</sup>

You remember that though your knowledge then, of your site, your place, your status, was as provisional as it is now, lost in the corridor, there were chances.

It's like when I was little and we first moved into this house which had had students in the attic and it was two weeks in – a cornflake packet floated past our kitchen window, we realised then that the students were still there!<sup>67</sup>

These memories remind us that the anxiety is limited, that not knowing it all (or not knowing at all) is not just a horror, a horror of a place

...partly darkened off and then on the ceiling there appeared to be an Alien seedpod that was breathing! It was going shhwee, shwoooo, shhwee, shwoooo, shhwee, shwoooo and there was this long white thing that was sucking in and out that was hanging off

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<sup>66</sup> File 2.

<sup>67</sup> File 1.

the ceiling. It was actually rather scary, because, as far as we knew...<sup>68</sup>

but the beginning again of a process, one in which we locate ourselves by the re-treading of our path.

The corridor provides room for memory, as it is a contested place it allows for gaps. In turn the corridor itself is dependent on memory, for memory allows us to operate, not in terms of Ariadne's thread, the corridor is not a Labyrinth, an arc of heroism, bringing us home to domestication. The corridor is the dislocator, the not-your-place, and memory prevents our recoiling in horror from it, allowing for our participation in its production.

There is a double alteration, both of memory, which works when something affects it, and of its object, which is remembered only when it has disappeared...It constructs itself from events that are independent of it, and it is linked to the expectation that something alien to the present will or must occur.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> File 1.

<sup>69</sup> From de Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life* pg.87

## **Intention and Interruption**

## **Intention and Interruption**

**These images demonstrate the interplay between practices of intention and interruption in the production of the corridor, in turn interrupting the progression of the report.**

**First, demonstrating the space that the corridor provides for interruption.**

**Second, demonstrating the interruption of systems of control by practices of care and carelessness.**

**Third, demonstrating the key process of erosion - of intentions by interruption - leading to a secretion. This demonstrates the manner by which the report itself has been interrupted - analytical construction being inadequate - being instead a process of wearing away and secretion, hence the dissolving of determiners.**



## Intention and Interruption

**Actually, all I wanted was a cup of coffee, oh hi!**

With this came a recognizably modern definition of privacy, not as the answer to a perennial problem of 'convenience', but quite possibly as a way of fostering a nascent psychology in which the self was, for the first time, felt to be not just at risk in the presence of others, but actually disfigured by them.<sup>70</sup>

Privacy is socially produced; this is its core contradiction, its root. The private space is never wholly private (if it once was or remains so, only in religious practice – the vow of silence, the isolation of the hermit); it is distinct from a public place by the manner in which it is governed. The private place is governed by the rules of record – by the manner and extent to which what is said is to be inscribed. The public place is governed by the rules of speech – rhetoric, oratory, heckling, and song.

There's no social space, nowhere to sit in public. I don't spend anytime here really, I always get interrupted in my office. I go to the café down the road if I want to do some work.<sup>71</sup>

I find that I very rarely bump into anyone here. It's very surprising, given the number of people who are packed into this building, but I really very rarely bump into anyone. The corridor is always pretty empty.<sup>72</sup>

Well, I get left out of the loop, I do. Stuck in here, I get forgotten.<sup>73</sup>

*The place from which one speaks is outside the scriptural enterprise. The uttering occurs outside the places in which systems of statements are composed.*<sup>74</sup>

I would be surprised if anyone of my age has ever been butterfly hunting. Not only have I never caught one; I hardly ever see them anymore.

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<sup>70</sup> Evans *Figures, Doors and Passages* pp. 75.

<sup>71</sup> File 5.

<sup>72</sup> File 9.

<sup>73</sup> File 1.

<sup>74</sup> De Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life* pp. 158.

## Intention and Interruption

### Fire Regs and Stuffing

#### FIRE SAFETY TECHNICAL GUIDE

To access enabling keys to silence or reset panel etc carry out the following:<sup>75</sup>

The Fire Officer came and saw what was happening and we were told that the building would be shut down if things didn't change immediately.<sup>76</sup>

YOU : PRESS: YES

PANEL: Do you want to enable controls?

We, well, we try to keep the corridors clear still there's a lot of stuff left in the corridor, the corridor by the end of the year used to get incredibly densely packed full of models and rubbish, err, and you know, I can't think I ever thought of them as being a particular fire hazard, but I probably did because I'm that minded<sup>77</sup>

YOU: PRESS: YES

PANEL: Enter: Password

I have, I have a role to fulfil. Obviously my primary concern is with the building, but I also need to take into account what is happening as regards the students' work. It's, obviously if I prevent the students, in some way, from doing their work then you end up with a situation where you're battling with the tutors. So, I try to make sure, within limits, that what needs to be done can be done<sup>78</sup>

YOU: ENTER: # # # # (the password slowly) Then Press: ENTER

Panel: Menu option then available and user function keys as required

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<sup>75</sup> Directly transcribed from fire alarm control panel, Wates House.

<sup>76</sup> File 4.

<sup>77</sup> File 1.

<sup>78</sup> File 4.

**NB: If you make a mistake press NO and restart process above  
· on completion (Wates House only): Select on 5 menu to disable  
the keys; then press 3 to disable keys**

**It's very intense at the end of the year, in the last month of the third term. That's obviously the hardest time. For everyone. Because there's a lot of pressure, with portfolios and exams, and so there's a lot more at stake. It's very draining at that time, and I don't know if people realise that it isn't just physically tiring, in that you have more to do, but emotionally it's quite exhausting. Because everyone you see brings with them more than just some technical problem or space issue, with all that there's a lot of other stuff too, upset and anger and all sorts of things, which, in the end, have to be dealt with.**

**END**

Timetables and Erosion

*Critique of everyday life studies the persistence of rhythmic scales within the linear time of modern industrial society. It studies the interactions between cyclic time (natural, in a sense still irrational, and still concrete) and linear time (acquired, rational, and in a sense abstract and antinatural). It examines the defects and disquiet this as yet unknown and poorly understood interaction produces. Finally, it considers what metamorphoses are possible in the everyday as a result of this interaction.*<sup>79</sup>

The existence of the corridor implies the existence of the timetable. How could a space be, having no overt purpose (but to not have one), if not for a grid of time and geography imposed upon it? Yet, the production of the corridor has led to a constant erosion of the timetable.

Students wait outside the doors of tutors, or arrive late to seminars, or forget which room they were supposed to be in, or ask if anyone would like a coffee, or realise they have forgotten something, or notice that they have the wrong room number, or that there is a more interesting seminar along the way, or that they have found something amusing in someone's walk, or the tutor is late again, or has forgotten to photocopy material, or received urgent phone call, or bumped into PhD student, or lunch and hungry, or spotted someone room allocation politics, or has forgotten book room, key, or has key fit lock, or loo, work floor student hurry deadline blocked sink wrong floor working last years timetable has smudge room number caused thumb photocopy print carried photocopier room discover key left door downstairs.

The existence of the timetable implies the existence of the corridor. The ordering of a single room requires only a list of activities. Yet the production of the timetable has led to a constant secretion of activities in the corridor. Like a monstrous parody of the common snail, slowly ingesting the material world and ultimately secreting this wondrous spiral shell.

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<sup>79</sup> Lefebvre *The Critique of Everyday Life, Volume 2* pp. 49

**O r i e n t a t i o n**  
**and the**  
**M a k i n g o f “ M y ” S p a c e**

### **Orientation and the Making of “My” Space**

**After interruption, the following images reperform the First Steps, but through specific practices.**

**First - the establishment of boundaries within the corridor through the appropriation of material – acts of erosion and secretion.**

**Second - appropriation through the a constant redrawing of boundaries, not through speech but through listening – again, an act of erosion.**

**Third - demonstrating the erosion of an architecture, such as the doorway, through daily practices that are constantly redrawing boundaries, using the doorway as a mask.**

### **When Is A Room Not A Room?**

The dichotomy between dominated and appropriated is thus not limited to the level of discourse or signification, for it gives rise to a contradiction or conflictual tendency which holds sway until one of the terms in play (domination) wins a crushing victory and the other (appropriation) is utterly subjugated.<sup>80</sup>

Inside these unhappy spaces sits a collection of old furniture from the former Bartlett, from Flaxman House and from the old joint unit for planning research.<sup>81</sup>

The pattern of work in the SES changes rapidly, particularly the relationships between project-oriented and formal teaching activities. It is essential, therefore, to consider most staff-student activities in the context of such change. It seems that the kind of accommodation most likely to fulfil this need is a range of interchangeable rooms of various sizes, which although allocated to specific types of activity when the building is first occupied may well change radically in their use patterns over quite short periods.<sup>82</sup>

I try not to spend anytime at all in them. For me they are like the underground, which I avoid as much as is possible. I feel like I have lost my own time when I am in them, so utterly wretched are they as an experience. No, I really try not to be in the corridor at all.<sup>83</sup>

Oh yes, yes I'm lucky here, there's uh, like [...], who used to have wonderful posters outside, umm, is no longer allowed to, whilst I can have ancient old effects posters and anything I want to put up. Gives character you see.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Lefebvre *The Production of Space* trans. D. Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991) pp. 166.

<sup>81</sup> Frank Duffy *Building Study: Wates House in The Architects' Journal* (1975) Apr.9, v.161, n.15, pp. 773.

<sup>82</sup> "Brief to the Architect for the Erection of a New Building for the School of Environmental Studies" (July, 1971), Paragraph 5, from unindexed archive.

<sup>83</sup> File 9.

<sup>84</sup> File 1.

Wates House Occupancy Survey (08.11.2004 – 22.11.2004)  
Average Numbers of students in Wates House

07:30 - 0  
09:30 - c. 50  
11:30 - c.100  
13:30 - c.125  
15:30 - c.175  
17:30 - c.150  
19:30 - c.125  
21:30 - c. 50  
23:30 - No Data  
01:30 - 0<sup>85</sup>

I imagined, for quite some time, that I would find the *evidence* of appropriation on the walls, floors and ceilings of the corridors in Wates House – forgetting the primary concern was to uncover the *practices* that constitute its production. And so, with every slip of masking tape, every piece of litter, or note or scratch, I sought the marks of home making, which were in fact only my own way of laying little traps along a boundary.

These fixations constitute procedures for forgetting. The trace left behind is substituted for the practice. It exhibits the (voracious) property that the geographical system has of being able to transform action into legibility, but in doing so it causes a way of being in the world to be forgotten.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Wates House Occupancy Survey, September, 2004.

<sup>86</sup> De Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life* pp. 97.



### Listening

Hearing sounds, she spies, through an opportune peep-hole...<sup>87</sup>

I had these shoes, with a heel, that eventually wore down, so that they were just wood that clipped the ground. So everyone could hear me coming down the corridor, they always knew it was me. You can see – I've changed them now.<sup>88</sup>

Oh, I better take these off, or you're going to get chinking on your recording. Keys, yeh. "The Sheriff," that's what my girlfriend calls me. "It's The Sheriff..."<sup>89</sup>

Yes, I am aware that you can hear a bit of what's going on in a room from outside. But then there's usually no one in the corridor to hear you anyway!<sup>90</sup>

No, no, I wouldn't do that. I think I would be very embarrassed to listen in on someone.<sup>91</sup>

I guess we say what we like because no-one listens, I mean no-one's going to stop and listen in on what your saying when your sat on the floor of the corridor.<sup>92</sup>

The reader takes neither the position of the author nor the author's position. He invents in texts something different from what they "intended." He detaches from their (lost or accessory) origin. He combines their fragments and creates something un-known in the space organized by their capacity for allowing an indefinite plurality of meanings.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Bold *Privacy and the Plan* pp. 109.

<sup>88</sup> File 3.

<sup>89</sup> File 1.

<sup>90</sup> File 9.

<sup>91</sup> File 3.

<sup>92</sup> File 3.

<sup>93</sup> De Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life* pp. 169.

It is listening that allows for orientation and therefore the making of our place. The listening post is not located, however, within the corridor, or the rooms leading from it. The listening post lies between, in the walls and floors, where we project our vision of what happens on the other side. In this way, listening cracks the walls, shining a light through the barriers that ward off the exterior and contested from the interior and stable. Of all the activities of everyday life, listening, in its supremely passive appearance, is that practice that allows our storytelling to transform space.

### **The Door in Corridor**

You have to have the password, you have to cross the threshold, have to show your credentials, have to communicate, just as the prisoner communicates with the world outside.<sup>94</sup>

Firedoors on every hand interfere with circulation and the doors of the rooms themselves when finally found have (except where they are illegally wedged open) an extraordinarily exclusive opacity.<sup>95</sup>

Oh yes! Definitely! Well, it certainly is now that I've been putting bars across the window, um, no it is, and quite, I mean, it's not just, the reason why it is so secure is not just the gear in it, but, when I started the job I found that...very frustrating that other people would have access to the room. Things would go missing that weren't actually stolen, they were just borrowed, and I would have no idea.<sup>96</sup>

For me it is not a problem. Okay? But for some of the other guys here it is. They do it, but they don't...they don't feel so sure about it. For me it's no problem. Because, in the end, we are going into their space and we will be looking around amongst there things. But! It has to be done...so; I like to leave a little note. I like to leave a little notice, just saying that I have been there, that I have been in their room. And! If they want to use these tools, they need to talk to me. Because in the end it is courtesy.<sup>97</sup>

You've got to hold the door. No, it's quite deliberate, because I designed the office layout, I designed it so that there would be a thin corridor with me at the end that if either somebody was in and

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<sup>94</sup> Perce *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* pp.37.

<sup>95</sup> Duffy *Building Study: Wates House Study* pp. 773.

<sup>96</sup> File 1.

<sup>97</sup> File 6.

they were next to the, sort of surgery table, um, with just me and the piece of equipment or they were out...especially if they were unsure about what they wanted and felt embarrassed about asking or certainly felt embarrassed about asking with other people listening.<sup>98</sup>

Is the door not the precondition of the wall?

Opening doors:

To open:

Use your key

Use someone else's key

Turn the handle and open the door and walk in

Knock and wait

Knock and say "Hi! Are you in?" And wait

Knock and turn the handle and open the door and say, "Oh, sorry, am I interrupting?"

Once open

Walk in, put things that you're carrying down, sit down (or continue to stand, press button of some item of technology – phone, computer, light switch, radio, etc) and then sit down.

Walk in and say, "Hello, how are you?"

Walk in and say "Hello, how are you, oh, hi there, how are you?"

Repeat as necessary for number of people present

Prop door open

Walk in a little way and then walk backwards a little way and prop door open

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<sup>98</sup> File 1.

## **Propping doors:**

### **Standard**

**Use side of arm - leaning against door swing**

**Use hand - raised up above head, hand clutching side, or (if tall enough) top edge of door**

**Use foot - against bottom edge of door**

**Use bottom - against outer surface of door**

**Use two hands - between your bottom and outer surface of door**

### **Dramatic**

**Use foot and hand - splay feet and arms in star position in doorway, holding door open chin up (anger or surprise)**

**Use both hands - keep feet near to each other, lean forward and hold door open with hands held far apart head bowed (best used with double doors - exhausted return)**

**Armpit - half fold legs and place feet at angle to body away from door hinge, place hand nearest to door hinge behind head, lean upper arm and armpit against outer surface of door near hinge, tilt head down by slight degree, but look up at room with great interest (seductive, male)**

**One arm and bottom - place feet half way between doorframes, facing away from hinge. Place bottom against frame, place arm nearest room across outer surface of door. Tilt head up and facing into room by slight degrees, look into room with half interest (seductive, female)**

### **Animal**

**Curl up on floor**

**It is in these performances, in the doorway, that we draw the line.**

## Wallpapers

## Wallpapers

Three images that attempt to show how discourses of efficiency and productivity are only ever static masks or wallpapers, for the dynamic interrelations that occur within an always produced architecture. This re-turns the report (as occurred at Intention and Interruption). The report's apparent beginning/middle/end, like the corridors', is shown to be an illusory structure, or at least – the attempt at structure by the imposition of controls is necessarily incompetently performed.

First – ordering, by timetables, regulations, standardised practices, all of which assume a degree of competence. As everyday practices erode through incompetence, ordering overlays and disguises – both remain dumb as regards the other.

Second – the first is reflected in the application of technology, which is never competently performed, but instead redefined.

Third – everyday practice absorbs the language of controls (power) and performs that language incompetently (weakness).

### The Papering of Cracks

There are pictures because there are walls. We have to be able to forget that there are walls, and have found no better way to do that than pictures. Pictures efface walls. But walls kill pictures.<sup>99</sup>

Even if the methods practiced by the everyday art of war never present themselves in such a clear form, it nevertheless remains the case that the two ways of acting can be distinguished according to whether they bet on place or on time.<sup>100</sup>

It's about using the building as efficiently as possible. With the Research Assessment comes an assessment of proper utilisation of space. So I carried out a measurement of who was in the building and when, to establish how the space is being used.<sup>101</sup>

The building will settle down. Decent grubbiness and indecent graffiti will obscure the worst features.<sup>102</sup>

I quite like the corridors being messy and you get p... spray paint on the wall, and something weird stuck up anywhere, um, and I don't know I don't even mind the floors being mucky because its just, you know, its what happens when you use, you use a building. I think it's sad to have a sanitised space.<sup>103</sup>

I don't really look at them, but I do like them there. It's how you know where you are. I wouldn't like it if I had to know what they said. No, I'd never read them.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Perce *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* pp. 39.

<sup>100</sup> De Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life* pp. 39.

<sup>101</sup> File 4.

<sup>102</sup> Duffy *Building Study: Wates House* pp. 773.

<sup>103</sup> File 1.

<sup>104</sup> File 3.



**It is difficult to imagine what would happen to the School if all the logistical and material problems were solved. If academic and non-academic staff and students immersed themselves in a paradise of smooth, efficient mechanisms of space control – of seamless circulation, what would become of learning?**

**It is precisely the failures of the building, the cracks in its operation, which provide opportunities for participation. And it is in the participants' lack of competence that the corridor remains a place of freedom and contest, rather than control and submission.**

## Wires and People

'The relation of rooms to each other being the relationship of their doors, the sole purpose of the thoroughfares is to bring these doors into a proper system of communication.' Kerr, R.<sup>105</sup>

### Computer Service

The School at present has a cardpunch machine and it is hoped to install a computer terminal giving direct access to University College London Computer Centre and other computer facilities. The terminal and associated machines will require a small to medium-sized room in a reasonably central location. Calculating and similar machines could also be housed here and general supervision by a technician would be necessary.<sup>106</sup>

Of course we didn't have these then.<sup>107</sup>

CABINET 82/4 is a large metal box (c. 4' 6" high, 3' deep) with a glass door front, locked and containing a mass of network cables. The lowest bank of connections display small green LCD lights. Continued dull hum.<sup>108</sup>

I don't really get interrupted as such, as, when I am here I am here to take phone calls and respond to emails, so if I am in, I'm not really in to do work. Actually, I probably get more emails than anything else these days.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Quoted in Evans *Figures, Doors and Passages* pp. 79.

<sup>106</sup> "Brief to the Architect for the Erection of a New Building for the School of Environmental Studies" (July, 1971), Paragraph 4.6.4, from unindexed archive.

<sup>107</sup> File 2.

<sup>108</sup> From observation notes, September 2004.

<sup>109</sup> File 9.

Who would have thought that the arts of address would be so rapidly and completely dismantled with the application of email, a most basic (and most intricately performed) part of the new communication technologies? With what consternation do I struggle to find a level of address in writing to someone via email for the first time, and with what joy, when I receive, from a complete stranger, that kind of address reserved in the past to my closest friends?

There was nothing to allay the violence with which it pierced me. Powerless I suffered, seeing that it obliterated my consciousness of time, my firm resolve, my sense of duty. And just as the medium obeys the voice that takes possession of him from beyond the grave, I submitted to the first proposal that came my way through the telephone.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Benjamin *Selected Writings Vol. 3: 1935-1938* pp.350

### Controls and Contests

For the beautiful abstraction of the prison are substituted the compromises, opacities and dependencies of a workplace. Hand-to-hand combat begins again with a reality that dislodges the spectator without rails or windowpanes.<sup>111</sup>

It is clear that flexibility will require a fairly sophisticated control system in the S.E.S. to do the allocation and re-allocation of spaces.<sup>112</sup>

Because that is six foot longer I think, for the end offices are just beyond the distance that is, becomes, is, makes the corridor have to be sterile.<sup>113</sup>

#### 2B. Allocation of Space (61D)

TO REPORT That (a) At the meeting of Professors and Tutors held on 6 February it was agreed that all space allocation should be dealt with by the Head of School on the advice, where appropriate, of the Extended Wates House Committee. Requests for space should continue to be channelled through the Administrative Secretary.<sup>114</sup>

There's no guidelines as such. I don't get involved in the politics. In the end I just can't. There isn't enough space to accommodate the politics. So, I do my best to keep everyone happy and if that isn't possible I remind them that there isn't another way. Because

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<sup>111</sup> De Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life* pp. 114.

<sup>112</sup> Report 1 of the Expanded Wates House Committee 24/03/72 pp. 7, from unindexed archive.

<sup>113</sup> File 1.

<sup>114</sup> Extended Wates House Committee, minutes 14/02/75, from unindexed archive.

that's what it comes down to – whether it is possible or not. Practicality usually gets through the politics.<sup>115</sup>

Monkeys, yeah – “Whi, whi, whi” “Get off! Shoo!” um, so, yes, especially as my room is so crowded that there is always something at hand to play with and is also so crowded therefore pull one thing and the whole lot comes down, so um, no, there's, yes it's not just security, there's uh, it's “People Management”.<sup>116</sup>

“Wet Paint,” oh. Hmm. Seems all right. We'll just “Leave Our Trace” I suppose.<sup>117</sup>

Yes. I have noticed just how *dark* it is on the other side. I mean, it really is very dark over there.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> File 4.

<sup>116</sup> File 1.

<sup>117</sup> File 3.

<sup>118</sup> File 9.

I've Been Here Before  
(?)  
A Conclusion

### Which Corridor Am I In Now?

I hope that the preceding images contain enough space for the reader to construct their own corridor through it. It might be argued that I have not synthesised the material enough, that by refraining from a clear narrative arc and relying so heavily on the presentation of quotes I have not provided a coherent picture of the Wates House corridor. So too, it might be argued that the structure is too opaque, that without an overt historical argument or discourse, the images provoked simply recede into a mist. Perhaps.

For too long architectural history has been dominated by the material of the architect, even when acknowledgment has been made that the architect is only a tiny element in the production of space. Implicit in this report is a critique of the fragmentary and disturbing nature of the modern environment, especially within the institutional building. If this subject has been explored numerous times,<sup>119</sup> the predominant mode of inquiry is exemplified by that of Anthony Vidler,<sup>120</sup> critiqued by McLeod<sup>121</sup> for his part in the promotion of an architecture of "otherness," who is only one of many critics who is drawn to serve a professional class. It is not that kind of service I wish to provide. Rather, I hope that this report has gone some way in the development of a practice that is informative not only for a profession, but for all those who are engaged in the production of space.

What is it that I hope people will take away from this work? What have I understood, in the process of its production? For me, what has emerged from this study is the degree to which social space is constructed by boundaries. It would be this simple fact - that architecture (in the sense of that expanded

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<sup>119</sup> See for instance Nan Ellin (ed.) *The Architecture of Fear* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997).

<sup>120</sup> See Anthony Vidler *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992) and Anthony Vidler *Warped Space* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2000).

<sup>121</sup> See McLeod *Everyday and "Other" Spaces*, pp. 1-2.

field that should 'not be left to architects') is the result of edges. I have tried to show how these boundaries, these edges, are manifest within the corridors of a particular building and within the work itself. The boundary in architecture is not a line, or a wall, or a rule (though it could be all these things), but that space in which many edges enfold upon each other. I believe it is this boundary that Rendell names the between.

Of course there is a particular story within the work for me and it offers the beginnings of a solution to the central, first, problem – to develop a practice appropriate to the study of everyday life. If the work has engaged the practices of spatial production at all it is through a process of erosion and secretion, one that constructs a boundary, an edge. To trace the edge of my story then, I invite you to re-enter the work.

I remember when, at the age of six or seven, I stood outside the American nuclear airbase at Greenham Common. I was staring at the link fence that surrounded the site, a fence that I had just cut a hole in. Before that fence was a shallow ditch. After it flat land, patrolled by British and American troops. I recall this image now, because it is an early memory that resounds with the term of boundary – between 'us' outside and 'them' inside, between me (a boy) and her (a mother), between 'right' and 'wrong', between action and passivity, between order and disorder, between access and denial, between knowledge and ignorance, between now and the past. I find it astounding, still, that these states can be ascribed to a fence, or a ditch, or a corridor (?)

Nicholas Beech, 2005



## Bibliography

## Bibliography

The bibliography contains all material that has been consulted for the report, including archive material. It had been my intention to include as appendices the transcripts of interviews given by members of staff and students who use or have used Wates House as a building. It has not proven economical (in terms of time and cost) to do so. If you wish to consult these original transcripts please apply to the University College London Archives who hold them (as of November, 2005) quoting the reference Z6364106/20005/5/21. I should like to acknowledge here those who gave their time answering my questions, my thanks goes to them for transforming my dull questions with such rich replies.

Much of the historical material that reveals the involvement of members of the School of Environmental Studies (SES) in the early history of Wates House has been provided by members of staff who were there at the time and have retained minutes, posters, letters etc. These are not held by an archival body. I intend to make copies of what I can and offer these to the UCL Archive. They should be contacted if consultation of the material is desired.

The bibliography is divided in three sections – the main body containing all authored, published material, the second the slight archival material available regarding the planning and construction of Wates House that I have found useful, and the third the British Standards that I consulted and found inspiring.

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### **Archive Material**

Camden Environment Department M13/6/B/9501602

University College London (UCL) Archive/Estate Management Committee (EMC) /Box 5 (2) /Appendix P+B.C. 71/3/16/Annexure 1

UCL Archive/EMC/Box 5 (3) /Appendix JSC/71/5/7

UCL Archive/EMC/Box 6 (1) / Appendix P+B.C. 75/1/1

UCL Archive/EMC/Box 6 (1) / Appendix P+B.C. 75/1/2

## **British Standards**

**BS 459:Part 3:1951** Specification for wooden doors. Fire-check flush doors and wood and metal frames (half-hour and one-hour types)

**BS 4422:Part 1:1969** Glossary of terms associated with fire. The phenomenon of fire

**BS 4422:Part 2:1971** Glossary of terms associated with fire. Building materials and structures

**CP 3:Chapter II:1970** Code of basic data for the design of buildings. Thermal insulation in relation to the control of environment

**CP 3:Chapter IV:Part 3:1968** Code of basic data for the design of buildings. Precautions against fire. Office buildings

**CP 115:1969** The structural use of prestressed concrete in buildings

**CP 116:1969** The structural use of precast concrete

**PD 6432:Part 1:1969** Recommendations for the co-ordination of dimensions in building. Arrangement of building components and assemblies within functional groups. Functional groups 1, 2, 3 and 4

**PD 6432:Part 2:1969** Recommendations for the co-ordination of dimensions in building. Arrangement of building components and assemblies within functional groups. Functional group 5

**PD 6444:Part 2:1971** Recommendations for the co-ordination of dimensions in building. Co-ordinating sizes for fixtures, furniture and equipment. (Functional Group 5)

**BS 4330:1968** Recommendations for the co-ordination of dimensions in building. Controlling dimensions