**IMHBDBT\_1**

Transcript of a semi-structured interview conducted with participant following their experience of Duncan Speakman’s *It Must Have Been Dark By Then* at the British Library, 4, 5, 6 June 2017. The audience for the work could either book a place in advance or just walk up.

*It Must Have Been Dark By Then* is comprised of a smartphone app, physical book, and a set of headphones. It takes about an hour to complete and involves participants being guided through mostly outdoor spaces by the smartphone app while listening to an audio track and reading selections from the book. Typically, after a brief explanation, participants were sent off from a table set up in a public space, with the experience returning them back there at the end. Participants were approached for interviews following their completion of the work.

Before the interview, in addition to being provided information regarding the project and consent in writing, participants were briefed on the independence of the interviewer from the makers of the piece and assured of the anonymity of their responses.

Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and then edited to ensure participant anonymity. Deleted sections of the interview are marked by either X’s or bracketed summaries.

START AUDIO

Interviewer: So yes, I just wanted to know, if you were going to describe the experience of this to a friend, how would you do that?

Respondent: I think it’s more of being guided by an audio- like an audio book, almost. And so, it’s giving you general directions, and you have to follow them, and then you have to basically build a map, but I think it exists on the device, but it’s mainly in your mind, and you have to remember the spots and everything, and you create a narrative by yourself. Just based on where you go, and what you remember about the place.

Interviewer: Did you know what to expect, when you arrived?

Respondent: No. (Laughter)

Interviewer: Did you have anything in mind?

Respondent: Well I thought, because I was just telling your colleague that I actually watched this show called, ‘The Encounter’, and it’s kind of like a play that is done, and so you go into the theatre, and you have to put on headphones, and then there is a binaural microphone on the stage. Then there is just one actor, making sound effects, and speaking and stuff like that. So I thought it might be something similar to that, but more literary.

I wasn’t very sure how the walking around would tie into that. But yes, and so then I did this, and it was quite different from what I experienced with the show, yes.

Interviewer: How do you think it was different?

Respondent: I think that it is more engaging- as in, it’s not as immersive in a sense, because the show was trying to spin the narrative, and you’re trying to enter that space. But I think in this case, it’s my story, or my narrative, is running parallel to what is happening in the book.

So it’s like, that whoever it was that wrote the book, or whoever was speaking as the voice in my head, it was more like a companion with me. I don’t know about other people, but I wasn’t trying to engage, and be like, “Oh, what did she see?” I was just like, “Oh, this a friend, telling me what’s happening.” And then, when she was like, “Oh, but imagine if this space were empty of people, or it were covered by sand.” That was when I was like, “Okay, I’m building my own kind of story.” Yes, and so I thought that it was different in that it involves me way more.

But, there isn’t a sense of immersion into the music or anything, because I’m already in the physical space. Does that make sense?

Interviewer: So, when you were talking about it, it was as if you were with this person, you’re not just trying to envision what they’re seeing. How did that relate to what you were actually seeing?

Respondent: I think, I was less aware at first. So for example, when I was reading about how she’s all alone and stuff like that. It wasn’t very vivid in my mind. But when the voice explicitly said, “Oh, imagine, as you’re walking through the space, imagine it being empty of people, and even of yourself,” and stuff. Then, that was when I could really visualise it, and imagine it.

So, it was when she gave me directions, and then she told me to imagine, and then that was when I was like, “Okay.” Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. So, you’ve been talking a lot about the voice. Were there any other sounds in the piece, that you thought of, or that did anything for you?

Respondent: Yes. So for example, I think there was one, where there were cars, the sound of cars, or a motorbike or something, and then dogs. Then for a while, I was thinking there was some kind of dog in the background. Then I was like, “Oh yes, I think this is the track.” So, because I didn’t play it that loud- I played it loud enough, but I could still hear some of what to me sounded like trucks rumbling. I have no idea if it was an actual truck, going behind me, or if it was inside the audio.

But I really liked that, because it was the sound that weaved everything together. Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. How did it work with the book, and the app, and the sound?

Respondent: I think that people thought- I feel like some people were thinking, “What am I doing?” Because it was a bit strange, if I’m just moving to one place, and then I stop, and then I move again. I think that having the book as a material is good, but then I wonder if it would be the same, if it weren’t there. But I don’t know what it would be like, if it was just narrated to me, instead.

Interviewer: When you were being told to look at the book, and look at the app, was there any problem with that, or any difficulty?

Respondent: It wasn’t that; I don’t think there was a problem, but I think that if I had to do this again, and if I had to do this on a daily basis for example, to navigate through the city or something, I think it could be a hassle, but because it was just a short thing, I didn’t mind. Yes.

Interviewer: Was there something that you really liked about it? Or some moment in your experience, that you really liked?

Respondent: I liked how I wasn’t really going, or heading to a specific place. I didn’t really know where I was going, and I think that in general, when we’re moving, we move towards something, but I wasn’t sure what I was moving towards, I was just being told to just move. So, I think that in itself, is a very interesting experience, because I get to notice my surroundings, and I note things. And so, for example, when I was retracing my path, I was very careful; I tried to be as accurate as I could, and it was because I was noticing all these things, that it helped me to make sure that, “Okay, I’m going in the right direction.” And I thought that was very fun, for myself, but I think the fun bits came from when I was involved.

When I felt like I was participating, do you know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yes, yes. Was the experience of what you were supposed to be doing, and what it was asking of you, was that all very straightforward, or were there any problems, in terms of figuring it out?

Respondent: Not really. I think it was quite straightforward. I think especially with the maps, because I’m very bad with maps, and so when they said, “Oh, turn in this direction,” and stuff like that, I was a bit confused. But then I think that is part of the experience, because I think if it was so easy, then it wouldn’t be- it would just be like Google Maps, and it wouldn’t be fun anymore.

I think that for example, when she was like, “Oh, look for water, and stuff,” I was like, “I don’t know. There is no water around me.” And then I noticed the tall thing, and so I think it’s having her clarify, “Okay, it doesn’t have to be actual.” I know that I didn’t have to follow it, but I really tried. So, having her clarify something like, “Oh no, it doesn’t have to be visible,” or when she said, the final stop was a vent or something. And I stopped outside of the automatic doors, so it was a building that I wasn’t supposed to go into.

To have her clarify that it doesn’t have to be an actual barrier, it helps. Because I tried to stick to the instructions. I guess, you could also say that the instructions are open to interpretation, because when for example, she was like, “Look for some things where people live?” I was wondering if a hotel is technically a place where people can live. So I was wondering, “Should I go to a more residential area, or should I stop here,” and stuff like that. Yes. So I don’t know if that would actually contribute to the experience, if you did a different text, yes.

Interviewer: Okay. How was it walking around outside, wearing the headphones?

Respondent: I think it was- at first, I was in my VR, and I thought it might be a health and safety hazard, but I don’t think it was. I think it was, like I said- I think it blocked out enough noise for me to get into the audio. But it allowed some of the outside noise to filter in, as well. So I think that blend of the two audio soundscapes or whatever you’d call that, I think it was very interesting. So I really, really liked it, and I thought that having the music play as I walked, was also a very nice experience, because it was like I was entering- it was almost as if I was entering a new space.

I tried to go to a place where I’ve never been to before, in London. Yes, but it felt very kind of new, like I was seeing the world with fresh eyes, yes.

Interviewer: Would you want to do something like this again?

Respondent: Yes. (Laughter)

Interviewer: Is there a specific reason for that? Or you’ve given me some as you’ve talked, and said a lot of positive things already.

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: But, is there a specific reason you wouldn’t want to do it again? If not, then just let me know.

Respondent: I like thinking about a mixed media, the intersection between tech performance, and I guess with audio, and things like that. So, I think this is quite interesting, and especially because with technology, we have audio books, and we have e-books and stuff like that; I’m quite sure we can push it even further, with video games, like VR and stuff like that.

So, I think I would want to see how people are trying, and are experimenting with technology, and other forms of technology or medium, and stuff like that. To produce an experience on what technologies are, etc. Yes.

Interviewer: Do you have any other comments about the experience from the very beginning? From when you first signed up online, to the ending?

Respondent: I think it would be good if you told the participants to download the app before.

Interviewer: Yes, we are doing that. (Laughter)

Respondent: I don’t know if I didn’t read it on the website or anything, but you might want to also say that it involves a lot of walking. So that people who can’t walk very far, because they’re disabled or something, so they will know not to sign up.

Interviewer: Yes, were there any notable things that happened while you were out? Anything that seemed out of the ordinary also, I suppose?

Respondent: Not really, I think that well, besides one of the people looking at me strange, I don’t think anything was that outstanding, but it was because I was trying to imagine everything, and stuff like that. So, I think I was making- it was de-familiarising myself with what I think is very normal, and regular. So I think it felt strange and discomforting, but I liked that, and it was very interesting, yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Then, just finally, I have some demographic questions, for you.

Respondent: Okay.

Interviewer: Again, you don’t have to answer any questions?

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: What is your age and gender?

Respondent: I’m 21, and I’m female.

Interviewer: Okay. What’s your highest level of education?

Respondent: I’m studying as an undergraduate right now.

Interviewer: Okay. How would you describe where you’re from?

Respondent: I’m from Singapore.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you regularly read for pleasure?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you listen to audio books?

Respondent: Yes, when I’m reading school texts, and I just have to get through it, I will read the text while it’s playing in my ear.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Respondent: That’s a help, yes.

Interviewer: Yes, yes. So it’s a very functional way?

Respondent: Right. So, yes. Yes.

Interviewer: Do you read on your phone, or a tablet, or an e-reader, or something like that?

Respondent: I usually read from a book.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you take part in street games, pervasive games, or re‑enactments, or live action roleplaying, or anything like that?

Respondent: Not really.

Interviewer: Do you engage with the applications that are available at museums, if there is a museum application?

Respondent: If I know about it beforehand, I will, and if it’s something that I think will help me in my experience, then I will download the app, yes.

Interviewer: Do you take part in locative, narrative smartphone apps? So I guess, do you do other things that are similar to this?

Respondent: I don’t think so.

Interviewer: Okay, and did you come here by yourself, or as part of a group?

Respondent: By myself.

Interviewer: Just by yourself. Okay.

Respondent: Yes, no problem.

Interviewer: Yes, thank you very much.

Respondent: No, thank you.

[END AUDIO](http://www.uktranscription.com/)