

**LANGUAGE DISEMBARKED: THE COAST AND THE  
FOREST IN MODERN BRITISH POETRY**

by

Amy Elizabeth Cutler

M.St (English Literature), University of Oxford, 2009

B. A. (English Literature), University of Oxford, 2008

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**LANGUAGE DISEMBARKED:** This PhD examines the representation of coasts and forests in texts written by British poets from 1970 to the present, in both small press and mainstream publications. Close readings are presented in the context of changing late twentieth century understandings of the dynamics and social practices of littoral space and the politics of British woodland, drawing on contemporary work by specialist cultural geographers and by environmental historians. The theories which have come to dominate – such as the ‘tidalectics’ (Naylor, 1999) of the Atlantic imaginary, or the ‘project of legibility’ (Scott, 1998) for forests under state governance – are applied to select poems and poets, both well-known and marginal. The texts focus on issues of authoritarian and alternative communication, from Thomas A. Clark’s *Twenty Four Sentences About the Forest* (1982) to the ‘depths & latitudes’ of language in Robert Hampson’s *Seaport* (2008). In Britain the assigning of concepts of language to these two sites in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is still a political issue as well as a major theme of new popular constructions of nature. This thesis traces key historical and geographical tropes of the two spaces and their cultural “speech” into the digital age via ‘radical’, ‘experimental’, and ‘Linguistically Innovative’ poetry. Poets referred to include Peter Larkin, Peter Riley, Anthony Barnett, Carol Watts, Bill Griffiths, Colin Simms, Ciaran Carson, Frances Presley, Giles Goodland, Alan Halsey, Wendy Mulford, Eric Mottram, Zoë Skoulding, and Richard Skelton.

*For Sue, Dave, Leo, and Edmund*

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*What is a tree? What is this escaping, again and  
again, in a delirium of forests, ships, poems?*

Giroux<sup>1</sup>

*What is the weather*

*Using us for where we are ready  
With all our language lines aboard?  
The beginning wind slaps the canvas.  
Are you ready? Are you ready?*

W. S. Graham<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Giroux (trans. Anthony Barnett), 'L'arbre le temps', *Time and the Tree* (Yorkshire: Open Township: 1987), p. 12

<sup>2</sup> W. S. Graham, 'What Is the Language Using Us For?', *Implements in Their Places* (1977), reprinted in *New Collected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 2004), p. 203

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Introduction: new word views

*MARE DITAT PINUSQUE DECORAT*: this motto, granted to one British seaside town in 1953, roughly translates as ‘The sea enriches and the pine adorns’.<sup>1</sup> As I will show within the pages of this thesis, the coastline and the forest in twentieth and twenty-first century Britain in fact have a far greater role to play in literary place-making than simple adornment. On the rocky shores of the mainland where ‘the sea-way / Silvers the feet’,<sup>2</sup> or beneath the canopy of her woodlands and plantations, literary and geographical fables abound. Within them are multiple contested encodings of past and future and of what passes as an authentic domain of identity. It is no surprise, therefore, that the language issues within these two regions are tackled repeatedly by modern and postmodern poems, from ‘the small nouns’ of the forest in George Oppen’s ‘Psalm’<sup>3</sup> to the ‘great verbs of the sea’ in W. S. Graham’s ‘Letter VI’.<sup>4</sup> This thesis examines the representations of coasts and forests in texts written by British poets from 1970 to the present, in both small press and mainstream publications. It uses close readings to consider the problems and possibilities of literary language and its modes of geographical entitlement. In these two “familiar” home landscapes – and in the wake of the revisionist rural studies by Cloke, Matless, and others<sup>5</sup> – tensions can be found between earlier poetic models of chorography and the expression of evolving global systems of governance, transport, and communication. It is also possible to map out possibilities for a new cross-disciplinary interaction between literary studies and geography via the problem of rhetorical mediation at these two sites –

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<sup>1</sup> Granted as a motto on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 1953 to the Sheringham Urban District Council. See ‘Sheringham Town Crest’ <<http://www.at-sheringham-norfolk.co.uk/towncrest.php>> (accessed 8/11/2013)

<sup>2</sup> Hilaire Belloc, *Sonnets and Verse* (London: Duckworth, 1938), p. 194

<sup>3</sup> George Oppen, *This in Which* (New York: New Directions, 1965), p. 99

<sup>4</sup> W. S. Graham, ‘Seven Letters’, *The Nightfishing* (1955), reprinted in Matthew Francis ed., *W.S. Graham: New Collected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 2004), p. 135

<sup>5</sup> Particularly in the last two decades, the study of new critical rural environments has emerged alongside the changed economics and industries of the British countryside. For an ESRC-funded refiguring of rural studies which collects five major viewpoints, see Cloke, Doel, Matless, Phillips, and Thrift, eds., *Writing the Rural: Five Cultural Geographies* (London: SAGE, 1994)

what Lytle Shaw has recently referred to as the disciplinary ‘bricolage’ of a discursive poetics of place.<sup>6</sup>

Coastlines and forests have been produced by literary texts in conflicting ways, both as external to, and as a vital constitutive part of, cultural structures and their administration. Within this doubly-sited thesis, shared modern geographies are addressed: the languages of law and land management; the operations of the technical environment; definitions of individual and collective identity; representations of history and science; the assigning of economic and vocal authority. By studying the tropes and the rhetoric of the coast and the forest in modern experimental poetry, it is possible to trace key historical and geographical models of these spaces into the digital age. The texts studied focus on issues of authoritarian and alternative communication, from Thomas A. Clark’s *Twenty Four Sentences About the Forest* (1982) to Andrew McNeillie’s coastal writings on ‘the sea of language / The eighth sea with its own ports of call’.<sup>7</sup> In Britain, the assigning of strictures of language to these two sites in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is an action of societal politics, and textual experimentation is one material response to this political ‘project of legibility’ (Scott, 1998) in the natural environment.

Why study these two land formations in particular, and in parallel? In the twenty first century we are still able to imagine the coast and the forest as somehow other to the ‘strategic designs’ of society’s master builders.<sup>8</sup> While they appear to have no physical environmental features in common, they share in a cultural paradox: both have a long history of being treated metaphorically as spaces to which one can retreat from “culture” into “nature”, problematized by four decades of work in cultural geography undermining the Western nature-culture dichotomy.<sup>9</sup> These clichés of the two sites as ascetic spaces – and as perhaps the two most quintessential wildernesses in this nation – are represented in remarks such as the following, by literary scholar Robert Pogue Harrison: ‘(w)e dwell not in the forest but in an exteriority with regard to its closure’<sup>10</sup> – an idea reiterated recently in Scottish poet Thomas A. Clark’s contribution to *The Bothy Project*, the republication of his poem

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<sup>6</sup> Lytle Shaw, *Fieldworks: From Place to Site in Postwar Poetics* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 2013), p. 3-4

<sup>7</sup> Andrew McNeillie, ‘Lafan’, *Winter Moorings* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014), p. 24

<sup>8</sup> Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (London: Routledge, 2007), p.202-3

<sup>9</sup> This work on ‘the inseparability of society and nature’ (Swyngedouw, 1999) includes defining texts in anthropology and the social sciences, such as MacCormack and Strathern eds., *Nature, Culture, and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), publications in cultural history and environmental history, such as Keith Thomas’s *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, 1991), and recent works revisiting the discourses involved in the nature-culture dichotomy, such as Sarah Whatmore’s *Hybrid Geographies: Natures Cultures Spaces* (California: SAGE, 2002), Steve Hinchliffe’s *Geographies of Nature: Societies, Environments, Ecologies* (California: SAGE, 2007), and Juliet Fall’s work on ‘bounding’ and ‘boundless’ nature in *Nature, Hybridity, and Politics in Transboundary Spaces* (London: Ashgate, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 201



‘The Hut in the Woods’, with its repeating line, ‘a place apart’.<sup>11</sup> Yet these two spaces are also seen as the opposite of culturally-estranged: as, in fact, formative and emblematic sites of British culture, part of the heartland of cultural life, providing it with deeply resonant natural symbols, from the shores of Dover to the heart of oak. At the time of writing this introduction, Prime Minister David Cameron has lately delivered a speech at the 2013 Conservative Party Conference revisiting the famous ‘Heart of Oak’ narrative, using the growth of oak beams as a metaphor for historicity as well as cultural sustainability and forward-looking politics.<sup>12</sup> And the UK Independence Party (UKIP) has more recently co-opted the image of the coast of Dover for its White Cliffs poster (‘No border. No control.’), part of a right-wing Eurosceptic campaign in the run-up to the 2014 elections. (Nigel Farage described the iconic photo, invoking British coastal permeability, as ‘the most powerful image of the entire European election campaign’.<sup>13</sup>) The coast is thus vital to contemporary, as well as historical, constructions of our ‘islanded identity’.<sup>14</sup>

As well as being politically emblematic, coasts and forests both have a long history of association with linguistic disorientation – from Corinne Saunders’ account of the first root words for forest and wood (the Greek *hyle*, primordial disorder, and Latin *sylva*, chaos or unshaped matter),<sup>15</sup> to James Romm’s account of the ancient Greek encryptions of the sea in, and as, riddle,<sup>16</sup> as well as the wider modern connotations of being “all at sea”. These two sites are also the subject of what George Monbiot has recently referred to as the ‘communication disasters’ of modern environmental description, calling for a change to the language we use to describe our relations with nature.<sup>17</sup> We live in interesting times, environmentally speaking – and that necessitates a re-assessment of these two semiotic assemblages. They are seen as primary romance landscapes and places of exile (eremitic

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas A. Clark, ‘The Hut in the Woods’, republished online as part of the 2013 project Bothan Shuibhne | Sweeney’s Bothy, available at <<http://alecfinlayblog.blogspot.co.uk/2013/10/the-hut-in-woods-thomas-clark.html>> (accessed 01/08/2014). Clark’s poem was originally published as a stand-alone chapbook *The Hut in the Woods* (Nailsworth: Glos, 2001)

<sup>12</sup> See ‘The acorn from which David Cameron’s speech grew’, *London Evening Standard*, 4<sup>th</sup> October 2013, online here: <<http://www.standard.co.uk/news/londoners-diary/the-acorn-from-which-the-david-camersons-oak-tree-speech-grew-8858921.html>>. The full speech is also available online at the Telegraph (2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013) here: <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron/10349831/David-Camerons-speech-in-full.html>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>13</sup> The poster features an escalator running up the White Cliffs of Dover and the slogan ‘No Border. No Control. Take back control of our country – Vote UKIP 22nd May’. See <<http://www.dover-express.co.uk/Nigel-Farage-praises-Ukip-White-Cliffs-poster/story-21047560-detail/story.html>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>14</sup> Maeve McCusker and Anthony Soares eds., *Islanded Identities: Constructions of Postcolonial Cultural Insularity* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011)

<sup>15</sup> Corinne Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993). See chapter one for her discussion of the ‘sylva’ and ‘hyle’ roots.

<sup>16</sup> James Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 178

<sup>17</sup> George Monbiot, ‘Saving the world should be based on promise, not fear’, *The Guardian*, Monday 16 June 2014. In this article he argues that ‘part of this (environmental and political change) means changing the language’: <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jun/16/saving-the-world-promise-not-fear-nature-environmentalism>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

or political); but they are also deeply valued civilised landscapes. Coasts and forests are both used as generative conduits for public environmental culture; four large scale festivals and exhibitions have very recently addressed cultural responses to the coastline,<sup>18</sup> with the National Trust's 'Year of the Coast' anticipated in 2015,<sup>19</sup> while the national arts and culture woodland organisation and lobbying group Sylva has declared 2013 'An Extraordinary Year for England's Woodlands',<sup>20</sup> the Forestry Commission has launched a number of major curatorial and artistic projects in 2013-2014 via its new subdivision company, 'Forest Art Works',<sup>21</sup> and this thesis's first submission coincided with the 38<sup>th</sup> annual celebration of National Tree Week.<sup>22</sup> As perceived sites of access to cultural history and heritage – on private, local, and national scales – these two spaces are temporally complicated; they undoubtedly provide a point of association with past cultures,<sup>23</sup> but are also inflected by their entrance into modern and global systems of management and the resulting on-going battles of meaning that constitute a 'legacy of change'.<sup>24</sup> As rhetorical topoi – and loci *par excellence* of national heritage, where can be seen, for instance, the use of the arts by environmental organisations and policy-makers to extoll certain visions of identity change or stability, as Sylvie Nail discusses in her book on forestry policy<sup>25</sup> – the semantics of the coast and of the forest offer two highly charged rhetorical environments. In terms of the complex hermeneutics at work in defining literary and environmental legacy – and the 'appropriate' modes for the performance of this legacy – the two sites work as ideal case studies of literary 'chronotopes',<sup>26</sup> modern experimental writing, and the affixing of interpretative strategies to the British landscape.

The 1970s was selected as the start of the time period under consideration for several reasons. The converging work of anthropologists and theorists in the 1970s, leading to the 'spatial turn' in the

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<sup>18</sup> *The Coast is Our Masterpiece: Art and the Sea* (Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts and University of East Anglia, 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2013); *Tides of Change: Kent Coastal Week 2013* (North Kent, 26th Oct – 3rd Nov 2013); *Shorelines: Literary Festival of the Sea* (Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, 8-10 November 2013); *Sea Change* (Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, 7<sup>th</sup> Nov 2013 – 26<sup>th</sup> Jan 2014).

<sup>19</sup> National Trust preparations are currently underway for this Golden Jubilee celebration of 50 years of the Enterprise NEPTUNE campaign, which originally acquired areas of coastline for preservation and public access. The celebration will focus on promoting the profile of the coast and 'coastal consciousness' in England more widely.

<sup>20</sup> *2013: An Extraordinary Year for England's Woodlands*, Oxford, 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 2013. See

<<http://sylva.org.uk/blog/wp-content/uploads/Woodlands1.pdf>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>21</sup> Notably, the Jerwood OPEN FOREST commission and 2014 exhibition, in collaboration with the Forestry Commission's new 'Forest Art Works' branch: <<http://jerwoodopenforest.org/>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>22</sup> See <<http://www.treecouncil.org.uk/community-action/national-tree-week>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>23</sup> See for instance Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun eds., *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2004)

<sup>24</sup> This phrase is recently common in the official literatures of land management – appearing several times in the National Trust's pamphlet on coastal management for the future, *Shifting Shores: Living with a Changing Coast* (2013), online at <<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/article-1356397220231/>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>25</sup> Sylvie Nail, *Forest Policies and Social Change in England* (New York: Springer, 2008), from p. 271

<sup>26</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel', *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 84

humanities and also to the “new” cultural geography of the 1980s,<sup>27</sup> coincided with another pattern of geographical engagement in British poetry. The transatlantic influence of Charles Olson’s *Maximus Poems* and the works of Ed Dorn<sup>28</sup> (particularly those published in Britain during his time at the University of Essex) at this time were also effecting a kind of land-creep in radical British poetry towards themes of geology, cartography, landscape morphology, and thereby also towards earlier cultural geography, notably the essays of Carl Sauer. As a more specific time marker, in 1969 the first photograph of the Earth was taken by the Apollo mission during lunar orbit; this, as Denis Cosgrove has observed,<sup>29</sup> was the beginning of a long period of satellite survey which has entirely changed our imaginative concepts of our global environment. What Harriet Tarlo and Richard Kerridge call the modern ‘crowded space’ of British geographical literature<sup>30</sup> is a direct product of a landscape which was (even more) extensively mapped and familiarised during this period – creating what the poet Louis Armand has referred to as ‘the impression of a landscape / exhausted by scrutability’,<sup>31</sup> and what Arendt has called ‘earth alienation’,<sup>32</sup> that latter concept also picked up by the poet J. H. Prynne in a 1971 lecture.<sup>33</sup> Attached to the rise of new geographical information systems are therefore profound questions about the provenance of modern and postmodern ‘nostalgia’<sup>34</sup> for previous eras of

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<sup>27</sup> The groups of texts which influenced the ‘new cultural geography’ notably included Denis Cosgrove’s *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), Peter Jackson and Denis Cosgrove’s article ‘New directions in cultural geography’, *Area* 19. 2 (1987), and Peter Jackson’s *Maps of Meaning* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), works referred to as a group by Kenneth Olwig as the ‘British invasion’ (Kenneth R. Olwig, ‘The ‘British invasion’: the ‘new’ cultural geography and beyond’, *Cultural Geographies* 17. 2 (2010)). The ‘new cultural geography’ – which broadly referred to a spatialised cultural theory which dealt with social and symbolic landscapes and their various discourses – was also associated with the work of James Duncan, Trevor Barnes, Stuart Hall, David Ley, and Susan Smith, and drew on the work of Raymond Williams, E. P. Thompson, and John Berger.

<sup>28</sup> Notably his 1960s publications, *From Gloucester Out* (London: Matrix Press, 1964), *Idaho Out* (London: Fulcrum Press, 1965), *Geography* (London: Fulcrum Press, 1965), and *The North Atlantic Turbine* (London: Fulcrum Press, 1967).

<sup>29</sup> Denis Cosgrove, *Apollo’s Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2001). The poet J. H. Prynne also addressed the estranging quality of this image in his ‘lectures on Maximus’ at Simon Fraser university on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 1971, reprinted in *Minutes of the Charles Olson Society* 28 (April 1999).

<sup>30</sup> Tarlo and Kerridge worked together in 2008 editing a collection of essays titled *Crowded Space: British perspectives on environmentalism, literature and culture*, although unfortunately the volume was never forthcoming. Contributing essays have since been published elsewhere.

<sup>31</sup> Louis Armand, ‘Dimensions Unknown’, *Land Partition* (Melbourne: Textbase Publications, 2001), p. 52

<sup>32</sup> See in particular David Macauley, ‘Out of place and outer space: Hannah Arendt on earth alienation: An historical and critical perspective’, *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 3. 4 (1992), and David Macauley, ‘Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Place: From Earth Alienation to *Oikos*’, in Macauley ed., *Minding Nature: The Philosophers of Ecology* (New York: Guilford Press, 1996).

<sup>33</sup> ‘There was that unbelievably gross photograph of the earth taken across the surface of the moon, which is now in all the soap ads, which was supposedly the first picture of earth as home ... My god, the stunning alienation of that piece’. J. H. Prynne, ‘Lectures on Maximus IV, V, VI’, Simon Fraser University July 27, 1971), reprinted in *Minutes* (ibid.)

<sup>34</sup> On the narratives of modern nostalgia and the environment, see Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), Nadia Atia and Jeremy Davies, ‘Nostalgia and the Shape of History’, *Memory Studies* 3. 3 (2010), and Nicholas Dames, ‘Nostalgia and its Disciplines: A Response’, *Memory Studies* 3. 3 (2010)

literary and geographical exploration. Another compelling reason for the chosen time period is that the print cultures of the 1970s – following the explosion of mimeographs, little magazines, and small run editions – gave an opportunity for an unprecedented amount of texts to be published which engaged with the physical attributes of the page and the book, as well as material processes of publication.<sup>35</sup> As Ian Davidson has observed, this experimentation with visual layout and open field poetics was as much a part of the ‘space age’ as was the building of rocket technology.<sup>36</sup>

Most intensely, this thesis is conceived of as a study of the intersection between modern poetry’s concern with alternative practices of writing and reading (including citation poetry, conceptual poetry, and ‘intentional errata’<sup>37</sup>), and the vagaries of the “language problem” of modern environmental spaces. This is a promising crunch point for literary geographies concerned with environmental representation, I will argue. Within the context of the parlous state of modern environmental politics, the ‘rhetoric of landscape’<sup>38</sup> is seen by these writers as a necessary and timely subject matter in itself. Against the perilous narrowing of concepts of language – for instance, in the name of contemporary environmental valuation projects, such as DEFRA’s 2011 white paper on the securitisation of the value of nature, which expresses British environmental assets largely in terms of their fungibility<sup>39</sup> – are a whole host of what Derrida terms ‘less visible, less direct, more paradoxical, more perverse’ discourses.<sup>40</sup> The texts which I will draw on in what follows concern themselves with those languages which are not stabilised, or part of securitisation narratives; they explore coastal traffics and drifts in language, and historical lingos of the forest, and excavate layers of myth and jargon as well as creating neologisms (such as neo-Anglo-Saxon riddles and kennings). Against the narratives of securitisation, these texts scrutinise again the definitional language acts of the coast “line” and the forest’s classification, often splintering into linguistic surrealism and provocation.

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<sup>35</sup> For resources on small British poetry presses during this period, see David Miller and Richard Price, *British Poetry Magazines 1914-2000: A History and Bibliography of ‘Little Magazines’* (London: British Library, 2006), Nigel Wheale, ‘Uttering Poetry: Small-Press Publication’, in Denise Riley ed., *Poets on Writing: Britain, 1970–1991* (London: Macmillan, 1992), Wolfgang Görtschacher, *Little Magazine Profiles: The Little Magazines in Great Britain, 1939-1993* (Salzburg: University of Salzburg, 1993), and Ken Edwards, ‘UK Small Press Publishing Since 1960: the Transatlantic Axis’, in *Mimeo Mimeo* 4 (2011).

<sup>36</sup> Ian Davidson, *Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> This practice is indicated by a spiky prefatory note in Steven Fowler’s *The Rottweiler’s Guide to the Dog Owner* (London: Eyewear Publishing, 2014), flyleaf: ‘ALL ERRATA IS INTENTIONAL AND THIS WORK HAS BEEN THOROUGHLY PROOFED’.

<sup>38</sup> James Duncan, *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 19

<sup>39</sup> In June 2011, DEFRA published the Natural Environment White Paper, titled ‘The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature’, available online at <<http://sd.defra.gov.uk/2011/06/the-natural-choice-securing-the-value-of-nature/>> (accessed 01/08/2014). For an insightful critique of its language of fungibility by a cultural geographer, see Kathryn Yusoff, ‘The Valuation of Nature: The Natural Choice White Paper’, *Radical Philosophy* 170 (2011)

<sup>40</sup> Jacques Derrida, ‘Canons and Metonymies: An Interview with Jacques Derrida’, in Richard Rand ed., *Logomachia: The Conflict of Faculties* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), p. 198

As this research evolved it therefore found resonance not just in its structural themes, but also in wide-spread encounters across the text with returning metaphors of language – as “spindrift” or “driftwood” words, as one poet imagines<sup>41</sup> – which speak across the text to each other and to the thesis title. The reworking of these specific tropes of linguistic ineffability – not where we are lost for words, but where words themselves are lost amongst dialectical holloways in the woods, or lapping waves of human speech at the coast – becomes greater than the sum of its metaphors. The obsessive depiction of the plight of language in these two spaces (from Val Cunningham’s discussion of language “dissolving” as it crosses the shoreline,<sup>42</sup> to Ciaran Carson’s depiction of the failed fable of Rumpelstiltskin in the forest, where absolute naming has no power<sup>43</sup>) is a shadow narrative to the “wicked” language problems approached in modern environmental discourse. What dictums exist for the woodlands and the shorelines of the modern UK? And how do these interact with modern poetry’s interest in the re-coding of existing tropes, utterances, and histories?

Both of these sites are subject to strictures of language that perform political and cultural tasks. Andrew Duncan, in his poem ‘Coastal Defences of the Self’, describes the ‘verbal ordeal’ of the coastline as a space of historical cultural unification.<sup>44</sup> It is a place where ‘the unsteady edge of marine and terrene powers’ is ubiquitously performed by ‘inaudible lines of language’, as he remarks in the sequence ‘Anglophilia – A Romance of the Docks’.<sup>45</sup> It is unsurprising therefore that the ramifications – and even the unseating – of these ‘lines of language’ should be a topic, or task, taken up by groupings of modern writers with existing concerns with issues of voice, authority, and history. In the main body of the thesis, I will expand on the link between these concerns and some of the representational poles of the two sites. In the forest, the history of over-determined legal or legitimate languages and ‘charters lost and found’<sup>46</sup> is balanced against the troubled backdrop of British woodlands as a historical space of illegitimate protest, violence,<sup>47</sup> and the “answering back” of an alternative semiotics, for instance in the trope of talking trees (versus talking *for* trees). At the coastline, performances of cultural identity – including the invocation of the Celtic “fringes”, or other

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<sup>41</sup> Nancy Gaffield, *Continental Drift* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2014), p. 20, 29

<sup>42</sup> See p. 107, this thesis

<sup>43</sup> See p. 203-204, this thesis

<sup>44</sup> Andrew Duncan, ‘Anglophilia – A Romance of the Docks’, *The Imaginary in Geometry* (Cambridge: Salt, 2005), p. 3. The poem considers the coastal conversion of historical ‘sh- and th- sounds, with melodic gestures twisted into tunes’ of Saxon sailors and the fishing traditions of ‘Irish boatloads’ into ‘a guardian maze of strict rules / that never runs the same way twice’ (p. 2).

<sup>45</sup> Duncan, *ibid.*, p. 46. Sean Bonney has also described the English by virtue of a linguistic imagining of their ‘closed borders, their bureaucratic exterior - / election day. terminal. a cluster of predecessors in the language’, encouraging us to ‘think of adjectives as refugees’. Sean Bonney, *Happiness: Poems After Rimbaud* (London: Unkant Publishers, 2011), p. 26

<sup>46</sup> Peter Linebaugh, *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons For All* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 69

<sup>47</sup> See in particular Daniel Beaver, *Hunting and the Politics of Violence Before the English Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

kinds of super-local ‘marginal utterances’<sup>48</sup> along the Atlantic coast – will be balanced against texts which explore the linguistic idiosyncrasies of drift and tide related to historical geographies of shore travel, global networks of trade, the political nature of the coastline, and new materialist approaches to shifting maritime space. Both chapters expose the fractiousness of language in these two spaces, producing from these environments examples of the ‘sounds and letters of tongues made multiple and dark’, as Daniel Heller-Roazen has put it in his recent book on the literary importance of trickery and word-play.<sup>49</sup>

Co-opting a phrase from a famous essay by Geoffrey Pullum,<sup>50</sup> we might imagine the coast and the forest as “lexicographical wonderlands”, where the idea of a singular, measured language is tested by the presence of incommensurable (local and global, historical and modern) cultural discourses and activities, as well as by the historical troping of the two sites as spaces of ‘philological mystification’, as Harrison has described the German forest.<sup>51</sup> A number of the writers included approach prior language – or that ‘cluster of predecessors in the language’<sup>52</sup> – by drawing on existing dictionaries and word collections, from Richard Skelton and Autumn Richardson’s recovery of regional and obsolete dialect terms in the glossaries accompanying or worked into a number of their Corbel Stone Press publications, to Anthony Barnett’s ‘coppicing’ or ‘pruning’ of the existing *Dictionary of Forestry* in his erasure poems.<sup>53</sup> These writing processes therefore find moments of frangibility in existing vocabularies, tropes, and axioms. The often celebrated function of modern radical poetry to perform feats of linguistic legerdemain is here used to go beyond singular or sanctioned languages of the coast and the forest, and to expose in these linguistic power lines ‘a forest of intertextuality’.<sup>54</sup> Strange idiolects occur: in fact, the thesis as a whole could easily have been given the subtitle ‘Coasts and forests *in a manner of speaking*’, as will become apparent. In Sarah Bodman’s introduction to the *Arcadia id est* artist books’ project (2005), for instance, she notes that the title was chosen because ‘*id est*, more commonly known by its abbreviation ‘i.e.’, is the descriptor for many of these works, in that

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<sup>48</sup> Thomas Paul Bonfiglio, *Mother Tongues and Nations: The Invention of the Native Speaker* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010) p. 9

<sup>49</sup> Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Dark Tongues: The Art of Rogues and Riddlers* (New York: Zone Books, 2013), p.17

<sup>50</sup> Geoffrey Pullum describes Alaska and the areas of ice and snow inhabited by the Inuit and Yupik as a ‘lexicographical winter wonderland’ (referring to the legend of their excessive morpheme stock). Pullum, *The Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax and Other Irreverent Essays on the Study of Language* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 162

<sup>51</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, *ibid.*, p. 164

<sup>52</sup> Sean Bonney, *Happiness: Poems After Rimbaud*, *ibid.*, p. 26

<sup>53</sup> I take the idea of ‘coppicing’ source texts from the book artist Colin Sackett’s blurb for his own *Specimens* (Axminster: Sackett, 1998), which investigates ‘abbreviation as a form: whether in the rendered line on a map, the hatched wooden block, or a diminution of the spelt word (often via a ‘de-vowelling’, or coppicing).’ This book work – and its relationship to the British history of woodland coppicing, which is cited in its textual sources – has in fact also been commented on by the geographer Stephen Daniels, in ‘Reviews in Brief’, *Cultural Geographies* 14 (2007).

<sup>54</sup> Derek Mahon, *Collected Poems* (Co. Meath: The Gallery Press, 1999), p. 240

they are ‘nature in other words.’<sup>55</sup> This thesis also considers the depiction of Britain ‘in other voices’, the topic of a New Garland special anthology in 2010; as a space of inter- and intra-lingual encounter between competing dialects and language histories.<sup>56</sup>

The research for this work, given its departmental affiliation, is involved with geographical scholars as much as it is with poetic texts. It does not set out to deal with all of the over-arching concerns in the growing field of ‘literary geographies’, nor to explicitly build on existing important work on politically concerned poetry via its involvement with European philosophies of “space” and “place”, though it obviously draws on spatial theory. Rather, it is imagined as a more case-based contribution to contemporary debates in the scholarly practice and methodologies of literary geography, working as it does through different genealogies of thought and representation in specific land types and the networks of currently practising researchers involved with them. Broadly following in the footsteps of new historicism and cultural poetics, it brings investigations into modern language history and the tools of textual interpretation together with contemporary geographical research in specialist areas, revealing some potential alternative developments of literary geography which for one reason or other may have been overlooked.

It is a truism of theses that they cannot cover everything they need to, and this anxiety of influence is only intensified in the case of the cross-disciplinary thesis. The survey chapter will begin with a straight-forward history of the various meanings (and purposes) of “literary geographies” in British geography from the mid-1970s onwards, starting by outlaying the connections between the angle of its disciplinary interventions, in early stages, and the resulting limitations of its dominant conversations about the role of text. Moving on from the quantitative and through the provocations of the humanist and poststructuralist trends, this account will consider the increasing resources with which twenty first century geographers are approaching literary art forms, including the online project blog *Literary Geographies*,<sup>57</sup> and the movement toward new interdisciplinary venues for literary geography. A greater deal of attention will then be paid to reviewing and historicising several active discussions around geography amongst contemporary British poets and researchers, focussing on recent publications such as Neal Alexander and David Cooper’s *Poetry & Geography: Space & Place in Post-war Poetry* (2013) and Ian Davidson and Zoë Skoulding’s *Placing Poetry* (2013). Summaries of these several complex areas together are scant in geographical writing, so this survey shall aim to give equal attention to several of the master narratives offered from the literary scholar’s position,

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<sup>55</sup> Sarah Bodman, ‘Introduction to the Arcadia project’, University of the West of England website, <<http://www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/sbtalk.htm>> (accessed 12/08/2014). See also the published catalogue and essays for the 2005 exhibition: Sarah Bodman and Patrick Eyres, *Arcadia id est, Artists’ Books, Nature and the Landscape 2005-2007: An Exhibition of 106 Artists’ Books* (Bristol: Impact Press, 2005)

<sup>56</sup> Shirley Toulson and Rosemary Grant eds., *Other Voices 1840-1940: An Anthology* (Essex: Happy Dragons’ Press, 2010)

<sup>57</sup> James Kneale and Sheila Hones founded this online open-access blog and bibliography in 2013, available at <<http://literarygeographies.wordpress.com/>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

bringing together materials which may be outside of the familiarity of this text's readers. It will touch briefly on variously suggested emerging canons of texts, including Allen Fisher's poetic project of the 1970s, *Place* (2005), and Harriet Tarlo's anthology *The Ground Aslant: An Anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry* (2011).

Chapter two, 'L/andedness ends', analyses the various coasts of British poetry, comparing treatments of the modern business of the land's edge in texts and vocabularies which draw from Celtic monasticism, Norse seafaring, coastal cartography, modern tourism, and meta-histories of navigation. It hones in on language issues which apply to the various economic, spiritual, and physical definitions of the coastline, giving examples of writers working with lexical complication to present these, from Colin Simms' use of creole languages in *No North Western Passage* (1976)<sup>58</sup> to Peter Riley's homonymic puns in *The Llŷn Writings* (2007).<sup>59</sup> The settlement in language between marine and terrestrial worlds is affected by contemporary imaginings and practices of coastal community, land reclamation, tourist economies, shipping, and mobility, which will be linked to the work of geographers including Phil Steinberg, Mark Monmonier, Avril Maddrell, and Anna Ryan, as well as oral histories and dialect collections by radio poet Katrina Porteous and Norse scholar Bill Griffiths. A number of issues related to the *mobilization* of the coast in contemporary literary depictions can be usefully linked to new critical interventions which draw on assemblage theory and new material geographies. The depictions are also complicated, however, by the nature of being an ongoing stage in a historical argument – drawing on, for instance, the rational coast "line" of the Enlightenment, and the Romantic interest in turbulent and dangerous shores, as well as the Victorian intellectual fascination with waves. The coastline as a natural landscape has been shown to be captive to a number of different legal schemes, from Roman law onwards,<sup>60</sup> which approach the requirements of legal partition whilst also being faced with the physical characteristics of the coast as a moving and unpredictable threshold, regularly subject to inundation. The texts considered draw out this definitional and 'eco-cultural complexity'<sup>61</sup> in the history of the "line" in their moving voices, testing the tropes of coastal language between ideas of settlement and drift.

The lengths of British coast – including approximately 11,073 miles of mainland coast, as recorded by the Ordnance Survey – could not be comprehensively covered; particular sites will be chosen to highlight the extent of the interplay between these social waters<sup>62</sup> and the modern textual histories of

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<sup>58</sup> Colin Simms, *No North Western Passage* (London: Writers' Forum, 1976)

<sup>59</sup> Peter Riley, *The Llŷn Writings* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2007)

<sup>60</sup> See for instance Daniel Heller-Roazen's chapter on the legal designations of the coastline, 'Crossings', in *The Enemy of All: Piracy and the Law of Nations* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2009). See p. 167, this thesis

<sup>61</sup> Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 11

<sup>62</sup> A workshop was convened on the topic of 'Social Water' at the University of York, 25<sup>th</sup> Oct 2013.



the margin of the North Atlantic seaboard and of the Irish Sea.<sup>63</sup> The contemporary revival of early twentieth century traditions of “place-based” anthology publication – and earlier forms of chorographic collection – has particularly been shown in the coastal anthologies now being released by non-mainstream, often regional presses; so texts including Shearsman’s *By the North Sea: An Anthology of Suffolk Poetry* (2013),<sup>64</sup> Humber Mouth Arts / University of Hull’s *Drift* (2008),<sup>65</sup> and the District of Easington’s *Turning the Tide* (2001)<sup>66</sup> act as small-scale modern re-imaginings of coastal community. The British shoreline has, in the late twentieth century, even been treated as a synecdoche for geographic literature itself: as in Kenneth White’s scenic model of geopoetics, expressed in manifesto form in *On The Atlantic Edge* (2006),<sup>67</sup> and also the growth of ‘archipelagic criticism’ (after John Kerrigan’s *Archipelagic English*, 2008, and the Clutag Press journal *Archipelago*, 2007), which brings the school of new historicism – post Raphael Samuels – into direct contact with environmental aesthetics via a concern with the migratory identities of the British mainland, waterways, and islands.<sup>68</sup> For these reasons, it is surprising that there is yet to be a full-length study which engages with the discursivity of the modern British coastline and its poetics.

The forest chapter, ‘The logos industry’, takes up where other forest-literature researchers have also tended to leave off – in the period of modern and ‘postmodern’<sup>69</sup> forestry. It analyses the language of modern forest texts in relation to historical and contemporary issues of classification, from Jeff Hilson’s use of obsolete forest terminology and hunting law in *In the Assarts* (2010)<sup>70</sup> to Anthony Barnett’s previously mentioned sampling of the late twentieth century construction of standard global forestry languages in his erasure-text, *A Forest Utilization Family* (1982).<sup>71</sup> It also analyses cultural expressions of environmental memory in the forest, with texts drawing from the principles of environmental history and of dendrochronology, and studies poems which make reference to a history of work by poets and theorists on forest echo and ideas of voice, translation, and alternative language in the woods. It asks, as Louisa Mackenzie has done, ‘what it is about (...) the forest in particular –

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<sup>63</sup> The Irish Sea and its crossings was the subject of the AARG symposium ‘Over the Irish Sea’, at University College Dublin, 26-27 April 2012. In 2014, a further public symposium will consider the Irish Sea through a range of historical methodologies: *The Irish Sea: History, Culture, Environment* (Sept 19-20, National Maritime Museum of Ireland)

<sup>64</sup> Aidan Semmons ed., *By the North Sea: An Anthology of Suffolk Poetry* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2013)

<sup>65</sup> Cliff Forshaw, David Kennedy, Simon Kerr, Christopher Reid, and David Wheatley, *Drift* (Hull: University of Hull, 2008)

<sup>66</sup> Katrina Porteous and Robert Soden, *Turning the Tide* (Durham: District of Easington, 2001)

<sup>67</sup> Kenneth White, *On the Atlantic Edge: A Geopoetics Project* (Ross-shire: Sandstone Press, 2006)

<sup>68</sup> See particularly Simon Meador and Philip Schwyzer eds., *Archipelagic Identities: Literature and Identity in the Atlantic Archipelago, 1550-1800* (London: Ashgate, 2004)

<sup>69</sup> Judith Tsouvalis, *A Critical Geography of Britain’s State Forests* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 179

<sup>70</sup> Jeff Hilson, *In the Assarts* (London: Veer Books, 2010)

<sup>71</sup> Anthony Barnett, *A Forest Utilization Family* (Providence: Burning Deck, 1982)

which allows the past-present confrontation to be staged',<sup>72</sup> in this case in language. Ongoing contemporary issues in British woodland policy and management are affected by the legacy of literary languages; the poets included in this study – including Caroline Bergvall, Eric Mottram, and Peter Larkin – approach these language legacies through their own experimental forms.

The forest in the late twentieth century can be seen as a site for epistemological questing – not just in certain literary fashions and high Romance, but also in accordance with the actual cultural histories of forests and our social understanding of them, which necessitates a battle of hermeneutics in acts of forest interpretation as well as in the interpretation of its texts (as diagnosed by geographers including Stephen Daniels, Charles Watkins, Carl Griffin, and Judith Tsouvalis). This chapter will track popular ideas of the forest, especially those revived by growing efforts in modern multivalent forestry by the Forestry Commission and others to focus on arts and culture,<sup>73</sup> as well as the evolving debates around issues of 'valuing nature', following DEFRA's recent attempts to account for the social worth of woodland.<sup>74</sup> In the wake of the strategic discussions of 2010-2013 around the public meaningfulness of the Forestry Commission estate, the study will examine poetic texts which focus on the constructions of meaning and authority through language, and the ideological positions hidden in 'the discursive shade of trees'.<sup>75</sup> The politics of modern forestry and its languages is rooted in its texts, from the Charter of the Forest to John Manwood's *A Treatise and Discourse of the Lawes of the Forrest* (1598) and John Evelyn's *Sylva, or a Discourse of Forest-Trees and the Propagation of Timber* (1664). The poems included in this chapter each deal on some level with these histories of timber culture, hunting legislation, and modelling of forms of state and civil authority in the forest. The prevalence of forests in turn of the century non-fiction 'new nature writing' – such as popular texts by Richard Mabey, Roger Deakin, and Robert Macfarlane – has revived interest in British silviculture, including its earlier traditions of coppicing and management. This has its counterpart in the poems considered which analytically engage with Britain's 'forests of nostalgia',<sup>76</sup> testing constructions of "the past" (whose past?) and forms of identity which are dependent on these.

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<sup>72</sup> Louisa Mackenzie, *The Poetry of Place: Lyric, Landscape, and Ideology in Renaissance France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p. 251

<sup>73</sup> An example publication is the 'toolkit' publication *Arts in Forest Interpretation* (Edinburgh: Forestry Commission Scotland, 2012), available online at <[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcs-arts-toolkit.pdf/\\$file/fcs-arts-toolkit.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/fcs-arts-toolkit.pdf/$file/fcs-arts-toolkit.pdf)> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>74</sup> For a discussion of the increased efforts of natural capital accounting in the last few years, see Kathryn Yusoff, 'The valuation of nature', *Radical Philosophy* 170 (2011), and the interdisciplinary Valuing Nature network: <<http://www.valuing-nature.net/>> (accessed 01/08/2014). For an account specific to DEFRA's work in forestry in 2011, see the 2012 report on the Independent Panel on Forestry: <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/183095/Independent-Panel-on-Forestry-Final-Report1.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183095/Independent-Panel-on-Forestry-Final-Report1.pdf)> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>75</sup> Dianne Rocheleau and Laurie Ross, 'Trees as Tools, Trees as Texts: Struggles over resources in Zambrana-Chacuey, Dominican Republic', *Antipode* 27.4 (1995), p. 408

<sup>76</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, *ibid.*, p. 155

The new imaginations of the coast and the forest, these supposed ‘edgelands’<sup>77</sup> of British culture, are therefore rich sites of research. These two land types can also be seen as cultural *heartlands*: multi-coded spaces in which, and to which, British culture is deeply subscribed – recognised in the experimental output of post-1970s poets and their linguistic corruptions of topographical tradition. The concluding chapter will bring together the insights drawn from the multiple texts and spaces considered – from young conifer plantations to the “timeless” sea horizon – to raise wider questions about singular and non-singular problems of language within, and between, literature and human and non-human environments.

The pun of the thesis title, ‘Language disembarked’, indicates that language – in all its tricky forms – is at the heart of this project. What can geographers do with philology (the study of words)? In this text, I aim to return attention again to the etymology of geography as ‘earth-writing’ (*geo* and *graphia*), and to show how a ‘knowingness’ about words can build on the existing and canonical cultural geographical studies approaching landscapes as symbolically mediated forms. The linkages between language, community, and property, as well as propertised identity, exist from the earliest forms of the English and Old English language.<sup>78</sup> Nicholas Howe, for instance, has argued for the need to attend to Anglo-Saxon place-terminologies – including the word ‘land’ – to understand the forms of designation taking place in early geographical descriptions; he has also problematised modern cultural geography’s investment in the phrase ‘reading the landscape’, by observing that the Old English word *rædan* originally meant ‘to solve a riddle’, and only later came to mean ‘to process written text’.<sup>79</sup>

It is this riddling nature, however, which comes to the fore in the landscape reading of the poets whom I am studying. Our habitual practises of landholding are carried in our language, in its tropes and idioms, as well as in the poetic history of concepts such as ‘region’.<sup>80</sup> Within the poems chosen, paranomasia – the pun – figures highly, as does permutation poetry and other experimental forms of

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<sup>77</sup> Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts, *Edgelands: Journeys into England’s True Wilderness* (London: Vintage, 2012)

<sup>78</sup> Notably in the *Landnámabók* (Norse Book of Settlements), for which see Margaret Clunies Ross, ‘Land-Taking and Text-Making in Medieval Iceland’, in Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles eds., *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998). Nicholas Howe’s posthumous volume, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Cultural Geography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) is a valuable resource for its exploration of the literal and abstract ways in which early written documents in this country presented ‘a construct or schema’ (p. 4) of geographical knowledge, and of the ‘varying senses of place’ (p. 2) by which a book of cosmography might be linked to a parcel of land. The website *Langscape* (<http://www.langscape.org.uk/index.html>), a searchable corpus of Anglo-Saxon estate boundaries, place-names and descriptions, is also a particularly useful resource for these purposes. The medieval land charters and the Latin and vernacular texts used to demarcate boundaries and grants are, to Howe, early examples of the textual production of geographic community, and the way in which documents can inscribe and circumscribe land within its human relevance. (accessed 25/08/2014)

<sup>79</sup> Nicholas Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England*, *ibid.*, p. 15

<sup>80</sup> See Stephen Wade, *In My Own Shire: Region and Belonging in British Writing, 1840-1970* (Westport: Praeger, 2002)

citation. I am with Christopher Ricks in believing that ‘a cliché can be a probe’;<sup>81</sup> in the hands of these poets, the familiar tropes and ‘collective repertoires’<sup>82</sup> of the environment – evidenced also in less experimental writing, amateur publication, and the flourishing popular texts which address the environment – can be used to expose unspoken assertions about the textual scope of land. These common-places about common places, as we might call them, serve as a reminder that, in the poet Peter Riley’s words, ‘The landscape is a thought thing, it / Has been thought as a gift and a burden. / We drive through someone’s book’.<sup>83</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Turner have also observed that ‘to understand poetic metaphor, one must understand conventional metaphor’;<sup>84</sup> as their significant study of the ‘conceptual mappings’<sup>85</sup> of metaphor and its schemata argues, poets combine these mechanisms ‘in ways that go beyond the ordinary’.<sup>86</sup> As a historical-geographical example of the use of common-places, in a reading of Sean Bonney’s *The Commons*, for instance, Ian Davidson comments on the conceptual performance of Bonney’s repetitions – where words ‘themselves become ‘common’ within the poem’<sup>87</sup> – arguing that *The Commons* thus works thematically on the meanings of ‘common’, including the repetitions of labour and production lines, as well as English cultural memory and private and public histories related to concepts of property.

As the postmodern geographer Gunnar Olsson observed, ‘As a speaking subject, I have no choice but to live in a language that is common and serial’;<sup>88</sup> this range between ‘heteroglossic’ and serial speaking is explicitly written on by several of the poets of the coast and forest, as will be shown. One of the more famous users of cliché, effective on the European stage of poetry, is Baudelaire, in whose ‘re-citation of existing commonplaces and maxims, the cliché is reworked’ as a poetically provocative use of the commonplace, whether in the form of ‘aphorismes-abîmes’, an ‘idée reçue’, or ‘la belle langue de mon siècle’.<sup>89</sup> These exhibit the use of a cliché as a temporal device as well as a figure of

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<sup>81</sup> Christopher Ricks, ‘Clichés’, in Leonard Michaels and Christopher Ricks eds., *The State of the Language* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 57. Ricks is here building on earlier publications, including Marshall McLuhan’s *From Cliché to Archetype* (New York: Viking, 1970).

<sup>82</sup> Allan Pred, *Lost Words and Lost Worlds: Modernity and the Language of Everyday Life in Late Nineteenth Century Sweden* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 3

<sup>83</sup> Peter Riley, ‘Noon Province’, in *Passing Measures* (London: Carcanet, 2000), p. 72

<sup>84</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989), p. 214

<sup>85</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, *ibid.*, p. 107

<sup>86</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, *ibid.*, p. 67

<sup>87</sup> Ian Davidson, *Radical Spaces of Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 33. Davidson is reading the text in an early online edition; it is now available in full as a chapbook issued in a brown woven case, *The Commons* (London: Opened Press, 2011)

<sup>88</sup> Gunnar Olsson, *Lines of Power / Limits of Language* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 177

<sup>89</sup> See Sonya Stephens, *Baudelaire’s Prose Poems: The Practice and Politics of Irony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 85-93, and Margery A. Evans, *Baudelaire and Intertextuality: Poetry at the Crossroads* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), particularly chapter seven, ‘The poet as savage: rewriting cliché’. Elissa Marder also notes the difference between the French word ‘poncif’ and the English word ‘cliché’, the former referring directly to technological advances such as the printing press; see p. 78-81 of Elissa

generalized exchange in language – both approaches which can be read into avant-garde responses to historical and environmental discourse and its expressive norms. For the environment – as discourse – ‘cannot fail to be oriented toward the ‘already uttered,’ the ‘already known,’ the ‘common opinion’ and so forth’.<sup>90</sup> Thus, the ‘teriors of commonplaceness’<sup>91</sup> – in the poet Nancy Gaffield’s words, playing on interior/exterior – can only take on new geopolitical life within a context in which ‘you cannot / wipe the slate clean / language gets used / over and over again’.<sup>92</sup>

Finally, by way of studying these two topographies, coast and forest, this thesis aims to show how late twentieth century poets have worked in different forms to expose the functions of unitary “correct language” in the modern world. In their terrains, the texts investigate geography’s nomenclatorial systems as well as language’s deictic claims – carrying on from long-standing questions about the relationship between text and British landscape (Ian Crichton Smith: ‘How can I nail my ‘sea’ to sea?’<sup>93</sup>). I will show how these texts are interested in the multiple ‘ways of splitting speech’<sup>94</sup> as much as any in Heller-Roazen’s study. Rather than founding their concepts of communication on ideas of natural, proper chthonic speech, these writers explore linguistic diversity as much as ecological diversity – through eccentric and ex-centric languages.<sup>95</sup> The poems and poets themselves may also be unfamiliar to some, as many of them have been disregarded by mainstream criticism (or accused of elitist avant-gardism), and thus have not been made available or accessible to readers who count themselves within the compass of geography. For this reason, the introduction to ‘literary geographies’ at the start of the survey chapter will also be followed with a sturdy account of the geographical poetic contexts to this thesis.

A note must be added here to say that this thesis is not designed as a meeting between centrifugal, or centralised, ideas of ‘literary studies’ and ‘geography’. Rather, it accords with Giles Gunn’s vision of interdisciplinarity as an off-centre ‘threading of disciplinary principles and procedures’,<sup>96</sup> as will become evident. This approach is, in itself, necessary to the subject matter, for, as the forest historian and geographer Charles Watkins observes,

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Marder, *Dead Time: Temporal Disorders in the Wake of Modernity (Baudelaire and Flaubert)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

<sup>90</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, ‘Discourse in the Novel’, *The Dialogic Imagination*, *ibid.*, p. 279. For an introduction in the poetic context, see Anthony Easthope, *Poetry as Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1990)

<sup>91</sup> Nancy Gaffield, *Continental Drift*, *ibid.*, p. 50

<sup>92</sup> Nancy Gaffield, *Continental Drift*, *ibid.*, p. 67

<sup>93</sup> Ian Crichton Smith, ‘Names’, *Selected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1985), p. 210

<sup>94</sup> Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Dark Tongues*, *ibid.*, p. 17

<sup>95</sup> See Catherine Nicholson, *Uncommon Tongues: Eloquence and Eccentricity in the English Renaissance* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), a recent study on an earlier period, which is compatible with the agenda here.

<sup>96</sup> Giles Gunn, ‘Interdisciplinary Studies’, in Joseph Gibaldi (ed.) *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures* (New York: MLA, 1992), p. 249

The history of European woods and forests has long remained somewhat on the edge of academic study; it has never been central to any particular discipline or sub-discipline. (...) Some (books) have considered, for example, the history of medieval forests, others have concentrated on the rise of scientific forestry. (...) As woodland and forests have frequently been found throughout history at the borders of regions, so much of the interesting research is taking place on the edges of disciplines ...<sup>97</sup>

The coast and the forest in the twentieth century have attracted new coteries and styles of research to themselves, and it takes a study with a far reach into various areas (from linguistic philosophy to site-specific heritage studies) to fully tackle the epistemological questions pursued in their poetry. They are both sites of modern “wicked environmental problems” – characterised by being ill-defined, constantly changing, and complex in their profoundly disagreeing values and discourses.<sup>98</sup> They are also necessarily involved with the many disciplines of the academy which are complicit in the question: ‘how do we pack the world into words?’<sup>99</sup> In recognition of this complexity of border-crossing intellectual activities, attached to this thesis is an appendix considering its placement – officially, between the two disciplines of cultural geography and literary studies – as part of a wider academic trend away from mono-disciplinary culture. There, I’ll briefly assess the languages, structures, and motives of “inter-disciplinary”, “intra-disciplinary”, or “cross-disciplinary” intellectual labour and its variant institutional forms, and place the objectives of the research within this context. I’ll also consider the function of other kinds of research output beyond the capacities of the lone scholar, including this thesis’s own supplementary projects, a collaborative exhibition and a cross-disciplinary online series.

Coinciding with the age of new and increasingly frangible disciplines (particularly those making up the new environmental humanities and the slightly older ‘area studies’) is a radical quickening of the communicative problems of the local and global environment. It is that which makes so timely the project by poets to unpick the acts of language which do, or can, exist at the coastline, ‘amid all that blab’ (Walt Whitman, ‘Sea-Shore Memories’),<sup>100</sup> or in the forest, where

Words aged in the dark  
before us

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<sup>97</sup> Charles Watkins, ‘Themes in the history of European woods and forests’, in Watkins ed., *European Woods and Forests: Studies in Cultural History* (Wallingford: CABI Publishing, 1998), p. 1, p. 8

<sup>98</sup> See Peter Balint, Ronald Stewart, Anand Desai, and Lawrence Walters, *Wicked Environmental Problems: Managing Uncertainty and Conflict* (Washington: Island Press, 2011)

<sup>99</sup> Bruno Latour, *Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 24

<sup>100</sup> Walt Whitman, ‘As I Ebb’d with the Ocean of Life’, from *Leaves of Grass* (1855), published in *The Portable Walt Whitman* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 185

stammer past future

present.

Time layers.

Find the word for it

and let it

go into the forest,

locate others.

Tuning.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Nancy Gaffield, 'Zu Babel', in *Continental Drift*, *ibid.*, p. 16

Surveys

As freedom and whisky so geography and literature 'gang thegither'.

Charles Withers<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles W. J. Withers, "The Image of the Land': Scotland's Geography through her Languages and Literature', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 100. 2 (1984), p. 81



Words and worlds: contemporary geographers and literature

Literary geography is a complex archipelago of disciplines. In spite of its longevity – dating back to the literary sections of Strabo’s *Geographica* (7 BC)<sup>1</sup> – it could still be described a few years ago as a ‘piecemeal’ arrangement of ‘missed opportunities and one-sided conversations’.<sup>2</sup> There is an odd paradox in which post-positivist cultural geography – itself informed by linguistic theory and discourse theory, and often invoking the textual metaphor (see the journal *The Social Text*, inaugurated in 1979; Richard Harvey Brown’s *A Poetic for Sociology* (1977), and Barnes and Gregory eds., *Reading Human Geography: The Poetics and Politics of Inquiry* (1997)) – was able to apply such founding textual principles to maps and landscapes, but not to literary texts themselves. Yet, as Tim Cresswell recounts in his recent ‘Autobiography in Theory’, postmodern and poststructuralist linguistics were being adopted at an ever-quickening pace in late eighties geography, when ‘the little black *Semiotext(e)* books by Baudrillard and others were the new currency of theoretical cool’.<sup>3</sup>

While phrases such as the ‘poetics of space’<sup>4</sup> and the ‘poetics of history’,<sup>5</sup> and texts such as Clifford’s *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1992), were symptomatic in the late twentieth century of a growing sense of the humanities as ‘language-oriented connective disciplines’,<sup>6</sup> the actual use of literature by geographers was often limited in its theoretical trends and uses, described by one commentator as varying ‘along a continuum between landscape depiction and

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<sup>1</sup> See in particular Daniele Dueck, ‘Strabo’s use of poetry’, in Dueck, Lindsay, and Potheary eds., *Strabo’s Cultural Geography: The Making of a Kolossourgia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

<sup>2</sup> James Kneale, ‘Commentary on ‘Text as It Happens: Literary Geography’’, *Compass Interdisciplinary Virtual Conference*, 19-30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2009: <<http://compassconference.wordpress.com>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>3</sup> Tim Cresswell, *Geographic Thought: A Critical Introduction* (2013), from ‘Chapter 13: Geography’s Exclusions’ (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), unpaginated Kindle edition.

<sup>4</sup> Gaston Bachelard (trans. Jolas), *The Poetics of Space* (New York: Viking, 1964)

<sup>5</sup> Hayden White, ‘Introduction: The Poetics of History’, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1973)

<sup>6</sup> Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice* (Wayne State University Press, 1990), p. 31

human condition.<sup>7</sup> It could even be said that in the 1980s geographers missed the boat on postmodern literature entirely, and that this was another ‘mysterious case of the missing geographers’.<sup>8</sup>

The next few pages will offer a potted history of the explicit imaginings of the field of literary geography in the wake of the cultural turn. My aim is not to repeat surveys of the fate of literature in positivist, humanist, and poststructuralist geography currently available in Brosseau, Sharp, and Thacker,<sup>9</sup> but rather to show – drawing in particular on a slim canon of articles which made up the geographer-to-geographer conversations about literature at the end of the twentieth century – how the new pluralisation of literary geographies, offered in recent years by such publications as the special issue of *Anglia*, the journal of English philology (2008),<sup>10</sup> and the virtual theme issue of *Society and Space* (2012),<sup>11</sup> has arrived, and why it has been so overdue. The sense of belatedness in some of these discussions is partly due to the intellectual histories of quantitative and humanist geographies, and partly due to interdisciplinary inhibitions which result from the different histories, technologies, and motivations of the scholars who approach the landscape of literary geography (I deal with some of these issues of cross-over in the appendix<sup>12</sup>). It is also exacerbated by the alienating division of relevant explorations into standard categories of ‘text, author, and genre’ scholarship: Joyce scholars will always speak to Joyce scholars, as Sheila Hones has recently commented,<sup>13</sup> meaning that useful insights are often effectively hidden in plain sight. The gathering work of the new *Literary Geographies* blog<sup>14</sup> is one sign of the democratisation and cross-fertilising of postmodern literary and geographical analyses in the still nascent era of open-access; as Douglas Richardson observes, the explosive growth of other new geographical technologies are also bringing geography back into more direct interaction with the humanities,<sup>15</sup> and thus this “significant rapprochement” (Cosgrove) is still moving into its very active phase.<sup>16</sup> But, as described, this section shall begin by looking backwards, revisiting a handful of articles which were formative in the emergence and popularisation of new literary geographies for geographers in the 1980s and 1990s. Focussing on editorials, framing

<sup>7</sup> Douglas Pocock ‘Introduction: Imaginative Literature and the Geographer’, in Douglas Pocock ed., *Humanistic Geography and Literature: Essays on the Experience of Place* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1981), p. 12

<sup>8</sup> Peter Dicken, ‘Geographers and ‘globalization’: (yet) another missed boat?’, in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 29.1 (2004), p. 5. On the same page, Dickens observes that ‘Over the years, geographers have developed a disturbing – even dysfunctional – habit of missing out on important intellectual and politically significant debates, even those in which geographers would seem to have a major role to play.’

<sup>9</sup> Marc Brosseau, ‘Geography’s literature’, *Progress in Human Geography* 18.3 (1994); Joanne P. Sharp, ‘Towards a critical analysis of fictive geographies’, *Area* 32.3 (2000); Andrew Thacker, ‘The Idea of a Critical Literary Geography’, *New Formations* 57: The Spatial Imaginary (2005-6)

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Jones guest ed., *Anglia* 126.2 Special Issue: Literature and the New Cultural Geography (2008)

<sup>11</sup> See <<http://societyandspace.com/2012/09/26/literary-geographie/>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>12</sup> See p. 267, this thesis

<sup>13</sup> Sheila Hones, ‘Text as It Happens: Literary Geography’, *Geography Compass* 2.5 (2008)

<sup>14</sup> See <<http://literarygeographies.wordpress.com/>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Richardson, ‘Foreword: Converging worlds: geography and the humanities’, in Daniels et al eds., *Envisioning Landscapes, Making Worlds: Geography and the Humanities* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. xviii

<sup>16</sup> Denis Cosgrove, personal correspondence with Douglas Richardson (2007), cited in Richardson, ‘Foreword: Converging worlds: geography and the humanities’, in *Envisioning Landscapes, Making Worlds*, *ibid.*, p. xxi

narratives, pedagogical entries, and articles which have proved to be triggers or turning points, rather than accounting for individual takes and single author studies, what follows will track a certain bibliography and introduce the slow percolation of literary theory and the crisis of the sign in textually-focussed geographies through the last decades of the twentieth century. As will be obvious, a number of the earlier geographical articles which deal with literary theory and impact this thesis (such as Gunnar Olsson's 1978 thought-piece on theories of linguistic ambiguity, mentioned below) appear as points in an isolated landscape, often published in volumes in which they are very much the 'odd ones out'. What follows will give a sense of this chronological scatter of more theoretical writings, cropping out from the changing narratives of geography (e.g. regional to humanist to Marxist), and leading on to the wider contemporary assemblages of 'literary geographies'.

At the end of the 1970s, there began a slow stream of publications by geographers characterised by attempted turnings of the old conversations about the field of literature, re-assessing imaginative literatures as part of geographers' new purview (within the larger narratives of humanistic geography and, in the 1980s, cultural materialism). The previous use of de-contextualised 'landscape signatures' taken from literature for the work of (regional) geographers as loans of 'descriptive prowess'<sup>17</sup> and a textual 'storehouse'<sup>18</sup> of documentary pictures of 'real earth',<sup>19</sup> particularly as depicted in Salter and Lloyd's *Landscape in Literature* (1976), was later to be condemned by Nigel Thrift as an exercise in 'stamp collecting',<sup>20</sup> and by Silk as 'the most notorious example (of the geography-literature crossover) in terms of its dullness'.<sup>21</sup> In Ley and Samuels' edited *Humanistic Geography: Prospects and Problems* (1978), two chapters in particular are by geographers aiming to move away from this kind of empirical 'ransacking',<sup>22</sup> offered as a starting shot to new literary studies. Yi-Fu Tuan's argues for a new attention to the subjective spaces of literature, valuing them for the soft lessons which they can teach geography, for: '(e)xcluded from geography are the "internal" aspects that make people quintessentially human.'<sup>23</sup> Tuan does strongly dismiss previous uses of literature as having just a 'decorative'<sup>24</sup> or auxiliary function in geographical writing, arguing that literary texts are in fact 'highly venturesome "thought experiments."<sup>25</sup> Yet his versioning of literature is annexed well within the humanistic project to 'restore 'man''<sup>26</sup> to geography, and thus geography to the humanities. From

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<sup>17</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, 'Literature and Geography: Implications for Geographical Research', in David Ley and Marwyn Samuels eds., *Humanistic Geography: Prospects and Problems* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 202

<sup>18</sup> Donald Meinig, 'Geography as an Art', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 8.3 (1983), p. 316

<sup>19</sup> E. W. Gilbert, 'The Idea of the Region', *Geography* 45 (1960), p. 167

<sup>20</sup> Nigel Thrift, 'Landscape and literature', Letters to the editor, *Environment and Planning A* 10 (1978), p. 348

<sup>21</sup> John Silk, 'Beyond Geography and Literature', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 2 (1984), p. 152

<sup>22</sup> Derek Gregory, 'Human agency and human geography', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 6 (1981), p. 2

<sup>23</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, 'Literature and Geography: Implications for Geographical Research', *ibid.*, p. 195

<sup>24</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, 'Literature and Geography', *ibid.*, p. 195

<sup>25</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, 'Literature and Geography', *ibid.*, p. 200

<sup>26</sup> Marc Brosseau, 'Geography's Literature', *Progress in Human Geography* 18. 3 (1994) p. 334

the perspective of this turn to human subject-centred geography, a literary work's 'intimate pacts between persons and settings' and depictions of 'human moods and behaviours' has much to teach those other human beings, geographers, who in Tuan's writing come off as rather awkward fellows in need of such social tuition ('A major challenge to the social geographer is to know what to observe. Here works of literary art are often helpful'<sup>27</sup>). In contrast, and in greater sympathy with this thesis's research, Gunnar Olsson's chapter in the same volume is a very different kind of essay, written – as he notes – on Bloomsday, as an exploration of the omnipresent spirit of ambiguity in modernist literature. Olsson ricochets through linguistic determinism (citing Wittgenstein: 'the limits of my language mean the limits of my world') and the 'impossibility of translation', the 'realm of reified meaning' in nomenclature (the world and the Word), and his own stylistic experiments ('equivalence is both ~~asserted~~ and ~~questioned~~, for whatever we erase always leaves a trace'). He sees each of these 'arriving at the Land of Geography' at the same time via a concern with 'one of the most crucial fronts in this constant war between social complicity and individual complexity ... the communication process itself.'<sup>28</sup>

The next, conservative, instalment of human geography and literature – Pocock's edited volume *Humanistic Geography and Literature* (1981) – again, on Tuan's pattern, envisions literature as a path toward understanding deep values of the environment and the writer's soul, offering in its opening editorial something of a doubling down on humanist literary values. While explicitly presenting new roles for the study of imaginative literature in advancing 'alternative perspectives and insights'<sup>29</sup> in traditional geography, these insights all seem to run to the sentimental, the experiential, or to 'lofty' ideas of the human condition (as Silk later observes).<sup>30</sup> The de-privileging of the physical truths of the geographer in favour of the 'truth beyond mere facts'<sup>31</sup> to be found by geographers in literature precludes the study of the cultural and formal qualities of literary texts. Literature, in Pocock's branding, should find favour with geographers for its 'primacy', its 'holistic nature', its 'mysterious intuition', and its insights – born of an individual writer's 'perspicuity' and 'deliberately cultivated subjectivity' – into 'the human condition'.<sup>32</sup> The contributing chapter by Kenneth Olwig in this same volume, however, stands out from this model of the individual author as a genius of humanistic values, just as much as from the empirical assumptions which 'read literature as geography',<sup>33</sup> towards a wider cultural study of the work of art as a social fact. Drawing on Marcuse's work on the

<sup>27</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, 'Literature and Geography', *ibid.*, p. 201

<sup>28</sup> Gunnar Olsson, 'Of Ambiguity or Far Cries from A Memorializing Mamafesta', in Ley and Samuels eds., *Humanistic Geography*, *ibid.*, p. 109, 110, 117, 111, 115, 110

<sup>29</sup> Douglas Pocock, 'Introduction: Imaginative Literature and the Geographer', *ibid.*, p. 9

<sup>30</sup> John Silk, 'Beyond Geography and Literature', *ibid.*, p. 152

<sup>31</sup> Douglas Pocock, 'Introduction', *ibid.*, p. 11

<sup>32</sup> Douglas Pocock, 'Introduction', *ibid.*, p. 9, 9, 11, 12, 10, 9

<sup>33</sup> Kenneth Olwig, 'Literature and 'Reality': The Transformation of the Jutland Heath', in Pocock ed., *Humanistic Geography and Literature*, *ibid.*, p. 50

alternate (non-isomorphic) reality of the work of art<sup>34</sup> and Raymond Williams' cultural history of 'the long habit of rural retrospect',<sup>35</sup> Olwig considers the feeds between pastoral, counter-pastoral, landscape change and sociohistorical context, specifically analysing the relationship between textual 'realities' (in poems by Hans Christian Anderson and Steen Steenson Blicher) and the differing rural values shown in the regional development of the heath districts of Jutland, Denmark. Olwig's article is valuable, for this thesis, for its concerns with poetry's role within the national symbolism of, respectively, the forestless and then afforested heath (including the image of the twisted oak), as well as in thinking through, in text, the complex dialectic of cultivation and preservation in historical landscapes. In this way, Olwig finds a role for the text's imagination outside either the 'monopoly' of already established reality or the true representation of the writer's soul and perceptions. Yet, by limiting the importance of the author to an ideological agenda for writing and reading, he limits the motive of the work of art, too, to optimistic and 'credible' insights of the 'potentialit(y)' of landscape, 'of value to the geographic planner'.<sup>36</sup>

In 1983 and 1984, two more important articles were published which drew literary geography through the interpretations of cultural materialism, by Nigel Thrift and John Silk respectively. Thrift describes cultures, authors, and readerships in 'a historically cumulative spiral of circulation', moving from Marx, to Williams, to an analysis of the First World War space of the trenches as literary, cultural, and polemical symbol. He describes how the landscape attachment of wartime English literature offers a 'structure of feeling' (Williams, 1973) as part of 'wider processes of cultural creation of which literature is a part',<sup>37</sup> and, aphoristically, how 'places have meanings and meanings are always produced, never simply expressed',<sup>38</sup> an underlying principle vital to the new cultural geography, as well as to this thesis. Silk's article, the year following, again explicitly leaves behind those 'phenomenologists and humanists (who) refuse resolutely to venture beyond the experiential',<sup>39</sup> offering instead a weighty consideration, for the purposes of geography, of Saussurean linguistics, the Russian Formalists, the New Critics, humanism, structuralism, the culture-and-society tradition, Marxism, and (mass media) culturalism. His article explores each reading model's different relations to the 'taken-for-granted world' (Ley, 1977), as well as relations existing between text and reader, touching on Fish (1980) but arguing against Fish's inattention to the 'relative power' of society's different interpretive communities.<sup>40</sup> While his offering of literary theory to geographers is important, his own use of literature is politically instrumentalist, and thus still shaped by the flaw – in Cosgrove

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<sup>34</sup> Herbert Marcuse, 'Art as a Form of Reality', *New Left Review* 74 (1972)

<sup>35</sup> Raymond Williams, 'Literature and Rural Society', *The Listener* 16 November 1967, p. 631, cited in Kenneth Olwig, 'Literature and Reality', *ibid.*, p. 50

<sup>36</sup> Kenneth Olwig, 'Literature and Reality', *ibid.*, p. 63

<sup>37</sup> Nigel Thrift, 'Literature, the Production of Culture and the Politics of Place', *Antipode* 15.1 (1983), p. 21

<sup>38</sup> Nigel Thrift, 'Literature, the Production of Culture and the Politics of Place', *ibid.*, p. 21

<sup>39</sup> John Silk, 'Beyond Geography and Literature', *ibid.*, p. 152

<sup>40</sup> John Silk, 'Beyond Geography and Literature', *ibid.*, p. 168

and Jackson's later description – of imposing 'grand sociological models on complex literary materials',<sup>41</sup> as well as in Brosseau's characterisation of the weakness of geographers so far for 'the partial silencing of the literary text as a text'.<sup>42</sup>

Language and semiotics was about to make an overdue entrance in the growing conversation on how to handle literature. In 1988 Michael Dear's 'state-of-the-discipline' article described the field of human geography as a 'depressing disarray'<sup>43</sup> which could be justifiably labelled 'moribund and irrelevant'<sup>44</sup> by outsiders if it chose to ignore the 'postmodern challenge'. For Dear, this challenge is explicitly brought to geography by the linguistic turn, its 'incommensurable language games',<sup>45</sup> and its stress on what is spoken and written – and thereby unspoken and unwritten ('deconstruction focuses on showing us how to 'read for absences' in the text, particularly the way in which archetypes of linguistic meaning can lull us into a false sense of security about the 'truth' of a text'<sup>46</sup>). At a similar time, Brian Robinson's chapter in Mallory and Simpson-Housley's edited *Geography and Literature: A Meeting of the Disciplines* (1987) also provides a break-out moment, of sorts, for literary geography; throwing to the side the naivety of realism-humanism, which 'avoids the question of what it means to speak or write for others'.<sup>47</sup> He explores the tensions of composition and decomposition in literary space, arguing of modernist urban representation, for instance, that 'there is no continuum and no point of view that makes the city totally available in either narrative or perspective form (which is what humanism takes for granted as a setting)'.<sup>48</sup> As opposed to therapeutic models of textual forms as a pill to reality (Yi- Fu Tuan: 'by stabilising experience they make reality feel more stable'<sup>49</sup>), Robinson argues for attention to surrealist and modernist forms that display the 'kind of achieved anxiety of a perpetual labyrinth',<sup>50</sup> tellingly finding it necessary to defend such, within the field of geography, against anticipated criticism of these works as 'arbitrary (...) self-indulgent esoterica'.<sup>51</sup>

Dear and Robinson are both important to this thesis's credos, for dragging 'literary geographies' kicking and screaming to the postmodern challenge. At the turn of the decade, however, Noble and Dhussa's survey of literary geography seemed to offer again a significantly vitiated model of the

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<sup>41</sup> Denis Cosgrove and Peter Jackson, 'New directions in Cultural Geography', *Area* 19 (1987), p. 97

<sup>42</sup> Brosseau, 'Geography's literature', *ibid.*, p. 349

<sup>43</sup> Michael Dear, 'The Postmodern Challenge: Reconstructing Human Geography', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 13. 3 (1988), p. 263

<sup>44</sup> Dear, 'The Postmodern Challenge', *ibid.*, p. 267

<sup>45</sup> Dear, 'The Postmodern Challenge', *ibid.*, p. 266

<sup>46</sup> Dear, 'The Postmodern Challenge', *ibid.*, p. 266

<sup>47</sup> Brian Robinson, 'The Geography of a Crossroads: Modernism, Surrealism, and Geography', in William Mallory and Paul Simpson-Housley eds., *Geography and Literature: A Meeting of the Disciplines* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), p. 186

<sup>48</sup> Robinson, 'The Geography of a Crossroads', *ibid.*, p. 189-190

<sup>49</sup> Tuan, 'Literature and Geography', *ibid.*, p. 196

<sup>50</sup> Robinson, 'The Geography of a Crossroads', *ibid.*, p. 192

<sup>51</sup> Robinson, 'The Geography of a Crossroads', *ibid.*, p. 193

promise of the emerging critical field: in their retrenchment they re-deploy the humanistic argument that writers and poets ‘convey feelings, viewpoints, values, attitudes’, that literature is ‘a source of geographical data and perceptions that are mostly untapped by geographers’, and that ‘(w)e should not make the mistake, however, of concluding that literary geography is a substitute for traditional geographical research ... On the contrary, the literary exploration of landscape is a complementary approach.’<sup>52</sup> They reach back to dated sources, including Sharp’s first 1904 consideration, *Literary Geography*, Geikie’s *Types of Scenery and Their Influence on Literature* (1970), with its focus on the charm of ‘inner history’,<sup>53</sup> and a couple of more contemporary pieces, including a problematic (but oft cited) essay on geography and Chinese poetry.<sup>54</sup> Their reading of literary creations unabashedly as a ‘supplementary route’ to geographical understanding by students, and as “‘data banks” consisting of subtle and elusive bits of information stored by sensitive, perceptive, and imaginative writers, who may respond to stimuli and landscapes in a different fashion from academically-trained geographers, makes small surprise of the fact that they find the field of literary geography lacking in promise, discovering in it a ‘stagnation of development’ and a ‘plateau of interest’.<sup>55</sup>

A significant growth in the geographical dialogue with literary postmodernism began in the 1990s, as well as a further internalisation of the interest in the workings of metaphor and the inherent politics of language.<sup>56</sup> This language work by geographers was becoming increasingly recognised as a necessary task, directly related as it was to the emerging canons of new cultural geographies of landscape following on classic works by Daniels and Cosgrove.<sup>57</sup> Duncan and Duncan, on the necessity of ‘denaturalizing the landscape’ to see it as a culturally produced social text (1988);<sup>58</sup> Duncan, on ‘the

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<sup>52</sup> Allen Noble and Ramesh Dhussa, ‘Image and Substance: A Review of Literary Geography’, *Journal of Cultural Geography* 20.2 (1990), p. 49

<sup>53</sup> Archibald Geikie, *Types of Scenery and Their Influence on Literature* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1970), p. 59

<sup>54</sup> Xiao-Lun Wang, ‘Geography and Chinese Poetry’, *Geographical Review* 80.1 (1990). This is essentially a broad aesthetic appreciation of Chinese poet-scholars, written in the form of anthropology; e.g., ‘appreciation of the past and place and the emotional attachment to nature as revealed in traditional Chinese poetry are examples of an authentic sense of place and nature’, p. 54. This article still crops up in article bibliographies and listings of resources on literary geography, perhaps due to Noble and Dhussa’s incorporation of it.

<sup>55</sup> Noble and Dhussa, ‘Image and Substance’, *ibid.*, p. 51, 50, 61, 59

<sup>56</sup> Gunnar Olsson, *Lines of Power / Limits of Language* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Trevor Barnes and James Duncan, *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (London: Routledge, 1992); Michael Curry, ‘Postmodernism, Language, and the Strains of Modernism’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81.2 (1991); Tim Cresswell, ‘Weeds, Plagues, and Bodily Secretions: A Geographic Interpretation of Metaphors of Displacement’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87.2 (1997)

<sup>57</sup> Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (London: Croom Helm, 1984); Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels eds., *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); and Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels’ essay on ‘spectacle’ and ‘text’ metaphors, ‘Spectacle and Text: Landscape Metaphors in Cultural Geography’, in James Duncan and David Ley eds., *Place / Culture / Representation* (London: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>58</sup> J. Duncan and N. Duncan, ‘(Re)reading the landscape’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 6.2 (1988), p. 125.

rhetoric of landscape' (1990);<sup>59</sup> and Barnes and Duncan, on the need to 'pay attention to our rhetoric, as well as the rhetoric of others' (1992).<sup>60</sup> On the linguistic side of literary geographies, Allan Pred's *Lost Words and Lost Worlds* (1990) – with its various references to the 'Wittgensteinian ... limits of our language', to Bakhtinian heteroglossia, to 'socio-ideological languages', to 'the "social construction of reality" impressed by linguistic categories', to 'legitimate' and other / 'Other' usages, and to people as 'not merely the bearers of taken-for-granted, traditional linguistic categories (...) but also "culture builders"'<sup>61</sup> – is well known for its own textual formal qualities as much as for its annihilating attack on singular textual authority. It is a mobile body of citations from anthropology and theory, broken into poetry-style lineation on the page, and itself taking part in the wordplay and textual aberration it seeks to describe, as in Pred's reference to 'The history of lost wor(l)ds / as the story of transformations',<sup>62</sup> where embedded in one word is the antagonizing relationship between word and world, as neither same nor different (with one containing the other, but neither entirely separate).

The following year, Gunnar Olsson's *Lines of Power / Limits of Language* (1991) brings just as close an attention to language and typography, from the word 'is' ('the epistemological marker par excellence ... a key concept in the vocabulary of power'<sup>63</sup>), to the equals sign of logics, the dash of dialectics, and the hyphen of semiotics, citing Beckett, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé, and the 'original tale of the crisis of the sign'.<sup>64</sup> Olsson also answers a question he had originally set and already confrontationally answered in 1978.<sup>65</sup> Again, he demands, 'Finally: Is this geography? Of course it is! For what is geography, if it is not the drawing and interpretation of lines' – before, somewhat incorrigibly, signing off his citation-rich text with the name 'Mondrian'.<sup>66</sup> Allan Pred's publication *Recognizing European Modernities: A Montage of the Present* (1995) later also experiments with unexpected spatial and linguistic forms in a scholarly venue, building his essay of montaged fragments put in 'significant conjuncture',<sup>67</sup> complete with line breaks, to 'attempt to jolt out of position / by suggesting a totality of fragments, / attempt to destabilize / by way of a stunning

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<sup>59</sup> James Duncan, *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 19

<sup>60</sup> Trevor Barnes and James Duncan, *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 3

<sup>61</sup> Allan Pred, *Lost Words and Lost Worlds: Modernity and the Language of Everyday Life in Late Nineteenth Century Sweden* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 1, 4, 4, 6, 5, 7

<sup>62</sup> Pred, *Lost Words and Lost Worlds*, *ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>63</sup> Gunnar Olsson, *Lines of Power / Limits of Language* (1991), p. 168

<sup>64</sup> Olsson, *Lines of Power*, *ibid.*, p. 179

<sup>65</sup> 'For those who are too afraid to admit that this is geography, the reply is that "The map of the soul's groupography rose in relief within their quarterlings."' Olsson quoting p. 476 of *Finnegans Wake*, in 'Of Ambiguity', *ibid.*, p. 118

<sup>66</sup> Olsson, *Lines of Power*, *ibid.*, p. 181

<sup>67</sup> Allan Pred, *Recognizing European Modernities: A Montage of the Present* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 1995), p.



constellation, / without insisting upon a closure / that does not exist'.<sup>68</sup> The revolutionary rhetoric of such views (and practices) of language by geographers is considered by Michael Curry (1991) in his survey of postmodernism's forerunners and delays in geography at the turn of the 1990s. The relevant question, for Curry, is not how Dear, Olsson, Pred, Reichert and other geographers interact with new attacks on authority, ontology, history, and language, and with non-geographers such as Lyotard and Derrida, but, instead, 'why were (these approaches) so long delayed?'<sup>69</sup> Curry perceptively analyses the role of literary *modernism* in (and as) geographical *postmodernism*, a kind of strange theoretical sluggishness, due in part to the amount of catch-up needed in a field, literary geography, which had been first pioneered by scholars with a strong humanist agenda. Revisiting Wittgenstein's 'language game' (1986), Rorty's language that goes 'all the way down' (1979), and Lyotard (1984), Curry considers the 'unmooring of language from the world' after the crisis of representation in the social sciences, and the effect of this on the geographer's traditional 'aura of the knower'.<sup>70</sup>

An early 90s breakthrough for literary geography came in Daniels and Rycroft's decision (1993) to not treat the materials of geography and the study of the novel as essentially defined and entirely distinct disciplines. The novel, they observe, has since its eighteenth century inception operated as a 'speculative instrument',<sup>71</sup> in the different phases of modern geography, and the ordering of spatial representation according to fixed categories of objective / subjective and real / imaginary is thus a misrepresentation of 'both the worldliness of literary texts and the imaginativeness of geographical texts' as 'a field of textual genres – the novel, the poem, the travel guide, the map, the regional monograph'.<sup>72</sup> Their study of the Nottingham novels by Allan Sillitoe draws from literary scholars of modernism (including Michael Seidel on Joyce's geography (1976) and Malcolm Bradbury on modernist cities (1991)) to explore Sillitoe's textual perspectives on space, including social, local, vernacular, cartographic, aerial, military, and class-based geographies, as well as the trope of the urban jungle or labyrinth. As with Cresswell's paper on Jack Kerouac, also published in *Transactions* two issues earlier that year, this form of research is explicitly involved with the content of the novel and its own form of 'cultural contestation' as greater than simply a 'reflection' of a geographical theme.<sup>73</sup> Marc Brosseau, in his article on John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*, shows how this analysis of themes through novelistic spaces depends on a careful distinction between 'geography *in*

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<sup>68</sup> Allan Pred, *Recognizing European Modernities*, *ibid.*, p. 27

<sup>69</sup> Michael Curry, 'Postmodernism, Language, and the Strains of Modernism', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 81.2 (1991), p. 210

<sup>70</sup> Curry, 'Postmodernism', *ibid.*, p. 217, 223

<sup>71</sup> Stephen Daniels and Simon Rycroft, 'Mapping the modern city: Allan Sillitoe's Nottingham novels', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 18.4 (1993), p. 460

<sup>72</sup> Daniels and Rycroft, 'Mapping the modern city', *ibid.*, p. 461

<sup>73</sup> Tim Cresswell, 'Mobility as resistance: a geographical reading of Kerouac's *On the Road*', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 18.2 (1993), p. 252

the text' and the 'geography of the text'.<sup>74</sup> (This concept is still a rich area in literary geographies, and is sometimes expressed in chiasmatic form, as in Michael Curry's later account of 'the space in the text and the text in space'.<sup>75</sup>) The year following Cresswell's piece, Brosseau's thorough study (1994) of Anglophone and French-speaking geography's literature (on literature) – still usefully cited twenty years later – covers again the slim canon of conversation which I have described above, driving home the point that it was the humanistic geographers' 'rescue' of literary geography in the late 70s and 80s which was to shape the subject matter's limitations over the next twenty years. Neither French structuralists nor writers associated with the wider linguistic turn in the social sciences had a real hand in the first arguments for literary geography within geography. Rather, the subject's first leading lights were set by the humanistic notions of place and perception in Relph, Tuan, and others. Further, Brosseau notes that in fact all three of the framings for geographers' literature (empirical, humanist, and materialist) shared in the same flawed vision of instrumentality:

For some, literature is used as a source of primary or secondary information; for others, to restore the human perspective to the core of geographical investigation; or to destabilize the political or social status quo in search of an imputedly better world. But in all cases we know exactly what to look for, and we find it.<sup>76</sup>

This retreat – or even alienation – from the formal, material, and self-referential qualities of the 'intricate and complex signifying practice called text' must be overcome, Brosseau argues, if geographers are to develop a real dialogic relationship of interdisciplinarity with literary forms, and find alternatives to their 'usual reading practices',<sup>77</sup> and new understandings of the narrative constructions of their own disciplinary objects.

Promisingly, the guest-edited special issue of *GeoJournal* of 1996<sup>78</sup> shows a group of scholars grappling with more complexly diverse understandings of literary geography in a newer versioning of the humanist perspective, including Italian, Latin-American, and European writers and critical directions, as well as the Anglo-American-Canadian channel. Beginning its editorial with a point to the suggestive pertinence of the etymology of geography (as *geo-graphēin*), this collection includes, in particular, a number of works engaging with relative forms and presences of fictionality in literature, including Caviedes' article on Hispanic-American magical realism, Joanne Sharp's article on migrancy and 'imaginative homelands' in Salman Rushdie's fiction, and Lucchesi's article on the

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<sup>74</sup> Marc Brosseau, 'The City in Textual Form: *Manhattan Transfer's* New York', *Cultural Geographies* 2 (1995), p. 95

<sup>75</sup> Michael Curry, *The Work in the World: Geographic Practice and the Written Word* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 175

<sup>76</sup> Marc Brosseau, 'Geography's literature', *ibid.*, p. 347

<sup>77</sup> Marc Brosseau, 'Geography's literature', *ibid.*, p. 349, 349

<sup>78</sup> César Caviedes guest ed., *GeoJournal* 38.1 Special Issue: Geography and Literature (1996)

‘geogram’ and Italian stereotypes of Australian travel. Fabio Lando’s bibliographic survey in particular indicates a (re)turn – in its typology of interests – to a new and improved humanist literary geography, responsive to ‘real and literary’ symbolic overtones and personal, regional, and cultural imaginations as the ‘feelings of a human group with respect to its own space and place’.<sup>79</sup>

At the later end of the decade, a number of geographers step up their writing and publishing on the ubiquity of metaphoric thinking in language and of language in space. Barnes and Gregory’s handbook *Reading Human Geography: The Poetics and Politics of Inquiry* (1997) includes an explicit section on textuality, exploring concepts of semiology, discourse regimes, logocentrism, and metaphor, referring on that last to Richard Rorty’s *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979). The same year, Tim Cresswell explicitly draws attention to the significance of geographic metaphor as ‘inseparable from the way that we live in the world’,<sup>80</sup> reproaching geographers for their only ‘recent’<sup>81</sup> interest in metaphor.<sup>82</sup> At the time of Cresswell’s writing, the scholarship and philosophy of metaphor was already well beyond its adolescence (with Lakoff and Johnson’s *Metaphors We Live By*, for instance, having been published a full seventeen years earlier). He gives a short history of objectivist, interactionist, and antifoundationalist accounts of metaphor, including literary scholars, linguists, and philosophers, such as Jakobson, Black, Lodge, Lakoff and Johnson, and Rorty, as well as references to classic uses of metaphor by geographers such as Anne Buttimer.<sup>83</sup> He argues for metaphor’s foundational importance in cultural geography, being an act of both constitution *and* naturalization of spatial regimes. ‘Power, at least in part, involves the ability to impose metaphors on others’, he notes, arguing that it is the discipline’s very home concern to be (self) aware of the crucial ‘geographically loaded’ metaphors of what, and who, belong where.<sup>84</sup> Tellingly, Crang and Thrift, in their millennial survey volume on *Thinking Space* (2000), not only present the concept of space as the radical everywhere of contemporary thought (‘an all-purpose nostrum’<sup>85</sup>), but introduce it through its ever-present companion, language: ‘Thinking space occurs through the medium of language ... texts are worldly and worlds textual ... not only is space seen as linguistic but language is seen as spatial.’<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Fabio Lando, ‘Fact and fiction: Geography and literature: A bibliographic survey’, *GeoJournal* 38.1 Geography and Literature (1996), p. 3

<sup>80</sup> Tim Cresswell, ‘Weeds, Plagues, and Bodily Secretions: A Geographic Interpretation of Metaphors of Displacement’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87.2 (1997), p. 330

<sup>81</sup> Cresswell, ‘Weeds, Plagues, and Bodily Secretions’, *ibid.*, p. 330

<sup>82</sup> As evidenced by Barnes and Duncan, *Writing Worlds*, *ibid.*; Patricia Price-Chalita, ‘Spatial Metaphor and the Politics of Empowerment: Mapping a Place for Feminism and Postmodernism in Geography’, *Antipode* 26.3 (1994); David Demeritt, ‘The Nature of Metaphors in Cultural Geography and Environmental History’, *Progress in Human Geography* 18.2 (1994)

<sup>83</sup> See Anne Buttimer, ‘Musing on Helicon: Root Metaphors and Geography’, *Geoscience and Man* 24 (1982); for an account of the importance of shifts in landscape metaphor, see Cosgrove and Daniels, ‘Spectacle and Text: Landscape Metaphors in Cultural Geography’, *ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Cresswell, ‘Weeds’, *ibid.*, p. 333, 343, 334

<sup>85</sup> Philip Crang and Nigel Thrift, *Thinking Space* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 1

<sup>86</sup> Crang and Thrift, *Thinking Space*, *ibid.*, p. 4

It could be said, following the timeline above, that the twentieth century timeline saw a relatively blinkered approach in the narrowness of the questions of the relative worldliness and wordiness of worlds and texts. Yet a number of critics were considering dimensions of textual space through other ‘philosophies of fictionality’ and ‘possible world theories’ (Lubomír Doležel, 1988, 1998<sup>87</sup>), ‘fantastic interfaces’<sup>88</sup> of literature, ‘extra-territorial’ writings aware of the broken contract of word and world,<sup>89</sup> and ‘fictional worlds’ in different guises.<sup>90</sup> In the twenty-first century, some of these ventures into unworldly fiction are re-gathered with more explicit force. A short article by Joanne Sharp in *Area* (2000) analyses the recreated and recreational worlds of ‘fictive geographies’ as presented by Umberto Eco (*Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, 1994) and by Roland Barthes (*Empire of Signs*, 1987), exploring the distorted forms which exist between the fictitious and the verisimilar.<sup>91</sup> Later, Fraser Macdonald was to call for new ‘orbits’ of critical geography in the space-travelling age,<sup>92</sup> followed by Denis Cosgrove’s chapter on evolving cosmological visions in culture and ‘extra-terrestrial’ geography.<sup>93</sup> Changing ways of knowing the planet and space had been creating, in the late twentieth century, new conditions for thinking about fictive and cognitive types of textual space. In the introduction to *Lost in Space: Geographies of Science Fiction* (2002), editors Rob Kitchin and James Kneale explain some of the divisions between generic and anti-generic modes of the ‘extrapolative’ and ‘speculative’ worlds of actual science fiction, discussing how the former – as in Todorov’s depiction of the science fiction ‘marvellous’<sup>94</sup> – offers a geocentric logic in which new imaginary spaces can be explored as ‘only (...) distorted echoes of our own’.<sup>95</sup> Against this they consider models of science fiction as essentially non-realist ‘fiction squared’, as a literature of ‘cognitive estrangement’, and as partaking of a ‘fantastic discourse’ characterised by ‘polysemic’ and ‘antinomical’ narrative forms.<sup>96</sup> These issues related to reading literature according to polarised models of fact and fiction are as relevant to “place writing” as to science fiction. In Kneale’s practical entry on reading novels as geographical research in *Cultural Geography in Practice* (2003) a year later he again raises some key dangers of utilitarian textual reading, including reference to some of the

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<sup>87</sup> Lubomír Doležel, ‘Possible Worlds and Literary Fictions’, in Allén Sture ed., *Possible Worlds in Humanities, Arts and Sciences: Proceedings of Nobel Symposium 65* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), p. 222. See also Lubomír Doležel, ‘Possible Worlds of Fiction and History’, *New Literary History* 29.4 (1998)

<sup>88</sup> Jose Lista Noya, ‘Mapping the “Unmappable”: Inhabiting the Fantastic Interface of Gravity’s Rainbow’, *Studies in the Novel* 29 (1997)

<sup>89</sup> George Steiner, *Extraterritorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1971)

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Pavel, *Fictional Worlds* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986)

<sup>91</sup> Joanne Sharp, ‘Towards a critical analysis of fictive geographies’, *Area* 32.3 (2000)

<sup>92</sup> Fraser MacDonald, ‘Anti-Astropolitik – Outer Space and the Orbit of Geography’, *Progress in Human Geography* 31.5 (2007)

<sup>93</sup> Denis Cosgrove, *Geography and Vision* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), particularly chapter 1 and 2.

<sup>94</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (NY: Cornell University Press, 1973)

<sup>95</sup> Rob Kitchin and James Kneale eds., *Lost in Space: Geographies of Science Fiction* (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 11

<sup>96</sup> Kitchin and Kneale, *Lost in Space*, *ibid.*, p. 4-5, referring to Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen, 1986)

models of reading by geographers covered above, and draws particular attention to the textual uncertainty of non-mimetic fictions, with which, he avers, ‘we can do more than just measure the difference between the author’s world and their secondary creations’.<sup>97</sup>

In the last decade, literary geography by geographers has become increasingly voluminous. A special issue of *New Formations* in 2005/6m evolved from the 2004 RGS panel ‘Textual Spaces, Spatial Texts’, explicitly considered ‘The Spatial Imaginary’ from different disciplinary angles, and is valuable here for its conjunction of geographers and literary critics.<sup>98</sup> Andrew Thacker, in his included survey of literary geography, deals with the perspective of ‘what literary and cultural critics can learn from a fuller engagement with theorists of space and geography, rather than the reverse.’<sup>99</sup> He outlines four recognisable strategies for literary studies working after spatial theory:<sup>100</sup> a concern with the implication of metaphorical and material spaces; a concern for the representational spaces of cultural texts within social history; a devotion to the formal properties and spatial features of a material text; and the new lenses applied by theory to cartographic thinking and thus textual cartographies. In (geographer) Miles Ogborn’s short response to Thacker’s and other articles, included at the end of the special issue, he too offers a four-part countdown of approaches to ‘words and their geographies’.<sup>101</sup> Firstly, he presents the treatment of both spaces and texts as cultural productions, meaning ‘neither (...) can be the *a priori* basis for the other’;<sup>102</sup> secondly, he observes shared ground between spatial and textual forms in aesthetics or rhetorical forms (for instance, a shared urban imaginary); thirdly, the study of material forms of words and books in a ‘sociology of texts’; and fourthly, emerging work on the reading of texts as a spatial performance in its own right, and so an expanded understanding of textual ‘spatial practices’. On Ogborn’s two latter points he relies on Cavell’s work on a new history of the book through electronic texts and technological spaces, *McLuhan in Space: A Cultural Geography* (2002). Meanwhile, Ogborn’s fourth topic – on the spatial practices of text – finds an advocate later in Sheila Hones’ 2008 article, ‘Text as It Happens: Literary Geography’, which aims to provoke an ‘explicitly spatial view of (...) the writing-reading nexus’.<sup>103</sup> Hones draws on previous histories of the book in arguing for fuller analyses of ‘text-as-event’ – and, crucially, as geographical event, happening at the ‘intersection of agents’ and performative contexts.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> James Kneale, ‘Secondary worlds: Reading novels as geographical research’, in Alison Blunt et al. eds., *Cultural Geography in Practice* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 47

<sup>98</sup> Richard Phillips and Scott McCracken eds., *New Formations* 57: The Spatial Imaginary (2005/6)

<sup>99</sup> Andrew Thacker, ‘The Idea of a Critical Literary Geography’, *New Formations* 57 The Spatial Imaginary (2005/6), p. 56

<sup>100</sup> See Julian Murphet, ‘Grounding Theory: Literary Theory and the New Geography’, in McQuillan, Macdonald, Purves and Thomson eds., *Post-Theory: New Directions in Criticism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999)

<sup>101</sup> Miles Ogborn, ‘Mapping Words’, *New Formations* 57 The Spatial Imaginary (2005/6), p. 145

<sup>102</sup> Ogborn, ‘Mapping Words’, *ibid.*, p. 146

<sup>103</sup> Sheila Hones, ‘Text as It Happens: Literary Geography’, *Geography Compass* 2.5 (2008), p. 1302

<sup>104</sup> Hones, ‘Text as It Happens’, *ibid.*, p. 1302

The ambitiousness of contemporary literary geography is seen in the flourishing of these emerging interdisciplinary interactions – what Hones refers to as the adventurous publishing needed for literary geography, if it intends its two key terms to refer to the disciplines, rather than just borrowed subject matter.<sup>105</sup> This thesis takes place within a dawning interdisciplinary climate for literary geography, in which a journal of philological criticism such as *Anglia* can release a special issue (2008) on new cultural geography, with literary articles by geographers such as Mike Crang (writing on Joyce and Austen) and Marc Brosseau (writing on Bukowski),<sup>106</sup> and in which two geographers can release articles in well-read journals aimed at the public pedagogies of geography through poetry.<sup>107</sup> In Jones' introduction to the *Anglia* issue, she observes the irony of the long-lasting 'lack of emphasis on writing in the very discipline known as earth-writing',<sup>108</sup> particularly considering this same cultural geography's close relationship to postmodernism, textualised anthropology, and the "bonfire of the certainties"<sup>109</sup> in the representation of knowledge; she also calls for more interdisciplinary crossing points which break out of long-established stereotypes. Angharad Saunders' report of the following year on the moving horizons of literary geography adds a warning to this call: that without the additional consideration of 'some of the more recent and incisive texts (...) from literary studies'<sup>110</sup> on the topic, the 'resilience of geography's literary imagination'<sup>111</sup> may still fail to assert itself. By drawing on a widening circle of sources, including literary critical sources such as Culler's *Structuralist Poetics* (2002), Saunders advises the practitioners of future geography to contribute 'forcefully'<sup>112</sup> to debates around textual form and aesthetics and practices and dissemination, rather than just work in the background of broader issues of textuality (in, for instance, the textuality of landscape).

At time of writing and submitting this thesis, the field of literary geography now has a dedicated open access blog, *Literary Geographies*, founded by Sheila Hones and James Kneale in 2012. Aware of the weight of what is now a growing mainstream in literary geographies, the blog includes resource bibliographies arranged thematically, with several variant literary geographies and emerging areas (offering alternatives to the focus, for instance, on the nineteenth century realist novel and modernist city novel), particularly graphic fiction, poetry, and French language work. The project has very

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<sup>105</sup> Hones, 'Text as It Happens', *ibid.*, p. 1311

<sup>106</sup> Elizabeth Jones guest ed., *Anglia* 126.2 Special Issue: Literature and the New Cultural Geography (2008)

<sup>107</sup> Daniel Donaldson, 'Teaching Geography's four traditions with Poetry', *Journal of Geography* 100.1 (2001); Hayden Lorimer, 'Poetry and Place: The Shape of Words', part of Eleanor Rawling's 'Poetry and place' spotlight (also including a section by the poet Owen Sheers), *Geography* 93.3 (2008)

<sup>108</sup> Elizabeth Jones, 'Literature and the New Cultural Geography', *Anglia* 126.2 Special Issue: Literature and the New Cultural Geography (2008), p. 223

<sup>109</sup> Denis Cosgrove and Mona Domosh, 'Author and Authority', in Duncan and Ley, *Place/Culture/Representation*, *ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>110</sup> Angharad Saunders, 'Literary Geography: Reforging the Connections', *Progress in Human Geography* 34 (2010), p. 436

<sup>111</sup> Saunders, 'Literary Geography', *ibid.*, p. 436

<sup>112</sup> Saunders, 'Literary Geography', *ibid.*, p. 436

recently also launched its peer-reviewed e-journal, *Literary Geographies*,<sup>113</sup> which aims to cover a wider selection of academic and disciplinary traditions. In a deliberate tie-in, the journal *Society and Space* released its own online virtual theme issue late in 2012, edited by Stuart Elden, which re-gathered (and offered open access to) articles from the journal's own history, as well as a wider selection of key and lesser-known articles from 1990 onwards. In Elden's brief editorial, he argues for the importance of current work taking four perspectives on the interrelations between geography and literature: postcolonialism, feminism, poetry, and politicised literary geography.<sup>114</sup> Elden's power to the elbow of literary geographers working outside of existing bands of the field and its more practiced dialogues (including those working outside of academic institutions) is part of a wider publishing landscape which has also given rise to interdisciplinary series such as Rodopi's 'Spatial Practices' ('An Interdisciplinary Series in Cultural History, Geography, and Literature') – in particular its volume *Process: Landscape and Text* (2010), edited by Catherine Brace and Adeline Johns-Putra and including geographers alongside literary eco-critics – and, recently, the two mammoth books on geohumanities edited by interdisciplinary groups of scholars, *GeoHumanities: Art, History, Text at the Edge of Place*, and *Envisioning Landscapes, Making Worlds: Geography and the Humanities*.<sup>115</sup>

There are, of course, wider arcs of the story of literary geography within geography. Any presentation of geography's involvement with literature as radically *new* belies the foundational histories of geographical ideas before the divided age of the modern academy. Historically-minded geographers and literary critics have long been well aware of these mutually constitutive conceptual pasts: as Robert Mayhew notes, 'Looking at literature has often been portrayed as geography roaming outside its realm for relevant insights, but as should be clear now, the opposite is the case for any contextual study of the geographical tradition prior to the last century'.<sup>116</sup> The role of the book, travelogues, and printing culture in the formation of scientific and geographical knowledge is well established;<sup>117</sup> and yet such interrelations have been kept away from the 'novel' literary geographies which have been most explicitly billed as a topic of post-1970s cultural geography, as covered above. Miles Ogborn and Charles Withers begin their hefty study of the geographies of the book (2010) by observing that 'the geography of the book is as old as the book (...) Yet it can also be said to be still defining what it

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<sup>113</sup> See <<http://www.literarygeographies.net/index.php/LitGeogs>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>114</sup> Stuart Elden ed., *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* Literary Geographies – Virtual Theme Issue (2012): <<http://societyandspace.com/2012/09/26/literary-geographie/>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>115</sup> Dear, Ketchum, Luria, and Richardson eds., *Geohumanities: Art, History, Text at the Edge of Place* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Daniels et al eds., *Envisioning Landscapes, Making Worlds: Geography and the Humanities* (London: Routledge, 2011)

<sup>116</sup> Robert Mayhew, *Geography and Literature in Historical Context: Samuel Johnson and Eighteenth-century English Conceptions of Geography* (University of Oxford: School of Geography, 1997), p. 7. See also Mayhew, *Landscape, Literature and English Religious Culture, 1660-1800: Samuel Johnson and Languages of Natural Description* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)

<sup>117</sup> See Douglas Chambers, particularly the section titled 'The Geographical Part of Knowledge', *The Reinvention of the World: English Writing 1650-1750* (London: Arnold, 1996)

might become'.<sup>118</sup> Part of this is an explicit symptom of the self-styling of kinds of contemporary interdisciplinary encounter with text by the 'new' cultural geographers. In the three decade conversation recounted here, references to the long-rooted importance of literary geography (pre-dating William Sharp's 1904 *Literary Geography*) were, at first, rare. But the dominance of a particular fashioning of literary geographies as "novel", and fit for one particular purpose or other, is perhaps retreating. Marc Brosseau's tracking of Anglophone and French-speaking geography, for instance, afforded several pages on the travelogue and French historical geographers and historians of philosophical geography, while the multiply edited collections of this decade have also tended towards the intent to make visible wider circuits of scholarly values. Countering the fashion for newness, there has also been a significant 'mopping up' of history in the cultural-geography-with-hindsight approach to historical figures.<sup>119</sup>

What the mainstream critical history above demonstrates is an important evolution in the perceived meanings of literary-geographical exchange. These began with a clear discrepancy between the (uses of) texts, geographers, and creative writers – as in work by Tuan, Pocock, and Noble and Dhussa – a division relying on some formidable stereotypes of each discipline, which then proved to have a long staying power, in spite of the contemporaneous richness of work on the textuality of space and the artificiality of the academic 'two cultures' idea. This reified literature-geography division has been broken away bit by bit over the last three decades by several forms of action: the postmodern wordplay of geographers like Allan Pred; arguments showing the mixing textual genres of literature and geography (as with Daniels and Rycroft's article); and self-reflecting practice by geographers – such as Matless' work on the textual conventions of landscape historians (2008),<sup>120</sup> John Wylie's geographical-come-creative writings on the personal experience of landscapes,<sup>121</sup> and, most recently, the gathering of eleven geographers in *Society in Space* in 2011, each commenting individually on the influence of fiction's imaginary geographies on their own academic writing.<sup>122</sup> These exchanges of disciplinary practice are also affected by the over-arching rationales of modern interdisciplinarity (as broached in this thesis's appendix); through them, identities are now crossing the barriers to such an

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<sup>118</sup> Miles Ogborn and Charles Withers, *Geographies of the Book* (London: Ashgate, 2010), p. 1. See also Innes Keighren, 'Bringing Geography to the Book: Charting the Reception of *Influences of Geographic Environment*', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 31 (2006)

<sup>119</sup> In publications such as John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Kathryn Lynch ed., *Chaucer's Cultural Geography* (London: Routledge, 2002), and Stuart Elden's work on political geography and Beowulf (2009), and Stuart Elden, 'Place Symbolism and Land Politics in Beowulf', *Cultural Geographies* 16.4 (2009)

<sup>120</sup> David Matless, 'Writing English Landscape History', *Anglia* 126.2 Special Issue: Literature and the New Cultural Geography (2008)

<sup>121</sup> See John Wylie, 'A single day's walking: narrating self and landscape on the South West Coast Path', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30.2 (2005)

<sup>122</sup> Olsson et al., 'Fictional Worlds', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29 (2011)



extent that some critics have even begun to suggest that a text ‘may constitute a “geographer” in its own right’.<sup>123</sup>

The opening up of the sub-discipline of literary geographies, described above, provides breathing room for this thesis to draw widely on both disciplines in analysing the importance of the language of the coast and the forest in poetry. These two fairly domesticated British landscapes will be held up as prisms where we can track both cultural geography’s ongoing interrogation of the production and consumption of environmental meaning and of ‘landscape-as-text’, and the wider linguistic and philosophical provocations of postmodernism and deconstruction as they relate to innovative poetry.

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<sup>123</sup> Brosseau, ‘Geography’s Literature’, *ibid.*, p. 349

‘What we hope to call “land”’: contemporary poets and geography

The relationship between modern British poetry and its geographical worlds has been the subject of flourishing critical attention in the twenty first century. Various unofficial groupings and canons of geographically-concerned writers and poems have been suggested, corresponding to different critical slogans, from Jeremy Hooker’s ‘poetry of place’,<sup>1</sup> to John Kerrigan’s adoption of ‘earth writing’,<sup>2</sup> to Pierre Joris’s language-crossing ‘nomad poetics’.<sup>3</sup> Notably, arguments using the critical lens of geography have been equally vocal around conservative readings of ‘autochthonic’, location-based poetries, as in Hooker’s work,<sup>4</sup> and, contrarily, the ‘radical’ spaces of ‘alternative poetries’,<sup>5</sup> as in Ian Davidson’s two critical volumes and in Harriet Tarlo’s ‘radical landscape poetry’.<sup>6</sup> The sites under analysis range from the natural spaces of human and cultural exploitation – which come to the fore in Terry Gifford’s ‘post-pastoral’,<sup>7</sup> exemplified for Gifford by the poetry of Ted Hughes, and the ‘radical pastoral’ written on significantly by the Australian poet and critic John Kinsella<sup>8</sup> – to the modern urban displacements assessed by Peter Barry in *Contemporary British Poetry and the City* (2000), including poets such as Iain Sinclair and Roy Fisher (whose *Birmingham River* gave cultural

<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Hooker, *The Poetry of Place: Essays and Reviews 1970-1981* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1982)

<sup>2</sup> John Kerrigan, ‘Earth Writing: Seamus Heaney and Ciaran Carson’, *Essays in Criticism* XLVIII 2 (1998)

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Joris, *A Nomad Poetics: Essays* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2003). See also Joris’s blog, *Nomadics*, at <<http://www.pierrejoris.com/blog/>> (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>4</sup> Jeremy Hooker draws on the concept of ‘autochthonic’ in *The Presence of the Past: Essays on Modern British and American Poetry* (Bridgend: Poetry Wales Press, 1987); its Greek etymology suggests the meaning ‘of one’s own soil’, with ‘chthonic’ drawn from ‘subterranean’ or ‘of the underworld’. See Andrew Duncan’s discussion of Jeremy Hooker and ‘down to earth’ poetry in *Centre and Periphery in Modern British Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), from p. 24. What he terms ‘the regionalist poetic ideology’ refers to poems which ‘follow a few well-known and convergent paths: centring poems on continuity, ancestry, culture and identity, on landscape, family, objects, ethnicity, roots, religion, and so on’ (p. 23). Playing off the Nazi ‘Blood and Soil’, he refers to these poems by the mnemonic ‘Blood Sod Spades God’ (p. 23).

<sup>5</sup> Ian Davidson, *Radical Spaces of Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 1

<sup>6</sup> Harriet Tarlo ed., *The Ground Aslant: An Anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2011)

<sup>7</sup> Terry Gifford, *Green Voices: Understanding Contemporary Nature Poetry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 121. See also Terry Gifford, *Pastoral* (London: Routledge, 1999), particularly the chapter ‘Post-pastoral’, and Alice Entwistle, ‘Post-pastoral perspectives on landscape and culture’, in Jane Dowson ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century British and Irish Women’s Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> John Kinsella, *Contrary Rhetoric: Lectures on Landscape and Language* (Western Australia: Fremantle Press, 2008)

geography-themed poetry a slogan with one sequence's opening line, 'Birmingham's what I think with'<sup>9</sup>).

There is no question anymore that writing can be simply linked to one location or other. As Rebecca Gould has observed in her article on 'topographies of anti-colonialism', the geographic provincialism of eco-critical inquiry (and other place-based orientations) diverges from postcolonial theory's diasporic situation; this splits critical desires between a focus on 'individual nations' literary histories'<sup>10</sup> and the multi-cultural concerns of, and in, globalization. The texts which this thesis considers are, in one way or other, British productions, chosen for their interactions with the British coast and the British forest as prismatic sites of cultural history and literary geography. But they are also arrayed in a complex field of encounter, involving influences from European spatial theory, American geographical poetry, and different versions of British literary ancestorship. They are prey to a number of complications; the postmodern spatiality of text explored in books such as Nedra Reynold's *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference* (2004); the transnational trajectories of innovative writing in oppositional, non-institutionalized groupings, as exemplified in Romana Huk's *Assembling Alternatives: Reading Postmodern Poetries Transnationally* (2003), and the braided histories of Britain itself as a literary site related to (rhetorical and constructed) discourses of nation.

In the most recent (and most heavyweight) large-scale critical collection of essays on contemporary British poetry, the turbulence of the relationship between literature, place, and national identity is clearly flagged as an important object of ongoing modern enquiry. Peter Robinson's edited *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* (2013) includes two large sections, 'Poetry in Places' and 'Border Crossings', which test British poetry's relationship to devolved histories and specific intra-national contexts as well as different versions of 'transit' in identity, via topics including the varieties of English across the islands, Northern dialect, Welsh and Irish gendered cultural positionings of "home", multi-ethnic poetries, and the reception of Scottish poetry abroad.<sup>11</sup> As important as locating ones poets in territories, evidently, is the acknowledgement of these territories as hybrid and unsettled; as places of colonial migrations and myths, a post-modernist plurality of voices, and the difficult meanings of 'here' or 'home'.

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<sup>9</sup> This statement is the opening line of Fisher's 'Six Texts for a Film' in *Birmingham River* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), and also used as the opening line of the poet Tom Pickard's 1999 documentary film piece *Birmingham's What I Think With*. John Kerrigan writes on Fisher's conceptual resistance to traditional loco-descriptive approaches in 'Roy Fisher on Location', in Kerrigan and Robinson eds., *The Thing About Roy Fisher: Critical Studies* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000); this is also the topic of Kerrigan's interview with Roy Fisher, 'Come to Think of It, the Imagination', in Robert Sheppard and Peter Robinson eds., *News for the Ear: A Homage to Roy Fisher* (Exeter: Stride Publications, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 16

<sup>11</sup> Peter Robinson ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Within the modern study of British poetry, a number of vital books by scholars such as Crawford, Tuma, Easthope, Ingelbien, Esty, Jarvis, Alexander, Stroh, and Davies<sup>12</sup> have interrogated expressions of forms of nationhood, territory, and identity, from ‘the failure of Englishness’ as empiricist ideal in Modernist poetry,<sup>13</sup> to the modes of marginality and contextual ‘discontents’<sup>14</sup> of different movements of British poetry writing. The discordant and decolonized (and economically contracted) spaces of modern Britain have also been written of, increasingly, in terms of border crossings and peripheries, including in Andrew Duncan’s *Centre and Periphery in Modern British Poetry* (2005), and several major edited collections published since the 1990s.<sup>15</sup> These make up part of the wider research turn towards a more archipelagic and less nation focused New British History,<sup>16</sup> awake to the ‘interactive perplexities’<sup>17</sup> of literary Britishness. As we now wait for the impact of the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence, the need for – and force of – research endeavours around the postcolonial rhetoric of nation (and alter-nation),<sup>18</sup> such as the Devolved Voices poetry project based in

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<sup>12</sup> Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Robert Crawford, *Identifying Poets: Self and Territory in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993); Keith Tuma, *Fishing by Obstinate Isles: Modern and Postmodern British Poetry and American Readers* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1998); Anthony Easthope, *Englishness and National Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999); Raphaël Ingelbien, *Misreading England: Poetry and Nationhood Since the Second World War* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002); Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004); Matthew Jarvis, *Welsh Environments in Contemporary Poetry* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008); Neal Alexander, *Ciaran Carson: Space, Place, Writing* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010); Silke Stroh, *Uneasy Subjects: Postcolonialism and Scottish Gaelic Poetry* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011); Damian Walford Davies, *Cartographies of Culture: New Geographies of Welsh Writing in English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Anthony Easthope, ‘Donald Davie and the Failure of Englishness’, in James Acheson and Romana Huk eds., *Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 17. On this topic of modernist conservative Britain, see also Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), and Helen Bailey, ‘A Re-Examination of the ‘Poetry Divide’ in 1970s Britain’, in Peter Robinson ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Robert Sheppard, *The Poetry of Saying: British Poetry and Its Discontents, 1950 – 2000* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005)

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Duncan, *Centre and Periphery in Modern British Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005); Hans-Werner Ludwig and Lothar Fietz eds., *Poetry in the British Isles: Non-Metropolitan Perspectives* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995); Tony Brown and Russell Stevens eds., *Nations and Relations: Writing Across the British Isles* (Cardiff: New Welsh Review, 2000); Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth, *Across the Margins: Cultural Identity and Change in the Atlantic Archipelago* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Elmer Kennedy-Andrews, *Writing Home: Poetry and Place in Northern Ireland, 1968-2008* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008); Colin Younger ed., *Border Crossings: Narration, Nation and Imagination in Scots and Irish Literature and Culture* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Since J. G. A. Pocock’s call for a New British History in 1975, various historians have revised the idea of Britain as a cohesive artefact, in texts such as Hugh Kearney’s *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) and Raphael Samuel’s *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain (Theatre of Memory Vol II)* (London: Verso, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> John Kerrigan, ‘Orrery’s Ireland and the British problem, 1641-1679’, in David Baker and Willey Maley eds., *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 198

<sup>18</sup> In particular, see Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990); the literary example of France is given by Timothy Hampton in *Literature and Nation in the Sixteenth Century: Inventing Renaissance France* (New York: Cornell, 2001). See also Stuart Murray ed., *Not On Any Map: Essays on Postcoloniality and Cultural Nationalism* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997)

Aberystwyth, becomes only more evident.<sup>19</sup> Modern discussions of a “Disunited Kingdom” are echoed in publishing projects such as the New Garland anthology *Other Voices*, which draws poems together to explore the shades of linguistic variation in the British Isles (including Katrina Porteous’ poem in Northumbrian dialect related to the splicing of rope for fishing).<sup>20</sup> The disintegration and rearrangement of forms of national and cultural identity are, interestingly, evident in both those texts, like some of Porteous’, which have been termed contemporary ‘neo-regionalist poetry’<sup>21</sup> (or, in Andrew Duncan’s shorthand, poems of ‘Blood Sod Spades God’<sup>22</sup>), and also those contrasting poetries which are responsive to the nomadic geographies of Anglo-American modernism<sup>23</sup> or a more postmodern poetics of place.<sup>24</sup>

The British landscape, as contested locus, is the outer limit of this thesis’s study, rather than its subject core: the texts I present are not, in their groupings, designed to give a full survey of Britain as a literary landscape. This would be foolhardy, particularly given the sheer breadth of cultural interpretations of the two sites considered, between, for instance, the adherence to Scotland’s Caledonian Forest Fallacy in some publications, which bemoan the loss of a former glorious woodland,<sup>25</sup> and, conversely, the fierceness of anti-afforestation perspectives in some of the Welsh poems, which bitterly resent the coniferous landscape, and the colonial aspects of a ‘world that has gone sour / with spruce’ (R. S. Thomas).<sup>26</sup> As a whole, however, the thesis has aimed to be sensitive to the nature of Britain as a multiple ‘kingdom of our own language’,<sup>27</sup> in general accord with new historical approaches.<sup>28</sup> (As the poet Alan Halsey has observed, ‘Where I live is language – my first

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<sup>19</sup> The web page for this Leverhulme funded project is at <<http://wordpress.aber.ac.uk/devolvedvoices/>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>20</sup> Shirley Toulson and Rosemary Grant eds., *Other Voices 1840-1940: An Anthology* (Essex: Happy Dragons’ Press, 2010). This Katrina Porteous poem, ‘Splicing Rope’, is on p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> This term was used by M. L. Rosenthal and Sally Gall in *The Modern Poetic Sequence: The Genius of Modern Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 273; see also David Lloyd’s discussion of it in his essay ‘Poetry in Post-War Britain: The Two Generations’, which considers linguistic violence, broken speech, and the various dialects of Britain, as tackled by the different poetry groupings – including Jeremy Hooker as a model of the neo-regionalist; in C. C. Barfoot ed., *In Black and Gold: Contiguous Traditions in Post-War British and Irish Poetry* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994)

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Duncan, *Centre and Periphery in Modern British Poetry*, *ibid.*, p. 23

<sup>23</sup> Giovanni Cianci, Caroline Patey, and Sara Sulla eds., *Transits: The Nomadic Geographies of Anglo-American Modernism* (Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2010)

<sup>24</sup> Eric Prieto, *Literature, Geography, and the Postmodern Poetics of Place* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012)

<sup>25</sup> herman de vries’ artist’s book *In Memory of the Scottish Forests* (France: Centre des livres d’artistes, 2007) is one example, designed to be read as a funeral book.

<sup>26</sup> R. S. Thomas, *The Bread of Truth* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), p. 17. Matthew Jarvis’s foreword on conifers in *Welsh Environments in Contemporary Poetry* (*ibid.*, p. 3-5) explicitly uses this poem to consider the crossed colonial associations of the Welsh forest Coed y Brenin.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Helgerson has titled his introduction ‘The Kingdom of Our Own Language’, quoting from Edmund Spenser’s discussions with Gabriel Harvey.

<sup>28</sup> See Helgerson, *ibid.*, and also Claire McEachern, *The Poetics of English Nationhood, 1590-1612* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

reality. Before I live in Nether Edge, I live in language.<sup>29</sup>) The issues of the geographical emplacement of the literary heritage of Britain – as written on by Watson (2006) and Zemgulys (2008),<sup>30</sup> as well as in critical studies of concepts of British locality (shire, region, county) in the periods prior to mine, by Wade and Radford<sup>31</sup> – have become in the last few years bound up again in new brands of neo-romantic writing. These contemporary writings often focus on a re-exhuming (or ‘re-enchanting’<sup>32</sup>) of place, and a conservative invocation of *genius loci* (‘spirit of place’); David Wheatley has shrewdly drawn attention, for instance, to the former Tory Secretary of State for Education Kenneth Baker’s *Faber Book of Landscape Poetry* (2000), which ‘came decked out in endpapers mapping its poets onto the landscape’.<sup>33</sup> The historical conservative dilemma of place in literature<sup>34</sup> returns in full force in such contemporary regimes of loco-descriptive writing, most visibly in the British library’s recent large scale exhibition *Writing Britain: Wastelands to Wonderlands* (2012), which drew strongly on place-bound traditions of chorography and literatouristical illustration, as well as reinforcing and celebrating certain models of conservative (topo-biographical) belonging.<sup>35</sup> What is left out of these accounts? Firstly, the fact that contemporary literary Britain is also a landscape of non-locals and dis-location. For every *A Writer’s Britain* (1979) or *A Poet’s Guide to Britain* (2010) is a book like Stan Smith’s *Poetry & Displacement* (2007).<sup>36</sup> For every volume of poems like Donald Davie’s *The Shires* (1974)<sup>37</sup> is one responsive to the ‘dislocating country’ of

<sup>29</sup> Alan Halsey, interview with David Annwyn, 25/03/08, quoted in online review at <<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/readings/issues/issue4/annwnonalanhalsey>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>30</sup> Nicola J. Watson, *The Literary Tourist: Readers and Places in Romantic and Victorian Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Andrea Zemgulys, *Modernism and the Locations of Literary Heritage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Wade, *Region and Belonging in British Writing, 1840-1970* (Connecticut: Praeger, 2002); Andrew Radford, *Mapping the Wessex Novel: Landscape, History and the Parochial in British Literature, 1870-1940* (London: Continuum, 2010).

<sup>32</sup> See Gareth Evans and Di Robson eds., *Towards Re-enchantment: Place and Its Meanings* (London: Artevents, 2010)

<sup>33</sup> David Wheatley, ‘David Wheatley reviews *Edgelands: Journeys into England’s True Wilderness* and *The Ground Aslant: An Anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry*’, online at Tower Poetry: <<http://www.towerpoetry.org.uk/poetry-matters/poetry/poetry-archive/465-david-wheatley-reviews-edgelands-journeys-into-englands-true-wilderness-by-paul-farley-and-michael-symmons-roberts-and-the-ground-aslant-an-anthology-of-radical-landscape-poetry-edited-by-harriet-tarlo>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>34</sup> Robert Dainotto has outlined its risks, noting that ‘getting back to place’ in literature has led to a negation of historical forces and tensions, so much that ‘Place is fundamentally a negation of history’. Robert M. Dainotto, *Place in Literature: Regions, Cultures, Communities* (New York: Cornell, 2000), p. 2. See also Roger Ebbatson, *An Imaginary England: Nation, Landscape and Literature, 1840-1920* (London: Ashgate, 2005); Peter Brown and Michael Irwin eds., *Literature & Place 1800-2000* (Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2006); John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

<sup>35</sup> For an account of these geographical logics in the exhibition and their relation with early modern literary genres of place-writing, see Amy Cutler, ‘A local habitation and a name’: *Writing Britain*, *Journal of Historical Geography* 39 (2013)

<sup>36</sup> Stan Smith, *Poetry and Displacement* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007)

<sup>37</sup> Donald Davies, *The Shires* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1974). This volume is described by Helen Bailey as ‘a nostalgic response to the 1972 Local Government act which abolished the traditional county

poetry,<sup>38</sup> or its ‘ex-centricity’,<sup>39</sup> as in Duncan’s poem quoted at the beginning of this section, which depicts the British coastline as a set of ‘Linguistic waves’ of ‘ethnicity as *mispronunciations*’.<sup>40</sup> The poets with whom this thesis engages are explicitly experimenting with ideas of linguistic diversions in language (Haslam: ‘Blemish is the native tongue / I speak in song / ... / and write ways wrongly wrought’), the fracturing of global geography into linguistic dissonance (Gaffield: ‘A blue orb fractures, / unfamiliar tongue / cleaving, wanting / to sing a song / in a strange land’), or, as in coastal and shoreline language, the explicit ‘primary difference of context (for) visitor/immigrant – or ‘blow-in’ as Suffolk has it’.<sup>41</sup> What draws them together with the work in cultural geography is their correspondence with that discipline’s awareness of the co-constitution of place and its rhetoric – as in Duncan’s chiasmatic reference to ‘the myth that is told by the Nation, / ... / the myth that tells the nation’.<sup>42</sup> Instead, these poems deliberately involve themselves in ‘contrary rhetoric’.<sup>43</sup> This cultural geography context is visible in the evident concerns for models of ex-centric language in contemporary British poetries and their criticism – rather than the more stable tropes of the coast and forest as imagined places. What follows will briefly survey such interventions of recent poetry scholars in ways of thinking about language’s construals of space and place through its signifying practices.

Two British collections of essays released in 2013, with surprisingly little crossover in contributors or poets, indicate the current range of critical approaches by writers and scholars who have taken up, or taken up with, geography. In looking over these two new books – in particular, their characterisation of the shared and diverse work of poetry-geography criticism – we can see a snapshot of the contemporary employment landscape for the modern jobbing poetry-geographer in these British landscapes. Which activities are seen to be most available – or valuable – to this person? A look over the two selections will introduce some of the connections currently being made between the different contexts of poetry and the tasks of spatial and geographical theory. More to the point, the two slightly differing emphases of the books will introduce this thesis’s own double reckoning with both transnational language poetics and British literary traditions, as mentioned above – and with both place theory and British place.

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structure’; Bailey, ‘A Re-Examination of the ‘Poetry Divide’ in 1970s Britain’, in Peter Robinson ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 134

<sup>38</sup> David Herd, ‘Dislocating Country: Post-War English Poetry and the Politics of Movement’, in Robinson ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 57; see also David Kennedy’s online essay ‘Mapping Value: Geography, Truth and the Construction of Value in Recent British Poetry’, available at: <<http://extra.shu.ac.uk/wpw/value/kennedy.htm>> (accessed 1/08/2014)

<sup>40</sup> Andrew Duncan, ‘On the Beach at Aberystwyth’, *The Imaginary in Geometry* (Cambridge: Salt, 2005), p. 42

<sup>41</sup> Michael Haslam, ‘Lyric in Blemish’, *A Cure for Woodness* (Todmorden: Arc Publications, 2010), p. 30; Nancy Gaffield, ‘Vor Langen Jahren’, *Continental Drift* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2014), p. 21; Wendy Mulford, ‘Preface to the East Anglia Sequence’, *The East Anglia Sequence* (London: Spectacular Diseases, 1998), preface page

<sup>42</sup> Andrew Duncan, ‘Anglophilia – A Romance of the Docks’, *The Imaginary in Geometry*, *ibid.*, p. 74

<sup>43</sup> John Kinsella, *Contrary Rhetoric*, *ibid.*

The earlier, transnational volume is Ian Davidson's and Zoë Skoulding's *Placing Poetry* (2013), described by Davidson as a collection of essays which respond to – and challenge – ‘concepts of place and processes of placing’<sup>44</sup> in social and cultural theory. In his introduction, Davidson draws on mobility studies, but also voices the concerns of the New Mobilities Paradigm,<sup>45</sup> which emphasises the network of systems on which mobility relies (‘roads, laws, economic circumstances’) and the increasing need for ‘digitization’ to allow those systems to interrelate. This context frames the new poetics, and movements in poetry, which investigate how concepts of the histories of landscape might be sustained – or altered – in the age of new media and mobility. As Davidson explains, the volume includes a range of positions responding to work in human geography, philosophy, and cultural theory (broadly, these positions build on the work of the spatial theory of the 1980s and 90s, particularly Lefebvre, de Certeau, and Massey), but no fixed grouping of poets, some of whom ‘have never received collective critical attention of the kind given in this volume’. The intent of the editors, as presented here, is to bring together an international range of poetic texts and critical exegeses which destabilize sedentary notions of place, while also revealing that the active concept of *placing* named in the title ‘disrupts very significant relationships between language and geography’.<sup>46</sup>

These relationships are varied by the different forms that ‘poetry’ takes between the chapters. Amongst the contributors to the book, Peter Barry analyses forms of asemic and visual poetry, tracing histories of earlier non-normative procedures of reading (e.g. triptychs, collage, concrete poetry, carving) into modern avant-garde works.<sup>47</sup> Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese considers the dialogic ‘word environment(s)’<sup>48</sup> of translated poetry, drawing from genetic criticism (the study of texts in their draft and variant forms). Skoulding’s own chapter extends de Certeau’s understanding of the ‘parallelism between linguistic and pedestrian enunciation’,<sup>49</sup> showing how the language fragments of poetry (in this case, American poet Lisa Samuels’ urban texts) can address the multiplicity of the city and its phatic discourses, as well as the Lefebvrian rhythms of the social body. Alice Entwistle’s chapter on deictic markers<sup>50</sup> (words such as ‘here’, ‘there’, ‘this’, and ‘that’) draws on cognitive linguistics<sup>51</sup> to show how the topoi of the speech environment depend on interactional tools, constructing the poem as a site of encounter – as she observes in her close readings of Zoë Skoulding’s *From Here*, which

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<sup>44</sup> Ian Davidson, ‘Introduction’, Davidson and Skoulding eds., *Placing Poetry* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), p. 9

<sup>45</sup> See p. 72, this thesis

<sup>46</sup> Ian Davidson, ‘Introduction’, *ibid.*, p. 10, 10, 3, 14

<sup>47</sup> Peter Barry, ‘Just Looking’, *Placing Poetry*, *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese, ‘Placing the Poem in Translation’, *Placing Poetry*, *ibid.*, p. 48

<sup>49</sup> Michel de Certeau (trans. Rendall), *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 99

<sup>50</sup> Alice Entwistle, ‘Taking Place: Deixis, Collaboration and the Gender Politics of the Aesthetic’, *Placing Poetry*, *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> In particular including Martin Pütz and René Dirven eds., *The Construal of Space in Language and Thought* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996)



‘concertedly frustrates any contextual, linguistic, or tropic locating of its eponymous deictic’.<sup>52</sup> Entwistle’s remarks on the ‘bilateral, transatlantic’<sup>53</sup> contexts of Welsh and European poetry – with its changing linguistic borders and modern phone lines, traffic and communication networks – are also echoed by Nerys Williams’ chapter on the encounter with information systems, news networks, and the ‘dissemination of self’ in the work of American poet Juliana Spahr and Welsh poet Robert Minhinnick. Describing poetry as ‘a medium of encounters’, Williams particularly problematizes the role of the lyric self as primary organising principle, tracing instead the ‘drafted-in voices’ and ‘visual performance’ of these linguistic texts.<sup>54</sup>

This thesis’s exploration of the indivisible, divisible, and divided languages of the coast and the forest draws on a similar terrain of thought around shifting and translated speaking subjects, a theme found throughout the volume, with its focus on the ‘space of verbal encounter’ (Skoulding), on ‘translative acts’ (Watts), and on ‘collaborative, dialogical relations’ (Boykoff).<sup>55</sup> Skoulding and Davidson’s book works to investigate a range of textual relationships beyond the solipsism of the singular place or lyric voice. From radical reading strategies to mapped poetry walks, it exposes the fact that – as Charles Bernstein and Bruce Andrews put it in a principle experimental publication, *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book*, ‘(l)anguage is not a monologic communication but a spatial interaction’.<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile, as part of the volume’s interrogation of language events beyond sedentary notions of place and identity – and corresponding with the turn in geography to spatial practices of text, as tackled by Sheila Hones and Miles Ogborn<sup>57</sup> – three chapters also focus on the literal taking-place of poetry in the settings of reading venues and other platforms; from John Wrighton’s essay on ethnopoetics, oral traditions and ‘performative dialogics’, to Jules Boykoff’s and Kaia Sand’s contributions on the ‘off-the-page poetic practices’, unconventional performance contexts, and the alternative poetry ‘populaces’ which these produce.<sup>58</sup>

Neal Alexander and David Cooper’s more recent *Poetry & Geography: Space and Place in Post-war Poetry* (2013) is a different literary-geographical affair; focussed exclusively on the landscape of Britain and Ireland, their collection places itself in a similar time scale to *Placing Poetry*, also citing

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<sup>52</sup> Entwistle, ‘Taking Place’, *ibid.*, p. 85

<sup>53</sup> Entwistle, ‘Taking Place’, *ibid.*, p. 85

<sup>54</sup> Nerys Williams, ‘Lyric Encounters with Other Places: Juliana Spahr’s *this connection of everyone with lungs* and Robert Minhinnick’s ‘An Isotope Dreaming’, *Placing Poetry*, *ibid.*, p. 183, 186, 194

<sup>55</sup> Zoë Skoulding, ‘Lisa Samuels: Unknown Cities’, *Placing Poetry*, p. 107; Carol Watts, ‘Zeta Landscape: Poetry, Place, Pastoral’, *Placing Poetry*, p. 285; Jules Boykoff, ‘Poets as Experimental Geographers: Mark Nowak, Kaia Sand and the Re-composition of Political-Historical Space’, *Placing Poetry*, p. 226

<sup>56</sup> Charles Bernstein and Bruce Andrews eds., *The L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E Book* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), p. 36

<sup>57</sup> See p. 37, this thesis

<sup>58</sup> John Wrighton, ‘Ethnopoetics and the Performativity of Place: Jerome Rothenberg and ‘That Dada Strain’’, *Placing Poetry*, p. 257; Jules Boykoff, ‘Poets as Experimental Geographers’, *Placing Poetry*, p. 230; Kaia Sand, ‘Affording Entrance’, *Placing Poetry*, p. 201

the spatial turn and its modern technological intensification due to ‘the far-reaching effects of economic globalisation, neo-imperialism, new transport and communications technologies, mass migrations, political devolution and impending environmental crisis’. However, Alexander and Cooper’s introduction more specifically notes the distinctively British pastoral and topographical traditions which are recast in the ‘dense particularities’ of literary place or regions, including the Irish civil conflict and the new aesthetic of British ‘edgelands’.<sup>59</sup> By taking the post-war epoch as its range, the book echoes the organizing frame of canonical anthologies such as Simon Armitage and Robert Crawford’s *Penguin Book of Poetry from Britain and Ireland since 1945* (1998), with its account of the ‘contemporary culture of pluralism’ in global Anglophone literature,<sup>60</sup> and Nigel Alderman and C. D. Blanton’s *A Concise Companion to Postwar British and Irish Poetry* (2009), which begins with a chronology section marking political and social events along with dates of major British poetry publications on a combined calendar. The ‘post’ of Alexander and Cooper’s ‘post-war’ title invokes what Alderman and Blanton have called ‘the inevitability of a backward glance’ in modern British poetry – the concern for its own continuous and dis-continuous formal traditions, and the need to ‘sort out, break with, exorcise, criticise, escape, or reconfirm a host of contradictory legacies’.<sup>61</sup>

*Poetry & Geography* arranges its chapters around cardinal points of intersection between geographical analysis and the British historical context. The first of these is, again, the dominant concept of ‘place’, and, relatedly, the ‘elusiveness of place’.<sup>62</sup> As Alexander and Cooper observe, the poetics of place has been regarded as dealing with traditional, stable, and familiar subject matter, but also – drawing on Tim Cresswell, Edward Casey and Ian Davidson – as a sign of the unsettled, the in process, and the radically open. These divided ‘representational poles’<sup>63</sup> are imaginatively productive for the first third of the book, as in Charles Armstrong’s chapter on the ‘spatially erratic’, ‘unmoored’ and ‘dynamic’ manifestations of Liverpool in Paul Farley’s poetry, and Peter Barry’s, on the ‘Cult of Northern-ness’ in the work of Northumberland and Durham poets Barry MacSweeney and S. J. Litherland, building on Rob Shields’ idea of ‘imaginary geography’ as ‘spurious homogenised identity’.<sup>64</sup> The editors also introduce a key tool in the poetics of place, the practice of toponymy in the place name poem, which uses vernacular geography to ‘meditat(e) on the interpenetrations of

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<sup>59</sup> Neal Alexander and David Cooper eds., *Poetry and Geography: Space and Place in Post-war Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p. 2, 6

<sup>60</sup> Simon Armitage and Robert Crawford eds., *Penguin Book of Poetry from Britain and Ireland Since 1945* (London: Penguin, 1998), p. xxii

<sup>61</sup> Nigel Alderman and C. D. Blanton, ‘Introduction’, in Alderman and Blanton eds., *A Concise Companion to Post-War British and Irish Poetry* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), unpaginated Kindle edition

<sup>62</sup> Neal Alexander and David Cooper, ‘Introduction: Poetry & Geography’, *Poetry and Geography*, p. 5

<sup>63</sup> Alexander and Cooper, ‘Introduction: Poetry & Geography’, *ibid.*, p.6

<sup>64</sup> Charles Armstrong, ‘City of Change and Challenge: Liverpool in Paul Farley’s Poetry’, *Poetry and Geography*, p. 29; Peter Barry, ‘Mapping the Geographies of Hurt in Barry MacSweeney and S.J. Litherland’, *Poetry and Geography*, p. 34; Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 47, 208

geography, selfhood, and collective identity'.<sup>65</sup> As in the poetics of place, this tool can be a deeply conservative reiteration of identitarian politics, as much as a radical sign of the complexity and unsettled nature of place – as in Matthew Jarvis's chapter on the 'torn consciousness'<sup>66</sup> of the second flowering of Anglophonic Welsh poetry. Katie Gramich's chapter also refers to the topophilia which is bound up with Welsh place names in Anglophonic poetry, reading the *bardd gwlad* (country poet) tradition through the post-1970s context of campaigns against English-only road signs and modern states of linguistic and cultural dispossession.

The second organizing theme for the book is the overlapping actions of walking and mapping<sup>67</sup> in British localities. Lucy Collins draws on de Certeau and David Harvey to investigate the scales of personal citizenship and city planning in Dublin, particularly focussing on the role of the modern *flâneur* in Thomas Kinsella's two publications of the same year, *Poems from Centre City* (1990) and *Personal Places* (1990). Daniel Weston also draws on de Certeau, in his case focussing on Ciaran Carson's Belfast poetry and its adoption of the 'city as labyrinth' trope. The doubling back, non-linear attributes of Carson's sequences – with their lateral connections across particular poems – displays, to Weston, the 'maze-like qualities' of indeterminate text and city.<sup>68</sup> Non-urban chapters also deal with the collocation of movement and mapping after spatial theory, and the tensions between what Denis Cosgrove has called 'kinetic cartography'<sup>69</sup> and a revived 'poetics of provincialism' (for instance, in Norman Nicholson's Cumbrian texts).<sup>70</sup> In sympathy with some of the work in *Placing Poetry*, the third and final section of the volume considers the theme of the agency of language and 'the dialogic space that poetry itself opens'.<sup>71</sup> This is addressed in Deryn Rees-Jones' chapter on Welsh speech patterns and the vocabulary of cartography in Jo Shapcott's work, particularly focussing on the intertextual dialogues with other poets in her writing of the spatialised female body, while Peter Howarth's contribution on the human social 'map poem'<sup>72</sup> of Alice Oswald's river sequence *Dart* draws on Doreen Massey in its exploration of the confluence of voices in Oswald's vocabularies of flux and interrelation. Peter Robinson – like Entwistle in *Placing Poetry* – analyses the small

<sup>65</sup> Alexander and Cooper, 'Introduction: Poetry & Geography', *ibid.*, p. 9

<sup>66</sup> Matthew Jarvis, 'Place under Pressure: Reading John Tripp's Wales', *Poetry and Geography*, *ibid.*, p. 54

<sup>67</sup> This is the subject of a previous critical anthology – David Kennedy ed., *Necessary Steps: Poetry, Elegy, Walking, Spirit* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2007) – as well as a new anthology of commissioned poems, Brian Lewis ed., *The Footing* (Sheffield: Longbarrow Press, 2013).

<sup>68</sup> Daniel Weston, 'I know this labyrinth so well': Narrative Mappings in the Poetry of Ciaran Carson', *Poetry and Geography*, *ibid.*, p. 119

<sup>69</sup> Denis Cosgrove, 'Introduction: Mapping Meaning', in Denis Cosgrove ed., *Mappings* (London: Reaktion, 1999), p. 6

<sup>70</sup> David Cooper, 'Envisioning 'the cubist fells': Ways of Seeing in the Poetry of Norman Nicholson', *Poetry and Geography*, *ibid.*, p. 158

<sup>71</sup> Alexander and Cooper, 'Introduction: Poetry & Geography', *ibid.*, p. 13

<sup>72</sup> Peter Howarth, 'Water's Soliloquy': Soundscape and Environment in Alice Oswald's *Dart*', *Poetry and Geography*, *ibid.*, p. 190

‘prepositions, pronouns, articles and deictic markers’ which construct Roy Fisher’s poetry of place, dependent on ‘the dynamics of speech identification and the directions of address or non-address’.<sup>73</sup>

These two books thus both adopt a particular ‘modern’ frame in which to set their literary analyses, drawing on both spatial theory and evolving mobile technologies and forms of communication. They correspond with this research’s interests in the tension between that modern frame and the inevitable ‘backward glance’ to other British traditions of place writing. In particular, a number of their chapters introduce the complex dialectic of conservative / radical understandings of place, space, and history in British poetry, with which this thesis necessarily interweaves, drawing as it does on historical geography as well as postmodern theories of space and language. The two books also give a sense of the range of poetics and types of close reading which in 2013 have been seen as apt tools in the critical study of geography – ranging from dominant interests in transatlantic and British experimental writing (including site-specific performance and open field poetics) to topographical re-settings, or writers who may be understood more as representatives of the eco-critical mainstream, such as John Burnside.<sup>74</sup> While both publications are presented as open-ended interventions showing ‘varieties of possibilities’,<sup>75</sup> they can be taken together as a useful introduction to the activities within geography-poetry criticism which are currently valued. Notable is the dominance of named figures in critical theory, including Michel de Certeau and Doreen Massey, and, in a more diffuse way, the work of David Harvey, Yi Fu Tuan, Michel Foucault, and Deleuze and Guattari – while previously dominant paradigms which might be seen as incompatible with a focus on modern mobility and mapping, such as Heidegger’s concept of ‘poetic dwelling’<sup>76</sup> or self-labelled “green” or “ecological” criticism, are relatively underrepresented. Both volumes can be seen to be seeding a number of questions suited to this thesis’s enquiry into the language-landscape linkage problems of the modern literary environment. In my interpretation of the vocations of the coast and the forest in modern poetry – in the literal, ‘vocal’ sense of that word, through their voicings – I necessarily find myself in similar overlaps (in some cases perhaps even aporias) between cultural histories or political geographies, long-standing literary traditions, and linguistic, philosophical, and spatial theory.

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<sup>73</sup> Peter Robinson, ‘Roy Fisher’s Spatial Prepositions and Other Little Words’, *Poetry and Geography*, *ibid.*, p. 205, 209

<sup>74</sup> Scott Brewster’s chapter in *Poetry & Geography*, for instance, is markedly faithful to the eco-critical tradition of reifying the divide between nature and human culture, hunting out John Burnside’s forays into wild space in his poetry. Here, he focuses on the figure of ‘the poet who ventures into the forest’s underworld’ (p. 189), citing Robert Pogue Harrison in his concluding lines: ‘that to be human ‘means to be always and already out of the forest’s inclusion’’ (p. 189). The citation is Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 201.

<sup>75</sup> Ian Davidson ‘Introduction’, *Placing Poetry*, *ibid.*, p. 15

<sup>76</sup> Martin Heidegger (trans. Hofstadter), *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971) – examples include Jonathan Bate’s Heideggerian eco-poetics in *The Song of the Earth* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2000), and Michael Peters and Ruth Irwin’s ‘Earthsongs: Eco-poetics, Heidegger, and Dwelling’, *Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy* 18.1 (2002)

In order for the range of critical objectives for these poetic geographies to be properly addressed it is also important to make visible the different factions of British poetry which have disclosed prominent concerns with human and cultural geography in the last few decades. Various roll calls of named poets have been suggested by those who have taken it upon themselves to summarise poetic concerns with space and place, such as Eric Falci,<sup>77</sup> and these provisional canons are in turn contingent upon changing interpretations of geography-in-literature – as a medium of continental philosophy, for instance, or as a tool for the dissection of cartographic sensibilities, after J. B. Harley.<sup>78</sup> For readers in the discipline of geography, the many strands and factions of British poetry may be, in the first place, confusing. A range of formative late twentieth century anthologies demonstrate the branding and rebranding of poetry groupings from The Movement, to the British Poetry Revival, to late modernist poetics, to Linguistically Innovative Poetry (LIP), while the titles and manifestos attached to these anthologies show different historical constructions of *New*, *Defining*, and *Other* poetries.<sup>79</sup> There is also a critical book of essays on these processes of selection and anthologising these poetries, and the alternate British canons and groups of readers.<sup>80</sup> Important monographs and single accounts include Tuma (1999), Duncan (2003), Sheppard (2005), and Barry (2006).<sup>81</sup> As Pierre Joris has observed in *Justifying the Margins* (2009), the Anglo-American expectations of the modes of ‘minor’ or ‘marginal’ literature have themselves been altered by ‘the growing nomadicity of our languages’ and their dissemination.<sup>82</sup> This thesis aims to apply a diversity of attention to British poetry of differently defined genealogies – the transatlantic and the national; the post-war and the contemporary; the

<sup>77</sup> Eric Falci, ‘Place, Space, and Landscape’, in Nigel Alderman and C. D. Blanton eds., *A Concise Companion to Post-War British and Irish Poetry* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). Falci uses examples drawn from Grace Nichols, Seamus Heaney, John Montague, Thomas Kinsella, Roy Fisher, Ciaran Carson, and Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin.

<sup>78</sup> J. B. Harley, ‘Deconstructing the Map’, *Cartographica*, 26.2 (Spring 1989)

<sup>79</sup> Al Alvarez ed., *The New Poetry* (London: Penguin, 1962); Michael Horovitz ed., *Children of Albion: Poetry of the Underground in Britain* (London: Penguin, 1969); Edward Lucie-Smith ed., *British Poetry since 1945* (London: Penguin, 1970); Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion eds., *The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry* (London: Penguin, 1982); Andrew Crozier and Tim Longville eds., *A Various Art* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1987); Allnutt, D’Aguiar, Edwards and Mottram eds., *The New British Poetry 1968-88* (London: Paladin, 1988); Iain Sinclair ed., *Conductors of Chaos: A Poetry Anthology* (London: Picador, 1996); Maggie O’Sullivan ed., *Out of Everywhere: Linguistically innovative poetry by women in North America & the UK* (East Sussex: Reality Street, 1996); Richard Caddel and Peter Quartermain eds., *Other: British and Irish Poetry since 1970* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1999); Nicholas Johnson ed., *Foil: Defining Poetry 1985-2000* (St. Leonard’s: Etruscan Books, 2000); Keith Tuma ed., *Anthology of Twentieth-century British and Irish Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Nathan Hamilton ed., *Dear World & Everyone In It: New Poetry in the UK* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 2013)

<sup>80</sup> Barbara Korte, Ralf Schneider, and Stefanie Lethbridge eds., *Anthologies of British Poetry: Critical Perspectives from Literary and Cultural Studies* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000)

<sup>81</sup> Keith Tuma, *Fishing by Obstinate Isles: Modern and Postmodern British Poetry and American Readers* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1998); Andrew Duncan, *The Failure of Conservatism in Modern British Poetry* (Cambridge: Salt, 2003); Robert Sheppard, *The Poetry of Saying: British Poetry and its Discontents, 1950-2000* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005); Peter Barry, *Poetry Wars: British Poetry of the 1970s and the Battle of Earls Court* (Cambridge: Salt, 2006).

<sup>82</sup> Pierre Joris, *Justifying the Margins* (Cambridge: Salt, 2009), p. 8. On a range of responses to innovative but neglected poetry, see also Robert Hampson and Peter Barry eds., *New British Poetries: The Scope of the Possible* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995)

conceptual and the formal. For the purposes of this text, therefore, the crucial division is that between forms of geographical exegesis which appear blind to language and form, and those which explicitly address the functions of language and geography in forming what, adopting the title of a previous author study, we might call ‘word play place’.<sup>83</sup> In what follows I will outline three distinctive modes of the turn toward language in geographically concerned poetry: eco-criticism, spatial theory, and the explicit invocation of mapping and geography by its own name.

The first two are grand narratives of the modern literary environment in their own right: firstly, the ambivalent relationship to poetic language and discourses of nature in first wave and second wave eco-criticism, with reference to Harriet Tarlo’s *The Ground Aslant: An Anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry* (2011), and secondly, the use of spatial theory in poetic analysis, usefully documented and exemplified by Ian Davidson in *Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry* (2007). This section on space will also briefly touch on the European emergence of eco-criticism’s theoretical sibling, geocriticism, focussing on different kinds of theoretical investment in textual considerations of mobility and immobility. From there, the third section will introduce the metaphorical and technical use of maps and mapping in literary studies, itself the subject of one of the major constellations of texts in the twentieth century literary-geographical universe.<sup>84</sup> The section will end by looking in closer detail at some of the moments at which poetry in this period has brushed up together with the history of geography as an explicit discipline – including examples of Colin Sackett’s innovative small-press redactions of twentieth century geography textbooks, as well as the occurrence of terms from physical geography and land mass analysis in experimental Anglo-American poetry.

It is worth repeating that the thesis, concerned as it is with textual negotiations of the geographies of the coast and the forest, does not specifically aim to advance the study of eco-criticism, spatial theory, or national politics – and the poems under consideration will cross over between these concerns in multiple ways rather than being determined by the attempt to interrogate them singly. However, the dedication of several pages to the critical contexts will hopefully provide a useful guide to, at least, some key texts in the fields. I have attempted to give as many references as possible which might be helpful for a reader from an outside discipline, unfamiliar with literary theory, and which will give a deeper background to the original research which follows into the historical and modern languages which have been allocated to the coast and to the forest in popular discourse and in experimental poetics

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<sup>83</sup> Robert Archambeau, *Word Play Place: Essays on the Poetry of John Matthias* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1998)

<sup>84</sup> For an introductory bibliography, see the page ‘Literary Geography and Mapping’ on the new Literary Geographies interdisciplinary blog, available at: <<http://literarygeographies.wordpress.com/litgeog-mapping/>> (accessed 24/08/2014)

## Eco-criticism

One of the important underpinning distinctions is the move in eco-criticism from its original preoccupations towards modes of scholarship which are more discriminate about linguistic form and theory. The first wave of eco-criticism was renowned for its retreat from deconstructive and postmodern issues of language; within the grand narratives of the ‘crisis of nature’ and human polity were buried calls for more holistic understandings of language as ‘open to the natural world’.<sup>85</sup> Eco-criticism’s U. S. proponents in the 1990s favoured a new eco-centric vocalisation of nature over literary formalism and cultural history, as exemplified in Lawrence Buell’s account of mimetic aesthetics and in David Abram’s writings on the earth’s native forms of articulation.<sup>86</sup> Even while sharing the attributes of literary criticism, as in Jonathan Bate’s textual readings of natural connection and dislocation in *The Song of the Earth* (2000), it is asserted that ‘poetry is not merely language, because when we allow it to act upon us it seems able to conjure up conditions such as dwelling and alienation *in their very essence*, not just in their linguistic particulars’.<sup>87</sup> As well as advocating certain environmental ideologies, eco-criticism has as one of its key building-blocks the perceived affinity between poetry, culture, and the metaphors of political ecology and ecological science, not least in two publications of 2002,<sup>88</sup> one of which begins with John Elder’s (‘rather crude’<sup>89</sup>) model of the poem as an ecosystem (a metaphor repeated again in the poet John Burnside’s ‘A Science of Belonging: Poetry as Ecology’<sup>90</sup>).

As it is based both on metaphor, and on ideology, and on the bringing together of the separate disciplines of economics, science, and the humanities, eco-criticism itself is ‘an unstable signifier’,<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Timothy Clarke, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 47

<sup>86</sup> Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1995); David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).

<sup>87</sup> Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 260

<sup>88</sup> Hubert Zapf, *Literatur als kulturelle Oekologie: Zur kulturellen Funktion imaginativer Texte an Beispielen des amerikanischen Romans* (Tuebingen: Niemeyer, 2002), partly available in English as ‘Literature as Cultural Ecology: Notes Towards a Functional Theory of Imaginative Texts with Examples from American Literature’, *REAL Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature* 17 (2001); John Elder and J. Scott Bryson eds., *Ecopoetry: A Critical Introduction* (Utah: University of Utah Press, 2002)

<sup>89</sup> This is Dana Phillips’ attack on Elder’s metaphor in Phillips, *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 156 – referring to the introduction of Elder and Bryson eds., *Ecopoetry*, *ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> John Burnside, ‘A Science of Belonging: Poetry as Ecology’, in Robert Crawford ed., *Contemporary Poetry and Contemporary Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

<sup>91</sup> Lawrence Buell, ‘Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends’, *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 19.2 (2011), p. 87

as Lawrence Buell has recently observed. Although coined as a term in 1978,<sup>92</sup> eco-criticism's main period of growth has been over the last twenty years, during which time some of its key concepts – such as the model of 'ecopiety'<sup>93</sup> – have been significantly redressed by theoretical works re-assessing the discourses of "nature".<sup>94</sup> There has been significant movement from the notion of ethics as a strong gathering principle for eco-criticism (Branch<sup>95</sup>) toward problems of representation (Kerridge and Sammells<sup>96</sup>), and theory and rhetoric (Tallmadge and Harrington<sup>97</sup>). The shifting of the forms of eco-criticism is partly due to the fact that the term itself is used as 'a convenient shorthand'<sup>98</sup> for a large range of interdisciplinary encounters between biology, philosophy, environmental technology, and the scholarly analysis of cultural representation.<sup>99</sup> These aggregate forms – and the lack of a standard consensus on whether eco-criticism refers to subject matter, methodology, or political principles – mean that contemporary engagements are often still asking questions about how to navigate, or find meaningfulness within, the field of eco-criticism – from Dana Phillips' search for the truth of ecology within the hyperreal<sup>100</sup> to Jonathan Skinner's recent re-imagining of the field via his 'compass points for ecopoetics' on Jacket2.<sup>101</sup>

The anti-modern hangover of some aspects of eco-criticism when applied to the study of poetics – including the early 1990s eco-critical interest in man's issues of belonging and non-belonging in the

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<sup>92</sup> William Rueckert, 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism', *Iowa Review* 9.1 (1978), reprinted in Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm eds., *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (London: University of Georgia Press, 1996)

<sup>93</sup> For an account of 'ecopiety' in U. S. poetry and criticism, see Patrick Murphy, *Ecocritical Explorations in Literary and Cultural Studies: Fences, Boundaries, and Fields* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009), p. 67-70

<sup>94</sup> Kate Soper, *What is Nature: Culture, Politics, and the Non-Human* (New Jersey: Wiley, 1995); Michael Soule and Gary Lease eds., *Reinventing Nature? Responses to Postmodern Deconstruction* (Connecticut: Island Press, 1995); William Cronon ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996); Steven Vogel, *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996); Timothy Luke, *Ecocritique: Contesting the Politics of Nature, Economy, and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Karla Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace eds., *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism* (Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 2001); Bruno Latour (trans. Porter), *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2004), and Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007)

<sup>95</sup> Michael Branch, Rochelle Johnson and Daniel Patterson eds., *Reading the Earth: New Directions in the Study of Literature and the Environment* (Idaho: University Press of Idaho, 1998)

<sup>96</sup> Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells eds., *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature* (London: Zed, 1998)

<sup>97</sup> John Tallmadge and Henry Harrington eds., *Reading Under the Sign of Nature: New Essays in Ecocriticism* (Utah: University of Utah Press, 2000)

<sup>98</sup> Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), p. 12

<sup>99</sup> Ursula K Heise, 'The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism', *PMLA* 121.2 (2006), p. 506

<sup>100</sup> Dana Phillips, 'Ecocriticism, Literary Theory, and the Truth of Ecology', *New Literary History* 30.3 (1999)

<sup>101</sup> Jonathan Skinner, 'Conceptualizing the field: some compass points for ecopoetics', *Jacket 2* (2011), online at: <<http://jacket2.org/commentary/conceptualizing-field>> (accessed 24/08/2014)



world, as re-iterated for instance in poet and critic Jeremy Hooker's 'poetics of place'<sup>102</sup> – is the subject of its own radical revisions.<sup>103</sup> The romantic concept of a lost ecological language, or speaking nature,<sup>104</sup> mentioned briefly above (and indicated also by Berg and Dasmann's demand that, according to the ethics of bioregionalism, 'the land must *speak* to us'<sup>105</sup>) is the topic of a recent conference and forthcoming collection, which calls for both continuity with, and philological criticism of, the earlier canonical writings on empathetic communication with nature.<sup>106</sup> The contemporary work of eco-criticism continues both within and without its own pre-existing 'self-validating norms',<sup>107</sup> as has been observed by scholars such as Morton, writing on the dogmatism of nature.<sup>108</sup> Regular attendance of the conference for the U.K. and Irish chapter of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE-UKI), founded in the U. S. in 1993, or reading of the subscription journals *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* and *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism*, indicates that certain areas of recent investigation are more progressive than others: notably, valuable emerging panels and papers on science fiction<sup>109</sup> and on bio-semiotics.<sup>110</sup> Richard Kerridge's account of the immediately recent scene of eco-criticism reveals both 'tasks' and 'constraints',<sup>111</sup> while a recent workshop on 'Poetry & Ecology' at Southampton University involved discussions of the field as both fruitful and potentially regressive.<sup>112</sup>

This is not the place to account for the ins and outs of the modern rehabilitation of language-focused eco-criticism, and it is important to note that I do not consider this thesis to be internal to the subject, theory, or practice of eco-criticism. However, while the American history of eco-criticism and its main tenets is, in many ways, inhospitable to this thesis – due to the framing of certain expectations of poetic biocentrism and realism – it is also a useful resource, from Jonathan Skinner's creative-critical

<sup>102</sup> Jeremy Hooker, 'The centre cannot hold': place in modern English poetry', in Ludwig and Fietz eds., *Poetry in the British Isles: Non-Metropolitan Perspectives* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995). See also Hooker's *Poetry of Place: Essays and Reviews 1970-81* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1982) and *Writers in a Landscape* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996).

<sup>103</sup> See Rebecca Raglon and Marian Scholtmeijer, 'Shifting Ground: Metanarratives, Epistemology, and the Stories of Nature', *Environmental Ethics* 18.1 (1996)

<sup>104</sup> See also David Abram, 'Merleau-Ponty and the Voice of the Earth', in David Macauley ed., *Minding Nature: The Philosophers of Ecology* (New York: Guilford Press, 1996)

<sup>105</sup> Peter Berg, *Reinhabiting a Separate Country: A Bioregional Anthology of Northern California* (San Francisco: Planet Drum, 1978), p. 218

<sup>106</sup> *Natura Loquens: Eruptive Dialogues, Disruptive Discourses: Fifth Biennial Conference of the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture, and Environment* (EASLC), Tenerife, 27-30<sup>th</sup> June 2012

<sup>107</sup> Timothy Clark, *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 202

<sup>108</sup> Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007)

<sup>109</sup> This is partly the result of the joint venture affiliating ASLE-UKI and the Science Fiction Research Association, as of the 2012 meeting in Worcester, *Composting Culture: Literature, Nature, Popular Culture, Science* (8<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference, 5-7<sup>th</sup> Sept 2012); science fiction themed panels are now an annual feature.

<sup>110</sup> Some of the papers originally given at ASLE-UKI are gathered in Wendy Wheeler ed., *Biosemiotics: Nature / Culture / Science / Semiosis* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2012)

<sup>111</sup> Richard Kerridge, 'Ecocriticism', *The Year's Work in Critical Cultural Theory* 21.1 (2013), p. 345

<sup>112</sup> *Poetry & Ecology Workshop*, Southampton University, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013

journal *Ecopoetics* (founded 2001) to Jed Rasula's well-known recent study of geophysical and biological concepts of recycling and innovation, *This Compost: Ecological Imperatives in American Poetry* (2012). In terms of the shifting scene of poetry writing and its engagement with eco-criticism, the popularity of recent anthologies on the topic<sup>113</sup> has recently reached an experimental and postmodern zenith in Corey and Waldrep eds., *The Arcadia Project: North American Postmodern Pastoral* (2013). This text – with its debts to Language Poetry – confirms the eco-critical questing towards formal experimentation in U.S. poetry, in its casting of radical textual interpretations of digital, spatial, and biotic forms.<sup>114</sup> As Gillian Osborne observes in her online article on 'eco-emergency' (emergent eco-critical forms), 'this work takes word play seriously'<sup>115</sup> – referencing works including a. rawlings' online multi-disciplinary work on landscape and language names, *Gibber*.<sup>116</sup> Arielle Guy's Dusie Press chapbook *Three Geogaophies* (2011) seems another good example, in title alone, of such error-friendly 'speechridden' geography.<sup>117</sup> This level of linguistic attention to 'radical' eco-poetry has had a relatively short life span. In 2009, Franca Bellarsi called for 'a re-assessment of the role played by Nature and green ethics in different avant-garde practices' in her specially edited issue of the *Journal of Ecocriticism* on 'Poetic Ecologies'<sup>118</sup> – an issue which also included an article by Rich Murphy<sup>119</sup> on postmodernist language poetry 'that unabashedly foregrounds the constructedness of both its landscapes and textscapes'.<sup>120</sup> This was followed by Brenda Iijima's edited creative-critical anthology, *((Eco(Lang)(uage(Reader)))*, which, amongst the text-works, images, and essays, reprints its original CFP setting questions about 'innovating languages (...) in a world of radical interconnectedness'.<sup>121</sup> Iijima's own manifesto-chapter also describes the 'refuse lingual' of new poetic processes,<sup>122</sup> while the book's flyleaf presents its own blurb as a printed verbo-visual collage of broken sentences and animal cut-outs.

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<sup>113</sup> Including Alice Oswald's *The Thunder Mutters: 101 Poems for the Planet* (London: Faber & Faber, 2006), Neil Astley's *Earth Shattering: Ecopoems* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 2007), and the recent American volume, Ann Fisher-Wirth and Laura-Gray Street's *The Ecopoetry Anthology* (Texas: Trinity University Press, 2013)

<sup>114</sup> Joshua Corey and George Waldrep eds., *The Arcadia Project: North American Postmodern Pastoral* (Idaho: Ahsahta Press, 2012)

<sup>115</sup> Gillian Osborne, 'Ecomergency: emergent forms', *Jacket 2* (2013), online at:

<<https://jacket2.org/commentary/ecomergency-emergent-forms>> (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>116</sup> This piece is online at: <<http://arawlings.is/gibber/index.php>> (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>117</sup> Edmund Berrigen, book blurb for Arielle Guy's *Three Geogaophies: A Milkmaid's Grimoire* (Switzerland: Dusie Press, 2011)

<sup>118</sup> Franca Bellarsi, 'Introduction: 'Eleven Windows into Post-Pastoral Exploration'', *Journal of Ecocriticism* 1.2 Special Issue: Poetic Ecologies (2009), p. 7

<sup>119</sup> Rich Murphy, 'Poetry's Evolving Ecology: Towards a Post-Symbol Landscape', *Journal of Ecocriticism* 1.2 Special Issue: Poetic Ecologies (2009)

<sup>120</sup> Franca Bellarsi, 'Introduction', *ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>121</sup> Brenda Iijima, 'Preface', in Iijima ed., *((Eco(Lang)(uage(Reader)))* (New York: Nightboat Books, 2010), p. i

<sup>122</sup> Brenda Iijima, 'Metamorphic Morphology (with gushing igneous interlude) Meeting in Language: P as in Poetry, Poetry Rhetorical in Terms of Eco', in Iijima ed., *((Eco(Lang)(uage(Reader)))* (New York: Nightboat Books, 2010), p. 280

In Britain, the main text of this kind – in fact conceived partly in retaliation against eco-criticism’s limited environmental channels of meaning – is Harriet Tarlo’s *The Ground Aslant: An Anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry* (2011), including the writers Colin Simms, Peter Riley, Thomas A Clark, Wendy Mulford, Peter Larkin, Frances Presley, Tony Baker, Ian Davidson, Elisabeth Bletsoe, Carol Watts, Nicholas Johnson, Zoë Skoulding, Harriet Tarlo, Mark Goodwin, Helen Macdonald, and Mark Dickinson – a selection that maps fairly well onto the selections of this thesis. Of her grouping of poets, Tarlo notes that ‘landscape poetry often challenges the divide between experimental or innovative and traditional or mainstream which has haunted British poetry, in all its many guises, since the 1930s’. Her title word ‘aslant’ she explains as a reference to the radical slanting of human perspective and scaping of the land, linked partly to ‘Lean Earth Off Trees Unaslant’, the title of a poem by Peter Larkin. The radical landscape poetry Tarlo conceives of here is that which ‘linguistically or philosophically shap(es) the specific or generic land with which it engages’, while she also notes that she seeks to redress the reliance on *urban* texts in previous scopings of poetry in the experimental tradition. She introduces the sixteen practicing poets in the collection by way of an address to four key themes, ‘form’, ‘terminology’, ‘the Scape’, and ‘bodies’. The formal techniques of blocks of text, the use of found sources, the Northern tradition of alliterative and compound words, and the sense of motion implied by punctuation are four examples Tarlo gives of the importance of form and language, not least because ‘delving into British or American avant-garde poetry soon teaches us that a continuous text does not make for continuity of narrative or discourse’. She is thus chary of committing the collection to the terms eco-poetry or ecopoetics, ‘perhaps because of the emphasis on subject matter over form’.<sup>123</sup>

As with the two critical collections commented on above, Tarlo tackles the difficult combination of ‘the transatlantic poetic roots of this work (and) the specific and localized aspect’<sup>124</sup> of locations in the North of England (particularly in the Northern poets Richard Caddel, Barry MacSweeney, Maggie O’Sullivan and Colin Simms). It is no surprise that she has written previously on modern radical landscapes with a crucial backward look, as a feature of the wake of British modernism. In ‘Radical Landscapes: Contemporary Poetry in the Bunting Tradition’, Tarlo notes that the avant-garde, experimental, or linguistically innovative poetry with which she is concerned – marginalised in Britain since the end of the 1970s – is gradually being recovered through new presses, new magazines, and new technology (while she has also remarked elsewhere that it may be exactly this period of intense marginalisation which ‘encouraged an internationalism amongst experimental

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<sup>123</sup> Harriet Tarlo, ‘Introduction’, in Tarlo ed., *The Ground Aslant: An Anthology of Radical Landscape Poetry* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2011), p. 7, 7, 9, 11

<sup>124</sup> Harriet Tarlo, ‘Radical Landscapes: Contemporary Poetry in the Bunting Tradition’, in James McGonigal and Richard Price eds., *The Star You Steer By: Basil Bunting and British Modernism* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), p. 152

writers within these shores',<sup>125</sup> and the transatlantic receptivity to the spatial concerns of American poetry). She also specifies a resistance to the historical trope of the romantic landscape and the singular 'I', or, in the terms of the American poet Charles Olson, that 'lyrical interference of the individual as ego'.<sup>126</sup> In place of a centralized lyric 'I' is a pointed regard for human-land relationship and its complex languages through 'the history of land "rights" and politics', shifts in landscape and industry, and 'geological, historical, and naturalistic knowledge'. Through these concerns comes a resultant linguistic questioning of forms of knowledge, ranging from E. M. Nicholson's ornithological quotations 'replayed again and again in the poem in different spatial and grammatical arrangements' in Richard Caddel's sequence 'Ground', to the plays on classification and definition in Maggie O'Sullivan's *A Natural History in Three Incomplete Parts* (1985) and on pedagogies of nature in Colin Simms' *First and Second Book of Birds* (1989). Through its various forms and linguistic attributes – including the collage of headlines and news statistics in O'Sullivan's pseudo natural history – the poetry considered is shown to trouble the frameworks of human naming systems and the 'anthropocentric view' of the land; that restricted understanding suggested in one of Richard Caddel's lines, 'no land held but in head'.<sup>127</sup>

While, as mentioned, Tarlo does not limit herself to the identity of an 'eco-critic', she is part of an emerging chapter of critical writing of relevance to engaged, postmodern eco-criticism. As she observed in an article in 2007 continuing her published output on 'radical landscapes', 'the project I have been working on has two obvious outlets, the eco-critical community and the experimental poetry community, both of which I have found to be partially welcoming and partially resistant'.<sup>128</sup> Like Jonathan Skinner, she is concerned with the verbal environments of avant-garde poetics which are responsive to some of the more progressive tenets of eco-criticism; like Skinner, too, she is resistant to much of eco-criticism's earlier claims around a realist language of nature, and critical of the legacy of both Laurence Buell and Jonathan Bate. In Skinner's 2004 panel contribution for 'Poetry Environments: An Ecopoetics Roundtable' at Brunel University he too queries the term 'ecopoetry' when seen as a poetic genre which perversely turns 'away from the tasks of poetry, to more important or urgent concerns',<sup>129</sup> instead giving a run-through of types of avant-garde, concrete, and procedural poems which might fall into a more language-centred understanding of 'ecopoetics'. Tarlo follows on from Skinner in querying the eco-critical 'suspicion of the avant-garde'<sup>130</sup> and avoidance of poetic

<sup>125</sup> Harriet Tarlo, 'Radical Landscapes: experiment and environment in contemporary poetry', *Jacket* 32 (2009), online at: <<http://jacketmagazine.com/32/p-tarlo.shtml>> (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>126</sup> Charles Olson, *Collected Prose* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 247

<sup>127</sup> Tarlo, 'Radical Landscapes: Contemporary Poetry in the Bunting Tradition', *ibid.*, p. 165, 170, 171, 173, and Caddel citation on p. 173

<sup>128</sup> Harriet Tarlo, 'Radical Landscapes: experiment and environment in contemporary poetry', *ibid.*, online

<sup>129</sup> Jonathan Skinner, 'Statement for "New Nature Writing" Panel at 2005 AWP (Vancouver)', *Ecopoetics* 4/5 (2004-5), p. 127

<sup>130</sup> Tarlo, 'Radical Landscapes: experiment and environment in contemporary poetry', *ibid.*, online

language issues. The ‘paucity of critical connections’<sup>131</sup> she sees between ecological or eco-critical work and literary criticism related to linguistically innovative poetry is drawn from the resistance of earlier canonical figures – such as Buell – to post-structuralism and its language work. Against this are the demands for a modern eco-criticism which has absorbed new critical texts – including those by Kate Soper and Donna Haraway<sup>132</sup> – in place of the conventional nature/culture dualities of earlier eco-criticism.

The dissatisfaction with ‘ecopoetics’ has been linked by critics to what has been perceived as its major limitations, including the focus on dwelling drawn from Heidegger and from the ‘house’ etymology of ‘eco’, the troping of gender and nature,<sup>133</sup> and the residue of Jonathan Bate’s interest in the correspondence between language and nature’s own rhythms. Yet these thorns in the side of modern eco-criticism can also be fillips to the production of new work, as some of the creative contributions to Tarlo’s HOW2 volume indicate.<sup>134</sup> A number of the excerpts – both creative and critical – are usefully adversarial; a. rawlings’ excerpt from her project *echology*, for instance, is a lipogrammatic exercise in sound and letters in response to the ‘humancentric syntax’ of normal usage, while Linda Russo observes in the introduction to her reflective piece that she is responding to Leonard M. Scigaj’s flawed view in *Sustainable Poetry: Four American Ecopoets* (1999) that nature, as a separate and equal other, must have its own voice (Russo: ‘How can this be? How can the “voice of nature” be other than a human construct?’).<sup>135</sup> The collection of texts in the issue range from linguistic satire, such as those playing on Latinate forms and classificatory language, to a section dedicated to the ‘eco-practice’<sup>136</sup> of using found texts (including public speech and media representations), to the explicit invocation of multicultural languages in sound poetry.

There have been precedents set in Britain, therefore, for the bringing together of outlying experimental writings with some of the critical works of second-wave eco-criticism and what is being called the ‘third wave of eco-criticism’.<sup>137</sup> The complicated, but potentially sustaining, relationship

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<sup>131</sup> Tarlo, ‘Radical Landscapes: experiment and environment in contemporary poetry’, *ibid.*, online

<sup>132</sup> Kate Soper, *What is Nature? Culture, Politics, and the Non-Human* (New Jersey: Wiley, 1995), and Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1989)

<sup>133</sup> This is a vastly important issue beyond the scope of this thesis; see Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993); Patrick Murphy, *Literature, Nature and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques* (New York: University of New York Press, 1995); Stacy Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space* (London: Cornell University Press, 2000); and most recently, Alice Entwistle, *Poetry, Geography, Gender: Women Rewriting Contemporary Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013)

<sup>134</sup> Harriet Tarlo ed., *HOW2* 3.2 Special Issue: Women and Ecopoetics (2002), online at: [http://www.asu.edu/pipercwcenter/how2journal/vol\\_3\\_no\\_2/ecopoetics/index.html](http://www.asu.edu/pipercwcenter/how2journal/vol_3_no_2/ecopoetics/index.html) (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>135</sup> Linda Russo, ‘Writing Within: Notes on Ecopoetics as Spatial Practice’, in *HOW2* Special Issue, *ibid.*, online

<sup>136</sup> Harriet Tarlo, ‘Women and ecopoetics: an introduction in context’, in *HOW2* Special Issue, *ibid.*, online

<sup>137</sup> This refers to the rise of postcolonial and cross-disciplinary approaches in emerging eco-criticism which transcends national and ethnic boundaries; see the overview of third wave eco-criticism in the inaugural issue

with eco-critical study shifts from its earlier forms in the wake of Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and the scholarship of American and British Romanticism, to incorporate aggressive deconstructions of the natural and environmental imagination by William Cronon and others. The range of poetics is eclectic, including major critical histories, such as that narrated by Jerome Rothenberg as ‘ethnopoetics’,<sup>138</sup> as well as newer terms, such as Tarlo’s own ‘eco-ethical poetics’,<sup>139</sup> and works which respond to postmodern writing on contemporary concepts such as the third landscape<sup>140</sup> and ‘post-nature’ theory. This shifting landscape of eco-criticism – as one of the metanarratives of environmental literature – necessarily contextualises this thesis’s selection of British poets and landscapes; however, its general trends of poetic relevance within postmodernism (towards brands of innovative American poetry inhabiting a particular horizon of ecological imperatives) mark its continued limitations for the purposes of a cross-disciplinary cultural geography. Outside of a strictly defined natural or ecological crisis is a better place to stand to assess the rhetoric of the two landscapes I consider, particularly within the context of the thesis’s concern both with linguistic philosophy and with the communicative problems of modern environmental discourse prompted by such crises, as well as wider analyses of cultural histories, political governance,<sup>141</sup> and historical geography. Eco-criticism will be invoked in this study, particularly by way of certain vocal tropes of the coast and the forest; but the sub-discipline’s existing borders shall not be held.

## Space

A second major device by which poetry has attached itself to geography is that of spatial theory – most whole-heartedly as an interpretative paradigm in Ian Davidson’s two volumes, *Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry* (2007) and *Radical Spaces of Poetry* (2010), which elucidate the state of the

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of *Ecozon@* 1.1 (2010), particularly the essays by Scott Slovic, Serpil Oppermann, and Serenella Iovina. The first and second waves were canonised by Lawrence Buell in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, *ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> See for instance Jerome Rothenberg’s entry on ‘ethnopoetics’ in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993)

<sup>139</sup> Tarlo, ‘Radical Landscapes: experiment and environment in contemporary poetry’, *ibid.*, online

<sup>140</sup> Gilles Clément’s concept of the ‘third landscape’, meaning an interstitial landscape between the engineered or cultivated and the preserved or natural, is a topic of writings by Jonathan Skinner on poetry, including ‘Thoughts on Things: Poetics of the Third Landscape’, in Iijima ed., *(((EcoLang)(uage(Reader)))* (New York: Nightboat Books, 2010), and ‘Gardens of Resistance: Gilles Clément, New Poetics, and Future Landscapes’, in *Qui Parle* 19.2 Special Issue: At the Intersections of Ecocriticism (2011).

<sup>141</sup> On this, see particularly John Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

poetic work after Henri Lefebvre, Doreen Massey, Fredric Jameson, Michel de Certeau, Deleuze and Guattari, and other spatial theorists. In Davidson's earlier volume he outlines the research area as a non-hierarchical project combining American, British, and European poets; some contemporary compatible scholarly approaches as applied to various poets have been exemplified in *Placing Poetry* and *Poetry & Geography*. It is important to note that while this thesis will be dealing more explicitly with specialist cultural geographers and historians of the coast and forest, it does rest on the concepts of space and language relations made familiar in some of this work, and within the context of David Harvey's 'time-space compression' of the postmodern world,<sup>142</sup> while of course cultural geography itself was importantly shaped by key texts which were spatially reconfiguring the social sciences in the 1980s, including those by Gregory and Urry and by Edward Soja.<sup>143</sup>

In what follows, I will briefly summarise some of Davidson's materials: as the most representative critic of modern spatial theory within my own fields of poetry, his readings of texts provide a vital double-history of the theories and philosophies of space, and the involvement of these in twentieth century poetics concerned with the fragmentary identities of language. I will also interrogate the focus on 'mobility' in geocriticism – styled as the more spatially concerned, European alternative to eco-criticism. A number of cultural geographers have attended to the issues with the critical paradigm of 'mobility'; it is a key topic in which the strengths of the discipline of cultural geography can be applied to the models of literary criticism to reveal its own strengths and weaknesses. I will briefly introduce the mobility idea as a problem area in emerging coastal and maritime criticism, part of the critical framework of this thesis; chapter one will expand more on the interrogation of the coast as mobile coalition of land and sea, in what Steven Mentz has called a 'Blue Cultural Studies'.<sup>144</sup>

*Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry* (2007) provides a useful entrance point to the canonical discussions of spatial and mobile representation within textual forms which threaten singular languages. It vouches – like this thesis – for the worth of close criticism at different linguistic scales, in this case within the larger frames of philosophies of space. It begins by accounting for the spatial meaningfulness of textual cut-ups and collage/ Dadaist techniques which 'disrupt the reading process' and 're-examine constituent parts of a text, breaking down established paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships'.<sup>145</sup> Davidson draws from changing trans-disciplinary understandings of space in the age of modern telecommunication and travel, including Lefebvre's concept of the social production of space, Fredric Jameson's cognitive mapping, de Certeau's city as text, and ideas of 'space' and

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<sup>142</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 260-307

<sup>143</sup> Derek Gregory and John Urry eds., *Social Relations and Spatial Structures* (London: Macmillan, 1985); Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso Books, 1989)

<sup>144</sup> Steven Mentz, 'Towards a Blue Cultural Studies: The Sea, Maritime Culture, and Early Modern English Literature', *Literature Compass* 6/5 (2009)

<sup>145</sup> Ian Davidson, *Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 9, 11

‘place’, particularly in Doreen Massey’s work on the global multiplicity of social relations in place.<sup>146</sup> Pierre Joris’ development of Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘rhizomatic’ and ‘nomadic’ principles (1980) in *Nomad Poetics* (2003) is also read alongside work by the British travelling poet Bill Griffiths, formulated as ‘not just outside striated space but between languages’.<sup>147</sup>

Canonical works by American poets are considered, including William Carlos Williams’ chronicle of public history in one place, *Paterson* (1963), Frank O’Hara’s alternative and circuitous mappings of New York, Ed Dorn’s changing takes on physical geography and mental landscapes, and Charles Olson’s famous essay on ‘Projective verse’ and his Gloucester, Massachusetts epic, *The Maximus Poems* – four varied performances of the increasing spatialisation of post-modern America (Olson: ‘I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America’<sup>148</sup>). Particularly important for the work of this thesis is Davidson’s fifth chapter, on identity as a construct of the social system of language, with all the deferred meaning and signification that that implies: i.e., ‘a poetics of form that denies notions of identity as unproblematically expressed through language’. The ‘national and linguistic allegiances’ of English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish poets are compared, whether through a lyric affirmation of identity or a more explicitly experimental approach to implied register and voice.<sup>149</sup>

On more material scales, Davidson treats the visual poetics of writers including Steve McCaffery, Caroline Bergvall, and English poet and Writers Forum founder Bob Cobbing, who also edited (with Lawrence Upton) an anthology of textual graphics, *Word Score Utterance Choreography: In Verbal and Visual Poetry* (1998) – combining work in which ‘the page becomes a diagrammatic representation of the different spaces language might inhabit’,<sup>150</sup> via typographic experimentation and the subversive use of printers and office machinery in the 1960s and 70s. Davidson also assesses poetic responses to the age of the internet and the recalibration of textual dissemination and of private and public space by modern digital technology. The writing and reading of digital data has critically changed the humanities – as suggested in N Katherine Hayles’ *Writing Machines* (2002) and Stephen Ramsay’s *Reading Machines: Towards an Algorithmic Criticism* (2012) – and Davidson gives several examples of the digital transmission of texts, including programmed poetry, which display complex new relations between body, technology, and language, counter to more traditional associations of the place of writing. Since Davidson’s publication – in which he refers to Jerome McGann’s now

<sup>146</sup> Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005)

<sup>147</sup> Ian Davidson, *Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry*, *ibid.*, p. 46

<sup>148</sup> Charles Olson, first sentence of *Call me Ishmael* (1947), reprinted edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997)

<sup>149</sup> Ian Davidson, *Ideas of Space*, *ibid.*, p. 90, 101

<sup>150</sup> Ian Davidson, *Ideas of Space*, *ibid.*, p. 162



canonical text *Radiant Textuality: Literature after the World Wide Web* (2004) – research has continued apace on new acts of reading in the internet age.<sup>151</sup>

These contexts are vital to the literal spaces which make up this thesis's research – in pages, screens, and installations, within the contemporary re-energising of intellectual investments in 'design in poetry'.<sup>152</sup> With the revival of small presses (with a complex range of formats and of formulas for reading<sup>153</sup>) and the growth of new digital media and journals for online publication, the forms of source material are increasingly diverse. These range from the single volume long poem or singly published 'miniature epic'<sup>154</sup> of the British landscape, to broadsheet (single-page) publications such as Peter Riley's geological miniature *Following the Vein*<sup>155</sup> to the growing number of eco-poetry anthologies, and modern digital poetics, which in turn range from publications designed for the internet, such as Caroline Bergvall's *Noping* (2013) with its animated text 'tripping' around the Norse sea and the Old English letter thorn,<sup>156</sup> to the online pre-publication of early parts of poetic sequences on sites such as onedit.<sup>157</sup> This diversity of production allows for a trialling of spatial forms and procedures as well as returning attention to questions about the 'definitive' text, as well as the 'definitional' landscape.

Three years later, *Radical Spaces of Poetry* (2010), drawing implicitly on the same backdrop of spatial theory, extends the research further on the place of modern poetry in political, social and cultural activity. In the second book, Davidson models several reading approaches in the separate chapters – the survey, the author study, and evidence-based close reading – and dwells on issues of textual representation of the uses and abuses of spatial, economic and cultural power. Texts about

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<sup>151</sup> In particular see Manuel Portela's recent publication, *Scripting Reading Motions: The Codex and the Computer as Self-Reflexive Machines* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013)

<sup>152</sup> Notably, Mottram's 1977 Writers Forum publication *Towards design in poetry* has been made available again by Veer Books, and is an invaluable guide to the complex bibliographies of material affecting both the Black Mountain poets and small-press British understandings of 'the space-time field of language', including field theory, systems theory, serial music, and the manifestos of international writers and philosophers. Eric Mottram, *Towards design in poetry* (London: Veer Books, 2004), p. 16

<sup>153</sup> Ranging from printed artefacts with multiply folded and cut pages, to something as simple as Julie Johnstone's work with Essence Press, such as her minimalist publication *landscape*, a sequence of simply bound paper pages ripped to give a horizon of contour lines – almost like rolling hills – with no print but for the single-word title (no date attributed). Texts described as "small press" may not even resemble a book at all, as with Alec Finlay's herbarium labels designed for real-world installation in tree plantations. This is a set of horizontal mesostic poems from the vertical letters of tree genera (oak, willow, sycamore, ash, etc.), printed onto small horticultural plaques of the type usually attached to trunks (ongoing project).

<sup>154</sup> See Nigel Alderman and C. D. Blanton's edited special issue, 'Pocket Epics: British Poetry after Modernism', *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 13.1 (2000)

<sup>155</sup> Peter Riley, *Following the Vein* (London: Albion Village Press, 1975)

<sup>156</sup> Caroline Bergvall's *Noping* was produced in partnership with the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, as part of the exhibition *Postscript: Writing after Conceptual Art*, on view from October 12, 2012, to February 3, 2013. The interactive online text is hosted by Triple Canopy at <<http://canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/noping>> (accessed 24/08/2014), where it is described as 'An unexpected tripping into English-language history'.

<sup>157</sup> Onedit, an online journal at: <<http://www.onedit.net/>> (accessed 24/08/2014)

history – including Charles Reznikoff’s *Holocaust* (1975) and *Testimony* (1979), Césaire’s *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (1983), Joan Retallack’s *Memnoir* (2004) and Sean Bonney’s *Document* (2009) – are tested against scholarship on global cultures of memory, forms of evidence, and processes of social history. Davidson brings his poetic readings to bear on concepts of political and spatial alterity – touching on the subject matters of war, colonialism, class, democracy and sexual transgression in texts by poets including Frank O’Hara, J. H. Prynne, Tony Harrison, and Lisa Robertson. Multiple and competing perspectives are presented of the distribution of bodies, of language, and of justice – filtered through Davidson’s use of European philosophy and non-representational theory. As he puts it, ‘the poets are not only trying to represent marginalized social positions and make them part of a broader cultural discourse, but they are also questioning that process of representation’ – through, at base, questioning ‘the language we might use as evidence to make ethical decisions’.<sup>158</sup> These considerations of concepts of social ‘authority’ and the layered voices of history, through the surface of the text at hand, is echoed in this thesis’s involvement with concepts of social and environmental archives and “cultural memory”, through the continued hermeneutic closures and openings of history in modern forest texts. Between these two works by Davidson, then, we see demonstrations of literary patterns of interest amongst several writers which correspond with two of the more geographically specific foci in this thesis: the mobile theory of the coast, and the radical histories of the forest.

Both books are important examples of the cross-disciplinary dialogues in philosophy, politics, and alternative representation which emerged from the late twentieth century application of spatial theory in literary analysis. The vastly growing disciplines of the spatial humanities – and now, in particular, the dynamic GIS technologies which rebound new questions onto existing critical spatial metaphors, such as ‘panopticism’ (Foucault, 1975) or ‘territoriality’<sup>159</sup> – are unstoppably altering the study of poetic texts; as the Institute for Enabling Spatial Scholarship states, ‘every discipline in the humanities and social sciences has been stamped with the imprint of spatial questions about nations and their boundaries, states and surveillance, private property, and the perception of landscape.’<sup>160</sup> Articulations of the role of space as ‘an existential and cultural dominant’ in postmodernism<sup>161</sup> range from those which contrasted space to the previously dominant concept of time – as in Jameson’s account of the ‘synchronic rather than the diachronic’<sup>162</sup> or John Urry’s declaration that ‘it is space rather than time

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<sup>158</sup> Ian Davidson, *Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry*, *ibid.*, p. 163-4, 163

<sup>159</sup> See in particular David Delaney, *Territory: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005) and David Storey, *Territories: The Claiming of Space* (London: Routledge, 2012)

<sup>160</sup> *Spatial Humanities: A Project for the Institute for Enabling Geospatial Scholarship*, online at: <<http://spatial.scholarslab.org/spatial-turn/what-is-the-spatial-turn/>> (accessed 07/11/2013)

<sup>161</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 365

<sup>162</sup> Jameson, *Postmodernism*, *ibid.*, p. 16

which is the distinctively significant dimension of contemporary capitalism'<sup>163</sup> – to those which applied spatial concepts *to* history, arguing that space is 'integral to the production of history' (Massey),<sup>164</sup> or even that history is itself truly a form of cartography ('Knowledge of the past (...) is literally cartographic: a mapping of the places of history indexed to the coordinates of spacetime'<sup>165</sup>).

Within the covers of this thesis it is impossible to give a survey of the important discussions of the sociological and anthropological dimensions of place and space which have impacted on the literary 'spatial turn'.<sup>166</sup> As Jameson himself has more recently observed, it continues to be such a fertile paradigm that, currently, 'statistics on the volume of books on space are as alarming as the birth-rate of your hereditary enemy'.<sup>167</sup> John Agnew has observed<sup>168</sup> that one of the explanations behind this diversity of ideas of space and place – even if limited to the sphere of geography – is the complex histories of the two terms (note, for instance, Ian Davidson's explanation of the contemporary usages and affiliations of the word 'space', including in drug culture<sup>169</sup>). This includes, as well as the changing intellectual trends of the English usage, the different reaches backward across the rift of history to the Ancient Greek concepts of *chora* (Plato) and *topos* (Aristotle). Geography's different basic definitions as a 'spatial science' or as a 'science of places'<sup>170</sup> are thus subtly mismatched in their acts of inquiry. Meanwhile, as Winkler, Seifert and Detering observe in their 2012 survey article on the spatial turn, the terminological loyalties to 'spatial turn', 'topographical turn', and 'topological turn' lead to conflicting senses of the scope and associations of the 1980s attention to geo-spaces and their literary-cultural constructs.<sup>171</sup> The subject of spatial theory has continued as such a frenzied site

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<sup>163</sup> John Urry, 'Social Relations, Space and Time', in Derek Gregory and John Urry eds., *Social Relations and Spatial Structures* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 21

<sup>164</sup> Doreen Massey, 'Politics and Space/Time', *New Left Review* 196 (1992), p. 72

<sup>165</sup> Philip J. Ethington, 'Placing the Past: 'Groundwork' for a Spatial Theory of History', *Rethinking History* 11.4 (2007), p. 466

<sup>166</sup> As well as theorists already mentioned, valuable resources include Yi Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977); Agnew and Duncan eds., *The Power of Place: Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations* (New York: Routledge, 1989); Edward Casey, *Getting Back Into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-world* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Massey and Jess eds., *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures and Globalization* (London: Open University Press, 1995); Feld and Basso eds., *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996); Benko and Strohmayer eds., *Space and Social Theory: Interpreting Modernity and Postmodernity* (New Jersey: Wiley, 1997); Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga eds., *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture* (New Jersey: Wiley, 2003); Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004)

<sup>167</sup> Fredric Jameson, 'The End of Temporality', *Critical Inquiry* 29.4 (2003), p. 696

<sup>168</sup> John Agnew, 'Space and Place', in Agnew and Livingstone eds., *Handbook of Geographical Knowledge* (London: SAGE, 2011)

<sup>169</sup> Ian Davidson, *Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry* (2007), p. 24

<sup>170</sup> Paul Vidal de la Blache, 'Des caractères distinctifs de la géographie', *Annales de Géographie* 22 (1913), cited in Paul Claval and J. Nicholas Entrikin, 'Cultural geography: place and landscape between continuity and change', George Benko and Ulf Strohmayer eds., *Human Geography: A History for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 35

<sup>171</sup> Kathrin Winkler, Kim Seifert and Heinrich Detering, 'Literary Studies and the Spatial Turn', *Journal of Literary Theory* 6.1 (2012)

of production under these terms that in a recent international panel, Eric Sheppard subtitled his talk ‘Confessions of a Recovering Spatial Fetishist’, based on his long-term exposure to the ‘evangelical spatial science revolution’.<sup>172</sup>

The spatial fetishism of literary scholars is equally diverse. At the widest optic it draws on the massing output of several fields in the twentieth century.<sup>173</sup> A number of these cross-disciplinary spatial engagements have touched on poetry, including, for instance, anthropologist James Clifford’s section on poetry and ethno-poetics (with several re-printings of serial poems) in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997) and Andrew Thacker’s chapter on Imagist poetry in *Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (2003). In the last two decades, European geopoetics – the sibling of the geocriticism made famous by Bertrand Westphal – has been a rising star for its accommodation of the new orientations of globalization theory,<sup>174</sup> including Jean-Luc Nancy’s ‘mondialisation’ (which Davidson also addresses in *Radical Spaces of Poetry*<sup>175</sup>). Problematically, the traffic with European philosophers and scholars has led to several ‘cartographic feud(s)’<sup>176</sup> in comparative literature regarding the appropriate cross-linguistic dimensions of a word such as ‘topography’ – such as that between J. Hillis Miller’s *Topographies* (1995) and Sigrid Weigel’s interpretation of the ‘topographical turn’.<sup>177</sup> Westphal’s work, however, has usefully been introduced to Western thinking by the American critic Robert T. Tally Jr., both via his translation of Westphal’s *Geocriticism*, his edited companion volume of the same year, *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies*, and in his own books.<sup>178</sup> Westphal’s

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<sup>172</sup> Peter Merriman, Martin Jones, Gunnar Olsson, Eric Sheppard, Nigel Thrift and Yi Fu Tuan, ‘Space and Spatiality in Theory’, panel at AAG 2010 (Washington), printed in *Dialogues in Human Geography* 2.1 (2012), p. 7

<sup>173</sup> The study of geography in the literature of postmodernism is highly dependent, of course, on the same subject matter in modernism. Famous texts range from the psychological/ philosophical analysis of the mental environments of the twentieth century in Marshall Berman’s *All That is Solid Melts Into Air* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982) to Andrew Thacker’s work on movement, technology, and the metaphorical and material spaces of early twentieth century modernism, *Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), and his edited collection with Peter Brooker, *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Places* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005) – both drawing their insights via the work of Jameson, Lefebvre, de Certeau and Foucault.

<sup>174</sup> See for instance Joan Brandt, *Geopoetics: The Politics of Mimesis in Poststructuralist French Poetry and Theory* (California: Stanford University Press, 1997)

<sup>175</sup> Ian Davidson, *Radical Spaces of Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan: 2010), p. 6-7

<sup>176</sup> Sigrid Weigel, ‘On the “Topographical Turn”: Concepts of Space in Cultural Studies and *Kulturwissenschaften*’, in Theo D’haen and Iannis Goerlandt eds., *Literature for Europe?* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), p. 62

<sup>177</sup> Sigrid Weigel, ‘On the “Topographical Turn”: Concepts of Space in Cultural Studies and *Kulturwissenschaften*’, *ibid.* See also Ernest W. B. Hess-Lüttich’s account of the translation and mis-translation of literary-geographical concepts between English and German, ‘Spatial turn: On the Concept of Space in Cultural Geography and Literary Theory’, *Meta-Carto-Semiotics: Journal for Theoretical Cartography* 5 (2012)

<sup>178</sup> Bertrand Westphal (trans. Tally Jr.), *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Robert Tally Jr. ed., *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Robert Tally Jr., *Spatiality* (London: Routledge, 2013);

geocriticism approaches its multi-lingual corpus by way of the ever-shifting image of ‘real-and-imagined’ place<sup>179</sup> – i.e., the thirdspace which is both real *and* imagined, and which refers to the ‘complex skein of imaginary relations’<sup>180</sup> between navigation and speculation, symbol and land. Westphal argues that the perceived cleavage between reality and fiction – and between worldly and otherworldly places – is an anachronism, given what we know of liturgical and medieval concepts of space-time; he cites Giuseppe Tardiola’s atlas of fantastical places in the Middle Ages: ‘Geographical space is a framework for interpreting signs; the image of the world is a semiotic encyclopedia open to meditation’.<sup>181</sup> Westphal’s writing style suits the thirdspace of his subject matter, as much for the hand-shaking across languages with writers such as Georges Perec and Jorge Luis Borges as for the intrusion of his own magical realist parables – such as the Snow White narrative of his section ‘Of Stone and Paper: Does the Text Precede the Place?’.<sup>182</sup>

The gathering of English language geocriticism in Tally Jr.’s *Geocritical Explorations* markets itself as having a particular set of ‘methodological invariants’.<sup>183</sup> It will build on Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘geophilosophy’,<sup>184</sup> we are told in Westphal’s foreword; it will be affiliated with the nomadic perspective and with post-1970s work in philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and postmodern cultural geography (‘above all Edward Soja and his notion of *thirdspace*’<sup>185</sup>); it will respond to possible-world theory and to contemporary postcolonial and globalization theory; it will example ‘true interactions’ between disciplines such as literary studies, geography, urbanism and architecture. As the above characterisation may indicate, it is uncertain whether Westphal and Tally Jr.’s geocriticism exists as a determination of a gathering field for the future, or as a retrospective naming of the trending together of literary studies and some of the spatial theories already discussed. In as much as it applies to poetry, it focusses on the mobile and the global – two themes which have proven to be valuable counters in contemporary poetic criticism. Favouring the ‘geo-centred’ rather than the ‘ego-centred’ approach, geocriticism is answerable not to the study of single authors, but to certain cardinal themes: of multi-layered identities, multiple perspectives, a ‘polysensuous’ approach to

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Robert Tally Jr., *Utopia in the Age of Globalization: Space, Representation, and the World-System* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>179</sup> Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (New York: Wiley, 1996)

<sup>180</sup> Robert T. Tally Jr., ‘Translator’s Preface’, Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. x

<sup>181</sup> Giuseppe Tardiola cited in Bertrand Westphal. *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, *ibid.*, p. 58

<sup>182</sup> Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, *ibid.*, p. 153

<sup>183</sup> Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, *ibid.*, p. 187-8

<sup>184</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); see also Bonta and Protevi, *Deleuze and Geophilosophy: A Guide and Glossary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004)

<sup>185</sup> Bertrand Westphal, ‘Foreword’, in Robert Tally Jr. ed., *Geocritical Explorations: Space, Place, and Mapping in Literary and Cultural Studies*, *ibid.*, p. xiii

place, an understanding of the meshing of space-time and its ‘geometric and philosophical coordinates’, and, crucially, ‘permanent fluidity’ and ‘transgressivity’.<sup>186</sup>

To take an example: the habits of a poet and critic such as Pierre Joris are certainly within the remit of a worldly geocriticism. His model in *A Nomad Poetics* (2003) of the ‘noet’, or nomad-poet, recruits the figure of the multi-lingual nomad well loved by the European intellectual industry (as does his poetic publication of the same year, *Permanent Diaspora*):

NOET: NO stands for play, for no-saying & guerrilla war techniques, for gNOsis & NOetics. ET stands for et cetera, the always ongoing process, the no closure: it stands for ExtraTerrestrial, for the continuous state of being outside (not a margin that would be always definable as the margin of something called the real (territory)). ET stands for Electronic Terrain, where the poem composes, recomposes, decomposes before your eyes, de & re-territorializing at will or chance...<sup>187</sup>

To look into Joris’s writing in this publication is to see a speedily moving horizon of ampersands, odd and incomplete reversals, multi-lingual referential gestures, manifesto style upper case,<sup>188</sup> and estranged territories (as above, the word ‘territory’ divided off by not one but two parentheses). The implied haste of the ampersand – with which postmodern and contemporary poetry is riddled, after its renovation as a sign of shorthand by Black Mountain and Beat poets in the twentieth century<sup>189</sup> – is already an uncertain geographical term. Having given its name to an alternative language-focused poetry review and press (the annual *Ampersand Review*<sup>190</sup>), it is perhaps not strange to see it as a sign of current interest in the small linguistics of geography and space.

Today, Joris’s poet-nomad – in terms of its stylistics and of its philosophy – is both increasingly relevant *and* suspiciously reactionary. Doreen Massey’s work on the ‘global sense of place’ (1991)<sup>191</sup> has been updated through ‘digital nomadism’ (Makimoto and Manners, 1997)<sup>192</sup> and ‘electronomadics’ (Mitchell, 2003).<sup>193</sup> Michiel de Lange’s work on the new nomad of the wireless age

<sup>186</sup> Bertrand Westphal, ‘Foreword’, *ibid.*, p. xiv, xiv, xiv, xv. The manifesto/description is available in full on pages xiv-xv.

<sup>187</sup> Pierre Joris, *A Nomad Poetics* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), p. 31

<sup>188</sup> This is an inherited aesthetic from modernist manifestos, including texts by Charles Olson, Ezra Pound, and the Vorticists. ‘GO to the treeless planes of the Pleistocene, DO NOT turn back, DO NOT RECOLLECT, GO flat out at top speed across curve of earth is the only way.’ Pierre Joris, *A Nomad Poetics*, *ibid.*, p. 5

<sup>189</sup> Notably Ginsberg and Berryman, as Kevin Nance observes in ‘Poets & Ampersands’, *News & Writers* (2012), available online at: <[http://www.pw.org/content/poets\\_ampersands](http://www.pw.org/content/poets_ampersands)> (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>190</sup> *Ampersand Review*, online at: <<http://ampersandreview.com/category/poetry/>> (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>191</sup> Doreen Massey, ‘A Global Sense of Place’, *Marxism Today* 38 (1991)

<sup>192</sup> Tsugio Makimoto and David Manners, *Digital Nomad* (New York: Wiley, 1997)

<sup>193</sup> William Mitchell, *Me++ : The Cyborg Self and the Networked City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p. 7

provides a useful summary;<sup>194</sup> he cites the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, whose *Liquid Modernity* (2000) announces the turn of the twenty-first century's confirmation of 'the revenge of nomadism over the principle of territoriality and settlement'.<sup>195</sup> The responsiveness of certain factions of recent and emerging poetry criticism to these trans-global philosophies means that the romanticism of the nomad as 'explicitly a hero of postmodernity thinking'<sup>196</sup> is continued beyond the textual signs on the page; it becomes an ideological positioning of writing and reading consciousness. The deep resistance to – even the critical disgust for – the locational and the place-bound in textual products is a constant cultural invitation to the performance of the 'intellectual nomad'<sup>197</sup> as a perpetual stray: like that most famous of strays, Sweeney, who, in the words of Seamus Heaney,

was revolted by the thought of known places  
and dreamed strange migrations<sup>198</sup>

Nomadic theory is somewhat of a sacred cow in modern literary geography. It has been imagined more particularly as a school in its own right, using terms like 'nomadology' and 'nomadography'<sup>199</sup> – perhaps not surprising considering how well it plays with others; it's an easy meld of disciplines and 'lines of flight', as applicable to new technology and global capitalism as it is to textual mechanics. With its focus on the border-crossings of fluid identity, it can also be easily likened to the activities of interdisciplinary exchange itself. This thesis, however, aims to take nomad theory as (merely) an important element in the history of textual criticism rather than as an irresistible paradigm. It will be wary of the flux between text and value in post-Deleuzian analysis and its various "nomad(s) par

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<sup>194</sup> Michiel de Lange, *Moving Circles: mobile media and playful identities* (Unpublished PhD dissertation: Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2010). De Lange has made his dissertation available online at <http://www.bijt.org/wordpress/2010/11/21/download-my-phd-dissertation-moving-circles/> (accessed 24/08/2014); his recent article on the traditions of 'reading the city' in anthropology and cultural geography as transformed by modern smart cities is also of note: Michiel de Lange, 'Txt and the city', *Canvas* 8 (2012)

<sup>195</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 13

<sup>196</sup> John Durham Peters, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 33, cited in Michiel de Lange, *Moving Circles: mobile media and playful identities* (Unpublished PhD dissertation: Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2010)

<sup>197</sup> 'Intellectual nomad' is a term of aspiration often used by Kenneth White, including, for instance, in his definition of geopoetics on the Scottish Centre for Geopoetics website, online at: <http://www.geopoetics.org.uk/welcome/what-is-geopoetics/> (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>198</sup> Seamus Heaney, *Sweeney Astray* (London: Faber & Faber, 2001), p. 8

<sup>199</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Nomadology: The War Machine* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1986); Robert T. Tally Jr., 'Nomadography: The 'Early' Deleuze and the History of Philosophy', *Journal of Philosophy: A Cross-Disciplinary Inquiry* 5.11 (2010)

excellence”, whether that phrase is used, for instance, to describe the wandering Jew,<sup>200</sup> the theorist,<sup>201</sup> an individual writer,<sup>202</sup> or advanced capitalism.<sup>203</sup> (One remembers at this point Tim Cresswell’s sharp aside that the nomadic figure is now him or herself the ‘geographic metaphor *par excellence* of postmodernity’.<sup>204</sup>) Finally, there is a need to be wary of the dominance of the ‘kinetic elite’<sup>205</sup> in critical imaginations; recently, the New Mobilities Paradigm has been renovating mobilities theory work towards a greater dialectical concern with the social and political phenomena of human geographical trajectories, from the necessary presence of immobile infrastructures, to the class, gender, and race-based experiences of particular forms of immobility.<sup>206</sup> The question of ‘whose mobility?’, and how, is perhaps incongruous to the ‘globe-trotting semiotician’<sup>207</sup> we might imagine when we speak intellectually with the voice of the nomad. However, most of our human experience tells us that space is not *simply* nomadic. In the terms of this thesis, the coast is not merely a space of circulation and travel – though it has certainly been written as such – but also of holding; a site of jurisdiction over the movements of native and alien objects and people. In David Herd’s poetry responding to the shores of Dover, from the iconic citadel to immigration control and the Dover Immigration Removal Centre, we are reminded of the role of the UK Border Agency and its judicial processes and forms of detention. This runs from the fast or slow processing of visitors carrying an appropriate passport (‘miles from any place / likewise carrying an alias / following the direction of the land’<sup>208</sup>), to the enforcement of the coast as a metaphorical line of impasse (where it comes to the ‘wrong’ kind of people). And these judicial performances are themselves enclosed, of course, within

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<sup>200</sup> In Eran Kaplan, *The Jewish Radical Right: Revisionist Zionism and Its Ideological Legacy* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), p. 134

<sup>201</sup> In Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 74

<sup>202</sup> E.g., said of Rimbaud, in O. R. Dathorne, *Worlds Apart: Race in the Modern Period* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 164

<sup>203</sup> In Rosi Braidotti, ‘Introduction’ (unpaginated), in *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (Columbia University Press, 2011)

<sup>204</sup> Tim Cresswell, ‘Imagining the nomad: mobility and the postmodern primitive’, in Strohmayer and Benko eds., *Space and Social Theory: Geographical Interpretations of Post-Modernity* (New Jersey: Wiley, 1997), p. 360

<sup>205</sup> This concept, advanced by Peter Sloterdijk in *Kritik der zynischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), has been picked up by geographers including Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 152

<sup>206</sup> See Mimi Sheller and John Urry, ‘The new mobilities paradigm’, *Environment and Planning A* 38. 2 (2006) and the journal *Mobilities*, particularly the inaugural comments by Hannam, Sheller and Urry, ‘Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings’, *Mobilities* 1.1 (2006). Subsequent work includes John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); Peter Adey, *Mobility* (London: Routledge, 2009); Tim Cresswell, ‘Towards a Politics of Mobility’, *Environment and Planning D* 28. 1 (2010); Hvattum, Brenna, Elvebakk and Larsen eds., *Routes, Roads and Landscapes* (London: Ashgate, 2011), and Cresswell and Merriman eds., *Geographies of Mobilities: Practices, Spaces, Subjects* (London: Ashgate, 2012). For the phrase ‘global kinetic elite’, see its usage in John Armitage and Joanne Roberts eds., *Living with Cyberspace: Technology and Society in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 4, and Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 223

<sup>207</sup> Mike Crang, ‘Commentary’, *Environment and Planning A* 34 (2002), p. 573

<sup>208</sup> David Herd, ‘4 poems by way of document’, *Outwith* (Vancouver: BookThug, 2012), p. 23



the lines of the English language and the courtroom hearing – hence the text’s concern with English non-speakers and the transactions of hearing, attending, and attendance:

This is just to say –  
 when a detainee  
 from the Dover Immigration Removal Centre  
 applies for bail,  
 if he has a bail hearing –  
 which he is not entitled to attend –  
 though his lawyer is,  
 and the judge is,  
 and a representative of the Home Office is –  
 the bail hearing –  
 imagine –  
 is officially un-  
 recorded.<sup>209</sup>

Herd’s poem, above, is from a grouping of texts concerned with language and the human experience of the political ‘lawscapes’<sup>210</sup> of the coastline of southern England, particularly of those classified as outsiders; these will be treated in more detail – drawing out their relationship with Matthew Arnold’s Dover and Charles Olson’s Gloucester – in the coastal chapter. For their working through of the various political silencings and immobilities which underpin the ‘coast-as-mobility’ trope, Herd’s poems might be contrasted to the Scottish poet Kenneth White’s approach to the coastline, as well as his written manifesto of ‘geopoetics’ – both of which show an unguarded embrace with the geophilosophy of nomadism discussed above. White’s English language and French language essays and poems and his on-going geopoetics project are performed on the precarious edges of the transatlantic coastline where he has lived for decades in various locations. In his dozen or so publications which draw on this coastal paradigm<sup>211</sup> White has proven himself to be fully enamoured

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<sup>209</sup> ‘Fact’, in David Herd, *All Just* (London: Carcanet, 2012), p. 27

<sup>210</sup> Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, ‘Atmospheres of law: Senses, affects, lawscapes’, *Emotion, Space and Society* 27 (2013)

<sup>211</sup> From his essay-book on Robinson Jeffers, *The Coast Opposite Humanity* (Carmarthen: Unicorn Bookshop, 1975), to his travel writing collections *House of Tides: Letters from Brittany and Other Lands of the West* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2000) and *Across the Territories: Travels from Orkney to Rangiroa* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2004), to his Canadian “way-book” *The Blue Road* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1990), to his long and short poems collected, respectively, in *The Bird Path* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1989) and *Open*

with what he calls the ‘earth-itineraries’<sup>212</sup> of geographical literary criticism and philosophy. He places his version of geopoetics firmly within a history of Greek sailors, Icelandic sagas, and the Celto-Atlantic ‘erratic logic’<sup>213</sup> of travelling pilgrims, evinced in the largest English-language collection of his writing, *The Wanderer and his Charts* (2004). White’s love of what he calls coastal ‘edge-knowledge’ – inflected with the environmental details and book/map histories of Canadian, French, and Scottish coastal Northernness – is both nomadic and deeply place-specific. White’s is a good example of the headstrong application of ‘nomadic’ readings which fail to pause to consider the immobile and the political bounds also present in our environments. The troping of the coast as ‘nomadic’ space will be drawn into this thesis’s exploration of the tension between two poles of representation – ‘drift’ and ‘settlement’ – at the coastline. But the initial sett(ling) of this “line” is bound up in a wider context: the cartographic delineation of the land’s edge, and the Coastline Paradox which surrounds every act of land mass definition.

## Maps

Phil Steinberg and Stuart Elden have both recently drawn attention to the map on the cover of the Scottish government’s 2014 report on land tenure issues associated with an independent Scotland. In particular Steinberg assesses ‘the performative power of the maritime line’, where the boundary limits are drawn in not just ‘to illustrate specific issues regarding rights to offshore resources but rather to connote the space of the nation’. In this case, the map shows both the Civil Jurisdiction Offshore Activities Boundary of 1987 (a simplified latitudinal version of a line delimiting international law) and the 1999 Scottish Adjacent Waters line. The double vision of the two lines partly exploits an ambiguity in meaning, Steinberg observes, between legal technicalities and public perception, confusing the outer marking of territorial sovereignty and of sovereign rights to resources at sea (‘the former is constitutive of the state’s extent whereas the other is subsequent to it’).<sup>214</sup>

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*World: The Collected Poems 1960-2000* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2003), to his published interview *Coast to Coast: Interviews and Conversations, 1985-1995* (Glasgow: Open World, 1996).

<sup>212</sup> Kenneth White, *On the Atlantic Edge: A Geopoetics Project* (Ross-shire: Sandstone Press, 2006), p. 49

<sup>213</sup> Kenneth White, *The Wanderer and His Charts: Essays on Cultural Renewal* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2004), p. 5. This book is sometimes referred to by an alternate title, *The Wanderer and His Charts: Exploring the Fields of Vagrant Thought and Vagabond Beauty*.

<sup>214</sup> Phil Steinberg, ‘Mapping Scotland’s Waters’ (May 24, 2014), blogged online at:

<<http://philsteinberg.wordpress.com/2014/05/24/mapping-scotlands-waters/>> (accessed 25/06/2014)

This is one instance of the continued testing of the coastal border as a site of production for the cultural imagination of the state, or the land; it also showcases the role of types of “immappancy” (approximate to illiteracy) underpinning the public and rhetorical power of maps. Meanwhile, the problematic of literary locatedness briefly discussed above,<sup>215</sup> and ironized in poetic texts such as Adrienne Rich’s *An Atlas of the Difficult World* (1991), is necessarily involved with the history of cartography as itself a cultural artefact. This is one of the major concerns through which contemporary cultural geography, as well as the early mainstream of discussions in cross-disciplinary literary geography, has established itself; it is also of major concern to the coastal work considered in this thesis, particularly that focussed on the challenging nature of the littoral boundary (Mark Dickinson’s *Littoral*, 2007) or on meta-histories of coastal navigation and colonisation (Colin Simms’ *No North Western Passage*, 1976). The following brief survey aims to provide the necessary context to contemporary literary-geographical thinking, highlighting as it does the importance of cartography to the major crossings of literary theory into geographical understanding. Critical readings of the spatial status of text and the textual status of land are necessarily involved with the fate of cartographic epistemologies across disciplines; this section will introduce the lateral spread of some of these discussions of the metaphorical and conceptual connections between mapping, writing, and reading the land. It will finish by considering other examples of poets’ use of the explicit tools and materials of both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ sciences of geography, including the drift maps invoked by Dorn, and by J. H. Prynne, in the coastal poem from which this survey takes its title.

Doubtless, the ‘lateral mappings’<sup>216</sup> of spatial theory across disciplines<sup>217</sup> and into literature are at their most rife around the language of cartography. As Louise Mackenzie notes, a WorldCat search in February 2010 for book-length studies using the combined keywords ‘cartography and literature’ yielded 754 results, of which 575 (76 percent) were published after 1980.<sup>218</sup> In the 1990s we were all ‘fashionably fascinated’ by maps<sup>219</sup> and by the ‘knowledge space’<sup>220</sup> they created; in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, unsurprising given current work in techno-environmentalism, this concern with mapping and cartography is still in the ascendant. This refers to both static and dynamic forms of modelling, and to a range of arguments about the figurative and metaphorical power of maps, given the dictum that ‘the

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<sup>215</sup> See p. 42-47, this thesis

<sup>216</sup> Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso Books, 1989), p. 2

<sup>217</sup> See Barney Warf and Santa Arias eds., *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2008)

<sup>218</sup> Louisa Mackenzie, *The Poetry of Place: Lyric, Landscape, and Ideology in Renaissance France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), p. 205

<sup>219</sup> Denis Cosgrove, *Mappings* (London: Reaktion, 1999), p. 3

<sup>220</sup> David Turnbull, *Masons, Tricksters, and Cartographers: Comparative Studies in the Sociology of Scientific and Indigenous Knowledge* (Psychology Press, 2000), p. 165

map is not the territory'<sup>221</sup> but that it 'engenders the territory'<sup>222</sup> and that it can itself be seen as a cultural and ideological terrain, as David Turnbull argues.<sup>223</sup> Literature has significantly absorbed and built upon this conceptual work on the map as a 'technology of power'.<sup>224</sup>

As a canonical crossing point between literary studies and geographical theory in the latter half of the twentieth century, the strained topic of cartographic representation is vital to the framing of this thesis. The critical campaigns of the last three decades to re-assess the language of mapping are key to cultural geography's evincing of the representational difficulties of landscape. In turn, that disciplinary concern permeates this current work's investment in the lines drawn by language and cultural geography's theories of representation – particularly at the coast and the forest, where often conventional mapping strategies have been seen to fail (whether that be due to the opacity of the terrain and the aesthetic associations of dense tree cover, or the cartographic paradox of the coast "line"). As described previously, issues of the relative status of literary locatedness – both in the geographers' discussions concerning the false polarities of fact and fiction and of environment and literature,<sup>225</sup> and as an age-old conceptual wrangle in the writing of the British landscape<sup>226</sup> – are profoundly written into the modern debates on cartographic representation seen on the next few pages. The survey which follows will introduce the converging discussions around practical, conceptual, artistic, and literary mapping, before focussing on a number of key examples of contemporary poets drawing on resources related to this cartographic problematisation, as well as other instances of the documentary histories of "geography, proper" being explicitly addressed, in new form, in post-1970s poetry.

Maps are invoked – although metaphorically – in Peter Jackson's *Maps of Meaning* (1989), one of the cornerstones of the discipline of cultural geography. Since then, the histories of cultural, social, and technological relations told by mapping and surveying have been accounted for in a number of key texts by Wood, Cosgrove, Dodge, and others.<sup>227</sup> The role of maps as 'a form of political discourse'<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics* (1933), p. 750

<sup>222</sup> Jean Baudrillard (trans. Glaser), *Simulacra and Simulation* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p.

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<sup>223</sup> David Turnbull, *Maps Are Territories: Science is an Atlas* (Geelong: Deakin University Press, 1989)

<sup>224</sup> J. B. Harley, 'Deconstructing the Map' (1989), printed in Barnes and Duncan eds., *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 244

<sup>225</sup> See 'Words and worlds' section, from p. 25, this thesis

<sup>226</sup> See 'What we hope to call "land"' section, from p. 42, this thesis

<sup>227</sup> Denis Wood, *The Power of Maps* (New York: Guilford Press, 1992); Denis Cosgrove ed., *Mappings* (London: Reaktion, 1999), particularly Cosgrove's introduction, 'Mapping Meaning', and James Corner's paper, 'The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique, and Invention'; John Pickles, *A History of Spaces: Cartographic Reason, Mapping and the Geo-Coded World* (London: Routledge, 2004); Martin Dodge, Rob Kitchin, and Chris Perkins eds., *Rethinking Maps: New Frontiers in Cartographic Theory* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009); Dodge, Kitchin, and Perkins eds., *The Map Reader: Theories of Mapping Practice and Cartographic Representation* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

was most famously tackled by J. B. Harley, drawing on Foucault, both in his 1988 essay in *The Iconography of Landscape*, and his more well-known essay the following year, 'Deconstructing the Map',<sup>229</sup> which, drawing on the 1980s force of the will to deconstruct, exposed maps as ideological artefacts.<sup>230</sup> This 'epistemic break' from the assumption that maps are "true", or that they represent zero-degree intervention,<sup>231</sup> was confirmed in Mark Monmonier's exposé of 1991, *How to Lie with Maps*, reminding readers that after all, in the words of J. K. Wright, 'Map Makers are Human'.<sup>232</sup> Commercial and political imperatives coded into the historical and modern map meant that, in the words of Jacobs, 'the making of maps constructed a possessable "other" place (and people) and provided a practical guide for dispossessing "others" of their place';<sup>233</sup> and, in Harley's terms, that maps were and are a clear tool in the 'acquisition and maintenance of power'.<sup>234</sup> This interest in map-making and territorial indoctrination was also the subject of a recent exhibition of the maps collections at the British Library, *Magnificent Maps: Power, Propaganda and Art*.<sup>235</sup>

The role of theory – including literary theory – in approaching map-objects was defended in a special issue of *Imago Mundi* in 1996, including notable essays by Matthew Edney and Catherine Delano Smith.<sup>236</sup> Many of the theory-based investigations of the epistemologies of mapping in the last three decades have also thrown attention back onto the word 'map' as a verb rather than a noun, from the accounts of variegated mapping practices and vernacular mapping gathered in Tim Ingold's *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (2000) and of mobile mapping practices in Denis Cosgrove's 'Moving Maps' chapter (*Geography and Vision*, 2008), to the account of the semiotic and cognitive processes of the writing and reading of maps in Alan M. MacEachren's *How Maps Work: Representation, Visualisation, and Design* (1995). The history of sovereign maps and the imperial discourses of cartography given by scholars such as Christian Jacob<sup>237</sup> and Kagan and Schmidt<sup>238</sup> were just one strand of a cartographic turn which also focussed on

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<sup>228</sup> J. B. Harley, 'Silences and Secrecy: The Hidden Agenda of Cartography in Early Modern Europe', *Imago Mundi* 44 (1988)

<sup>229</sup> J. B. Harley, 'Deconstructing the Map', *Cartographica* 26.2 (Spring 1989)

<sup>230</sup> J. B. Harley, 'Maps, Knowledge, and Power', Cosgrove and Daniels eds., *The Iconography of Landscape* (1988); J. B. Harley, 'Deconstructing the Map', *Cartographica* 26.2 (Spring 1989). Harley's essays are now collected in his *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography* (2001).

<sup>231</sup> Jeremy W. Crampton, 'Maps as social constructions: power, communication and visualization', *Progress in Human Geography* 25.2 (2001), p. 235

<sup>232</sup> J. K. Wright, 'Map Makers are Human', *Geographical Review* 32 (1942)

<sup>233</sup> J. M. Jacobs, cited in David Howard, 'Cartographies and Visualisation', in Shirley Chew and David Richards eds., *A Concise Companion to Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 141

<sup>234</sup> J. B. Harley, 'Silences and Secrecy: The Hidden Agenda of Cartography in Early Modern Europe', *Imago Mundi* 44 (1988), p. 57

<sup>235</sup> *Magnificent Maps: Power, Propaganda and Art*, The British Library, 30<sup>th</sup> April to 19<sup>th</sup> September 2010

<sup>236</sup> Matthew H. Edney, 'Theoretical Aspects of the History of Cartography: A Discussion of Concepts, Approaches, and New Directions', *Imago Mundi* 48 (1996); Catherine Delano Smith, 'Why Theory in the History of Cartography?', *Imago Mundi* 48 (1996)

<sup>237</sup> Christian Jacob (trans. Tom Conley), *The sovereign map: theoretical approaches in cartography throughout history* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006)

personal cartography, affective mapping, and mental maps, as in Peter Gould and Rodney White's publication of that name.<sup>239</sup> These 'soft' ideas of mapping are tackled in a number of twenty-first century academic and popular works,<sup>240</sup> and are also developed through work on visual art, cartographic aesthetics, and theories of representation.<sup>241</sup>

The interpretive model of reading the map as a text and an artefact of cultural practice<sup>242</sup> has found favour with a number of key books of discourse-historical criticism, particularly those touching on the Renaissance 'cartographic impulse'.<sup>243</sup> Modernist mapping has also grown exponentially, although often focusing on the modernist novel to a greater degree than its poetry<sup>244</sup> – an exception being Thacker's account of Imagist poetics.<sup>245</sup> The contemporary era of mapping theory also allows literary scholars and historians to explore the spatial regimes and technologies of the Romantic sublime and other literary genres representing the space of the Britain.<sup>246</sup> Beyond canonical British genres, the discourse of mapping has also been variously presented as uniquely apt to particular times, places, and political climates informed by texts and maps of different vintages, as with the territorial disputes of

<sup>238</sup> Richard Kagan and Benjamin Schmidt, 'Maps and the Early Modern State: Official Cartography', in David Woodward ed., *The History of Cartography, vol. 3: Cartography in the European Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007)

<sup>239</sup> Peter Gould and Rodney White, *Mental Maps* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1974)

<sup>240</sup> Including Louise Swaaji and Jean Klar's *The Atlas of Experience* (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2000), Giuliana Bruno's *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (London: Verso Books, 2002) and Katharine Harmon's *You Are Here: Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004)

<sup>241</sup> Including Denis Cosgrove's argument for attending to contemporary avant-garde practises of mapping as much as the pre-modern cartographic documents (Cosgrove, 'Maps, Mapping, Modernity: Art and Cartography in the Twentieth Century', *Imago Mundi: The International Journal for the History of Cartography* 57.1 (2005)), Denis Wood and John Krygier's edited special issue, *Cartographic Perspectives* 53: Art and Cartography (2006), including Cosgrove's intro 'Art and Mapping: An Introduction', Katherine Harmon's *The Map as Art: Contemporary Artists Explore Cartography* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009), and Karen O'Rourke's recent *Walking and Mapping: Artists as Cartographers* (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2013).

<sup>242</sup> See Howard Marchitello, 'Political Maps: The Production of Cartography and Chorography in Early Modern England', in Ezell and O'Keefe eds., *Cultural Artifacts and the Production of Meaning: The Page, the Image, and the Body* (Michigan: University of Michigan, 1994)

<sup>243</sup> Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Tom Conley, *The Self-made Map: Cartographic Writing in Early Modern France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Bernhard Klein, *Maps and the Writing of Space in Early Modern England and Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Ricardo Padrón's *The Spacious Word: Cartography, Literature, and Empire in Early Modern Spain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), and Bernhard Klein and Andrew Gordon eds., *Literature, Mapping, and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>244</sup> See for instance Eric Bulson, *Novels, Maps, Modernity: The Spatial Imagination, 1850-2000* (New York: Routledge, 2007), and Robert T. Tally Jr, *Melville, Mapping and Globalization: Literary Cartography in the American Baroque Writer* (London: Continuum, 2009).

<sup>245</sup> Andrew Thacker, *Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003)

<sup>246</sup> Notably in Rachel Hewitt, 'William Wordsworth and the Irish Ordnance Survey: "Dreaming O'er the Map of Things"', *Wordsworth Circle* 38 (2006); Ron Broglio, *Technologies of the Picturesque: British Art, Poetry, and Instruments, 1750-1830* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2008); Rachel Hewitt, *Map of a Nation: A Biography of the Ordnance Survey* (London: Granta, 2011).

indigenous Australia and Canada,<sup>247</sup> or Damian Walford Davies' account of the 'triangulation' of cartographic imaginations in modern Anglophonic literatures of Wales.<sup>248</sup> The imaginative dimensions of mapping – in process, dream, and text – have also been celebrated in popular studies and books (such as Peter Turchi's *Maps of the Imagination: The Writer as Cartographer*, 2004) which draw on the quixotic novels and thought-pieces of mapping of the twentieth and twenty first century,<sup>249</sup> after Jorge Luis Borges' famous fantastical account of the Ludic fallacy.<sup>250</sup>

In other words, mapping has clearly become a major topic of traditional literary study as well as a cross-disciplinary methodology. The 'use and abuse'<sup>251</sup> of cartography by now exists as a broad church in the humanities. It can be used as a theme to tackle visual geography, information graphics, historical landscape aesthetics, and the shifting landscapes of political identity. The forthcoming book *Mapping Across Academia* (2014) promises to tackle the many disciplinary biases which can accompany the use of the cartographic metaphor (including an essay on literary studies),<sup>252</sup> following on from Mark Monmonier's more technical guide to simple and complex two dimensional mapping as understood in the humanities.<sup>253</sup> The technological advances in dynamic cartographies and spatial modelling on the page and on the screen also create a moving frontier in humanities research, from new approaches to carto-bibliography and geographical studies of the book in historical geography<sup>254</sup> to the use of multi-media mapping and cartographic encounters of increasing sophistication in the digital humanities.<sup>255</sup> Some of these technologically informed explorations of cartograms in poetry

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<sup>247</sup> Graham Huggan, *Territorial Disputes: Maps and Mapping Strategies in Contemporary Canadian and Australian Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994)

<sup>248</sup> Damian Walford Davies, *Cartographies of Culture: New Geographies of Welsh Writing in English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012).

<sup>249</sup> Including James Cowan's *A Mapmaker's Dream: The Meditations of Fra Mauro, Cartographer to the Court of Venice* (Boston: Shambhala, 1996), Miles Harvey's *The Island of Lost Maps: A True Story of Cartographic Crime* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2000), Rebecca Solnit's *Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), and Judith Schalansky's *Atlas of Remote Islands: Fifty Islands I Have Not Visited and Never Will* (London: Penguin, 2010).

<sup>250</sup> I am referring here to Jorge Luis Borges' famous 1946 short story 'On Exactitude in Science', concerning a useless map simulacra: the 'Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it'. Available in Andrew Harley's translation *Collected Fictions* (London: Penguin, 1998)

<sup>251</sup> Matthew Edney, 'Mapping Empires, Mapping Bodies: Reflections on the Use and Abuse of Cartography', *Treballs de la Societat Catalana de Geografia* 63 (2007)

<sup>252</sup> Andrew Frayn, "'Now— well, look at the chart": Mapping, Maps and Literature', in Stanley D. Brunn and Martin Dodge eds., *Mapping Across Academia* (New York: Springer, forthcoming 2014)

<sup>253</sup> Mark Monmonier, *Mapping It Out: Expository Cartography for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993)

<sup>254</sup> See in particular the historical geographer Keith Lilley's on-going project 'Mutable Mappings and Spatial Humanities: Negotiating Cartographic Cultures in a Digital World', based at Queen's University, Belfast, and Mitch Fraas's excellent blog *Mapping Books*, at: <<http://mappingbooks.blogspot.co.uk/>> (accessed 25/08/2014), which includes research on 'screen scaping' the movement of books between medieval libraries, on digitally cataloguing antique library markings to reconstruct networks of texts, and on the Atlas of Early Printing.

<sup>255</sup> See in particular the large interdisciplinary project at Lancaster University, 'Spatial Humanities: Texts, Geographic Information Systems and Places', available at: <<http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/spatialhum/theproject.html>> (accessed 25/08/2014)

and fiction act as a corrective to previous narratives of the ‘stable’ cartographic form, in particular those which respond to the arguments over the usefulness of literary atlases and locative analysis post Malcolm Bradbury<sup>256</sup> and Franco Moretti.<sup>257</sup> Particularly valuable examples of literary criticism augmented by the philosophical questions around new spatial technologies, and sprung from Moretti and Bradbury, are the several studies by David Cooper<sup>258</sup> and Barbara Piatti, Lorenz Hurni, and Aneka Reuschel,<sup>259</sup> as well as a number of other volumes<sup>260</sup> and online resources<sup>261</sup> including the Poetry Atlas.<sup>262</sup> The collected papers on the theme of ‘cartography’ on the Literary Geographies blog also indicates the many ways mapping might be approached in criticism, including readings responding to toponymy and cartographic naming, colonialism and empire, aesthetic tradition, spatial theories of fiction, performative and cognitive mapping, and maps of selves, empires, and phantasmic spaces.<sup>263</sup>

Poetry has responded profusely to these promptings from the newly energised critical cartography of the twentieth century. Poetry critics such as Selby,<sup>264</sup> Mackenzie,<sup>265</sup> Van Noy,<sup>266</sup> Crawford,<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Malcolm Bradbury, *The Atlas of Literature* (London: De Agostini Editions, 1996)

<sup>257</sup> Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900* (London: Verso Books, 1998). Even Moretti has argued that literary atlases, such as those by Bartholomew, Hardwick, Daiches, and Bradbury, have tended to disable complex interpretative strategies.

<sup>258</sup> See David Cooper and Ian Gregory, ‘Thomas Gray, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Geographical Information Systems: A Literary GIS of Two Lake District Tours’, *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing* 3 (2009), David Cooper and Ian Gregory, ‘Mapping the English Lake District: a literary GIS’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 36 (2011), and David Cooper and Gary Priestnall, ‘The Processual Intertextuality of Literary Cartographies: Critical and Digital Practices’, *The Cartographic Journal* special issue: Cartographies of Fictional Worlds, 48.4 (2011)

<sup>259</sup> See Piatti and Hurni, ‘Mapping the ontologically unreal: Counterfactual spaces in literature and cartography’, *The Cartographic Journal* 4 Special Issue: Art & Cartography (2009), Piatti, Reuschel, Bär, Cartwright, and Hurni, ‘Mapping Literature. Towards a Geography of Fiction’, in Cartwright et al. eds., *Cartography and Art* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2009), Piatti and Hurni, ‘Editorial: Cartographies of Fictional Worlds’, *The Cartographic Journal* 48.4 (November 2011), and Reuschel and Hurni, ‘Mapping Literature: Visualisation of Spatial Uncertainty in Fiction’, *The Cartographic Journal* 48.4 Special Issue: Cartographies of Fictional Worlds (2011). In this last special issue, see also Annika Richterich’s ‘Cartographies of Digital Fiction: Amateurs Mapping a New Literary Realism’.

<sup>260</sup> Janet Abrams and Peter Hall eds., *Else/Where: Mapping New Cartographies of Networks and Territories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Design Institute, 2006); David Bodenhamer, John Corrigan, and Trevor Harris eds., *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); Terence Cavanaugh and Jerome Burg eds., *Bookmapping: Lit Trips and Beyond* (London: International Society for Technology in Education, 2011)

<sup>261</sup> Particularly the project *A Literary Atlas of Europe: Mapping and Analysing the Geography of Fiction with Interactive Tools* at <<http://www.literaturatlas.eu/en/>> (accessed 25/08/2014), and Barbara Hui’s *Litmap / Mapping Sebald* experiment at <<http://barbarahui.net/litmap/>> (accessed 25/08/2014)

<sup>262</sup> Online at <<http://www.poetryatlas.com/>> (accessed 25/08/2014)

<sup>263</sup> See <<http://literarygeographies.wordpress.com/litgeog-mapping/>> (accessed 25/08/2014)

<sup>264</sup> Nick Selby, ‘“Created Space”: Mapping America as Poem in Gary Snyder’s Mountains and Rivers Without End and Susan Howe’s Secret History of the Dividing Line’, *Journal of American Studies* 39.1 (2005)

<sup>265</sup> See the chapter ‘The Poet and the Mapmaker’, in Louisa Mackenzie, *The Poetry of Place: Lyric, Landscape and Ideology in Renaissance France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011)

<sup>266</sup> Rick Van Noy, *Surveying the Interior: Literary Cartographers and the Sense of Place* (Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 2003)



Alexander,<sup>268</sup> Riley,<sup>269</sup> Newmann,<sup>270</sup> and, in particular, Haft,<sup>271</sup> have written usefully on the measures and scapes of the land in map-conscious poems; both Haft and Newmann also have full-length volumes on twentieth-century American poetry and cartography forthcoming.<sup>272</sup> The response to Harley's point that 'postmodernism offers a challenge to read maps in ways that could reciprocally enrich the reading of other texts',<sup>273</sup> in poetry, includes a range of activities: the writing of new cartographic poems or visual maps, the consulting of existing historical maps as inter-textual sources, the insertion of maps or mapping paraphernalia (for instance, as the book cover), the explicit reference to surveyors and mapmakers, and the writing of the imagined experience of affective mapping.

Original maps by British and Irish poets include Edwin Morgan's famous 'Chaffinch Map of Scotland' (1965),<sup>274</sup> a dialect map of the names for the endemic finch / shielyfaw / britchie, whose own song also includes regional variations across the Scottish territory. Morgan's word-geography of names for chaffinch itself marks out the space of Scotland on the page, a national iconography made up of ornithological language: this is an approach frequent in the early black and white British linguistic atlases, classically, those national and regional examples of visual dialectology which built

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<sup>267</sup> Rachel Crawford, 'Cartography and the Poetry of Place', in Christine Gerrard ed., *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007)

<sup>268</sup> See the chapter 'Mapping Belfast: Urban Cartographies', in Neal Alexander, *Ciaran Carson: Space, Place, Writing* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010)

<sup>269</sup> Jeanette Riley, 'The 'words are maps': Locating Citizenship in the Poetry of Adrienne Rich', in Wadell ed., *'Catch if you can your country's moment': Recovery and Regeneration in the Poetry of Adrienne Rich* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007); Jeanette Riley, 'Eavan Boland's 'The Lost Land': Altering the Cartography of the Irish Poem', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 35.2 (2009)

<sup>270</sup> Alba Newmann, "Language is not a vague province": mapping and twentieth-century American poetry'. Unpublished PhD dissertation: The University of Texas at Austin (2006); available electronically from <<http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/2586/newmann56298.pdf>> (accessed 25/08/2014)

<sup>271</sup> See the following articles by Adele Haft: 'The Poet and The Map: (Di)Versifying the Teaching of Geography', *Cartographic Perspectives* 33 (1999); 'Poems Shaped Like Maps: (Di)Versifying the Teaching of Geography, II', *Cartographic Perspectives* 36 (2000); 'Maps of Memory: The Autobiographical Maps of J.B. Harley and Denise Levertov', *Mercator's World* 6.4 (2001); 'The Poet as Map-Maker: The Cartographic Inspiration and Influence of Elizabeth Bishop's 'The Map'', [(Di)Versifying the Teaching of Geography, III.] *Cartographic Perspectives* 38 (2001); 'Henry Reed's Poetic Map of Verona: [(Di)Versifying the Teaching of Geography, IV.]', *Cartographic Perspectives* 40 (2001); 'Earle Birney's 'Mappemounde': Visualizing Poetry with Maps', *Cartographic Perspectives* 43 (2002); 'A Poet's World on a Wheel: Grevel Lindop's 'Mappa Mundi.'', *Mercator's World* 8.2 (2003); 'Marianne Moore's 'Sea Unicorns and Land Unicorns': The 'Unreal Realities' of Early Modern Maps and Animals', *Cartographic Perspectives* 46 (2003); 'Karl Kirchwey's 'The Geographer's Line': Maps, Poetry, and Lewis & Clark', *The Portolan* 65 (2006); 'The Map Shows Me Where It Is You Are': Gloria Oden Responds to Elizabeth Bishop across National Geographic and Rand McNally World Maps', *Cartographic Perspectives* 61 (2008); 'Introduction to Maps and Mapping in Kenneth Slessor's Poetic Sequence The Atlas', *Cartographic Perspectives* 70 (2011, plus six subsequent articles on Kenneth Slessor's The Atlas, being published one per issue in *Cartographic Perspectives*); and 'The Map-makers' Colors': Maps in Twentieth-Century American Poetry in English', in Brossard and Manolescu eds., *Cartographies de l'Amérique Transatlantica: revue d'études américaines* 2 (2012), available online at <<http://transatlantica.revues.org/6149>> (accessed 25/08/2014)

<sup>272</sup> Haft, *Maps in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Book in progress); Newmann, *On the Map: Twentieth Century Poetry and Cartography* (Book in progress)

<sup>273</sup> J. B. Harley, 'Deconstructing the Map', *Cartographica* 26.2 (1989), p. 15

<sup>274</sup> Edwin Morgan, 'The Chaffinch Map of Scotland', in *The Second Life* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968), republished in Morgan, *Collected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1996), p. 179

on Harold Orton's eleven year survey of English speech patterns in the 1950s, such as North and Sharpe's *Word-geography of Cornwall* (1980).<sup>275</sup> The vernacular geography of Scotland presented by Morgan – which, as Haft observes, plays both with bird-range maps in guides like Peter Clement's *Finches and Sparrows* and, in its title, with the standardised large-scale British Ordnance survey “one-inch maps” – is one of a number of iconic concrete poetry word-maps.<sup>276</sup> In Allen Fisher's *Place*, his great 1970-82 cosmological project, we see a similar diagram of the land of the nation through word-geography in ‘Place XXVI’, in this case geological: ‘the white chalk veined to / through the roots / the ochre / & the sand / we try to penetrate / within ourselves / as if towards an earth / grey / London and the chalk’. The lines are placed at varying degrees of slightly skewed horizontal angles below each other, giving the impression of different levels of sediment in the earth. The print on the page moves mimetically ‘downwards’ through a ‘porous’ structure, to end on the final line at the deepest end of the page, ‘deeper than the seed’ – drawing from this textual and geological matter, in full layout, a familiar mimetic silhouette of Britain.<sup>277</sup>

As Denis Cosgrove remarks in *Geography and Vision*, Britain is the country most familiar with the authority of survey mapping: indeed ‘the survey movement peaked in the 1930s with the recruitment of schoolchildren from across England and Wales to map the use of every parcel of land, returning the results to London where they were compiled onto topographic base maps and coloured to reveal national patterns of land use’.<sup>278</sup> Alison Russell observes that this cartographic literacy led to a ‘sense of exhaustion’ of existing landscapes and forms in postmodern British travel writing<sup>279</sup> and thus to experimentation with ideas of survey and surveying. This follows on the rich Romantic traditions querying the perspectives of the British surveyors, as narrated in Rachel Hewitt's *Map of a Nation: A Biography of the Ordnance Survey* (2011). Modern British poetic texts which respond to the cultural specifics of the Ordnance Survey map in order to explore non-objective processes of mapping include Sean Borodale's *Walking To Paradise* (1990), a collection of twelve fold-out OS-map-sized poems written in the footsteps of Wordsworth and Coleridge's tours of the Lake District (1999) – according

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<sup>275</sup> See Harold Orton and Eugen Dieth, *A Questionnaire for a Linguistic Atlas of England* (Leeds: Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, 1952); Harold Orton, ‘Editorial Problems of an English Dialect Atlas’, in Lorraine Burghardt ed., *Dialectology: Problems and Perspectives* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1971); Harold Orton and Nathalia Wright, *A Word Geography of England* (New York: Seminar Press, 1974); and David North and Adam Sharpe, *Word-geography of Cornwall* (Cornwall: Institute of Cornish Studies, 1980).

<sup>276</sup> Including Canadian poet Earle Birney's ‘up her can nada’, John Hollander's ‘A State of Nature’, bpNichol's visual adaptations of Robert Gambles' Lake District guide and history as the poems ‘Man in Lakeland’ and ‘In Lakeland’, and the geographer Howard Horowitz's map-poems of Manhattan, Idaho, Whitewater and other regions, available online at <<http://www.wordmaps.net/index.html#othermaps>> (accessed 25/06/2014)

<sup>277</sup> Allen Fisher, *Place* (East Sussex: Reality Street, 2005), p. 77

<sup>278</sup> Denis Cosgrove, *Geography and Vision* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), p. 166. On this topic see also David Matless, ‘The Uses of Cartographic Literacy: Mapping, Survey and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Britain’, in Denis Cosgrove ed., *Mappings* (London: Reaktion, 1999)

<sup>279</sup> Alison Russell, ‘Introduction: Surveying the Territory’, in *Crossing Boundaries: Postmodern Travel Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001). See also Barthes, ‘The Literature of Exhaustion’, in *The Friday Book: Essays and other Nonfiction* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984)

with Damian Walford Davies' observation of the dialectics of *carta* and page in 'verbal chorography',<sup>280</sup> citing David Matless on bibliographic wayfaring: 'Unfolding the map unfolds the country'.<sup>281</sup> (Tim Robinson is another artist who has experimented with the techniques of book-production and map-production in his various *Folding Landscapes* publications, plotting the coastline of Galway and Connemara.<sup>282</sup>) Sean Borodale's London-based *Notes for an Atlas* (2007), another text working through cartographic resemblance, offers a pedestrian counter-tourism of the city, transcribing details from blowing leaves to tarmac cracks and banal surveillance of other people in the crowd, in an urban drift or *dérive* after the tradition of Machen<sup>283</sup> or Woolf.<sup>284</sup> Douglas Oliver's poem 'Ordnance Survey Map 178', from the collection *Oppo Hectic* (1969),<sup>285</sup> also deals with the dislocated geographies of the conventionally symbolic experience of the map on the page versus the haptic experiences of travel and of affective mapping ('Soaked, filthy, bursting / upright, transitional, we, the black earth fountaining, / detach ourselves from a lost field on the map'). The poem partly takes place in the realm of the official record of landscape and its normative processes of representation (the titular Ordnance Survey of Dorchester, published in 1960 as part of the OS Seventh Series), and partly as a disordered, personal journey through that same landscape – enacting a distinction between the tableau of the 'map', and the 'tour' by which the land is navigated.<sup>286</sup> These poems each therefore – conceptually or materially – invoke the 'cartographic fallacy' in their approach to the British land.<sup>287</sup>

Maps also recur in poems of historiographical meta-fiction. International examples include Susan Howe's *Secret History of the Dividing Line* (1978),<sup>288</sup> which works with the textual histories of the

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<sup>280</sup> Damian Walford Davies, *Cartographies of Culture: New Geographies of Welsh Writing in English* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2012), p. 1

<sup>281</sup> David Matless, 'The English outlook: a mapping of leisure, 1918-1939', in Nicholas Alfrey and Stephen Daniels eds., *Mapping the Landscape: Essays on Art and Cartography* (Nottingham: University of Nottingham Press, 1990), p. 29

<sup>282</sup> This is Robinson's Galway-based small press, which publishes hand-plotted maps and texts; see the publisher's website for list of volumes: <[http://www.foldinglandscapes.com/?page\\_id=14](http://www.foldinglandscapes.com/?page_id=14)> (accessed 25/08/2014)

<sup>283</sup> Arthur Machen, *The London Adventure or The Art of Wandering* (London: Martin Secker, 1924)

<sup>284</sup> Virginia Woolf, 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure' (1927), in *Collected Essays Vol. IV* (London: Hogarth Press, 1967)

<sup>285</sup> Douglas Oliver, 'Ordnance Survey Map 178', from the collection *Oppo Hectic* (1969) and reprinted in Crozier and Longville eds., *A Various Art* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1987)

<sup>286</sup> On this distinction see particularly Linde and Labov's 1975 study of speech acts and spatial lay-out through New York residents describing their apartments, described in de Certeau (trans. Rendall), *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 119

<sup>287</sup> I.e., the perceived divorce of maps from the original spatializing actions which created them. See Tim Ingold's chapter 'To journey along a way of life: maps, wayfinding and navigation', in *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>288</sup> See Rick Van Noy, 'Surveying the Sublime: Literary Cartographers and the Spirit of Place', in Steven Rosendale ed., *The Greening of Literary Scholarship: Literature, Theory, and the Environment* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2002), Nick Selby, "'Created Space': Mapping America as Poem in Gary Snyder's Mountains and Rivers without End and Susan Howe's Secret History of the Dividing Line', *Journal of American Studies* 39.1 (2005), and Elisabeth W. Joyce, *"The Small Space of a Pause": Susan Howe's Poetry and the Spaces Between* (NJ: Associated University Presses, 2010).

survey of the border between North Carolina and Virginia, drawing from William Byrd's *The History of the Dividing Line* and *The Secret History of the Line*, and Karl Kirchwey's 'The Geographer's Line' (1989), an autobiographical London-based re-versioning of the mappings of Lewis and Clark, published in *A Wandering Island* (1990).<sup>289</sup> Adele Haft also writes on Earle Birney's five-page poem 'Mappemounde' with its melancholic seafarer figure attempting to chart his way through the Psalter map, the Anglo-Saxon Cotton (Tiberius) map, the Leardo map, and the ocean portolan charts which typically depict coastal sections of the Atlantic.<sup>290</sup> (There is evidence to suggest that Birney's poems on Captain Cook and the navigations of the North West Passage were influential upon the British poets Colin Simms and Eric Mottram and their own work on coastal survey and navigation, which will be touched on later in this thesis.) In Britain again, the English poet Grevel Lindop's poem 'Mappa Mundi' (in *Tourists*, 1987) draws on the Hereford Mappa Mundi, the "body as map" Ebstorf map with its crucifixion scene, and Bevan and Phillott's *Medieval Geography* (1873), while Paul Muldoon's *Madoc: A Mystery* (1990) draws together maps, geometrical diagrams, and textual echoes of forms of Celtic exile, from its titular Welsh prince seafarer to modern Irish border anxieties.<sup>291</sup>

Irish poets have in particular evidenced a cartographic 'turn' and 'turn again' towards poems which deal with the colonial contexts of the modern and early modern mapping of Ireland.<sup>292</sup> Gillian Doherty's account of the many cultural texts and artefacts which companioned the 1824-1846 OS project, *The Irish Ordnance Survey: History, Culture, and Memory* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), includes an account of the poet James Clarence Mangan, who was in the employ of the Ordnance Survey, amongst other civic and local representatives.<sup>293</sup> Faber's U.S. edition (1979) of Seamus Heaney's *Field Work*, with its large scale antique map cover, is thus branded with the cultural importance of this visual survey – a crucial context for Heaney, whose poem 'Act of Union' (1975), for instance, is an ekphrastic encounter with the 'logo-map'<sup>294</sup> of Britain and Ireland, in a cartography of erotic domination between man and woman: 'I caress / The heaving province where our past has grown. / I am the tall kingdom over your shoulder'.<sup>295</sup> Brian Friel's famous 1980 play *Translations*,

<sup>289</sup> Adele Haft, 'Karl Kirchwey's 'The Geographer's Line': Maps, Poetry, and Lewis & Clark', *The Portolan* 65 (2006)

<sup>290</sup> Adele Haft, 'Earle Birney's 'Mappemounde': Visualizing Poetry with Maps', *Cartographic Perspectives* 43 (2002)

<sup>291</sup> See John Kerrigan, 'Paul Muldoon's Transits: Muddling through after *Madoc*', *Jacket* 20 (2002), available at <<http://jacketmagazine.com/20/kerr-muld.html>> (accessed 25/08/2014)

<sup>292</sup> Claire Connolly, 'The turn to the map: cartographic fictions in Irish culture', in Kreilkamp ed., *Éire/Land* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003)

<sup>293</sup> Rachel Hewitt also deals with Mangan's relationship with the Irish survey in her *Map of a Nation: A Biography of the Ordnance Survey*, *ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 175

<sup>295</sup> Seamus Heaney, 'Act of Union', *North* (London: Faber, 1975), p. 50. The 1983 poem and illustration 'Geography Lesson', by English poet John Fuller and political cartoonist Nicholas Garland, also anthropomorphises the silhouette of Britain and Ireland, as 'A sloppy nurse who hopes that maybe / No one

which draws on the map historian John Harwood Andrews' *A Paper Landscape: The Ordnance Survey in Nineteenth Century Ireland* (1975),<sup>296</sup> is – to the cartographer Andrews himself – the text which ‘has done more than anything else to make the cartography of Celtic names a fashionable subject’,<sup>297</sup> wearing on its sleeve its historical resentments concerning the Anglicization and transliteration of cultural places in the ‘possessing wor(l)ds’ of the Irish map.<sup>298</sup> Meanwhile, Ciaran Carson's dominance in the contemporary critical fields of poetry and literary geography is often explained by reference to the cartographic counter-discourses of his *Belfast Confetti* (1990).<sup>299</sup> The text presents a fractured city of ‘remembered maps’ and contrasting ‘surveillance map(s)’,<sup>300</sup> with epigraphs from Walter Benjamin, Kevin Lynch's *Image of the City* (1960), and the 1678 *Ordinance of the Corporation of Belfast*. The Wake Forest University Press edition (1990), with its black and white aerial survey of Belfast on the cover, and the Silver Buckle Press small-run edition (1993), with its city landscape formed of cut outs in the paper, respond materially to the text's concerns: building plans, street directories, and military cartographic projection; spaces of IRA, paramilitary, and English surveillance; riots, terrorist attacks, and infrastructural damage; the mnemonics of location names and district codes; the discursive crossings of personal and political maps in the urban terrain. It is a book concerned with the vicissitudes of history and with competing forces of memory and revision in a city in perpetual motion, with its ‘meta-cartography’<sup>301</sup> crossed into the linguistic forms of an imagined verbal map, in which ‘every move is punctuated’: ‘A fount of broken type. (...) / This hyphenated line, a burst of rapid fire ... / (...) All the alleyways and sidestreets blocked with stops and colons’.<sup>302</sup>

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will see she's dropped her baby / Splash into the Irish Sea' – Fuller and Garland, ‘Geography Lesson’, *Critical Quarterly* 25.4 (1983), p. 74

<sup>296</sup> See also John Harwood Andrews' broader study, *Shapes of Ireland: maps and their makers 1564-1839* (Dublin: Geography Publications, 1997); on these fictional maps, see also David Punter, ‘Fictional Maps of Britain’, in Susan Bassnett ed., *Studying British Cultures: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1997)

<sup>297</sup> John Harwood Andrews, ‘More suitable to the English tongue’: The cartography of Celtic Place-names’, *Ulster Local Studies* XIV 2 (1992), p. 18

<sup>298</sup> Kurt Bullock, ‘Possessing Wor(l)ds: Brian Friel's *Translations* and the Ordnance Survey’, *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua* 4.2 (2000), p. 98

<sup>299</sup> See in particular Alex Houen, *Terrorism and Modern Literature: from Joseph Conrad to Ciaran Carson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Temple Cone, ‘Knowing the Street Map by Foot: Ciaran Carson's *Belfast Confetti*’, *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua* 10.3 (2006), Eamonn Hughes, ‘The Mouth of the Poem’: Carson and Place’ and John Goodby, ‘Walking in the City’: Space, Narrative and Surveillance in The Irish for No and *Belfast Confetti*’, both in Elmer Kennedy-Andrews ed., *Ciaran Carson: Critical Essays* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), Eric Falci, ‘Place, Space, and Landscape’, in Alderman and Blanton eds., *A Concise Companion to Post-War British and Irish Poetry* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), Neal Alexander, *Ciaran Carson: Space, Place, Writing* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), and Daniel Weston, ‘I know this labyrinth so well’: narrative mappings in the poetry of Ciaran Carson’, in Alexander and Cooper eds., *Poetry & Geography: Space and Place in Post-War Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013)

<sup>300</sup> Eric Falci, ‘Place, Space, and Landscape’, *ibid.*, p. 213

<sup>301</sup> Alan Gillis, ‘Ciaran Carson: Beyond Belfast’ in Nicholas Allen and Aaron Kelly eds., *The Cities of Belfast* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2003)

<sup>302</sup> Ciaran Carson, ‘*Belfast Confetti*’, version printed in *The Irish For No* (North Carolina: Wake Forest University Press, 1987) p. 31

Four years later, Eavan Boland's 'That the Science of Cartography is Limited'<sup>303</sup> attacks the colonial authority of Irish cartographic documents, and is noteworthy – for the purposes of this thesis – for its presentation of a wood in the Connacht borders as providing a 'gloom' beyond the reaches of the map: note the double meanings of 'shading' in reference to the graphic notation on the map: 'this shading of forest / cannot show the fragrance of balsam, / in the gloom of cypresses'.<sup>304</sup> The unmappable forest – a key concept to the forest chapter of this thesis which follows, linked to the anti-colonial troping of the Vietnam forest, as well as to the ongoing problems of 'under-canopy' cartographic opacity, even with new LIDAR technology – is present also in Douglas Oliver's 'Ordnance Survey Map 178'. Oliver also provides the perspective of a 'body' undeniably immersed in the wooded environment, rather than looking down upon a map: navigating 'disordered' and 'disturbing' foliage under the 'deciduous sky'.<sup>305</sup> In Boland's poem, it is only under the cover of this wood that the troubling vectors into the past – hidden on official map documents – are opened up: while the map itself is a 'masterful' and 'apt rendering', it is also entirely unblemished by the histories of the famine road and of the cultural trauma which has taken place in this landscape: 'the line which says woodland and cries hunger / and gives out among sweet pines and cypress, / and finds no horizon / will not be there'.<sup>306</sup>

At current moment, the poetic use of the mapping discourses of Wales and Scotland may not yet have received the same frequency of critical attention; but the post-colonial interest in what Matthew Sparke refers to as the "contrapuntal cartographies"<sup>307</sup> of nation is textually evident, from Douglas Dunn's 1979 poem of Scottish labourers and forefathers, 'Empires' ('All the dead Imperia ... They have gone / Taking their atlases (...) / They could not leave geography alone'<sup>308</sup>) and Robert Crawford's techno-map of a jargon poem, 'Scotland' ('Semi-conductor country, land crammed with intimate expanses / Your cities are superlattices, heterojunctive / Graphed from the air...'<sup>309</sup>), to Damian Walford Davies' re-navigation of modern and contemporary texts and territorial imaginations in *Cartographies of Culture: New Geographies of Welsh Writing in English* (2012).

'Mapping', as the above critical interventions demonstrate, incorporates graphic and digital processes related to multiple different kinds of British terrains, and diverse reasons for rendering space legible or navigable. The return to the subjective processes of mapmaking itself is figured in poetry in a

<sup>303</sup> See Katie Conboy, 'Revisionist Cartography: The Politics of Place in Boland and Heaney', in Kathryn Kirkpatrick ed., *Border Crossings: Irish Women Writers and National Identities* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2000)

<sup>304</sup> Eavan Boland, *In A Time of Violence: Poems* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), p. 174

<sup>305</sup> Douglas Oliver, 'Ordnance Survey Map 178', *Oppo Hectic* (London: Ferry Press, 1969), p. 27

<sup>306</sup> Eavan Boland, *In A Time of Violence*, *ibid.*, p. 175

<sup>307</sup> Matthew Sparke, 'A Map that Roared and an Original Atlas: Canada, Cartography, and the Narration of Nation', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88.3 (1998), p. 464

<sup>308</sup> Douglas Dunn, 'Empires', in Ken Cockburn and Robyn Marsack ed., *Intimate Expanses: XXV Scottish Poems 1978-2002* (Edinburgh: The Scottish Poetry Library, 2004), unpaginated

<sup>309</sup> Robert Crawford, 'Scotland', in Cockburn and Marsack ed., *Intimate Expanses*, *ibid.*, unpaginated

number of examples by the presence of an actual geographer or map-maker character – from the American poet Ed Dorn’s Gunslinger in *The North Atlantic Turbine* who ‘will show you his map’,<sup>310</sup> to the ‘young mapmaker’ who descends to salt flats and ‘enlarges a shore line / according to enthusiasm’s measurements’ in Douglas Oliver’s ‘An Island That is All the World’,<sup>311</sup> to the action in the titular poem of Peter Sansom’s *Making Maps* (1989). These texts each display the mobile processes of composition which precede the normative symbolism of the map document. This is perhaps most dedicatedly approached in the characters of the bickering surveyors in Allen Fisher’s post-Brixton riots volume, *Brixton Fractals* (1985), which – through arrhythmic line beats, grammatically uneven sentences, and fragmented textual forms – considers the disjunctive social geographies of Brixton, ‘irregular’ and ‘fragmented’ in both space and time. Recurrent imagery of ice, glaciation, non-linear creep and basal sliding, imported from the language of physical geography and landscape morphology, is metaphorically linked to the text’s motifs of spatial and social alterity in Brixton, a site of rebellious geographies of noise, music, and movement, as well as, here, playful riffs on the grand terms of social spatial theory.<sup>312</sup> *Brixton Fractals* is an important example of the modern poetic text’s engagement with the unstable divisions of geography itself; physical, conceptual, and cultural. The round-up so far of meta-narratives of late twentieth century British geographical poetry – Britain, maps, nature, and space – has this final fault-line to observe: the explicit poetic presentation of geography, “geography”, and Geography.

In Peter Hughes’ chapbook *Physical Geography* (Oystercatcher Press, 2008), the discipline of the title is morphed into a mental geography by the third line of the text:

it’s hard to recognise  
the shift of virtual plates  
inside the mind<sup>313</sup>

This ‘shift’ in poetic landscape bears the hallmarks of the ‘morphological’ landscapes associated with the work of one of the founders of twentieth century cultural geography, Carl Ortwin Sauer.<sup>314</sup> In fact,

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<sup>310</sup> Ed Dorn, ‘An idle visitation’, *Edward Dorn: Collected Poems* (London: Carcanet, 2012), p. 279

<sup>311</sup> Douglas Oliver, ‘An Island That is All the World’, *Three Variations on the Theme of Harm* (London: Paladin, 1990), p. 65

<sup>312</sup> ‘Endless destruction / makes Brixton / Call it the coexistence of prohibitions and / their transgression / Call it carnival and spell out jouissance and horror, / a nexus of life and description, the child’s / game and dream plus discourse and spectacle.’ Allen Fisher, ‘Brixton Fractals: Birdland’, *Gravity* (Cambridge: Salt, 2004), p. 81; originally published as the stand-alone book *Brixton Fractals* (London: Aloe Books, 1985)

<sup>313</sup> Peter Hughes, *Physical Geography* (Norfolk: Oystercatcher Press, 2008), unpaginated. The subsequent references in the text are to this unpaginated volume unless marked otherwise. The text of the chapbook can also be found reprinted in Peter Hughes, *The Summer of Agios Dimitrios* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2009).

throughout Hughes' sequence – which draws partly from Francis John Monkhouse's *Principles of Physical Geography* (1974)<sup>315</sup> as a source text – there is a relentless shifting towards the personal perspective; the 'landscape of your habits' and the processes of the mind: 'I think it's how the mind began / & begins to surround the idea of the sea'. The physical and areal phenomena treated in the text are repeatedly positioned relative to a human consciousness, often addressed in the second person. This surreal positioning of the human interloper in the geological landscapes of Monkhouse's educational text forces several 'derangements of scale', to use ecologist Timothy Clark's term.<sup>316</sup> The conscious interpolation of human bodily presence and thought – evidenced in the various anthropomorphic personifications<sup>317</sup> – is confirmed in the repeating geographies of the brain and head. An erratic, meaning a rock transported by ice, 'like the shards in your head / will contain connate water'; a discovery is anticipated of 'dark / matter inside the mind'; and the density 'of the hardest glacier ice (over 0.9)' is compared to 'the density of your next thought'. These are not 'imagined geographies' (Said 1978) or 'geographies of the imagination' (Davenport 1981) as much as a metaphorical slippage from geomorphology to the mind's own analogous processes. As Hughes remarks of his reading of the textbook, 'it was a head trip (...) & of course all those geomorphological features had become hopelessly entangled with poetry & returned to the lands of myth'.<sup>318</sup>

The characteristics of this 'head trip' – that is to say, its morphing of physical geography and conceptual and mental geography – are not that unusual. The work of the American poets Charles Olson and Ed Dorn are famously responsive to the language and disciplinary histories of earth geography, whilst also focussing on the 'terrain of the mind',<sup>319</sup> and recognising that, as Dorn wrote during the autumn of 1965, in Essex: 'geography is not what's under your foot, that's simply the ground'.<sup>320</sup> In fact, Dorn's first use of the word 'geography', in one of his earliest printed volumes – four years before the publication of his famous *Geography* (1965) – is unmistakably a reference to a subjective space: 'all the natural things I groom, in my mind, of / faint rememberable patterns, the

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<sup>314</sup> Carl Ortwin Sauer, 'The Morphology of Landscape', *University of California Publications in Geography* 2.2 (1925). Sauer's important texts on cultural landscapes are collected in Leighly ed., *Land and Life: A selection from the writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).

<sup>315</sup> Francis John Monkhouse, *Principles of Physical Geography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1974). Monkhouse himself was invested in the study of the language use and terminology of geography within the natural and social sciences and the humanities, having published his *A Dictionary of Geography* four years earlier (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970).

<sup>316</sup> Timothy Clark, 'Derangements of Scale', in Tom Cohen ed., *Telemorphosis: Theory in the Era of Climate Change Volume I* (Michigan: Open Humanities Press, 2012).

<sup>317</sup> For example, 'lakes are unsure of their edges / & where their next drink's / coming from'; 'the firm field nestles in its bowl / wiggles in with time and irritation'; 'barren ground / (...) felt like changing colour / from the feet up', in Peter Hughes, *Physical Geography*, unpaginated, *ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> Peter Hughes, personal email to author, 13/09/2013

<sup>319</sup> Ed Dorn, interview with Roy Okado, in Allen ed., *Edward Dorn: Interviews* (1973), p. 39 – cited in Davidson, *Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry*, *ibid.*, p. 76

<sup>320</sup> Ed Dorn, 'Preface to *Idaho Out* (1965)', in *Edward Dorn: Collected Poems* (London: Carcanet, 2012), p. 923



great geography of my lunacy'.<sup>321</sup> Both Olson's and Dorn's use of 'The inside real and the outsidereal'<sup>322</sup> are shaped by the rise of cultural geography as a discipline, but also – perhaps paradoxically – occupy the discourse of physical geography and draw from its source materials. *Maximus Poems*, Olson's unfinished epic of place – a text which, in the words of Donald Davie, aspired 'to give in language a map, a map of one place, the town of Gloucester, Massachusetts'<sup>323</sup> – was, like Hughes' later text considered above, shaped by the influence of Carl Ortwin Sauer, renowned as the founder of cultural geography as a discipline in its earlier twentieth century form.

The use of a Saurian understanding of the morphological processes of landscape to approach the historical, latitudinal, and cultural spaces of modern America – as well as its subjective and mental geographies – is evident in Dorn too.<sup>324</sup> Dorn's two volumes of 1965, *Idaho Out* and *Geography*, are canonical for their interpretations of geographical material; but it was the texts written during his two year residency at the University of Essex (at Donald Davie's invitation) which applied this for the first time to the British landscape. The unpublished poem 'My age from a map to illustrate that the reconstructed North Atlantic Continent has an essential Structural Unity by F. J. Fitch',<sup>325</sup> written in Colchester in 1966, is titled in reference to the geologist F. J. Fitch's map of chelozones of the pre-Tertiary North Atlantic continent, published the year earlier.<sup>326</sup> The autobiographical invocation of the title (who is the 'me' of 'my age'?) is echoed in the oratorical figure who speaks the poem: 'I speak now / of the orogeny / of my soul / and the extension / of my limbs'; 'Oh tell me now my Illinois / is not old'.<sup>327</sup> The shifting text fragments which recede from the left towards the right-hand margin are themselves, in part, referenced from the words of Fitch's publication on the 'disrupted fragments' of a geology 'jigsaw' being used as 'age data' to project an understanding of past 'orogenic/ metamorphic / magmatic events'.<sup>328</sup> The reference to the 'orogeny' of the soul (orogeny meaning the structural deformation of the Earth's lithosphere due to the horizontal movement of tectonic rocks) can be read as the land autobiographically declaring these tectonic figurations as a characteristic of its own soul (a soul *made of physical geography*); equally, it hints that these isotopic age determinations are not

<sup>321</sup> Ed Dorn, 'Geranium', in *The Newly Fallen* (1961); reprinted in *Edward Dorn: Collected Poems*, *ibid.*, p. 23

<sup>322</sup> *Slinger* Section 111, cited by Davidson, *Ideas of Space*, *ibid.*, p. 76

<sup>323</sup> Donald Davie, *The Poet in the Imaginary Museum: Essays of Two Decades* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1977), p. 180

<sup>324</sup> Sauer's influential 1925 essay 'The Morphology of Landscape' was listed, alongside his later 1948 piece, 'Environment and Culture during the Last Deglaciation', in Olson's pamphlet 'A Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn', first published as a pamphlet in 1964 by the Four Seasons Foundation in San Francisco. Meanwhile, having encountered Olson during his time at Black Mountain College, Dorn was heavily influenced by Maximus; his 1960 essay 'What I See in the Maximus Poems' developed into his own take on the setting, *From Gloucester Out* (London: Matrix Press, 1964).

<sup>325</sup> Edward Dorn, 'My age from a map to illustrate that the reconstructed North Atlantic Continent has an essential Structural Unity by F. J. Fitch', *Edward Dorn: Collected Poems*, *ibid.*, p. 211

<sup>326</sup> F. J. Fitch, 'Geochronology and Continental Drift – The North Atlantic: Appendix. The Structural Unity of the Reconstructed North Atlantic Continent', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 258 (1965), p. 191-3

<sup>327</sup> Edward Dorn, 'My age from a map', *ibid.*, p. 211

<sup>328</sup> Fitch, 'Geochronology and Continental Drift', *ibid.*, p. 192, 193

objective, but dependent on the backwards projection of large, even mythical, human concepts. The thinking-through of geological time here provides the data and language for the land itself to personally challenge the human narratives of geo-chronology into speech ('tell me now' ... 'Dare say to me now'), outside of the meaningful glaciation of concepts of the past which exist within geology's existing literatures and publications. The poem nods at such distinct 'epoch' classifications of the materials of shifting history in its playful capitalised references to 'Superior Chelozone' and 'Questionable Sincerity'.

*The North Atlantic Turbine* (1967) – another volume with a map on its cover – draws explicitly from British landscapes, particularly around Oxford, in poems including 'England, its latitude and some of its conditions, the seriousness of ghosts', 'A Theory of Truth: The North Atlantic Turbine', and two from the Oxford sequence, 'Comforted by Limestone' and 'An Epistolary Comment: knowing none of it accurately, the world can be surveyed'. The content of Dorn's writings cannot be more fully accounted for here, but a great number of sources have recently been made generally accessible;<sup>329</sup> for current purposes, Olson and Dorn's poetic influence on their British counterparts<sup>330</sup> is of most import – surveyed in two essays by Donald Davie<sup>331</sup> and in Keith Tuma's 'Ed Dorn and England'<sup>332</sup> – including on J. H. Prynne's *Kitchen Poems* (1968) with its map of the oil fields of the East Midlands on its cover.<sup>333</sup> It is in *The White Stones* (1969) that the English poet J. H. Prynne published his most Sauerian poem, 'The Glacial Question, Unsolved', with its 'heart's desire' for the 'striations' of physical geography.<sup>334</sup> Written by a poet who was later to give lectures on Olson's 'original orogenies' in *The Maximus Poems*,<sup>335</sup> and whose collected poems is itself dedicated to Ed Dorn,<sup>336</sup> the linguistic exchanges in the poem around the subject matter of glaciation and drift can be seen as part of a transatlantic pattern in which an influx of data from physical geography is used to address how human cultures have created meaningful understandings of the past as well as of the earth's mobile systems. For the concerns of this thesis, it also interrogates the reckoning with the materials of the land's physical history – and the drifting shape of the nation – which crucially takes place at the coastline.

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<sup>329</sup> See Carcanet's *Edward Dorn: Collected Poems*, *ibid.*, and Selerie and Katko eds., *Edward Dorn: Two Interviews* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2012); meanwhile, Reitha Pattison's *Edward Dorn: Geography, Capitalism, Cosmology*, shortly forthcoming from Peter Lang, is to deal at length with Dorn's use of the maps and theory of the North Atlantic drift.

<sup>330</sup> The poetic reception of Olson's essay 'Projective Verse' is particularly noteworthy - originally published in a New York poetry magazine in 1950, available in Donald Allen ed., *Human Universe and Other Essays* (San Francisco: Grove Press, 1967); see also the essay 'Proprioception'.

<sup>331</sup> Donald Davie, 'Landscape as Poetic Focus' and 'The Black Mountain Poets', *The Poet in the Imaginary Museum*, *ibid.*

<sup>332</sup> Keith Tuma, 'Ed Dorn and England', *The Gig* 6 (2000)

<sup>333</sup> For more on the relationship between Prynne, Dorn, and Olson through geology and historiography, see *Earth Ship* 4/5 (1971), pages 1-2.

<sup>334</sup> J. H. Prynne, *Poems* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 2005), p. 65

<sup>335</sup> J. H. Prynne, 'Lectures on Maximus', *ibid.*

<sup>336</sup> J. H. Prynne, *Poems*, *ibid.*, dedication page

The first half of this two page poem is the subject of a valuable thirty-nine page article by Thomas Roebuck and Matthew Sperling in volume two of *Glossator* (2010),<sup>337</sup> which tracks the poem's deliberate commentary on the histories of geology and geography as they may be understood as teleologically developing disciplines, invoking Prynne's work on James Hutton's *Theory of the Earth* (1788), including its sacred earth debate, as well as the five texts on glaciation which are footnoted at the end of the poem alongside the 1955 OS limestone map. As Roebuck and Sperling clearly outline, the poem – like Dorn's – expands upon the methodologies of geological deduction, as well as intertextually referring to longer trajectories of understandings of the earth as the world of man, through the secularisation of geology and Butzer's designation of 'Pleistocene geography'. In a text which considers varied interpretations of the historical margins of glaciation along the coast of Norfolk, the shifting tenses and line endings refer both to the 'ridges and thermal delays' and 'separable advances' of 'ice front' and 'sea level' of glacial and continental drift, and also to the intellectual drift of scientific and philosophical cultures which seek to represent the same.

Particularly striking is the use of scare quotes to draw attention to the value-laden language of the known human environment: 'hills rise into / the "interior"'; 'the eustatic rise / in the sea-level curls round the clay, the / basal rise, what we hope to call "land"'; 'the sentiment / of "cliffs" is the weathered stump of a feeling'; 'filling the hollows with sandy clay / as the litter of "surface"'.<sup>338</sup> Sperling and Roebuck argue that the quotation marks around "land" de-naturalise the content of the term as the "finding" of 'heterogeneous evidences',<sup>339</sup> including pollen analysis, carbon dating, biblical scholarship, and philosophy, as well as the modern divisions of disciplinary knowledge (as the poem itself states: 'the Pleistocene is our current sense'). The language used to describe this stratigraphic evidence and to draw physical and temporal boundaries in geo-chronology is also partly drawn from metaphorical association with the biological sciences, as Prynne exhibits in his cuts across to the semantics of the body: head, spine, lobe, and foreheads.<sup>340</sup> It is the association with writing itself which brings the full meaning of 'geo-graphy' to this weathered landscape: the phrase 'the gliding was cursive', a reference to the movement of ice invading the mainland from the coast, is entirely in accord with the troping of the earth's markings as script (Roebuck and Sperling add the

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<sup>337</sup> Thomas Roebuck and Matthew Sperling, 'The Glacial Question Unsolved': A Specimen Commentary on Lines 1-31', *Glossator 2: On the Poems of J. H. Prynne* (2010)

<sup>338</sup> All from Prynne, 'The Glacial Question, Unsolved', *Poems*, *ibid.*, p. 65-6

<sup>339</sup> Roebuck and Sperling, 'The Glacial Question Unsolved', *ibid.*, p. 52

<sup>340</sup> The anthropomorphic interpretation of the earth's evidence according to the phenomenological experience of the lived body has often been accorded attention by poets, including more recent works by Peter Riley, Geraldine Monk, and Carol Watts. See Peter Riley, *Lines on the Liver* (London: Ferry Press, 1981); see also Nigel Wheale, 'Mining the Heartfold', *The Gig 4/5: The Poetry of Peter Riley* (2000); Geraldine Monk, *Lobe Scarps & Finales* (Nottingham: Leafe Press, 2011); Carol Watts, 'Zeta Landscape 17': 'land rises<sup>1</sup> in peaks and levels it has forgotten / ocean beds / scree memories'; 'in high and low alluvial shakedown / land sits rises<sup>1</sup> tired and muscled', in Tarlo, *The Ground Aslant*, *ibid.*, p. 118

detail that Prynne's use of 'lobe', a common term in glaciology, may also suggest at its additional meaning in terms of calligraphy as a 'curved projecting part of a letter'<sup>341</sup>).

The metaphorical connotations which geology and language share – an analogy drawn often in nineteenth century philology<sup>342</sup> as well as by the land artist Robert Smithson in his assertion that 'a book is a paper strata'<sup>343</sup> – is an important field of encounter for what Roebuck and Sperling call the 'geologist-poet'. For present purposes, the geological work of poets including David Jones,<sup>344</sup> Christopher Dewdney,<sup>345</sup> Jeffrey Radley,<sup>346</sup> Jack Clemo,<sup>347</sup> Seamus Heaney,<sup>348</sup> Ted Hughes,<sup>349</sup> Peter Riley,<sup>350</sup> Douglas Oliver,<sup>351</sup> and W. H. Auden<sup>352</sup> must be skirted here (although it is noteworthy that The Geology Society has itself recently come to celebrate the 'geology of the imagination' in the hands of poets<sup>353</sup>). However, it is certainly striking that the language of quantitative analysis and

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<sup>341</sup> Roebuck and Sperling, *ibid.*, p. 67

<sup>342</sup> Roebuck and Sperling, *ibid.*, p. 58:

'The geological metaphor is the master trope of the nineteenth-century discourse on language, as when R. C. Trench, in an influential popularizing lecture series of 1851, makes an analogy between the work of the geologist and the work of the word-historian (...) This line of thought can be traced back to the German philologists, especially Max Müller, who claimed in his *Lectures on the Science of Language*, 2 vols. (1864; London, 1994), 2:14, that 'There is no science from which we, the students of language, may learn more from than from Geology.'

<sup>343</sup> Robert Smithson, *The Collected Writings* (California: University of California Press, 1996), p. 75

<sup>344</sup> See Thomas Dilworth, 'David Jones's Use of a Geology Text for *The Anathemata*', *English Language Notes* 15 (1977)

<sup>345</sup> Dewdney is Canadian rather than British, but his work engages famously with geology, from his first publication, *A Paleozoic Geology of London, Ontario* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1973)

<sup>346</sup> Jeffrey Radley was a professional geographer and archaeologist who wrote one book of his own verses, *Scarred Temple* (York: York Poetry, 1972), as well as collaborating with Colin Simms – a featured poet in this thesis – on *Yorkshire Flooding: Some Effects on Man and Nature* (Yorkshire: The Ebor Press, 1970)

<sup>347</sup> See particularly Clemo's early volumes, *The Clay Verge* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1951) and *The Map of Clay* (London: Methuen, 1961)

<sup>348</sup> See Christine Finn, *Past Poetic: Archaeology and the Poetry of W. B. Yeats and Seamus Heaney* (London: Duckworth Publishers, 2004)

<sup>349</sup> See Patricia Boyle Haberstroh, 'Historical Landscapes in Ted Hughes' *Remains of Elmet*', in Scigaj ed., *Critical Essays on Ted Hughes* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1992)

<sup>350</sup> Peter Riley, *The Linear Journal* (Lincoln: Grosseteste Review, 1973), *Following the Vein* (London: Albion Village Press, 1975), *Lines on the Liver* (London: Ferry Press, 1981), *Tracks and Mineshafts* (Matlock: Grosseteste Press, 1983), *Two Essays* (Matlock: Grosseteste, 1983), and *Distant Points: Excavations Part One, Books One and Two*, republished as *Excavations* (East Sussex: Reality Street, 2004). See also John Hall, 'On Lines on the Liver and Tracks and Mineshafts', Tom Lowenstein, 'Excavation and Contemplation: Peter Riley's Distant Points', and Nigel Wheale, 'Mining the Heartfold', all in *The Gig 4/5: The Poetry of Peter Riley* (2000), and Keith Tuma, 'On Peter Riley's Lyric Excavations', *Chicago Review* 43.3 (1997)

<sup>351</sup> Douglas Oliver, *In the Cave of Suicession* (Cambridge: Streed Editions, 1974). See also Peter Riley, 'Some Notes Marginal to Douglas Oliver's In The Cave of Suicession', *Grosseteste Review* 12 (1979)

<sup>352</sup> See Douglas Houston, 'Landscapes of the Heart: Parallels in the Poetries of Kavanagh and Auden', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 77.308 (1988), Robert Forsythe and Alan Myers, *W. H. Auden: Pennine Poet* (Pennines: North Pennines Heritage Trust, 1999), and Jonathan Hufstader, 'Auden's Sacred World', *Essays in Criticism* LIX 3 (2009)

<sup>353</sup> 'Poetry and Geology: A Celebration', 10<sup>th</sup> October 2011, The Geological Society, London. Materials from this event are available online here: <<http://www.geolsoc.org.uk/geopoetry>> (accessed 25/08/2014)

physical geography, including the geological earth sciences and theories of glaciation<sup>354</sup> – often imported from earlier, and even antiquarian, authorities and schools of thought – has been used frequently in literary texts to remind readers not only that, in Edward Said’s words, ‘none of us is completely free from the struggle of geography’,<sup>355</sup> but also that that struggle is always changing, informed as it is by learned and cultural ideas in a discipline which has itself been plate-shifting and drifting significantly during the twentieth century.

A number of postmodern texts have, in this way, used hard language to approach ‘soft geography’, drawing on the materials of the history of the discipline to address new conceptual areas. As Colin Simms writes in his poem ‘Oystercatchers’ – itself concerned with the narratives told about earlier geographical explorers such as Captain Vancouver, and the reification of understandings of place and belonging by ‘avian systematists’<sup>356</sup> – ‘geography grows by precepts and then by discerning’.<sup>357</sup> In other words, the practice of geography is first of all dependent upon our pre-conceived concepts of geography. The use of previous models of the discipline to approach philosophies of perception and ‘non-referential’ and ‘con-/jectural landscapes’<sup>358</sup> – and to question the role of any discipline which presents its own outlook on the land as ‘a genre of stasis’<sup>359</sup> – ranges in other twentieth century texts playing with types of geographical citation, as in Louis Armand’s use of ‘littoral, parabolic’ and ‘graphemic’ geographies, academic spatial principles, ‘eldorado / or ultima thule’,<sup>360</sup> and demarcation and descriptive systems in his *Land Partition* (2001) (scattered with Prynne-like scare quotes: ‘the remoteness between symptom & land-/scape increases – words under / “mineral sedation”’).

The revival of cosmology in certain areas of modern poetry positions the poet as a reader and student of previous geographies and of geography’s own textual history. This is made materially obvious in poetry which is accompanied by insertions, addendums, explanatory notes, footnotes, glosses, and other forms of paratext. From David Jones’ footnotes and glosses on Celtic pre-history in *The Anathemata: Fragments of An Attempted Writing* (1952), to Peter Riley’s ‘Topographical Notation’ on pilgrim journeys and the economics of Anglo-Welsh tourism at the end of *Sea Watches* (1991), to

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<sup>354</sup> For a study of the work done by glaciation in modern poetry, see Peter Middleton, ‘On Ice: Julia Kristeva, Susan Howe and Avant-garde Poetics’, in Easthope and Thompson eds., *Contemporary Poetry Meets Modern Theory* (Hertfordshire: Wheatsheaf, 1991)

<sup>355</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 21

<sup>356</sup> Colin Simms, ‘Oystercatchers’, *Eyes Own Ideas* (Durham: Pig Press, 1987), p.42

<sup>357</sup> Simms, ‘Oystercatchers’, *ibid.*, p. 42

‘Vancouver was no stolid Dutchman either, Donald Davie:  
out of Norfolk puddings maybe, but of that cosmopolitan navy  
exploring, distinguishing, reflecting sense in learning  
that geography grows by precepts and then by discerning;  
for Karel Voous mind-opening beyond race to the new concepts.’

<sup>358</sup> Louis Armand, ‘Notes on Incarceration, Geography’, *Land Partition* (Australia: Textbase Publications, 2001), p. 11

<sup>359</sup> Louis Armand, ‘Dimensions Unknown’, *Land Partition*, *ibid.*, p. 53

<sup>360</sup> Armand, *Land Partition*, *ibid.*, p. 78

Richard Skelton's 'notes on the landscape' and 'end matter' in his sequence on the Anthropocene's 'geological losses',<sup>361</sup> *Moor Glisk* (2012), and the hefty appendices to his *Landings* (2012) (including 'Lancashire Dialect Terms' and 'Farm Names from Census Records'), the twentieth century small press poetry volume is able to accommodate companion materials in a way which resembles the eclectic material forms of certain styles of disciplined antiquarian argument. The use of the full landscape of the book even includes, in one recent publication by Corbel Stone Press, an inserted erratum card which is itself part of the text.<sup>362</sup> This use of appended sources and (an)notations – imagining the reader as an armchair scholar, leafing through the cross-references – is fitting for a poetry which contends with the new cultural geography and its important work on multivalent landscapes and textual relations. The returned interest in “cosmology” in modern poetry is signalled in publications such as Ralph Maud's *Charles Olson's Reading* (1996) – which broadcasts the role of the poet as himself a bibliophile and a reader of multi-disciplinary cultures and philosophies. Allen Fisher's already mentioned juggernaut of a publication, *Place* (2005), is a prime British example: it has a bibliography which runs to 169 texts, including amongst the obligatory Olson essays works as various in period and approach as Oke T. R.'s *Boundary Layer Climates* (1978), Robert Fludd's *Utriusque Cosmi Historia* (1619), C. C. Knowles and P. H. Pitt's *The History of Building Regulations in London, 1189-1972* (1972), and Matthieu's Ricard's *The Mystery of Animal Migration* (1971), as well as several maps. In it, Fisher consciously remarks within the text on the overdetermined, intra- and intertextual nature of geography through the endless reference to other texts and landscapes, none of which hold the final 'key' to understanding the terrain. In this situation it is geography itself which can become the lost signified; as he puts it,

what we have lost is geographical  
 how in hell did i expect to cover all this ground  
 it takes me more than half an hour to walk to the library  
 to look this much up<sup>363</sup>

On this intertextual approach to geographical sources, from Peter Hughes' chapbook re-writing of Francis John Monkhouse's *Principles of Physical Geography* (1974) as a 'head trip', we might look across at Colin Sackett's use of another of Monkhouse's textbooks, *Maps and Diagrams: Their*

<sup>361</sup> Skelton, *Moor Glisk* (Cumbria: Corbel Stone Press, 2012), p. 13

<sup>362</sup> The card reads 'ERRATA / for path read contour / for stone wall read scree / for field read moor / for clearing read wood'. Here, the publishing practise of including a small card slip listing misprints and wording errors is made to refer to the 'humanisation' of each landscape as an 'err' (wall rather than scree, clearing rather than landscape, etc.) Richard Skelton, *Moor Glisk* (Cumbria: Corbel Stone Press, 2012), errata.

<sup>363</sup> Allen Fisher, *Place* (East Sussex: Reality Street, 2005), *ibid.*, p. 55

*Compilation and Construction* (1952). Sackett's *thirty lines* (2008) is a re-setting of the second figure in the textbook, 'Fig 2. Varieties of Line', which depicts the 'various distinctive lines (which) are used for categories of footpath, roads, railways, waterways, political boundaries, electricity grid cables and aqueducts'.<sup>364</sup> In Sackett's experimental citation text, these lines are individually redacted onto single pages, so that each page turn brings the reader to the same sparse horizon drawn across the page, but in each case with different markings, so that the reader judges that (s)he finds him/herself at an entirely different bureaucratic, physical, or even electrical horizon. Re-produced as they are from a pedagogical source text which aims to give instruction to the 'student-draughtsman' in the niceties of 'line-work',<sup>365</sup> this text revisits the emblematic qualities of each of these single lines as unique, but also necessarily iterable, features of the graphic notation of place – by hand, by printer, and in this case by re-printer. The source text – with its essays on mechanical stipples, lettering masks, stencils, tracing papers, and double-pointed pens – is a manual of replications and their devices. In Sackett's own wordless replication of these thirty lines, we have a small-press pun on the postmodern obsession with the many forms of line in language poetry and concrete poetry.<sup>366</sup> With each successive delineation, Sackett reminds us of the need for specialist visual codes to understand what line it is we are, indeed, standing on. However lo-fi his production might seem, each page's resetting of the horizon draws from a different set of learned visual geographies (or guesswork) – while, stripped of any orienting key or decoding labels, each 'line' of his 'text' remains radically open to interpretative strategy.<sup>367</sup>

Sackett's *Monophonic Conversations About Landscape: English Handwriting Model No. 2* (1998) is another experimental small press text drawn from the annals of geography and its textbooks. In this case, T. W. Birch's *Map and Photo Reading: A Graded Course* (1956) is reset as a small flip-book with narrow horizontal pages, in which the text monophonically "speaks" only the student's answers

<sup>364</sup> F. J. Monkhouse and H. R. Wilkinson, *Maps and Diagrams: Their Compilation and Construction* (London & New York: Camelot Press, 1952), p. 4

<sup>365</sup> Monkhouse and Wilkinson, *Maps and Diagrams*, *ibid.*, p. 5

<sup>366</sup> See, for instance, Kathleen Fraser, 'Line. On the Line. Lining up. Lined with. Between the Lines. Bottom Line', in Robert Frank and Henry Sayre eds., *The Line in Postmodern Poetry* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1988); also the anthology edited by Emily Rosko and Anton Vander Zee, *A Broken Thing: Poets on the Line* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2011)

<sup>367</sup> Important work on geography's visual practices includes Abler, Adams and Gould, *Spatial Organisation: The Geographer's View of the World* (Detroit, MI: Prentice-Hall, 1971); Jacques Bertin (trans. Berg), *Semiology of Graphics: Diagrams Networks Maps* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Rayan Abdullah and Roger Hübner, *Pictograms, Icons and Signs: A Guide to Information Graphics* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006); Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (London: Routledge, 2007); John Bender and Michael Marrinan, *The Culture of Diagram* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010); Sybille Krämer, 'Epistemology of the Line: Reflections on the Diagrammatical Mind', in Pombo and Gerner eds., *Studies in Diagrammatology and Diagram Praxis* (London: College Publications, 2010); Tim Ingold ed., *Redrawing Anthropology: Materials, Movements, Lines* (London: Ashgate, 2011); Nicholas Gansterer, *Drawing a Hypothesis: Figures of Thought* (New York: Springer, 2011), and Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Interpreting Visual Materials* (London: SAGE, 2012). Irit Rogoff in particular has written on the 'constant unease' of geographical iconography in the face of the criteria and crises of the modern world, in Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, 2000) p. 15

to Birch's set questions. The questions in the source text are designed to structure responses to the visual apparatus – largely Ordnance Survey materials, maps at different scales, and photographs – and to encourage literacy in their reading. (A typical set of questions: '1. What colours show (a) buildings, (b) land, (c) sea? 2. In which part of the map is Folkestone situated, north, south, east or west? 3. Give the grid reference of the two squares in which most people probably live.'<sup>368</sup>) This conventional application of the idea of 'reading' to mean visual reading and the interpretation of geographical iconography is literalised in Sackett's small book, which provides *only* words – in his block texts of answers, run together in paragraphs. The text looks a little something like this:

*No, of country. By water. It is in the valley. No. A steep bank. Summer, foliage. The farm-house. To contain the stock. In the fields. By dotted marks arranged in arcs. Yes. No. Timber. South-west. Yes. Indicated by the small divided doors. The houses are situated far apart. South-east. No. No. To keep the animals at a distance. South-west. Yes, by referring to the plan. Yes, housing the pump. Yes, to the left side of the gate. No. Left or north-east. Behind. Solid line, broken line. Yes.*

For his title, Sackett has adopted in place of the conventional 'reading' metaphor (as in Dodge, Perkins and Kitchin's *The Map Reader*) the metaphor of conversation, which deliberately suggests at the 'two-way communicative process'<sup>369</sup> and 'mutuality of encounters'<sup>370</sup> in landscape dialogues – for example, in Benediktsson and Lund's recent edited interdisciplinary volume, *Conversations with Landscape* (2010). In this latter, Benediktsson and Lund note their intention in the use of this central metaphor, invoking Rebecca Solnit's precept that 'conversation provokes response, not silence', as well as work in eco-phenomenology and bio-semiotics, such as David Abram's writing on 'more-than-human conversations'.<sup>371</sup> Of course, there is no such reciprocity in Sackett's model – it is not a conversation at all, but, strictly, a monologue – by a dutiful learner in response to visual paths, divisions, and icons that we cannot see. The text resembles nothing so much as an overheard phone conversation, where our restricted hearing means that we receive nothing of import from the actual landscape, and know nothing of the actual navigations and mental work referred to in an inscription such as 'No. Left or north-east. Behind. Solid line, broken line. Yes.'

<sup>368</sup> T. W. Birch, *Map and Photo Reading: A Graded Course* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1956), p. 24

<sup>369</sup> Benediktsson and Lund, *Conversations with Landscape* (London: Ashgate, 2010), p. 1

<sup>370</sup> Benediktsson and Lund, *Conversations with Landscape*, *ibid.*, back cover

<sup>371</sup> Rebecca Solnit, *Motion Studies: Time, Space and Eadweard Muybridge* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), p. 9-10; David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), p. 56



A large number of Sackett's books work with this kind of conceptual mediation, drawing on pedagogical and canonical materials often from the mid twentieth century.<sup>372</sup> They demonstrate the learning of geography 'by precepts' (to quote Simms' poem 'Oystercatchers' again), and those historical statements of the discipline which also serve to carry geographical judgements into the future. In a twenty-first century generation in which cultural geography is still relatively unknown in the public eye – in which school-age geography has done much to form the imagination of the discipline, and in which no cultural geographer has gone without having to answer that pub question 'what's that when it's at home?' – a number of texts are importantly engaging with the cultural turn. As seen above, this does not necessarily mean a recoil from the language of cartography and earlier phases of quantitative analysis, or from previous philosophical and scientific schools of thought: these are often, in fact, the tools of the rethinking. Whether this engagement is through an explicit involvement with the 'new cultural geography' and spatial theory, a revived interest in antiquarianism, cosmology and multivalent landscapes, or an intertextual relationship with maps and earlier theories of morphology and navigation, each of these textual experiments takes place against previous and new horizons of expectations for the study of the cultural land.

In Hayden Lorimer's 2008 article 'Poetry and Place' in the pedagogical journal *Geography*, he discussed the growing attraction between geographers and the discipline of poetry, particularly through the visceral 'shape of words';<sup>373</sup> in Ian Davidson's *Cultural Geographies* review this year (2014) of a debut poetry collection by geographer Tim Cresswell, he sees 'evidence of a next stage, where the geographers become poets, and the poets become geographers, able to test out ideas and practices through the different contexts of the disciplines'.<sup>374</sup> Here, in the poems above – antagonising the pedagogies of Britain's sheerly mapped surfaces and histories (as per Cosgrove), as well as experimenting with different forms of direct iteration of sources – we might recognise Shaw's account of methodological and conceptual 'bricolage' in anthropological poetry. This is the 'practice of literary interpretation (as) a disciplinary outward-bound experience (...) rearticulat(ing) relations among several fields in the humanities';<sup>375</sup> in this case, intersecting with the explicit materials, and

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<sup>372</sup> See for example the following small press texts, all conceived of and published by Sackett in Axminster, Devon: *A Country Museum* (1992), extracted from E W Swanton's history of Jonathan Hutchinson's educational museum (1947); *Extension* (1993), nine terms from the supplementary index to *The Land of Britain, its use and misuse*, L Dudley Stamp (1962); *commentary* (1994), fifty-six titles selected from the bibliographical references in Charles Hartshorne, *Born to sing, an interpretation and world survey of bird song* (1973); *singinging* (1995), abstracted subjects from the index to the central chapter of W. H. Hudson, *Nature in Downland* (1900); *vignette* (1997), E B Ford's recollective text describing the Hedge Brown from his 1945 book *Butterflies*, in a constellatory form of a two-dimensional print; *English Handwriting Model no. 4 Anonymous Observer* (1998), Date and location marginalia, tabulated from a copy of *The Observer's Book of British Wild Flowers*; etc.

<sup>373</sup> Hayden Lorimer, 'Poetry and Place: The Shape of Words', part of Eleanor Rawling's 'Poetry and place' spotlight (also including a section by the poet Owen Sheers), *Geography* 93.3 (2008)

<sup>374</sup> Ian Davidson, 'Book Review: *Soil* by Tim Cresswell', *Cultural Geographies* 21.3 (2014), p. 534

<sup>375</sup> Lytle Shaw, *Fieldworks: From Place to Site in Postwar Poetics* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 2013), p. 3-4

disciplinary pasts, of geography – without sacrificing the knowledge that geography is *not just what's under your feet*.

These interpolations of physical and cultural geography into poetry – from the canonical influence of Sauer via Dorn and Olson which contextualises this study, to the lesser known small press English engagements by Peter Hughes and Colin Sackett – provide an introductory opening, here, for the readings that will follow in this thesis: into innovative poetry's bastardizations of history, of disciplinary precepts, and of previous language.

L/andedness ends: the coast in modern British poetry

it is a traffick  
and no mistake

Carol Watts<sup>1</sup>

At the coastline, as Simms puts it in truncated fashion in *Eyes Own Ideas* (1987), ‘as any other line definition necessary’.<sup>2</sup> This chapter is concerned with those British poets who, like Simms, return in text to the definitional linguistic acts of the coastline by way of its histories and its tropes (of “off-grid life”;<sup>3</sup> of “maritime mystique”,<sup>4</sup> of being “all at sea”<sup>5</sup>). It particularly tracks the use of the coast as an emblem of contemporary linguistic difficulty, from a depiction of the shore’s threshold as ‘the verbal ordeal that I pass through’ to enter the mainland,<sup>6</sup> to the encryption of the land’s edge in the languages of prayer and economics. It deals with a coastline of grids (Peter Riley), zones (Mark Dickinson), keels (Eric Mottram), and fish-puzzles (Bill Griffiths), and with messages lost at sea (Caroline Bergvall) as much as those found there (Carol Watts). It gives examples of experimental poetry’s bastardizing of the historical narratives of singular selves or voices, from the Seafarer to Captain Cook. And it tracks and contextualises the depictions of inter- and intra-lingual confusion in maritime contact zones, addressing the role of post-linear poetry in drawing new critical attention to the notionally finite shoreline. In what follows, the coast will be parsed into “lines” and endless fractals to be pored over, beyond official terminologies (section one); it will be logged in captain’s books and re-crossed in meta-historical sailing journeys (section two); it

<sup>1</sup> Carol Watts, *Wrack* (East Sussex: Reality Street, 2007), p. 35

<sup>2</sup> Colin Simms, *Eyes Own Ideas* (Durham: Pig Press, 1987), p. 37

<sup>3</sup> Several articles by Philip Vannini make up a research project on ‘off-grid’ mobilities on coasts, ferries, and islands on Canada’s west coast, including Vannini, ‘Constellations of ferry (im)mobility: islandness as the performance and politics of insulation and isolation’, *Cultural Geographies* (2011), Vannini, ‘Off-grid Mobilities: Incorporating a Way of Life’, *Transfers: Interdisciplinary Journal of Mobility Studies* 2.1 (2012), Vannini, ‘In time, out of time: Rhythmanalyzing ferry mobilities’, *Time & Society* 21.2 (2012), and Vannini, *Ferry Tales: Mobility, Place and Time on Canada’s West Coast* (London: Routledge, 2012). There is also a collaborative project website including ethnographic film: <<http://lifeoffgrid.ca>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>4</sup> See Philip Steinberg, ‘The maritime mystique: sustainable development, capital mobility, and nostalgia in the world ocean’, *Environment and Planning D* 17 (1999)

<sup>5</sup> John Mack: ‘In English the phrase ‘all at sea’ carries with it the sense that someone is completely and utterly lost. This is the sea as wilderness, as a place without paths or distinctive marks.’ Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion, 2011), p. 72

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Duncan, ‘Coastal Defences of the Self’, *The Imaginary in Geometry* (Cambridge: Salt, 2005), p. 3

will be dragged from the sublime and from traditions of seashore meditation into linguistic exchange and wordplay with economic realities (section three), and it will be used to track the mobile language histories attached to coastal traffic, colonisation, and exploitation (section four). In each case the poets will approach the coastline as a semiotic ensemble in which is hidden all sorts of rhetorical powers to divide, unite, or transition between realms and identities.

The coast has provided the formative geography of (epic) world literatures,<sup>7</sup> as well as being the site of Britain's own foundational cultural landfalls and colonial and territorial appropriations. It is also a modern cutting-off point, signifying the edges of contemporary citizenship; in the wake of recent droughts and tidal floods in Britain in 2013, a number of scholars are now asserting the current importance of research on the meanings of our cultural identity and "hydrocitizenship" attached to fluid water issues.<sup>8</sup> The in-going and out-going metaphors of the British seas and their land edges include those which can be read politically as a set of lines of enclosure (or internationally and globally, as the line of the 'law of nations') – but also as 'lines of passage', as a number of the texts which follow will demonstrate. The writers considered often draw on internal textual histories of Britain's ship-to-shore spaces – including local knowledge and dialect terms, as well as the figures of Anglo-Saxon seafarers and Celtic monks – but draw these into the wider relations of the contemporary maritime, the movements of people, and the traffic of services, waste, and language.

These issues have been the topic of fragmentary sub-disciplinary collectives in the late twentieth century, including "coastal-marine human geography", which grew in force across the 1990s due to a number of factors, including changing coastal legislation and environmental events.<sup>9</sup> In more recent years, the 'oceanic turn' is described as a more inter-disciplinary assemblage; indeed, as itself a meta-narrative of the spaces beyond disciplinary 'territoriality'.<sup>10</sup> As, in the twenty-first century, these

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<sup>7</sup> See James Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994). On the modern re-tracing of epic coastal geographies, also see Robert Hampson, 'Spatial Stories: Joseph Conrad and James Joyce', in Brooker and Thacker eds., *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> 'Towards hydrocitizenship. Connecting communities with and through responses to interdependent, multiple water issues', an AHRC-funded three year project, including Antony Lyons, Owain Jones, Graeme Evans, Iain Biggs and others; see <<http://hydrocitizenship.wordpress.com/>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>9</sup> Psuty, Steinberg, and Wright remark on the following important factors: '(G)rowing public environmental awareness, a decade of unusually severe coastal storms, more frequent reporting of marine pollution hazards, greater knowledge about (and technology for) depleting fishstocks, domestic legislation on coastal zone management and offshore fisheries policies, new opportunities for marine mineral extraction, heightened understanding of the role of marine life in maintaining the global ecosystem, new techniques for undertaking marine exploration, the 1994 activation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, reauthorization of the US Coastal Zone Management Act in 1996, and designation of 1998 as the International Year of the Ocean'. Norbert Psuty, Philip Steinberg, and Dawn Wright, 'Coastal and marine geography', in Gary Gaile and Cort Willmott eds., *Geography in America at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 314

<sup>10</sup> Notably at the conference *The Oceanic Turn: Beyond Disciplinary Territorialization* convened by Adriana Craciun in 2009 at the University of California, which characterised the oceanic turn as a rethinking of divisions of knowledge.

coastal research areas become more integrated and involved, so too does the understanding of the ‘perils of writing the coastline’ (Bellamy, 2013),<sup>11</sup> a phrase which plays on the perils of sailing the coastline written of in the early *periplou* texts (including the *Massiliote Periplus*, the *Periplus of Himilco*, and Avienus’ *Ora Maritima*). What are the contemporary dangers of *writing* the coastline – the hidden reefs and hazards of our linguistic conduct, on which ships have been sunk? As will be shown, many of these are linked to the concept of the line as the measure of the land, where the aesthetic, ultimately, becomes the political, and vice versa; we can see in such coastal polemic a number of crossed political ideas, dependent on differing ideas of shore-line egress and transgress, including the imperial dream of borderless England; the ‘terra firma overdeterminations of nationalism’,<sup>12</sup> and the devolved or archipelagic paradigms which counter them.

Beyond its role as a necessary actor in the problems of conceptualising the local and global seas and oceans it edges, as will be obvious when this chapter later considers the changing foci of new maritime studies, the site of the coastline has a strange history of challenging conclusive definition of land and identity. In what follows, I will consider texts which dwell on the difficult terminological and cartographic delineations of the space of the coast. This draws on the eighteenth century coastline as image of reason, as well as on the Romantic sublime’s re-crossing of this in imaginations of the shore as a site of doubt and turbulence.<sup>13</sup> It also coincides with ongoing legal argument regarding the distinguishing of contemporary off-shore and on-shore histories, rights, and resources, notably the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982) and subsequent discussions. These “lines” will be complicated by the poets’ presentations of the split and drift of language and authorial identity at the coastline. Against this dynamic, and in a more conservative model, the potential cultural privatisations enacted by the lines of coastal closure are suggested in the final couplet from Andrew Duncan’s poem ‘On the Beach at Aberystwyth’, which, treated as a two line micro-text, asks and answers some profound questions about the location of culture. Firstly, it suggests that culture is located in its own speaking (it ‘*is* what it says’, rather like being what you eat); it then suggests that in fact this culture (of speaking) ends at the ocean’s edge. Here we have in the microcosm of one curious reversing line a number of tropes deliberately brought to our attention; that culture-is-land, that sea-is-silence, and that, therefore, culture only amounts to the territorial words we can brandish, before the point at which the ocean starts its reply:

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<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Jane Bellamy, *Dire Straits: The Perils of Writing the English Coastline from Leland to Milton* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013)

<sup>12</sup> John Brannigan, ‘Dreaming of the Islands’: The Poetry of the Shipping Forecast’, *UCD Scholarcast Series 4: Reconceiving the British Isles*: <<http://www.ucd.ie/scholarcast/scholarcast25.html>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>13</sup> Christoph Singer has completed a PhD – not yet available to readers – called *Sea Change: The Coast as a Site of Transgression* (Unpublished PhD dissertation: University of Paderborn, 2014), and recently gave the paper ‘Arcadia in Doubt: The Shore and Uncertainty in Tennyson and Arnold’, at *Coastal Cultures of the Long Nineteenth Century*, Oxford, 14-15<sup>th</sup> March 2014

The culture *is* what it says  
 The ocean starts where it *ends*<sup>14</sup>

Michael Gardiner, in his study of British devolution, has written of the perceived connection of ‘cultural death with the loss of control over water’.<sup>15</sup> This is troped several times in the poems considered, which may present the coastline, for instance, as a space of ‘little more than arrival’ (Riley).<sup>16</sup> But vital to this study is the fact that the coast is also itself deeply saturated with culture – not just an edge zone between two opposed cultures. The shore of Britain is a health resort, a political army, an ‘eco-tone’, and a tongue twister.<sup>17</sup> It is a space to analyse “hydrosocial” histories, to paint, to write a memoir, and to study the horizon.<sup>18</sup> It can be walked, swum, sailed, fished, or used to make cinema.<sup>19</sup> It’s a place to come up with a theory of ‘geopoetics’, to gather folklore, or to find

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Duncan, ‘On the Beach at Aberystwyth’, *The Imaginary in Geometry* (Cambridge: Salt, 2005), p. 44

<sup>15</sup> Michael Gardiner, *The Cultural Roots of British Devolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 31-2; cited by Brannigan in ‘Dreaming of the Islands’: The Poetry of the Shipping Forecast’, *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> See in particular Peter Larkin’s piece on Peter Riley’s use of this line, in Larkin, ‘*Sea Watches: Little More than Arrival*’, Nate Dorward ed., *The Gig 4/5: The Poetry of Peter Riley* (2000)

<sup>17</sup> Ronan Foley, *Healing Waters: Therapeutic Landscapes in Historic and Contemporary Ireland* (London: Ashgate, 2010); Jonathan Scott, *When the Waves Ruled Britannia: Geography and Political Identities, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). The word ‘eco-tone’ has often been used in traditional environmental studies to describe sand dunes, shallow coastal waters, and the interface between land and sea, but it is also the domain of new critical thinking around transitional areas and “translation zones”; the forthcoming conference *New Ecotones* (Université Paul-Valéry, 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> June 2015) marks the start of the research project *Ecotones: Encounters, Crossings, and Communities* (2015-2019), and explicitly invites papers related to shore-lines. Two particularly well-known tongue twisters have been recorded: ‘the seething sea ceaseth and thus the seething sea sufficeth us’, and ‘she sells seashells on the sea shore’, which is reworked in Amy Evans’ chapbook *The Sea Quells* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2013), considered later in this chapter.

<sup>18</sup> The word ‘hydrosocial’ is countered with the physical term ‘hydrological’; See Erik Swyngedouw, ‘The Political Economy and Political Ecology of the Hydro-Social Cycle’, *Journal of Contemporary Water Research & Education* 142.1 (2009). This was also the topic of a recent interdisciplinary workshop, *Social Water* (York, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2013). On painting, see particularly the See particularly the practice-based research group ‘Land/Water and the Visual Arts’:

<<http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/researchcover/rcp.asp?page=275&pagetype=G>> (accessed 01/08/2014). There are a number of examples of island memoirs and coastal memoirs, but an explicit case is (London: Picador, 2012). On sea horizons, see Didier Maleuvre, *The Horizon: A History of Our Infinite Longing* (California: University of California Press, 2011) and Steven Levine, ‘Seascapes of the Sublime: Vernet, Monet, and the Oceanic Feeling’, *New Literary History* 16.2 (1985)

<sup>19</sup> For a stroller’s viewpoint, see Christopher Somerville, *Britain Beside the Sea* (London: Grafton, 1989); for a swimmer’s view on the same terrain, see chapter 2, ‘I-Spy at the Seaside’, in Roger Deakin, *Waterlog: A Swimmer’s Journey Through Britain* (London: Vintage, 2000); for sailing, see Jonathan Raban, *Coasting* (London: Picador, 1995). A valuable engagement with coastal fishing space through the discourse of cultural geography is offered in Chris Bear, ‘Assembling the sea: materiality, movement and regulatory practices in the Cardigan Bay scallop fishery’, *Cultural Geographies* 20.1 (2013). On cinema, see Jez Conolly, *Beached Margin: The Role and Representations of the Seaside Resort in British Films* (self-published, 2008), and Hammon and Redmon eds., ‘This is the Sea: Cinema at the Shoreline’, *Continuum* 27.5 Special Issue: This is the Sea (2013), including articles on televisual and filmic encounters with the Cornish coast, post-apocalyptic depictions of the edge of the sea, the ‘haunted’ film aesthetic of beaches, and transnational film cultures.

alternative landscapes of nature writing.<sup>20</sup> It's a site of more than human encounter with surfing waves, marine ecology, and specific land formations.<sup>21</sup> And it makes good telly.<sup>22</sup>

Not only must we be cautious of the national or cultural identities which are refracted over the coast's fractal lines; we must also be aware of the varied practices of framing the land and framing the ocean linked to the coast, including the history and conceptual baggage of 'seascape'.<sup>23</sup> Shifts of perspective may offer other ways of critically understanding the land's thresholds (including, vitally, articulating the land from the view of the sea as social, inhabited space<sup>24</sup>). Meanwhile, critical drives to re-assess the nature of the cultural coastline as a spatial and national super-signifier include Anna Ryan's contemporary call for an alternative politics of the coast via non-representational theory.<sup>25</sup> Much of this is very new: five recent or forthcoming critical volumes from Ashgate bring attention to the lived-in spaces and material geographies of the sea<sup>26</sup> and artistic responses which go beyond the sea-as-spectacle to consider the conflicted identities of coastlines.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the 'domain of the soluble'<sup>28</sup> is also the domain of the sociable, in Duncan's words.

These social occupations are indicated in the poetry. The texts of the modern shoreline explore many of the working coasts of recent British history. Writers may refer to local working communities (as in Katrina Porteous' longshore fishing radio poems) and myths and customs (as in George Mackay

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<sup>20</sup> Kenneth White, *On the Atlantic Edge: A Geopoetics Project* (Ross-shire: Sandstone Press, 2006). On folklore and fables, see Sophia Kingshill and Jennifer Westwood eds., *The Fabled Coast: Legends & Traditions from Around the Shores of Britain & Ireland* (New York: Random House, 2012) and David Thomson, *The People of the Sea: A Journey in Search of the Seal Legend* (New York: John Day, 1954). On alternative nature writing, see Jason Orton and Ken Worpole, *The New English Landscape* (London: Field Station, 2013), a study of the 'bastard' landscape of the Essex coastline.

<sup>21</sup> Jon Anderson, 'Relational places: the surfed wave as assemblage and convergence', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30.4 (2012); Rachel Carson, *The Edge of the Sea* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1955); James Alfred Steers, *The Sea Coast* (London: Collins, 1953)

<sup>22</sup> Amongst the many televisual investigations of the British coast in the last few years are BBC 1's *Britain and the Sea*, BBC 2's *Coast*, now in its eighth series ('uncovering stories that have made us the island nation we are today'), and on BBC 4, as part of a special season in 2010-2011, a number of programmed series on seafaring, shipping containers, coastal poetry, beachcombing, port histories, and celebrity visits to shorelines, including *Art of the Sea*, *The Boats That Built Britain*, *The Box That Changed Britain*, *Sea Fever*, *Shanties and Sea Songs*, *Empire of the Seas: How the Navy Forged the Modern World*, *Storyville: Cod Wars*, *Passport to Liverpool*, and *The Wrecking Season*.

<sup>23</sup> On this topic, see the critical collection by academics and ethnographers, Mike Brown and Barbara Humberstone eds., *Seascapes: Shaped By the Sea* (London: Ashgate, 2015).

<sup>24</sup> For a gathering of research pertaining to this shift in perspective, see the 'Perspective from the Sea' research group at the University of Bristol, web page at

<<http://www.bris.ac.uk/arts/research/collaborations/clusters/perspective.html>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>25</sup> Anna Ryan, *Where Land Meets Sea* (London: Ashgate, 2012)

<sup>26</sup> Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters eds., *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean* (London: Ashgate, forthcoming 2014); Tricia Cusack ed., *Framing the Ocean, 1700 to the Present: Envisioning the Sea as Social Space* (London: Ashgate, forthcoming 2014); Mike Brown and Barbara Humberstone eds., *Seascapes: Shaped By the Sea* (London: Ashgate, 2015).

<sup>27</sup> Tricia Cusack ed., *Art and Identity at the Land's Edge* (London: Ashgate, 2012); Anna Ryan, *Where Land Meets Sea* (London: Ashgate, 2012)

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Duncan, 'On the Beach at Aberystwth', *ibid.*, p. 43

Brown's Orkney poems and plays), to contemporary seamanship and their own sailing experiences (as in Richard Murphy's *The Last Galway Hooker*, 1961), or to the economic business and historiography of the sea and its trade and wrecks (as in Carol Watts' *Wrack*, 2007). Following poems' speakers to the salt edge of Britain in a poem may mean being taken on board boats, as in Kathleen Jamie's *The Overhaul* (2012), or through port cities (as in Ciaran Carson's *The Ballad of HMS Belfast*, 1999), or simply being stationary on the shoreline itself: this latter is common in texts which draw on the numinous poetics of the Celtic coast, taking the traditional perspective of a landlocked speaker staring out to sea, as with R. S. Thomas' pilgrims 'whose office / is the blank sea that they say daily'.<sup>29</sup> The coastal poetic text may be involved with modern archipelagic relations, or it may look backward through water as material of history: J. H. Prynne's poem 'Living in History' starts, for instance, with an instruction to the reader to be in an auspiciously historical place: 'Walk by the shore'.<sup>30</sup> That history sensed at the sea, too, may be provided by the archive – as in Justin Hopper's recent reworking of late nineteenth century articles related to coastal shipwrecks in Essex in his audio-poetry work *Public Record: Estuary*<sup>31</sup> – or it may be bodied forth by the ghosts of the drowned or the dead returned on the tide, as in several of Geoffrey Hill's early poems ('The Guardians', 'The White Ship', 'Wreaths'<sup>32</sup>). And it may refer to the line of the sea as one unified synecdoche (for instance, in the 'naked shingles of the world' in Matthew Arnold's 'Dover Beach' and 'the foreshore of the world' in Prynne's 'Song in Sight of the World'<sup>33</sup>), or to a specific part of any number of Britain's erratic coastal topographies.

For, of course, this coastline is *both* a plural space of multiple localities – ranging from saltmarsh to sea cliff to town harbour, and between Gaelic, Anglian, Cymric, and Norse histories – and a singular image, synecdoche for a whole mainland identity. Historiographies of the imaginations of Britain and England as defined by shifting and mobile maritime spaces have been a key part of new historicist work,<sup>34</sup> as well as studies of archipelagic identities<sup>35</sup> between the countries of Britain and across their

<sup>29</sup> R. S. Thomas, 'Pilgrimages', originally published in *Frequencies* (1978); in *R. S. Thomas Collected Poems 1945-1990* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2012), unpaginated electronic edition

<sup>30</sup> J. H. Prynne, 'Living In History', *The White Stones* (1969), printed in *Poems* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 2005), p.41

<sup>31</sup> This was performed for the first time at *Shorelines: Literature Festival of the Sea*, 8-10 November 2013, in Leigh-on-Sea – see <<http://www.justin-hopper.com/public-record-estuary/>> for related materials (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>32</sup> Geoffrey Hill, *Geoffrey Hill's New and Collected Poems: 1952-1992* (New York: First Mariner Books, 2000), p. 28, 29, 30

<sup>33</sup> 'All the shores are a single peak. All the / sea a great road, the shore a land in / the mist', J. H. Prynne, 'Song in Sight of the World', *Poems*, *ibid.*, p. 76-7

<sup>34</sup> David Cannadine ed., *Empire, the Sea, and Global History: Britain's Maritime World, 1763-1833* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); David Armitage and Michael Braddick eds., *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Glen O'Hara, *Britain and the Sea: Since 1600* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Jonathan Scott, *When the Waves Ruled Britannia: Geography and Political Identities, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Sebastian Sobocki, *The Sea and Englishness in the Middle Ages: Maritime Narratives, Identity, and Culture* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011)



sea divisions, touched on, for instance, in similarly named collections by two Irish poets: Bernard O'Donoghue (*Here Nor There*) and Sinead Morrissey (*Between Here and There*).<sup>36</sup> British poetry has also responded to the overlapping cultures of very different seas and oceans – partitioned liquid areas of the world which have been differentiated further in both scholarly and popular imaginations in recent years by the rise of the sea-biography as well as revisionist narratives.<sup>37</sup> In Donald Davie's poem 'The North Sea', directed to the 'Protestant sea' of the 'low countries' ('I have come to live on your shore'), he observes

Having come to this point, I dare say  
That every sea of the world  
Has its own ambient meaning:  
The Mediterranean, archaic, pagan;  
The South Atlantic, the Roman Catholic sea.<sup>38</sup>

Andrew Duncan has also observed the divvying of up British literary shores through the regions of the Celtic archipelago and the ports of the Atlantic seaboard, noting the difficulty of mapping the personnel of British radicalism in poetry in any too schematic reading of the places belonging to the Highlands, Ireland, and Atlantic capitalism.<sup>39</sup> This chapter also looks to landward: in this thesis it is important to remember that – as Cramer observes in *Great Waters* (2003) – 'sixty percent of the human population lives within forty miles of the ocean, but all of us live in watersheds draining to the sea'.<sup>40</sup> Closer to home, as Theroux points out, '(i)n many respects, Britain was its coast – nowhere in Britain was more than sixty-five miles from the sea'.<sup>41</sup> It is no wonder there has been such an 'ink-

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<sup>35</sup> Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth, *Across the Margins: Cultural Identity and Change in the Atlantic Archipelago* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Maeve McCusker and Anthony Soares eds., *Islanded Identities: Constructions of Postcolonial Cultural Insularity* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011)

<sup>36</sup> Bernard O'Donoghue, *Here Nor There* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999); Sinead Morrissey, *Between Here and There* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2002)

<sup>37</sup> Peregrine Hordon and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Deborah Cramer, *Great Waters: An Atlantic Passage* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002); W. V. Harris ed., *Rethinking the Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); David Brett, *A Book Around the Irish Sea: History Without Nations* (Dublin: Wordwell Books, 2009); Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Atlantic in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (Middlesex: Penguin, 2012); Cyprian Broodbank, *The Making of the Middle Sea: A History of the Mediterranean from the Beginning to the Emergence of the Classical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

<sup>38</sup> Donald Davie, *Collected Poems 1950-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 182

<sup>39</sup> Andrew Duncan, *Centre and Periphery in Modern British Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p. 7

<sup>40</sup> Deborah Cramer, *Great Waters*, *ibid.*, p. 308

<sup>41</sup> Paul Theroux, *The Kingdom by the Sea* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), p. 4

wash' of British tidal poetry 'by the page', in the words of a poem by Andrew McNeillie,<sup>42</sup> or that the speaker of Seamus Heaney's 'Shoreline' sees the water of 'both ocean and channel' present in every direction he imagines, and in every place threatening the land with history:

Take any minute. A tide is rummaging in  
At the foot of all fields,  
All cliffs and shingles.

Listen. Is it the Danes,  
A black hawk bent on the sail?  
Or the chinking Normans?<sup>43</sup>

Vendler has observed of this poem that '(i)n turning outward, Heaney finds in one glance shoreline, insularity, and vulnerability to invasion'.<sup>44</sup> The poems which are included in this chapter will analyse this conflict in the construction of the British coastline as a lineation, or bounding, of identity, against it as a mobile and dynamic space, threatening rhetorical signatures of local belonging or conventional geographical logics of located space. It will also consider the handling of a number of other tropes, including, vitally, the temporal dynamics of the coastline. This leads to contradictory expressions of historical narrative: like the old-growth forest, the sea has been perceived as timeless both in terms of having no time (as an *a*-historical, fluid space), and, opposingly, in terms of its diverse reach back to the multiple paths of time: the sea *is* history, as in Derek Walcott's famous poetic address on the 'tribal memory' locked up in its waters.<sup>45</sup> A number of recent interventions have considered the possibilities or impossibilities of such "fluvial history", and the ways in which maritime historiography might be affected or distinguished by the mobile nature of its subject.<sup>46</sup> Notably, *Imagining Change: Coastal Conversations*, a collaborative project founded by cultural geographers at

<sup>42</sup> Andrew McNeillie, 'The Sea, The Sea', *PN Review* 33.3 (2007), p. 42

<sup>43</sup> Seamus Heaney, 'Shoreline', *Door into the Dark* (London: Faber, 1969), p. 51

<sup>44</sup> Helen Vendler, *The Music of What Happens: Poems, Poets, Critics* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 151. See also Daniel Tobin's account of the surveying of 'historical consciousness' in 'geographical extremity' in this poem, in Tobin, *Passage to the Center: Imagination and the Sacred in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), p. 64

<sup>45</sup> 'Where is your tribal memory? Sirs / in that gray vault. The sea. The sea / has locked them up'; Derek Walcott, 'The Sea is History', *Collected Poems 1948-1984* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), p. 364. See also accounts of this poem in Marcus Rediker, 'Towards a people's history of the sea', in Killingray, Lincoln, and Rigby eds., *Maritime Empires: British Imperial Maritime Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2004), Lars Eckstein, *Re-membering the Black Atlantic: On the Poetics and Politics of Literary Memory* (New York: Rodopi, 2006), p. 61, and Elizabeth DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots*, *ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>46</sup> The forthcoming symposium, *The Irish Sea: History, Culture, Environment* (Sept 19-20, National Maritime Museum of Ireland) aims to specifically engage with the interdisciplinary methodologies of literary studies, maritime heritage, and historiographical approaches to the sea.

the University of Nottingham, examines temporal narratives of environmental change at the coastline, using it as a site to model conceptual approaches to ‘reverse chronology’ and ‘anticipatory history’. Britain’s temporal experience of global environmental change is, of course, particularly visible on her shorelines. This is where the local lands of Britain – its specific intertidal mudflats, eroded coasts, and “warplands” (named by the artist Mike Pearson after the reclamation technique of warping) – unmistakably overlap with global environmental discourses of change over time. From flood management techniques to reclamation and the building of embankments, the coast is unmistakably a site with a long history of ‘building up and letting go of the land’.<sup>47</sup> More generally, the coast is an emblem of both Britain’s past and its future; as, for instance, in its relationship with the ramifying cultural and theoretical meanings of ‘drift’, from the formative Atlantic glacial drift which created Britain, in the Prynne poem considered earlier in this thesis,<sup>48</sup> to the drift between past and present human voices which will be encountered in the texts that follow, including in Caroline Bergvall’s *Drift* (2014).

Given the complexity of the encounters in this space between interior and exterior, and between foundational histories, environmental futures, and mutable forms of legacy, there are not as many close critical readings of the language of British coastal literature as one might expect. Valuable sections in historical studies are offered recently by Bridget Keegan<sup>49</sup> and by Val Cunningham, writing on the allegorical and metaphorical figures of the swimmer, the beach, and the tide in ‘seaward’ Victorian poetry (2011).<sup>50</sup> In his study, Cunningham identifies a textual process of ‘dissolving’ at sea (borrowing a word from *Finnegan’s Wake*), an imagined process which is of use to this thesis’s own critical findings (and connected to the interest in ‘dissolving’ self, or language, in contemporary poems including Andrew Duncan’s ‘Coastal Defences of the Self’<sup>51</sup> and Andrew McNeillie’s ‘Words At Sea’<sup>52</sup>):

Dissolving/Dissolving: Self-dissolution: what happens, or what’s initiated, at the land’s edge  
 ... The knowable, fixable self ending in a dissolving: death of the self in, indeed as, water.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Stephen Daniels and Lucy Veale, ‘Imagining coastal change: reflections on making a film’, *Cultural Geographies* 21 (2014), p. 500

<sup>48</sup> In which a sea-level ‘basal rise’ becomes ‘what we hope to call “land”’; Prynne, ‘The Glacial Question, Unsolved’, *ibid.*, p. 66

<sup>49</sup> Bridget Keegan, chapter titled “What terms of Art can Nature’s pow’rs express?”: William Falconer and Labouring-Class Poetry at Sea’, in Keegan, *British Labouring-Class Nature Poetry, 1730-1837* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

<sup>50</sup> See particularly the sections ‘Endangered Edgings’, ‘On the Beach’, and ‘The Deep Blue Gender Sea’, in Val Cunningham, *Victorian Poetry Now: Poets, Poems, and Poetics* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011)

<sup>51</sup> Andrew Duncan, ‘Coastal Defences of the Self’, *The Imaginary in Geometry* (Cambridge: Salt, 2005), p. 1-3

<sup>52</sup> Andrew McNeillie, ‘Words at Sea’, *Winter Moorings* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014), p. 17

<sup>53</sup> Val Cunningham, *Victorian Poetry Now*, *ibid.*, p. 229

Insightful international research and work in comparative literatures – not limited to the British poetry or sites considered here – has also strongly emphasised the use of shore-lines in poetry to consider cultural premises in language; René Dietrich (2007), for instance, writes on American shore line poetry and ‘language at the limit’, where questions of language are used to investigate collective imaginaries of other borders, and where ‘land and sea meet, but also center and margin, inside and outside, ‘self’ and ‘other’’, so ‘those very concepts shift, switch, dissolve and clash’.<sup>54</sup> Literary criticism has long used the shore as a canonical site to consider environmental discursivity, phenomenology, and the philosophy of language, from J. Hillis Miller’s much cited *Topographies* to more recent work with a European bent.<sup>55</sup> Here, the Byronic rapture on the lonely shore is scattered through theories of metaphor and deconstruction; in the contemporary era these shoreline language difficulties are taken up again as a key theme of contemporary postcolonial study. Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey has written importantly on the ‘island story’ of Britain as a ‘sea-girt home’ through its histories of invasions and settlements and its creole literatures of landfall.<sup>56</sup> DeLoughrey presents her book under the umbrella concept of ‘tidalectics’, a term from Braithwaite with water as its structuring principle (as a ‘pelagic imaginary’, ‘tidalectics motions are backward and forward (...) “farwards” is Braithwaite’s preferred term’<sup>57</sup>). Mandy Bloomfield also writes recently, via Braithwaite’s poetry, on contemporary language issues and the Caribbean-Atlantic imaginary of ‘a sea that diffracts’.<sup>58</sup>

This work with the geographies of global exchange and diasporic imagining – in particular following on from Paul Gilroy’s key text, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*<sup>59</sup> – is the topic of a 2010 special issue of *PMLA*, in which Margaret Cohen addresses the ‘hydrophasia’ of twentieth-century literary criticism: that critical practice which focuses on the literary representation of territorial scales such as the city, the empire, and even the self; ‘a pervasive twentieth-century attitude that the photographer and artist Allan Sekula has called “forgetting the sea”’.<sup>60</sup> She advocates instead a criticism which would show the importance of saltwater transport networks in the forging of global modernity, acknowledging the ship as ‘a pioneering technology of mobility’ and as ‘a motor of

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<sup>54</sup> René Dietrich, ‘Towards a Poetics of Liminality in “This Space Between Spaces”: The Shore Lines of Contemporary American Poetry’, *Anglia* 125.3 (2007), p. 449

<sup>55</sup> See Joseph Hillis Miller, *Topographies* (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.283-285; David Nowell Smith, *Sounding/Silence: Martin Heidegger at the Limits of Poetics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), p. 193-195.

<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (Hawai’i: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007), p. 7

<sup>57</sup> Keith Sandiford, *Theorizing a Colonial Caribbean-Atlantic Imaginary: Sugar and Obeah* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 142. This term is also used by Paul Naylor several times in his *Poetic Investigations: Singing the Holes in History* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999).

<sup>58</sup> Mandy Bloomfield, ‘A sea that diffracts’, *Foma* 1.1 (2011). The title is a quotation from Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 33

<sup>59</sup> Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993)

<sup>60</sup> Margaret Cohen, ‘Literary Studies on the Terraqueous Globe’, *PMLA* 125.3 (2010), p. 658. Cohen defines ‘hydrophasia’ as a ‘spectacular [...] disregard for global ocean travel’ (p. 658) in which even novels with explicit ocean-going themes are read as allegories for processes taking place on land.

value essential to capitalist modernity, along with the more familiar processes of production, circulation, exchange, and consumption'.<sup>61</sup> The emerging maritime studies has had a symbiotic relationship with mobility studies in cultural geography and, saliently, Cohen lists John Urry's *Mobilities* (2007) amongst her references. Other works respond to Foucault's concept of the 'heterotopia' of the ship or draw out Deleuzian understandings of the 'smooth' and 'striated' space of the sea.<sup>62</sup> Strikingly, William Boelhower in 'The Rise of the New Atlantic Studies Matrix' describes the Atlantic as 'fundamentally a space of dispersion, conjunction, distribution, contingency, heterogeneity, and of intersecting and stratified lines and images – in short, a field of strategic possibilities in which the Oceanic order holds all together in a common but highly fluid space'.<sup>63</sup> A recent public example of the use of such an oceanic connective metaphor is a poster being currently shared on online social media by the Ocean Conservancy, bearing the tag: 'with every drop of water you drink, every breath you take, / you're *connected to the sea*'.<sup>64</sup>

British poetry has included many conscious linguistic engagements with this increased kinetic understanding of the geographies and politics of the sea. Yet poetic texts have also continued to place regional values on each written firth, inlet, and tidal main as super localities ('a hundred coasts menaced and defended / a small-scale world of rights and interests'<sup>65</sup>), as in a text such as Norman Nicholson's *Sea to the West*<sup>66</sup> – as well as continuing to work with the materials of specifically British literary tradition, including the Celtic cycle described by David Jones as the 'deep water troubling, under every tump in this Island'.<sup>67</sup> These various different kinds of textual symptoms display an ambivalent attitude to littoral geographies, equivocating between residual Romantic understandings of 'sublime' coastal prospects and conceptions of the coast as a space crisscrossed with economic and

<sup>61</sup> Margaret Cohen, 'Literary Studies on the Terraqueous Globe', *ibid.*, p. 660.

<sup>62</sup> Foucault's 1967 lecture 'Des Espace Autres' refers to the ship as the 'heterotopia par excellence'. Michel Foucault, 'Different Spaces,' in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* ed., James D. Faubion (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), p. 184-5. Deleuze and Guattari describe the sea as both 'the archetype of all smooth spaces' and also as undergoing 'a [...] striation gridding it in one place, then another, on this side and that'. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 529. Texts which make use of maritime or oceanic approaches, particularly in the space of the Atlantic, include Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993); Bernhard Klein, ed., *Fictions of the Sea: Critical Perspectives on the Ocean in British Literature and Culture* (London: Ashgate, 2002); Ralph Bauer, *The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures: Empire, Travel, Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun, eds., *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2004); Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Practice of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); and Christopher Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>63</sup> William Boelhower, cited in Hester Blum, 'The Prospect of Oceanic Studies', *PMLA* 125.3 (2010), p. 670.

<sup>64</sup> See the Ocean Conservancy website: <<http://www.oceanconservancy.org/>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>65</sup> Andrew Duncan, 'Anglophilia – A Romance of the Docks', *The Imaginary in Geometry*, *ibid.*, p. 46

<sup>66</sup> Norman Nicholson, *Sea to the West* (London: Faber & Faber, 1981). David Cooper analyses this as an example of a revived 'poetics of provincialism' in Cooper, 'Envisioning 'the cubist fells': Ways of Seeing in the Poetry of Norman Nicholson', in Neal Alexander and David Cooper eds., *Poetry and Geography: Space and Place in Post-war Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p. 158

<sup>67</sup> David Jones, 'Preface', *In Parenthesis* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963), p. xi

political interests.<sup>68</sup> Monastic understandings of the coastline as the threshold between the earthly and the heavenly also conflict with the modern globalised understanding of it as integral to traffic and shipping interests, and amphibious paradigms born of modern capitalism.<sup>69</sup> Language is thus under heavy symbolic pressure in contemporary texts, after oceanic studies theory, to deal with the counterpointing of sea and land in our culture, habitation, and politics.

Experimental British coastal poetry does seem to have responded more energetically to these perspectival and methodological shifts on coastlines than has much of the modern literary criticism. There is often a focus in the critical work on novels rather than poetry and on seas rather than coasts.<sup>70</sup> The 2006 conference 'Modernism on Sea' (and 2009 volume of the same title) gave a valuable cultural history of the artistic importance to modernist writers of British seaside resorts and ports, and in 2014 the conference 'Coastal Cultures of the Long Nineteenth Century', based in Oxford,<sup>71</sup> gave sustained attention to Victorian shores and genres related to shipwreck, natural history, music, art history, and gender. But there has yet to be a study which engages with twentieth century coastal poetry more theoretically and analytically.<sup>72</sup> The former conference certainly brought a useful focus to the modern period's emerging avant-garde approaches to the marginal space of the seaside, as depicted in texts such as Rob Shields' *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (1991). It called for new attention to 'the complex, imaginative life of the coast'<sup>73</sup> and the 'rich, continuous tradition of seaside art that has never properly been pieced together'.<sup>74</sup> Meanwhile the Atlantic Archipelagos Research Project currently underway at the University of Exeter and the Moore

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<sup>68</sup> See Steven Z. Levine, 'Seascapes of the Sublime: Vernet, Monet, and the Oceanic Feeling,' *New Literary History* 16.2 (1985), p. 377-400. For an account of the suggestive link between 'sublime' and 'liminal', which share the Latin root *limen* (threshold), see James B. Twitchell, *Romantic Horizons: Aspects of the Sublime in English Poetry and Painting, 1770-1850* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983).

<sup>69</sup> As described in Christopher Harvie's *A Floating Commonwealth: Politics, Culture, and Technology on Britain's Atlantic Coast, 1860-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>70</sup> The main book-length studies are all novel-based and sea-based. See Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever, eds., *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001); Cesare Casarino, *Modernity at Sea: Melville, Marx, Conrad in Crisis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2002); Hester Blum, *The View from the Masthead: Maritime Imagination and Antebellum American Sea Narratives* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Robert T. Tally Jr.'s chapter on 'Marine Nomadology' in *Melville, Mapping and Globalization: Literary Cartography in the American Baroque Writer* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), and Margaret Cohen, *The Novel and the Sea* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010). Those texts which make use of the emerging theoretical approaches, particularly in the space of the Atlantic, include Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), Bernhard Klein's *Fictions of the Sea: Critical Perspectives on the Ocean in British Literature and Culture* (London: Ashgate, 2002), Ralph Bauer's *The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures: Empire, Travel, Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Ian Baucom's *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Practice of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), and Christopher Miller's *The French Atlantic Triangle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>71</sup> *Coastal Cultures of the Long Nineteenth Century*, English Faculty, University of Oxford, 14-15<sup>th</sup> March 2014

<sup>72</sup> Lara Feigel and Alexandra Harris eds., *Modernism on Sea: Art and Culture at the British Seaside* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009).

<sup>73</sup> Harris and Feigel eds., *Modernism on Sea*, *ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>74</sup> Harris and Feigel eds., *Modernism on Sea*, *ibid.*, p. 1

Institute in Galway follows on from John Kerrigan's *Archipelagic English* and the Clutag Press journal *Archipelago* by bringing together literary scholars working on 'the identities, cartographies and cultural ecologies of the Atlantic Archipelago'; it has begun to facilitate such developments in coastal criticism, in particular in John Brannigan's curated *Scholarcasts* at UCD. Specific other geographical areas, however, have been more dedicatedly approached through the critical paradigms of coastal scholarship, in particular, Australia, the subject of Zeller and Cranston's edited *The Littoral Zone: Australian Contexts and Their Writers* (2007) and Hosking, Hosking, Pannell and Bierbaum's *Something Rich and Strange: Sea Changes, Beaches and the Littoral in The Antipodes* (2009). This is striking considering that a far greater proportion of the British landscape is within the coastal watershed, and yet the same attention has not been paid here to the contemporary transliteration of sea, land, and interior/ exterior relations.

In what follows I discuss several British poetic texts which examine the cultural positioning and conventional rhetorical systems of land and ocean. I will show how they pose, through language difficulties and riddles, geographical concerns which are exclusive to the coast, including: coastal erosion; troubled littoral cartography; the economic impact of seaside tourism; the colonial histories of coastal survey and exploration; and a complex understanding of the relationship between shores, shore-crossings, and the business of capitalism. Close formal analysis of the poems is required to show the way in which the evolution of different legal, scientific and aesthetic knowledges of the coast impacts the politics of these word formulations. My aim here is to concentrate in a more prolonged way on what the new oceanic and maritime studies often seems (at least as yet) to overstep: that seemingly innocuous first threshold of land and sea. Ian Vince in *The Lie of the Land* notes that 'at the coastline the structure of the island is revealed',<sup>75</sup> which has a more-than-geological truth to it. It is a site at which mythic histories and political histories of the island integrate. In many ways the European coastline is culture's prime 'deserted battlefield',<sup>76</sup> marked by a wall of half-submerged wartime bunkers and fortifications facing Germany. (Andrew Motion's sequence 'Salt Water', for instance, specifically imagines the histories of Orford's coast through the threefold geographies of radar, military, and mermen.<sup>77</sup>) This wall is so palpably a national and political front that it is now impossible to divide the European coastal zone from political and historical associations.

In the twenty first century coastlines are vastly important 'fractured landscape(s) of modernity',<sup>78</sup> offering abridgements of various cultural unities and imaginations; E. M. Forster, for instance, has described Swanage beach as the place where 'the imagination swells, spreads, and deepens, until it

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<sup>75</sup> Ian Vince, *The Lie of the Land: An Under-the-field Guide to the British Isles* (London: Boxtree, 2010), p. 257

<sup>76</sup> Paul Virilio, *Bunker Archaeology* (New Jersey: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009), p. 9

<sup>77</sup> Andrew Motion, 'Salt Water', *Selected Poems 1976-1997* (London: Faber & Faber, 2002), p. 111-120

<sup>78</sup> For a specific example on the coast of southern England, see James Wilkes, *A Fractured Landscape of Modernity: Culture and Conflict in the Isle of Purbeck* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

becomes geographic and encircles England'.<sup>79</sup> The British beach still offers such cribbed imaginations of the country or nation: '(h)ome is always the hardest place to get into sharp focus (...) If only it could be *encompassed*,' Jonathan Raban wrote on his sailing trips in the eighties<sup>80</sup> – while as James Hamilton-Paterson points out, in the case of Dover '(a) few miles of cliffs came to stand for an entire spiritual seaboard which might not be violated.'<sup>81</sup> Sea-shores elicit the desire to define and annex territory, but they also invite exchange. This happens on the national scale, as Jonathan Scott shows in his study of political identity and geographic metaphor, *When the Waves Ruled Britannia*,<sup>82</sup> it is also enacted at larger metaphorical scales, shown in phrases such as 'the shores of the unknown' and 'the friendless shores of the universe'.<sup>83</sup> It is valuable to recognise changing perspectives on the use of these rhetoric structures to contain and counter, to shape, and to identify ourselves, locally, nationally, globally, and spiritually.

Several key themes come out of the contradistinction of ideas of the coastline as a site of mobility and, instead, as the land's terminus, or terminal point – seen in the contrast between readings given below of poems (such as Peter Riley's) which play with Belloc's idea that 'all that which concerns the sea is profound and final',<sup>84</sup> and those which are explicitly galvanized by theoretical ideas of circulation and heterotopic space. What are the prime characteristics, for literature, of the 'eco-social assemblages' of coastlines?<sup>85</sup> What territorial principles do we attribute to the land, the sea, and the various water-lands in between? What regulatory practices accompany their meeting? Can a coastline be performed as a deterritorialized space, as Bear suggests,<sup>86</sup> or does it hide within it its own regional imaginary?<sup>87</sup> As Christine Evans writes in the poem 'Waves', set on the edge of a small Welsh island, 'This is frontier country'.<sup>88</sup> This is not just a natural frontier, but a social one, and a poem's attention to the 'human-encrusted reefs' of modern society<sup>89</sup> is involved with a number of histories – both real-

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<sup>79</sup> E. M. Forster, *Howards End* (London: Edward Arnold, 1910), p. 165., also cited in Wilkes, *A Fractured Landscape of Modernity*, *ibid.*, p. 1

<sup>80</sup> Jonathan Raban, *Coasting* (London: Picador, 1987), p. 22

<sup>81</sup> James Hamilton-Paterson, *Seven Tenths: The Sea and its Thresholds* (London: Faber & Faber, 2007), p. 85

<sup>82</sup> Jonathan Scott, *When the Waves Ruled Britannia: Geography and Political Identities, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

<sup>83</sup> For an example of the former, see the astronomer Joseph Silk's *On the Shores of the Unknown: A Short History of the Universe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). The latter is in this case a quotation from John Hay, *The Primal Alliance: Earth and Ocean* (San Francisco: Friends of the Earth, 1972), p. 43

<sup>84</sup> Cited in Raban, *Coasting*, *ibid.*, p. 31

<sup>85</sup> Owain Jones, 'Lunar-solar Rhythmpatterns: Towards the Material Cultures of Tides', *Environment and Planning A* 43.10 (2011), p. 2285

<sup>86</sup> Christopher Bear, 'Assembling the sea: materiality, movement and regulatory practices in the Cardigan Bay scallop fishery', *Cultural Geographies* 20.1 (2013)

<sup>87</sup> Christopher Connery, 'The Oceanic Feeling and the Regional Imaginary', in Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake eds., *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996)

<sup>88</sup> Christine Evans, 'Waves', *Island of Dark Horses* (Chester Springs: Seren, 1995), p. 14

<sup>89</sup> Earle Birney, 'November walk near False Creek Mouth', *Near False Creek Mouth* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964), unpaginated



world histories, and also the felt sense of history; that imagined correspondence between the shore and ‘What is salt / And ancient in us’.<sup>90</sup>

The coast’s social histories have been formative from the earliest ages of writing; Robert Hampson’s essay on Joseph Conrad and James Joyce and forms of coastal mapping and epic geography demonstrates the undoubtable importance of coastlines to the three phases of European geography (as seen by Conrad: fabulous phase, scientific phase, and geography triumphant).<sup>91</sup> Histories in human literary culture are also a constitutive part of human geographical culture, of course, as James S. Romm observes. Drawing on Ancient Greek seafarers’ logs, geographical treatises, and epic poetry, Romm gives a valuable history of the schemes of land and water in the understandings of ancient geography, along the way giving philosophical exegeses of words such as *peirar* (shoreline or coast), *peirata Okeanoio* (boundaries of Ocean), *epi peirasi gaies* (borders of the Earth), and *periplou* (coasting voyage). In describing the vagaries of early geography he also analyses the kinds of marvel, order, and chaos attached to the differently conceived bounded and boundless spaces, and observes, too, that Aristotle and Plato supposed ‘that early poets deliberately “wrote in riddles”’, and saw ‘Ocean as a prime example of such encryption’.<sup>92</sup> This chapter will consider modern versions of such encryptions.

Two thousand years ago Strabo described humankind as ‘amphibious’.<sup>93</sup> Contemporary work in cultural geography has continued to examine these amphibian cultures. From Owain Jones’ article on the affective spaces of the UK tides,<sup>94</sup> to Avril Maddrell’s research on modern pilgrimage at Celtic coastlines (particularly the Keeils),<sup>95</sup> to Philip Vannini’s work on ferries, islands, and concepts of off-grid life at coastal edges,<sup>96</sup> to Kimberley Peters’ paper on the material experience of the sea as it affects off-shore radio piracy,<sup>97</sup> to Phil Steinberg’s writing on ocean nostalgia and ‘maritime mystique’,<sup>98</sup> cultural geographers are probing their way into the domains of coastal and marine

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<sup>90</sup> Donald Davie, ‘Emigrant, to the Receding Shore’, *Collected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2002), p. 230

<sup>91</sup> Robert Hampson, ‘Spatial Stories: Joseph Conrad and James Joyce’, in Brooker and Thacker eds., *Geographies of Modernism: Literatures, Cultures, Spaces* (London: Routledge, 2005)

<sup>92</sup> James Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 178

<sup>93</sup> This description by Strabo is cited by Phil Steinberg in *The Social Construction of the Ocean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 9

<sup>94</sup> Owain Jones, ‘The Breath of the Moon’: The Rhythmic and Affective Time-spaces of UK Tides’, in Tim Edensor ed., *Geographies of Rhythm* (London: Ashgate, 2010)

<sup>95</sup> Avril Maddrell, ‘Praying the Keeills’: Rhythm, meaning and experience on pilgrimage journeys in the Isle of Man’, *Landabréfið: Journal of the Association of Icelandic Geographers* Special Issue: Practicing Nature-based Tourism (2011)

<sup>96</sup> Philip Vannini, ‘Constellations of ferry (im)mobility: islandness as the performance and politics of insulation and isolation’, *Cultural Geographies* (2011)

<sup>97</sup> Kimberley Peters, ‘Manipulating material hydro-worlds: rethinking human and more-than-human relationality through offshore radio piracy’, *Environment and Planning A* 44.5 (2012)

<sup>98</sup> Philip Steinberg, ‘The maritime mystique: sustainable development, capital mobility, and nostalgia in the world ocean’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 17.4 (1999)

geography, calling for new analyses of multiple shores and ocean spaces. The short film *Imagining Change: Coastal Conversations*, mentioned above and created in 2012 as part of the Landscape Environment programme (by Stephen Daniels, Caitlin DeSilvey, Mike Pearson, Simon Read, and Lucy Veale), was directed by cultural geographers working with arts and humanities scholars, practicing artists, and coastal landscapes.<sup>99</sup> The conversations of the title involved artists and researchers, discussing Mullion Cove and harbour (as a transit place not just between land and sea, but between past and future), and an experimental narration of shoreland management plans, erosion and reconstruction, and a “reverse chronology” of coastal agendas. DeSilvey also published a tie-in article working through the ‘anticipatory history’ of the coastline and her research on Mullion’s forms of heritage, dynamism, and ‘future unmaking’ as an example of ‘other ways of storying landscape, framing histories around movement rather than stasis’.<sup>100</sup>

A number of recent texts by cultural geographers have promoted the role of the discipline in focussing on the ‘materiality and multi-dimensionality’ of the coast and its ‘assemblages’ of human and nonhuman systems, as in Jones (2011), Anderson (2012), and Bear (2013),<sup>101</sup> all explicitly drawing on assemblage theory. In the forthcoming *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean* (2014), editors Anderson and Peters explicitly present their volume as paying an overdue debt of attention to the human and material dimensions of the ocean – its social qualities and its wateriness – which can be overlooked in global political histories. They explain that the book acts as a corrective to the fact that geography has ‘traditionally overlooked this vital component of the earth’s composition’, not least due to the frequent observation about geography’s *terrestrial* etymology (earth-writing). They state instead that they will ‘cast adrift’ old oppositions with the ocean’s terra incognita, bringing cultural geography’s theoretical debates around ‘affect, assemblage, emotion, hybridity and the more-than-human’ to bear on the fluid nature of watery spaces.<sup>102</sup> These geographers have shaped some of the critical concerns for territorial and de-territorialized principles with which I approach the poems. Throughout what follows, I also rely on major and impactful readings of the cultural narratives of the coastline by Taussig, Norquay and Smith, Steinberg, Ryan, Mack, and Bellamy.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> The research film is available online here: <<http://vimeo.com/39651591>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>100</sup> Caitlin DeSilvey, ‘Making sense of transience: an anticipatory history’, *Cultural Geographies* 19.1 (2012), p. 31

<sup>101</sup> Owain Jones, ‘Lunar – solar rhythmpatterns: towards the material cultures of tides’, *Environment and Planning A* 43.10 (2011). See also Owain Jones, ‘The Breath of the Moon: The Rhythmic and Affective Time-Spaces of UK Tides’, in Tim Edensor ed., *Geographies of Rhythm* (London: Ashgate, 2010); Jon Anderson, ‘Relational places: the surfed wave as assemblage and convergence’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30.4 (2012); Christopher Bear, ‘Assembling the sea: materiality, movement and regulatory practices in the Cardigan Bay scallop fishery’, *Cultural Geographies* 20.1 (2013)

<sup>102</sup> Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters eds., *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean* (London: Ashgate, forthcoming 2014)

<sup>103</sup> Michael Taussig, ‘The Beach (A Fantasy)’, *Critical Enquiry* 26.2 (2000); Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth, *Across the Margins: Cultural Identity and Change in the Atlantic Archipelago* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Phil Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

For cultural geographers and for poets and critics alike, therefore, as this introduction aims to show, ‘The seashore is a summons’.<sup>104</sup> It offers an unpredictable figuration of past and future identities. According to Douglas Dunn and Norman Ackroyd in their collaboration *A Line in the Water* (2009), the border of the sea itself can be seen to abut on the space of art: ‘You live in an estuarial embrace, / And there the sea meets Art, and Art meets sea’.<sup>105</sup> Several fleets of poems and poetry volumes have been written about littoral space in Britain in the last forty years, not all of which can be considered here. The poems which have been chosen have been for their resonances with the theme of what Rasula calls the ‘workable ground(s)’<sup>106</sup> of the language of the ocean-rim, themselves textually responding to the fact that ‘(t)he face of the shore is under ceaseless erasure by overinscription’.<sup>107</sup> The texts which follow work with previous literary concepts of the coast, including in their experimental use of sources, and show the changing stakes of these concepts for bodies, borders, and ecologies. As the poet Kelvin Corcoran puts it in his *Backward Turning Sea*,

We’re all on the seaside to a new figuration.<sup>108</sup>

### ‘Precipice of Niches’: coastal tides, lines, and maps

What follows in this section is an initial deconstruction of the coast, in its rhetoric and its terminology as well as its maps, in particular focussing on the way in which these rhetorics have responded to mobility and immobility, and to cultural as well as ecological fluidity. The contexts (from official terminologies to the writings of natural ecologists) which will be considered here will then be drawn into a final focus on border making in language as well as on maps, and why a coast is always ‘so to speak’.

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Press, 2007); Anna Ryan, *Where Land Meets Sea: Coastal Explorations of Landscape, Representation and Spatial Experience* (London: Ashgate, 2012); John Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion: 2011); Elizabeth Jane Bellamy, *Dire Straits: The Perils of Writing the Early Modern English Coastline from Leland to Milton* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013)

<sup>104</sup> Jed Rasula, *This Compost: Ecological Imperatives in American Poetry* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2012), p. 64

<sup>105</sup> Douglas Dunn (poems) and Norman Ackroyd (aquatints), *A Line in the Water* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2009), unpaginated catalogue

<sup>106</sup> Jed Rasula, *This Compost*, *ibid.*, p. 65

<sup>107</sup> Jed Rasula, *This Compost*, *ibid.*, p. 64

<sup>108</sup> Kelvin Corcoran, *Backward Turning Sea* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2008), p. 58

Firstly, *where* is the coast? For the poet Andrew Duncan it can only be placed as a ‘3-dimensional meander’ through the planes of language and the forms of structured identity,<sup>1</sup> where the waterline itself marks the changes in the geographical distribution of historical speech patterns (‘Silurian drift of air wafer like the surf / Turning lateral sibilants into chain alliteration’<sup>2</sup>). In what follows, I will look at the cartographic dilemmas of the fractal coastline and its mobile ecology, but also at the mapping of the coast in discrete vocabularies, and the demarcations of its watery zones in metaphorical terms (such as ‘cut’ and ‘mouth’) which differently impact our coastal consciousness. The poems gathered here each tackle the nature of the coast as a non-static line, a set of relational boundaries, or an area of transition or movement, complicatedly related to the map’s own ‘predrawn lines of least distance’.<sup>3</sup> They also consider the legal divisions of the coastline in contemporary political practice, as in David Herd’s Dover poems, and the cultural importance of a re-assessment of the coast’s perceived laws and lines:

The sea being fate and fate a mystery  
Questioning all laws that cause effects  
To trace anew old lines on the map.<sup>4</sup>

Living in an archipelago, coastal regimes of thought are foundational to cultural identity. As Edna Longley puts it, ‘the archipelago’s ability to feed antinomies of home and strangeness (...) may be intrinsic to lyric structure’.<sup>5</sup> The coastal poetic text is recurrently written as a place of embarkation and a place of encounter. It is also thought of as a cultural precipice, the place in which, in conservative philosopher Carl Schmitt’s view, the ‘Nomos’ of the Earth may be suspended (that is to say, the determination of a juridical and territorial ordering).<sup>6</sup> If it is an outline of the physical landmasses of Britain – the geography which one can stand upon, and have under your feet – then it is also many other kinds of outline: cultural, social, literary, and temporal. Yet, at the same time, cultural identity is not only constituted by ‘what lost footing’<sup>7</sup> on the move into the sea, with the sea as a sort of negative space to identity. Rather, the shore is the space where models of culture and identity

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Duncan, ‘On the Beach at Aberystwyth’, *The Imaginary in Geometry*, *ibid.*, p. 39

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Duncan, ‘On the Beach’, *ibid.*, p. 39

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Duncan, ‘On the Beach’, *ibid.*, p. 41

<sup>4</sup> Andrew McNeillie, ‘Trouvé: Rigg Bay’, *Winter Moorings* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014), p. 20

<sup>5</sup> Edna Longley, ‘Poems and Paradigms’, *UCD Scholarcast Series 4: Reconceiving the British Isles* <<http://www.ucd.ie/scholarcast/scholarcast16.html>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>6</sup> Carl Schmitt (trans. Draghici), *Land and Sea* (Washington: Plutarch Press, 1997); Carl Schmitt (trans. Ulmen), *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (New York: Telos Press, 2003). See also Christopher Connery, ‘Ideologies of Land and Sea: Alfred Thayer Mahan, Carl Schmitt, and the Shaping of Global Myth Elements’, *boundary 2* 28.2 (2001)

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Duncan, ‘On the Beach’, *ibid.*, p. 39

refract and diffract. As Elizabeth-Jane Bellamy remarks, it is also a site which is haunted by its own literary history, and a number of different spectral geographies which, in a coastal poetics, exist alongside the material reality of the British shorelines, so that ‘these local coastlines sometimes ‘spoke’ in a more attenuated voice than did the land’.<sup>8</sup>

These spectral geographies included, firstly, Classical antiquity’s topos of *ultima Britannia* – from Greek and Roman accounts which saw Britain as a bleakly remote ‘welter of coastlines’<sup>9</sup> at the edges of the earth itself. Secondly, there was the archipelagic topos of the ‘Fortunate Isles’, and thirdly, the broader Mediterranean theme of *peirar* and the sacred liminality between land and sea. Fourthly, there was the emerging university geography, with its focus on coastlines as ‘forward-looking sites of mercantilist expansion’;<sup>10</sup> and, fifthly, the local histories of Anglo-Saxon and medieval English poetry at the coastline. These accrued layers created conflicting ‘early modern English protocols for how to ‘write’ the material reality of the East Anglian coastlines’;<sup>11</sup> affected by early modern humanism’s preoccupations with Ovid’s exile poetry, by Greco-Roman geography, by the Mediterranean sublime, and by a very different history of coastal pathetic fallacy offered by the prior English depictions of the tide-beleaguered coast. Bellamy tracks these palimpsestuous maps of early modern depictions of the land’s edge – such as Spenser’s Faerie seacoast – between Mediterranean navigations, early modern British pilotage manuals and attempts to chart local coastlines, Elizabethan maritime understanding of the coasts as imperial gateways, the tropes of classical poetry, and the interests of English antiquarianism. A number of other sources exist which testify to these conflicting influences upon the contours of modern British poetry, from its ‘local habitations’ to its investments in global, Mediterranean or Atlantic cultures.<sup>12</sup>

As the following texts will show (at least in the small samples that can be considered here), modern British coastal poetics are still multiply mapped and layered with tropes. They are also affected by both antiquarian and contemporary thought around continental shelf formation, tidal currents, navigation, and the vagaries and dangers of the coastal zone. Varieties of local coastline have a wide range of terminologies, related to types of indentation of the sea into the land and of the land into the sea, and as Fiona Stafford has observed recently in a paper exploring the anthropomorphic and also political resonances of a range of terms (firth, arm, inver, outfall, brace, fleet, pill, etc.), different

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Jane Bellamy, *Dire Straits: The Perils of Writing the Early Modern English Coastline from Leland to Milton* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), p. 3

<sup>9</sup> Bellamy, *Dire Straits*, *ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>10</sup> Bellamy, *Dire Straits*, *ibid.*, p. 10

<sup>11</sup> Bellamy, *Dire Straits*, *ibid.*, p. 14

<sup>12</sup> See Robert Ashton Kissack Jr., ‘The Sea in Anglo-Saxon and Middle English Poetry’, *Washington University Studies: Humanities* series 13 (1926); Michelle Warren, *History on the Edge: Excalibur and the Border of Britain, 1100-1300* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); see also J. P. Murphy’s English translation of Avienus’ 4<sup>th</sup> century AD Latin text, *Ora Maritima*, as ‘Ora maritima or Description of the seacoast’ (Chicago: Ares, 1977); Avienus’ text is based partly on the 6th century BC now-lost merchants’ handbook of sea-routes, *Massiliote Periplus*.

imaginings of agency, territory, movement, and exchange are coded into the vocabulary choices.<sup>13</sup> The double meaning of a word such as ‘mere’, in its usual non sea-going location in our language, occurs in Earle Birney – ‘that mere more which squares our map’<sup>14</sup> – and Andrew McNeillie – ‘at mere memory of your name I drown’;<sup>15</sup> in both of these occurrences its grammatical position suggests the diminutive sense of ‘mere / merely’, and yet it also brings its Old English vast and watery sense to the lines, at a map-swallowing scale which drowns out its stated meaning. (Note also Amy Evans’ gendering of the sea-line with one grave accent, drawing on the trope of sea as ancient mother: ‘for mer / for the mere *mère*, / from the child / -less : whore’.<sup>16</sup>) This anthropomorphism of the sea’s edge has also been picked up in a self-conscious way by poets including Eric Mottram (‘a tidal opening – they make / “an arm of the sea” / tidal mouths’)<sup>17</sup> and Giles Goodland (‘Glove of the sea feeling its way / up & down’).<sup>18</sup>

In terms of the more common and basic historical terminologies, Roebuck and Sperling have observed that the words ‘coast’ and ‘shore’ are given different kinds of work in Prynne’s poetry, with the former implying an abstract territorial or administrative division – and the only term used in the geological source articles – and the latter, ‘shore’, deriving through ‘shear’ from Proto-Germanic *skur* (‘cut’), suggesting the cutting of a dividing line between land and sea, or also, in the word ‘foreshore’, a susceptibility to the ebb and flow of the tide for its allotted space and meaning.<sup>19</sup> This cut etymology has itself been played with several times, from Nicholas Johnson’s poem ‘Shore Body’, which diagnoses the ‘Cut. / Sign. / Recede. Tide.’ of the shore as a ‘guillotine mirage’<sup>20</sup> – utilising the role of the period itself to create these emblematic cuts between the continuing one-word sentences – to the final line of Prynne’s ‘The Glacial Question, Unsolved’:

what in sentiment we are, we  
are, the coast, a line or sequence, the  
cut back down, to the shore.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Fiona Stafford, ‘Writing around the Irish Sea: Inlets, Outlets, Firths and Mouths’, *UCD Scholarcast Series 7: The Literatures and Cultures of the Irish Sea*: <<http://www.ucd.ie/scholarcast/scholarcast31.html>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>14</sup> Earle Birney, ‘Mappemounde’, *The Cow Jumped Over the Moon: The Writing and Reading of Poetry* (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), p. 84; see also Adele Haft’s account of his wordplay and philology, particularly Anglo-French medieval influences, in Haft, ‘Earle Birney’s ‘Mappemounde’: Visualizing Poetry with Maps’, *Cartographic Perspectives* 43 (Fall 2002)

<sup>15</sup> Andrew McNeillie, ‘Lafan’, *Winter Moorings*, *ibid.*, p. 24

<sup>16</sup> Amy Evans, *The Sea Quells* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2013), p. 28-9

<sup>17</sup> Eric Mottram, *Estuaries: Poems 1989-91* (Middlesex: Solaris, 1992), p. 59

<sup>18</sup> Giles Goodland, *Littoral* (Devon: Oversteps Books, 1996), p. 27

<sup>19</sup> Tom Roebuck and Matthew Sperling, ‘The Glacial Question, Unsolved’: A Specimen Commentary on Lines 1-31’, in Ryan Dobran ed., *Glossator 10: On the Poems of J. H. Prynne* (2010), p. 53-4

<sup>20</sup> Nicholas Johnson, ‘Shore Body’, *Pelt* (St Leonard’s: Etruscan Books, 2005), p. 510

<sup>21</sup> Prynne, ‘The Glacial Question, Unsolved’, *Poems* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 2005), p. 66

Physically, of course, the coastline is not a literal line, but more properly, a strip of debatable land, criss-crossed with different forms of interpretative delimitation. The concept of the coastline as a “line” is itself constructed, as Paul Carter observes, arguing that the Enlightenment desire to eliminate gaps in geographical knowledge – with ‘the instrument of elimination (being) the continuous line’ – meant that ‘To fulfil these intellectual ambitions, to become an image of reasoning, the coast itself had to be linearized, reconceptualized as a *coastline*’.<sup>22</sup> Historically the coastline has always been very poorly mapped, and its cartographic histories and calculations have been touched on throughout its textual histories, from the *Canterbury Tales* shipman who ‘rekenen wel his tydes’, to the contemporary work of writers such as Brenda Iijima (who locates the coastline as a habitual practice, existing only ‘by dint of repeated hint’<sup>23</sup>), and the never-ending several pages long sentences of A. R. Ammons: ‘I have reached no conclusions, have erected no boundaries, / shutting out and shutting in, separating inside / from outside: I have / drawn no lines: / as / manifold events of sand / change the dune’s shape that will not be the same shape’.<sup>24</sup>

This resistance of coasts to conventional cartographic techniques is also due to the prominence of different administrative readings of the landscape. The Ordnance Survey and the Hydrographic Office each have their own way of combining kinds of littoral data into maps, including the definition of national and international shipping rights, admiralty charts, radio maps, off-shore oil and gas operations, changes in sediment type, and various different forms of tidal measurement. Meanwhile, although the modern tidal information is digitised into a continuous data set and held by the British Oceanographic Data Centre, much of the pre-1976 data is in fact archived with separate local authorities. Designated Heritage Coast areas, which make up thirty-four percent of the coastline of England and Wales, are also subject to scientific enquiry by the Countryside Commission, leading to a nine hundred mile exercise in coastal coordination. Under all these administrative data-scapes it may be difficult to spot the local detail underfoot, such as ‘the green / Straight belt of seaweed’ which ‘Marks out the interspace of tide’.<sup>25</sup>

Even the maps which use satellite technology and Geographical Information Systems are, according to Mark Monmonier, inaccurate in their depictions, for an ‘outlining’ of the coast depicted on a map after the use of a standard satellite image would, after rescaling, have a thickness proportionate to a

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<sup>22</sup> Paul Carter and Ruark Lewis, *Depth of Translation: The Book of Raft* (Burnley, Victoria: NMA Publications, 1999), p. 129, 125

<sup>23</sup> This phrase is from Jackson Mac Low’s review of Iijima’s book, *Around Sea* (California: O Books, 2004), in his ongoing poetry newsletter: Jackson Mac Low, *Poetry Project: Issues 192-205* (St. Mark’s Church: author, 2002), p. xcvi

<sup>24</sup> A. R. Ammons, ‘Corsons Inlet’, *Collected Poems 1951-1971* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), p. 149

<sup>25</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, ‘The Light-Keeper’, *The Complete Poetry of Robert Louis Stevenson* (Boston: Digireads, 2011), p. 315

space of up to ten miles on the real territory.<sup>26</sup> The fine detail required by littoral mapping is also the focus of Tim Robinson's writing on 'A Connemara Fractal'. He argues that the intricacy, the complexity, and the sheer convolutedness of the Connemara coastline, especially around Carraroe and na hOileáin, is such that it transcends 'the usual dimensional constraints of a line'.<sup>27</sup> In fact, in the first place, coastlines were famously used as an image of infinite fractal dimensions in a line by the mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot, in his essay 'How Long is the Coast of Britain?', which explained that 'Seacoast shapes are examples of highly-involved curves' which are 'so involved in their detail that their lengths are often infinite or, rather, undefinable'.<sup>28</sup> The poet Peter Philpott, in his sequence 'An Encounter Upon the Beach of Minehead with the Prince of this World', tried to find a suitable language for just these 'interference patterns'<sup>29</sup> and 'refractory' periods,<sup>30</sup> declaring 'Think now of this tortuous sea margin / Banded round into a fractal infinity', and finding 'Each interface a page / On which I throw my accusations'.<sup>31</sup> These strained assessments of a tidal boundary are made even more difficult by the fact that there is an un-calculable zone, not properly of the tide, that is nonetheless moistened daily by the falling droplets of the spray, which alters its physical composition and populations. The three key problems for the mapping of the physical space of the coast "line" are, therefore, scale, plurality, and mobility – i.e., the ever-retreating accuracy of cartographic judgement of a fractal line at closer scales, the fact that there is no single complex line, but rather, a series of aggregate forms and events, and the fact that these forms and events are always in motion. Each of these three problems can be seen to antagonize the mappable clarity of the coastline in Andrew Duncan's recent poem, 'Precipice of Niches': in a text beginning with the movement from the scale of cliffs, splitting and splitting again down to the seabed, and then into the 'fine-scale degradation' of the knowledge of the line at a closer scale, at which open up 'its traps and part-worlds'.<sup>32</sup>

Duncan's poem is itself worth looking at again at a finer grain. Its focus on the indivisible movements and places of the coastline brings out Fiona Stafford's concern with the fluctuating meaning of the

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<sup>26</sup> Mark Monmonier, *Coastlines: How Mapmakers Frame the World and Chart Environmental Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008)

<sup>27</sup> Tim Robinson, *Setting Foot on the Shores of Connemara*, (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2012), unpaginated Kindle edition. However, on this quotation, see Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), which also questions the dimensional constraints of a line. Ingold's publication is part of his wider research project which offers a comparative anthropology of ways, traces, threads and surfaces; the gestural trace and the point-to-point connector; writing and drawing, and the significance of the straight line. See also Tim Ingold ed., *Redrawing Anthropology: Materials, Movements, Lines* (London: Ashgate, 2011), Tim Ingold, 'Looking for lines in nature', *Earthlines* 3 (2012), and Tim Ingold, 'Lines in time', *Oxford Art Journal* 36.3 (2013)

<sup>28</sup> Benoit Mandelbrot, 'How Long is the Coast of Britain? Statistical Self-Similarity and Fractional Dimension', *Science* 156.3775 (1967), p. 636

<sup>29</sup> Peter Philpott, *Textual Possessions: Three Sequences* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2004), p. 75

<sup>30</sup> Philpott, *Textual Possessions*, *ibid.*, p. 69

<sup>31</sup> Philpott, *Textual Possessions*, *ibid.*, p. 82

<sup>32</sup> Andrew Duncan, 'Precipice of Niches', online at *Intercapillary Space* (2012): <<http://www.intercapillaryspace.blogspot.co.uk/2012/06/poem-by-andrew-duncan.html>> (accessed 01/08/2014)



‘mouth’ of a sea or river as a site of admission, expulsion, speaking, drinking, etc. (‘what is the meaning of a mouth that is perpetually open?’<sup>33</sup>): ‘growing faint at the horizon line / the curve where its mouth closes / dispersing over the bed of the visible / to swallow itself at the horizon line’.<sup>34</sup> As we can see here, Duncan’s poem is concerned not just with the indivisible nature of the coastline, but also with what is visible and invisible in the environment: thus, ‘The viewing-glass viewed / the pored littoral paradise / scattered over many acres, / in frames, in niches’. Here, ‘pored’ of course has a physical and ecological meaning: the presence of pores in this littoral area means the presence of minute interstices or passageways through which liquid can filter or be absorbed, acting as both an outlet and an orifice. But the expected term for this would be ‘porous’: the use of ‘pored’, so close to ‘viewed’, calls to mind its completion in the phrase ‘pored over’: referring to something that is gazed fixedly upon, carefully and attentively read, intently examined, or meditated on or over. Not all of these strategies will grant a person static knowledge of the coastline, or even promise to. The ocular experience of the indistinct boundaries of the coast is also emphasised here, to an even greater degree, with the double-vision of the viewing-glass itself presented as a viewer; the sweep of modern technological ‘eyes’ on the sea has been essential to our imagined vision of it in satellite imagery from above as much as from the water’s level, as John Mack has observed;<sup>35</sup> Anna Ryan has also studied the differing expressions of the geometry of the coastal sea horizon as static (standing and staring) or as an opening vision<sup>36</sup> – perhaps suggested in Duncan’s reference to a horizon line ‘soft as an eye’.<sup>37</sup> But there is another purpose to Duncan’s pointers toward the language of visual knowing.

It is not going too far, given Duncan’s own critical predilections as a well-known surveyor-of-the-field of British poetry,<sup>38</sup> to see in the poem something of a comment on the modern poetry scenes – as a landscape – with which this thesis is concerned. Particularly suggestive to this reader is his title for the poem, ‘Precipice of Niches’, which itself refers to a text known only by those within a small British poetry niche (and even then, not that well-known), Eric Mottram’s small press Writers Forum publication on bits of coloured card, *Precipice of Fishes* (1979).<sup>39</sup> This coded pun in the title is an extra clue to the fact that Duncan’s ‘niche fish flushed with signs’ is in fact a littoral vision of the fashions of the margins of the British poetry world. From here we can read out from the poem several signals to the state of ‘marginal’ poetry as ‘a foam of local ends to vision’, made up of an aggregate of individual poets or ‘Short-lived selves’ each on ‘an I-scene / cascade’. Singular and group identifications with the marginal position – and embittered infighting as well as outfighting with

<sup>33</sup> Fiona Stafford, ‘Writing around the Irish Sea’, *ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>34</sup> Duncan, ‘Precipice of Niches’, *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> John Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion: 2011), p. 35

<sup>36</sup> Anna Ryan, *Where Land Meets Sea: Coastal Explorations of Landscape, Representation and Spatial Experience* (London: Ashgate, 2012), p. 20-21

<sup>37</sup> Duncan, ‘Precipice of Niches’, *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> In particular see Andrew Duncan, *The Failure of Conservatism in Modern British Poetry* (Cambridge: Salt, 2003) and *Centre and Periphery in Modern British Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009)

<sup>39</sup> See also p. 143, this thesis

wider publishing cultures – create the poetic scene as a ‘kinetic geometry / marginal to so many dead states / slowed on a slope of dispersal & destruction’. And at this poetry coastline are shared antiquarian and esoteric tastes: ‘we swallow the rich and alien forms / a fan of dialects & early inscriptions falling / down a slope of broken symmetries / we ascend to match the past / spreading in a strained and saturated web / sets dense in doubles & contrasts form’.

Within this tidal setting of poetry movements – where the line of identification between insider and outsider is troubled and crossed through the diversification and self-complication of positions imagined as exterior and interior – the language of sight and vision takes on a new potency. Why is it, we might ask, that this dense spume of modern small press and language poetry should be found only lodged into the tiny coastal insets of ‘ruin as complexity, interior swallowing each surface, / riddled, a perfect refuge for what hides’? The poem displays not only this kind of poetry’s taste for the self-divisible contradictions in esoteric language – words ‘shimmering with traps and part-worlds’ and a ‘recurring turning-back’ – but also the result of these literary horizons’ commitment to ‘part and deny each other’ and to ‘sift and sop around’. In other words – in terms of the visible – to an external perspective, the vision of this small-grained and contradictory sea edge is as ‘A passive and incomprehensible surface / a culture leaving its Time in puzzles and masks’. Duncan’s text plays with the different meanings of niche – firstly: as a shallow recess, or, suitably for the coast, a small alcove; and secondly, as a cultural or social niche, hidden and also difficult or impossible for non-specialists to access. So what would a precipice of niches be? Surely this is an incomprehensible description, combining as it does the sure cut (shore) of the ‘precipice’ with the ‘pored’ complications of inward riddle and ‘broken symmetries’, invisible at the scale of the public arena of sea cliffs with which the poem began. Amongst the many ‘dispersing’, ‘swallow(ing)’, and ‘recit(ing)’ mouths of this text therefore comes the question: are these poetries only able to be merely ingoing, invisible to outsiders, or are their movements outgoing, too?

The alcoves, or niches, of modern poetry have sheltered a great number of other texts specifically about the marking and terminologies of tides and the problematic assessments of the coast “line”: full book-length examples in recent years include Zoë Skouilding’s *Tide Table* (1998), Angela Leighton’s *Sea Level* (2007), and Philip Gross’ *The Water Table* (2009). If poets are ‘border-workers’, in American poet Michael Palmer’s words,<sup>40</sup> then alongside the great sea-going poems of the modern era (such as Pound’s *Cantos*) we must rate those which take place in these complex landscapes of coastal zones. Volumes such as Ian Davidson’s *No Passage Landward* (1989), Thomas A. Clark’s *The Path to the Sea* (2005), and Patricia Debney’s *Littoral* (2013) consider and report upon the inhabitation of, or movement through, this narrow and partitioned avenue between land and sea, while Conar O’Callaghan’s *Seatown* (2000) is written about the county town Dundalk and the formation of

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<sup>40</sup> Michael Palmer, *Active Boundaries: Selected Essays and Talks* (New York: New Directions Books, 2008), p. 222.

liveable towns on landfill – i.e., land that is reclaimed from the sea; his autobiographical sequence contains several references to the management of the different activities of dredging, house-building, and creating new bypasses in an area which still retains ‘the vague sense of being cut adrift’.<sup>41</sup> Derek Mahon’s *Harbour Lights* (2005), meanwhile, investigates the modern Irish coastline as a cultural watershed, including alongside the planes and freighters ‘(t)he long contingent action / of salt on the first rocks’ or the ‘raw strand where Cúchulainn fought the waves’.<sup>42</sup> And ‘The Sea in Winter’, in Nancy Gaffield’s *Continental Drift*, depicts the shifting temporal attributions where ‘the tide / fills the space / between a bank of cloud / and a band of shingle / the sea belongs to the land / today’.<sup>43</sup>

Mark Dickinson’s *Littoral* (2007) explicitly analyses the internal divisions in the narrow avenue between land and sea, in form as well as text. Dickinson’s poem is broken into subsections with their own cover pages, or flyleaves, with the titles ‘Zone: [inner shore]’, ‘Zone: [Middle shore, interlude]’, and ‘Zone: [upper shore]’,<sup>44</sup> moving playfully through each terrestrial ‘equinox’, ‘subclass and order’, to show the mobile ‘points where neaps intercept’.<sup>45</sup> The dynamic nature of the environment is shown through an excess of modifying verbs and deictic shifts, as in the following passage:

Rock mount above green  
Swell that presses sand  
To an embankment that  
Table-tops and reaches into  
Grass / shelter / cove.

Pressing incline sides granite;  
Sheep amidst sheer  
Rear amongst the vertical.<sup>46</sup>

The task of the coastline surveyor is to combine data from idiosyncratic tides as well as harmonic constants. But within Dickinson’s delicate grammatical ecology – each clause modifying the position of the surrounding clauses – it is difficult to specify individual data sets: ‘Saline squandering’, in Dickinson’s words, is a ‘haemorrhage of particulars’. The interchange of departure and return at the

<sup>41</sup> Conar O’Callaghan, *Seatown and Earlier Poems* (Wake Forest University Press: 2000), p. 54

<sup>42</sup> Derek Mahon, ‘Shorelines’ and ‘Harbour Lights’, in *Harbour Lights* (County Meath: Gallery Press, 2008), p. 50, 63

<sup>43</sup> Nancy Gaffield, *Continental Drift*, *ibid.*, p. 27

<sup>44</sup> The use of the word ‘zones’ also plays with the scientific approach shown in, for instance, C. M. Yonge’s chapter on ‘Zonation on Rocky Shores’, first published in 1949, which begins: ‘the zoning of both plants and animals within the narrow vertical limits of a rocky shore is one of the most striking features about shore life’. C. M. Yonge, *The Sea Shore* (London: Bloomsbury, 1990), p. 220

<sup>45</sup> Mark Dickinson, *Littoral* (Kenilworth: Prest Roots, 2007), p. 7, 12.

<sup>46</sup> Dickinson, *Littoral*, *ibid.*, p. 9

coastline is indicated in grammatical conjunctions designed for cross-directional movements: ‘ebb/ Exposed to & by’; ‘Sand, pockets of or Up-/ Welling’; ‘To enter on or upon/ Rock-base geology’. The fluid three page sentence that makes up sections vii to ix also shows a preponderance of coastal details existing ‘over’, ‘towards’ and ‘amongst’ each other, a set of relational logics which are particularly suited to the textual manoeuvres of poetry. Even the ‘fixture’ in the line ‘rock layer upon fixture as at tide line’ seems unfixed, held in place only relationally.<sup>47</sup> It is evident that the dynamic nature of marine space – and the movements that provoke the ‘great verbs of the sea’<sup>48</sup> – is a challenge to representation. The fact that ‘nausea’ and ‘nautical’ share the same Greek root immediately hints at this human un-settlement at sea.

On this idea of unsettlement, the recent book *The Dance of Air and Sea* has drawn attention to the importance of ‘rhythm’, and mobile interactions, to oceanography. Whilst the grasses of the earth seem relatively fixed, the pastures of the sea (referred to stylishly as ‘wandering grasses’ and ‘floating meadows’<sup>49</sup>) move with the currents, and also have a faster growth rate, and so speedily ‘swell and thin according to a tempo’<sup>50</sup> governed by tides, salt supply, on-shore ecology, and the tilt of the earth. The vast network of mobile ecologies at sea – which take place on the minute levels of phytoplankton – has led Cramer to opine therefore that ‘(t)he limit to greater understanding seems to rest not in the sea, but in our perception’.<sup>51</sup> Vaughan Cornish’s research into ‘kumatology’ (the science of waves)<sup>52</sup> while daily regarding the waves near his Dorset home also led him to decide that ‘the wave was key to all geographies’.<sup>53</sup> In his *Waves of the Sea and Other Water Waves* (1910) Cornish wrote of the study of kumatology that ‘its call is like the call of the wild’.<sup>54</sup> The epistemological fascination with the sea is strongly linked to this witnessing of wave forms: where the mobile forms and structures of society everywhere are made explicit in the fluid medium of the sea. Pelagic life cycles and the patterns of sea activity give crucial shape to the ways in which we inhabit the earth. Cramer’s volume *Great Waters: An Atlantic Passage* (2002) reminds us that we do not stand outside the marine realm, but are bound into these complex interdependencies at the coastline. This influx and outflux at the coast is not simply to do with ships breaching the protective barrier of the sea. There are also all sorts of animals and species riding on hulls and floating in ballast water, showing the way in which ‘we have opened

<sup>47</sup> Mark Dickinson, *Littoral*, *ibid.*, p. 32, 17, 17, 19, 14

<sup>48</sup> W. S. Graham, ‘Seven Letters’, *The Nightfishing* (1955)

<sup>49</sup> Deborah Cramer, *Great Waters: An Atlantic Passage* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), p. 32, 34

<sup>50</sup> Cramer, *Great Waters*, *ibid.*, p. 31

<sup>51</sup> Cramer, *Great Waters*, *ibid.*, p. 28

<sup>52</sup> On kumatology, see also Willard Bascom, *Waves and Beaches: The Dynamics of the Ocean Surface* (New York: Anchor, 1964), and William Bascom, *The Crest of the Wave: Adventures in Oceanography* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

<sup>53</sup> Robert Macfarlane, *The Wild Places* (London: Granta, 2007), p. 248

<sup>54</sup> Cited in Macfarlane, *The Wild Places.*, *ibid.*, p. 249

Atlantic's borders'.<sup>55</sup> Diverse works of literature informed by these ecologies can be exposed as narratives about coastlines as repositories for freight, wreckage, and foreign beings.<sup>56</sup>

One of the most well-known naturalists of coastlines is John Hay. In each of his texts he seems concerned with the human interface at the ocean-side as much as its natural histories, and freely jumps in his analysis between the biological tidal rhythms of fiddler crabs and the 'vagaries of the market-price of the soft-shell clam industry'.<sup>57</sup> Hidden amongst the grandiose statements ('the unvisited sea keeps its savage and capacious counsel'<sup>58</sup>) are representations of the several levels of the micro and macrocosms of the beach as 'a landscape in motion', shown, for instance, in the series of paratactic verbs turned into nouns with which he describes the landscape, as constituted by 'the concurrent response of countless inhabitants: the seedmakers and dispensers, the hole diggers, the fliers, scuttlers and divers, those that swim, crawl or walk'. In this ebb and flow, 'the two worlds find their division and also their meeting and their communication'.<sup>59</sup>

How does this space challenge poets to find a new language to express an environment in which, even in the hands of a fairly traditional ecologist like John Hay, we can see that (as cultural geographers would surely agree) *nowhere is only local*? Hay's ecological coast is an unpredictable locale where 'The cove partakes of a larger mobility' because it 'shares a distance (...) with the migrant smelts'.<sup>60</sup> This nod to the kinetic understanding of place implies that distance can be 'shared' or transferred between inhabitants and the location they reside in. In Hay's hands this is a symptom of ecological processes; in the hands of recent cultural geographers it has been applied to geo-social affairs including business, mercantilism, and economic systems. Conventional sea-going phrases such as 'At long last, we have caught the trades'<sup>61</sup> are a perfect commercial expression of the sea, marking the physical environment (the trade winds) as forever linked to 'business in great waters'.<sup>62</sup> Trade and capitalism, like these 'rhythmic' eco-systems, are another way of establishing continuous communications between sea and land.<sup>63</sup> Coastal poetry which responds to these perspectival and methodological shifts may reveal that freedom from a prescriptive geographical sense of belonging

<sup>55</sup> Cramer, *Great Waters*, *ibid.*, p. 345

<sup>56</sup> A bibliography of canonical beach fiction from the eighteenth century onwards is offered in Jean-Didier Urbain (trans. Porter), *At the Beach* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003)

<sup>57</sup> John Hay, *The Primal Alliance: Earth and Ocean* (San Francisco: Friends of the Earth, 1972), p. 29

<sup>58</sup> Hay, *The Primal Alliance*, *ibid.*, p. 115

<sup>59</sup> John Hay, *The Great Beach* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980), p. 74, 85

<sup>60</sup> Hay, *The Primal Alliance*, *ibid.*, p. 129

<sup>61</sup> Cramer, *Great Waters*, *ibid.*, 345

<sup>62</sup> This is originally sourced from King David's psalm 107, 23-24: 'They that go down to the sea in ships / That do business in great waters'.

<sup>63</sup> Our language's Norse kennings can be shown to express a very early interest in collapsing the distinctions between sea and land in words such as 'eel-road, seal-road, keel-road, whale-road'. Coastal kennings are still used by contemporary poets, including Heaney in his 1979 poem of North Atlantic flux, VII in the ten poem sequence 'Glanmore Sonnets' (in *Fieldwork*), and other Old English-inspired writers, including Eric Mottram and Bill Griffiths. These kennings are rooted in two of the very first Old English poems, 'The Wanderer' and 'The Seafarer'.

can, in Hester Blum's words, 'make possible other ways of understanding affiliation, citizenship, mobility, rights and sovereignty'.<sup>64</sup> But, on the other hand, is there also a danger with these coastal rhetorics? After all this representational attention to how such spaces flow and 'estuate' – to use the Eric Mottram's chosen verb in *Estuaries*<sup>65</sup> – where does all this discursivity and fluidity stop? Is there an end to this commotion at the margins, or, as Mottram chose it, estuation?

Phil Steinberg has written recently of the metaphors which have accrued around – and obscured – the liquid spaces of the earth, including within the very discipline, maritime studies, which sought to render them more visible: 'studies that seek to highlight political-economic connections across ocean basins tend to ignore the sea altogether, while those that highlight it as a site for challenging modernist notions of identity and subjectivity tend to treat the ocean solely as a metaphor'.<sup>66</sup> Building on Hester Blum's now famous assertion that 'the sea is not a metaphor',<sup>67</sup> Steinberg surveys the growing arguments for a rethinking of the actual experiences of the sea, from new materialist studies and assemblage theory to the oceanographic modelling techniques of Lagrangian fluid dynamics. This is in part a response to poetic assertions such as that by Epeli Hau'ofa, that 'the sea is our pathway to each other and to everyone else, the sea is our endless saga, the sea is our most powerful metaphor, the ocean is in us'.<sup>68</sup> What comes of the desire to characterise the sea, with impunity, as 'the easiest of highways',<sup>69</sup> and the space of ultimate cross-cultural fluidity? Many of our metaphors have the effect of naturalising, or disguising, the experiences of diaspora: for, 'As poetic as it may seem, most migrants do not choose to permanently leave their homes because their saline blood flows like the oceans'.<sup>70</sup> Contemporary publics may also in fact be more aware of the continued force of the Romantic designation of the sea as a space of freedom, wilderness, or threat – as for instance in a text such as Auden's *The Enchafed Flood* (1951) – than the very real contemporary privatisation and zoned managements founded on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982).<sup>71</sup> These mental images – from the concepts of the sea described by Mack<sup>72</sup> to the Atlantic 'islands of the mind' described by Gillis<sup>73</sup> – have framed the ocean, unavoidably, in the public and critical eye.

<sup>64</sup> Hester Blum, 'The Prospect of Oceanic Studies', *PMLA* 125.3 (2010), p. 671

<sup>65</sup> Eric Mottram, *Estuaries: Poems 1989-91* (Middlesex: Solaris, 1992), p. 59

<sup>66</sup> Philip Steinberg, 'Of other seas: metaphors and materialities in maritime regions', *Atlantic Studies* 10.2 (2013)

<sup>67</sup> Blum, 'The Prospect of Oceanic Studies', *ibid.*, p. 670

<sup>68</sup> Epeli Hau'ofa, *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works* (Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), p. 58

<sup>69</sup> Froude, 1886, p. 11-12, cited in Elizabeth DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), p. 27

<sup>70</sup> DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots*, *ibid.*, p. 28

<sup>71</sup> See Sara Mitchell et al., 'Ruling the Sea: Institutionalization and Privatization of the Global Ocean Commons', *Iowa Research Online* 1.1 (2008)

<sup>72</sup> John Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History*, *ibid.*, p. 72

<sup>73</sup> John Gillis, *Islands of the Mind: How the Human Imagination Created the Atlantic World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

DeLoughrey, in her article 'Heavy Waters: Waste and Atlantic Modernity', complains of the 'naturalising discourse of fluid, trans-oceanic routes'. As she argues, 'our current efforts to explore the fluid, transnational networks of the sea are constituted by an unprecedented era of global ocean governance and militarization'. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea expanded all coastal nations through an Exclusive Economic Zone of two hundred nautical miles, so that 'roughly thirty-eight million square nautical miles of the global sea were enclosed by the state, a privatisation of thirty-five percent of the world's ocean'. This meant not just control over the ocean surface but also claims made defending the 'passage of nuclear submarines, sea-launched missiles, and maritime surveillance systems undergirded by thirty thousand miles of submarine cables'.<sup>74</sup> A reappraisal is due of the way in which the coastline is enacted and performed, she argues, and what this can tell us about the border-making of liquid modernity – as well as what reassessments of these coastal borders may tell us about other new 'supranational frontiers' on the Internet and in aerospace.<sup>75</sup>

David Herd's three sets of poems dealing with different approaches to Dover (*All Just*, 2012; *Outwith*, 2012; 'Outwith', 2012) are striking for their engagement with both maritime fluidity and the border making of state surveillance (that is, the forms of territorialism and power structures which exist *within* liquid modernity). We are not just freely moving 'human / krill', as Carol Watts has it in *Wrack* (2007); we would not want to be 'eighteen million without shelter'.<sup>76</sup> To Herd, Dover is the key emblematic site at which one experiences the country entirely differently dependent on which direction you approach it from. There is a vast difference between looking out to sea from the land and looking back to the land from the sea, as we know from Olson, Prynne, and the coastal 'Figure of Outward'.<sup>77</sup> In Herd's writing around the subject he reminds us that Matthew Arnold's speaker in 'Dover Beach' was looking out from Dover towards France, aware of his position on the 'cliffs of England'.<sup>78</sup> We have already had a backward-turn to this poem performed by Daljit Nagra, whose title poem in *Look We Have Coming to Dover* (2007) – in reference to both Arnold's 'Dover Beach' and

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<sup>74</sup> DeLoughrey, 'Heavy Waters: Waste and Atlantic Modernity', PMLA, all quotations on p. 705

<sup>75</sup> Cohen, 'Literary Studies on the Terraqueous Globe', *ibid.*, p. 658

<sup>76</sup> Carol Watts, *Wrack* (East Sussex: Reality Street, 2007), p. 25

<sup>77</sup> It is notable that Herd has written on the poet Charles Olson and also co-convened the Olson centenary conference (University of Kent, 2010). Olson's Maximus poems took a position on the Gloucester coast, in Massachusetts, facing the Atlantic. Prynne described this Olsonian speaker as 'the Figure of Outward', occupied simultaneously 'with the settling of Gloucester and the way out into the ocean, into Okeanos, the way out into space'. The first section of the Maximus poems is thus a journey to the limits of space; the second, landward-facing section achieves what Prynne calls a return to 'the condition of coast' ('there is only one place you can see that from and that is from the curvature of the limits') – during which the speaker looks back ashore to 'the livelihood of the past'. Jeremy Prynne, 'Lectures on Maximus IV, V, VI', Simon Fraser University, July 27, 1971. Transcribed by Tom McGauley and published in *Iron* (October 1971); reprinted in *Minutes of the Charles Olson Society* 28 (1999)

<sup>78</sup> Matthew Arnold, 'Dover Beach', in Carl Woodring and James Shapiro eds., *The Columbia Anthology of British Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 620

Auden's *On This Island* ('Look, stranger, at this island now'<sup>79</sup>) – portrays, instead, an arrival at Dover ('swarms of us') and into the slangs of the nation ('vexing their barnies', 'yobbish rain and wind') with the language in tow: 'babbling our lingoos, flecked by the chalk of Britannia!'<sup>80</sup>

Herd's materials on Dover – two published poetry books, several poems in journals, an article in a journal and an academic paper in a collection, and a forthcoming book<sup>81</sup> – each respond to its layered spaces and the models of citizenship which are shaped by the land and the water. By looking seaward from the cliffs rather than landward, Herd notes, 'When Matthew Arnold wrote 'Dover Beach' he didn't observe / the building.'<sup>82</sup> The building in question is not just the Napoleonic fort or Dover Citadel, but the one-time Dover Borstal, now an immigration removal centre. The poet Bill Griffiths has also visited the 'complex of the fort' on the site where 'Dover / 's mighty imperfection: fits the sea', and written of the emblematic chalky cliffs that form a wall to the country ('writing the chalk – kid / shout for separation') and famous sight of France across the water ('En regardent vers le país de France'), as well as observing the contemporary realities of incarceration there: 'sat by my work-wife the sea, prison tea'. I would note that the titles of these two Griffiths poems – one called 'Cycle One: On Dover Borstal' and the second called 'Cycle Two (Dover Borstal)' may even explain the different approaches: one, standing 'on' Dover and commenting on the familiar sites; two, inside, caught in the brackets of the borstal.<sup>83</sup>

For Herd's text the position of the visitor to Dover 'Always on the verge of some kind of landscape'<sup>84</sup> is profoundly diverse; this may mean observing the scenery of the periphery of Britain – enjoyed from the heights of one of the two English Heritage routes or vantage points – or being held on that periphery, pending deportation, 'always' unable to reach the (actual) landscape. In his work on the topic he has investigated the layering of different checks and balances of legislation in the Kent landscape, and discussed how these encounters with the legal limits of Britain can act both as

<sup>79</sup> W. H. Auden's poem 'Look, stranger, at this island now' was originally written as a voiceover for the 1935 documentary *Beside the Seaside*; it was published in *Look, Stranger!* (1936; American edition titled *On This Island*) and is reprinted in Auden, *Selected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1979), p. 43. See Stan Smith's discussion, 'Island Distractions: W. H. Auden's Ethical Topographies', in Giovanni Cianci, Caroline Patey, and Sara Sulla eds., *Transits: The Nomadic Geographies of Anglo-American Modernism* (Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2010)

<sup>80</sup> Daljit Nagra, 'Look We Have Coming to Dover!', in *Look We Have Coming to Dover!* (London: Faber, 2007), p. 32

<sup>81</sup> David Herd, *All Just* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2012); David Herd, *Outwith* (Vancouver: BookThug, 2012). David Herd, 'Outwith', *Almost Island* 7 (2012); David Herd, 'Feedback', *Blackbox Manifold* 10 (2013). The text of Herd's online unpaginated sequence 'Outwith' (2012) is entirely different to the text of his chapbook, *Outwith* (2012). David Herd, 'Poetry and Voice: The Urge to Nowhere', *PN Review* 37.3 (2011); David Herd, 'Dislocating Country: Post-War British Poetry and the Politics of Movement', in Peter Robinson ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). David Herd, *The View from Dover* (book publication currently in planning)

<sup>82</sup> David Herd, '5', in 'Outwith', *ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Bill Griffiths, 'Cycle One: On Dover Borstal' and 'Cycle Two (Dover Borstal)', in Halsey and Edwards eds., *Bill Griffiths: Collected Earlier Poems 1966-80* (East Sussex: Reality Street, 2010), p. 64-69

<sup>84</sup> David Herd, 'Show and Tell', *All Just*, *ibid.*, p. 53



protections for, and from, the nation (for instance, the administrative boundaries of the A.O. N. B. – Area of Outstanding National Beauty – mark out an area where the authority of the two national heritage organisations is exceeded). Depending on whether you come across the site by inland walk, road, or sea – and who you are – this place has different names, Herd observes: from the Gateway to Britain, to the tourist destinations also signposted in French, to the less-than-visible military installation, with ditches that work to prevent entrance or egress. The Dover Citadel itself refers to a history of bounding identity; with its root in *civis*, it is thus a stronghold built to protect, demarcate, or determine citizenship. Alongside this are the public-facing principles of access for the heritage coast, and the more complex terms of access for visitors and legal representatives of detainees at the removal centre.

In Herd's prose explorations, the idea of language is crucial to these holding points on Dover's Western Heights. It through language that the decision is made to admit a person to the land of sovereign law as a 'citizen' with a passport ('carrying an alias / following the direction of the land'<sup>85</sup>) – which, as Herd reminds us in poems including 'Sans papiers' and '4 poems by way of document', is itself just a material paper with text assigning citizenship. It is also through language that one can be kept at a radical remove from the mainland, nation, or surrounding landscape. Many of Herd's poems respond to the notable absence of inscription in processes of detention or deportation. Drawing from Mark Augé's concept of 'non-places'<sup>86</sup> and Giorgio Agamben's writing on the 'state of exception',<sup>87</sup> Herd notes the several places in the process at which the voice of the detainee is struck from the record. Even more: the tribunals that adjudicate over the holding, or movement, of peoples do not officially constitute a court of record, so the proceedings of the examination are not written down, let alone translated into the language of the detainees, as the poem by Herd quoted in this thesis's introduction explores.<sup>88</sup> These are non-places outside of the official discourse, therefore – integral to the present environment, but held outside of the language which the detainees seek admission to; like the woman who 'just came through, / carrying a baby, / on false documentation, / drawn by the language / because the syntax runs deep, / uncertain of her surroundings save / this is probably Dover'.<sup>89</sup> Herd has also worked elsewhere on accounting for the unwritten sites of the UK Border, having been involved with the preparation of a book of visa stories.<sup>90</sup> A talk he gave in 2013 called again for an attention to the legal invisibility of certain interstitial zones along the coastline, as well as an attempt to regard the mainland's culture (literary and otherwise) from the vantage point of one of

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<sup>85</sup> David Herd, '4 poems by way of document', *Outwith*, *ibid.*, p. 23

<sup>86</sup> Mark Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (New York: Verso, 1995)

<sup>87</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

<sup>88</sup> See p. 72, this thesis

<sup>89</sup> Herd, 'Somehow it seems', *All Just*, *ibid.*, p. 51

<sup>90</sup> Menozzi, Kemal and Mushakavanhu eds., *Visa Stories: Experiences Between Law and Migration* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2013)

these unwritten sites.<sup>91</sup> His Dover poems consistently explore the language elements of this coastal process of adjudication and of ‘Bringing persons into place’.<sup>92</sup> ‘The person without place’, he observes in his *PN* article, ‘let’s call them a refugee for the sake of argument – is rendered, as far as possible, outside expression.’<sup>93</sup> On such a division of sound inside or outside of recognised expression and official national place (i.e., that crucial passport, name, or alias of the land, mentioned above), Nicholas Johnson’s poem ‘Shore Body’ is also notable:

‘What is your name?’ was asked on  
the landing. This is one of the first  
requirements. *Whoosh. Daprime.*  
But those are sounds. They are not  
identifiable. Or negotiable.<sup>94</sup>

Herd’s online sequence ‘Outwith’ in particular – in its repetitive serial form – explores the syntactical processes of this limit that is inscribed in and through language. Reference is made to Olson (‘Not a turning out. A turning outwards. / Witness language. / The figure of outward’<sup>95</sup>), while Herd also explores ‘this question of holding’ in explicit citations from Giorgio Agamben regarding ‘the grammar of the ban’, through his own lineated comments on ‘the linguistic manoeuvre by which those not held are *held*’.<sup>96</sup> Herd’s own practices of citation (including in-text references to sources, such as Olson’s ‘For Robert Creeley— Figure of Outward’) is used to discuss concepts of trope and troping (turning), and the relation between the homely ‘figure of speech’ and the open ‘Figure of Outward’. When he discusses the landscape of Kent around Dover and the land’s edge as ‘on the doorstep just, in the / dooryard so to speak’,<sup>97</sup> that phrase ‘so to speak’ – which occurs five times across the sequence – reminds us that everything about the structure of nation as demarcated by the legal coastline is ‘so to speak’: performed by a manner of speaking, or troping, identity – casting the outsider in the holding facility just outside language, ‘struggling / to arrive at terms’<sup>98</sup> (where here, ‘terms’ can refer to a contractual agreement or allowance, or to the set period of time to be served, or to the correct words of the English language and its ways of saying, which a non-speaker may struggle to arrive at).

<sup>91</sup> David Herd, ‘The View from Dover’, part of the *Print Screen: Writing and the Moving Image* series, University of Westminster (12<sup>th</sup> Nov 2013)

<sup>92</sup> Herd, ‘4 poems by way of document’, *Outwith*, *ibid.*, p. 26

<sup>93</sup> Herd, ‘Poetry and Voice: The Urge to Nowhere’, *PN Review* 37.3 (2011)

<sup>94</sup> Nicholas Johnson, ‘Shore Body’, *Pelt* (St Leonard’s: Etruscan Books, 2005), p. 50

<sup>95</sup> Herd, ‘7’, ‘Outwith’, *ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Herd, ‘4’, ‘Outwith’, *ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Herd, ‘5’, ‘Outwith’, *ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Herd, ‘Ecology’, *All Just*, *ibid.*, p. 205

Herd's paper on Arnold's 'Dover Beach' investigates gestures of identification 'between poetry and country, where that relation is understood as a default position, and where it is known to carry an implicit cost'.<sup>99</sup> This single poem links into wider discussions of postcolonial practices of writing and reading; it is a characteristic of coastal poetics that it may map the national project too smoothly onto the coastal survey, and, in the most literal sense of the word, create an 'alignment' between country and poem, and between coast "line" and the lines of cultural identity. As Herd has shown, circumspect within this coastal landscape are sites where the very real processes of dividing – or shearing – interior and exterior identities take place. Some of the poets considered above have tested these coastal ultimatums of cultural identity, such as Derek Mahon (in *Harbour Lights*, 2005); or those considered recently by John Brannigan in his podcast on shipping forecast poetry.<sup>100</sup> The rest of this chapter will consider a few of these coastal places at which, in Herd's words, 'The poem splits / It has no desire to become a nation, / It traffics in meanings'.<sup>101</sup> Yet in many ways this topic demands a larger, historical approach which cannot be given here: a return to all of the mythopoeic and historical origins of "England" or "Britain," imagined as a series of cultural landfalls. Andrew Duncan's sequence 'Anglophilia, a Romance of the Docks' is a work which very explicitly returns to such English myths of kinship and location, via the framing theme of coastal geometry. The emphasis is on that last word, geometry, considering that the sequence is published in a volume which Duncan named, after Lobachevsky (1835), *The Imaginary in Geometry*. Lobachevsky's concept of imaginary geometry can be seen in a number of writers considered in this chapter – for instance, in the non-Euclidian language of the 'curvature of the limits' which has been assigned by Olson, Prynne, Peter Riley and others to the coast;<sup>102</sup> Anna Ryan has also studied contemporary expressions of the 'geometric conditions' of the coastline.<sup>103</sup>

One particular poem in Duncan's sequence, 'On the Beach at Aberystwyth,' explicitly draws on the vocabularies and histories of the coastline as a complex imaginary geometry which includes in its non-finite symbolic spaces 'The very wash of our geosophy', as well as the 'Linguistic waves' of the history of the western seaways as the routes along which Celtic culture spread. Duncan here addresses

<sup>99</sup> Herd, 'Dislocating Country: Post-War British Poetry and the Politics of Movement', in Peter Robinson ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 499

<sup>100</sup> John Brannigan, "Dreaming of the Islands': The Poetry of the Shipping Forecast', *UCD Scholarcast Series 4: Reconceiving the British Isles*: <<http://www.ucd.ie/scholarcast/scholarcast25.html>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>101</sup> David Herd, 'One by One', *All Just*, *ibid.*, p. 37

<sup>102</sup> This non-Euclidian coastal geometry is again linked to Olson's crucial division between seaward and landward perspectives discussed already. Peter Riley also investigates this language in *The Llŷn Writings* (*ibid.*). In 'Between Harbours' he refers to 'the curvature of the earth' (p. 84); in 'Performing Dogs' he describes a person's position on the most outlying point of land as 'on the edge of the great curve' (p. 18); in 'Six Prose Pieces' he describes looking into 'the boundary of the sphere' (p. 27); and in 'The Nightwatch Notebook' he observes 'the world-sheet folding the line' (p. 47), and transcribes an illegible note referring to the 'curvature of [?thought]' (p. 50).

<sup>103</sup> Anna Ryan, *Where Land Meets Sea: Coastal Explorations of Landscape, Representation and Spatial Experience* (London: Ashgate, 2012)

again the potential regional, and provincial, identities of the coastline: ‘In the middle of this sea province’ ... ‘The shingle addresses the whole question of proximity’. Sharing some concerns with Herd over the issues of a naturalised fluid rhetoric, he sees at the coast ‘the topos of borderless egoless states / Seized in a net and unseized’, indicating that the extra dimensionality of the coastline – into the dimension of culture – is not merely a smooth space of flux, but somewhere at which the peculiarities of the structuring of cultural identity can be assessed (‘how much / of the oceanic culture strain / secured in me?’), as well as the relations of centre to periphery (‘that same *old riddle / Always starts in the middle* structure / Where language flows’<sup>104</sup>).

Yet to be mentioned here is the fact that the procedures for ‘lining up’ our cultural identities with the shear cut of the coastline are also partly linked to the differing experiences of the aesthetics of the coastal horizon. The horizon is itself a managed artefact of the coastline; the Welsh-Irish Seascape Assessment Project, for instance, is concerned with the bureaucratic management of the scenery and visual perception of the coast, and in particular, the prime distances for the visual gauging of the sea from the land. (It is notable that in Welsh there are two words for ‘seascape’, only one of which has accrued the same aesthetic history: *morluniau*, suggesting a view or painting, and *morweddau*, referring to a distinct geographical area.) The writers considered here have shown what else of cultural identity is “shored up” in such practices of management of the artificial line of the sea margin. The depiction of any coast “line” is necessarily dependent on the ways in which cartography, as a discipline, must look beyond itself (as many contemporary cartographic theorists have discussed) to other forms of mapping, as well as other ways of understanding the co-fabrication of spaces and human cultures. This includes a consciousness of the force of metaphor and words; of every ‘cut’ and ‘shear’ and ‘mere’ and ‘mouth’ of the British margin. As readers of the coastline, as in Andrew Duncan’s ‘Precipice of Niches’, we must ‘pore over’ or parse the shore in its words and riddles and infinite particulars; in Mark Dickinson’s *Littoral* we again attempt (but fail) to parse apart the relational lines of both its grammar and its intertidal zones. As these poets have shown, to *verbalize* the coast is to put it in motion, and to re-consider the counter-cartographic materialities of the tidal lines, both in its natural features, and in the various social dynamics of the space, including, as David Herd has observed, those which divide our own ways from non-native ways of speaking. Finally, these lines are always inescapably cultural, for, as W. S. Graham put it in his 1949 collection *The White Threshold*, ‘Men sign the sea’.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Andrew Duncan, ‘On the Beach at Aberystwyth’, *ibid.*, p. 39, 42, 40, 43, 42, 41-2, 42

<sup>105</sup> W. S. Graham, *New Collected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 2004), p. 82

### ‘Whitby is a statement’: Colin Simms and coastal exploration

A mostly forgotten text, printed on office machinery in the mid-1970s, is my key example in the following section, for the way it tests the waters between traditions of regional, location-based writing, and a more globalised understanding of coastal traffic. In this text by Colin Simms, the coastline is torn between transoceanic and local perspectives: it is the site which most fulfils the concept of the local permeating the global.<sup>1</sup> This local-global tension is partly due to Simms’s own identity as both an experimental modern poet with transatlantic influences, and as a naturalist working in small-scale regions writing observations of martens, otters, and birds of prey.<sup>2</sup> The articulation of the sea-swept edges of North Yorkshire in his *No North Western Passage* (1976) is thus concerned with local details of the coastline, but shows through its experimental text an understanding of the dynamics of place and the saltwater transport networks within which Britain is implicated, responsive in its form to the complexity of the northern coast’s overlapping cultures of regional ecology and of the modern North Atlantic seaboard.

In originally writing his text, I suspect that Simms was partly influenced by Canadian poet Earle Birney’s *Near False Creek Mouth* (1964), which begins with the poem ‘November Walk’, in which he writes of being situated between modernity and the archaic sea on a ‘darkening bitten shore’, ‘between the lost salt home / and the asphalt edge’.<sup>3</sup> This Birney poem is illustrated with a sketch map of False Creek Mouth, the first of a series of playful sketch maps which show False Creek Mouth’s relation to the rest of the world amongst the sequence of poems rewriting Canadian history. Birney had dealt with the coastal expeditions in Canada in his earlier collection, *The Strait of Anian* (1948), by title referring to the alleged Northwest passage, and bearing as an epigraph to the volume part of a 1594 account of Francis Drake’s first attempted voyage through the passage. That collection begins with a poem entitled ‘Atlantic Door’ and concludes with one entitled ‘Pacific Door’. In between, it moves through poems dealing with the Maritimes, Quebec, Montreal, to Toronto in the centre, and then out to the prairies and the Rockies. Throughout, there’s a focus on the titular expedition and the

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<sup>1</sup> See Christopher Connery, ‘The Oceanic Feeling and the Regional Imaginary’, in Wimal Dissanayake and Rob Wilson, eds, *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996)

<sup>2</sup> *No North Western Passage* particularly bears the influence of the Canadian poet Earle Birney and his volumes *The Strait of Anian* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1948) and *Near False Creek Mouth* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964). Simms’s early pamphlets include *Lives of British Lizards* (Norwich: Goose and Sons, 1970), *Adders and Other Worms* (Sheffield: Headland, 1972), and *Bear Skull* (York: North York Poetry, 1972). Shearsman Books have also recently published two larger selections from these works, *Otters and Martens* (Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2004) and *Gyrfalcon Poems* (Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Earle Birney, ‘November walk near False Creek Mouth’, *Near False Creek Mouth* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964), unpaginated

search for the Northwest Passage, while the elegiac kennings invoke the voice of Anglo-Saxon seafarers.<sup>4</sup>

In the Eric Mottram archive at King's College London is an undated poster for an Earle Birney reading in England, at Morden Tower, at which both Eric Mottram and Colin Simms were present. Mottram's 1976 mimeograph book *1922 Earth Raids* shows Birney's influence most strongly in the poem 'Raids: Knot and Keel'. Here, his use of kennings (sea-lung, earth-end) and the frequent breaking of the line in the middle is reminiscent of Birney's 'Mappemounde', as is his use of technical vocabulary of orientation, such as 'azimuth', the angle of the sun clockwise from due north. Eric Mottram is a trained and experienced sailor, which provides some of the context for his remarks about navigational ideosyncrasies – 'headlands swung / around our compass bowl'.<sup>5</sup> The sources of this poem, as he remarks in the note that follows it, include both Anglo-Saxon texts and extracts from the Sailor's Manual of Navigation. Where Birney was rewriting the cape voyages in the time of the portolan charts, Mottram throws his attention further back to some of the founding shore-landings of our British culture. On the first page, the Vikings wade in through 'foam sea swirls brine / dried on thronged and twisted / hide boots they inseminate / up from the beachhead / (...) / veering backing winds seas where spectrum shifts / sitar of serpent in rock lines / serpent of Midgard beneath their keel'.<sup>6</sup> He is reimagining the sea's epic and mythical status before the discovery of longitude (one of the most important instruments in the development of our current aesthetic world view, as Ron Broglio observes<sup>7</sup>). Mottram's briny sea ebbs into fantasy – 'Vinland a knotted horn / calls out of dream without map' – and its myths stand unchallenged by modern cartography:

the snake still poisons the god at the end of the world  
 an end on no map      seamen with no picture  
 no logline or mile  
 a shift at imprisoning oars  
 four to five miles      vikar sjafar  
 sailing days      dogr sigling  
 by cardinal points and bisections  
 without floated needle to give North  
 but memorized azimuths of sun a few stars<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Earle Birney, *The Strait of Anian* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1948)

<sup>5</sup> Eric Mottram, 'Raids: Knot and Keel', *1922 Earth Raids* (London: New London Pride Editions, 1976), p. 22

<sup>6</sup> Mottram, *1922*, *ibid.*, p. 18-19

<sup>7</sup> Ron Broglio, *Technologies of the Picturesque: British Art, Poetry, and Instruments, 1750-1830* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2008)

<sup>8</sup> Mottram, *1922*, *ibid.*, p. 20, 20-21

The text moves through Orkney edge, Pentland Firth, and Norway, from jetties and shores to perilous icy areas and ‘dreams of voyages / where discovery could be held / a course through the Moving Rocks’. Mottram pays most attention to riddling metaphors born of the crafts of boat-building, particularly skerries and skerry-quern (‘a man unknown to himself / to give a heart to songless wood’), sailing (‘water skeins press blades and measure / in a seaman’s hands forms from his life’), knot-tying (‘a sea man’s lace (...) / eyes in interfering loops of runes’) and navigation (‘Burma coast to our left a compass light / faint in the bowl sick in my life / a stir to be competent in current and shoreline’). The distinctions are blurred between the instructive voice (‘unlay the rope to the place desired’) and the fantastical Nordic voice (‘chief furrows / the hull’s lair with his ship’s beaked prow’), giving heroic and mythic properties back to the skills of seafaring.<sup>9</sup>

Mottram’s *Shelter Island and the Remaining World* (1971), meanwhile, moves around East Cleveland, Connecticut Shore, Ram Island and Coecles Harbour, compiling a lattice of different kinds of navigable action, whether taken from the rutters he was using as sources (15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century books of sailing directions), or the imagined unreality of trying to take bearings by shore lines which are so indiscernible and fragmentary they resemble ‘a drawing by Seurat’. Mottram opens these coastlines to new imagined forms of mobile geographical observation (such as the ‘new swimming habits for goldfish’ which ‘arouse sleeping skeins in the nervous maps’). His text is full of references to diverse ways of taking bearings, such as ‘Louis Giddings’ one hundred and fourteen beaches of Eskimo horizontal startigraphy at Choris peninsular’, as well as ecological details which are mixed metaphorically into geometrical and nautical calculations, such as the ‘triangulation’ of ‘five grasses in the grass’ and the ‘flat surfaces of the sea pitted by separate rain’.<sup>10</sup>

Colin Simms’ text was published the same year as ‘Raids: Knot and Keel’, and also after having attended, with Mottram, this same reading of nautical and colonially inflected poetry by the visiting Canadian, Birney. In Simms’ *No North Western Passage* (1976), topographical notation of the landscape of Cleveland, North Yorkshire – the headlands and coasts of Captain Cook country and the North Sea – is combined with latitude and longitude quotations, natural history, and botanical observations from Cook’s voyages in search of the Northwest Passage. Hand-printed on Bob Cobbing’s 1915 model Gestetner ink duplicator, the text is full of errors, either corrected with a metal stylus or left to stand, giving a convincing visual impression of a log book. It brings the ideas of coastal voyage (‘coasting’) and questionable cartography into the British landscape, whilst seeking out the remaining traces of Cook’s movements in Yorkshire.

Simms uses archaic practices of nautical notation, visible in the handwritten latitudinal references on the first page, and structures the entire text as a numbered itinerary, each poem labelled with a

<sup>9</sup> Mottram, 1922, *ibid.*, p. 23, 24, 25, 25, 23-4, 26, 23

<sup>10</sup> Eric Mottram, *Shelter Island and the Remaining World* (London: Turret Books, 1971), unpaginated

geographical location.<sup>11</sup> There are also botanical observations typical of expedition journals: ‘travelling along the bedding-places are hyphae of fungi. Epiphyte or parasite’.<sup>12</sup> Simms has constructed a ‘multi-territorial pun’:<sup>13</sup> on one level, the headlands of North Yorkshire are the setting; but this text was actually begun in 1973 in the Quinault Rainforest on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington, and only finished in Cleveland, North Yorkshire. As can be seen from Simms’s afterword to *Rushmore Inhabitation*, published in Dakota the same year as *No North Western Passage*, his time while writing this sequence of chapbooks was equally spent in northern England and North America.<sup>14</sup> Crucial to the text’s representation of space is the deliberate slippage in geographical references across the North Atlantic. Simms particularly enjoys the etymological confirmation of the translation of places in the name Cleveland, sometimes meaning Cleveland in England and, on other occasions, Cleveland in Connecticut, USA. Although at first the location is clearly Staithes and Whitby, with tales of the building of the boats *Endeavour* and *Discovery*, there is soon an unannounced transition to a description of the redwood pines of Cleveland, Connecticut, Mount Rainier, and Native American tribes. (The implied point of connection is the oaks of North Yorkshire, which went into the building of the Yorkshire colliers, manufactured for the coal trade, and which Cook used in his expeditions to North America.)

The fairly unprepossessing Yorkshire location is thereby used by Simms to play out one of the larger foundational narratives of coastal exploration: the search for the Northwest Passage. Instead of a synoptic or objective aerial map of the landscape, he provides an erratic *periplou* or coastal journey, moving from one focal point to another. ‘II ASTORIA’, for instance, commences in movement with the phrase ‘From the port’.<sup>15</sup> This attempt to give a mobile perspective also brings out the drama of human endeavour, whether in navigational feats or in grave cartographic errors (the controversial reckonings of Lewis and Clark, surveyors of the American Northwest, appear several times in the text). By telling fragments of familiar coastal stories, subject to a series of redefinitions and substitutions, what had seemed fixed and familiar on the Yorkshire coastline becomes open and indeterminate. (This brings to mind Andrew McNeillie’s recent observation, also cited above, that the sea’s charisma is itself a key part of what demands revisionist perspectives on knowledge: ‘The sea

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<sup>11</sup> According to Nicholas Howe, the itinerary is the earliest form of written map. Nicholas Howe, *Writing the Map of Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Cultural Geography* (New Haven: Yale, 2008), p. 3-5.

<sup>12</sup> Colin Simms, *No North Western Passage* (London: Writers’ Forum, 1976), p. 8. This volume is unpaginated but, since I quote it in some detail, in this case I have estimated page numbers by counting forwards from the title page.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Ellmann employs the terms ‘multi-territorial pun’ to describe the morphing of the Homeric voyage with the walk around Dublin in *Ulysess*. Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Colin Simms, ‘How I Came to Write *Rushmore Inhabitation*’, *Rushmore Inhabitation: An Exploration of Borders* (South Dakota: Blue Cloud Quarterly, 1976), p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Colin Simms, *No North Western Passage*, *ibid.*, p. 8



being fate and fate a mystery / Questioning all laws that cause effects / To trace anew old lines on the map.<sup>16)</sup>

The passage of the title is, in fact, passages – multiple rapid movements in the narrative between Yorkshire and other locations. Whitby and the Olympic Peninsula are associated through the smell of dead migratory coastal birds at the ‘stinking shore’. The coastline is not just a physical site, but signifies outwards, whether by metaphor, an account of trade routes, or other analogies, in an ‘intercross of ripples’. The text is composed of intersecting journeys: discontinuous spaces and different ways of connecting them. The concerns of the narrative are thus globalised and made larger than the orienting line of the Yorkshire coast. This is a coast as geographers have recently seen it: a zone of transition, commerce, and communication, and unmistakably part of the world-economy of the Atlantic. There is a characteristic criss-crossing sprung out of small details in the environment of the Yorkshire coast, whether oysters, birds, or geology, which begin dialogues with further shores – dialogues which go on, mile after mile, around England’s edges. This ease of transnational slippage, for example between the Viking shore of Cleveland and the ‘sea-cole shore of Blackhall, County Durham’,<sup>17</sup> is reminiscent of that other coast-walker, W.G. Sebald, making his way through a desolate salt-marsh in Suffolk and observing that it could be ‘perhaps by the Caspian Sea or the Gulf of Lian-tung’.<sup>18</sup>

Simms prefaces the volume with a dedicatory poem to Cook himself: ‘Son of a border grieve, a boy in Yorkshire’s Cleveland / what was in his mind at Aireyholme Farm’. Aireyholme Farm is where Cook and his father both worked for the local squire, Thomas Skottowe; the return to this period of youth shows the deep romanticism typical of local accounts of Cook, which proudly link him to Staithes, because of his time working as a youth at a haberdasher on the sea front, or to Whitby, because of his links to the Whitby ship-building industries.<sup>19</sup> Simms plays with this local appropriation in the prefatory poem by describing Cook as he was as ‘a boy’ in ‘a cleved place’. From the start, the geography is not simply referential: he already sets the location of Cleveland within a code of cryptic nomenclature: ‘a cleved place’ meaning etymologically a place of cliffs, but also hinting at the fact that, in this volume, place is itself cleft, somehow self-divided.<sup>20</sup>

This is immediately followed by Simms describing Cook’s misnaming of Cape Flattery: ‘Some Voyageur might have named it other, but Cook, put on the hook/ after Santa Monica: where he’d been

<sup>16</sup> Andrew McNeillie, ‘Trouvé: Rigg Bay’, *Winter Moorings* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014), p. 20

<sup>17</sup> Simms, *No North Western Passage*, *ibid.*, p. 20

<sup>18</sup> W. G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 154.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. W.R. Mitchell, *Exploring the Captain Cook Country* (Clapham: Dalesman, 1978).

<sup>20</sup> Simms, *No North Western Passage*, *ibid.*, p. 4, 4. The doubling of Cleveland, North Yorkshire and Cleveland, Connecticut is made more resonant by the fact that the latter has itself been a poetic touchstone: its coastline, harbours, and islands feature in Eric Mottram’s *Shelter Island and the Remaining World* (London: Turret Books, 1971); and in Ed Dorn’s playful reference to ‘Any given Cleveland’ in *The North Atlantic Turbine* (London: Fulcrum Press, 1967), p. 19.

a few miles a-drift/ and to call it Cape Flattery; because “it first bid us fair” but/ (his Resolution logged) “proved an inhospitable shoreline”.’ The Cape Flattery misnomer is one thing, but it is the use of the ships the *Voyageur* and the *Resolution* as nouns which truly shows the ‘cleaving’ properties of language. Throughout the text, Simms is concerned with proper nouns – underlining genus types, such as ‘the humped-back Megaptera boops’ and the final ‘Aplodontia’ – with confusions of names, such as between crew member ‘Charles Clerke’ and ‘Captain Clerk in the other ship’, and with cartographical double-naming: ‘Henry Teesdale’s map of about 1840 shows / The Olympic Peninsula as the “New Georgia” and / New Albion as “New Hanover”.’<sup>21</sup>

The first section of *No North Western Passage*, ‘I CAPE FLATTERY (98° 15’N, 235° 3’E)’, is itself doubly located. It begins by considering sea-otters at ‘the rucks at Kettleness’ (which bears an additional, and entirely contradictory, latitudinal reference added in handwriting: 54° 57’N, 0°43’W). The otters begin a meditation on the instability of language, which touches on Whitby four times by name while considering the links between words and the colonisation of the sea:

what I have to say is not quite true.

Whitby is a statement out of the mouth of the Esk and the sea.

Poetry is the truth we got

to see

whether it happened quite that way or not.

The Celts and Romans met at the Whitby

Synod

in the seventh century

so that sailships and otters can bear the same name.

The headlands enclose the Bay: whatever it is we see.

The Rachel made only one voyage out of Whitby

a whaler, 1776, on the Greenland Game

but there is no record of her foundering

nor of any change of name

we’re coming back round to thinking of this in Whitby.<sup>22</sup>

Here, Whitby is a statement out of the mouth of the Esk and the mouth of the sea. There are two mouths here: is it a shared mouth, or is there a dialogic relation? What, therefore, is Whitby? It appears to be a mix of sediments, a shared statement in the exchange of river and sea, an impossible

<sup>21</sup> Simms, *No North Western Passage*, *ibid.*, p. 4, 12, 32, 15, 13

<sup>22</sup> Simms, *No North Western Passage*, *ibid.*, p. 5

watershed. The pun on sea and on arrival in ‘we got / to see’ is just one of the doublings in the text, with uncertain divisions between the ‘Whitby / Synod’ and between ‘sailships and otters’.<sup>23</sup>

Simms’s narrative goes on to describe the trophy-hunting of otters at Nootka Sound on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1778, ‘needed’ to add to the onboard ‘economy’ of ‘Living fur’. The link between the slow sea-otters ‘grooming by hand and gentleness’ in the rucks at Kettlecess, Whitby (where ‘Rachel feared the white seal-cub’) and the ‘poor otters/ at Nootka sound’ open and close the page; but there are other links, such as that concerning the ‘they’ who reached ‘Vancouver Island’ and presumably, given the similarity in dates, were on board the Rachel when it voyaged out of Whitby in 1776. There is also the person Rachel who in the first line fears a seal-cub in the rucks, and the whaling ship the Rachel which, in the lines quoted above, we are told voyaged on the Greenland Game. Simms notes playfully that ‘there is no record of her foundering / nor of any change of name’. There is indeed no change of name, for in fact the opposite has taken place – a change in signified, from human to ship. Meanwhile, the ‘they’ who eventually reached Vancouver Island have not been identified, on a page which also includes Yorkshire otters, Canadian otters, a you, a me, an us, the Celts, the Romans, the Rachel, a Rachel, and two Brontë sisters. This is a text which continually compares the quixotic, unpredictable coastal landscapes to its own quixotic movements between characters and landscapes, undermining the heroic properties of Cook’s language, which rest on the singular self who speaks.<sup>24</sup>

‘Cook of his sextant’, the reader is told, is ‘Like me to you or the otters to both of us’. The conjunction ‘like’ here draws strange navigational diagrams which cannot quite be followed. Instead, the reader is elliptically led back to imagine the naming of Capes. Clerk ‘named the next cape after Cook’, who was on the hook ‘after getting Santa Monica all wrong from the stars’; but ‘the stars must have moved their courses, / I will remember Cape Flattery my head-land / Space for my morning stride Whitby Strand, you at my side ... / sky, heather and sea moved over for me back in Whitby’. The movable stars have brought the reader from North American cape to British strand; although within a few lines the text is outward bound again: ‘Northward to Nootka / and they went to cutting trees down for the new masts they saw / would be needful to enable them to make the Northwest Passage’.<sup>25</sup>

This first mention of the Northwest Passage is followed by the second section, ‘II ASTORIA’, which begins with a noticeable avoidance of naming places. Whitby, so often referenced in this text, is one of two disembarking points that are now acknowledged without name: ‘From the port that built the Endeavour and Discovery for them / deep-hulled colliers two-storeyed / We came upon the place they had looked forward to’. Simms then notes the bedding-places of ‘hyphae of fungi. Epiphyte or

<sup>23</sup> Simms, *No North Western Passage*, *ibid.*, p. 5

<sup>24</sup> Simms, *No North Western Passage*, *ibid.*, p. 6, 6, 5

<sup>25</sup> Simms, *No North Western Passage*, *ibid.*, all p. 6

parasite’, and takes this cue to note the changes wrought on the landscape by ‘dried plankton’ and ‘rain from old seas’, which lead to new growth, ‘an ocean of breakers in new forests’, particularly spruce trees. Here Simms is adopting the style of Cook’s companion, the surgeon-naturalist William Anderson mentioned later in the text, by giving botanical notations of ‘oystercatchers ostralegus, Apricarius’. The description then slips over into what is clearly no longer Yorkshire – ‘round the Point for all of us [...] pines, redwoods, cedars’ – but the Quinault rainforest: ‘I had not expected to find a Redwood so far north as in the Quinault’. This is quickly reversed, however, as the ‘precarious oystercatchers’ there put ‘him in mind of his Atlantic and the Whitby North Sea Shore/ tame birds, “cheeky as a whore”’.<sup>26</sup>

These transatlantic parallels bring to mind the role of the navigator, trying to recognise and distinguish coastlines and continents from afar, or onshore ‘to list and describe all the birds trees plants fish weather oysters geology / to sketch the characteristic’, with the paratactic listing of these nouns giving the sense of raw material which must be organised. This is a reminder that Cook and the voyagers Simms describes are adventurers on the edge of knowledge, still operating at ‘the limits of European geography’, reaching ‘the void space in our maps / which is marked as country unknown’. Cook’s crew are striving for an entirely new geographical link – the Northwest Passage – which would break apart the existing oceanic networks and trade routes. And this heroic figure of Cook sailing beyond the edges of knowledge becomes the protagonist of a text which is at heart about epistemology – about the defining and recording of the phenomenal world and the wake that this leaves behind it in our language, cartography and environmental discourses. Simms is questioning the relations between local specificities across the world. The tautological ‘haar-mists’ and points of dew in Whitby – ‘haar’ a term for incoming North Atlantic fog, with a Norse derivation and primarily used in Scotland, here paired as a compound word with the superfluous ‘mist’ in a doubled dialect – thus become indistinguishable from the ‘thick and hazy’ rain and ‘bad weather’ which kept Cook from the straight at Cape Flattery.<sup>27</sup>

The troubling of singular language is tied to the creole nature of the coastline. On Simms’s transatlantic coast the reader is made aware of multiple languages: ‘Tlingit sign-language’; Native American words and names – ‘haëla’, ‘the Stinking Water’, ‘Kwin’ot’; Cook’s Cleveland dialect; contemporary idiosyncrasies in pronunciation; and even the signalling of bird calls and animal scents. This linguistic rippling in the text picks up on the histories of coastal crossings, trade and industry. The creole language Simms constructs is deeply coastal, as is his text’s preoccupation with the

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<sup>26</sup> Simms, *No North Western Passage*, *ibid.*, p. 8, 8, 12, 8, 9, 10

<sup>27</sup> Simms, *No North Western Passage*, *ibid.*, p. 15, 15, 11, 11

‘derivation of names’, or the status of language when it comes to animals that, like the Northwest Passage, exist in name alone, such as ‘Nessie’, ‘Bigfoot’, and ‘the mooch’.<sup>28</sup>

There is also a temporal double-consciousness on this North Yorkshire coast: the voice of Cook is adopted, but also that of a speaker who walks past such modern markers as the Captain Cook monument on Easby Moor. The crucial difference between the temporal landscapes of *No North Western Passage* is that one exists in a time of heroic saltwater traditions of seamanship, and the other exists in late modernity, when ‘mechanization has by shortening and regularizing the routes of navigation nullified the significance’ of the mariner as a cultural figure.<sup>29</sup> As Margaret Cohen remarks, ‘[b]efore the marine chronometer, the conquest of scurvy, and steam transport, the sea was an exceptionally dangerous frontier. The mariner who navigated it safely was a cultural icon, endowed with a heroic practical capacity in situations of immense risk and danger’.<sup>30</sup> Simms brings these heroic maritime tales into the circumstances of global modernity.

The contemporary routinisation of global travel has led the anthropologist Michael Taussig to remark that ‘[t]he conduct of life today is completely and utterly dependent on the sea and the ships it bears, yet nothing is more invisible’.<sup>31</sup> Through Simms’s dispersion of territories and of the poetic narrative, he brings back to our attention those avenues by which our geographical knowledge was formed, providing along the North Yorkshire coast a criss-crossed multi-cultured history of the present. The continuous deictic shifts show a view of the modern ocean characterised by what Philip Steinberg describes as a ‘hyperspace of pure circulation’, and a ‘seemingly friction-free surface [...] across which capital flows with increasing ease’.<sup>32</sup> This is a theory evolved from the material contexts of shipping and container port globalisation, and this material ‘conquest of distance’ is depicted by Simms in the transoceanic movements of the text, and its outbound and inbound metaphors and analogies. Simms’s *No North Western Passage* is a poetic illustration of Hester Blum’s statement that in much oceanic literature the sailor is ‘both mythologized and consigned to invisibility’, with the text giving a romantic rewriting of Cook’s navigations, but also routinely transporting itself between locations.<sup>33</sup> The result is an obsessive epistemological questioning of the practices of labelling persons, things or places, and the short watery distances which keep – or finally fail to keep – one identity apart from another.

I went back with a boy called Kirby Cook (with no problem

<sup>28</sup> Simms, *No North Western Passage*, *ibid.*, p. 15, 11, 15, 21, 16, 9-10, 26, 14, 18, 27

<sup>29</sup> Paul Bruss, *Conrad’s Early Sea Fiction: The Novelist as Navigator* (New Jersey: Bucknell, 1979), p. 75.

<sup>30</sup> Cohen, ‘Literary Studies on the Terraqueous Globe’, *ibid.*, p. 659.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Taussig, ‘The Beach (A Fantasy)’, *Critical Enquiry* 26.2 (2000), p. 251.

<sup>32</sup> Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean*, *ibid.*, p. 166.

<sup>33</sup> Hester Blum, ‘The Prospect of Oceanic Studies’, *ibid.*, p. 671.

of the derivation of either name for him : whats definition?)

Compare this boy from Bremerton with Captain Cook

along a watershed, alternately alive and dead, the country up ahead.<sup>34</sup>

In this text we can see the trialling of different historical and modern spaces of the coastline against each other. This is a coastline alive and dead, both living and moving and in the process of mapping (and where we can see ‘footloose capital’<sup>35</sup> in full flow), and archival and commemorative. (In real life, one of the most bizarrely kinetic elements of the Cook heritage landscape is the cottage from Great Ayton, which as W. R. Mitchell describes in *Exploring the Captain Cook Country*, ‘now stands in Fitzroy Gardens, Melbourne – a living link between the navigator and the state that was established in the area of Australia he first sighted’<sup>36</sup>.) Simms’ text also works as an aesthetic and epistemological commentary on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century nautical traditions. Felix Driver and Luciana Martins have observed that there are ‘diverse material forms’<sup>37</sup> of the logbook, and Simms is echoing, in his text’s formal structures and experimental play, this ‘traffic in literary and visual conventions’.<sup>38</sup>

Interestingly, later that year, Tom Raworth’s illustrated *Logbook* (1976) – with prints by Frances Butler – was to play with the same conventions; it is more oceanic and ship-focussed than coastal, so cannot be given a great deal of attention here, but it is a striking example of ‘fictional pagination’ – where the first line of the first page begins mid-sentence, and the numbered pages (106, 291, 298, 301, 345, 356, 372, 399, 444 and 453) are obviously to be taken, in self-reference, as the ‘only ten pages of my logbook’ of which this text is supposedly made: thus, a travelogue in surviving fragments, with several references to sextants, chronometers, maritime telegraphs, incomplete languages, and failed transmissions: ‘can work the transmitter we’ve forgotten the message. The card retrieved from the bottle floating by said only / o / how you grow’.<sup>39</sup> This is a modern version of the textual fascination with (and deliberate resemblance to) “drift data”, in which a bottle is thrown overboard, with a paper inside, stating the time and the place at which this is done, thus giving information on current based on where it is cast and found and the time elapsed. The ‘drift’ fascination in a number of the coastal poems considered – including Nancy Gaffield’s *Continental Drift* (2014) and Caroline Bergvall’s *Drift* (2014) – are forms of intervention with the contingency of

<sup>34</sup> Colin Simms, *No North Western Passage*, *ibid.*, p. 21

<sup>35</sup> Phil Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean*, *ibid.*, p. 166

<sup>36</sup> W. R. Mitchell, *Exploring the Captain Cook Country* (Yorkshire: Dalesman, 1978), p. 11-12

<sup>37</sup> Felix Driver and Luciana Martins, ‘Visual Histories: John Septimus Roe and the Art of Navigation, c. 1815-1830’, *History Workshop Journal* 54 (2002), p. 158

<sup>38</sup> Felix Driver and Luciana Martins, *ibid.*, p. 150

<sup>39</sup> Tom Raworth (illust. Francis Butler), *Logbook* (Poltoon Press, 1976); no true pagination (the pagination in this volume is fictional)

this approximate, uncertain, and extrapolated “floating knowledge”,<sup>40</sup> often through the ‘message in a bottle’ image of floating language itself, in effaced forms, as ‘Some words remain with them, / splinters of driftwood, pieces / of sea glass’.<sup>41</sup>

Beyond these material engagements, an extra element of the coast’s dimensionality is offered in the format of books or other forms of publication as navigable spaces. For the Yorkshire coast, this can be seen in Clive Fencott’s *Opal Coast Tours*, an online poetry piece created in the mid-nineties in part collaboration with Bob Cobbing. A visitor to the website is greeted with a traditional cartographic coastal profile; he or she may then scroll horizontally along the Yorkshire coast’s profile to the east or the west, using the buttons marked ‘Sail South East’ and ‘Sail North West’. Stopping points – Whitby, Redcar, Staithes and so on – are marked on the scrolling map as harbours, and can be clicked to allow the reader to ‘disembark’ and read the individual poems in the sequence in the windows that open. In his note on this sequence – which reveals it to be a somewhat abandoned project, with not all of the ports and harbours yet ‘fully functional’ – Fencott imagines the project ‘sending out its rhizomes North West and South East to entangle much of the beautiful Opal Coast.’<sup>42</sup> In this way the online space of the reader’s interaction aims to resemble the openness of the sea encircling Britain, with each possible navigation of the “text” – in which the harbour poems can be visited and read in any order, or not at all – enacting a different *periplou* or coasting voyage.

Mottram’s *Precipice of Fishes*, a small-run edition of sixty published by the Writer’s Forum in 1979, also brings a level of bibliographic experimentation to his briny topic. The text is made up of units of work on title and colophon cards ‘to be shuffled and read in that order or any other’, while the four colours of the cards, blue, green, yellow and orange, ‘may be used to indicate four readers (or the cards may be scattered on the ground and each of the four readers read the card of his/her colour nearest, and so on in order)’. This reading strategy is a fitting testament to the self-generating repeatability of the sea’s actions, and the circumstances of oscillation and circulation which define the coast. The units of text are themselves partly quotations, drawn from ‘a long memory of sea and shore’,<sup>43</sup> and the resources are listed at the start. This includes littoral ideas taken from figures as wide-ranging as Fidel Castro, Klee, Boulez, Allen Upward and Peter Lanyon, often very short (one card simply bears the line ‘and the unique white track of sea trumpets’). The kinetic quality of these fragments in performance means there is a near infinite variety of readings that can result, perhaps a nod to the near infinite distance and non-uniformity of the fractal coastline as ‘a kind of meeting / not

<sup>40</sup> Julia Heunemann gave an as yet unpublished paper engaging with the literary reception of drift data at the conference *British Waters and Beyond: The Cultural Significance of the Sea Since 1800*, Royal West of England Academy, Bristol, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

<sup>41</sup> Nancy Gaffield, ‘Offshore’, *Continental Drift*, *ibid.*, p. 29

<sup>42</sup> Clive Fencott, ‘Opal Coast Tours’, <<http://www.fencott.com/Clive/OpalCoast/>>; for author’s note, see <<http://www.fencott.com/Clive/OpalCoast/welcome.html>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>43</sup> Eric Mottram, *Precipice of Fishes* (London: Writers Forum, 1979), loose unpaginated cards

to be repeated', as Mottram writes in another poem.<sup>44</sup> The title, *Precipice of Fishes*, is a broad translation of Dynbych Pyscot, the Welsh name for Tenby, Pembrokeshire.

Bill Griffiths' *Found Sea Texts* is a small stapled chapbook with narrow horizontal pages, each with an unevenly printed found line from Jane Austen's *Persuasion* (one page, for instance, reads: 'the sea is no beautifier / upon looking over his / letters & things she / found it was so'); these are interleaved with equally fine pages with hand-painted monochrome or watery brush strokes. Another of his Pirate Press mimeograph publications, *Forming Four Dock Poems* (1975), is an example of asemic writing: constructed from several Roman looking glyphs are four different organisations of illegible text in the blankness of the page, possible to interpret as an arrangement of jetties or docks.<sup>45</sup> Sharing this interest in the calibration of space and text in printing is Autumn Richardson and Richard Skelton's *Typography of the Shore* (2008), which meaningfully incorporates the idea of line-setting in poetry printings which use a manual press.<sup>46</sup> Here, the chapbook's minimal text plays on the differing glossaries of type-setting and coastal division: so a line such as 'ragged shoreline / spurred stems ascending / brome and fescue / wind-kerned grasses' plays with the meanings of 'ragged' (unjustified type, or a region of type in which one margin is kept unaligned), 'spur' (a serif-like ending to the stroke of a letterform), 'stem' (the main, usually vertical, stroke of a letterform), and 'kern' (the action of adjusting the spacing between letters and words).<sup>47</sup> In this way Skelton and Richardson explore some of the finer typographical navigations between the tide-marks of the subject matter and varied kinds of 'marginal scrawl'.

Innovative uses of bibliographic illustration, meanwhile, include Michael Charlesworth and Patrick Eyres' collaborative sequence 'Landfall: Romney Marsh Emblems', which opens Eyres' edited *Landfall: Encounters with English Landscapes*<sup>48</sup> and which includes printed ship's figureheads and emblems beached into the text, which draws from archival sources on wrecks. Circle Press, one of the most well regarded small artists' book publishers, also has several experimental printings responding to the coast through the collaboration between writers and book setters; notably, Kenneth White's booklet poem *Lettre De La Mer Noire / Black Sea Letter* (1997), written for the purpose and in reference to Ovid's 'Black Sea Letters' poems of exile, is presented in a limited edition of sixty books created with printed hot-wax and letterpress. The wax process, conceived by the artist Jean-Claude Loubieres, is applied to sections of the page, which are left waxy and translucent, giving a tideline of visibility to the page below, and so a 'coastline' aesthetic through which part of the text can be read.

<sup>44</sup> Eric Mottram, *Estuaries*, *ibid.*, p. 13

<sup>45</sup> Bill Griffiths, *Found Sea Texts* (Middlesex: Pirate Press, no date marked), unpaginated; Bill Griffiths, *Forming Four Dock Poems* (Middlesex: Pirate Press, 1975), unpaginated

<sup>46</sup> Compare Bill Griffiths' reference to font in the final line of his 'North Yorkshire Line Rearrangements', *Collected Earlier Poems 1966-80* (East Sussex: Reality Street, 2010), p. 205

<sup>47</sup> Autumn Richardson and Richard Skelton, *Typography of the Shore* (Cumbria: Corbel Stone Press, 2012)

<sup>48</sup> This is the New Arcadian Press' special issue of *Arcadian Journal* 41-42 (1996)



A full exploration can't be made here of the diverse ways the space of the coast has been constituted by and through such different material publications or practices – as in Hopper's Essex coast audio-walk, mentioned previously, or Matthew Clegg's and Mark Goodwin's various audio poems recorded (for the aural effects) in a boat, on coastal cliffs, or in sea caves, for Longbarrow Press,<sup>49</sup> or Alec Finlay and Chris Watson's collaboration *Siren* (2006), a booklet publication referring to a sound piece performed by singers standing on opposite ends of a Northern harbour, inaudible to each other, but caught in strains on the recording device which was carried on a boat moving between them.<sup>50</sup> For current purposes, however, Colin Sackett's *About* (2009) is striking for the coasting journey it offers: taking its cartographic illustrations and text entirely from the 'Notes to the Plates' in J. A. Steers' visual survey *The Coast of England and Wales in Pictures* (1960), it is set within a roughly square pale brown exercise book, on the cover of which dotted lines suggest the space for a name and title often included on the front of school children's exercise books. Each individual page incorporates one labelled coastal silhouette of Britain from a different perspective (e.g., as approached from the sea to the west), with a block of text below assembled from Steers' descriptions in the source text, combined into one book-long paratactic sentence. This is toponymic verse without the capitalised toponyms or 'proper names'. The coasting journey around each of these locations is indicated by the use of the ellipsis, also a conventional code for missing text when drawing from source material. Thus, in this case we approach the coast as a disorientating on-going profile of the edge of the land, with all its named places and natural details incorporated in one onward drift through the set (and repeatable) vocabulary of Steers' mid twentieth century physical landscape description. The constant lower case also merges the distinctions between etymology, coastal features, geological formation, and named location: 'north of place robin south steep sweeps to which within ... and at beds cliffs cornbrash clay corallian dipping gently in nan oxford yons ... bay filey ... flamborough head ... blow-hole boulder-clay chalk covered flambourough formed head is of with ... active boulder-clay cliffs coast erosion grimston holderness in of ... head spurn ... eroded forshore.' Like Fencott's use of post-book technologies to renew the experience of the navigational histories of the Yorkshire coast, and Colin Simms' revisit of Cook's coastal survey through splitting dialects, Sackett's England is not seen for its landmass, but, from the sea, as one on-going vista, or line, of familiar and unfamiliar words.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Matthew Clegg, 'Cave Time and Sea Changes', recorded in a sea cave at the North Landing, Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 19 September 2012: <<https://soundcloud.com/longbarrow-press-scale/cave-time-and-sea-changes>> (accessed 01/08/2014); Mark Goodwin, *Ish Coast Etched* CD (Sheffield: Longbarrow Press, 2009).

<sup>50</sup> Alec Finlay and Chris Watson, *Siren: A New Bookscape* (Edinburgh: Platform Projects / Morning Star, 2006). <[http://www.gruenrekorder.de/?page\\_id=110](http://www.gruenrekorder.de/?page_id=110)> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>51</sup> Colin Sackett, *About* (Axminster: Sackett 2009), unpaginated

### ‘The sea’s continual code’: Peter Riley and the monastic coast

Across this chapter we have been led by the poets to ask: if lineation at the coast is local, bounding, and place-based, must it be read as conservative-nationalist, against a cosmopolitan, progressive image of the sea? Is the latter image necessarily bound to mercantile sea-capitalism (capitulating to the model of the smooth sea, or to Connery’s image of ocean as ‘capital’s myth element’ eclipsing other visions of maritime space<sup>1</sup>)? In Peter Riley’s engagements with the peripheries of Northern Wales, these tropes are awakened to new word plays, in which the economic metaphor rides along the existing romantic image of the un-reachable Celtic sea and of the prayers cast at surf’s edge. The languages of the sublime and the languages of commerce, as I will show in a couple of close (and even single-word) readings, simultaneously shape the landscape that Riley is dealing with. He draws on a number of conventional tropes of the coast and the rhetorical traditions of seaside meditation, while setting his text within the territorial ideologies of modern Britain. Throughout, he poses syntactical and lexical riddles which it is impossible for the reader to address without coming to a wider awareness of the economic and political geographies that are manifested in this small ragged edge between land and sea.

Peter Riley’s Llŷn writings, composed and published variously from 1977, are a series of historical, geographical, spiritual, and linguistic engagements with a small peninsula in North Wales, an 8 by 30 mile rocky isthmus facing out into what Riley calls ‘the connecting and severing sea’.<sup>2</sup> These were collected in 2007 with other materials and prose notes as Shearsman’s *The Llŷn Writings*. Alongside Riley’s Poetic Histories sequence, *Ospita* (1987), and the two ‘forgotten’ Llŷn poems published belatedly in the electronic journal *Free Verse*,<sup>3</sup> these texts comprise a significant, decades long project which explicitly draws from Celtic monastic traditions, but also from the languages of economics and accountancy. This section will consider Riley’s coastal ‘accounts’ through an analysis of his consciously intersystemic languages – constructing the land’s edge in terms of cost and tariff, arithmetic and prayer. It will focus on the homonymic puns which exemplify his use of the peninsula as a complexly multi-layered elegiac space. These range from the densely referential to the

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Connery, ‘The Oceanic Feeling’, *ibid.*, p. 289

<sup>2</sup> Peter Riley, ‘Absent from Llŷn’, *The Llŷn Writings* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2007), p. 91

<sup>3</sup> Peter Riley, ‘The Idea of It’ and ‘Another Week on Llŷn, Another Catalogue’, *Free Verse: A Journal of Contemporary Poetry and Poetics* 15 (2008)

<[http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/freeverse/Archives/Winter\\_2008/poems/P\\_Riley.html](http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/freeverse/Archives/Winter_2008/poems/P_Riley.html)> (accessed 12/08/2014). The former poem also appears in draft form (dated 1982) in the ‘Poems and Notes’ section of *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 35

comparatively simple – for example, ‘that anchorage (...) that holds our scattered souls to a focus’,<sup>4</sup> which invokes interpretations of ‘anchorage’ as a monk’s hermitage, as a place to anchor, or as a holding point in the sea, as in the Welsh name for Bardsey, *Ynys Enlli*, or the Island in the Currents.

John Hall has previously observed that Riley’s pieces are linked into ‘earlier (Christian) tradition of spiritual exercises and battles with meaning’.<sup>5</sup> In ‘Sea Watches’ this is manifested formally, particularly in the sequence ‘Eight Seaside Chapels’, in which each of the eight stanzas presents a stopping-point at a chapel of rest. Like Seamus Heaney walking with the dead in *Station Island* (1984), Riley’s Llŷn excursions refer to the Celtic practise of coastal pilgrimage around penitential stations, the topic of geographer Avril Maddrell’s recent studies on the Isle of Man.<sup>6</sup> Riley draws on monastic presentations of the coastline as an ultimate threshold, partly through his re-workings of St. Columba and of R. S. Thomas; at the same time he draws attention to the passages of economic tides, the cultures of fishing and trade, the tourist industry, and the slate and haulage industries also based out of the ports of Llŷn. This is not merely a countering of the data of capitalism with the disenfranchised spiritual histories preserved on the Welsh coastal margin: these languages are not separately telegraphed into his poetry, but mutually inform each other. Llŷn has been described by Matthew Jarvis as ‘caught between the arena of myth (in the west) and the arena of practicality (in the east)’, as two ‘opposing cardinal points’.<sup>7</sup> But Riley’s spiritual exercises are ultimately not opposed to, but coterminous with his commercial metaphors. Discrete phrases and words, seemingly innocuous in their lyric treatment of the coast, are deserving of close scrutiny, given Riley’s proven interest in terminologies and their ‘speculative structures’ made explicit<sup>8</sup> (seen for instance in his essay ‘Notes on Vein Forms’, on mining terminology and the economic theses of the imagery of *Tracks and Mineshafts*<sup>9</sup>). These intersections are necessarily involved with his wider thoughts on poetic labour, the linking of ideas of ‘cost’ to the measurement and metrics of poetry, and the means by which landscape is made accountable.

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<sup>4</sup> Riley, ‘Absent from Llŷn’, *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 94

<sup>5</sup> John Hall, ‘On *Lines on the Liver* and *Tracks and Mineshafts*’, in Nate Dorward ed., *The Gig 4/5: The Poetry of Peter Riley* (2000), p. 40

<sup>6</sup> Avril Maddrell, ‘Praying the Keeills’: Rhythm, meaning and experience on pilgrimage journeys in the Isle of Man’, *Landabréfið: Journal of the Association of Icelandic Geographers* Special Issue: Practicing Nature-based Tourism (2011)

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Jarvis, *Welsh Environments in Contemporary Poetry* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), p. 110

<sup>8</sup> Peter Riley, ‘The Books: Retrospective and texts’, *April Eye*: <<http://www.aprileye.co.uk/books.html>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>9</sup> Peter Riley, ‘Notes on Vein Forms’, *Two Essays* (Matlock: Grossetest, 1983). Both this and the accompanying essay, ‘Theses on Dream’, are republished in *The Derbyshire Poems* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2010). Riley has also written on mining nomenclature for the Peak District Mines Historical Society bulletin, in Riley, ‘Peak District Mine Names: A Preliminary Survey’, *Mining History: PDMHS Bulletin* 6.5 (1977)

Riley describes the coast as ‘a refuge for monks and pirates’.<sup>10</sup> Why monks and pirates? We may think that the link between the coastline and piracy (expanded upon by Daniel Heller-Roazen<sup>11</sup>) and the link between the coastline and spirituality seem like very different things, but both depend upon the idea of the space external to human machinations and law. According to this trope, the coastal margin appears to border on a sea space free of human dictates. The sea-coast in the Llŷn writings becomes the location where the space of industrious society entirely ends; the brink of the sea itself is then presented as syntactically and hermetically sealed. Riley describes ‘All the white lines / and pale fences of dark England snaking through (...) all the roads and service stations (...) to the end, the foot, the fixed point on which / the horizon spins into reverse’.<sup>12</sup> The play-off is between the agricultural, commercial and mobile society, and the horizon-challenging depth of the sea – as Steinberg puts it, ‘the idealization of the deep sea as a great void of distance countered with an ever-advancing tendency toward capital mobility’.<sup>13</sup> The linguistic play here – where ‘foot’ refers explicitly to a poetic device, and the enjambment emphasizes ‘the horizon’ – is an example of Riley’s self-conscious poetics of the shore, in which the sea is presented as unknowable, as we are turned about face to look inland again when ‘the horizon spins into reverse’. The narrative can only arrive at the coast and go no further, as we see in the opening two stanzas of the volume, from ‘Sea Watches’:

Almost there we hesitate, and turn, high on the soft  
Edge of Britain, to view the whole story: the sea barking  
Up both sides of the peninsula to the point, top  
Crest of land, pilgrims’ goal or final extent  
Of a life’s coming and going called together when  
There is after all a focus, an intellectual love.<sup>14</sup>

An interesting contextualisation for this first line is the opening line of the first chapter of John Hay’s afore-mentioned ecological text *The Primal Alliance: Earth and Ocean* (1972): ‘there is in these regions a *turning and hesitating*, a waiting evidenced in birds or men, slack tide and full tide, the sunlight showing and fading again, color and light on the sea’.<sup>15</sup> But here, another side to Britain is exposed as we turn on the sea’s edge: that is to say, Riley’s use of the vantage of his position ‘high on the soft / Edge of Britain’ to comment on the economic structures and discourses of (our) landed society. In a flyer for *Sea Watches*, issued by Prest Roots in 1991, Riley describes the setting as

<sup>10</sup> Peter Riley, ‘Dithyrambic, after the Vicar of Aberdaron’, *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 37

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Enemy of All: Piracy and the Law of Nations* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2009)

<sup>12</sup> Riley, ‘Between Harbours’, *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 82

<sup>13</sup> Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean*, *ibid.*, p. 163

<sup>14</sup> Riley, ‘Sea Watches’, *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 9

<sup>15</sup> This section is reprinted in John Hay, *In Defense of Nature* (Iowa: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), p. 28

an ancient landscape (...) a peninsula in North Wales pointing to an unreachable island. Pilgrim's goal, rock of ages, ecstatic finality. (...) World politics lurks far round the coast (...) coming and going, eating and trading, noticing the shore curving into fate.<sup>16</sup>

The 'unreachability' is here countered with the daily business of 'eating and trading'. The traffic of pilgrims across the landscape is in fact so institutionalised that it creates its own grid, with churches as 'fixed points in / succession, a chain of stations through the land'. Meanwhile, the two routes for foot-pilgrims across the peninsular '(cut) across all the local trans-peninsular trade routes' – while the sea route for pilgrims is paralleled by 'a haulage industry transporting coffined corpses to Bardsey from all over Britain', with the constant embarkation and disembarkation of hundreds of bodies belying the sense of an austere pilgrim's landscape.<sup>17</sup>

In Riley's collaboration with the artist Colin Whitworth, 2003's *The Sea's Continual Code* (an edition of 60), that trope discussed above of the austere 'beyondness' of the sea is immediately suggested in the physical layout of the book.<sup>18</sup> Whitworth's fold-out pages extend the right hand margin, and the long space which therefore stretches beyond the text is marked by sketches of the ligaments of waves, derived from his drawings made along Carmarthen Bay and the Pembrokeshire coast. For this reader, however, the small press work's title is perhaps one of its most interesting interventions in Riley's publishing cycles around Llŷn, as it marks an association with a nexus of thinking around the coded sea, with the sea's continual *code* bearing in the philology of the word 'code' a mix of different spaces. In fact, the interesting in coding itself refers to the meanings which are camouflaged within Riley's use of the more common romantic rubrics of the poetic coast as edge of human society.

'Code' is a word which came to us from 13<sup>th</sup> century Roman law, originally referring to the various systematic collections of statutes (e.g. 'the code of Theodosius'). This expanded to a later sense of 'a systematic collection or digest of the laws of a country', and then, further, to 'a collection of rules or regulations on any subject'. However, it was not until 1808 – with the development of the telegraph – that it evolved through 'code telegram' towards its current use as a coded form of language, often appearing in the phrase 'code word'. Later, an 1875 definition related it to maritime codes of signals, or other systems of military or naval signals, while computer code and internet code are the more contemporary coinages. Thus, its original meaning as the system of laws governing a particular land has developed with the use of telecommunication, sailing and cybernetics, each expanding the meaning. This leaves Riley's and Whitworth's title in a strange position. It may well refer to the errant 1701 dictionary definition, 'a collection of writings forming a book, such as the Old or the New Testament', and have a spiritual meaning (the sea's code is a spiritual code). It may have the original

<sup>16</sup> Riley, 'Sea Watches: The Blurb', originally released as a flyer by Prest Roots Press in 1991 and reprinted in *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 113

<sup>17</sup> Riley, *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 35, 115, 115

<sup>18</sup> Peter Riley, *The Sea's Continual Code* (Cambridge: Colin Whitworth, 2008)

legal sense (the sea's code is the system of laws of the 'country' that is the sea). It may have the literary sense (the sea's code as the book of the sea), and it may even refer to the code of naval signals used by human beings at sea, or to the 'Sea's Code of Honour', 'Sea's Code of Practice' and 'Sea's Code of Ethics' still being put together by such bodies as the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. Each of these may refer to different typologies of maritime space – the pelagic space which exceeds terrestrial boundaries, the strategic naval space, or the legal divisions of national and international waters. Either way, it begins to look as if the word 'code' is itself in code, an insolvable puzzle that puts us one step further away from understanding what the sea is continually doing. The code, whatever it may be, cannot be easily translated into a language which is itself in motion.<sup>19</sup> In many ways this coding theme connects outwards to other examples in this chapter of the riddled language of sailor's knot-tying, as in Eric Mottram's writing, as well as to the failed telegraphs and semaphores which inform Caroline Bergvall's drift texts.

The *continual* coding of the sea, meanwhile, is a part reference to a number of historical Celtic influences, including St. Columba's Sea-Watch, Riley's translations of which are published in the *Llyn Writings*. This text, attributed to the sailor and Irish saint, was apparently written during his self-imposed penance on the three-mile island of Iona, in Scotland, where he founded its abbey and monastic community in 563 AD, later to become a site of pilgrimage. Columba declares: 'Delightful would it be to me / From a rock pinnacle to trace / Continually / The ocean's face',<sup>20</sup> perhaps inspiring part of Riley's own turn of phrase, 'the sea's continual code'.<sup>21</sup> Michael Haslam's account of the meaning behind his own title, *Continual Song* (1986), is also of note here. Haslam began his poetic career by sending 40 poems to Riley in Denmark, and later published his first pamphlet in 1975, which he himself described as 'Vacation poetry of the Celtic seacoasts'.<sup>22</sup> It is therefore not strange to imagine a link between the Celtic histories of Columba's 'Continually (tracing) / The ocean's face', Riley's 'the sea's continual code', and Haslam's 'Continual Song', when we read about the Welsh Triad which Haslam used as an epigraph, and which

says that there were three places in Britain where monks, time out of mind, took shifts to sing praise for Creation, round the clock (at Bangor-Is-Coed, Caer Caradoc, and Glastonbury). In a notion of that spirit, I had tried to make my book *continual*, by supposing the book could be

<sup>19</sup> "Code", *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed.

<sup>20</sup> Alfred Perceval Graves, 'St Columba on Iona', in Brendan O'Malley ed., *A Celtic Primer: The Complete Celtic Resource and Collection* (Norfolk: Canterbury Press Norwich), p. 139

<sup>21</sup> Riley, 'Llyn, Going', *The Llyn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Haslam, 'For a Life: Bibliography (in Loose Talk)', online at his website at <<http://www.continualesong.com/bibliography.html>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

read round in circles, front to back and back to front and from the centre out unto the fringes.<sup>23</sup>

Columba's writings about sea-watching, set as they are on a rocky overhang suitable to the oceanic sublime, explicitly link the coastal margin to the threshold of the spiritual world, remarking on 'Heaven's bright borders – / Land, strand, and flood'.<sup>24</sup> The rhyming archaeologies of the earth (land, strand, and flood) are here both connected to and severed from 'Heaven's bright borders' by a dash; the soul is left to merely envy the pelagic spaces of the sea beyond. Riley's St. Columba translations also carry this conflation of coastal threshold and spiritual threshold, but the diction is less explicitly Christian: he focuses largely on the 'contrite or empty heart', the 'clear headland', and what may be thought of as a geometrical sublime: 'We are established at the outer edge'.<sup>25</sup> He is influenced, too, by what he calls the 'particularly stony, exposed, and sea-light-stricken'<sup>26</sup> spirituality of R. S. Thomas. Thomas's 'Pen Llŷn', with its red Biblical rubric in its first printing, as used to distinguish instructions in Gothic bibles, takes as its subject matter 'the marriage / Of land and sea',<sup>27</sup> while he identifies spirituality geographically as a coastal 'area' in the first line of his own 'Sea-Watching': 'Grey waters, vast / as an area of prayer / that one enters'.<sup>28</sup> Finally, 'Launching a Prayer' and 'Tidal' both draw associations between the movements of prayer into the unknown and the movement of the waves themselves (as in the latter Thomas talks of 'Dashing / my prayers at him'<sup>29</sup>); this pious "line" of the coast is drawn on in Riley's numinous poetics of the shore.

Riley's use of geometrical logic to justify such a spiritual reading of the coast "line" – in which the peninsula 'funnelled human souls to a final stadium'<sup>30</sup> – is, again, made more discursive in his use of wordplay. Most obviously, the idea of the 'meniscus'<sup>31</sup> between worldly land and spiritual afterlife is paralleled with the physical form of the coast, the 'journey's end / Between driven earth and halting sea'.<sup>32</sup> The first publication in the Llŷn writings is *Sea Watches*, originally issued by Prest Roots Press in 1991, which was an eight-poem sequence written at and around 'A caravan at a small coastal farm called Rhwyngyddwyborth ("between two coves") on the north side of the peninsula a few miles from its end (which) was visited one week in each of thirteen years 1977-1989'.<sup>33</sup> This deliberately pilgrim-

<sup>23</sup> Available on Haslam's website at <<http://www.continualesong.com/name.html>> (accessed 12/08/2014). It is also worth noting that Peter Riley credits Haslam with introducing him to Llŷn, as well as to Brenda Chamberlain's *Tide-Race* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1962).

<sup>24</sup> Alfred Perceval Graves, 'St Columba on Iona', *ibid.*, p. 140

<sup>25</sup> Riley, 'The Translations of St Columba's Sea-Watch', *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 69

<sup>26</sup> Riley, 'Other notes', *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 120

<sup>27</sup> R. S. Thomas, *Collected Later Poems 1988-2000* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 2004), p. 196

<sup>28</sup> R. S. Thomas, *Laboratories of the Spirit* (London: Macmillan, 1975), p. 71

<sup>29</sup> Thomas, *Collected Later Poems*, *ibid.*, p. 167

<sup>30</sup> Riley, 'Six Prose Pieces', *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 27

<sup>31</sup> Riley, 'Sailing, Sailing Away', *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 14

<sup>32</sup> Riley, 'Between Harbours', *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 79

<sup>33</sup> Riley, 'Topographical Notes to *Sea Watches*', *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 114

like trek around a location ‘Stark on the margin’ with ‘On either hand the seething fields and the full sea / Like life and death’<sup>34</sup> is complicated by a number of ramifications coded into the language, as in one key moment of play in ‘Eight Seaside Chapels’, regarding the word ‘relief’.

‘A line of light writes final relief’,<sup>35</sup> Riley observes, drawing in both the imagery of the final contour of the coast (‘relief’ in its geological meaning as the elevation of the earth’s surface from sea-height) and of spiritual salvation (‘relief’ as the ending of worldly burden). If we puzzle at it longer, this sentence could also refer to divine transcription (the writing is done by ‘a line of light’), and the physical effects of sunset on the sea (‘a line of light’ which brings the scene into ‘relief’). This is a likely reference point, as Riley has referred throughout *The Llŷn Writings* to the phenomena of coastal phosphorescence, where land is thrown into relief by being ‘particularly (...) sea-light-stricken’.<sup>36</sup> In fact, this is a volume full of enumerations of light. It may be an even more specific marking of sunlight Riley is imagining; study of megalithic astronomy has shown that the Welsh burial chamber Bryn Celli Ddu, for instance, was a site for marking the alignment of the summer solstice (at which point in time the light would hit a specific marker on the rocky horizon).

Given Riley’s concern with the role of Bardsey as the burial place of saints, there could also be a link to the older meaning of relief as ‘the body, or part of the body, of a dead person, esp. a saint; a relic’ – a rare usage which was roughly contemporary with the Bardsey burials. And turning to deeper philology, and the insidious economic meaning, ‘relief’ also has feudal, financial and legal connotations as ‘release from bond’ or ‘succession to an estate’, which each may connect to the concept of reward-in-death, or the ‘indulgences’ granted to Bardsey pilgrims. As Edel Bhreathnach has noted, claims made around saints’ burial places and relics were also medieval income generators (‘Give me some of your relics, o cleric’, retorts one Irish martyrology<sup>37</sup>). Riley’s mixing of languages (of accountancy and burial, prayer and arithmetic) revisits these financial interments as a way of accounting for the value of a life, largely at eremitic coastal sites, as if in a new form of coastal Celtic eschatology: ‘He lies flat out / On the shore counting ills. The waves enter / His total wealth into books of sand. / It’s enough. They are happy to inter / His soul in lime and ash’.<sup>38</sup> Riley’s tropic exchanges along the coast thus build a financial semantics for Christian eschatology, linked to the contexts of the buying and selling of indulgences and pardons in Llŷn, as well as to the idea of measured sins and compensation in ‘tariff penance’, a leitmotif of early British and Irish monasticism (performed by Riley in the theme of the divine audit which takes place at the outermost edge of land).

<sup>34</sup> Riley, ‘Sandlogged’, *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 11

<sup>35</sup> Riley, ‘Eight Seaside Chapels’, *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 21

<sup>36</sup> Riley, ‘Overheard by the Sea’, *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 73

<sup>37</sup> Edel Bhreathnach, ‘Ynys Enlli: The Representation of Medieval Pilgrim Destinations’, in Jonathan M. Wooding ed., *Solitaries, Pastors and 20,000 Saints: Studies in the Religious History of Bardsey Island* (Trivium 39, 2010). This reference to ‘The Martyrology of Óengus’ is on p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Riley, ‘Ospita’, *Passing Measures: A Collection of Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2000), p. 63



Beyond these complex financial interments at the sea's edge, however, Riley's portrayal of monetary languages is also involved with the wider social contexts of the contemporary shore. The human history of the British coastline, at the latter end of the twentieth century, is marked with economic depression and closure threats, overfished stocks, and the unhappy tolerance of second-home owners and waterfront apartments.<sup>39</sup> Michael Bracewell has written on the use of the 'aesthetics of nostalgia' at the coast, noting that the contemporary seaside visitor 'goes to the coast partly in search of ghosts'.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, his 2004 article in the *Independent* opined that a mix of 'perilous tidal conditions' and 'severe economic decline' had come to mark out certain English sea-front locations, such as T. S. Eliot's Margate Sands, as subjects of modern and postmodern art works which were interested in ragged dereliction, previously seen only as a quality of various industrial inner-city districts.<sup>41</sup> And the poets Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts have recently remarked on the morphing of economic and pastoral seaside narratives in the elegiac aesthetic of Brighton.<sup>42</sup> This economic elegiac comes to the fore in *The Llŷn Writings*, which draws on the 'reconfiguration of money and the sea' which Anna Ryan sees in late twentieth century cultural expressions of the coast.<sup>43</sup> While the use of the coastline to consider the fraying edges of economic tides is not unique (we might consider, for instance, Alan Halsey's poem 'In Cusop Dingle, On Change & Exchange'<sup>44</sup>), Riley's is the most sustained engagement through wordplay.

Peter Riley's interest in recording the after effects of financial developments along the coast is also made obvious in his prose and other notes, full of references to 'For Sale signs all over the town', 'the eastern England house-price boom' and 'the 60s pastoral dream (having) collapsed before the new hard domestic economy and its inhering conformism' as 'the rich want their extra houses abroad; the locals have had enough: fishing prohibited, no use farming, sheep two a penny'.<sup>45</sup> The words 'theatre' and 'stadium' which Riley uses to describe his Llŷn setting, and which most suggest the English cultural interest in dilapidated resort towns, seem touched with a reference to the carnivalesque structures which Rob Shields, in his chapter on Brighton ('Ritual Pleasures of a Seaside Resort'), sees as a result of the 'liminal status of the seaside vis-à-vis the more closely governed realms of the

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<sup>39</sup> See Christopher Somerville's first hand walker's account and ethnography, *Britain Beside the Sea* (London: Grafton, 1989).

<sup>40</sup> Michael Bracewell, 'Morecambe: The Sunset Coast', in Feigel and Harris, eds, *Modernism on Sea: Art and Culture at the British Seaside* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), p. 9.

<sup>41</sup> Michael Bracewell, 'The Last Resort,' *The Independent*, 22 February 2004  
<<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/the-last-resort-570999.html>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>42</sup> Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts, *Edgelands: Journeys Into England's True Wilderness* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), p. 263-4.

<sup>43</sup> Anna Ryan, *Where Land Meets Sea: Coastal Explorations of Landscape, Representation and Spatial Experience* (London: Ashgate, 2012), p. 39

<sup>44</sup> Alan Halsey, 'In Cusop Dingle, On Change & Exchange', in Ian Davidson and Zoë Skoulding eds., *Skald Special Issue: On Wales* (2002), p. 14-15

<sup>45</sup> Riley, 'Llŷn in the Rain: Only the Song', *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 98, 98

nation'.<sup>46</sup> Riley's north Welsh landscape is also evidently constructed as an arena to play out the poetic function of the coast's economic disrepair. He describes 'the need and the cost' in Llŷn as 'hollow distances where the gull sits / and laughs and the tides roar back / small change wash hands take it'.<sup>47</sup> In 'Absent from Llŷn', he cuts from a stanza about the global movements of 'the plane accelerat(ing) / into plane zones' to a stanza which returns us to the local, fading seaside: 'Meanwhile, a small cove on the Welsh coast in the night, the sea / grinding stones in the darkness, the disused boast sinking deeper / into the shingle year after year'.<sup>48</sup>

In Riley's poetry, the retreat to the meditative pilgrim's spaces of Llŷn is not finally enough to escape the vicissitudes of tourism in the capitalist landscape or its systems of economic expression. Why would he tell us in his own 'Seawatch' poem that 'The sea throws / Silver coins at the rock'?<sup>49</sup> Why, in a later prose piece, is the spiritual salve provided by being beside the sea described through the language of transaction? ('It promotes (...) soul inflation but look how the long land reaches out to be cancelled'.<sup>50</sup>) Why is the disappearance of the evening light recorded as a monetary loss (using the 'sixpence' trope of measuring the moon's fullness)? ('This evening it darkens / From grey to white and draws at what cost / I don't know the light from the fields until / Swathed in shade I let it go for sixpence net'.<sup>51</sup>) The symbol of money appears to be an uninvited guest at the site of every poetic utterance in Riley's Llŷn. Perhaps this is because, in the words of Marc Shell, money 'cannot be eradicated from discourse without changing thought itself, within whose tropes and processes the language of wares is an ineradicable participant'.<sup>52</sup>

At the simplest level, we may see Riley's inclusion of economic subject matter as a determined acceptance that '(t)his also is the earth, this theatre of shelving, with its prices, categories, attached tea-shop'.<sup>53</sup> The seaside has been described by Shields as something which evolved to fulfil a societal need, providing a carnivalesque experience in a liminal space.<sup>54</sup> Correspondingly, Riley is self-consciously writing about a peninsula which is, in his own words, one of those '(p)laces arisen for an economic purpose and a spiritual relief'.<sup>55</sup> The co-presence of these two foundations means that the speaker cannot express a poetic or spiritual reading of the landscape which is disassociated from its place in the economic, territorial ideology. In one sentence Riley compares the 'locations' and 'sites'

<sup>46</sup> Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 74

<sup>47</sup> Riley, 'Llŷn in the Rain', *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 98

<sup>48</sup> Riley, 'Absent from Llŷn', *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 91

<sup>49</sup> Riley, 'Seawatch', *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 23

<sup>50</sup> Riley, 'Six Small Prose Pieces', *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 88

<sup>51</sup> Riley, 'Seawatch', *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 23

<sup>52</sup> Marc Shell, *Money, Language, and Thought: Literary and Philosophic Economies from the Medieval to the Modern Era* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 180-1

<sup>53</sup> Riley, 'Six Small Prose Pieces', *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 87

<sup>54</sup> Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991)

<sup>55</sup> Riley, 'Llŷn in the Rain', *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 99

and ‘the structures that talk us into it’,<sup>56</sup> as if the landscape cannot be directly encountered except through these speaking ‘structures’.

Riley is also, therefore, dramatizing the role of commercial and capitalist metaphor in poetic thought. ‘Ventriloquistic commodities’<sup>57</sup> are made to speak through the landscape. He directly quotes an old poetic epithet for Llŷn as ‘the cloth of gold’, which he footnotes as being a probable reference to the fertility of the land.<sup>58</sup> ‘Cloth of gold’ is, also, a multi-layered phrase, with an ecclesiastical use (a term for particular robes worn by the clergy), as well as a more literal link to the topography (it has been explained as a reference to the uncommon profusion of golden hair lichen in Llŷn, also explaining Dafydd Nanmor’s 15<sup>th</sup> century poem comparing the lichen in Llŷn to the colour of his loved one’s hair). Within this phrase we therefore see that the monetary significance of ‘gold’ is one of the participating factors in a landscape layered with topographical and religious meaning. The allusions are drawn out by repetition, as Riley describes the sea top as a ‘shining cloth’<sup>59</sup> (which in 1989 was the intended original title for ‘Sea Watches’) and the littoral scene as ‘(c)loaked in brightness’,<sup>60</sup> and finally issues the direction ‘Gather up the silver threads in the rubble / that twine together to a gleam in the distance, / the world’s treasure at its final section’.<sup>61</sup>

Riley’s economic systems of metaphor in this text are complex and evolved. Questions are raised about the medium of labour in poetry, most explicitly in ‘The Poet’s Labour’, from ‘Sea Watch Overstock’: ‘The faint piping of oyster-catchers in the morning / like an aeolian machine behind the steady / rain on the roof and the wind on the corners. / Collect these details, as your wages’.<sup>62</sup> We are continually forced to counter the arts in terms of spiritual revelation and the arts in terms of political economy. The image of the poet in the employ of the capitalist system, collecting details of the landscape as his ‘wages’, reminds us that words such as ‘price’, ‘labour’, ‘profit’, ‘credit’ and ‘cost’ point to semantic and philosophical values beyond the merely commercial. As Shell has observed,

Poetics is about production (*poiesis*). There can be no analysis of the form or content of production without a theory of labor. Labor, like language, is symbolically mediated interaction, reconciling man and ‘nature’.<sup>63</sup>

This is beyond a simple metaphorical linking of the semantic systems of money and language. Shell has also complained about the lazy uses of Saussurean economic comparisons by literary critics

<sup>56</sup> Riley, ‘Llŷn in the Rain’, *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 100

<sup>57</sup> Marc Shell, *The Economy of Literature* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 5

<sup>58</sup> Riley, ‘Topographical Notes to *Sea Watches*’, *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 120

<sup>59</sup> Riley, ‘Sailing, Sailing Away’, *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 14

<sup>60</sup> Riley, ‘Translations’, *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 69

<sup>61</sup> Riley, ‘Poems and Notes’, *The Llŷn Writings*, p. 35

<sup>62</sup> Riley, ‘Sea Watch Overstock’, *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 46

<sup>63</sup> Shell, *The Economy of Literature*, *ibid.*, p. 9

(Saussure's adoption of Walras's economics, meaning that merchandise and discourse are linked and 'words are a kind of credit-money'<sup>64</sup>). Instead, we might see in Riley a conscious intersystemic analysis of forms of thought which are transferred between the two. Heinzelman has pointed out how commerce and literature 'attempt to transcend and moderate (...) each other'.<sup>65</sup> This can be observed throughout the *Llyn Writings*; a self-consciousness of the ways in which literature is marked as 'a commercial text', in Ruskin's words.<sup>66</sup> Riley dramatises the constant assessing of exchange value, declaring 'My oh my I thought I had a notion / To validate with truth this brittle / Spending',<sup>67</sup> marking even 'truth' as an exchangeable signifier. His re-use of valued words such as 'love', 'harm', 'good' and 'cost' means they each build up their own significant systems of meaning, while also bringing our attention to the currency of reproducible signs. Even while complaining about the 'fair-weather traders'<sup>68</sup> who were responsible for the fading prosperity of coastal tourism, and for replacing the native culture with a 'trade in fakes',<sup>69</sup> Riley evidences the speaker's own bartering and monetary consciousness in romantic imagery:

A tern plummets to the sea and curves back  
at the good moment / a cormorant hangs  
on the meniscus and slides into the music.  
Their rate of expenditure is low<sup>70</sup>

In the final stanza of his translations of St. Columba's Sea-Watch, the speaker staring out to sea determines 'So to think further the simple heights of physics / That redeem our term, and the necessities become / Lighter, and life is (prized.)'. The 'term' may mean life span, or may mean the terms of a contract (as in the earlier use of the phrase 'the earth's terms'), while 'prized' – the giving of value to a life – is footnoted 'query priced'.<sup>71</sup> The crucial difference between 'prized' and 'priced' is left unresolved. So what is the 'redeem(ing)' of 'our term'? In such instances, Riley shows that his volume, while appearing to be a fairly monastic and nostalgic representation of the sea shore as a place of finality and stillness, in fact embraces diverse cultures of thought about terrestrial and pelagic spaces, countering Romantic rhetoric about the transcendental (and deathly) experience of the coastline with the language of the grid, the zone and the marketplace. The spiritual and meditative lyric in this front-line space is 'border-working' in several languages, through semantic rhymes and

<sup>64</sup> Shell, *The Economy of Literature*, *ibid.*, p. 5

<sup>65</sup> Kurt Heinzelman, *The Economics of the Imagination* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), p. 8

<sup>66</sup> John Ruskin, *Unto This Last* (New York: Cosimo, 2006), p. 31

<sup>67</sup> Riley, 'Sea Watches', *The Llyn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 24

<sup>68</sup> Riley, 'Llyn in the Rain', *The Llyn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 100

<sup>69</sup> Riley, 'Llyn in the Rain', *The Llyn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 100

<sup>70</sup> Riley, 'Mornings with a Walkman at Rhwyngyddwyrth', *The Llyn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 53

<sup>71</sup> Riley, 'The Translations of St Columba's Sea-Watch', *The Llyn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 70

patterns of syntax and etymology. In this way Riley shows that none of these languages alone can fully account for the fractal habits of the coast.

The narrative arrives at the coast and goes no further<sup>72</sup> because the rest is only ‘shadows on the sea’.<sup>73</sup> This is the closing line of the *Llyn Writings*, and, as Riley notes, it’s an adaptation of a lyric from a fishermen’s song by Joe Skilbeck, which refers to an old belief that ‘shadows on the sea’ is what sailors’ souls become after death. It’s also a poetic trope. Hart Crane’s poem ‘At Melville’s Tomb’ ends by intoning that ‘Compass, quadrant, and sextant contrive / No farther tides ... High in the azure steeps / Monody shall not wake the mariner. / This fabulous shadow only the sea keeps.’<sup>74</sup>

Meanwhile, in ‘Walking the West, Early’, Christine Evans’ more recent poem set on the island of Bardsey itself, the last lines edge around the same poetic metaphor, observing that ‘The mainland twitches in its sleep. / The shadows all point forwards, to the sea.’<sup>75</sup> The closing line of Riley’s entire volume is therefore itself throwing a set of shadowy connotations of death over the coastal landscape, imagining a future ‘that I myself / helped to grow and be, shadows on the sea’.<sup>76</sup>

This final poem was also published again in Ian Davidson’s special issue of *Skald*, put together with Zoë Skoulding in 2002 as a compilation of work by nine non-Welsh poets writing about Welsh landscapes. Davidson notes in his editorial that it’s the opening poems by Riley and the closing poem by Andrew Duncan (‘On the Beach at Aberystwyth’, also considered in this chapter) which show the deepest understanding of ‘the splintery feel of the ‘language issue’ in Wales, and the richness of the tensions within its bilingual communities’.<sup>77</sup> This awareness of the bilingual environment is unmistakably present in the issues surrounding Riley’s coded sea, and his pronouncement in the final poem, ‘I wonder if the sound / will reach the far shore, I wonder / if the sea’s continual code will ever / be broken, in English or Welsh.’<sup>78</sup> This invoked inexpressibility of the sea is cognate with the shore-prayers of Celtic hagiography mentioned above. It is also, for instance, not unlike the conclusion to Seamus Heaney’s ‘The Peninsula’, in which the speaker in theory offers the possibility of ‘uncoding’ the landscape. In the Heaney poem, ‘uncode’ itself remains a resolutely unusual word, while the clue the reader is offered is nothing more than the final unsolvable – and insoluble – division between land and sea, which leaves the landscape still inexpressible as, leaving the coast, you ‘drive back home, still with nothing to say / Except that now you will uncode all landscapes / By this: things founded

<sup>72</sup> See Peter Larkin, ‘Sea Watches: Little More than Arrival’, in Nate Dorward ed., *The Gig 4/5: The Poetry of Peter Riley* (2000)

<sup>73</sup> Riley, ‘Llyn, Going’, *The Llyn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 109

<sup>74</sup> Hart Crane, ‘At Melville’s Tomb’, *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane* (New York: Liveright, 2001), p. 33

<sup>75</sup> Christine Evans, ‘Walking the West, Early’, *Bardsey* (Carmarthen: Gomer Press, 2008), excerpted on illustrated page

<sup>76</sup> Riley, ‘Llyn, Going’, *The Llyn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 109

<sup>77</sup> Ian Davidson, ‘Introduction’, in Ian Davidson and Zoë Skoulding eds., *Skald Special Issue: On Wales* (2002), p.

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<sup>78</sup> Peter Riley, ‘Llyn, Going’, in Davidson and Skoulding eds., *Skald Special Issue: On Wales* (2002), *ibid.*, p. 10

clean on their own shapes, / Water and ground in their extremity.’<sup>79</sup> In the poem ‘Absent from Llŷn, 1994-1997’, Riley’s speaker, too, wakes with a bluesy tone and a still unsolved landscape: ‘Woke up this morning with an awful aching head, never knew the / distance, never solved the far shore blues.’<sup>80</sup>

The ‘sea’s continual code’ which will not be solved or broken ‘in / either language or any on earth’,<sup>81</sup> in Riley’s ‘Llŷn, Going’, is reflected in a later, neighbouring poem by the more mainstream poet, Gillian Clarke (titled ‘Fires on Llŷn’). Aside from the coastal sounds of the buried saints’ ‘broken rosary / of their coracles, / praying in Latin and Welsh’,<sup>82</sup> reminiscent of Riley’s final poem, the coastal setting of Clarke’s piece is loud with other voices: ‘Words shape-shift to wind’, ‘Choughs sound alarm’, ‘the sea’s intonation’, ‘cliff-talking’, a ‘shout’, ‘the sea’s mumbled novenas’, and several puns on sound, including the bird ‘whinchat’, and the use of ‘sound’ in ‘the holy sound’ in its meaning as a long broad inlet of the ocean or long passage of water connecting two major bodies. In this setting the speakers of the poem – in the conventional sense, although they are amongst many speakers – appear to be driven to speak by the cultural specificities of the view from this coast into the Irish Sea: ‘Facing west, we’ve talked for hours / of our history, / thinking of Ireland’; later they turn again to landward and to mainland culture (‘Done with cliff-talking we turn / inland, thinking / of home’), and finally, in the presence of the sea’s novenas (a Roman Catholic form of worship), are ‘struck still / without a word / in any language’.<sup>83</sup>

These many coded (or bilingual) voices and cultural interpretations of the meeting of land and sea and its histories also pertain to its reality as a space of linguistic drift. The final section of this chapter will consider the mobile nature of our existing language histories between land and sea, as in the Celtic-Atlantic drift of ‘phoneme arrays / Spanish towns matched to Irish ones / Shimmering plane of beached wave’.<sup>84</sup> In Peter Riley, however, we can see a particularly consistent example of a body of work which codes and re-codes the coastline; in his case, through the languages of profit and price, of eschatology and prayer, and of cryptography and the runic sea. We might think, here, of Roland Barthes:

Here I am, before the sea; it is true it bears no message. But on the beach,  
what material for semiology!<sup>85</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Seamus Heaney, ‘The Peninsula’, *Opened Ground: Poems 1966-1996* (London: Faber, 1998), p. 21

<sup>80</sup> Peter Riley, ‘Absent from Llŷn’, in Davidson and Skoulding eds., *Skald Special Issue: On Wales (2002)*, *ibid.*, p. 7

<sup>81</sup> Riley, ‘Llŷn, Going’, *The Llŷn Writings*, *ibid.*, p. 109

<sup>82</sup> Gillian Clarke, ‘Fires on Llŷn’, in Dewi Roberts ed., *A Llŷn Anthology* (Llanrwst: Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2007), p. 24

<sup>83</sup> Gillian Clarke, ‘Fires on Llŷn’, *ibid.*, p. 23-4

<sup>84</sup> Andrew Duncan, ‘On the Beach’, *ibid.*, p. 40

<sup>85</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Vintage, 1993), p. 112

### ‘Mouth to mackerel’: human businesses and voices at the shore

In the archaeologist Barry Cunliffe’s recent *Britain Begins*, he refers to the foundational importance to Celtic Britain of the mobile development and convergence of language, and what he refers to as ‘coastal Atlantian’, ‘a lingua franca (...) called into being by maritime communication in the fourth millennium’.<sup>1</sup> Cunliffe’s *Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and Its Peoples, 8000 BC to AD 1500* (2001) also narrates the linguistic force of sea-to-sea Celticity, and has been picked up on by the poet Andrew Duncan in a short online essay, where he draws on the histories (or theories) of split Gaelic language (‘a ‘Küstensprachbund’, to use the technical term’<sup>2</sup>), Atlantic littoral culture, and bilingualism on the shores of the Irish Sea. This is the context of his poem, referred to several times in this chapter, ‘On the Beach at Aberystwyth’, with its focus on the word structures that travelled by sea; ‘rules of assonance’ which ‘crossed the water sometime’,<sup>3</sup> and learned ‘callable rules / Of transit & contingency & address’.<sup>4</sup> This line does not merely account for the local and global identities of coastlines as shifting and fractal spaces, but also refers to the rhyme revolution in 7<sup>th</sup> century Ireland (which he mentions in his essay),<sup>5</sup> part of an ongoing coastal pattern of developing culture, with a ‘set of excellences recorded in strict verse / A line of hops between soft coves for coastal vessels.’<sup>6</sup> This is the more specific, archipelagic context to the poem lines with which I began this chapter, in which ‘the culture’ is presented as a culture of speaking, interacting with the sea’s edge. What kind of speaking travels in on the sea?

The sea has often been written as a drift or dirge of human voices. In a famous section of Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, ‘Sea-Drift’, we hear both the sea (‘with them the key, the word up from the waves / (...) / The sea whisper’d me’<sup>7</sup>) and the voices that carry upon it (‘As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women wreck’d’<sup>8</sup>). The model of the sea *in* or *of* language has been treated, complexly, in poems drawing on the trope of seaside meditation, as above, while depicting contrasting relations of human and marine speech and theories of metaphor, including by Wallace Stevens (‘The

<sup>1</sup> Barry Cunliffe, *Britain Begins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 247-8

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Duncan, ‘Insularity’, Glasfryn Project: <<http://glasfrynproject.org.uk/w/2308/andrew-duncan-insularity/>> (accessed 01/08/2014)

<sup>3</sup> Duncan, ‘On the Beach’, *ibid.*, p. 42

<sup>4</sup> Duncan, ‘On the Beach’, *ibid.*, p. 43

<sup>5</sup> Duncan, ‘Insularity’, *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Duncan, ‘On the Beach’, *ibid.*, p. 40

<sup>7</sup> Walt Whitman, ‘Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking’, from *Leaves of Grass* (1855), published in *The Portable Walt Whitman* (New York: Penguin, 2004) p. 198

<sup>8</sup> Whitman, ‘As I Ebb’d With the Ocean of Life’, from *Leaves of Grass* (1855), published in *The Portable Walt Whitman* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 184

maker's rage to order words of the sea<sup>9</sup>). Some texts offer an "apostrophe to the ocean" form of direct address, from Byron's apostrophe in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*<sup>10</sup> through Hilda Doolittle's 'The Shrine' ('Are your rocks shelter for ships –'<sup>11</sup>). The sea is also, however, recurrently characterised as a linguistic force in its own right – from the 1850 song 'What Are the Wild Waves Saying, Sister?', quoted in *Ulysses*, to W. S. Graham's poem 'On the Other Side of Language' in which the speaker (or speaking poem) must 'proceed / As a shoal' to or from 'The poor man on the other side'.<sup>12</sup> In the groupings that follow, I will be particularly looking at those poems which trope such coastal utterances but are more socially inflicted by language histories, from the large scale foundational narratives of the movements of coastal Celtic-Atlantic language, as with Cunliffe, to the super local dialect terms of British fishermen.

Whether through the use of fishermen songs, archives, or oral histories, the sea has been seen in British poetry as a site for the gathering of voices. Coastal anthologies are an obvious performance of this gathering of communal voices by the shore. These have taken place on varied scales, from the fine grain of Dewi Roberts' edited *A Llŷn Anthology* (2008), limited to the titular 8 by 30 mile rocky isthmus – in which the Gillian Clarke poem 'Fires on Llŷn', mentioned above, is featured – to wider sections of the coast and its imagined local cultures. Eric Bird and Lilian Modlock have compiled both the 1992 *Writers on the Coast* (a selection of writings from Kent round the South-East coast to the Hampshire-Dorset border) and, in 1994, *Writers on the South-West Coast* (from Dorset via Land's End to the Bristol Channel), sticking to a fairly traditional model of locational literary geography, while also in both volumes performing something of a cleaning-up or white-washing of the actualities of the social coastline: 'we have quoted only those that we felt had gone beyond a straightforward description, including some that described places as they used to be, not as they are now (...) (T)here are, unfortunately, areas of sprawling suburbia, particularly around Torbay, but there are also areas of quite outstanding coastal, scenery.'<sup>13</sup> In these two texts, the advice about which maps, buses, and routes to take confirms the fact that the editors' 'primary aim is to enhance the enjoyment of those who travel along this coast'.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Wallace Stevens, 'The Idea of Order at Key West', *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2011), p. 130. See also discussion of Stevens' 'words of the sea' in Joseph Hillis Miller, *Topographies* (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.283-285, and Nancy Goldfarb, "Watery Worlds Awash": The Sounds of Water in Wallace Stevens', in Marlies Kronegger and Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka eds., *Analecta Husserliana: The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research LXV: The Aesthetics of Enchantment in the Fine Arts* (The Netherlands: Kluwer, 2000)

<sup>10</sup> Lord George Byron, 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: Canto the Fourth', *Selected Poetry of Lord Byron* (New York: Random House, 2001), p. 163

<sup>11</sup> Hilda Doolittle, 'The Shrine', *Sea Garden* (London: Chiswick Press, 1916), p. 4

<sup>12</sup> W.S. Graham, *New Collected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 2004), p. 310

<sup>13</sup> Eric Bird and Lilian Modlock eds., *Writers on the South-West Coast* (Bradford-on-Avon: Ex-Libris Press, 1994), p. 7-8

<sup>14</sup> Bird and Modlock eds., *Writers on the South-West Coast*, *ibid.*, p. 9



Many other versions of coastal gatherings which are responsive to social histories have been imagined, however, and it is indicative of the hydrophilia of local and national funding bodies that many of these have been able to be commissioned as contemporary gatherings of entirely new texts and works. This often leads to the inclusion of locational paraphernalia, such as maps. These include *Drift*, published as a Humber Mouth Special Commission (2008), with poems by the writers David Wheatley, Christopher Reid, Simon Kerr, David Kennedy, and Cliff Forshaw (with some of the poems incorporating sailors' letters kept by the Maritime History Unit at the University of Hull), as well as photographs and an accompanying DVD. *Turning the Tide* (2001) is published by the District of Easington and contains poems by Katrina Porteous alongside the works of a local painter and a local photographer, plus a map of Seaham and East Durham; quoted in the editor's introduction is what seems to be a catchphrase for the volume: 'What is this coast? The tale we tell ...'. The photographer Jem Southam's *Clouds Descending* is a collaborative book-length response to LS Lowry's drawings and paintings on the Cumbrian coast, also involving Richard Hamblyn, Nicholas Alfrey, David Chandler and others, as well as the full printing of Harriet Tarlo's lengthy plotting of the Cumbrian coast in location by location poems in the sequence 'Particles: Cumbrian Coast, 2008'.<sup>15</sup> And the new Shearsman anthology of Suffolk poetry, *By the North Sea* (2013), frames its subject county as 'in a sense defined by water', also explicitly quoting the Britten sculpture on Aldeburgh beach pictured on the cover of the book, with its telling words, 'hear those voices that will not be drowned'.<sup>16</sup>

These are each slightly different takes on the argument for an artistic response to particular and 'unique'<sup>17</sup> coastlines, gathering together the expressions of their historical and contemporary residents – or, in some cases, outsiders afforded special status, or commission, to be involved in the landscape. The English poet who has been most involved with such gathered expressions of local coastal affinities and communities of voice is Katrina Porteous. For Porteous, the retiring of certain social practices (such as longshore fishing and other artisanal and traditional fishing activities and technologies) leaves certain dialects and voices in danger of ebbing out of wider cultural memory altogether; she has responded to this throughout her writing career, from her first major collection *The Lost Music* (1996), to specific collaborative or locally funded publications.<sup>18</sup> Working as she does as a broadcaster and radio poet, her texts are often explicitly presented as not just dialect poems, but also dialogic poems: voices and songs are assigned to boats, waves, the sea, the wind, and even ship's

<sup>15</sup> Jem Southam ed., *Clouds Descending* (Salford: Lowry Press, 2008)

<sup>16</sup> Aidan Semmons, 'Introduction', *By the North Sea: An Anthology of Suffolk Poetry* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2013), p. 8

<sup>17</sup> Semmons, 'Introduction', *ibid.*, p. 10

<sup>18</sup> These include, as well as *Turning the Tide*, mentioned above, *Beadnell Harbour 200th Anniversary* (Beadnell: Harbour in Trouble, 1998), *The Wund an' the Wetter* (Newcastle: Iron Press, 1999), *The Bonny Fisher Lad* (North Northumberland: People's History, 2003), *Dunstanburgh* (Middlesbrough: Smokestack Books, 2004), *Longshore Drift* (Wivenhoe: Jardine Press, 2005), and *The Blue Lonnen* (Wivenhoe: Jardine Press, 2007)

engines, while the layout of the text between the left and right hand pages, and the alignments of the different sections on each page, delineates human, natural, and historical voices, ‘speaking’ antiphonally. Such divisions are also made through the use of italics or bold font, as in ‘This is the lie in the bones. / *This is the line you must cross.* / This is the coast of stones. / **Sea surge, loud**’,<sup>19</sup> as well as in her stage directions to the voice (or sound engineer), such as ‘*Sea that swallows / All its children / **Fade out kittiwakes** / *Whisper. Whisper.**’<sup>20</sup> As she herself explains in her notes, ‘It is a secret history, expressed through the sound of the place itself (...) the voices become, like history, almost opaque’.<sup>21</sup> Alongside the monologues of humans and the chants of history are the local dialect names for sea-bed flora and fauna; she therefore often finds a final page glossary needful in her texts.

Porteous also contributes a glossary, ‘words used by north Northumbrian fishermen and their families’, to the appendix of Bill Griffiths’ weighty publication, *Fishing and Folk: Life and Dialect on the North Sea Coast* (2008). This text is an incredible source for local coastal terminologies, divided into ‘Headland words’, ‘Rock shelves and isolated rocks’, ‘Hills and dales’, ‘Rivurine and water features’, ‘Bay and harbour words’, and ‘Shore and beach terms’, as well as chapters on the dialect and terminologies of seaweed, tides, weather, fish, birds, and the practices of coastal communities (fishing, trawling, whaling, angling, running lifeboat rescues, singing shanties, etc.). Griffiths describes the project as a ‘vocal voyage’, trawling for maritime dialect;<sup>22</sup> finding the histories of navigation, smuggling, and so on around the names of each of the sea-marks and land-marks, while also attempting to understand ‘how and when the sea-forest of names came about’.<sup>23</sup> He observes that ‘The combination of dialect vocabulary and literature as a way of explaining the coast and its social development is something of an experiment also – a history-by-vocabulary’.<sup>24</sup>

As far as the relationship between Britain’s coast (singular) and its regional and specific coasts (plural) is concerned, much can be discovered by tracking the contiguity – or not – of the coastal languages. In Griffiths’ introduction he explains some of the language histories behind the varying ‘cultural fluxion and cultural individuation’ of the history of the coast.<sup>25</sup> ‘In dealing with the ‘culture’ of the coast, from Anglian settlement to the present, he explains, we are faced with a number of overlaid historical strata: ‘the official terminology for coastal features and coastal procedure, encouraged by mapmakers, legislation on safety and like official usage’ (which tends to obscure local variety and historical divergence); the diversity of ‘pet’ names’ for rocks, fish, and weather, which show little consistency between the separate and settled fishing villages; the interchange of Old Norse

<sup>19</sup> Katrina Porteous, *Longshore Drift* (Wivenhoe: Jardine Press, 2005), unpaginated

<sup>20</sup> Katrina Porteous, *Dunstanburgh* (Middlesbrough: Smokestack Books, 2004), p. 24

<sup>21</sup> Katrina Porteous, ‘Introduction’, *Dunstanburgh*, *ibid.*, p. 9-10

<sup>22</sup> Bill Griffiths, ‘Preface: Cuthbert on the Inner Farne’, *Fishing and Folk: Life and Dialect on the North Sea Coast* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Northumbria University Press, 2008), xiii

<sup>23</sup> Griffiths, ‘Part One: Coastal Terminology’, *Fishing and Folk*, *ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>24</sup> Griffiths, ‘Acknowledgements’, *Fishing and Folk*, *ibid.*, p. iv

<sup>25</sup> Griffiths, ‘Chapter 10: Sea Birds’, *Fishing and Folk*, *ibid.*, p. 57

and Old English terms in the vocabulary and technology along the North Sea, a ‘specific phenomenon of the coastal zone’; and finally, behind all these, ‘the layer that distinguishes Anglian from Viking, clearest in coastal feature name and settlement place-names, which show division along the lines of first settlement of each group’.<sup>26</sup>

These histories of super-local communication and also of North Sea ‘unity along our coast’ depend on the interchange of loan words along with goods and technical terms and ideas. The sense of coastal cohesion and identity – with many words shared along the Eastern coast of England, but not in use elsewhere – has even led one linguist he cites to use the term ‘Nordseewort’ (Kluge, 1975), or ‘north sea word’.<sup>27</sup> The final texts I’ll be considering in this chapter each in different ways draw from this sense of the ballast of human voices, carried by water to the land, or, alternately, up and down the coastal edge, by land. These are the spaces where we, after Britten, hear those voices that will not be drowned.

An obvious concern is shown in Bill Griffiths’ own *Mid North Sea High* (1992), which explores the regional ‘lisps and tatters’ of a language that is ‘beset with zephyr-factors’ and ‘tireless oceanic vectors’.<sup>28</sup> As with Ed Dorn’s *The North Atlantic Turbine*, Griffiths’ poetic text is named after a tectonic movement – in this case, related to petroleum geology: ‘a broad, approximately east-trending structural high that extends from the coast of the Scottish Borders region to the UK North Sea median line.’<sup>29</sup> Griffiths’ language histories are here therefore doubled up with oil business and land morphology. His vocabulary choices, from difficult slang (‘nevver progs oily tines’) to kennings and historical reference, slide again and again through the fishing industry that has compiled so many of our own sea languages: ‘From Greenland’s icy vine-winds / to Kent-King’s muddy shore, / the world of fish (frantic)’. It is these dynasties of fish food and fish economics – or as Griffiths puts it, ‘Rickle-kittle fishy affluence’ – which have mobilised as well as settled our languages, in a human history of speaking ‘mouth / to mackerel’. Throughout the sequence, Griffiths puns on either eating, or speaking, through the medium of fish; his invocations of the mythic and archaic legends of coastal settlement are shadowed by references to the supermarkets, lorries, and trucks which transport these fish foods in the contemporary world, in both explicit reference, and suggestions in the vocabulary, as in this nod to tinned mackerel ‘I have ate from the sea. / The mack’rel-catcher lured me, / take the tin-grey bodies’.<sup>30</sup> Throughout, we are shown (through compound words and their ilk) that to study maritime space is to witness a language riddled with ‘fish-puzzle’.

<sup>26</sup> All quotations from Griffiths, ‘Chapter 10: Sea bird’, *Fishing and Folk*, *ibid.*, p. 57

<sup>27</sup> Griffiths, ‘Chapter 14: Conclusion’, *Fishing and Folk*, *ibid.*, p. 214

<sup>28</sup> Bill Griffiths, *Mid North Sea High* (Durham: Amra, 1992), unpaginated

<sup>29</sup> H. Johnson, M. F. Quinn, J. Bulat and D. Long, ‘“Laramide” events: Mid North Sea High (UK Quadrants 38 & 39)’, *Geological Society, London, Petroleum Geology* 5 (1999), p. 171

<sup>30</sup> Griffiths, *Mid North Sea High*, *ibid.*, unpaginated

Man above nature  
 stares and studies.  
 He cannot speak marine-talk  
 sez there is nowt to be learned.  
 Takes only  
 what he divvnt want.  
 There ye are.  
 That is my fish-puzzle.<sup>31</sup>

To Griffiths, the story of language is a fish story. This is reminiscent of Sekula's *Fish Story* (1995), recently turned into Sekula and Birch's film essay on the business of the world at sea, *The Forgotten Space* (2012). Sekula's essay, and recent film, concerns the container cargo and mega-ships of modern high-seas globalisation and capitalism, in which money becomes the rule of movement. The harbour therefore loses its sense as a haven in which things can be anchored (a poetic trope: as in Nicholas Johnson's poem 'The Telling of the Drowning' he talks of 'the loss of life so harboured'<sup>32</sup>); instead harbours become 'accelerated turning-basins for supertankers and container ships', while 'if the stock market is the site in which the abstract character of money rules, the harbor is the site in which material goods appear in bulk, in the very flux of exchange'.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps this is why Frances Presley, in section 4 of 'Somerset Letters', declares that 'You cannot economically contain the beach'<sup>34</sup> – because the economics of the beach is no longer a local or localised issue, and cannot be managed by human beings in the way they attempt to control and manage beach materials. The effect of this sea capitalism plays viscerally across the oily surface of Griffiths' text, in his many references to transport, cargo, oil, and supermarket economies. And – of course – the aggregate languages of the coastal zone:

We will be wave,  
 word of water,  
 in continue,  
 in big spray special letter, millions.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Griffiths, *Mid North Sea High*, *ibid.*, unpaginated

<sup>32</sup> Nicholas Johnson, *The Telling of the Drowning* (London: Author, 1987), p. 18

<sup>33</sup> Allan Sekula, *Fish Story* (Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 1995), p. 12, 12

<sup>34</sup> Frances Presley, *Myne: New and Selected Poems and Prose 1976 – 2005* (Cambridge: Salt, 2006), p. 73

<sup>35</sup> Griffiths, *Mid North Sea High*, *ibid.*, unpaginated

The gathering of voices of human administration, nomenclature, and land-use, as well as the lost and found voices of coastal social history, are emphasised in a number of other texts which identify with the ‘marginal utterances’<sup>36</sup> of the coast. Giles Goodland’s *Littoral* (1996) includes obsolete or dialect terms he has gathered – in his role as a lexicographer for the O.E.D. – which refer to particular coastal zones: saltern, foxledge, zawn, lagan, towan, lissan, thursehole, goyal, shillet, chawn. Against the ‘unformed words’ of the sea’s murmur in Goodland’s text are the more densely specific and historical human terms for coastal processes (paralic seaslutch, interluve, planated, anfractuous, quopping, exuvia, antidunes, soliflucting, striplynchets, landsherd, greywethers), as well as Goodland’s own coinages created by running words together (‘containerfreight’, ‘tidalrange’, ‘marsbars’). The richest density of the multi-syllabic words seems to be in the verbs which refer to a complexity of processes the land and the sea subject each other to: we hear of the ‘desquamation of stone’, the ‘morcellation of rocks’, the ‘décollement of conglomerates’; the other emphasised area is in the specification and classification of the fauna and seaweed which he notes in shorthand prose poems between the lineated poems (glareous birdstongue, scansorial hottentot fig, etc.), perhaps a play on the botanical specificity with which one must judge the coastal zone or sublittoral zone, based on the aggregation of particular plants. Against all of this density of human language, the sea – when mentioned – seems comparatively inarticulate (‘Spraying below to no accompaniment, / the sea’s lost its syllables’); and yet again, after all this human name-calling and dialect nomenclature, ‘Th sea’ll have th last word in this particular battle for meanings’.<sup>37</sup>

A more explicit use of the economic meanings of ‘language on the edge of empire’<sup>38</sup> – and the edge of culture – is offered by Carol Watts in *Wrack* (2007), partly a rewriting of Victorian shipwreck poems, which works in its language through various historical economies of the ocean, from the ‘hoard of silver’ garnered by mercantilist sailors to the disasters of global commerce. Language here – as much as human relations with the sea – is an ‘endless series/ of settlements’. Watts tracks different kinds of inscription associated with sea-routes, including the parallel economy of cowrie shells, with faint writing upon them to ‘denominate their currency on the strand’. She plays on the double meanings of words – the ‘surge’ in the insurgency of sailors, and the liquid investment of ‘superfluous’ in *A Treatise of Superfluous Things* (1627) – and marks out where movement at sea to arrival at land changes how a thing may be denoted, as in the transformation from sea wreck to salvageable wrack on reaching the coast: ‘it is a traffick and no mistake / what wreck delivers wrack takes’. Marine debris itself is subject to strict named categories of reclaimable and non-reclaimable material (flotsam,

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<sup>36</sup> Thomas Paul Bonfiglio, *Mother Tongues and Nations: The Invention of the Native Speaker* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010) p. 9

<sup>37</sup> Goodland, *Littoral* (Devon: Oversteps Books, 1996), p. 2, 4, 34, 37, 27

<sup>38</sup> Michael Taussig, ‘The Beach (A Fantasy)’, *Critical Inquiry* 26.2 (2000), p. 251

jetsam, lagan and derelict), as suggested in a text which is fully engaged with economic opportunism and the differing kinds of piracy at land and at sea.<sup>39</sup>

The beaching of language in *Wrack* – i.e., its arrival on the strand in the ‘salt preserves’ of historical seafaring narratives – is seen in the various different forms of text found at the coast after historical wreckage: ‘the writing of barnacles’, ‘a briny manual / discovered’, the notations of ‘mud-borne ledgers’, and, most simply, ‘word booty’.<sup>40</sup> This concept of ‘word booty’ – contraband language carried and exchanged between boats and sailors and brought to land – is a key example of the imagination of what Taussig, discussing the ‘fourworded wavespeech’ in *Ulysses*, refers to as ‘buoyant’ language (‘This is language moving into the sea as our very bodies might’<sup>41</sup>). The equating of language with sea goods is also very apt: as John Mack observes, the linguistic accommodations of seagoing language were designedly related to the brokering of goods which was taking place at shorelines, creating through trade and exchange several mobile languages known by various names: “the speech of the beach”, *patois-des-marins*, *Beach-la-mar*; that latter term, Mack notes, is itself a corruption of a named trading item: the *Bêche-de-mer*, French for sea-cucumber.<sup>42</sup> (Daniel Heller-Roazen has also written on the differing lexicons of sea-faring, and its coinages, ‘in Latin, Greek, and all the emerging vernaculars of modern Europe’,<sup>43</sup> while Redmond O’Hanlon’s contemporary non-fiction account *Trawler: A Journey Through the North Atlantic* (2003) has been remarked upon for its re-staging of contemporary sea dialects.)

Robert Hampson’s *Seaport* (2008) is also interested in the past and contemporary ‘word booty’ of the histories of the human coastline. It shows in its re-cited archival materials how multiple channels of traffic have formed the port of Liverpool over time, combining reports of the cotton and slave trades, the exodus of capital, passenger emigration, and the spread of typhus by ship. In Part IV Hampson focuses on the contemporary traffic of the music industry, car and fuel companies, and even ‘cinema circuits’ and their promoters. Hampson shows the conflict between the different social typologies of space in the seaport, not all contingent on the traffic of ships. His account of the aural landscape of Liverpool – the influx and outflow of Cuban-heeled boots and black American music, and the networks of those who capitalise upon the music industry – is compared to the voyages and passages of the earlier sea trades. He also brings out the architectural contradictions of a place which is both physically enclosed and externally ‘linked’ or shaped by its dynamic activity. Against the ‘bustle & activity’ of the quays are the ‘China Walls of masonry; a succession of / granite-rimmed docks, / completely enclosed, but linked’. By opening up different interpretations of transmission and trade at

<sup>39</sup> Carol Watts, *Wrack* (East Sussex: Reality Street, 2007), p. 12, 10, 35

<sup>40</sup> Carol Watts, *Wrack*, *ibid.*, p. 9, 7, 7, 9, 8

<sup>41</sup> Michael Taussig, ‘The Beach (A Fantasy)’, *ibid.*, p. 252

<sup>42</sup> John Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History*, *ibid.*, p. 174-8; see also his discussion of sailing terminology, profanity, and ‘sailor’s talk’.

<sup>43</sup> Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Enemy of All*, *ibid.*, p. 79

this one-time fishing village, he shows how Liverpool has become a hub for contemporary and historical exploitation. Meanwhile, in creating a text about a port which carries so many different kinds of historical and geographical freight, Hampson is drawing attention to the topographical ‘depths & latitudes of language’<sup>44</sup> – what another writer has referred to recently as ‘the sea of language / the eighth sea with its own ports of call’.<sup>45</sup>

The sea, as a physical force, can also act as a disruption to language’s organising of histories and knowledge of the land, as seen in a number of texts focussed on coastal erosion, such as Andrew Crozier’s ‘On Romney Marsh’ (1967) and Wendy Mulford’s *The East Anglia Sequence* (1998). The latter, in its experimental text, concerns the move between perceived terrains of natural and civil law in cases of coastal flooding and transition. On this subject, it is notable (and not entirely coincidental) that Daniel Heller-Roazen is the author of both a previously mentioned study on language and linguistic trickery,<sup>46</sup> and a book on piracy which contains a sustained engagement with the complex and conflicted early history of the dicta of the shore. There, he traces the Roman legal dissent between versions of the shore-side as a space ‘incapable of being definitively appropriated’ (Neratius), as ‘common to all’ (Ulpian), or as in the category of public places or *loca publica* (Pampinius and Paulus).<sup>47</sup> The differing classical claims are combined in instances where the littoral is read as having a ‘composite juridical status’,<sup>48</sup> dividing the external pelagic space (common to all) from the internal region of ports and harbours over which the state can exert proprietary authority. Yet there is also a strange openness of the littoral space to acquisition by individuals; for ‘whatever anyone builds upon the shore of the sea’<sup>49</sup> will become his own private property. Then again, this is not like the securing of a city, for should that building as mark of property collapse on the return of a sea tide, ‘the place reverts to its former condition by the law of *postliminium*, so to speak’.<sup>50</sup> The Roman juror Marcianus characterises this legal coastal phenomenon as being much like the law of restitution which applies to a prisoner of war, recovering his freedom as he crosses the border of his homeland. Thus, the littoral is ‘determined not by the proper extent of the territory but by the shifting movements of the water’,<sup>51</sup> as a threshold of civil rights, or a moving line of states of possession and dispossession. It is a place where our descriptions are strained by the fact that ‘the shifting limit that divides the land from the sea is in truth a line of passage’, and of legal conversion through forms of movement.<sup>52</sup> In the texts which feature here – in the contemporary era of ocean zonation and sea-grabs – there have been a number of engagements with the ‘passage’ and ‘routes’ of the shore-line threshold; but it is *The East Anglia*

<sup>44</sup> Robert Hampson, *Seaport* (Bristol: Shearsman Books, 2008), p.53, 36, 34

<sup>45</sup> Andrew McNeillie, ‘Lafan’, *Winter Moorings* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014), p. 24

<sup>46</sup> Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Dark Tongues: The Art of Rogues and Riddlers* (New York: Zone Books, 2013)

<sup>47</sup> Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Enemy of All: Piracy and the Law of Nations* (New York: Zone Books, 2009), p. 63

<sup>48</sup> Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Enemy of All*, *ibid.*, p. 64

<sup>49</sup> Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Enemy of All*, *ibid.*, p. 65

<sup>50</sup> The Roman juror Marcianus, cited in Heller-Roazen, *The Enemy of All*, *ibid.*, p. 66

<sup>51</sup> Heller-Roazen, *ibid.*, *The Enemy of All*, *ibid.*, p. 64

<sup>52</sup> Heller-Roazen, *ibid.*, *The Enemy of All*, *ibid.*, p. 67

*Sequence* which deals in the most sustained way with the acquisition or relinquishment of various rights caused by the interactive movement of the sea itself. Here, the coast as a site of legal capture and release is characterised by a peculiar temporality, or indivisibility of boundary and events (as Phil Steinberg has discussed in his work on territorial discourses and maritime metaphors).<sup>53</sup>

Mulford's two-part text is located in Salthouse, Norfolk, and Dunwich, Suffolk: both once-flourishing trading communities which, in Mulford's own words, have been 'reduced by the depredations of the North Sea upon the East Anglian coastline to a handful of people subsisting mainly on tourism'.<sup>54</sup> Here the economic decline is partnered with the literal erosion of the landscape, most strikingly in half-sunken Dunwich. Mulford brings attention to questions of license and ownership at the place where 'L / andedness ends', a phrase which indicates both the land literally falling to the encroaching sea and the end of ideas of *being landed* in the sense of wealth, of having ownership over an estate. The line break also enacts a disorienting vertical collapse, as in the lines 'S / ea's measure' and 'L / andfarer's lost line', in which the precipice comes, unpredictably, before the word's end.<sup>55</sup> This can be compared to Amy Evans' two small sequences, *Collecting Shells* (2011) and *The Sea Quells* (2013), which also explore the sea's intrusion between and scattering of morphemes in a single lexical unit, often adding different inflections to the expected words and identities (so the ancient mariner becomes 'un marryner / a rif/t', a sea shell or sea shelf becomes 'sea-"she"lf lies', and the full tongue twister is re-twisted again as 'sea-shellf encrusts, / she sells sea shelf for her crust / sea-shellf encrusts, / creates / surf?').<sup>56</sup>

Mulford describes the coastline in terms of legal wrangles and concepts of ownership: when she presents the place 'where settlement and sea contend / possession' she reminds the reader that a settlement does not just mean a group of human dwellings, but also a financial agreement that may be temporary. She describes the historical 'disputes legal wrangles lasting mafia payments fish ships / to the kings treasury' in paratactic confusion, with none of these payments or disputes having primary place in the sentence. But she is equally interested in the 'melting' soil and 'honeycomb' geological foundations of these transactions. The legal definitions and the physical characteristics of place are therefore found to be mismatched. Analogies are made throughout the text between the families evicted by landlords, and the 'banished dipper', 'foraging gull', and mariners 'Banished from warmth', far from the lost inheritance of the land. The local history of Gabriel Piggott and his mother, evicted in 1590, links their 'expropriation' by landlord and by sea – 'she / challenged his & nature's

<sup>53</sup> Philip Steinberg, 'Of other seas: metaphors and materialities in maritime regions', *Atlantic Studies* 10.2 (2013)

<sup>54</sup> Wendy Mulford, *The East Anglia Sequence* (London: Spectacular Diseases, 1998), preface page

<sup>55</sup> Mulford, *The East Anglia Sequence*, *ibid.*, SN 23. This text is broken up into two sections which are paginated separately, 'Salthouse, Norfolk' and 'Dunwich, Suffolk'. I will use 'SN' and 'DS' to refer to these.

<sup>56</sup> Amy Evans, *The Sea Quells* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2013), p. 9, 34, 35



expropriation'. And after the boatman, builders, and fisherfolk receive notice to quit so the housing can be re-auctioned, 'lost suits at law creep in the tide'.<sup>57</sup>

The vicissitudes of this stretch of land are both physical and economical, with colonisation threatened by humans and the sea. The fact that this is a site at which 'boundaries dissolve' and have 'no edge' throws into stark light the languages of administration. Mulford includes a reprinted account of the 'Privileges, Liberties, Customes & besides' of Dunwich men in favour with the king, followed by an extract on the exact rules regarding the packing and pricing of herring and sprats. She titles one poem 'Pareto Optimality 1099, 1953', named for a theory of distribution, particularly financial. This poem takes the form of insurance assessments for sea-exposed land, citing percentages and data showing that 'the cost of protection would be out of proportion to the value / of the limited land area protected'. It anticipates the moment at which 'the sea-bank breaks', a pun on dually unstable landscapes and economies (the breaking of the bank).<sup>58</sup>

In 'Storm Surges', Mulford voices the measures by which the land is protected from the sea, adapting technical instructions: 'To assess how high these must be we must assess the probability of seawater exceeding known levels'. The effect of tides and of storms beleaguers the administrative voices characterised in the text, particularly in the poem 'Voices', which begins with what appears to be an index of human control over coastal environments: 'Ship-breaking / Marine & Recovery Work / Wrecks Disposed Of / Spare Parts Salvaged'. The data supplied in these poems is held at a bureaucratic distance, as when in 'Danger Level 1820, 1980' the reader is told that 'even on the coarse-grid model the predictions look convincing / but appropriate action would of course be in the remit of / a different department'. It is this sense of 'remit' which in Mulford's sequence is strained and conflicted, prey to the bureaucratic uncertainty of the coastline. Whose remit – legally, economically and aesthetically – is the coast? Mulford has taken this topic of land-defences but represented it through archival data-scapes in Norfolk and Suffolk, contesting conclusive legal or economical definitions of place by the sea.<sup>59</sup>

There have been a large number of texts dealing with the appropriateness of different kinds of language for knowing, or determining, the coastline, and its difficult definitions – both in its geological sense and its social sense. Frances Presley declared in the 'Somerset Letters' that 'I need a grammar that will link the channel tunnel to the need for an extra groin in the sea wall',<sup>60</sup> which she later expanded upon: 'I felt that this more paratactic and disjunctive prose gave me a way of writing about some of the contradictions inherent in the language of the present day country and coast'.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Mulford, *The East Anglia Sequence*, *ibid.*, SN 7, DS 5, DS 16, SN 15, SN 14, DS 3

<sup>58</sup> Mulford, *The East Anglia Sequence*, *ibid.*, DS 1, DS 9-10, SN 6, SN 6

<sup>59</sup> Mulford, *The East Anglia Sequence*, *ibid.*, SN 1, SN 17, SN 8

<sup>60</sup> Frances Presley, *Myne*, *ibid.*, p. 73

<sup>61</sup> Frances Presley, personal email correspondence to author, 2010

Meanwhile, Peter Philpott's sequence set in exactly the same area (the beach at Minehead) finds a 'prompt assonance' between the seaside environment and a tactile sense of the forms of poetic language, where 'the shoreline detritus holds us / here / Regularly invaded, a few words beached and stagnant / Storm wrack piled up like a string of adjectives'.<sup>62</sup> A number of poets' approaches have shown the ocean – via its interactions with us at the coast – to be itself a dynamic engine of change in human language, as in Griffiths' work. Often the languages chosen by the poets have been arranged to reflect the 'regulatory practices' of the coastline<sup>63</sup> – as in Presley's several references to beach management – or, opposingly, the havoc wreaked by the sea on human practices of knowing and writing the land.

Divining the history of the ocean from its edge, or trying to speak its historical voices, is problematic: the sea *is* history, to Derek Walcott, and it has been given historical attributes ('The sea is our ancient mother'<sup>64</sup>), but where history means a record of place and events, the sea in fact, as John Mack observes, 'is not somewhere with 'history', at least recorded history ... There are no footprints left upon it'.<sup>65</sup> Various discussions have arisen around potential ways of assembling or understanding the history of the sea(s), including in some of the sea-biographies mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, as well as John Mack's *The Sea: A Cultural History* (2011); Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun's edited *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (2004) has also been a valuable call-to-arms for considerations of maritime historiography as a way to restore 'the dynamics of the historical process', using the sea as paradigm to revise the accounts of 'outworn patterns of historical causality and explanation' of the historicized land, with its archives and museums.<sup>66</sup> David Lambert, Luciana Martins and Miles Ogborn's edited 2006 special issue of the *Journal of Historical Geography*, 'Historical Geographies of the Sea', was also designedly agenda-setting, proposing that geographers could bring to seaward subjects new 'epistemological and historiographic perspectives (...) beyond the local and the national', a consideration of 'imaginative, aesthetic, and sensuous geographies of the sea', and a survey of the 'material and social worlds' of the global political economy as well as individuals at sea.<sup>67</sup> As seen in this chapter, many of the poets and poems considered have approached such revisionist histories, returns to history, and non-linear approaches to the constituent spatialities and narratives of the coastline. Their textual processes record the struggle between the material presence of the sea and the fragments of human history and language which are carried upon it. As

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<sup>62</sup> Philpott, *Textual Possessions*, *ibid.*, p. 71

<sup>63</sup> Christopher Bear, 'Assembling the sea: materiality, movement and regulatory practices in the Cardigan Bay scallop fishery', *Cultural Geographies* 20.1 (2013)

<sup>64</sup> Vicki Goldberg. 'By the Sea', in Sue Hostetler ed., *Oceans* (New York: Rizzoli, 2002), cited in Anna Ryan, *Where Land Meets Sea*, *ibid.*, p. 39

<sup>65</sup> John Mack, *The Sea: A Cultural History*, *ibid.*, p. 16

<sup>66</sup> Klein and Mackenthun, 'Introduction', *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 2

<sup>67</sup> David Lambert, Luciana Martins, and Miles Ogborn, 'Currents, visions, and voyages: historical geographies of the sea', *Journal of Historical Geography* 32.3 Special Issue: Historical Geographies of the Sea (2006), p. 479

has been established above, the modern sense of the coast “line” is not always appropriate to the cultural or scientific expressions of the sea’s edge: this perhaps suggests that post-linear poetics – and the whole host of critical antagonism it brings to the concept of ‘the line’ – may offer tools to deal with this subject matter.<sup>68</sup>

This post-linear history, or re-troping of coastal voice, returns in a number of poems dealing with that foundational British seafaring text, ‘The Seafarer’. Ironically, the seafarer’s ‘self-song’, self-telling, or monologue about himself (‘Mæg ic be me sylfum / soðgied wrecan’) has been the subject of a number of poems which trouble the authorial identity of seafarer, historian, scribe, and message, from Bill Griffiths’ *Mid North Sea High* (‘Each all lucky signs / signals / exact go, / and-enter, and-out – / my show / my interioral psalm-say / my message to me’),<sup>69</sup> to Andrew McNeillie’s ‘In the Wake of ‘The Seafarer’’ (in the forthcoming book *Winter Moorings*, 2014), which in its title plays explicitly on the literary practice of poem-dedication (‘in the wake of’) and the navigation of the Seafarer’s boat paths (‘in the wake of’), in a poem which is explicitly about the ‘scribe-scribble’ in the Seafarer’s wake: ‘So I fare now / aboard my glossary battered by cruces / in ink-black night chasing more than / imitation more than word for word / the seafarer’s voice’.<sup>70</sup>

The transcription of The Seafarer source was written by the scribe Giraldus Cambrensis, who claimed to have discovered it ‘caulking a coracle’ amongst other manuscripts, whose thickness helped preserve it. Meanwhile, Ida Gordon has dismissed the entire text as ‘irredeemably corrupt’.<sup>71</sup> The text I shall briefly end with here is another take on the corrupt and waterlogged text of The Seafarer, Caroline Bergvall’s *Drift*, forthcoming from Nightboat Books. It begins in paratactic voyage or monologue: ‘Let me speak my true journeys my own true songs I can spin a right soggy truth my ship-sailing treks how I a total wreck gedayswindled off’, and continues through the ‘transmission errors’ of non-singular language (‘Sailed on due north North norþ norð norit norþ norh give or take a few transmission errors when steering by the sun or the stars or prevailing winds’) to break down, page by page, into unnavigable illegibility (individual glyphs scattered across the page), via gradual letter-loss and exchange:<sup>72</sup>

Then the wind ddroppe and they were beset by w inds from then orth and fog for manyd ays  
they did not know where they were sailing Thef air wind f ailed and they wholly l ost their

<sup>68</sup> See Brian Reed, ‘Eden or Ebb of the Sea’: Susan Howe’s Word Squares and Postlinear Poetics’, *Postmodern Culture* 14.2 (Jan 2004)

<sup>69</sup> Bill Griffiths, *Mid North Sea High*, *ibid.*, unpaginated

<sup>70</sup> Andrew McNeillie, ‘In the Wake of ‘The Seafarer’’, *Winter Moorings* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014) p. 14

<sup>71</sup> Both cited in the blurb to McNeillie, ‘In the Wake of ‘The Seafarer’’, *ibid.*, p. 14

<sup>72</sup> Caroline Bergvall, *Drift* (New York: Nightboat Books, 2014). For this thesis I was reading an advance, unpaginated extract from the author.

reck their reckoning did not know from what direction D riven here and there The fog was sodense that they lost all sense of direction and lost the course<sup>73</sup>

Another strange glitchy transcription of a source message from the sea to the land is offered in Tony Kemplen's *The General Synopsis @ 20:00*. This little book of text is generated by playing the BBC's shipping forecast into a speech recognition programme, with the resulting composition typed out onto background images of 'voiceprints' of the names of the sea areas as read out by the announcer. This conversion of the radio's shipping news as it sweeps in at the coast and goes through Kemplen's automated translation process offers playful references to our foundational coastal history ('strenuous Viking nausea originator'), as well as a surprising switch of cultural vocabularies to include misheard terms with other poetic values, like 'desolate' ('north-west Connaught desolate rising fertility'). The generated text includes within it accidental play on law, licence, and governance ('the expected pathways license as one'; 'good vision combined lawful north-west frail'; 'lawful as free 1884 Mayfair'; 'lawful notwithstanding pests rainfall Mayfair good occasionally moderate piracy'), as well as on audibility and translation ('measurable forces translator good cannot'; 'not as inaudible north-east'; 'Lisa moderately, understands'). Its formerly useful navigational details of wind and weather – already offered in the dense cultural code of the shipping forecast and its name calls – is recoded here into confusing directions: 'code after Northern north-east all five increasing 6 East there could bolster North criminal piecemeal' (...) 'vocational Batman particularly Isles advancement everyone rising early runaway westwards Isles comparison rising loss-making Everyman head down West'.<sup>74</sup>

At the coastline, as a number of these texts have shown, we seem to lose our reckoning of individual tides and individual language ('all sense of direction').<sup>75</sup> Or, we are forced to see our cultural identity through language for what it really is – a series of aggregate forms; a movement of word patterns and culture as a beach 'detritus whose environment is itself'.<sup>76</sup> In the twenty-first century we live in an age of immense particularisation (and privatisation) of sea-routes and zones, in a 'watery worldwide web' of power and resource rights,<sup>77</sup> as has been discussed above. Competing political vernaculars are used to attempt to lay down lasting claims and definitions in off-shore and on-shore spaces. Yet beyond these dicta the sea has been imagined as threatening its own kind of linguistic saturation (or drowning in language). In Wendy Mulford's texts, for instance, we see legible historical documents which have become waterlogged or eroded, economic and legal arrangements which have abruptly collapsed into the sea, creating a new edge of land, and historical narratives which have been totally wracked by the

<sup>73</sup> Caroline Bergvall, *Drift*, *ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Tony Kemplen, *The General Synopsis @ 20:00* (Sheffield: Tony Kemplen, 2000), unpaginated

<sup>75</sup> Caroline Bergvall, *Drift*, *ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Andrew Duncan, 'On the Beach at Aberystwyth', *ibid.*, p. 41

<sup>77</sup> Chris Parry, *Super Highway: Sea Power in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (London: Elliot & Thompson, 2014), unpaginated Kindle edition

storm. This is demonstrated most visibly on the page in which her source text (in original typography) is scattered in small words in opposing directions across the blank space, like the free floating remains of a shipping disaster.<sup>78</sup>

Following this page space metaphor, experiment with typography and line-setting is also practiced in Bill Griffiths' illegible dock poems,<sup>79</sup> and invoked, through word play, in Richardson and Skelton's *Typography of the Shore*.<sup>80</sup> Harriet Tarlo's 'Particles: Cumbrian Coast, 2008' marks its textual form of clusters from its first contents page, which resembles a join-the-dots of the Cumbrian coastline, but is missing the linear mark which links them, so that the coastline is dissolved back into an aggregate of particulars.<sup>81</sup> Amy Evans' two chapbooks also experiment with particles and linguistic particulars, and the sea's '[st]utterance' of language on the beach.<sup>82</sup> This stutterance is seen in the breaking of bits of existing terms away into new, gendered expressions, as in the shell hoard ('she'll' and 'whored') of 'whoreding treasures / she'll-like / drift would / : matterial'.<sup>83</sup> In Evans' *The Sea Quells*, a tongue twister (she sells sea shells on the sea shore) is retwisted through 'quells' and linguistic ripples, finding a new 'rif/t' in each lexical component.<sup>84</sup> And Caroline Bergvall's *Drift*, just quoted above, ultimately breaks its repeated source message into an entirely un-decodable glitchy transmission (at one point, a full page of the letter 't'), materially invoking the flaws of the various historical technologies of naval communication, from semaphore to telegraph. Here, the message (still almost visible in the quotation which follows below – 'the ship was driven off course'; 'they (...) failed to reach their destination') is lost in kerning. The surviving, scattered glyphs used for navigation – with mostly consonants still standing – offer corrupt meaning (thus, 'failed' becomes 'fled', depending on the reader's ability to re-navigate their way and fill in missing letters or unscramble):

The sh p w s dr ven fff c rse t l nd Th y w r sst d b t st f r

l ngt me and fled t r ch th r d st n tion W mb rkt nd s l d b t

f g<sup>85</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Wendy Mulford, *The East Anglia Sequence*, *ibid.*, DS 7

<sup>79</sup> See p. 144, this thesis

<sup>80</sup> See p. 144, this thesis

<sup>81</sup> Harriet Tarlo, 'Particles: Cumbrian Coast, 2008', in Jem Southam ed., *Clouds Descending* (Salford: Lowry Press, 2008), p. 63

<sup>82</sup> Amy Evans, *Collecting Shells* (Norfolk: Oystercatcher Press, 2011), unpaginated

<sup>83</sup> Amy Evans, *Collecting Shells*, *ibid.*, unpaginated

<sup>84</sup> Amy Evans, *The Sea Quells* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2013), p. 9. For another play on the link between sea tides and the sing-song of nursery rhyme, see Wendy Mulford, *The East Anglia Sequence*, *ibid.*, SN 1: 'Seven o seven / by the tide tables'.

<sup>85</sup> Caroline Bergvall, 'Hafville', *Drift*, *ibid.*, unpaginated advance copy supplied by author

The coast is an exemplary ‘coded geography’, as Rob Shields has observed.<sup>86</sup> In Peter Riley’s systematic re-writings of the coast of north Wales, religious, naval, and bilingual understandings of this ‘code’ compete. His adoption of a numinous poetics – which characterises the sea as an external space which only the spiritual afterlife can lay claim to – is mired in a double-speak full of financial claiming and pricing. In many of the poems considered we see such re-codings of coastal culture. In Eric Mottram’s texts, the use of language to divide and measure is countered with the use of kennings and riddles as a return to briny, pre-longitudinal Viking shores. In Colin Simms’ composite of languages, including Native American and Cleveland dialect, in *No North Western Passage*, we see a recognition of the histories of maritime contact zones (particularly in doubled compound words, like ‘haar-mists’). This is resonant: in the contemporary world, maritime contact zones – ships and coasts – are still places where languages meet with their alternative forms, and clash, or merge, as O’Hanlon has observed in his account of trawler life and the circumlocutions of Atlantic languages.<sup>87</sup> Meanwhile, the organisation Nautilus International, which deals with issues affecting the modern marine workforce, has recently had to bring attention to language problems in contemporary transnational seafaring, particularly related to policies of ‘flags of convenience’.<sup>88</sup> At these spaces, notional language meets inter- and intra-lingual divisions. And as Wendy Mulford observes, trope itself is a form of recurring code, only ‘broken’ in as much as a wave breaks, while remaining in restless motion:

broken-back the trope this tide’s recurring pattern she  
to place and law unbroken.   sweeps all before.<sup>89</sup>

Beyond the linear tropes of the coastline and its cartographies, or the territorial tropes of national identity and its sea-grabs,<sup>90</sup> these poems return attention to the contemporary and historical marine realities of drift. Drifting becomes a model for new forms of interrogation, whether concerning the re-arrangement of words themselves or the journey of text from reader to reader, discourse to discourse, into posterity. The idea of ‘drift’, of course, ramifies across the issues of contemporary environmental change, which is marked not with static markers, but by wave events: the ebb of fish stocks, sea temperatures, and coastal floods. The health of the ocean in the contemporary Anthropocene is

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<sup>86</sup> ‘The resulting formation – half topology, half metaphor – is inscribed as an emotive ordering or *coded geography*’, Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 265

<sup>87</sup> Redmond O’Hanlon, *Trawler: A Journey Through the North Atlantic* (New York: Knopf Doubleday, 2010)

<sup>88</sup> Walt Whitman, ‘As I Ebb’d With the Ocean of Life’, from *Leaves of Grass* (1855), published in *The Portable Walt Whitman* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 184

<sup>89</sup> Wendy Mulford, ‘A Tale of Loss: Navigation’, *The East Anglia Sequence*, *ibid.*, DS 15

<sup>90</sup> See in particular Sara Mitchell et al., ‘Ruling the Sea: Institutionalization and Privatization of the Global Ocean Commons’, *Iowa Research Online* 1.1 (2008)

frequently made visible by the mobile narratives of marine litter or marine debris, from ocean dumping disasters, to manufacture's oil industry (and its spillages). Many of these poems draw on corresponding metaphors for their imagining of language, returning attention to the forms of floating knowledge<sup>91</sup> which can be deduced, extrapolated, or translated from drift data – here, imagined as a linguistic cargo, from the pirate's word-booty (Carol Watts), to the logbook of misnamed shores (Colin Simms), to the travelling Northumbrian terms for coasts and rocks (Bill Griffiths).

This 'dirge' of voices<sup>92</sup> is not just a poetic aesthetic, but a sign of history. We can track, through language forms, foundational Celto-Atlantic histories of Britain as shaped by mobile kinships and by the movement across the land/sea threshold ('Saxons sailing up the Trent with / sh- and th- sounds, with melodic gestures twisted into tunes; Irish boatloads landing in Argyll'<sup>93</sup>). Word patterns offer signs of the internal diasporic languages and histories of our coastlines, showing that the narrative of British culture follows a 'fluid (...) axis'<sup>94</sup> rather than being fully centrifugal, with an inland, territorial centre. From the long-shore fisherman's dialect terms re-broadcast as radio (Katrina Porteous) to the strange text generated by the British shipping forecast being processed by a speech recognition programme (Tony Kemplen), these poems explore the British coast as a site where history finds its alternative passages, and where language drifts away from its owner. It is a site where linguistic transition processes occur (in mobile lines of passage and admission). Yet, as seen in David Herd's work with the idea of states of exception, it is also a site where lines of closure and silence are enforced, and where not all speech is admitted, or not all people are admitted to recognised speech: 'ranged against the chilly edges / Where parts of the message must have disappeared / With time but also through violence, errors in transmission / So it couldn't be framed how much movement there had been'.<sup>95</sup>

The contemporary cultivation in poetry of the trope of language as sea-wrack or "drift data" is part of a rehabilitation of interest in archipelagic, mobile versions of history. These forms of coastal speaking also inform new textual experiments with concepts of authorial identity, fluvial history, and cultural definition, as for instance where the coast is, in this chapter, performed in kinds of double-speaking, from the clefted locations of Simms' coastlines, to the economic accountancy of Riley's religious shore. The poetic texts I have considered each explicitly reassess the nature of the littoral, via its precarious languages, in a way which can be usefully read alongside twentieth-century cultural geographies. However, these poetries each radically approach not just our imaginations of the coast in

<sup>91</sup> Julia Heunemann addressed the concept of 'floating knowledge' in her paper 'Marine (hi-)storiography; or, the sea as narrative subject', given at the conference *British Waters and Beyond: The Cultural Significance of the Sea Since 1800*, Royal West of England Academy, Bristol, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

<sup>92</sup> Whitman, 'As I Ebb'd With the Ocean of Life', from *Leaves of Grass* (1855), published in *The Portable Walt Whitman* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 184

<sup>93</sup> Andrew Duncan, 'Coastal Defences of the Self', *The Imaginary in Geometry*, *ibid.*, p. 2

<sup>94</sup> Duncan, 'On the Beach at Aberystwyth', *ibid.*, p. 39

<sup>95</sup> David Herd, 'Sans papiers', *Outwith* (Vancouver: BookThug, 2012), p. 8

words (as a general symptom of the social construction of reality), but also our imaginations of words at the coast: their wrack, drift, and passage, and associated social histories, all wrapped up in one leaky boat of language.

Much critical literary attention has already been given to our ‘seascape of mind’.<sup>96</sup> Less has been given in poetry criticism to what happens to poetry at the specific coastal edges of Britain. The ‘littoral chain-stitch’<sup>97</sup> around and beyond the British Isles contains many of its own well-storied voyages – coastal, rather than oceanic voyages – as well as departures and arrivals. The use by poets of words such as ‘farwards’<sup>98</sup> and ‘outwith’<sup>99</sup> suggests a need to look beyond the traditional idioms of place and positioning in order to understand the directional exchanges and experiences that these movements create in our language and our national imagination. Britain’s specific regional coastlines are a site of inhabitation as well as contemplation; they are also where the crucial coastal performances of ‘Bringing persons into place’ happen.<sup>100</sup> In a modern British culture which is still ‘both terrestrial and waterlogged’,<sup>101</sup> and still making new and on-going settlements in the ‘armistice between sea and land’,<sup>102</sup> Tom Raworth’s lines are apt: ‘And we are the disputed territory – we, and the water we come from and are.’<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Michael Taussig, ‘The Beach (A Fantasy)’, *Critical Inquiry* 26.2 (Winter 2000), p. 251

<sup>97</sup> Andrew Duncan, ‘On the Beach at Aberystwyth’, *ibid.*, p. 39

<sup>98</sup> Kamau Braithwaite, cited in Keith Sandiford, *Theorizing a Colonial Caribbean-Atlantic Imaginary: Sugar and Obeah* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 142.

<sup>99</sup> David Herd, *Outwith*, *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Herd, ‘4 poems by way of document’, *Outwith*, *ibid.*, p. 26

<sup>101</sup> Carol Watts, *Wrack*, *ibid.*, p. 24

<sup>102</sup> Watts, *Wrack*, *ibid.*, p. 16

<sup>103</sup> Tom Raworth, *Logbook*, *ibid.*, p. 444



The logos industry: the forest in modern British poetry

its dark coolness is a foreign voice

Louis Macneice<sup>1</sup>

Michael Haslam's *A Cure for Woodness* begins with a return to the definitional: the linking of the word 'wood' itself to a kind of linguistic frenzy, through the connections between *woodnesse* and madness, and its strange philological rewriting in errant moments in the corpus, from the Pearl poet through Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and right to Ted Hughes' 'wodwos'. Haslam's introduction travels through these citations to unpick the gloss of 'wood' in his blurb into 'a wood, a forestful of words' in which 'there's a bend, or cleavage of meaning', describing this semantic confusion as itself a form of woodland foray or way-finding ('I'm just wandering the under-storey brush' ... 'wandering the ancient wordlands' ... 'it was Spenser who first led me astray with this word *wood*' ... 'this (...) set me off on the wrong track'). Haslam uses his adopted word, 'woodness', to thematically navigate 'a handful of tricks, puns, quibbles, word-plays, rhymes' as principles in modern poetry, including the meetings of 'obsolete, archaic, poetical, and dialect usages' in 'the same old puns and plays: woods and words'. In his verbal ecology he draws on metaphors of weeds, eccentricity, and garble, as well as Arcadian diction, to explain why 'wood must be a wide word.'<sup>2</sup>

Like the coast, where poets offered 'an unexpected tripping into English-language history'<sup>3</sup> or a history-by-vocabulary of coastal loan-words in 'lisps and tatters',<sup>4</sup> the forest has been seen by contemporary writers as a place to model 'uncommon tongues' and 'English (becoming) increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> 'Into what yet is foreign; whatever its name / Each wood is the mystery and the recurring shock / Of its dark coolness is a foreign voice.' Louis Macneice, 'Woods', *The Collected Poems of Louis Macneice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 231

<sup>2</sup> Michael Haslam, *A Cure for Woodness* (Todmorden: Arc Publications, 2010), p. 14, 8, 7, 7, 8, 9, 9, 7, 7, 7, 9

<sup>3</sup> Caroline Bergvall's *Noping* (2013), interactive online text hosted by Triple Canopy at: <<http://canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/noping>> (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>4</sup> Bill Griffiths, *Mid North Sea High* (Durham: Amra, 1992), unpaginated

strange to itself'.<sup>5</sup> This is partly due to a history of literary philosophies which have used woodlands or forests as a model for reading strategies and hermeneutic processes themselves, as in Umberto Eco's *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, where the metaphor of 'lingering in the woods' is used to describe the many ways of navigating text discursively through signals of suspense and inference, which are the very opposite of the readings that 'cut to the chase', another woodland metaphor.<sup>6</sup> It is partly also to do with associations with philology and the branching of word families and histories. It is no coincidence that *The Oxford Guide to Etymology* bears on its cover a woodland scene, shaded by the branches of a large tree in the foreground.<sup>7</sup> W. H. Auden's 'Bucolics', one of the most heavily cited British forest poems by geographers and cultural historians, itself notes this affinity: 'where should an austere philologist / Relax but in the very world of shade / From which the matter of his field was made.'<sup>8</sup> This, in a poem which begins with the logic of the wood's root etymologies of wildness (the first line, 'Sylvan meant savage in those primal woods'), and then tracks alternative versions of language in the woods and its patois, from 'rustic English' to the 'private idiom' of individual falling leaves, including historical tropings of forest acoustics and echo as well as bilingual birdcalls ('Old sounds re-educate an ear grown coarse, / As Pan's green father suddenly raps out / A burst of undecipherable Morse, / And cuckoos mock in Welsh...').<sup>9</sup> This poem is partly revisited by Zoë Skoulding in her poem of echoes and acoustic confusion in the woods, 'Woodpeckers' ('even there you can't be sure / that what you hear as morse might not be scattershot').<sup>10</sup>

In the poems which follow in this chapter, the linguistic splitting in woods – between standard and non-standard languages, and between contemporary voice and historical echo – becomes a means of addressing the cultural difficulties of woodland interpretation in language. If woods are 'roots of a nation'<sup>11</sup> and forms of historical evidence (Rackham),<sup>12</sup> and 'a culture is no better than its woods' (Auden),<sup>13</sup> then in woodlands we are reckoning with all kinds of assertions about value and identity. This chapter will particularly pay attention to poets' navigations of traditional schemes of history and

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<sup>5</sup> Catherine Nicholson, *Uncommon Tongues: Eloquence and Eccentricity in the English Renaissance* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 'Introduction: Antisocial Orpheus', unpaginated Kindle edition

<sup>6</sup> 'It is lovely to linger, to watch the beams of sunlight play among the trees and fleck the glades, to examine the moths, the mushrooms, the plants in the undergrowth. Linger doesn't mean wasting time: frequently one stops to ponder before making a decision. (...) One can wander in a wood without going anywhere in particular, and (...) at times it's fun to get lost just for the hell of it'. Umberto Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 50; the two citations in the main text are from p. 49.

<sup>7</sup> Philip Durkin, *The Oxford Guide to Etymology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

<sup>8</sup> W. H. Auden, 'Bucolics', *Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 2007), p. 559

<sup>9</sup> W. H. Auden, 'Bucolics', *Collected Poems*, *ibid.*, p. 58-9

<sup>10</sup> See p. 232-233, this thesis

<sup>11</sup> Clive Aslet, 'Britain's oldest trees – the roots of a nation', *The Telegraph* 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2007, available online at: <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/3316714/Britains-oldest-trees-the-roots-of-a-nation.html>> (accessed 25/08/2014)

<sup>12</sup> Oliver Rackham, *The Illustrated History of the Countryside* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), p. 30

<sup>13</sup> W. H. Auden, 'Bucolics', *Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 2007), p. 559

continuity – what Duncan called the ‘Blood Sod Spades God’ ideology.<sup>14</sup> The forest is a ‘vortex of dead regimes’, in the poet Eric Mottram’s words,<sup>15</sup> where stable histories can be re-interrogated in overdrafts of previous texts, erasures, or other forms of textual experiment – as in Anthony Barnett’s coppicing or pruning of global forest dictionaries to release a new, rebellious patois of the woods. These texts complexly engage with the changing rubrics of forest heritage and policy, offering versions of the forest as ‘misshapen memory’ (Zanzotto),<sup>16</sup> or timber histories which dynamically invite ‘further histories given the initial trace’ (Larkin).<sup>17</sup> As the following sections will explore, these poetic interventions are taking place within the context of vastly complex contemporary political machinations around the difficulties of language, interpretation, and the forest, both in the British context and in global environmental discourse, particularly through concepts of standardisation, which will be discussed later. The public forested estate in Britain is one of the most ‘widely misunderstood’ landscapes in the country,<sup>18</sup> or at least the most argued over, as seen in the heated public and governmental discussions of the last two years over the Great British Forestry Question. It is historically shaped by languages, definitions, and interpretations which are (and always have been) violently partisan.

In the late twentieth and twenty first century there is a new political context of forests, within which the literary research of this chapter operates. Increasingly, there is ‘almost universal agreement that “trees” need to be at the very centre of our political debates, that the fate of the forests and other environmental issues are inextricably tied up with the future of human society and of social justice’.<sup>19</sup> At time of writing, perhaps the most visible indicator of the strong links between trees and identity is in the planting, theft, or uprooting of Palestinian trees (as forms of attachment with the land) and the competing Israel/Palestine eco-imaginaries, in which the trees function as ‘weapons of war’<sup>20</sup> and as ‘planted flags’.<sup>21</sup> During last year’s protests in Turkey begun by conflict over urban sycamore trees, a Huffington post article concluded that ‘there is something about a tree that should make an autocrat

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Duncan, *Centre and Periphery in Modern British Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), p. 23

<sup>15</sup> Eric Mottram, *A Book of Herne*, (Lancashire: Arrowspire Press, 1981), p. 42

<sup>16</sup> ‘But, mean glory of the world, / misshapen memory of other seasons, / the forest remains’; Andrea Zanzotto’s *Dietro il paesaggio*, cited in Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 243

<sup>17</sup> Peter Larkin, *Rings Resting the Circuit* (Ontario: The Gig, 2004), unpaginated.

<sup>18</sup> Edward Anderson-Bickley, a private advisor on forestry assets, writing from a commercial perspective on ‘The Great British Forestry Question’ in *Country Life* June 30<sup>th</sup> 2014, available online at: <http://www.countrylife.co.uk/articles/the-great-british-forestry-question> (accessed 25/08/2014)

<sup>19</sup> Mick Smith, ‘To Speak of Trees: Social Constructivism, Environmental Values, and the Future of Deep Ecology’, *Environmental Ethics* 21.4 (1999)

<sup>20</sup> Irus Braverman, ‘Planting the Promised Landscape: Zionism, Nature and Resistance in Israel/Palestine’, *Natural Resources Journal* 49.2 (2009), p. 319

<sup>21</sup> Irus Braverman, *Planted Flags: Trees, Land, and Law in Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

shiver.<sup>22</sup> Outside of these visibly violent outbreaks, which draw from the symbology of woodland as a locus of identity (individual, collective, or political), forest management is a broad and systemic issue in the global environment. Modern international forestry congresses deal with ethics of state power, global relations and timber contracting, and the relations between local communities and land rights and ‘the crisis of global governance’.<sup>23</sup> What claims find support in this current ‘global forest tenure transition’<sup>24</sup> depends on the problems of competing international values, discourses and definitions, as this chapter will consider later.<sup>25</sup> In Britain, meanwhile, there is an ongoing shift towards new models of post-industrial forestry as an eclectic, social, and postmodern phenomenon. McQuillan has observed that the ‘remarkable congruence of the language of postmodernism with the language of *new forestry* (seen in many terms, including ‘diversity’, ‘eclecticism’, ‘plurality’, ‘landscape’, ‘multi-cultural’, ‘multi-faceted’ and other ‘multi’-prefixed words) leads me to suggest the latter is emerging as a concrete expression of the former, that *new forestry* is a postmodern phenomenon.’<sup>26</sup>

In this complexifying discourse of the British forest we constantly encounter interpretative battles, including the discussions being handled by DEFRA currently over the nature of the public woodland schemes. The adherence of contemporary British cultural identities to woodland is also becoming more evident once again, partly in response to forestry’s social and public turn, and partly in response to the current environmental climate and events, including the centenary woods celebration (2014) and the advent of ash-dieback.<sup>27</sup> This is the strongest revival of the British love affair with woods<sup>28</sup> since the changes in perception and policy after the great storms of 1987 and 1990.<sup>29</sup> The long history of literary engagements with the stewardship or policing of the forest has returned in political

<sup>22</sup> Carl Pope, ‘What Is It About Trees?’, *Huffington Post* 6<sup>th</sup> June 2013, available online at: <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/carl-pope/what-is-it-about-trees\\_b\\_3393840.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/carl-pope/what-is-it-about-trees_b_3393840.html)> (accessed 25/08/2014)

<sup>23</sup> For research related to local/global land rights in modern forestry practice, see particularly Routledge’s ‘Earthscan Forest Library’ book series of the last decade, including publications such as Carol Colfer, *The Politics of Decentralization: Forests, Power, and People* (London: Routledge, 2005), David Humphreys, *Logjam: Deforestation and the Crisis of Global Governance* (London: Routledge, 2006), Anne Larson et al. eds., *Forests for People: Community Rights and Forest Tenure Reform* (London: Routledge, 2010), and Constance McDermott et al., *Global Environmental Forest Policies: An International Comparison* (London: Routledge, 2012)

<sup>24</sup> See William Sunderlin, ‘The Global Forest Tenure Transition: Background, Substance, and Prospects’, in Thomas Sikor and Johannes Stahl eds., *Forests and People: Property, Governance and Human Rights* (London: Routledge, 2012)

<sup>25</sup> See p. 182-183, this thesis

<sup>26</sup> A. G. McQuillan, ‘Cabbages and Kings: The Ethics and Aesthetics of New Forestry’, paper presented at the University of Montana in 1992, and cited in Judith Tsouvalis, *A Critical Geography of Britain’s State Forests* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 187

<sup>27</sup> On recent forest narratives triggered by values attached to particular trees, see Richard Mabey, *The Ash and the Beech: The Drama of Woodland Change* (London: Vintage, 2013); in the last year, Reaktion Books have also launched a series of titles each dedicated to specific trees, such as Peter Young’s *Oak* (London: Reaktion, 2013)

<sup>28</sup> A rejuvenation of public interest in silviculture and its discourse is shown, for instance, in the contemporary invocation of John Evelyn’s *Sylva*, in Gabriel Hemery and Sarah Simblet, *The New Sylva: A Discourse of Forest and Orchard Trees for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014)

<sup>29</sup> Discussed by Sylvie Nail, *Forest Policies and Social Change in England* (New York: Springer, 2008), p. 284

discourse and media reporting (as in George Monbiot's metaphor of the 'monoculture of the spirit'<sup>30</sup>). Rather than allowing the forest to be defined as an anti-cultural wilderness, we can see in it a spectrum of cultural activity, identity, and argument. This is apt considering that forests have, in literature, philosophy and elsewhere, long been associated with interpretative difficulty – and, as evidenced in this chapter, contemporary linguistic difficulty.

The chapter will thus bring these contextual aspects of forest interpretation together with a consideration of poetic versions of the strangeness – and estrangement – of voice and language in the forests of modern Britain, particularly as a mode of interrogation into cultural hermeneutics. In this introductory section I will, necessarily, begin with the key question: what is a forest? How do we talk about a forest, and how is it defined? Much of the poets' textual concerns here are with the tricksiness of proper naming in the forest – poems involved with textually redefining, or even 'dedefining', the forest, as in the poet Robert Crawford's words.<sup>31</sup> This ranges from the transformations of normative language as echo, 'sung through the forest mirror' (Mottram),<sup>32</sup> to the playfulness of a small press text like Patrick Eyres' *Eye Spy Trees*, with its diagrams and gaming strategies for woodland identifications as a spotter's guide,<sup>33</sup> to 'dedefining' as an act of deliberate interruption in the normal signification processes of language in utilitarian or official forms, as in Barnett's interventions in global forestry language. Various plays on oral tellings, sound, and music produce such interventions in "proper" language or sanctioned versions of history: 'I am sick of the right word (...) wrestling begins again (...) rotted heroic music hero'.<sup>34</sup>

On that first question of right words and pure definition, in 2001 the journal *Topoi* included an article by the geographer Brandon Bennett, asking 'What is a Forest? On the Vagueness of Certain Geographic Concepts'. He also asks a dozen example follow-up questions which are not answered in the criteria 'forest' (e.g., 'If part of a forest is felled and subsequently regrown, does it remain part of the forest throughout?'). In his analysis of the 'logic of vagueness' of the term, he offers a 'supervaluationistic dissection of 'forest'', including conflicting notions of temporal status ('aspects of the vagueness of 'forest' which are associated with persistence through time'). Another key

<sup>30</sup> George Monbiot, *Feral: Rewilding the Land, the Sea, and Human Life* (London: Penguin, 2013), unpaginated Kindle edition

<sup>31</sup> Robert Crawford, 'Dedefining Scotland', in Susan Bassnett ed., *Studying British Cultures: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1997)

<sup>32</sup> Eric Mottram, *A Book of Herne*, *ibid.*, p. 51

<sup>33</sup> Patrick Eyres (text) and Ian Gardner (drawings), *Eye Spy Trees* (West Yorkshire: Blue Tunnel publications, 1980). This unpaginated chapbook offers a tree silhouette on each page, with the text playing on processed of discernment and authoritative (and non-authoritative identification): 'EYE SPY a gnarled massive / trunk dull reddish-brown / The Cracked Rosa is no relative to the Constable / What is the difference between the bark of your / (6) and (9) / *The bark was gruff* / Give two words to describe the bark of your (6) / *Rough and uneven* / Say as exactly as you can'. Each page also offers dotted lines – as if for the reader's fill-in responses – while the flyleaf is marked with scorings (e.g., 'Score 1,500 points - / and you must be a NOSEY-PARKER / Good for you, Arcadian. Now ask two fellow Arcadians to examine your record.'). *Ibid.*, unpaginated.

<sup>34</sup> Eric Mottram, *A Book of Herne*, *ibid.*, p. 51

problem in this ‘precisification’ of language, he states, is the division between legal and conventional conferrals of the status of ‘forest’ onto wooded land, at which point ‘once forests are named (and thus probably also owned) additional conventional and legal mechanisms may be employed to individuate forests’; he makes distinctions between ‘Forest’, ‘ForestExtent’, ‘Natural\_Forest’, and ‘Fiat\_Forest’, and particularly the application to logged and logging areas; yet at the end of the article he notes the general sensation that ‘any attempt to pin down its meaning formally is completely hopeless ... It is for the reader to decide whether the analysis given in this paper cuts anywhere near the heart of the meaning of ‘forest’ or merely wanders among its many branches’.<sup>35</sup>

These difficult linguistic predicates of the forest are the subject of the texts that follow in a number of different ways. On the contingency of human knowledge of the forest, Thomas A. Clark’s *Twenty Four Sentences About the Forest* (1982) observes that ‘If we wish to investigate the forest, in all its depths and ramifications, we must first subtract all those qualities, such as quiet, autonomy or peace, we have attributed to it. / It is not the forest we eventually discover but our own strategies of evasion.’<sup>36</sup> This is a slim white chapbook with each page evenly set with six sentences, held apart from each other as a series of unconnected axioms. These include fallacies (‘In the beginning was the forest and the forest stretched everywhere, unbroken and single’), tropes (‘Saints and brigands make the forest their home’), misleading distinctions (‘Woods, groves, and copses are deciduous but the forest is evergreen’), and pronouncements on linguistic relationships (‘Many common words are darker than forests’). After each interval of one line’s space we are given another axiom of the forest; the book as a whole is plotted as a monoculture of strictly separate sentences. Like the conifer plantation depicted in the photograph on the flyleaf, ‘There is a propriety which governs the intervals between trees’. In this place where ‘wild flowers and rhetoric flourish’, Clark offers no more strategies of knowing than simply twenty-four unconnected and contradictory sentences of different lengths. He marks the impossibility of a direct object: ‘All the verbs of the forest are intransitive’. And finally he observes the events that are placed outside – and outlast – the human summaries of the forest: ‘All we have forgotten about the forest steals back into the forest and watches us with shining eyes.’<sup>37</sup>

This version of the ‘axiomatising’ of the forest – in Bennett’s use of the term<sup>38</sup> – is a self-conscious topic in modern poetry. It is used to refer to systems of authority, concepts of legacy, and the nature of re-writing. It is also of major importance to contemporary geographers. That question posed above, ‘What is the forest?’, is not just irrelevant philosophising. In fact, as cited in the Indian compilation of *Forest Laws*, on considering a late twentieth century case that challenged the definition of ‘forest’, the

<sup>35</sup> Brandon Bennett, ‘What is a Forest? On the Vagueness of Certain Geographic Concepts’, *Topoi* 20 (2001), p. 195, 200, 195, 195, 200

<sup>36</sup> Thomas A. Clark, *Twenty Four Sentences About the Forest* (Fife: Moschatel Press, 1982), unpaginated

<sup>37</sup> Thomas A. Clark, *Twenty Four Sentences About the Forest*, *ibid.*, unpaginated

<sup>38</sup> Bennet, ‘What is a Forest?’, *ibid.*, p. 200

Full Bench of the Nagpur High Court was faced with the fact that ‘the term ‘forest’ had not been defined anywhere in the Forest Act. As Haripriya Rangan notes, attention must be paid to the institutional classifications of forestry areas, as well as monopolies on the languages of classification, because while cultural and symbolic meanings vary substantially between localities, the actual business of forest classification and re-classification is an iterative process – such that any decision made in forest language shall continue to be repeated, and to affect policy, for generations to come.’<sup>39</sup>

Not only this, but international definitions make up a global governance discourse which is full of epistemological ruptures: there are sixty six international definitions of a tree, and around nine thousand six hundred possible combinations of the definition of forest and tree, as Scott Cettie and Georg Winkel calculated in a recent paper.<sup>40</sup> The semiotic framing of forests over time – and the fact that it is impossible to maximise all the values of the different forest management paradigms, simultaneously, in a uniform terminology – has led to a global definitonal conflict, referred to as the ‘forest regime complex’,<sup>41</sup> a key part of the ‘global environmental problématique’.<sup>42</sup>

The poems that follow here each deal with this issue of the pre-scripted but also paradoxical nature of the modern cultural and political forest, whether referring to the trope of the readable, speakable, or speaking woodland. In Donald Davie’s ‘Sylvae’<sup>43</sup> we see this processing of the forest as literary product, ‘at the hand / Of many a bookish writer’, in full force. In the first stanza we are reminded of the differently publically understood and misunderstood British woods: ‘Not deerpark, royal chase, / Forest of Dean, of Windsor, / Not Cranborne, Savernake / Nor Sherwood nor that old / Plantation we can call / New, nor be, it is / So old, misunderstood’. As the poem progresses, it becomes evident how profoundly shaped this primordial oak-wood is by cultural fictions: ‘Sprung of this cultured landscape / The fiction-makers of / My race have so completely / Made over it escapes / Nowhere from that old love’. The forest is trapped within the myths of it that we love. Yet, as the poem also attests, it is also untrappable, because our language fails to describe this ‘prodigious dapple / Of once uninterrupted / Cover we at best / Subvert by calling ‘forest’.’ On this level, the poem itself becomes a more self-conscious meditation on the philological tracking through the woods, as in the Michael Haslam essay mentioned above. The line ‘This it is our hedgerows / Preserve from the pre-Saxon’ can therefore itself be seen to play on the preservation of the proto-Germanic word ‘hedgerows’. Finally, this

<sup>39</sup> See Haripriya Rangan, ‘Contested boundaries, state policies, classifications, and deforestation in the Garhwal Himalayas’, *Antipode* 27.4 (1995)

<sup>40</sup> Scott Cettie and Georg Winkel, ‘Millions of Trees and Multiplicities of Meaning: On the Framing of ‘Forests’ in International Policy Discourse(s)’, paper given at *Framing Nature: Signs, Stories, and Ecologies of Meaning*, April 29<sup>th</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2014, University of Tartu

<sup>41</sup> In particular, see the currently live research project, *Discursive fragmentation of the international forest regime complex: Towards a better understanding of multi-level forest policy discourses* (2012-15), led by Georg Winkel at the Institute of Forest and Environmental Policy, University of Freiburg.

<sup>42</sup> Geoffrey Palmer, *Environment: The International Challenge* (Victoria: Victoria University of Wellington, 1995), p. 12

<sup>43</sup> Donald Davie, ‘Sylvae’, *Collected Poems 1950-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 197-198

poem's powerfully simple representation of the battle between the primitive and the cultivated – through language roots, etymology, and misconceptions – is performed in the punning last two words of the text:

the most  
 Primitive of woodland cultures;  
 I have to offer her  
 To whom I most would make  
 Offer, no more than nuts,  
 Berries, and dubious roots.<sup>44</sup>

Such social texts and dubious rhetorics call for deconstructive work. As David Matless observes, 'Human understanding, and its claims to proprietorial or emotional possession of the land, works alongside the claims to place accruing to, say, a stand of beech.'<sup>45</sup> A number of texts example the forging of concepts of belonging through the literary matter of woodland, such as Irish poet Ewart Milne's *Life Arboreal* (1953); these are brought together in Peter Ackroyd's analysis of the trope of trees and cultural identity through British literary history.<sup>46</sup> A large part of this transaction with place is made through language. How is the forest wrought in our language? In the Oxford Collocations dictionary (based on the one hundred million word British National Corpus), we can see the phrases we have favoured when discussing it: from the most common adjectives attached to the noun forest ('dense, thick / impenetrable / dark / native, natural / ancient, primeval, virgin'), which indicate a favoured imaginary forest for description, to the most common prepositions, 'in a/ the', or 'through a / the', which place the imagined speaker or articulation firmly inside the forest's borders (examples given: 'They got lost in the forest. We slashed our way through the dense forest.'). The most common verbs to be found with the word 'forest' as object indicate the fullness of perceived human agency, whether in its creation or its disappearance ('plant / chop down, clear, cut down, destroy') – while the likely verbs for the forest itself to be actively caught doing in a sentence are 'stretch' and 'cover', often, however, presented in passive construction ('Much of Europe was once covered in forest'.)<sup>47</sup>

While the forest may cover European land, the human voice covers the forest. As the English poet Peter Larkin has stated in a recent online poetic text, 'Woods in the Nearby Materials They Are For',

<sup>44</sup> Donald Davie, 'Sylvae', *ibid.*, all quotations p. 197-8

<sup>45</sup> David Matless, 'Nature Voices', *Journal of Historical Geography* 35.1 (2009), p. 180

<sup>46</sup> Peter Ackroyd, 'Chapter 1: The Tree', *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2002)

<sup>47</sup> "Forest", Oxford Collocations Dictionary, online at <<http://oxforddictionary.so8848.com/>> (accessed 12/08/2014)



‘Trees are bigger than people but dwarfed by people communicating with people’.<sup>48</sup> It is notable that the much billed new nature writing finds itself so often expressing the forest, including in works by Deakin, Macfarlane, Tudge, and Mabey.<sup>49</sup> Some of the texts of the ‘new nature writing’ canon<sup>50</sup> have been criticised for offering a particularised view of a ‘male rover around a world of wood’,<sup>51</sup> although Mabey in particular has turned attention consciously to the histories and strategies of cultural storytelling of the woods and its ‘figment(s)’.<sup>52</sup> A number of diaristic texts have also been recently published or re-published which offer vicarious accounts of woodland living.<sup>53</sup> For this text’s current concerns, what is also particularly striking is the frequent publishing of popular texts reliant on the connection of voice and forest, including by Taplin, Boyer, and Maitland.<sup>54</sup> The idea of the speaking woods is not new, but is drawn from a classical trope, as Todd Borlik observes in his article on the politics of Arcadian timber dialogues<sup>55</sup> and Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook explores in her chapter on Jonathan Swift’s ‘vocal stump’ and its play on Virgil’s ‘articulate holy trees’.<sup>56</sup> The ventriloquizing of trees ranges from talking trees to trees ‘talking back’; in its seventeenth century handling, Cook observes, trees (or tree stumps) are often found arguing with woodsmen and woodcutters, making ‘powerfully articulated counterclaims’ from the natural world, opposing ‘an anthropocentric vocabulary of productivity and profit’.<sup>57</sup> A contemporary play on the trope can be seen in the moody

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<sup>48</sup> Peter Larkin, ‘Woods in the Nearby Materials They Are For’, *Junction Box* 3 (2012), <<http://lyndondavies.co.uk/w/1938/peter-larkin-woods-in-the-nearby-materials-they-are-for/>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>49</sup> Roger Deakin, *Wildwood: A Journey Through Trees* (London: Penguin, 2008); Robert Macfarlane, *The Wild Places* (London: Granta, 2007); *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* (London: Penguin, 2013); Robert Macfarlane, Dan Richards, and Stanley Donwood, *Holloway* (London: Faber & Faber, 2014); Colin Tudge, *The Secret Life of Trees: How They Live and Why They Matter* (London: Penguin, 2006); Richard Mabey, *The Wildwood: In Search of Britain’s Ancient Forests* (London: Aurum Press, 1993); *Beechcombings: The Narratives of Trees* (New York: Vintage, 2008); *The Ash and the Beech: The Drama of Woodland Change* (New York: Vintage, 2013)

<sup>50</sup> See the now well-known *Granta*, 102. Special Issue: The New Nature Writing (2008)

<sup>51</sup> Matless, ‘Nature Voices’, *ibid.*, p. 180

<sup>52</sup> Richard Mabey, *Beechcombings: The Narratives of Trees* (New York: Vintage, 2008), p. 234

<sup>53</sup> These include John Stewart Collis’ *The Wood* (republished by Penguin in 2009), Colin Elford’s *A Year in the Woods: The Diary of a Forest Ranger* (London: Penguin, 2011), Hugh Thomson’s *The Green Road Into the Trees: A Walk Through England* (London: Windmill Books, 2013), Ben Law’s *Woodman: Living in a Wood in the 21st Century* (London: Collins, 2014), and Sylvain Tesson’s *Consolations of the Forest: Alone in a Cabin in the Middle Taiga* (London: Allen Lane, 2013)

<sup>54</sup> For example, Kim Taplin’s edited volume of woods poetry, *Tongues in Trees: Studies in Literature and Ecology* (Bideford: Green Books, 1989), which is unabashed in its use of the Shakespearian title to refer to the directness of what ‘trees and poetry share’; Marie-France Boyer’s illustrated art history book *Tree-Talk: Memories, Myths and Timeless Customs* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996); Sara Maitland’s collection of stories and conversational retellings of fables, *Gossip from the Forest: The Tangled Roots of Our Forests and Fairytales* (London: Granta, 2013).

<sup>55</sup> Todd Borlik, ‘Mute Timber? Environmental Stichomythia in the Old Arcadia’, in Kamps, Raber, and Hallock eds., *Early Modern Ecocriticism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook, ‘The vocal stump: the politics of tree-felling in Swift’s ‘On cutting down the old thorn at Market Hill’’, in Auricchio, Heckendorn Cook and Pacini eds., *Invaluable Trees: Cultures of Nature, 1660-1830* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2012), p. 119

<sup>57</sup> Cook, ‘The vocal stump’, *ibid.*, p. 119

talking twigs in W. S. Graham's titular poem in the volume *Implements in Their Places* (1977),<sup>58</sup> while Dryden's translation of Virgil's *Georgics* with 'the branching beech, and vocal oak, / Where Jove of old oraculously spoke'<sup>59</sup> can be seen echoed again in Eric Mottram's 'oracular oak', in *A Book of Herne* (1981), which speaks in what sounds like the Celtic Ogham tree alphabet: 'stems spring from his tongue oaken alphabets'.<sup>60</sup>

David Matless suggests that a key problematic of certain of the leading male nature writers is that their 'nature voices' rely on the 'speaking (up) for things animal, vegetable or mineral' through 'foregrounding of the authorial voice'.<sup>61</sup> Discussion of what Raymond Williams calls 'green language'<sup>62</sup> as an ethically valid form of communication, avoiding anthropomorphic rhetoric, has been crucial to eco-criticism, from the meanings of the popular critical phrase 'give voice to place',<sup>63</sup> to arguments that challenge language as a privileged index of agency, as Cook observes; on this latter, David Gilcrest in particular argues against the suspect 'trope of speaking nature' in favour of recognizing the 'alinguistic agency' of natural actors.<sup>64</sup> Several of the poets considered here play with the textual identities of different acts of giving, taking, and exchanging language. Zoë Skoulding's 'Undergrowth' contends with pre-conceived notions of authorial voice, beginning with a forest utterance, whilst also displacing the quoted voice again through the use of italics as a standard citation practice (as in the first line: '*Stop!*' says the forest the wolf comes out of / roots bruised by footsteps, crushed under wheels'<sup>65</sup>). This linguistic turning is important in the forest particularly, as this chapter aims to show.

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<sup>58</sup> 'I've had enough said twig Ninety-thousand  
Whispering across the swaying world  
To twig Ninety-thousand-and-Fifty. This lack  
Of communication takes all the sap  
Out of me so far out. It is true.  
They were on their own out at the edge  
Changing their little live angles.  
They were as much the tree as the trunk.  
They were restless because the trunk  
Seemed to never speak to them.' W. S. Graham, 'Implements in Their Places', *New Collected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 2004), p. 254

<sup>59</sup> John Dryden, *The Works of Virgil, Translated into English Verse* (London: John & Carey, 1819), p. 167

<sup>60</sup> Eric Mottram, *A Book of Herne* (Lancashire: Arrowspire Press, 1981), p. 17

<sup>61</sup> David Matless, 'Nature Voices', *ibid.*, p. 178

<sup>62</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Country and The City* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973), p. 141

<sup>63</sup> For typical use of the phrase 'give voice to place', see for instance Belden Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins, 2002), p. 42, and Stephanie Norgate, 'Introduction', in Norgate ed., *Poetry and Voice: A Book of Essays* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), p. 5

<sup>64</sup> David Gilcrest, *Greening the Lyre: Environmental Poetics and Ethics* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2002), p. 38, 59

<sup>65</sup> Zoë Skoulding, 'Undergrowth', *The Mirror Trade* (Bridgend: Seren, 2004), p. 37

If, as Mabey notes in a recent essay on forest painting, traditional forest aesthetics reflected ‘and helped to consolidate’ conventions of land ownership and attachment,<sup>66</sup> then more experimental perspectives on our languages and economies of wood are needed. In fact, this kind of experimental probing into language through the discourse of the forest already has a rich historical tradition, as will be shown below. The ‘divided wood’<sup>67</sup> in the British landscape has long been a subject of partisan interpretations. Its relationship with nomenclature – and naming and misnaming – has been tackled in a number of poems, from Colin Simms’ ‘Maples’ (‘Maypoles’)<sup>68</sup> to Jorie Graham’s ‘I Was Taught Three’ (with the ‘human tree / clothed with its nouns’<sup>69</sup>). Its specific names have been transformed (as, for instance, in Eric Mottram’s uncollected poem ‘Meet in the corpse’,<sup>70</sup> a play on the lovers’ tryst in the copse). The divided and dividing wood has also, itself, become a figuration for poetry, both for its role as symbolic of a wide range of languages – as in Christopher Merrill’s *The Forest of Speaking Trees: An Essay on Poetry* (1996)<sup>71</sup> – and as symbolic of the disturbance, or disordering, of poetic language, as accounted by Paul Valéry (1964):

But the dialectical hunt is a magical hunt. When poets repair to the enchanted forest of language it is with the express purpose of getting lost; far gone in bewilderment, they seek crossroads of meaning, unexpected echoes, strange encounters; they fear neither detours, surprises, nor darkness; but the huntsman who ventures into this forest in hot pursuit of the ‘truth,’ who sticks to a single continuous path, from which he cannot deviate for a moment on

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<sup>66</sup> Richard Mabey, ‘Green Chaos: Painting the Forest’, in *Kurt Jackson: A New Genre of Landscape Painting* (Cornwall: Kurt Jackson editions, 2010), p. 113

<sup>67</sup> Sorley Maclean, ‘The Woods of Raasay’, *From Wood to Ridge* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1989), p. 173

<sup>68</sup> See, for instance, Colin Simms’ ‘Maples: A Pub Conversation’ – ‘Maypoles? / ... / today you call them sycamores: / we have forgotten what they mean’, in *Birches and Other Striplings*, *ibid.*, p. 6

<sup>69</sup> ‘What is the idea  
that governs blossoming? The human tree  
clothed with its nouns, or this one  
just outside my window promising more firmly  
than can be

that it will reach my sill eventually, the leaves  
silent as suppressed desires, and I  
a name among them.’ Jorie Graham, ‘I Was Taught Three’, in Sarah Maguire ed., *Flora Poetica: The Chatto Book of Botanical Verse* (London: Chatto, 2003), p. 105-6

<sup>70</sup> Eric Mottram, ‘Meet in the corpse’, *Lucifer*, no issue number (King’s College, London, 1962), p. 16; in Mottram archives, King’s College.

<sup>71</sup> ‘It is true that poets give voice to the voiceless (...) Thus ‘each poetic adventure is distinct,’ as Octavia Paz suggests, ‘and each poet has sewn a different plant in the miraculous forest of speaking trees.’ Who knows how big that forest is? Indeed, it contains all the glories sung or said by mankind – aboriginal chants and curses, medieval kennings and riddles, blank verse and ghazals. Osip Mandelstam called this forest ‘the whole of world poetry, which know(s) no bounds of time and space.’ Christopher Merrill, *The Forest of Speaking Trees: An Essay on Poetry* (New York: White Pine Press, 1966), p. 11

pain of losing the scent or imperiling the progress he has already made, runs the risk of capturing nothing but his shadow.<sup>72</sup>

A number of the poems which follow will draw on these forest diversions in linguistic pathways. Finally, this chapter's title also takes its pun in inspiration from Jacques Derrida's playful lecture *Signéponge/Signsponge*, which investigates Francis Ponge's *Le Carnet du bois de pins* and its relationship with logos and the act of naming in the forest.<sup>73</sup> Ponge's text is already an important influence for its manifestation of linguistic play with surnames, proper names, and puns on singular and variant identity through the pine wood.<sup>74</sup> Ponge's work has been translated by a number of small press British poets within this period,<sup>75</sup> while it is also explicitly invoked as an inspiration by the English poet Peter Larkin – who will feature in this chapter – in a 2007 interview.<sup>76</sup> Derrida's essay, translated for the bilingual edition by Richard Rand, hones in on the original text's involvement with literary 'copyright' or 'signature' and 'the paradoxes of name and reference, of nomination'. Derrida cites Ponge on the ideal identity of pine as 'an I, a stem', while he also observes variant practices of citation ('treating words between quotation marks') against the signature of ones 'proper name' in the forest – challenging, through the medium of the pinewood's linguistic play in Ponge, the single event of 'autography', or writing with a self's proper language, amongst or within the forest.<sup>77</sup> These ideas – of singular self, nomenclature, and linguistic play in the woods – are what informs the selection of texts which follow, within the context of larger environmental language issues. These are related to

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<sup>72</sup> Paul Valéry (trans. Manheim), *Aesthetics* (New York: Pantheon, 1964), p. 48. On this 'dialectical hunt' in the forest, see also the final lines of Sorley Maclean's 'The Woods of Raasay' (*From Wood to Ridge*, *ibid.*, p. 183), on the 'crooked veering' of knowledge in the woods:

'There is no knowledge, no knowledge,  
of the final end of each pursuit,  
nor of the subtlety of the bends  
with which it loses its course.'

<sup>73</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Signéponge/Signsponge*, originally given as a lecture in 1975, translated by Rand in 1984, and available as 'From *Signsponge*', in Derek Attridge ed., *Jacques Derrida: Acts of Literature* (London: Routledge, 1992)

<sup>74</sup> The Ponge text is now most readily available for the British reader in Lee Fahnestock's translation, *Mute Objects of Expression* (New York: Archipelago Books, 2008). On these puns on singular and variant identity, See for instance Živilė Gimbutas' chapter 'Francis Ponge: Identity and Variation Form', in *The Riddle in the Poem* (University Press of America, 2004), from p. 35.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen Bann, *Field: After Francis Ponge* (East Markham: Tarasque Press, 1972): five-inch-square booklet, eight leaves, stapled in self-wrappers; extracts from Ponge's poem in French en face with concrete poem-illustrations. For the Mahon versions, see Hugh Haughton, *The Poetry of Derek Mahon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 108, 119, 300. Peter Riley, 'Francis Ponge (translations)', in Riley and Harwood eds., *Collection 4 Tzarad 3* (Hove, Sussex: mimeographed joint issue, 1969). Ian Brinton, 'Francis Ponge: three pieces', in Barnett and Brinton eds., *SNOW lit rev 2* (2013)

<sup>76</sup> Edmund Hardy, 'Less than, more at: an interview with Peter Larkin', *Intercapillary Space*, 2007: <<http://intercapillaryspace.blogspot.co.uk/2007/11/less-than-more-at-interview-with-peter.html>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>77</sup> '...the *Oral Essay* (...) inscribes on a leaf (of a tree, of course), the common name that is closet, nearest, to the common name of the author (...) this tree, who is my friend, thought that he had written on his leaves, on each of his leaves (in the language of trees, everyone knows what I mean), that he had written *franchise* on a leaf (...) in brief, the tree (...) signing itself'. Derrida, 'From *Signsponge*', *ibid.*, p. 365

the role of the forest as a space which is troped in the linguistic pursuit of memory, lore, myth, and forms of name and identity, as in Nancy Gaffield's 'Zu Babel':

In the boreal forest  
memory frays.

Blur of lore,  
dream-work and grasping,  
finding your name<sup>78</sup>

We might compare this to this 1977 woodland chase by W. S. Graham:

Whatever you've come here to get  
You've come to the wrong place. It  
(I mean your name.) hurries away  
Before you in the trees to escape.<sup>79</sup>

### **Sometimes I think we all need a little forest glossary: words for woods**

'Sometimes I think we all need a little / forest glossary', Jeff Hilson writes on the first page of his sonnet sequence *In the Assarts* (2010)<sup>80</sup> – indeed, right after an O.E.D. epigraph glossing the forest term 'assarts'. Immediately on the first page, therefore, we are faced with etymology: the French origin *essart* or *essarting* used by modern historians, the errant meaning to hoe or to weed, and the common dual usage as both a noun for a clearing in a forest, and as a verb (so either 'A piece of forest land converted into arable by grubbing up the trees and brushwood', or 'The action of grubbing up the trees and brushwood to make arable land'). Hilson's declared need for a forest glossary comes out in

<sup>78</sup> Nancy Gaffield, 'Zu Babel', *Continental Drift*, *ibid.*, p. 16

<sup>79</sup> W. S. Graham, 'The Secret Name', *New Collected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 2004), p. 237

<sup>80</sup> Jeff Hilson, *In the Assarts* (London: Veer Books, 2010), p. 1

playful references across the text: he uses terms like ‘Hedgebote’ or ‘haybote’ (an English law term for wood allowed to a tenant for repairing a hedge or fence), invented Early Modern compound phrases such as ‘I ought to be a purley-man’ or ‘Sally-my-obscurely’, and contextual plays on words, such as ‘Oxgang’ – a measure of land based on how much land a team of oxen can plough in a year – in the line ‘But now I am in an oxgang’, riffing on the modern meaning of gang. This text is all about the ‘lingo’ of the forest rerouted across historical directions, in what John Latta, describing these sonnets, has called a ‘din of contradictories’.<sup>81</sup>

In writing this text Hilson actually *is* using a glossary for what he calls ‘my geographic tongue’,<sup>82</sup> which this thesis has traced to Langton and Hughes’ research project *Forests and Chases of England and Wales c. 1000 to c. 1850*.<sup>83</sup> He has confirmed this material source in a personal message.<sup>84</sup> This is a multi-disciplinary survey of forest maps, including a gazetteer and cartographic database, starting with the cadastral maps, and laws, including the Charter of the Forest, and statutes related to hunting and deer. The forest has a huge amount of competing laws and customs which refer to feudal systems and state systems, different central and local administrations of agrarian forestry, the protection of venison and vert, and the recreation of princes and poachers. There are different bailiffs and justices of the forest, purprestures and wastes, forest courts, agisters, and verderers, pannage-dues, forester-in-fees, and tolls – and therefore a complex background of specialised terms. When Jeff Hilson in his sonnet sequence uses this language of leases, areal measurements, and words like ‘hedgebutt’, compiled by Langton and Hughes from various sources, he creates this ‘din of contradictories’ through a language history of variations in property systems and customary rights as well as Romantic inscriptions of the forest and its various historical texts and symbolisms. His volume is also influenced by sources and by literary spirits such as Thomas Wyatt, who is invoked several times, as is Ron Silliman’s edited volume of avant-garde American poetry, *In the American Tree* (1986). Hilson uses a mix of faux-archaic and contemporary registers as a comparison to the systems of aging different properties of the forest, referring to ‘datable (...) brambles’ and ‘historic leaf-litter’;<sup>85</sup> this chapter will come back to the topic of the rhetoric of time and dendrochronology at a later point. Overall Hilson presents the languages of the forest as historically multiple – and with all its continuities broken:

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<sup>81</sup> John Latta, ‘Jeff Hilson’s *In the Assarts*’, Sept 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010: <<http://isola-di-rifiuti.blogspot.co.uk/2010/09/jeff-hilsons-in-assarts.html>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>82</sup> Jeff Hilson, *In the Assarts*, *ibid.*, p. 27

<sup>83</sup> Research website, ‘Forests and Chases in England and Wales, c. 1000 to c. 1850’, led by John Langton and Graham Jones: <<http://info.sjc.ox.ac.uk/forests/glossary.htm>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>84</sup> Jeff Hilson, email to author. On the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2013 myself and Edmund Hardy ran an evening seminar as part of the Intercapillary Places modern poetry series at Parasol Unit at which Jack Langton presented the research survey and Hilson read from *In the Assarts*; the two had not previously met.

<sup>85</sup> Jeff Hilson, *In the Assarts*, *ibid.*, p. 3, 2

That beautiful language is worn  
 that beautiful language is.  
 I'm glad I'm talking in.<sup>86</sup>

As Hilson makes clear, the language of woodland use relates to economic and social power structures, and models of governmentality, as well as concepts of property, history, and identity. It has a power beyond just name-calling. Judith Tsouvalis, a geographer and a historian of the Forestry Commission and of forestry policy in Britain, has written on linguistic philosophy, particularly ‘choice of wording’ and how this impacts policy.<sup>87</sup> Her key example is of the institutionalisation of “ancient woodlands”, and their enforcement through language – citing Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* as ‘history turned into nature’.<sup>88</sup> She summarises the formative role of some of the early lectures and manuals of the first forestry school in Britain (1885), as well as the more contemporary incorporation of Lucas’ work on aesthetics in forest management.<sup>89</sup> She then turns to a vocabulary history, explaining how the distinction between *primary* and *secondary* woodland was altered by Oliver Rackham’s use of ‘ancient’ and ‘recent’ woodlands, a vocabulary choice also developed by the woodland ecologist and Forestry Commission advisor George Peterken. Tsouvalis gives a useful history of the attempts by different authorities to agree on classifications at the 1982 debate between the FC, the Institute of Chartered Foresters, and the Nature Conservancy Council in which ‘the tide turned against the dominant forestry practices in favour of ‘ancient woodlands’’,<sup>90</sup> and at which the Director General, George Holmes, commented in his closing remarks: ‘We spent a lot of time talking about the *classification* of woodlands’.<sup>91</sup> The NCC’s subsequent Ancient Woodland Inventory and Codes of Practice led to changing understandings of woodland and forest amenities that can be protected, banishing older categories of productive and unproductive woodland – in part of what would later be seen as a more general turn towards multi-valent forestry. While based on subjective meanings assigned to the natural entities in the landscape, by becoming part of the vocabulary, ‘ancient woodlands’ became a part of national heritage itself, as Tsouvalis observes: ‘once it had come out on

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<sup>86</sup> Jeff Hilson, *In the Assarts*, *ibid.*, p. 62

<sup>87</sup> Judith Tsouvalis, ‘Making the invisible visible: ancient woodlands, British forest policy and the social construction of reality’, in Charles Watkins ed., *European Woods and Forests: Studies in Cultural History* (Oxon: Cab International, 1998), p. 223

<sup>88</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, ‘The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups’, *Theory and Society* 14.6 (1985), p. 78; cited in Tsouvalis, ‘Making the invisible visible’, *ibid.*, p. 216

<sup>89</sup> Oliver Lucas, *The Design of Forest Landscapes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Lucas, ‘Aesthetic Considerations in British Forestry’, *Forestry* 70.4 (1997); this latter article is a contemporary reconsideration of the values of an early twentieth century paper of the same title (Dallimore, 1927).

<sup>90</sup> Tsouvalis, ‘Making the invisible visible’, *ibid.*, p. 225

<sup>91</sup> A. J. Grayson ed., *Broadleaves in Britain: Addresses, Supplementary Papers and Discussions* (UK: Forestry Commission, 1982), p. 35

top in the symbolic power struggle over the legitimate vision of the world, it could no longer be denied as a reality'.<sup>92</sup>

Other forest researchers have tackled the importance of these language histories and of socially constructed realities in forestry. Keith Thomas observes that 'once these categories have been learned, it is very difficult for us to see the world in any other way. The prevailing system of classification takes hold of us'.<sup>93</sup> The use of either 'ancient' woods or 'old growth' forest has continued to be tackled in policy reviews, particularly considering the fact that these broad terms are themselves dependent on a variety of what are called 'ancient woodland indicators', such as bluebells or wood sorrel; the determination of woods and forests is thus itself an interpretative endeavour reliant on signs. Certain watershed moments in the spatial fixing of 'woods' and 'forests' of certain identities, dependent on structural and botanical indicators, are still seen as up for discussion;<sup>94</sup> not least because 'ancient woodland' refers to survival period – an uninterrupted physical continuity of woodland since the seventeenth century – which may be hard to 'read' from the qualities of the living evidence. The unreliability of reading the functions of age in the forest from particular taxa has continued to be discussed, as has the importance of the dominance of the 'ancient woodland' category and its changing social meaning.<sup>95</sup> Outside of Britain and British forestry institutions, meanwhile, Matthias Bürgi has written on how terms shape forests in a Swiss context (focussing on the words 'Niederwald', 'Mittelwald', and 'Hochwald'),<sup>96</sup> Geoffrey Aguirre has considered the ethical performance of the Kyoto Protocol and its application of the term "sink" to forests (and 'the dangers of conceptualizing forests as being more or less fungible'),<sup>97</sup> and Dean McCulloch has compiled a guide to American logger language, *Woods Words: A Comprehensive Dictionary of Loggers Terms*, and has analysed the movement of words between other discourses to forestry situations as part of a logging idiolect, and from there back (as slang) into public languages.<sup>98</sup> A number of articles on

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<sup>92</sup> Tsouvalis, 'Making the invisible visible', *ibid.*, p. 227

<sup>93</sup> Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London: Allen Lane, 1984), p. 52

<sup>94</sup> See for instance Ian D. Rotherham, 'A Landscape History Approach to the Assessment of Ancient Woodlands', in Erwin B. Wallace ed., *Woodlands: Ecology, Management and Conservation* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2011)

<sup>95</sup> See Charles Watkins, 'The idea of ancient woodland in Britain from 1800', in Fabio Salbitano ed., *Human Influence on Forest Ecosystems Development in Europe* (Bologna: Pitagora Editrice, 1988); there was also a paper given by Ben Lennon at last year's *Trees Beyond the Wood* conference (Hallam University, 7<sup>th</sup> Sept 2012) titled 'Ancient Woodland from Concept to Policy: The triumph and the tragedy'.

<sup>96</sup> Matthias Bürgi, 'How Terms Shape Forests: 'Niederwald', 'Mittelwald' and 'Hochwald', and Their Interaction with Forest Development in the Canton of Zurich, Switzerland', *Environment and History* 5.3 (1999)

<sup>97</sup> Geoffrey Aguirre, 'Why Cutting Down Trees Is Part of the Problem, but Planting Trees Isn't Always Part of the Solution: How Conceptualizing Forests as Sinks Can Work Against Kyoto', *Oregon Review of International Law* 11 (2009), p. 206

<sup>98</sup> 'None of the words included is claimed to be the sole property of loggers. The ingenious logger borrowed from any place that fitted his needs and invented words where ready-made ones failed him.' Dean McCulloch, 'Author's Preface', *Woods Words: A Comprehensive Dictionary of Loggers Terms* (Oregon: Oregon Historical Society, 1958), p. v



REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation) schemes have also called for the critical need for new definitions of forest and forest degradation, as the existing, weak definitions mitigate the effectiveness of any global environmental project.<sup>99</sup>

At the very base level, the vulnerability of the word ‘forest’ itself to linguistic rerouting, due to its origin in a slippage and double meaning, has been observed several times, including by Rackham: this will be touched on later in this chapter. Michael Frome has offered insight into the use of the phrase ‘Whose woods these are’ by American environmental protestors, which, in its reversal of the more normal order (‘are these’), is an obvious citation from Robert Frost’s poem ‘Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening’ (‘Whose woods these are I think I know’). As Frome notes, Frost himself is nonplussed by the take-up of his opening line by the national forestry movement in North America;<sup>100</sup> it is curious that a phrase used to reference the custody battle over the forest between different jurisdictions, agencies, and campaigners has itself fallen foul of a somewhat complicated chain of custody, also being cited in a modified fashion in Nancy Peluso’s well-known article on counter-mapping and the surveying of indigenous rights and cultures in the forest.<sup>101</sup> This is one example of the filtering of poetic language into forestry management discussions; a much longer-standing trend is the Forestry Commission’s own practice of excerpting poems in the chapter headings of their FC Guides of specific areas of Britain in the 60s and 70s. (A longer thesis would be able to consider the exact choice of poems, as well as the role of this editorial practice in invoking wider civic and cultural terrains. For current purposes, it is interesting to note the geographer Judith Tsouvalis’ inclusion of her own concrete poem at the head of her concluding chapter in her history of forests and social policy – a timber mesostic containing the key value words of postmodern multi-valent forestry.<sup>102</sup>)

In 2011 the workshop ‘Cultural and Social Issues Affecting Woodland and Forest Policy in England’, which I attended in Westminster, was convened to inform DEFRA’s Independent Panel on Forestry – itself born out of the fierce public debate surrounding the future of Forestry Commission woodland. Much of the time was spent discussing not the impending decisions, but the languages and values which would inform this decision-making process – including several conversation threads around the

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<sup>99</sup> See Nophea Sasaki and Francis Putz, ‘Critical need for new definitions of “forest” and “forest degradation” in global climate change agreements’, *Conservation Letters* 2.5 (2009), which explains what will happen if global policies intended to promote forest conservation ‘continue to use the definition of “forest” adopted in 2001 by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change’, p. 226. This article has led to two critical commentaries, one on the blog of the Center for International Forestry Research, at [http://blog.cifor.org/20055/defining-forest-could-improve-redd-monitoring-in-indonesia#.U\\_2vAvldXLn](http://blog.cifor.org/20055/defining-forest-could-improve-redd-monitoring-in-indonesia#.U_2vAvldXLn) (accessed 25/08/2014), and one on the REDD-monitoring website, at <http://www.redd-monitor.org/2009/09/08/redd-will-fail-with-the-current-definition-of-forest/> (accessed 25/08/2014)

<sup>100</sup> Michael Frome, *Whose Woods These Are: The Story of the National Forests* (New York: Doubleday, 1962)

<sup>101</sup> Nancy Peluso, ‘Whose Woods are These? Counter-Mapping Forest Territories in Kalamantan, Indonesia’, *Antipode* 27.4 (1995)

<sup>102</sup> Judith Tsouvalis, *A Critical Geography of Britain’s State Forests* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 200

shortcomings of DEFRA's 2011 online public consultation, 'The future of the public forest estate in England', for its 'leading' questions and values.<sup>103</sup> As this thesis is also concerned with the 'management' of forest language – the choice of wording, and the operations of this wording in delineating and excluding certain land types – it will be drawing from poems which refer to both 'forests', and 'woods'; the lines between these categories are not hard and fast, as we have seen above, and there is certainly not a unified agreement about how they operate as discrete entities between the fields of literature, history, science, and policy. A number of the poets considered deliberately evoke a particular terrain – rather than an 'ideal' concept of the forest – including, for instance, Peter Larkin's attention in his texts to plantations and different kinds of forest stratification and land-use practises in a variety of British woodlands.

When W. S. Graham's speaker asks the reader to 'Imagine a forest / A real forest',<sup>104</sup> he is asking for an impossible purity and disassociation from cultural values. There is an agro-forestry term, 'multi-storied', which refers to both the structure and the diversity of managed forest. I would argue that this term is also suitable as a reference to the long history of literary and narrative ideas which are bound up in cultural inscriptions of trees and forests. (Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley's edited *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* even has an entire section dedicated to 'Forest Fictions'.<sup>105</sup>) A number of researchers are currently conducting valuable investigations into this multi-storied British forest. For the cultural geography of forestry practices, the most valuable sources for my research have been Judith Tsouvalis' study of twentieth century nature-society relations, *A Critical Guide to Britain's State Forests*, which also analyses regimes of meaning in the forest relative to national identity, and is useful for its discussion of the changing relations of forest production in the postmodern age and 'the formulation of new forest visions in Britain'<sup>106</sup> as a socio-ecological utopia; more recently, Sylvie Nail's *Forest Policies and Social Change in England* – particularly her preliminary chapter, 'Woodlands as Landscapes of Power' – is a thorough guide to the social and economic status of woods within different regimes of forestry (including scientific forestry, social forestry, post-productivist forestry, and heritage forestry), as well as their political symbology in references to England's 'wooden walls' or 'heart of oak'.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> A report on the AHRC workshop (30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2011, Nobel House) is online here: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/files/Cultural-and-Social-Issues-affecting-Forest-Policy.pdf> (accessed 12/08/2014). The progress report on the Independent Panel of Forestry (DEFRA), also quoting responses to the online consultation, begins by noting that the forest is 'a political landscape (...) shaped by people' and 'never static'. It is available online here: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/forestrypanel/files/Independent-Panel-on-Forestry-Progress-Report.pdf> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>104</sup> W. S. Graham, 'Imagine a Forest', *New Collected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 2004), p. 204

<sup>105</sup> Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley, *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

<sup>106</sup> Judith Tsouvalis, *A Critical Geography of Britain's State Forests*, *ibid.*, p. 202

<sup>107</sup> Sylvie Nail, *Forest Policies and Social Change in England* (New York: Springer, 2008)

James C. Scott's *Seeing Like A State* has been very instructive for its parables of state politics drawn from modern fiscal forestry, exploring the relations between local knowledge and practice and state administration in the forest, particularly the facilitation of statecraft through forest management. Scott counters contrasting versions – and tools – of ‘legibility’ in the forest, whether regarding complex social uses (magic, refuge, pasturage, etc.) or ‘the state’s tunnel vision’<sup>108</sup> which organised the ‘meaning’ of nature according to fiscal and commercial logics. (He also cites Diderot’s entry for ‘forest’ in the *Encyclopédie*, which is limited to a narrative of utility rather than reflecting an ecological and social habitat). Carl Griffin has done important work<sup>109</sup> on state silviculture and protest cultures, analysing the forest as a space for modelling the remote control and surveillance of the state, and therefore also a site of complex negotiation of the relationship between the metropole and the provinces. His *Transactions* paper on ‘tree cultures of conflict’, particularly tree-maiming as a material act of protest, fits within a wider arc of historical studies.<sup>110</sup>

Articles dealing with political and social structures of meaning in the forest – or why trees are ‘good to think with’<sup>111</sup> – have been made available in a number of collections specific to this topic; particularly influential papers on culturally artifactual trees and woods are contributed by Rival, Bloch, Mauzé, Fairhead and Leach, Watkins, Watkins, Griffin, and Jones.<sup>112</sup> These include

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<sup>108</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 13. Notably, Scott’s epigraph is taken from Brian Friel’s play *Translations* – mentioned earlier in this thesis in the introduction to cartographic poetry – and is an excerpt of the play’s dialogue discussing the standardisation of names.

<sup>109</sup> Carl Griffin, ‘Cut down by some cowardly miscreants’: plant maiming, or the malicious cutting of flora, as an act of protest in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rural England’, *Rural History* 19.1 (2008); Carl Griffin, ‘More-than-human histories and the failure of grand state schemes: silviculture in the New Forest, England’, *Cultural Geographies* 17.4 (2010)

<sup>110</sup> Carl Griffin, ‘Protest practice and (tree) cultures of conflict: understanding the spaces of ‘tree maiming’ in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 33.1 (2008). See also Richard Thomas, ‘Tree Violation and Ambivalence in Virgil’, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 118 (1988), and Lindsay Diggelmann, ‘Hewing the Ancient Elm: Anger, Arboricide, and Medieval Kingship’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 40.2 (2010)

<sup>111</sup> Maurice Bloch, ‘Why Trees, Too, Are Good to Think With: Towards an Anthropology of the Meaning of Life’, in Laura Rival ed., *The Social Life of Trees* (Oxford: Berg, 1998)

<sup>112</sup> Laura Rival ed., *The Social Life of Trees* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), particularly Laura Rival, ‘Trees, from Symbols of Life and Regeneration to Political Artefacts’, Maurice Bloch, ‘Why Trees, Too, Are Good to Think With: Towards an Anthropology of the Meaning of Life’, Marie Mauzé, ‘Northwest Coast Trees: From Metaphors in Culture to Symbols for Culture’, and James Fairhead and Melissa Leach, ‘Representatives of the Past: Trees in Historical Dispute and Socialised Ecology in the Forest Zone of the Republic of Guinea, West Africa’; Charles Watkins ed., *European Woods and Forests: Studies in Cultural History* (Oxon: Cab, 1998), particularly Charles Watkins, ‘Themes in the history of European woods and forests’, and Charles Watkins, ‘A solemn and gloomy umbrage’: changing interpretations of the ancient oaks of Sherwood Forest’; Eva Ritter and Dainis Dauksta ed., *New Perspectives on People and Forests* (Series: World Forests, 9, 2011), particularly Dainis Dauksta, ‘Introduction – The Crooked Timber of Humanity’, Eva Ritter, ‘Forests in Landscapes – The Myth of Untouched Wilderness’, Carl Griffin, ‘Space and Place: Popular Perceptions of Forests’, Owain Jones, ‘Materiality and Identity – Forests, Trees, and Senses of Belonging’, and Hansen and Ovesen, ‘Definitions and Concepts – The Etymology and Use of the Terms Forest and Landscape’.

specifically textual analyses of the definitions, concepts, and etymology of forests,<sup>113</sup> and of the ‘lexical manifestation’ of trees as political symbols.<sup>114</sup> Articles outside of specific forestry-themed collections include Stephen Daniels’ chapter on the political iconography of woodland in Georgian England, focussing on some particularly vociferous debates around conifers, and Douglas Davies’ writing on arboreal metaphor and symbol theory,<sup>115</sup> William Ruddick’s chapter on ‘liberty trees’ and ‘loyal oaks’ during the French Revolutionary period,<sup>116</sup> Bridget Keegan’s chapter on the labouring-class politics and poetics of wood in the early nineteenth century,<sup>117</sup> and Johannes Zechner’s chapter on ‘politicized timber’ and cultural constructions of national landscapes via the ‘ideological orchestration’ of forests, beginning with the German novelist and anthropologist Wilhelm Riehl’s famous line ‘Even if we were not in need of timber any more, we still would need the forest (...) The German Volk needs the forest like humans need wine’.<sup>118</sup> Auricchio, Cook and Pacini’s new volume *Invaluable Trees: Cultures of Nature, 1660-1830* is the fullest collection to date of ‘arboreal negotiations’ in European culture and politics.<sup>119</sup> Meanwhile, Owain Jones and Paul Cloke’s *Tree Cultures: The Place of Trees and Trees in their Place*, as indicated by its chiasmatic title, aims to turn from an understanding of trees through social constructionism – and forests as a place for the maintenance of ‘individual and collective identities’, as Jones notes in a later article<sup>120</sup> – and towards material relationality. That is to say, an understanding not just of the human ‘placing’ of trees in culture and politics, but also the agency of trees themselves in shaping and performing the spaces of orchards, cemeteries, heritage trails, and squares.

A second branch of forest research has conducted analysis into historiography itself and the knowledge of the past. This includes John Langton’s discussions of *anamnesis* and views of the past

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<sup>113</sup> Kirsten Krogh Hansen and Hanna Byskov Ovesen, ‘Definitions and Concepts – The Etymology and Use of the Terms Forest and Landscape’, in Dauksta and Ritter eds., *New Perspectives on People and Forests*, *ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Laura Rival, ‘Trees, from Symbols of Life and Regeneration to Political Artefacts’, in Rival ed., *The Social Life of Trees*, *ibid.*, p. 9

<sup>115</sup> Douglas Davies, ‘The evocative symbolism of trees’, and Stephen Daniels, ‘The political iconography of woodland in later Georgian England’, both in Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels eds., *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)

<sup>116</sup> William Ruddick, ‘Liberty trees and loyal oaks: emblematic presences in some English poems of the French revolutionary period’, in Yarrington and Everest eds., *Reflections of Revolution: Images of Romanticism* (London: Routledge, 1993)

<sup>117</sup> Bridget Keegan, ‘Conclusion: The Politics and Poetics of Wood: Labouring-Class Poetry in the Victorian Era’, in Keegan, *British Labouring-Class Nature Poetry, 1730-1837* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)

<sup>118</sup> Johannes Zechner, ‘Politicized Timber: The German Forest and the Nature of the Nation 1800-1945’, in *The Brock Review* 11.2 (2011), p. 19

<sup>119</sup> Laura Auricchio, Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook and Giulia Pacini, *Invaluable Trees: Cultures of Nature, 1660-1830* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2012)

<sup>120</sup> Owain Jones, ‘Materiality and Identity – Forests, Trees, and Senses of Belonging’, in Dauksta and Ritter eds., *New Perspectives on People and Forests*, *ibid.*

in the joint project publication *Forests and Chases of England and Wales c. 1500-c. 1850*.<sup>121</sup> Most potently, Joachim Radkau's *Wood: A History* – only recently published in English – looks to the 'multiplicity of 'wood ages' and 'wooden cultures', proving beyond doubt that any history of cultures and epochs would find 'Wood, wood, everywhere!'<sup>122</sup> His account is full of the meta-analysis of the material of wood as a means to a historical approach, including 'Praising Wood, Caring for Wood, Splitting Wood – and a Historical Synthesis', 'Paths into the Thicket of History', 'Man and Forest: Stories and History', and 'Wood and Historical Change'. In this sturdy book we not only find myriad histories of the human milieu of wood and forests, but also uncountable reasons to deny any claims made that forests are somehow an opposite force to human culture – the 'shadow of civilization', as Robert Pogue Harrison had put it.<sup>123</sup> They are, rather, a predicate of culture – wood is what 'inspires culture',<sup>124</sup> Radkau argues. Wood may even be inspire culture *into existence*; John Newton<sup>125</sup> and William Bryant Logan are amongst those who have made such an argument, with Logan pointing to Norah H. Logan's 'World Oak Distribution' map to show that the densest areas of human civilization and trade erupted specifically amongst the areas with the most oak coverage, rather than the opposite.<sup>126</sup> Archie Miles has written on this in the specific British context in *The Trees that made Britain*.<sup>127</sup> It is not surprising that forests and trees have become a much-appropriated symbol for culture itself,<sup>128</sup> as seen in shorthand by the number of cultural geography texts on this researcher's bookshelf, not specific to woodland, which bear tree forms on the front cover,<sup>129</sup> including the ASLE journal.<sup>130</sup> They are also emblematic of literary culture, or a figure for literary history itself.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> John Langton, 'Forests in Early-Modern England and Wales: History and Historiography', in John Langton and Graham Jones eds., *Forests and Chases of England and Wales c. 1500 – c. 1850: Towards a Survey and Analysis* (Oxford: St John's College Research Centre, 2005)

<sup>122</sup> Joachim Radkau (trans. Camiller), *Wood: A History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), p. 19, 18

<sup>123</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993)

<sup>124</sup> Joachim Radkau, *Wood*, *ibid.*, p. 19

<sup>125</sup> John Newton, *The Roots of Civilisation: Plants that Changed the World* (Pier 9: Murdoch Books, 2009)

<sup>126</sup> William Bryant Logan, *Oak: The Frame of Civilization* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006): 'All that it is to be human was defined in and through wood' (p. 21); 'it seems that people went and stayed where oaks were (...) we invented a whole way of living out of their fruit and their wood' (p. 28); 'Oaks ... invented us' (p. 28).

<sup>127</sup> Archie Miles, *The Trees that made Britain* (London: BBC Books, 2006)

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Marie Mauzé, 'Northwest Coast Trees: From Metaphors in Culture to Symbols for Culture', in Rival ed., *The Social Life of Trees*, *ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> These included: James Duncan and David Ley, *Place / Culture / Representation* (London: Routledge, 1989); Cloke et al., *Writing the Rural: Five Cultural Geographies* (London: SAGE, 1994); Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Language of Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); and Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); the association between trees and woodland and principles of history and cultural identity can also be seen exemplified in the print of an oak tree on the cover of Simon Jenkins' *A Short History of England* (London: Profile Books, 2012)

<sup>130</sup> The Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) publishes the journal *ISLE*, or *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, which bears a print of a twisted oak tree on the front cover of each issue.

<sup>131</sup> See Xanthe Ashburner and Timothy Chandler, 'Introduction: Pastoral Echoes in the Forest of Literary History', *COLLOQUY Text Theory Critique* 23 (2012)

In literary studies there is also a good deal of useful work with a silvo-centric emphasis based on earlier periods. The regulation of woodlands and their use has textual histories through John Manwood's *Treatise and Discourse of the Lawes of the Forrest* (1598) and John Evelyn's *Sylva, or A Discourse on Forest-Trees and the Propagation of Timber in His Majesty's Dominions* (1662). The discursiveness of the forest and its legal and economic rhetoric has long been a site for textual interactions with history and politics. In literature, the forest fulfils its characteristic of being 'richly generative of (...) contradictory perceptions', as Griffin has noted in his article on popular perceptions of the forest as space and/or place.<sup>132</sup> While in history the forest has been a topical space for debates around law and legislation – with its surviving feudal laws, and the systems of verderer law and forest courts, being known to contradict larger state law and sovereign law – it has also been troped in literature as a lawless space (which in turn can mean either uncivil and barbarous, or a refuge from wrongful law – as Robert Mayhew observes<sup>133</sup>). In the modern age of environmental representation, this trope is filtered through wider debates about the processing of nature within cultural representations. James Proctor has sifted through the ethics and related ideas of nature which inform 'the forest controversy' in North American conservationism;<sup>134</sup> in the same publication, William Cronon has famously written about that most vital of forest clichés, wilderness – as the grandchild of romanticism and post-frontier ideology – as being 'profoundly a human creation'. Against the concept of civilization as a 'human disease' infecting the earth's pure wilderness, he argues that wilderness – as a socially imposed category – is itself 'loaded with some of the deepest core values of the culture'.<sup>135</sup> In Phil Macnaghten's mini-essay on 'Trees' in *Patterned Ground* he also observes that trees play 'a crucial role in structuring social relations', and that 'The collective use and management of trees (is) thus central to the sustenance and ordering of social life'.<sup>136</sup>

Much of literature has been complicit in the social coding of the forest as an "external" space of magic, folklore, barbarism, or refuge. Robert Pogue Harrison's *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* in particular tracks this trope – beginning with descriptions of civilization as a clearing of the forest ('A sylvan fringe of darkness defined the limits of its cultivation'<sup>137</sup>) – and investigates the literary devices of the forest through Dante, the Bacchanalias, German utilitarian forestry, High Romanticism and music, iconography and painting, Shakespeare, the Brothers Grimm, Thoreau, and modern ecological

<sup>132</sup> Carl Griffin, 'Space and Place – Popular Perceptions of Forests', in Dauksta and Ritter eds., *New Perspectives on People and Forests*, *ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> On this division see Robert Mayhew, 'These Trees Shall be My Books': Forests as a Geographical Imaginary in English Literature, c.1600-1800', in Baigent and Mayhew eds., *English Geographies 1600-1950: Historical Essays on English Customs, Cultures and Communities in Honour of Jack Langton* (Oxford: St. Johns, 2009)

<sup>134</sup> James Proctor, 'Whose Nature? The Contested Moral Terrain of Ancient Forests', in William Cronon ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), p. 271

<sup>135</sup> William Cronon, 'The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature', in Cronon ed., *Uncommon Ground*, *ibid.*, p. 69, 69, 73

<sup>136</sup> Phil Macnaghten, 'Trees', in Harrison, Pile, and Thrift eds., *Patterned Ground: Entanglements of Nature and Culture* (London: Reaktion, 2004), p. 233, 232

<sup>137</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. ix

poetry. Harrison's survey is inclined towards language – from the word 'lex' and its links to oak, acorns, law, word, and reading, to the 'philological mystification' of German forests,<sup>138</sup> to Vico's use of 'clearing' as a '*lucus*', in the sense of an eye. While Harrison's text does not free itself from the forest/civilization dichotomy it seeks to describe, it is useful for its interest in language, and in particular, an attention to the on-going dominion of the forest over human communication: 'they have (...) plundered its trees in order to forge their fundamental etymologies, symbols, analogies, structures of thought, emblems of identity, concepts of continuity, and notions of system'.<sup>139</sup>

Other major literary analyses include Corinne Saunders' study of forests in medieval romance, which focusses on Biblical, romantic, and allegorical geographies, including alongside her reading of the Latin term *sylva* an exploration of the Classical Greek root *hyle* (wood, chaos, disorder, primordial matter); between the various histories she finds the forest to incorporate 'a geographical actuality, an economic necessity, a royal preserve, and a wilderness of exile, escape, test and vision'.<sup>140</sup> Jeffrey Theis's account of early modern sylvan pastoral is an intricate survey of multivalent national, Royalist, and/or Shakespearian woods, bringing together literary form, forest history, and the interplay between new and old forest law and land-use practices; in his careful readings of the texts, he finds the forest to be 'always a multiple place that means different things to different characters', and a theatre for 'contestation and conflict'.<sup>141</sup> Pat Rogers' monograph on Alexander Pope considers both the antiquated creeds and Stuart myths of the forest, and the realities of woodland economy, forest magnates, and the peculiarities of forest law.<sup>142</sup> And William Perry Marvin's work on hunting ritual explores the connection between hunting treatises and poetry and the motif of the "arts of hunting" in imaginative literature; most insightful for current purposes is Marvin's exploration of the duality of the arts of hunting and reading, tracing metaphorical links made between tracking game by reading animal signs, and the "venery" of book-literacy itself – a trope which presents the hunt for truth as a stag chase, but also explains the textual and prescriptive impulses in the forest landscape.<sup>143</sup> This trope informs such modern poems as John Burnside's 'The Fair Chase';<sup>144</sup> Colin Simms'

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<sup>138</sup> Harrison, *Forests*, *ibid.*, p. 164

<sup>139</sup> Harrison, *Forests*, *ibid.*, p. 7-8

<sup>140</sup> Corinne Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993), p. 19. See also Della Hooke, *Trees in Anglo-Saxon England: Literature, Lore, and Landscape* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2013)

<sup>141</sup> Jeffrey Theis, 'Introduction', *Writing the Forest in Early Modern England* (Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 2009), p. xiii

<sup>142</sup> Pat Rogers, *The Symbolic Design of Windsor-Forest: Iconography, Pageant, and Prophecy in Pope's Early Work* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004)

<sup>143</sup> William Perry Marvin's *Hunting Law and Ritual in Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006)

<sup>144</sup> This poem appears in John Burnside, *Black Cat Bone* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011). Chloe Stopa-Hunt has noted in a review of this volume that in 'The Fair Chase', 'the hunter, "alone in a havoc of signs", parses as much as he hunts'; Stopa-Hunt, 'The Fierce and the Fragile', *Poetry Review* 101.4 (2011), unpaginated online issue.

‘Carcajou’, considered later in this chapter,<sup>145</sup> is another such long poem which uses the motif of the hunt and the anonymous, shape shifting beast to mark the forest as a space of linguistic pursuit (rather than definition).

Thus, forest literature has a huge back catalogue. Although the poets Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts describe the ‘complicated and sustaining myth’ of forests as being ‘places of hiding and as places beyond the codes and authority of the day’,<sup>146</sup> they are actually multiply coded and lawed, and in fact over-determined with codes and symbols, as well as the interpretative problems of sorting access, entitlements, restrictions, concessions, rights of use, and resources. This is all in ‘a political terrain where boundaries between state and civil society can never be clearly drawn since they are constantly being contested, negotiated, and redefined’.<sup>147</sup> This is a vital area of study in the current climate of modern forestry. In the modern period, however, there has been a dropping off of scholarly analysis of the literary geographies of the forest. The major studies of forest literature all cut off before what Judith Tsouvalis has called our age of ‘postmodern forestry’<sup>148</sup> – yet public argument over forested land and language has been rife in this period, coinciding with forestry’s own turn to an explicit concern with the multiplicity of cultural interaction and interpretation. More contemporary work is needed to analyse the re-setting of the forests theme in our current writing – including the effect of the state of capitalism and global timber currencies, the tensions of modern forests and the politics of their expression, the intensely local versus the global infrastructure of forestry, and the automotive processes of late twentieth century forestry and its technologies.

Following on from Jeff Hilson’s intervention in the historical British forest glossary, and within the contexts touched on above, this chapter therefore considers the attention that modern British poetry brings to the glossing and reglossing of modern forest space. It will consider the effect of modern social and language histories on the trope of the forest as a speaking site (as in Hardy’s Hintock Woods, a fictional treed reserve of ‘signs and symbols which seen in few were of runic obscurity, but all together made an alphabet’<sup>149</sup>). A forest is a perplexing collection of legal, political and cultural identifications, and an impenetrably rich vehicle of metaphor (see, for instance, Judith Owen’s remarks on the ambivalent ‘demesne’ of Wyatt’s “heart’s forest”<sup>150</sup>). As I will argue, much of this in language also revolves around the understanding of the forest as a space of translation – and this is not simply translation from the language of trees into the language of humans; often a more complex

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<sup>145</sup> See p. 232, this thesis

<sup>146</sup> Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts, *Edgelands: Journey’s Into England’s True Wilderness* (London: Vintage, 2012), p. 162

<sup>147</sup> Haripriya Rangan, ‘Contested boundaries, state policies, classifications, and deforestation in the Garhwal Himalayas’, *Antipode* 27.4 (1995), p. 344

<sup>148</sup> Tsouvalis, *A Critical Geography of Britain’s State Forests*, *ibid.*, p. 179

<sup>149</sup> Thomas Hardy, *The Woodlanders* (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 297-8

<sup>150</sup> Judith Owens, *Enabling Engagements: Edmund Spenser and the Poetics of Patronage* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), from p. 26



linguistic refracting is imagined to be at work. Part of this is seen as an apt correspondence with the nature of arboreal space: a mapping onto language of our spatial experience of the forest as a network of dark hollow ways, illegible to the outsider. John P. Welle writes in his book on Andrea Zanzotto, for instance, of ‘a linguistic code, the Italian language, that has seemingly lost its way in a deep, dark wood’.<sup>151</sup>

Famously, Walter Benjamin imagines the act of translation as being ‘not in the center of the language forest but on the outside facing the wooded ridge; it calls into it without entering’.<sup>152</sup> The echo is then able to give a response in its own language, reverberating from the trees and the dark hollows of the forest. The task of the translator is to take these alien reverberations as a point of departure, though ‘reconciled in their mode of signification’.<sup>153</sup> Benjamin’s term ‘*Bergwald der Sprache*’ literally translates as ‘mountain forest of language’ or ‘mountain forest of speaking’, although existing English language translations prefer ‘the language forest’.<sup>154</sup> His topography of translation, which finds itself not in the interior of the forest of language, but on the outside facing the wooded ridge, is partly a play on an existing German adage. As Jakob Grimm observed, ‘it is an age-old saying that however one calls into the forest, just so does it echo back.’<sup>155</sup> Eric Mottram reworks this German adage in his *A Book of Herne* (1981), which will feature later in this chapter: in ‘Deer Hunt’ he closes with the lines ‘what is shouted into the forest / the forest echoes back / throws its terror cry / against crumbling ultimates of law’.<sup>156</sup> Here, the echo is not an exact human shout, but an amplified ‘terror cry’, terrorising the paradoxically ‘crumbling ultimates’ of civilised law. Carol Jacobs in ‘The Monstrosity of Translation’ refers to the same German saying, but specifies Benjamin’s division from this model, for in ‘The Task of the Translator’ there is *not* a literally returned echo; the sound that returns from the dark woods is othered, ‘its own tongue become foreign’.<sup>157</sup> The transmission and displacement which takes place in the woods thus means we are confronted not with ‘language as a whole’ or ‘one’s own’. There is a disarticulation of the originary voice: as Hanssen and Benjamin put it,

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<sup>151</sup> John P. Welle, *The Poetry of Andrea Zanzotto: A Critical Study of Il Galatea In Bosco* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1987), p. 57

<sup>152</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (London: Pimlico, 1999), p. 77

<sup>153</sup> Benjamin, *Illuminations*, *ibid.*, p. 77

<sup>154</sup> See the translation in Nägele, *Echoes of Translation: Reading Between Texts* (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 36, 33, and also Walter Benjamin (trans. Zohn), ‘The Task of the Translator’, in Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings eds., *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 1: 1913-1926* (London: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 258-9

<sup>155</sup> Jakob Grimm, ‘Über das Echo. Gelesen in der Akademie der Wissenschaften am 25. Juni 1863’, *Kleinere Schriften* 7. Bd. *Recensionen und vermischte Aufsätze* 4. Teil (Berlin, Dümmler, 1884), p. 503

<sup>156</sup> Eric Mottram, *A Book of Herne* (Lancashire: Arrowspire Press, 1981), p. 35

<sup>157</sup> Carol Jacobs, ‘The Monstrosity of Translation’, *Modern Language Notes* 90.6 *Comparative Literature: Translation: Theory and Practice* (1975), p. 764

however one calls in, ‘one’s ‘own’ voice could never remain such’ in the reverberations of the forest of language.<sup>158</sup>

Benjamin’s voice, too, is partly not his own: the ‘Task of the Translator’ essay was first written and published in 1923, as ‘Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers’, a preface to his translations of Baudelaire’s ‘Tableaux parisiens’ poems. It is clearly affected by Baudelaire’s ‘forest of symbols’, a line from his famous symbolist manifesto poem ‘Correspondences’, in *Fleurs du mal* (1857). This symbolist poem is in turn, of course, a part reworking of neo-Platonist Plotinus’ principles of correspondence.

Baudelaire writes:

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers  
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;  
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles  
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.<sup>159</sup>

Here, living pillars (‘vivants piliers’) sometimes give voice to confused words (‘confuses paroles’). The aesthetic of the woods as an alternative ecclesiastical space (the forest cathedral trope) is seen in the tree-pillars of the temple of Nature. Their confused ‘paroles’ make impossible the dream of an absolute language in these woods. (The word ‘parole’ in modern English-language linguistics specifically indicates this multiplicity of utterance. In Saussure’s dichotomy, the term ‘parole’ indicates individual verbal behaviour, which is differentiated from ‘langue’, an abstract system of language.) Most famously, ‘L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles’ – ‘Man walks through a forest of symbols’. These arboreal ‘paroles’ are described, in the next stanza, as distant, confounding echoes – ‘Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent’. These confusing echoes of the forest ring again in Benjamin as a model of the discontinuity of language and its remembrances.<sup>160</sup>

The linguistically disassociating forest has become a useful trope for otherness in language; Helen Lambert, for instance, recently gave an account of the ‘fractured and slippery’ ‘Australian language forest’ and its colonial and indigenous constituents, revealed through poetry’s function of de-familiarising language, in her source text, Les Murray’s *Translations from the Natural World*

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<sup>158</sup> Beatrice Hanssen and Andrew E. Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin and Romanticism* (London: Continuum, 2002), p. 94

<sup>159</sup> Charles Baudelaire, ‘Correspondences’, *The Flowers of Evil* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 18

<sup>160</sup> Baudelaire, ‘Correspondences’, *ibid.*, p.18

(1993).<sup>161</sup> Irish poet Ciaran Carson uses the motif of the ‘forest of language’ throughout his sonnet sequence *For All We Know* (2008), a dexterous study of memory, repetition and linguistic difference. ‘And so we lost ourselves in the dark forest of language’,<sup>162</sup> he writes, and returns severally to this phrase. His volume, in its serial form, is a text fully concerned with echoes and translations. It is arranged into two parts, together making up a sequence of slightly divergent sonnet forms. The second part is made up of thirty-five poems with the same titles, in the same order, as the thirty-five poems of the first part. But this is an inconsistent textual return. Stories repeat in contradictory forms; the same events are recast as taking place in Berlin, Dresden, Belfast, and Paris. The non-native speaker Nina tells stories, or is remembered telling stories, which repeat and diverge through the languages of fables and ‘the language of dream’. The text bears synecdoche of itself within it, whether it is the fugue, the ‘labyrinth’, the ‘arabesque’, the quilt of sewn memories (which resembles a city, or the Paris arcades), or the ubiquitous forest.<sup>163</sup>

Throughout there is a focus on the bilingual ‘interminable wrestle with words and meanings’, and of the ‘irrevocably’ split father and mother tongues in which ‘one word never came across as just itself’. This is imagined as a political split, referring to ‘double lives’ and the constant possibility of being ‘betrayed by our words’ to the ‘other side’ through turncoat nomenclature (in the poem ‘Birthright’, changing one’s name is ‘the act of a turncoat’). The text is full of ‘disinformation’, unplaceable accents, brokering ‘lingua franca’, ‘insinuating’ transmissions, unreadable menus, ‘sweet nothings’ which are ‘Greek to you’, and the ‘dim murmur’ of foreign liturgy. Everything in the book is ‘in a manner of speaking’. This doubling between several spies and doppelgängers in the narrative is also followed into a fascination with radio, telephone and long-distance speech, language’s own doppelgängers, including poems given in the voice of telephone dialogue (‘Second Take’), in which the speaker remarks ‘That’s why I knew your voice then. And you’re speaking in it now’, with an oddly uncanny touch of the momentary inhabitation of the voice. The dream of the absolute language, and of absolute linguistic integrity, is thus made impossible by the self-alienation of language throughout Carson’s text – the negotiators’ ‘form / of words which can be claimed by both sides as a victory’, and the theme of betraying words and the double life of the self.<sup>164</sup>

The regular reprises in the text of the fairy stories of the forest provide an ideal model of the non-absolute in language – fairy tale being constituted by a range of oral tellings. These mismatching tales work with familiar patterns, but further disrupt any sign of singular language: ‘Deep in the forest of language there dwelt a manikin / not called Rumpelstiltskin. His name was not that important.’ Here, the magic of Rumpelstiltskin’s true name, which if discovered gives one power over him, is entirely

<sup>161</sup> Helen Lambert, ‘The Australian Language Forest: Les Murray’s *Translations from the Natural World*’, *Colloquy: Text Theory Critique* 19 (2010), p. 45

<sup>162</sup> Ciaran Carson, *For All We Know* (Loughcrew: Gallery Books, 2008), p. 18

<sup>163</sup> Carson, *For All We Know*, *ibid.*, p. 41, 33, 57

<sup>164</sup> Carson, *For All We Know*, *ibid.*, p. 28, 66, 15, 18, 90, 24, 20, 15, 17, 22, 107, 83, 59

denied – in this forest, absolute naming has no power. There is no transcendence of the forest of language in which poets such as Carson have their livelihood, and with whose materials they labour. The non-Rumpelstiltskin character similarly has his livelihood within the forest of language and with its materials. He becomes a joiner, famous for ornamental chests of drawers ‘each crafted from a plank of his oak house in the forest’, and holds as his last wish ‘to be buried in the Forest of Language / his body to be laid in a box of his own device’.<sup>165</sup>

The forest is the over-arching terrain of *For All We Know*, constantly referenced whether explicitly (‘And so we lost ourselves in the dark forest’; ‘We travelled towards the dark forest’; ‘She told me a stranger was approaching through the forest’; ‘We are entering a forest’) or through fabular tales of woodcutters and riderless mares. This forest is always amplified self-consciously as the forest of language – and as the scene of non-literal translation. The interest throughout the text in echo, modelled through the forest of language, places Carson very firmly in a Benjaminian frame. The soldier’s promise ‘*I come again / Je reviens*’, which literally returns in another language, in the French following the line break, is remembered also in Nina’s last words: ‘*Je reviens*, you said, I will return within a week – / your last words to me, as I knew by the end of the week’, as well as the morbid detail of a dead lover’s perfume, ‘A spurt of *Je Reviens* on both wrists’.<sup>166</sup>

The echo can itself be seen as morbid - a figure of continued life after death, of ‘a return of the departed within (acoustic) remembrance’,<sup>167</sup> as with the ‘ghostly reflections’ of Carson’s fugue-text. It is also an oral displacement: an uncanny traversing of the voice by other, altered, voices. The afterlife’s discontinuity within the forest is where Benjamin markedly diverged from the German adage about the exact forest echo. He imagined not a reply, but a non-literal translation reverberating from the dark interior of the forest. Carson, too, in a text concerned with the impossibility of having a singular, politically safe voice and ‘guarding our tongues’ as an exclusionary communication, uses Benjamin’s topography of the forest which, here, overhears and retransmits through multiple ears and mouths:<sup>168</sup>

You put the book away and spoke in a language I knew  
from a long time before. We are entering a forest,

you said, whose trees have ears and mouths that listen and respond

<sup>165</sup> Carson, *For All We Know*, *ibid.*, p. 38, 38, 39

<sup>166</sup> Carson, *For All We Know*, *ibid.*, p. 18, 44, 48, 49, 57, 110, 109

<sup>167</sup> Hanssen and Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin and Romanticism*, *ibid.*, p. 94

<sup>168</sup> Carson, *For All We Know*, *ibid.*, p. 57, 18

to every passerby. Everything gets reported back.<sup>169</sup>

We cannot guard our tongues against the other. Here, the other is present even in the action of the scene, where the dead lover stops her reading and speaks in a half-forgotten language, garbling Baudelaire's 'living pillars' with Benjamin's '*Bergwald der Sprache*', and with Stasi bugging ('Everything gets reported back'), as well as the language sensitivity and social surveillance of a troubled Belfast.

The use of the spatially complex terrain of the forest as a model for multi-lingual exchange occurs, again, in Carson's collection of short stories *Fishing for Amber* (1999), where he writes that 'bringing one language to bear upon another is like going through a forest at night, where there are many forking paths, and each route is fraught with its own pitfalls'.<sup>170</sup> Why is there this profound association between the human spatial experience of the forest – as a dense zone of alternate twisting routes – and the potentially confounding nature of linguistic multiplicity? Carson invoked this association once more in his inaugural Professor of Poetry lecture, 'Whose Woods These Are...': Some Aspects of Poetry and Translation'. In the published version of this lecture, he draws a link between Dante's opening to *Inferno* (which he himself translated in 2002), and American poet Robert Frost's 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening':

*Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura* – 'I came to in a dark wood'. That is the landscape in which poetry, and translations, are found. *Whose woods these are I think I know*.<sup>171</sup>

Here, the first italicised quotation is from the first line of *Inferno*, and the second italicised quotation is the opening to Frost's poem. Carson implies that the 'who' of Frost's 'Whose woods' is the shadowy figure of Dante himself, that Frost's rhyme scheme is a skewed version of Dante's terza rima, and that Frost's speaker is ominously evoking the model of the sombre and pathless Wood of the Suicides in the eighth canto of the Italian text. He also follows the reverberating 'dream vision of the woods' theme through Irish poet Brian Merriman's *aisling* 'The Midnight Court', and the 'wood of the suicides theme' into a John Boyle O'Reilly poem about a pestilential 'wooded swamp', both in the light of bi-lingual Irish culture. Moreover, he reveals how Frost's poem may be explicitly about

<sup>169</sup> Carson, *For All We Know*, *ibid.*, p. 49

<sup>170</sup> Ciaran Carson, *Fishing for Amber* (London: Granta Books, 1999), p. 203

<sup>171</sup> Carson, 'Whose Woods These Are...': Some Aspects of Poetry and Translation', version of inaugural QUB lecture, 5 May 2005, in *The Yellow Nib: The Literary Journal of the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry* 2 (2006), p. 122

this ‘alternate reading’, or the continual ‘spiriting’ of words into another dimension – as in the final two repeating lines, ‘And miles to go before I sleep’ and ‘And miles to go before I sleep’, where he suggests a ‘vast speculative gap’ opens up between the identical lines, which invite a double-take, or translation.<sup>172</sup>

The Benjaminian model of translation in the forest is understandable for several reasons – as is Carson’s uptake of it. Firstly, the forest has been used as an orienting theme in several linguistic philosophies, particularly European. It has an unassailable link to thinking about language because of its use by linguists as a model for understanding and calculating linguistic structures and processes (forest, tree, string). Actual forests have also been held up as a truth-resource by language historians and analysts seeking to recover information about primitive forms of human language,<sup>173</sup> while it was ethnographer Wade Davis who penned the aphorism ‘Every language is an old-growth forest of the mind’.<sup>174</sup> In Europe, the forest has been cross-fertilised with philosophies of language and semantics – such as in Derrida’s *Signéponge/Signsponge*, mentioned above – as well as with understandings of symbolism in poetry, whether it be Baudelaire’s ‘forest of symbols’ or the poet Robert Grave’s arboreal meditations in *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (1948).

The second reason for this ‘forest-as-translation’ trope, as introduced above, is that the forest is, and has historically been, a place of conflicting interpretations, whether of the evocative political symbolism of trees<sup>175</sup> or the competing administrative definitions of forested land.<sup>176</sup> The British forest imaginary is a confounding repository of different meanings, values and practices, as well as different understandings of local and national governance. It is important to note that the word itself, ‘forest’, began life with a linguistic slippage: the first recorded use of the word in England is in the Domesday Book (1086), an adapted French word from the Latin *forestare*, meaning the exterior, or something foreign or alien. However, early regal forestry concerned the marking off of particular areas where game was reserved for the monarch and the royal entourage’s hunting; this draws out the other Latin etymology of forest, ‘to keep out, to place off limits, to exclude’, and means that the term ‘forest’ largely functioned as a legal designation. Our contemporary understandings of forest have been diverted towards particular understandings of wooded topography, not strictly included within

<sup>172</sup> Carson, ‘Whose Woods These Are...’, *ibid.*, p. 121, 116, 124, 116

<sup>173</sup> See Alban Lemasson et al, ‘The primate roots of human language: Forest guenon’s vocal abilities’, in Francesco d’Errico and Jean-Marie Hombert eds., *Becoming Eloquent: Advances in the Emergence of Language, Human Cognition, and Modern Cultures* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2009); see also Alfred Gell’s work on the articulatory symbolism of Umeda ‘landscape’ concepts in the chapter ‘The Language of the Forest: Landscape and Phonological Iconism in Umeda’, in Gell, *The Art of Anthropology: Essays and Diagrams* (London: The Athlone Press, 1999)

<sup>174</sup> Wade Davis, *The Wayfinders: Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in the Modern World* (Ontario: House of Anansi Press, 2009), p. 3

<sup>175</sup> See Douglas Davies, ‘The evocative symbolism of trees’, *ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> See Carl J. Griffin, ‘More-than-human histories and the failure of grand state schemes: sylviculture in the New Forest, England’, *Cultural Geographies* 17.4 (2010)

the original definitions: this is one example of some of the contemporary difficulties with the interpretation of the commercial, social and political aspects of past and present forests today and their misnomers.<sup>177</sup>

Thirdly, the multiple trajectories of flora and fauna in the forest may provide a literary rebuff to anthropocentrism. The many route-ways of the forest guarantee echoes beyond the privacy of the human language. In Zoë Skoulding's poem 'Undergrowth', the speaker attempts to create a secluded linguistic space in the forest ('So what if I won't let you in on my own private thoughts') which is in fact traversed also by the 'wandering script' of 'beetle journeys' and 'boar calling boar, elk / dreaming of elk' where 'paths multiply a forest's disregard for boundaries'.<sup>178</sup> In theologian poet John Milbank's volume *The Mercurial Wood: Sites, Tales, Qualities* (1997), the forest is where 'paths intersect of tales / Untelling to each other'.<sup>179</sup> This 'untelling' of the multiple bio-geographical realms of the forest is linked to a cultural understanding of the forest as a place in which man does not, or can no longer, belong – and thus the languages of its denizens are amplified beyond his intelligibility. Euro-centrally, the forest is modelled not as a site for belonging, but as a place to regard the other and its alien expressions of culture – whether in language studies<sup>180</sup> or in other forms of symbolic eavesdropping.<sup>181</sup>

Fourthly, the 'forest-as-translation' poetic trope is related, if unconsciously, to the real practical struggle for a uniform terminology in dealing with the complex terrain and practises of the forest, which is what informs much of the contemporary global discourse debates with which this chapter began. This will be laid out in the next section of the chapter.

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<sup>177</sup> See for instance the 'Roundtable Discussion' in Langton and Jones eds., *Forests and Chases of England and Wales c. 1500-1850: Towards a survey and analysis* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2008).

<sup>178</sup> Zoë Skoulding, *The Mirror Trade* (Bridgend: Seren, 2004), p. 37

<sup>179</sup> John Milbank, *The Mercurial Wood: Sites, Tales, Qualities* (Salzburg: University of Salzburg Press, 1997), p. 49

<sup>180</sup> See Alban Lemasson et al, 'The primate roots of human language: Forest guenon's vocal abilities', *ibid.*, and Alfred Gell's chapter 'The Language of the Forest: Landscape and Phonological Iconism in Umeda', *ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> Forests are canonical venues for ethnographic investigations into the territory of ritual and symbolism, such as Victor Witter Turner's *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1967), which bears Baudelaire's 'Correspondences' poem as its epigraph, or of ethnographic delineations of border-crossing human practises, such as Valerio Valeri's *The Forest of Taboos: Morality, Hunting and Identity among the Huaulu of the Moluccas* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000).

### **‘Distortion in lumber’: Anthony Barnett and forest dictionaries**

The struggle for a uniform forestry vocabulary is recorded in the Society of American Foresters’ *Terminology of Forest Science, Technology Practise and Products* (1971), and energises the pluri-linguistic ideas in poet Anthony Barnett’s adaptation of it into *A Forest Utilization Family* (1982) and *Forest Poems Forest Drawings* (1987).<sup>182</sup> The account of the vocabulary’s construction in Britain, America and the Commonwealth which follows here may seem an oddly technical diversion, but it is also a relatively little known or specialised history which casts an interesting contextual light on the attempt to deal, poetically or practically, with the ‘semantic confrontations’<sup>183</sup> posed by the forest – both in Barnett’s poetic text, which explicitly reworks the materials of the terminology, and in texts by other poets which address similar linguistic issues.

The initial proposal for building the comprehensive forestry terminology was advanced in 1949 during the Third World Forestry Congress in Helsinki. This was to be a combined effort between the director of the Forestry Division, M. Marcel Leloup, the Joint Committee on Bibliography set up by FAO (the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations), and IUFRO (the International Union of Forest Research Organizations). The first act of these groups was to create an internationally acceptable subject-classification system for forestry. This resulted in the 1954 publication of the Oxford System of Decimal Classification for Forestry for use in forestry libraries – as they put it in Article II, ‘working towards uniformity of nomenclature and standardisation in matters such as information storage and retrieval’ (this system is still basically in use for retrieving electronic and paper forest and forestry-related information resources).<sup>184</sup>

Only in 1965 did work begin in earnest on the terminology, with twenty-five working parties of specialists formed across Great Britain, covering various fields of forest science, technology and products as defined in the Oxford Decimal Classification, and each headed by one of eight Coordinators at The Commonwealth Forestry Institute (Oxford), the Forest Products Research Laboratory (Princes Risborough), the Forestry Commission’s Research Station at Alice Holt, and the Tropical Products Institute in London. Each specialist party was reviewing the terms and definitions relevant to its subject-field as collected in the British Commonwealth forest terminology and

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<sup>182</sup> Anthony Barnett, *A Forest Utilization Family* (Providence: Burning Deck, 1982) and *Forest Poems Forest Drawings* (London: Ferry Press, 1987). Both of these chapbooks are unpaginated.

<sup>183</sup> F. C. Ford-Robertson and Robert K. Winters, *The Terminology of Forest Science, Technology Practise and Products* (Washington: Society of American Foresters, 1971), ‘Preface’, xxi

<sup>184</sup> F. C. Ford-Robertson and Robert K. Winters, *The Terminology of Forest Science, Technology Practise and Products* (Washington: SAF, 1971), ‘Article II’



proposing amendments or additions. This material was then subject to various reviews by the Director-Editor at Oxford, and recast in the standard project form, before multiple copies of the revised, re-ordered text were sent out to Commonwealth countries, Ireland, and South Africa for criticism and suggestions. Following this, each item was reviewed at the Society of American Foresters office in Washington, in light of its relevance in the American fields, before being sent back to Oxford for discussion. This long and complicated ‘consultative flow-line’<sup>185</sup> was reversible in instances in which U.S. forestry had a wider or more developed vocabulary, as with cableways and wildlife management – in which case the forest definitions were established in America before being checked and discussed locally in Britain.

There is some fretting in the preface of the SAF (Society of American Foresters) volume over the ‘semantic confrontations’ which were made visible in this exchange of materials, caused by ‘the different English language “forestries” over the greater part of the subject fields involved’. The pluralism of “forestries” led to ‘hard-core divergences’ which occasionally ‘proved intractable by correspondence’.<sup>186</sup> The problem was that the project had an intended hierarchic flow – i.e. the application of officially sanctioned terms to encompass all local activities and components of forestry – at the same time that it was forced to acknowledge the mutable nature of language and forestry practise. This can be seen in the actions taken towards the translation and uptake of the terminology. As an agreement on text was reached,

the Director-Editor had the terms and definitions satisfactory to both the Commonwealth and the USA transferred to 8 X 4-inch cards, up to a total of 130 sets of each, and despatched to documentation centres and ad hoc bodies (72 addresses) throughout the world (...) so that each could process the cards according to a uniform procedure – essentially by making a faithful translation of each definition in their own language and fitting an appropriate key-term, synonyms, etc. to it.<sup>187</sup>

The hoped-for dissemination of a prescribed linguistic code *across* languages was literalised in these uniform cards, which instructed different language-regions in the setting up of ‘a comparable Project terminology in its own language with the minimum of trouble, *using the same body of concepts and the same typographic minutiae, order and form of presentation, Figures, Families, etc.*’ (emphasis mine). The policing of typographic minutiae and the emphasis on faithful and direct translation was to guarantee a controlled and efficient process. The intended effect was, of course, to increase the

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<sup>185</sup> F. C. Ford-Robertson and Robert K. Winters, *The Terminology*, *ibid.*, ‘Preface’, xxi

<sup>186</sup> F. C. Ford-Robertson and Robert K. Winters, *The Terminology*, *ibid.*, ‘Preface’, xxi

<sup>187</sup> F. C. Ford-Robertson and Robert K. Winters, *The Terminology*, *ibid.*, ‘Preface’, xxi

efficiency of the business of international forestry – with the feeling that the medium of language is dangerously inefficient. The preface to the massive document finishes by acknowledging the ‘ever-evolving’ nature of language, and hoping that ‘some sort of mechanism’ could be created ‘for keeping the Project terminologies representative and up-to-date’ and anticipating the ‘substantial accession of concepts suggested by the linguistic needs of other important forestry languages’. The preface does acknowledge the importance of being flexible to the input of other languages. But this is still a mechanistic envisioning of forestry as something which can be made, linguistically, entirely smooth and functional in its vocabulary of tools and processes. The preface concludes by underlining the ultimate objective: ‘a comprehensive Terminology of modern type, linking all languages; each one of these provided with appropriate mechanisms for amendment and growth, under international control.’<sup>188</sup>

The processes and intentions of the *Terminology* were recast in the 1980s by English poet and musician Anthony Barnett, at a distance from the original vocabulary (whose contents are transformed, with hindsight, by the vast uptake of computing in forestry). The texts of both *A Forest Utilization Family* and the later *Forest Poems Forest Drawings* are alphabetised collections of reworked individual lexical items from the *Terminology*. In each case, Barnett obediently tracks the original occurrence of the dictionary entry by spacing the words and symbols exactly as they appear on the *Terminology* record, and would have appeared on the uniform cards which were despatched. Yet Barnett ruins the sense by omitting the majority of the text. Only fragments of the original entries survive, although those fragments are kept in their original position on the page. This spatial and typographical fidelity without semantic fidelity is Barnett echoing the production and dispatch of the uniform cards – but simultaneously involving his text with the obstructive variance of the language.

On the first page of *A Forest Utilization Family* we get the first of Barnett’s modified alphabetical entries, BARK. The typography of the *Terminology*’s entry for BARK is exactly replicated, such as the title’s bold face upper case,<sup>189</sup> but it is shorn of its associated paraphernalia of orienting signs and symbols. The below shows the changes to just the first paragraph of this entry by Barnett, where my own underlining indicates the parts preserved in his poem entry:

**BARK** Fig. 16

- (1) (s. c.) (wood structure) A non-technical term  
covering all the tissues outside the \*xylem cylinder.

NOTE: In older trees, generally divisible into \*inner

<sup>188</sup> F. C. Ford-Robertson and Robert K. Winters, *The Terminology*, *ibid.*, ‘Preface’, xxi

<sup>189</sup> This is common not just to the *Terminology*, but also to other glossaries, such as the US Forest Service’s *The Encyclopedia of Wood* (Washington: US Department of Agriculture, 2007).

bark and \*outer bark and, in any growing season,  
 into **early bark** (consisting typically of \*sieve tubes  
 with \*companion cells or \*sieve cells → SOFT  
 BARK) and **late bark** (consisting typically of \*paren-  
 chyma and a few, small sieve tubes or sieve cells →  
 HARD BARK) (≈ MGWA)<sup>190</sup>

## BARK

cover the outside

in season,

with

a few,<sup>191</sup>

As seen here, the supposed replication of the vocabulary is marred by the excerpting of only individual lexical units – occasionally breaking those into smaller units, such as ‘cover’, excerpted from the word ‘covering’. The concerns of the original *Terminology* entry are to give a taxonomy of the ‘divisible’ kinds of bark, based on its constitutive cells and positioning on the tree, and of the divisible kinds of barking: ‘(2) (vb) Fam. II = strip, ross [N. Am], ‡flaw, ‡flay, ‡rind, †debark [N. Am, New Zealand], †decorticate, †disbark [N. Am]’. Barnett’s entry overskips these symbolic divisions, however – notably, it is nomenclature itself which seems to be entirely missing from his entry. Specific terms, both nouns and the verbs, have been cut, and the entry ends with the final sentence ‘removing in narrow strips / tanning / the action of animals / incomplete’. Here, ‘removing in narrow strips’ is the definition of a human activity, while ‘tanning’ is a reference to the wattle bark

<sup>190</sup> F. C. Ford-Robertson and Robert K. Winters, *The Terminology*, *ibid.*, ‘The Vocabulary’, p. 17

<sup>191</sup> Anthony Barnett, *A Forest Utilization Family* (Providence: Burning Deck, 1982), unpaginated.

industry which those narrow strips would be used for; and ‘the action of animals’ is a reference to environmental circumstance, which in the *Terminology* version is referred to as ‘**scale** ≈scar ( → FRAYING)’. Barnett’s version thus removes the careful linguistic distinctions between intended human action, the industrial context, and environmental dynamics.

Meanwhile, the incompleteness of his entry prevents the symbols on the page from performing their linguistic conversions. Sentences designed to redirect might have at base a structure such as ‘for the action of animals, see FRAYING’ – as here, in the more complexly symbolic line ‘for the action of animals, e.g. deer, monkeys, **scale** ≈scar ( → FRAYING)’. However, when Barnett quotes only ‘the action of animals’, he takes this semantic unit out of the complex directional processes it originally began. The original entry operates by redirecting semantic meaning towards specific terms, as in the sentence ‘For bark of small stems that is readily separable, the more appropriate terms are **peel**, (also **sap peel** at time of active \*cambium division)’. In Barnett’s version, the conveyance of meaning from a vernacular form to a specific term is prevented through a disorienting loss of text. ‘Removing in narrow strips’, quoted in Barnett’s version, was originally a description which followed, in parenthesis, the term ‘**strip**’. But the actual term ‘**strip**’ is absent in Barnett’s version, so we are given a definition which defines nothing, a quoted half-parenthesis unable to orient itself in the taxonomical process. This is the first of several poems in the book which exhibit a physical consciousness of the processes it describes: this is a vocabulary entry ‘spot barked’, ‘patch barked’, ‘incompletely’ stripped and peeled. The structures of conveyance of meaning are not present, and there is no movement between lexis: this is language disembarked.

This is a deliberate approach Barnett has taken to a *Terminology* which begins with a long ‘Conspectus of Abbreviations, Signs and Symbols’, marshalling the different symbols for cross-referential movements of forest meaning. A double tilde or “swung dashes” precedes a movement to a near-synonym. An obelus or “dagger” refers to a ‘deprecated (a) key term – generally followed by a preferred synonym’, and then ordered: ‘synonym, antonym, alternate spelling, abbreviation, or note’. One set of symbols is translated as ‘see (also) (1) to (3); etc. of this homographic term’. There are various symbols for the positioning of items relative to each other (vs., ca., i.e.). Rarer symbols are used to indicate a relation of compound contexts, or the hierarchical balancing of ‘a colloquial term, e.g. “lick” (fire control); or a loan word, e.g. “BLENDERSAUM-SCHLAG”, or a neologism; or “so-called” (generally metaphoric)’.<sup>192</sup> Other marks show associative linkings, or indicate equivalence or non-equivalence (< meaning that ‘the KEY TERM is narrower in sense than the one(s) following’, and ± meaning that ‘The KEY TERM is both broader and narrower in sense than this one; see e.g. TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT’). Each symbol confers significant relations on the words around it, and directs the reader through different patterns of consultation.

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<sup>192</sup> F. C. Ford-Robertson and Robert K. Winters, *The Terminology*, *ibid.*, ‘Preface’, xxi

This is followed by a defence of the selection process, designed to give ‘the fullest spread of that tricky and elastic term *forestry*’. The rejection of non-traditional soil divisions is defended, as is the non-inclusion of certain terms from ‘the fast-developing Computer field’. The aim is to give as clear a corpus of ‘types’ as possible. This demands the standardized spatial form of each entry – a repeatable structure of synonyms, homonyms, and archaic and regional types. This territorial scatter of citations, attributions, cross-references and determining contexts is described in a seven page key decoding the spatial and typographical principles – including two full pages on ‘the asterisk convention’. Thus, the complex arrangement of the components on the page is not stylistic. The material must appear *seriatim*: these are painstaking mathematical equations, set out in the standardized systems ‘made familiar to forestry documentary centres all over the world through the thousands of cards supplied to them over the years 1958-1969’.<sup>193</sup>

It is exactly this which Barnett challenges: each poem is carried away from its source entry’s nomenclature systems. ‘BILLET’ skips each of the definition of blocks, bolts and composite wood, in doing so releasing from the forest data a ‘heart’ metaphor, freed from its functional origin: ‘in current usage / show none / prepare for / for / for / less / than a half without heart’.<sup>194</sup> ‘CHIPS’ is a scattering of lexical chips at the bottom of the page – even the word pieces itself in pieces. In full, the text reads ‘all pie s / ax(e) / cuts / of the / paper / y / es’, failing at a collective entity. ‘FELLING’ recasts the act of tree felling as a ‘coupe / of annual success’, the taxonomical lacunae in the sentence hiding the specifics of the original entry’s ‘annual succession’ of ‘cutting systems’ for bamboo. A practical instruction is then cut into nonsense: ‘obtained, if so desired, by / a ping / board plank’. ‘EXTRACTION’ dramatizes itself as ‘A loose process moving / fuel / from place of growth to some / delivery / or further manufacture’, where the poem is itself an act of extraction, moving out words for ‘further manufacture’: it ends by modifying the sentence ‘not to be confused with’,<sup>195</sup> which is contrarily ruptured into ‘confused its sense of pulling out by / force’. ‘FOREST UTILIZATION’ converts the sentence ‘every merchantable part of each tree according to its best end-use’<sup>196</sup> into ‘every art / according to its end’, imagining ‘delivery / to the consumer’ as applicable to the mechanics of art, too. ‘POLE’ extrapolates a sense of the elegiac from an original sentence about height growth and crown expansion,<sup>197</sup> drawing new forms of prosodic rhetoric from the text, such as the parallel sentence structure in ‘still young from / time it begin to die / begin to slow’. ‘TRIMMING’ describes ‘debranch (de) limb / , shragging, / snedding’ in an errantly punctuated text which fails to end ‘clear / or flush’, as its penultimate line states, the word ‘defects’ instead oddly placed at the bottom of the page, warping the layout of the text. ‘TREE’ reworks an entry about the

<sup>193</sup> F. C. Ford-Robertson and Robert K. Winters, *The Terminology*, *ibid.*, ‘Introduction’, xi, xii

<sup>194</sup> Barnett, *A Forest Utilization Family*, *ibid.*, unpaginated. All further Barnett quotations are from this volume.

<sup>195</sup> F. C. Ford-Robertson and Robert K. Winters, *The Terminology*, *ibid.*, ‘The Vocabulary’, p. 93

<sup>196</sup> F. C. Ford-Robertson and Robert K. Winters, *The Terminology*, *ibid.*, ‘The Vocabulary’, p. 110

<sup>197</sup> F. C. Ford-Robertson and Robert K. Winters, *The Terminology*, *ibid.*, ‘The Vocabulary’, p. 199

legal entity of the tree in ordinances,<sup>198</sup> which comprises not only trees proper but plants, shrubs, and even parts of plants – Barnett giving the reader, in lieu of a single well-defined tree, a collage of ‘awe in Forest Acts / and trees / and arts’.

By creating new poetic strophes from the vocabulary data, Barnett disrupts the normal processes of combination and subordination which take place not just in forestry classification, but also the constituent classifications of any structured linguistic expression. (This is something Barnett is still interested in: his 2012 collection *Antonyms and Others* includes six commentaries on the use of English.<sup>199</sup>) Changing the architectonics of the text releases new expressions. One major effect is to draw attention to the forces of language morphology which have plagued stable definitions of the forest – and which the writers of the original *Terminology* sought to avoid. But attention is also drawn to the unstable intersections of the multiple foundational languages of forestry in the first place. In the *Terminology* this played out in regional and national semantic disagreements, but also in the confrontations between different working parties’ specialisms involving different forestry processes, scales and contexts (e.g., land management). In wider British culture, the circuits of language around the forest – legal, political, botanical, historical, lyrical, to name a few – have created an overlay of different systems of signification. Anthony Barnett’s *Forest Utilization Family* renews such diversifications in the vocabulary data, legitimising elegiac and rhetoric expressions as languages of forestry, patched together from the source’s existing taxonomy of discourses.

It is worth commenting on Barnett’s use of visuals. *A Forest Utilization Family* is a handsome green book, handset and printed in an edition of 475 copies. The cover page bears a reprint of the diagram ‘11. A FOREST UTILIZATION family’, from Appendix 3 of the *Terminology*.<sup>200</sup> This Appendix 3 diagram shows families of contextually connected linguistic terms, in diagrammatic compositions, such as ‘A family of fungal SPORES’, ‘A family of SAWS’, ‘A TREE-removal family’, ‘A family of STRESSES (mechanics)’, ‘A family of CROWN CLASSES’ and ‘A family of FIRE PHENOMENA’. Many of these diagrams are family trees: of course, a key use of forestry metaphor in linguistics. Barnett’s use of this diagram ‘A FOREST UTILIZATION family’ for his cover image explains several things. It explains his organising principle, by which his chosen material is all related to the narrative of ‘utilization’ – as he notes: ‘For this book selection from the over 5150 forest poems has been made on the basis of a title’s appearance in Family No.11 of connected terms in Appendix 3 of the *Terminology*’.<sup>201</sup> It explains his interest in the logical co-ordination of the linguistics of forestry utilization, and the spatial organisation of nodes of hierarchy of meaning (presented by the SAF as supposed ‘organic linkages’ – but in fact a disruptable form, as he shows). It explains his interest in

<sup>198</sup> F. C. Ford-Robertson and Robert K. Winters, *The Terminology*, *ibid.*, ‘The Vocabulary’, p. 282

<sup>199</sup> Anthony Barnett, *Antonyms and Others* (London: Allardyce, 2012)

<sup>200</sup> F. C. Ford-Robertson and Robert K. Winters, *The Terminology*, *ibid.*, ‘Appendix 3’, p. 331

<sup>201</sup> Barnett, *A Forest Utilization Family*, *ibid.*, Author’s note. Barnett’s choice here to refer to each of the 5150 forestry vocabulary entries as ‘poems’ asserts the validity of their linguistic interest even in original form.

the non-metrical constructional schemes of poetry, and how they might remark on directional processes of meaning, as marked in this diagram. And finally, it works with our own arboreal logics for explaining rational communication.

Five years later, *Forest Poems Forest Drawings* (1987) makes further use of diagramming, as might be imagined from the title. This recollects forest pieces reworking the *Terminology* in the same fashion, in some cases directly reprinted from *A Forest Utilization Family*. But this is an illustrated collaboration between Anthony Barnett and the artist and sculptor David Nash, best known for his works in what he calls the ‘language’ of wood.<sup>202</sup> A younger Nash worked with his father clearing and replanting a local forest and also spent time working for the Commercial Forestry Group. His work is supported by his knowledge of different management ideas, as well as the specifically economic and commercial processes of forestry and wood sourcing. While his pieces are prized for their natural qualities – using growing, living trees in sculpture arboretums – they are also charged by an interest in systemic economic processes. His works explore this undercurrent in the sphere of the forest, considering ‘how the world of the geometric can be reconciled with the organic forms of trees’.<sup>203</sup> He explores both standardisation – in early work using milled planks and adzes, saws, chisels and wedges – and unrepeatable or unexpected forms: the cracking and warping of unseasoned wood, the effect of charring and burning wood, the unpredictable growth of shapes from seeds.<sup>204</sup>

These ideas inform *Forest Poems Forest Drawings*. This selection of *Terminology*-based poems explores how our economies work trees into inorganic geometries, while also contingently bringing out the natural resistance of the material. In this collaborative text there is a focus on models of forest utilization and commercial forestry, but also the diverging material geographies of the forest which may be resistant to these concerns. The felling and cutting of timber into marketable sections is called conversion. By beginning the set with the self-reflexive poem ‘CONVERTED TIMBER’, Anthony Barnett reminds us that forest poetry itself is the division of the topoi of the forest into marketable sections for consumer-readers. This is bound up in literal wood economies, too, of course, as the words of the poem are printed on the paper produce of the forest or woodland.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Oliver Lowenstein, ‘David Nash: Shaping the language of wood’, *TREE NEWS* (2004), p. 43

<sup>203</sup> Lowenstein, ‘David Nash’, *ibid.*, p. 44

<sup>204</sup> From April to September 2012 David Nash had an exhibition at Kew Gardens and also worked on site in a wood quarry. Several of the small textual pieces he included in the exhibition related to his description of working with the ‘language’ of wood. See: <<http://www.kew.org/visit-kew-gardens/whats-on/past-festivals-events/david-nash/>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>205</sup> It’s worth noting that this particular text, published by Ferry Press, was printed by The Beacon Press, which is a leading environmental printer and a member of a network dedicated to increased transparency of the supply chain for forest goods, and ‘forestry certification systems’, which are about verifying the legality of the timber involved. It’s relevant, therefore, that Barnett’s poetry sequence itself transparently shows the supply chain, ‘end use’, ‘business delivery’, and ‘categorisation of forest goods’ – all part of the systemic processes of the production of the physical text. See the GFTN-UK Forest Product Reporting Summary for 2010:

Barnett divides the items into two alphabetically arranged sections – CONVERTED TIMBER and DISTORTION IN LUMBER. Timber as a noun can mean anything from a piece of structural wood (as in a timber in a roof), the wood of growing trees suitable for structural purposes, the growing trees themselves, or the wooded land or area. However, lumber, as a noun, applies to something more specifically marketable – timber sawn into boards, planks, or other structural members of standard or specified length. Chronologically, therefore, the text moves from woodland to the more specific and standardised output. The two events which Barnett focuses on – conversion and distortion – are very different. Conversion is a number of different deliberate processes which timber is put through, by manpower or machinery, to create functional pieces of wood (such as rift sawing). Distortion of lumber, the title of the second section, is very different: it's a natural occurrence in which there is a deviation from the straight plane of the wood, often due to shrinkage or moisture (such as 'kiln kink').

The first section of the text, 'CONVERTED TIMBER', is a set of poem entries on words used in the technology of wood production. Each term is in capitals, with a poem erasure on the verso page and an illustration by Nash on the facing recto. In the poem 'FACE',<sup>206</sup> face is taken as a technical term, referring to a plane or board face, but also extended into the anthropomorphic trope of describing trees bodily: Barnett cuts away at the text, leaving phrases about a 'side cheek' and also a 'face above man-height', heightening the metaphorical performance of the technical language. The layout of the poem itself echoes its subject matter: the initial cuts into a vertical column of timber creating a new organisation of space and family of geometrical faces. The repetition of words, such as chip – 'regularly chipped', 'type chipping us', 'a / type of chipping', 'wood chip', 'bark chip' – shows a splintering into small units which must be categorised into types, although they are plural and repeatable, and isolated in single units of sometimes one word. Meanwhile, the repetition of 'face', which appears six times, shows the difficulty of making the 'distinction between faces' or following the geometric protocol of 'rules' to distinguish between 'the better side' and 'the / poorer side' – as does the disorienting repetition of supposedly orienting words such as 'edges', 'no edges', 'back', 'side', 'flat, side', and 'opposite side'.

The second half of the book, 'DISTORTION IN LUMBER', includes five terms for kinds of lumber warp – 'bow', 'cupping', 'diamonding', 'spring', and 'twist'. In 'cupping', the spatial rhyme of two dish-like lines of the text is echoed in Nash's diagram. Cupping is a kind of shrinkage in flat-sawn boards, particularly from small-diameter trees, in which the difference between tangential and radial shrinkage creates a curvature – a deviation which can cause an excessive loss of lumber in any later mechanical handling. What is interesting about this text as a whole, therefore, is that it starts with a

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[http://ftp.pureprintdev.co.uk/WWF\\_GFTN\\_UK\\_Forest\\_Product\\_Report\\_Summary\\_2010.pdf](http://ftp.pureprintdev.co.uk/WWF_GFTN_UK_Forest_Product_Report_Summary_2010.pdf) (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>206</sup> Anthony Barnett, *Forest Poems Forest Drawings* (London: Ferry Press, 1987), unpaginated. The Barnett quotations which follow are all taken from this text.



vocabulary of the mechanised processes which convert timber into functional wood economies, but in the second half it diverts into a vocabulary of the different natural deviations within this process which affect the utility of wood. These kinds of drying flaw reduce the value and grade of lumber and intervene in its future economic processes. Wood is losing market share in construction specifically due to this lack of dimensional stability of lumber, and Barnett is evidently interested in the way this lack of dimensional stability creates its own terminology, as well as in spatial textual representations of this lack of stability. Within the very structure of his text, therefore, is an interest in the natural forms of resistance which are ingrained in these processes. We are reminded of the subversive quality of the natural timber and its potential resistance to our economic schemes – and even, by extension (in Barnett’s constant reconstruction of the word ‘art’ from constituent letters or larger words), our literary or poetic schematics of the forest as a marketable subject.

Barnett’s work on the uniformity of forest materials compares it to the attempted uniformity of forest language. Like the standardisation of lumber for stacking purposes, the same typographic minutiae in each version are needed for the global transport and use of these systems. The processing of wood lumber into replicable forms becomes, in both these texts, a metaphor for the attempt to create a certifiable forest language. The *Terminology* goes so far as to assign universal serial numbers (USNs) to each semantic entry, so that different alphabetical organisation in different languages does not interfere with the transmission of information. Barnett’s pluralisation of forestry languages – using the *Terminology* as a lesser known context of the literary and linguistic self-reflexivity in woodland – is deliberately pitted against this number system. In other words, his text shows poetry recalculating the forest.

The attempt at standardising forest languages is unceasing; the *Terminology* was the beginning, not the end, of a series of efforts in this direction. John A. Helms’ adaptation, *The Dictionary of Forestry*, published by SAF in 1998, was in 2008 launched as a website,<sup>207</sup> with an accommodating call to world-wide users to respond on perceived errors or omissions. The SAF pose a familiar problem on their home page: the struggle between the ‘dynamic’ form of forestry vocabulary, and the need for a consistent professional global language. This need has increased exponentially as the technicity of the forest has increased. The modern British forest is handled by computers: forest metrics, logging and budgeting are all deeply coded activities. This is partly in fact because of a shifting of forestry towards wider, multi-purpose objectives. Perhaps counter-intuitively (given the temptation to link codification with standardisation), this widening of “forestry” into multiple schemes and motivations is possible only alongside the rise of digital forestry – and therefore a rise in formal requirements of the codability of forest data. Governmental programs are responsible for the GIS mapping of forests, for monitoring harvest outputs, and the remote sensing methods for assessment of canopy structure.

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<sup>207</sup> Online at: <[www.dictionaryofforestry.org](http://www.dictionaryofforestry.org)> (accessed 12/08/2014)

But digital forestry also facilitates new adaptable experiments in forest research. The contemporary network of forest experiments which use computer-based silvicultural tools are run by various field stations of the Forest Research Technical Services Unit. Their findings, site classifications and predictive models are founded upon the languages of programming and its data-efficiency – dependent on the improved computability of forests which, in turn, was possible only with the first step, the *Terminology*.

Barnett's texts coincided with early discussions about this evolution of computing and forestry.<sup>208</sup> What is a particularly striking element of the modern forest dictionaries, within the concept of this chapter, is that their contemporary published forms, drawing from the same source material – such as *Holz-Lexicon*, *The Dictionary of Forestry*, and *English-Russian Russian-English Dictionary of Forestry and Forest Industries* – each tend to use the subject matter of the forest to organise their bi-lingual or tri-lingual structures. The forest, here, is offered as a kind of global pasigraphy or perfect trade language, according to the twentieth century moves toward International Auxiliary Languages mentioned record by Eco,<sup>209</sup> which in this case aimed to resist the forest problématique of linguistic relativity.

Such heavy-weight computer technology in forestry is crucial to work on the remote governance of the forest, as in the studies by James C. Scott and Carl Griffin mentioned above, and in Nancy Peluso's influential essay on the counter-mapping of forests.<sup>210</sup> But it is clear that Anthony Barnett's two forest texts deliberately occupy an intersection within this narrative. Barnett uses the *Terminology* as an archive of the moment of hand-over, in priority and practise, into the new efficient linguistic evaluation of the woods, with modern digital forestry about to appear on the horizon. He re-edits the text to release the metaphorical content of forest lexis and its morphs. 'Forest' itself is a compendious metaphor – a world-sized metaphor, according to Ursula Le Guin in *The Word for World is Forest* (1976). Yet it and its processes are increasingly held accountable to the utterances of programming and monitoring systems. In the modern world, code is the Lorax which speaks for the forest, too.

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<sup>208</sup> Contemporaneous examples include the *Council on Forest Engineering's High Technology in Forest Engineering* conference proceedings of 1987, the *Canadian Forestry Service's Primeval Improvement: The New Forestry Age* proceedings of 1987, and the Forestry Commission's *Report on Forest Research* of 1989, in particular the section on computing projects at Alice Holt Lodge.

<sup>209</sup> Umberto Eco has outlined the contemporary agenda for such International Auxiliary Languages (IALs) in *The Search for the Perfect Language*. In the twentieth century, he observes, governments felt as never before the need for international forums where they might meet to solve an infinite series of common problems, which were run by supra-national bodies, and so required machine-like organised languages, 'sous peine de revenir à la tour de Babel'. Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language* (London: Fontana Press, 1997), p. 317 onwards

<sup>210</sup> Nancy Peluso, 'Whose Woods are These? Counter-Mapping Forest Territories in Kalamantan, Indonesia', *Antipode* 27.4 (1995)

### ‘Tune, Robin Hood reviv’d’: Eric Mottram and the forest of iteration

The contemporary forest is a site of ‘messy complexity *and* modern technology’, as recently observed.<sup>211</sup> The ongoing effect of modern technology on its languages has been considered above. On the side of messy complexity in language, the multi-lingual forest may be demonstrated in a text’s hyper-literary stratum: archaic spellings, intertextual allusions, mythological references. Bill Griffiths’ *The Great North Forest* (1992) exhibits such perennial literary forms – Latinate and Saxon – alongside dialect and modern idiom.<sup>212</sup> This is apt as an investigation into the form of the romantically titled Great North Forest itself, established over 250 square kilometres of urban fringe countryside across Tyne and Wear and north-east Durham in 1990, two years before Griffiths’ publication, as one of the twelve new community forests. Proportionally, it is a mix of new plantation (over 800 hectares), reclaimed derelict land (over 200 hectares) and newly created or improved wildlife habitats (over 450 hectares). This and the other eleven British community forests are the ‘green engines’ which poets Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts address, asking ‘where are the wild woods now?’ In their two typologies of modern woodland – edgelands and plantations – they take umbrage at the utopian schemes of the community forests, observing that ‘(s)ome of these young ecosystems, finding their footholds in our abandoned edgelands, are even cleared away and destroyed to make way for the new ‘high-quality environments’’. Farley and Roberts’ chapter outlines the grand imaginations of British forests: ‘We look for what’s left of Robin Hood’s Sherwood, a few miles to the east of the M1 ... We want to find an Epping Forest in Essex that a fugitive Dick Turpin could hide out in’. But these literary and social imaginations of the forest are mismatched with ‘the lone copse surrounded by arable fields’ or ‘the farmer’s shelterbelt of woodland’. Farley and Roberts’ text deliberately primes a new aesthetics of edgelands and plantations, referring to feral car-park woodlands and clumps of trees outside airport perimeters. The twelve community forests, ‘man-made greenings’ on wastelands and former industrial sites, become part of what Farley and Roberts call ‘the postmodern forest’.<sup>213</sup>

If the forest is postmodern, it seems, so is the forest’s textual life – with an anarchic range of confected and anachronistic citations, where the writers speak of ‘yearn(ing) for traces’ of the primeval forest whilst riffing off verbatim website statements: ‘You can easily get lost in the woods of mission statements and manifestos’ where community forests are concerned: the twelve woodlands established so far aim to ‘deliver a comprehensive package of urban, economic and social

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<sup>211</sup> Shelley Saguaro, ‘The Republic of Arborea’: trees and the perfect society’, *Green Letters: Studies in Ecocriticism* 17.3 (2013), p. 241

<sup>212</sup> Bill Griffiths, *The Great North Forest* (Amra Imprint, Seaham, 1992), unpaginated

<sup>213</sup> Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts, *Edgelands: Journeys into England’s True Wilderness* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), p. 162, 164, 162, 162, 163, 163

regeneration', and are in the process of 'creating high-quality environments for millions of people by revitalizing derelict land, providing new opportunities for leisure, recreation and cultural activities, enhancing biodiversity, preparing for climate change and supporting education, healthy living and social and economic development'.<sup>214</sup> To be lost in the woods of mission statements is another example of language as a mazy forest of data-rich encounters. And in keeping with Farley and Roberts' postmodern forest of citations are the linguistic modes of Bill Griffiths' *The Great North Forest*, which reroutes playfully through older languages and artifice in constructing this part plantation, part reclaimed derelict landscape on the urban fringe of Durham; it seems to follow the call offered by Michael Haslam at the beginning of this chapter, to wander through the woods of old poetics and philological diversion.

Griffiths' chapbook begins with a worn collocation: 'Why, when I wend to the woods, / first reaction, is, oh boy'.<sup>215</sup> Griffiths here embarks on the forest space with an archaism, a familiar alliterative echo, broken then into the speech modernism of 'oh boy'. His speaker wends in the sense of journeying, 'betaking oneself', or turning to a new direction (as when wend means turning a ship's bow or head). But it may be noteworthy that 'wend' has alternate definitions as 'to depart or pass away' (so, to pass away from life into the woods), 'to think or turn in thought' (e.g. to turn thought to the woods and, like W.S. Graham, imagine a forest), 'to turn from one language into another', or 'to change form, condition, or course of life'. When the speaker wends to the woods it may be with more than one of these implications. William Cullen Bryant, the American Romantic poet and traveller, previously wended to the woods in his poem 'The Western Hunter to His Mistress', in which a hunter and his 'woodland bride' escape on matching steeds to live 'far in the forest' with 'the beaver' and 'the wild flowers' ('Wend love with me, to the deep woods wend'<sup>216</sup>). There is also a possible nod to the 1622 madrigal, 'To the shady woods now wend we', a short secular piece by composer Thomas Thomkins celebrating the topography of woodland as an escape from the overseeing sun. In the current text, the speaker turns or wends into a 'solemn, plant-ridden, dench-land' full of 'slow languorous living force' and internal phosphorescence – 'ever-ending light-up green'. The oddness of the term 'ever-ending' for this non-deciduous light lies in its temporal patterning – to be always ending, caught in seasonal motion, but communicated in a word which calls for the more normative fixity of 'never-ending'.

In Griffiths' Great North Forest, the *Holzweg*'s 'twig-way' and 'forest-tunnels' are described commercially ('a shopping-busy branch of nooks and pumice - / paths and puzzles'). 'Nooks' here has none of that word's meaning of 'a hidden or secluded spot; a place of privacy or retreat' – instead, they are the 'shopping-busy' alcoves and recesses of the forest. This is a kind of update of the latent

<sup>214</sup> Farley and Roberts, *Edgelands*, *ibid.*, p. 162, 164

<sup>215</sup> Bill Griffiths, *The Great North Forest*, *ibid.*, unpaginated.

<sup>216</sup> William Cullen Bryant, 'The Western Hunter and his Mistress', *The American Monthly Magazine* IV (1835), p. 266

commercial architectural meaning in Robert Louis Stevenson's 'I dreamed of forest alleys fair',<sup>217</sup> or the natural 'aisles of oak and ash' of Alfred Noyes' 'Sherwood'.<sup>218</sup> Griffiths writes: 'there are / palace-spaces, / wide arcs of park, / shopping-squares, / their own mazes'. These modern mazes, with their associations of commercial opulence and architectural regularity, are mapped onto the Romantic maze of the canopied forest, with its opaque twists of 'stinking bark and lime-slur'. In this 'mazy' forest are also an 'Almost goat faced' Bacchus, a Gawain amongst pines, 'yule-mist' and Christmas rites ('the solemn drumming-green house-tree'), kings 'a-riding', and knights on 'steaming, chinking' horses.

Griffiths plays on Chaucer's ringing in of April at the start of *The Canterbury Tales* ('Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote'), but Griffiths' April song is invaded with the commercial and economic markers of seasonal time, including spring sales and tax deadlines: 'The first shake of the snowdrop / the modest advance to the spring sales / the bold formation crocuses / the rustling of the tax-man's paper' – 'all / but prelude to a great BACCHANALE'. The awakening of the forest for the bacchanale is also given in Latinate form ('There, mirabile dictu, the mushroom'). The ethereal content of the forest is linked to the botanical, whether it be in the Latinate wonder at the growing mushroom, or the description of 'spring mysteries, / ice-lilith, tear-tip'. There is a use of competing taxonomies, too – with the text's hyphenated forms reminiscent of an altered botanical terminology ('ptink, ebbibi-tink / wood-tree, grove-leaf, / hear it as slang-song / ... / glory and aura and strange strong-tune'), as well as a musical alterity. This reader might suggest that from the first line to the end, we are intended to see how language itself wends (turns/ translates) in the woods – with both woods and language invoked in the question 'how large? / how much twisty?'<sup>219</sup>

The use of previous texts in forms of citation and wordplay is a significant dimension of poetry's involvement in the forest. Eric Mottram's *Windsor Forest: Bill Butler in Memoriam* (1979), for instance, features references to Herne the Hunter's appearance in William Harrison Ainsworth's gothic romance *Windsor Castle* (1842), as well as reprinting George Cruikshank's illustration of this antlered 'wood demon' or 'hunt ghost'.<sup>220</sup> In its later reprinting as the first poem in *A Book of Herne* (1981), Mottram explains in his afternote that the poem also features Thomas Wyatt, Robert Graves' *The White Goddess*, and Pound's Canto IV (which includes Actæon's transformation into a stag,

<sup>217</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, 'I dreamed of forest alleys fair', *The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson: Vol 15* (New York: Scribner's, 1925), p. 92

<sup>218</sup> Alfred Noyes, 'Sherwood', *Poems* (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1904), p. 9

<sup>219</sup> 'Imagine a labyrinth –

how large?

how much twisty?

It is not clear,

nor if it has a centre,

or an exit, circuit or what.

Only that you have been entered' ; Bill Griffiths, *The Great North Forest*, *ibid.*, unpaginated

<sup>220</sup> Eric Mottram, *Windsor Forest: Bill Butler in Memoriam* (Durham: Pig Press, 1979), unpaginated

various wood nymphs, and ‘old Vidal speaking, / stumbling along in the wood’<sup>221</sup>). Mottram’s afternote also explains that his poem ‘Puns on him as corner, arch and stag’.<sup>222</sup> The transformations in the text are thus linked to the different identifications of Herne: as ‘a figure of dark corners’ with ‘hunt horns’ (no doubt referring here to the Old English *hyrne*, meaning ‘horn’ or ‘corner’, and thus supposing an Anglo-Saxon deity); as the Celtic horned god Cernunnos – a theory inconsistent with the local interpretation (‘a wild spectral humanity / (...) his a skull helmet antlered’); as Actaeon (‘the very hounds with which thou hunted me shall lick thy blood’); as the Norse Woden/ Herian who learned the runic alphabet (‘I am a stag of seven times / who set out letters in ogham’; ‘the beech book by an oak seer’); as a ghost from a Victorian novel (‘from castle chamber to chamber’); and as a transformed stag (‘he left deer imprints’; ‘he starts from the brake / the spectre rides hart royal’), in a text that seems to investigate history’s own ‘changes in tree light’ between different lore and hunt horn ‘allegiances’. Mottram’s Herne is therefore a shape-shifting ghost of forest narrative, alternately leading the chase, being pursued, passing through stone walls, and invoking oaths, horns, and ‘records in beech books’.<sup>223</sup>

Alan Halsey’s *A Robin Hood Book* (1996) takes on another key figure who represents the changing fates of the British greenwood. Like Mottram’s Herne, Halsey’s Robin appears in his full historic and mythic personnel: Robin Goodfellow / Robyn Hode / Robert Hod / Robene Hude / Happy Robin Whood / Robert Fitzooth / Robertus Hood fugitivus / Robin of Locksley, and even more: ‘*I am, ’ said the forester, ‘a nameless man.*’ The illusion of the individual self slips away’. Robin is yeoman, green man, fugitive, prankster, or noble, with each variant of the narrative ‘received once more into the forest’.<sup>224</sup> The book – in a handsome green binding, with a Robin montage on the cover illustrated by Halsey – is separated into prose poem chapters under Roman numerals. As a writer Halsey has shown concern with the re-setting of textual histories in volumes such as *The Text of Shelley’s Death* (1995), the punningly titled *Marginalien* (2005), and *A Looking-Glass for Logoclasts* (2005). David Annwn describes him as a ‘master of linguistic legerdemain, of fugue and subterfuge’.<sup>225</sup> Here we witness the legerdemain of the Robin Hood legend as it is turned to meet different political ends,<sup>226</sup> or intrudes upon anachronistic Tesco’s and ring-roads. The text is full of actual transformations – in the head of a stag, antlers, or horsehide disguise – and historical transformations, as well as lacunae: ‘in the variant where Robin becomes a courtier’ ... ‘the rest of the manuscript is lost’. His name is itself coded across fiction and history (‘Robin is five-sevenths of robbing, Hood rhymes with good’ ... ‘You can’t

<sup>221</sup> Ezra Pound, ‘The Fourth Canto’, *The Dial* 68 (1920), p. 690

<sup>222</sup> Eric Mottram, ‘Resources’, *A Book of Herne* (Lancashire: Arrowspire Press, 1981), p. 100

<sup>223</sup> Mottram, *A Book of Herne*, *ibid.*, p. 4, 1, 3, 1, 2, 4, 1, 2, 4

<sup>224</sup> Alan Halsey, *A Robin Hood Book* (Hay-on-Wye: West House Books, 1996), p. 37, 53

<sup>225</sup> David Annwn, ‘Master of the Five Dimensions: Alan Halsey Nearing Sixty’, *Readings: Response and Reaction to Poetries 4*: <<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/readings/issues/issue4/annwnonalanhalsey>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>226</sup> For transformations of Robin Hood in modern and historical popular culture, see Thomas Hahn ed., *Robin Hood in Popular Culture: Violence, Transgression, and Justice* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000)

help suspecting that all these names beginning ‘R’ must be code words’ ... ‘when Robert de Longchamp is made Abbot of St. Mary’s the R-code takes another turn’ ... ‘the syllabic pattern is the crux. Allowing for the interchangeability of vowels and a B/V shift, adding the code-letter ‘R’ and remembering the usual abbreviation for HOOD we find: IVANHOE / ROBINHO’).<sup>227</sup>

Robin’s class – and relation to the land – in particular is up for grabs: is he an outlaw, a rural terrorist compared to the IRA, or ‘a kind of gentleman-farmer’? As indicated in Halsey’s list of errant and well-known Robin Hood ‘Gestes’, ‘Rymes’, songs and sources, Hood as a figure has been the subject of major custody battles, with interpretative models varying by attitudes to estate, green law, and radicalism. This density of allusion and interpretation is itself forest-like; Robin Hood’s ‘shadow is a greenwood thicket’. The spatial cover provided by the forest canopy (‘A score of men could hide out here for months’) also thus provides a place to ‘hide out’ in history, to take cover and then re-emerge as future merry men or ‘Roberdsmen in Hobbeshod form’. In the text’s first prose-poem introduction, in the face of modern business park land-grabbing, Robin is still able to find a new variant in the legend:<sup>228</sup>

‘This is a new path to me,’ said Will Scarlett wonderingly (...) Or let’s say: at this moment Will and Robin see an aspect of the forest they had previously been unaware of: or, more specifically, they have begun to see the forest in a way that the Sheriff’s men never do (...) the men sent down on quango business to whom the forest is a tangle of old trees and undergrowth which with sufficient investment would be a suitable site for the Oswald Montdragon Park. To them Robin and Will must become terrorists with an incomprehensible message’.<sup>229</sup>

‘Essentially the division is one of language’, Gavin Selerie notes in his suitably titled essay on Halsey, ‘Tracks Across the Wordland’.<sup>230</sup> Robin is not a single person but ‘brigand Robin’; he is therefore not limited to his corporeal presence in the text as ‘his deare body’, or to the several versions of his death by arrow, fever, or suicide. Reports of his death may be greatly exaggerated: in different versions, he dies or returns: his soul sped out like an arrow; ‘again there is a thief in the forest’; his ghost watches the modern eroding of the forest for retail parks and Texas Homecare; and/or ‘The date of his death 24 kal dekembris 1247 was no time at all just as his greenwood was a blank on the map or else he was

<sup>227</sup> Alan Halsey, *A Robin Hood Book*, *ibid.*, p. 11, 18, 13, 34, 35, 39

<sup>228</sup> Halsey, *A Robin Hood Book*, *ibid.*, p. 11, 10, 7, 53

<sup>229</sup> Halsey, *A Robin Hood Book*, *ibid.*, p. 7

<sup>230</sup> Gavin Selerie, ‘Tracks Across the Wordland: The Work of Alan Halsey 1977-1996’, in *Pages*, third series (1996), re-published online by Leaf Press: <<http://www.leafepress.com/litter/selerie02.html>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

truly King of Misrule whose wildnesse named him robin heud.<sup>231</sup> Even Thomas A. Clark's chapbook *Twenty Four Sentences About the Forest* – mentioned earlier in this chapter<sup>232</sup> – is present as a source in this text, interwoven with the past and present legend:

Thomas A. Clark is invited to lecture to the Sheriff's officers: *It is not the forest we discover but our own strategies of evasion*. The officers' problem is that out in the forest they lose any sense of *their own*: even their strategies of evasion are stripped away and put to good use by the man or many they call Robin Hood. For either Robin Hood is himself the forest or Robin Hood is nobody at all.<sup>233</sup>

Alan Halsey's 'thicket' of history can be compared to a number of other texts working with re-settings of forest literature, or what Eric Mottram has called the forest's 'storied glamour'.<sup>234</sup> American poet Susan Howe's 'Thorow' (a phonetic misspelling of Henry David Thoreau) calls on literary references to Thoreau and to James Fenimore Cooper, as well as the concept of "thorow" – through – as invoked in the line 'slipping back to primordial / We go through the word Forest'.<sup>235</sup> Useful work has been done on Howe's critical relationship with singularity of authorship, including Nanes, on 'The Reviser in the Word Forest',<sup>236</sup> and Finkelstein, on Howe's 'wilderness of an endlessly dictated, pathless language (the "Word Forest")'.<sup>237</sup> A British play on Thoreau is offered by the poet Peter Larkin, whose chapbook *Sprout Near Severing Close* (2004) draws on Thoreau's forest landscapes, but specifically handed down via David Foster's account of 'Woodlands and Sproutlands' in *Thoreau's Country: Journey Through a Transformed Landscape* (1999).

Foster's book accounts for Thoreau's development of a forest terminology specific to the tree forms of the Concord landscape, which had no old-growth or natural forest. Thoreau's terms, he observes, are partly 'borrowed from a classification of forest types employed by Gilpin'<sup>238</sup> – thus offering a transculturation of forest terminologies between the English landscapes ('relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty') described by Gilpin, and the woodlots surrounding Walden Pond 'that had been

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<sup>231</sup> Halsey, *A Robin Hood Book*, *ibid.*, p. 49, 53, 49, 48

<sup>232</sup> The quotation on this page explicitly reworks the Thomas A. Clark text; see p. 182, this thesis

<sup>233</sup> Halsey, *A Robin Hood Book*, *ibid.*, p. 49

<sup>234</sup> Mottram, *A Book of Herne*, *ibid.*, p. 27

<sup>235</sup> Susan Howe, 'Thorow', *Singularities* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1990), p. 41

<sup>236</sup> Erika Nanes, 'The Reviser in the Word Forest: Susan Howe and the American Typology of Wilderness', *Journal X: A Journal in Culture and Criticism* 2.1 (1997)

<sup>237</sup> Norman Finkelstein, *On Mount Vision: Forms of the Sacred in Contemporary American Poetry* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2010), p. 134

<sup>238</sup> David R. Foster, *Thoreau's County: Journey Through a Transformed Landscape* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 73. See also William Gilpin's *Remarks on Forest Scenery and other Woodland Views (relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty)* (London: R. Blamire, 1794)



clear-cut repeatedly'.<sup>239</sup> Thoreau's criterion for naming the wooded land areas depended on the different practices of burning, clearing, cutting, and, more specifically, pollarding or coppicing, as well as the natural growth's 'slow time re-invading', the species found in 'the understorey of forests', and the trees' 'rate of dispersal'.<sup>240</sup> Foster includes several entries from Thoreau's journal, particularly those which explore ownership patterns and land-use practices as 'major determinants of forest composition and structure'.<sup>241</sup>

Larkin's chapbook re-exploration of Thoreau's idiomatic terminology for what he called 'sproutlands' draws together the languages of the human business of cutting and managing woodland, in a strangely transcultured move, from the English context (Gilpin) and American context (Thoreau) back to the English context (Larkin). Alongside these landscaping and management terminologies are faint echoes of more literary forms of tree writing, both in his epigraphs, and in words such as 'physic' and phrases such as 'Awake cleared forest'. Following on from Thoreau's coinages, Larkin's neologisms – which, as he notes, are also drawn from his reading of some recent forestry papers on regeneration modes, seed dispersal, and tree attrition – pun on existing official terminology, such as the understanding of the ecological envelope ('Long-term envelopment in the ransom of cutting'), and on metaphorical readings of the actions: 'lops', 'cut', 'scab', 'pares', 'axe-niche', 'curt docks'. He breaks out terms from Gothic architecture ('new gantries / of apartness'), earlier crafts of dwelling ('culled trees / scuttling thatchers of ruin') and of agricultural improvement with the loom ('Shoots exactly on cut, doesn't / shuttle the difference: sky / is horizon sans edge of weave'); all of which can be seen as ways of creating homely spaces ('We adjudicate seed as domus already') while incarcerating the natural growth of the environment ('Woods strewn with fresh bars').<sup>242</sup>

Peter Larkin's work has been commented on for its reading difficulty.<sup>243</sup> Robert Baird in particular has written on Larkin's 'idiolect', observing that 'most of us have little sense of what it is like to live with an alien dialect of our own language (...) Peter Larkin's *Leaves of Field* gives English speakers a taste of that absent experience', as he describes parsing the puns on the grammatical level 'at which Larkin twists his language awry'.<sup>244</sup> Jeremy Prynne has also recently commented on his language's relationship to foliate rhizome structures ('leafage and foliage; these structures are interrelational (...)

<sup>239</sup> Foster, *Thoreau's Country*, *ibid.*, p. 73

<sup>240</sup> Foster, *Thoreau's Country*, *ibid.*, p. 75

<sup>241</sup> Foster, *Thoreau's Country*, *ibid.*, p. 74

<sup>242</sup> Larkin, *Sprout Near Severing Close* (Ontario: The Gig, 2004), unpaginated. Quotations here are from '1', '4', 'Note', '8', '18', '18', '17', '16', '17'

<sup>243</sup> Most recently, Sophie Seita notes that the inattention to Larkin's work relative to other experimental poets may be due to a perceived 'unglamorous abstruseness'. Seita, 'The Ethics of Attention in Peter Larkin's 'Leaves of Field'', *Cordite Poetry Review* online (2013): <<http://cordite.org.au/scholarly/the-ethics-of-attention/>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>244</sup> Robert P. Baird, 'Peter Larkin, *Leaves of Field*', *Chicago Review* 53.1 (2007), p. 186-8

we know roots and stems, and the roots of words branch out into branches and into trunks’),<sup>245</sup> while Jonathan Skinner has observed that ‘Reading Larkin is like guessing topography from canopy, and entails inventing a whole new method.’<sup>246</sup> Larkin’s several other texts<sup>247</sup> draw out new lexes for the forest from botanical, managerial, and architectural registers, referring in his strange syntactical forms and etymology to different tiers of managed and natural space, as well as metaphors of human habitation already existing in our languages of woodland (cf. multi-storied, understorey). His grammar itself is arranged in localised terrains of ‘qualifying canopies’ reflective of ‘grammatical (and arboreal) hierarchy’, as Skinner observes.<sup>248</sup>

In *Sprout Near Severing Close* he observes the compositional disturbances and long-term dynamics of wood growth and forests aside from its natural processes of autogenic succession. This ‘petty (...) shearline’ landscape (depicted in a photograph on the front cover) is without the conventional poetic stature of the forest: in its ‘stump’, ‘bristles’, and ‘inseparation gristle’ it does not fit conventional aesthetic categories of the tree, but offers alternative structures: ‘not into a tree / but into nearer, sparser canopy’. Throughout, as with Thoreau’s linguistic inventiveness and transculturation, he tries out different idioms for the patterns of controlled regeneration in the spaces of managed landscapes: ‘a ventral healing going from cut rather than rescinding it’.<sup>249</sup> Finally, in the space of each page’s cropped texts and dense language Larkin re-presents on the page a visual and syntactical sense of Concord’s ‘sproutlands’, said to be dense hardwood coppices containing ‘impenetrable thickets’ of hardwood stems, as Foster observes.<sup>250</sup>

In Griffiths, Mottram, Halsey, and Larkin, these references backward (or backwood) through a thicket of earlier texts and sources is particularly apt for the forest. As one Dante scholar observed, ‘The image of a wood has appeared often enough in English verse. It has indeed appeared so often that it has gathered a great deal of verse into itself; so that it has become a great forest where, with long leagues of changing green between them, strange episodes of high poetry have place’.<sup>251</sup> This rendering of the space of past literatures as a wood is reminiscent of Derek Mahon’s ‘forest of

<sup>245</sup> J.H. Prynne, ‘On the Poetry of Peter Larkin’, *No Prizes 2* (2013), p. 44-45

<sup>246</sup> Jonathan Skinner, ‘Thoughts on Things: Poetics of the Third Landscape’, in Brenda Iijima ed., *(((Eco(Lang)(uage(Reader)))* (New York: Nightboat Books, 2010), p. 35

<sup>247</sup> Publications include *Additional Trees* (Kenilworth: Prest Roots, 1992), *Terrain Seed Scarcity: Poems From a Decade* (Cambridge: Salt, 2001), three pamphlets from Nate Dorward’s Canadian press, the Gig, in 2004 (*Rings Resting the Circuit*, *What the Surfaces Enclave of Wang Wei*, and *Sprout Near Severing Close*), *Leaves of Field* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2006), *Lessways Least Scarce Among: Poems 2002-2009* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2012), *Imparkments (The Surrogate Has Settled)* (London: Veer, 2012), the critical text *Wordsworth and Coleridge: Promising Losses* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), and *Give Forest Its Next Portent* (Bristol: Shearsman, forthcoming).

<sup>248</sup> Skinner, ‘Thoughts on Things’, *ibid.*, p. 35

<sup>249</sup> Larkin, *Sprout Near Severing Close*, *ibid.*, ‘4’, ‘14’, ‘Note’

<sup>250</sup> Foster, *Thoreau’s Country*, *ibid.*, p. 76

<sup>251</sup> Charles Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice: A Study in Dante* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), p. 107

intertextuality',<sup>252</sup> as well as the Michael Haslam text with which this chapter began: 'I'll wander idly among old woods or poetries (...) wandering the ancient wordlands'.<sup>253</sup> In this case, this piece of slightly old fashioned high poetical criticism goes on to describe the academics 'petrify(ing) in the forest' and the poets 'penetrat(ing) towards the centre' where, past 'great trees and tangled shrubs', there is 'one especially wild part' at the end of the paths turning through the wandering wood.<sup>254</sup> This part is, of course, Dante's.

In the French-Norwegian-English poet Caroline Bergvall's re-setting, 'Via: 48 Dante Variations', Dante's forest (*selva oscura*) is presented as the site of interlingual encounter. Bergvall's text is entirely made up of the first tercet taken from every English translation of *Inferno* present in the British Library in 2000 ('In the middle of the journey of our life, I came to myself within a dark wood, where the straight way was lost'). This is a text for recitation, available to be heard online: she reads it in an even, chanting voice, following each 'Englished' Dante tercet with the date and surname of the translator. The variation structure, in which the text constantly riffs on the same refrain, draws attention to small interpretative differences in the terrain of Dante's wood – and the moral differences evident in the versions of wood, path, and speaker, through such small shifts of diction. As the texts are arranged alphabetically by first letter, rather than chronologically, standard classroom editions and famous translations are mixed up with the more obscure versions, in a forest of bibliographic data.

The published version of this text was included in *Chain 10: Translucinación* in 2003, in which the editors of the issue drew attention to 'flawed ideas of linguistic meticulousness and semantic accuracy' and 'a traditional authoritarian, single literary voice'.<sup>255</sup> In this experimental variorum, the journey through the forest is uttered not from a singular origin, but as a long series of transmissions of acousmatic voice(s). Original authority recedes, with each *selva oscura* heard in relation to the anterior, and following, utterance. These constant distorted broadcasts draw from the functions of a random-access memory device, relevant to the technocritization of the forest and the serial components of its textual identity. The interminable act of translation in the middle of the forest is here constantly being reset, with echoes ringing through it again as a model of the discontinuity of language and its remembrances. Thus the reader wanders, 're-finding' himself or herself in the middle (Dante: *mi ritrova!*) of these 'deceits of the forest' as plagiarised text, to use Williams' term.<sup>256</sup>

Bergvall's recitative sound piece is one of several texts which call for a listening ear to forest history. This idea is raised in Halsey's re-setting of the variant tunes of Robin Hood, mentioned already,<sup>257</sup> in

<sup>252</sup> Derek Mahon, *Collected Poems* (Co. Meath: The Gallery Press, 1999), p. 240

<sup>253</sup> Michael Haslam, *A Cure for Woodness* (Todmorden: Arc Publications, 2010), p. 7

<sup>254</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, *ibid.*, p. 108

<sup>255</sup> Jena Osman and Juliana Spahr eds., *Chain 10* Special Issue: Translucinación (2003), 'Editors' Note'

<sup>256</sup> Williams, *ibid.*, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 108

<sup>257</sup> 'To the tune of, Robin Hood and the Stranger

Derek Mahon's recent *Echo's Grove: Collected Translations* (2013), including Narcissus and Echo in the woods, and in Thomas A. Clark's dusky brown small press text *Forest Grove* (2001), which plays with several singular and plural 'song(s)' and their reversals in the wood through his chiasmatic form.<sup>258</sup> There is much to be said about the modern literary treatments of the forest as a voice-activated device. Several of the texts I have been considering solicit attention to vocal and auditory phenomena in the forest as a way of challenging mono-linguistic cultures, through what John Hollander in *The Figure of Echo* calls 'the hermeneutics of overhearing'.<sup>259</sup> This is through aesthetic and technical devices as well as specific addresses to the idea of forest echo; a number of these texts, such as Bergvall's 'Via', Susan Howe's 'Thorow', and Eric Mottram's *A Book of Herne*,<sup>260</sup> also exist as sound pieces or in musical settings, which cannot be fully discussed here.

There are canonical literary typologies of the acoustic phenomena of sonic rebound in the woods. The Hesiodic trope of echo in Virgil's eclogues and the pastoral locus amoenus is of an oratorical utterance confirmed by the woodland's reciprocity (Spenser: 'the woods shall to me answer and my echo ring'<sup>261</sup>). The forest's echoic mourning in Hymn to Pan can be traced forward in treatments of the Aeolian cacophony of the woods linked to Pan (covered particularly David Toop's *Sinister Resonance: The Mediumship of the Listener*<sup>262</sup>). The mythology of the forest-dwelling nymph Echo herself is historically split between Pan versions (where Echo is dismembered by Pan's followers leaving only her voice and musical properties) and Narcissus versions. The Ovidian Echo is a love-struck, speech-inhibited being who haunts woodland caves, and continues to have the last word through her terminal echo of Narcissus's language. This Echo, whose vocation is a turning of the speaker's words, can be heard in the Renaissance *versi echoici*, with its left alignment of speaker and

The tune is, Robin Hood and the Beggar  
 To the tune of, In Summer time  
 To a pleasant northern tune, Robin Hood in the green-wood stood  
 Tune is, Robin Hood and queen Katherine  
 To a New Northerne tune  
 Tune, Robin Hood's last farewell, &c.  
 Tune of Robin Hood or: Hey down, down a down  
 To a new tune  
 To the tune of The Abbot of Canterbury  
 Tune is, Robin Hood was a tall young man, &c.  
 Tune, Robin Hood reviv'd.' Halsey, *A Robin Hood Book*, *ibid.*, p. 28

<sup>258</sup> 'the song of the goldcrest / in the branches of birch // the song of the siskin / in the branches of alder // the songs and shadows / in the branches of birch / the shadows and songs / in the branches of alder'.

Thomas A. Clark, *A Forest Grove* (Fife: Moschatel Press, 2001), unpaginated

<sup>259</sup> John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 'Preface', p. x

<sup>260</sup> *A Book of Herne's* setting is by John Kenny and is online here:

<[http://thankyouoneandall.co.uk/music/kenny\\_mottram\\_herne.mp3](http://thankyouoneandall.co.uk/music/kenny_mottram_herne.mp3)> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>261</sup> Edmund Spenser, 'Epithalamion' 1.18, cited in Celeste M. Schenck, *Mourning and Panegyric: The Poetics of Pastoral Ceremony* (PA: Pennsylvania State University, 1988)

<sup>262</sup> David Toop, *Sinister Resonance: The Mediumship of the Listener* (New York: Continuum, 2010), particularly p. 9-24

right alignment of echo in the ‘Dic, Echo’ format (Speak, echo). These echo-texts deconstruct first speech into its hidden but operative parts, as in the extractions of light, joy, and leisure from the longer words in George Herbert’s ‘Heaven’.<sup>263</sup> Often this meaningful truncation relies on the knowledge of two languages: Martin Mersenne’s seventeenth century thesis tested echoes that would answer in Spanish what was said in French, while Athanasius Kircher’s artificial schema for echo created a bilingual effect where the shouted word ‘clamore’, a literal outcry, returns at different points as the Italian words for ‘love’, ‘delays’, ‘hours’, and, finally, ‘king’. The forest echo that manifestly transfigures speech – rather than amplifying it with consenting noise – is, in Thoreau’s words in *Walden*, ‘to some extent an original sound’, and ‘partly the voice of the wood’.<sup>264</sup> These kinds of revisionary echoes have been used also as a model for the constrained retorts of contemporary poetry (see Vanessa Place’s *Echo*<sup>265</sup> and Denise Riley’s ‘Affections of the Ear’).<sup>266</sup>

The forest echo, as Hollander points out, ‘inhabits a realm of figurative language as dense as any woods’.<sup>267</sup> This is because the word echo refers to very different manifestations of amplification, resonance, dwindling, distortion, delays in return, scattering, proliferation, or diffusion, and these have very different kinds of literary import. When we ‘listen in the listening wood’, as W. S. Graham has it, it is uncertain whether we shall hear the voice of the forest, or our own voice returned, as suggested in that rebounding of the word ‘listen’ in the excerpt from Graham.<sup>268</sup> In one single page from Eric Mottram’s *A Book of Herne*, echo appears in multiple forms: as referring to the perseverance of some original or anterior sound – ‘speech ceaseless’ and ‘ancient speech’ – or to the non-human non-vocal amplification of the natural environment – ‘archaic rocks woods echoes’ – or to fractured reiterations of certain parts of speech – here ‘fragment sounds’ – or as some kind of disembodied vocality, here either in ‘ancient pronunciation’ or in ‘intelligible voice’ – or, finally, echo addressed as an ‘interrogator’, in the *versi echoici* sense. Mottram is explicitly referring to a range of different acts of audition in the forest; textually we can’t discern which of these versions of

<sup>263</sup> George Herbert, ‘Heaven’; particularly see the discussion of this poem (with its ‘echo of stem rather than of suffix’) by Hollander in *The Figure of Echo*, *ibid.*, p. 28, 46

<sup>264</sup> Henry Thoreau, *Walden: The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 123. See also the discussion of this section of *Walden* in John Sallis, *Echoes: After Heidegger* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990), from p. 4, and in the context of contemporary poetry’s use of non-original material (or ‘poetry’s voice-over’), in Jed Rasula, *Modernism and Poetic Inspiration: The Shadow Mouth* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 103

<sup>265</sup> Vanessa Place, *Echo: Ηχώ* (London: Tusk Records, 2012)

<sup>266</sup> Denise Riley, ‘Affections of the Ear’, *Selected Poems* (East Sussex: Reality Street, 2000), reprinted in *The Words of Selves: Identification, Solidarity, Irony* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), where she notes ‘Echo might be taken as a figure or trope for the troubled nature of lyric poetry’, p. 111

<sup>267</sup> John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo*, *ibid.*, p. 18

<sup>268</sup> ‘  
listen in this listening wood.

To tell you the truth I hear almost  
only the sounds I have made myself.’ W. S. Graham, ‘The Secret Name’, *New Collected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 2004), p. 237

the trope he is encountering, or if this is an echo-dialogue, or just the comportment of his own voice around the page in unrequited questions – ‘explain’, ‘where are you’, ‘do you hear me’, ‘have you / wonderful intelligible voice’.<sup>269</sup>

The volume as a whole is explicitly engaged with sonic spectacularity in the forest (‘forester sounds / beat to his ears’; ‘ageless songs / springs into branches’), rather than any gesture towards possession or privacy of the voice. The excursive exercise of vocality is treated both literally (‘his homed voice / hangs in the branch’; ‘in the call to home / her voice encircles each bole’), and through the techniques. The text is interested in language’s shedding of selves and resurrections, and temporary assignments of identity are made in the rapid shifts between the huge amount of proper names and capitalised titles. Its invocation of pantheistic forest gods and figures, like the stag-man Cernunnos, or the Green Man, is also indicated by ubiquitous reference to the ritual shedding of the stag’s antlers, and other kinds of shedding and resurrection in myths of transfiguration – most particularly, in how this might be indicated in auditory exoticism and linguistic idiosyncrasies. The text acts as a kind of musical notation to the ‘ovidian sleights’ of language, as Mottram puts it: of language ‘in laurel transformation’, when ‘the tongue hears birds as words / in absurd ovidian games’. (Here, the idea of the hearing tongue suggests Echo as a speech that is authored significantly by listening.)<sup>270</sup>

The text is carried by sequences of polyglot phonetic transcriptions – where each occurrence varies by a single phoneme, for instance – and other re-samplings of phrases, referring to etymology and language morphology (‘wie alr alder place / community narrow col / water durr / colder calder / a narrow water community / cwic / evergreen alder’). This phonetic mimicry relies on endophony, or the reader’s inner articulation of the near homophones, following the commands and grammar of the graphic text. The text also plays with different ways of denoting speech and citation, from spatial alignment to quotation marks, italics, epigraphs, internal epigraphs, and the bibliography of citations. These are deliberately confusing; Mottram may begin paraphrasing a source quotation before the quotation marks commence, as with Gascoigne’s ‘The Green Knight’s Farewell’, or continue after the quotation marks close, as indicated by grammar and sense. The migration of quotation marks across the text is exacerbated by its exceeding of monolingual borders – movements between German, English, and French mid-sentence or mid-line, sudden fragments of phrases with caesura either side, or breaks into Anglo-Saxon riddling. These oral transmissions are marked by their irregularity. In the use of the George Gascoigne poem, the quotation marks would suggest direct fidelity; but Mottram extracts only fragments from the 1575 version of the doubly-scripted verse, and re-organises them into terse Old English hemistich with a strong caesura; he also reverses the text, so that the a-verse ends up as the b-verse, displacing the identities of Echo and Speaker if the layout were to be read in the ‘Dic, Echo’ format. In *A Book of Herne* we confront through these heroic cycles repeated

<sup>269</sup> Mottram, *A Book of Herne*, *ibid.*, p. 37

<sup>270</sup> Mottram, *A Book of Herne*, *ibid.*, p. 44, 45

performances of the vocalic uncanny – the resounding and re-sounding of text in the forest, in a voice which is always exophonic (‘distorted the I song in the greenwood’).<sup>271</sup>

There is much more to be said about Mottram’s echo-work, particularly within the larger trends of modern poetry’s interest in multi-lingual citation, copy-right law, and the re-setting of earlier texts. There are also more specific contexts to forest echo – or ‘forest echoes’, which is also a commonplace title for waltzes, piano pieces, and collections of verses, particularly in the late nineteenth century. These cannot be addressed here, but they include the widespread use of LIDAR, the echo-technology used to map and measure the inside of forests; the understanding of the forest as the space of trans-species communication, ‘bolving’, and the echoing of animal and deer cries; and the typologies of hunting horn resounding in the forest in music and literature, as treated by Murray Schafer in *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (1994). There are also relevant research projects; Kyle Spratt’s “treeverb”, a technique of digital sound-scattering for achieving the reverb-like impulse of the forest, and the resulting Forest Reverberation Modeller;<sup>272</sup> other projects using forest amplification to determine space, and various forms of ecological monitoring; poetic installations by Alec Finlay, Ian Hamilton Finlay, and Rhodri Davies which treat the woods as ‘a form of instrument’;<sup>273</sup> and other radio installation projects, including poet Jamie Wilkes’ walkie-talkie project for disembodied voices in the woods as part of *Charter of the Forest* (2011), a site-specific woodland exhibition and festival of modern artworks responding to the titular act of forest law.<sup>274</sup> Most recently, Will Montgomery and Carol Watts’ sound-poetry collaboration *T.R.E.E.* and the sound engineered ecological installation *Living Symphonies* both re-work the auditory environment of the forest as part of a compositional process.<sup>275</sup>

In the context of this chapter it can only be briefly noted that the sonification of the woods in the post-individualistic poetry of the mediatised age is an area deserving of fuller study. These writers’ (and performers’) navigations of the forest as the space of *dislocution* use its auditory worlds to refuse

<sup>271</sup> Mottram, *A Book of Herne*, *ibid.*, p. 18, 39

<sup>272</sup> Kyle Spratt’s “treeverb” project is described at: <<http://blog.nutaksas.com/2008/07/forest-reverb-model.html>> (accessed 12/08/2014); a simulation can be downloaded at: <<http://blog.nutaksas.com/2008/07/forest-reverb-model.html>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>273</sup> See their joint blog post – on wind-harps and Aeolian trees – at: <<http://skying-blog.blogspot.co.uk/2011/09/wind-song.html>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>274</sup> The *Charter of the Forest* project took place at Chambers Farm Wood, Lincolnshire, in August 2011; see the programme archive (including details of Jamie Wilkes’ radio installation) online at: <<http://lincolnartprogramme.co.uk/charter.html>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>275</sup> *Living Symphonies* is a sound installation created by an artist and sound engineer, in which the growth of the forest ecosystem creates the musical composition, broadcast in the forest in real time. It is being performed four times in the summer of 2014, in collaboration with Forest Artworks, the Forestry Commission, and Sound and Music; for more information, see the project website: <<http://www.livingsymphonies.com/about/>> (accessed 12/08/2014). *T.R.E.E.* is a sound and poetry collaboration between Carol Watts and Will Montgomery, recently featured in *Cordite Poetry Review* 46.1 Special Issue: Collaboration (2014), with text and sound available online here: <<http://cordite.org.au/poetry/collaboration/tree/>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

allegiance to the idea of an absolute language or vocality. To talk in the forest is to solicit a response – to invite infiltration, translation, or sonic feedback. This is vital within the wider context of my research into the questions of language in the forest. Debates around the discursiveness of competing definitions of forested land, and its modelling of the boundaries between state and civil society, are a crucial context to poetic texts which display the antinomy of the forest’s voices – and use the echo trope to set the forest up as the space where language fails to fulfil its mandate of univocally legislating space and defining identity.

Colin Simms’ ‘Carcajou’ is an explicit adventure into these sonic feedbacks of the forest, beginning as it does – ‘who can face encounter who must face it / listen in the forest first where the voices we want to hear / are not people’s but of The People’. In a poem full of singing pines, singing chainsaws, low voices in the woods, and ‘lulled ululations (...) holler in his hollows’, we must strain our ears to make out the forest’s diversity of ‘rich lingual lingo accents lingering’. Previous narratives of the wood are incorporated into the Carcajou ‘long poem of encounter’, punningly (‘the old world fairy-tale organisation in imagination what figure is Grimmer / than Grimm’s woodcutter’), given that ‘our starting place’ is ‘the Given Word / before we know its prejudice’. The breaking down of this logos in the sign systems of the forest (‘the forest floor we walk on / carries all signature’ ... ‘why shouldn’t I go on twisting’) – in the context of a poem which as a whole concerns the chase in nomenclature for the unclassifiable creature encountered, known as Carcajou – leads the speaker, or reader, into the diversions of language as woodland chases, or ‘trails’, after previous patterns of the past: ‘lingual rich lingual the lingua franca of the ancients / lingo-accents you who sauntering fit my footprints / where you beat trails I’ve been before’.<sup>276</sup>

What lies at the end of these trails of lingering voice in the forest? It seems it can only ever be the constantly shifting ‘something different’ that hides in the communicative process, as in Zoë Skoulding’s ‘Woodpeckers’:

We should have stayed in the forest, watching woodpeckers.  
A knock on hollow wood and air rattles in the tree’s chambers  
like a voice trying to remember where to put its tongue.

Wingbeats echo on the inside of a skull. A stutter slides in parallax  
between two birds translating early autumn into insect drone,  
sky into raised voices, mushrooms into footsteps on mud.

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<sup>276</sup> Colin Simms, ‘Carcajou’, *Eyes Own Ideas* (Durham: Pig Press, 1987), p. 9, 16, 13, 14, 9, 10-11, 16



We should have stayed in the forest, drowned out  
by hiss between the branches, but even there you can't be sure  
that what you hear as morse might not be scattershot. And now

you're speaking. Hover and balance. Hover and stop: hold it.  
We could have stayed in the forest and I could have said -  
but I didn't. And you could have heard something different.<sup>277</sup>

### **'Time spirals out of seed': Zoë Skoulding and arboreal memory**

The forest is also a civic monument. The contemporary reinforcement of the association between trees and national identity by bodies such as the Woodland Trust is picked up on by writers including Kathleen Jamie, whose poem written from the point of view of a wishing tree describes the timber's subsuming of symbolic identity, 'drawing / into my slow wood, fleur / -de-lys, the enthroned Britannia'.<sup>278</sup> The diction of the forest – as such a symbolic resource – is partly built around these mnemonic and memorial functions. The utterances of the forest's calls to memory, in literature, heritage, or science, are structured according to various principles of past and present. In what follows, I will show how the logic of such histories are interrogated in a number of poems which approach their cultural and environmental models of memory through "backwoods" paths.

At the most basic level we can outline two distinct ways in which the forest actions memory. The first, and most simple, call to memory is to us as humans to remember the (imperilled) forest. This may be in the form of anti-deforestation poetry, as with American poet Gary Snyder's logging poems ('I sit without thought by the log-road / Hatching a new myth'<sup>279</sup>); it may be in the preserved *selva antica* which has the last word in Robert Pogue Harrison's *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, in its closing quotation from Andrea Zanzotto's *Dietro il paesaggio*: 'But, mean glory of the world, /

<sup>277</sup> Zoë Skoulding, 'Woodpeckers', Parking Non-Stop's CD *Species Corridor* (2008). The track setting Skoulding's poem, originally printed in her book *Remains of a Future City* (Bridgend: Seren, 2008), can be heard online here: <<https://soundcloud.com/parkingnonstop/woodpeckers>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>278</sup> Kathleen Jamie, 'The Wishing Tree', *The Tree House* (London: Picador, 2004), p. 3

<sup>279</sup> Gary Snyder, *Myths & Texts* (New York: Totem Press, 1960), p. 18

misshapen memory of other seasons, / the forest remains'<sup>280</sup> (see also Harrison's chapter on the logic, pathos, and psychology of "forests of nostalgia"<sup>281</sup>). American poet Susan Stewart's *The Forest* begins with this call to recollection in its titular poem, written for the Polish poet Ryszard Kapuściński, 'who suggested to me that a time may come when no one will remember the experience of a forest':<sup>282</sup> 'You should lie down now and remember the forest, for it is disappearing - / no, the truth is it is gone now / and so what details you can bring back / might have a kind of life'.<sup>283</sup> Her text is constructed from these reclaimed details which the act of reading 'can bring back', making more tangible the memorial quality of language: lines that recur in italics, or with variant grammar,<sup>284</sup> in a poem which belongs to the eco-criticism of loss<sup>285</sup> as much as permutation poetics.<sup>286</sup> Its final end admits the loss of the truth as well as the forest in a small grammatical sleight: 'but the truth is, it is, lost to us now'.<sup>287</sup> The poet Peter Larkin observed of Stewart's forest volume that '(f)ateful for the book is its declaration of the loss of forest, though enough of the forest lingers to challenge loss's cultural status and complicate the poetic initiative of making loss a point of departure',<sup>288</sup> elsewhere he has written of poetry itself as 'an exploration of what must not be allowed to be lost, even if the ground of that reappearance cannot be secured'.<sup>289</sup> Other texts, such as Theresa Kishkan's *Mnemonic*:

<sup>280</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests*, *ibid.*, p. 243. Earlier in the text (p. 125), he notes that the poet of nostalgia 'is fraught with contradictions not only for those who reckon with the coherence of his doctrines, but above all, withing himself, especially when it comes to his discourse about forests'.

<sup>281</sup> Harrison, *Forests*, *ibid.*, p. 155

<sup>282</sup> Susan Stewart, *The Forest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 77

<sup>283</sup> Stewart, *The Forest*, *ibid.*, p. 5

<sup>284</sup> 'no, the truth is it is gone now' ... ' - you should lie down and remember the forest - / nonetheless, you might call it "in the forest," / *no the truth is, it is gone now* ... 'as if it were firm, underfoot, for that place is a sea, / nonetheless, you might call it "in the forest," / 'the place you remember, as layers fold in time, black humus there, / as if it were firm, underfoot, for that place is a sea', 'sing without a music where there cannot be an order, / as layers fold in time, black humus there', / 'They sing without a music where there cannot be an order, / though high in the dry leaves something does fall' / 'Where the air has a texture of drying moss, / (in that place where I was raised) the forest was tangled' ... 'A low branch swinging above a brook / in that place where I was raised, the forest was tangled' ... 'Sometimes I imagine us walking there / (...pokeberry, stained. A low branch swinging above a brook) / in a place that is something like a forest' ... 'by pliant green needles, there below the piney fronds, / a kind of limit. Sometimes I imagine us walking there' ... 'so strangely alike and yet singular, too, below / the pliant green needles, the piney fronds. / Once we were lost in the forest, *so strangely alike and yet singular, too*, / but the truth is, it is, lost to us now.' Stewart, *The Forest*, *ibid.*, pp. 5-7

<sup>285</sup> In particular, the work of Geoffrey Hartman (e.g. *The Unremarkable Wordsworth*, London: Methuen, 1987, p. 29) and, through the trope of recycling and return, Jeff Rasula (*This Compost: Ecological Imperatives in American poetry*, Georgia: University of Georgia, 2002).

<sup>286</sup> For a good introduction see Norbert Bachleitner, 'The Virtual Muse: Forms and Theory of Digital Poetry', in Eva Muller-Zettelmann and Margarete Rubik eds., *Theory into Poetry: New Approaches to the Lyric* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), and Florian Cramer, 'Buffer Overflows: Codes, Systems and Subversion in Computational Poetics', in Geoff Cox and Wolfgang Sützl eds., *Creating Insecurity: art and culture in the age of security* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2009).

<sup>287</sup> Stewart, *The Forest*, *ibid.*, p. 7

<sup>288</sup> Peter Larkin, 'The Poetics of Province and Standing Loss in Susan Stewart's *The Forest*', paper given at the conference *Poets Reading Philosophy, Philosophers Reading Poets*, Warwick University, 26-28<sup>th</sup> October 2007, available online at <<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/philosophy/research/phillit/poetryphil/papers>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>289</sup> Peter Larkin, 'Scarcity by Gift: Horizons of the 'Lucy' Poems', *The Coleridge Bulletin (NS)* (2004), p. 51

*A Book of Trees* (2011), are explicitly framed, and structurally arranged, as a project of commemoration.

The second type of memory concerns the social construction of forests as natural spaces which remember us; thus forest memory gives us a form of cultural reimbursal in the shape of our own, anthropological memory, given back to us – even in personal and individuated form, as seen in Jeremy Hooker’s memorial book of poems written for his friend Les Arnold, *Arnolds Wood* (2005). In this way woodland appears to enshrine individual or communal memory, although contemporary debates on the contested heritages of the forest problematize this sentimental public memorialising quality. The forests and trees which remember us include trees which are memory aids, such as those used as genealogical symbols (i.e., family trees, showing an individual’s patrilineal identity) or archival or classificatory systems;<sup>290</sup> myths of ethnic origin in forests, as in Tacitus; commemorative plantations; the memory of the land given by ‘datum trees’ or ‘record trees’;<sup>291</sup> and the ecological memory kept after disasters, for instance, in the retardation of timber growth rate in areas which have seen wartime bombing, known in French horticulture as “forest trauma”. Forests even themselves symptomize our ability to remember, as Harrison observes.<sup>292</sup> This type of anthropological remembrance is offered by the rowan tree in entrepreneur-poet Felix Dennis’s *Tales from the Woods*: ‘Last of all her kind, she keeps / Mute memory of human lore’.<sup>293</sup>

The work being conducted by cultural geographers on these two criss-crossing logics of arboreal memory cannot be fully represented here; however, Sylvie Nail has written importantly on the ‘retrophilia’ of modern forestry<sup>294</sup> – in which, through the cherishing and maintenance of old pollarding techniques and so on, woodland practices partake in what some have called the ‘museumisation’<sup>295</sup> of the country from the 1980s onward, under the sign of that modern word, ‘heritage’.<sup>296</sup> As she states – referring to such woodland campaigns as ‘Trees of Time and Place’ – the oldest woods in Britain have in the last few decades in particular been presented as ‘a sort of time capsule’, while public policy documents and projects utilise a very intense rhetorical language about

<sup>290</sup> These examples of the visual use of arboreal logic have been gathered recently in Manuel Lima’s *The Book of Trees: Visualizing Branches of Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2014)

<sup>291</sup> See J. H. Wilks, ‘Landmarker and boundary trees’, in Wilks, *Trees Of the British Isles in History and Legend* (London: Muller, 1972)

<sup>292</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests*, *ibid.*, particularly ‘Chapter 4: Forests of Nostalgia’

<sup>293</sup> Felix Dennis, ‘Go Not To The Walnut Tree’, *Tales From the Woods* (London: Random House, 2010), p. 36

<sup>294</sup> Sylvie Nail, *Forest Policies and Social Change in England* (New York: Springer Science & Business, 2008), p. 287

<sup>295</sup> Cf. David Lowenthal’s description of the British landscape as a ‘vast museumised ruin’ which exists according to practices of consumption, in Lowenthal, ‘British National Identity and the English Landscape’, *Rural History* 2.02 (1991), p. 217

<sup>296</sup> Sylvie Nail, *Forest Policies*, *ibid.*, p. 281-289. Nail particularly notes the rise of the “heritage” paradigm in the late 1970s, ‘with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s appeal to these values in 1979, the mention that same year of the word ‘heritage’ in a speech made by the Queen, and the vote of the *National Heritage Act* in 1983 which created English Heritage’ (p. 282). On this move from history to heritage see also David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985)

trees ‘as intermediaries between people past and present’, while, as Nail observes, this is profoundly linked to the way in which ‘words shape expectations’.<sup>297</sup> Woodlands – including the wildwood, and the British greenwood – are symbolically ‘at the heart of the search for identity, not only collectively, but also individually’,<sup>298</sup> and this is something which has been particularly noticeable in attitudes to natural history and public landscape management in the last few decades; this is also seen in the Forestry Commission’s 2005 statement of policy entitled ‘Keepers of Time’ – where we can see a clear example of the ethnocentric, rather than biocentric, focus of the ‘forest memory’ idea that catches the imagination of the government and the media. This technique can also be seen in the prominence of themes of vocality, history, and witnessing in published registers of notable local or national trees (‘Living Witness: Remarkable Trees of Suffolk’, ‘Veteran Trees of the South Downs’, etc.). Nail observes of English Nature’s ‘Veteran Trees Initiative’ that ‘many of these ‘veterans’ are notable trees associated with national events, from the Ankerwycke Yew at Runnymede, said to have witnessed the sealing of the Magna Carta in 1215, to Isaac Newton’s Apple Tree at Woolsthorpe Manor.’<sup>299</sup>

Paul Cloke and Eric Pawson’s article ‘Memorial Trees and Treescape Memories’ explores how such wooded spaces of heritage translate complex processes (cultural, political, and symbolic) into the popular imagination, and how (and why) trees are enrolled symbolically in this way. This social imaginary is partly an economically driven nostalgia, of course, as Nail observes in her writing on modern forestry policy. Cloke and Pawson examine some of the more unruly factors involved in this use of woodland and trees to implant memory in the landscape. As they observe, the trees are ‘active organic components in the changing co-constitution of place’; and so ‘the ability of memorial trees to carry significant memories of past events into the present involves all sorts of slippages’. For this reason they suggest the term ‘treescape memories’, to demonstrate how trees, as socially constructed markers of memory, are subject to shifting cultures of interpretation, becoming living habitats with a ‘broader portfolio’ of social memories and emotional geographies. Cloke and Pawson’s account of ‘arboreal remembrance’ (as opposed to spelt-out memory, as with permanent text on stone plaques) – which will connect to the poems below, concerning illegible forest memories – explains some of the ways in which trees come to represent the rhetorical topoi of social memory and the unruly feel of unwritten collective memory.<sup>300</sup> The association between woodlands and trees and particular expressions of history creates a contestable landscape which is also multifunctional, in which ‘social relations support memory, remembrance, forgetting, silences, erasures, and memory slippage’.<sup>301</sup> An

<sup>297</sup> Sylvie Nail, *Forest Policies*, *ibid.*, p. 268, 273, 270

<sup>298</sup> Nail, *Forest Policies*, *ibid.*, p. 281

<sup>299</sup> Nail, *Forest Policies*, *ibid.*, p. 288

<sup>300</sup> Paul Cloke and Eric Pawson, ‘Memorial trees and treescape memories’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26.1 (2008), p. 107, 107, 107, 117, 110

<sup>301</sup> Jo-Anne Morgan, *Arboreal Eloquence: Trees and Commemoration* (Unpublished PhD dissertation: University of Canterbury, 2008), p. ii

example is the changing meaning of wartime plantations from a memorial to the dead – as with the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire – into a new generation’s symbol of peace-time relations and civic connection.

A small number of scholars in geography are analysing the theme of the memory work of the forest, from Paul Gough’s work on national mourning, conifers, and commemoration, to John Dargavel’s work on the plantation of Australia’s commemorative tree avenues, to Andrew Garner’s valuable oral history of forest and woodland volunteers, ‘Living History: Trees and Metaphors of Identity in an English Forest’, through Cloke and Jones’ publications on the ‘hybrid geographies’ of graveyard trees, and one unpublished PhD thesis, ‘Arboreal Eloquence: Trees and Commemoration’.<sup>302</sup> Each of these investigates the unscripted elements of commemorative trees as living memorials, bringing a ‘different range of symbols and meanings not necessarily available to more conventional forms of memorialisation’.<sup>303</sup> Histories of landscaping and labelling in these woodlands show the negotiations between appropriate civic commemoration, forgetting, and rewriting. These trees are seen to offer a different kind of biological framework for memory. They have a capacity to disrupt the closed order of official memorial spaces, without following the same rules of legibility or having specific or straight forward inscriptions.

As Rival has observed, trees ‘provide some of the most visible and potent symbols of social process and collective identity’.<sup>304</sup> The interpretation and expression of communal pasts, however, is problematic, considering that forests have divisive political histories. Which past is it that should be preserved or accessed? The idea of the forest and its trees as conservators of a mass ‘sense of place, of literal rootedness, which is one of the great themes of the English imagination’<sup>305</sup> is too easy – even facile. As the previous contextual work has shown, the interlocution of historical voices in the textual forest is confected and mediated by past and present politics. Our incomplete cultural understanding of the past (and even present) use of each British forest leads to a battle of hermeneutics in every supposed retrieval of forest memory.

The most ancient forest in Europe stretches along the Poland-Belarus-Lithuania borders: what Simon Schama calls ‘the black-green phalanx of the primeval forest’. That word ‘phalanx’ is no mistake: this

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<sup>302</sup> Paul Gough, ‘Conifers and Commemoration: the Politics and Protocol of Planting’, *Landscape Research* 21.1 (1996); John Dargavel, ‘More to Grief than Granite: Arboreal Remembrance in Australia’, *Journal of Australian Studies* 64 (2000); Andrew Garner, ‘Living History: Trees and Metaphors of Identity in an English Forest’, *Journal of Material Culture* 9.1 (2004); Paul Cloke and Owain Jones, ‘Turning in the graveyard: trees and the hybrid geographies of dwelling, monitoring, and resistance in a Bristol cemetery’, *Cultural Geographies* 11 (2004); Jo-Anne Morgan, *Arboreal Eloquence: Trees and Commemoration* (Unpublished PhD dissertation: University of Canterbury, 2008)

<sup>303</sup> Jo-Anne Morgan, *Arboreal Eloquence*, *ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>304</sup> Rival, *The Social Life of Trees*, *ibid.*, p. 1

<sup>305</sup> Peter Ackroyd, ‘The Tree’, in *Albion: The Roots of the English Imagination* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2002), p. 6

was a war-torn forest full of (mostly unrecorded) military and partisan WWII deaths. It is a forest that has been occupied by Lithuanians, Austrians, Poles, Jews, Nazis and Stalinists: it holds eighteenth century martyr-barrows (*kopiec*) of anti-Russian revolutionaries, Giby's memorial hummock, a mass forest grave of German soldiers, and a Jewish burial mound. Within the timbered landscape there are still unidentified bodies sinking into the ground, belonging to those who sought and lost refuge in the forest during the war – deaths undocumented in the post-war official silence. It is a place where, as Schama puts it, the sublime 'had been chewed up by war and fertilized by the bones and blood of the unnumbered dead' and where 'greatcoat buttons from six generations of fallen soldiers can be discovered lying amidst the woodland ferns'. The strain between memory and forgetting is enacted in this landscape and its uncertain identifications. At the forest of Augustowska, a mass of bodies were assumed to be villagers who supported the Polish Home Army, but were later discovered to be German from the badges and buckles appearing amidst the bones. At the Giby hummock, the dead were becoming grassy tumuli: Schama states 'Their memory had now assumed the form of the landscape itself'. At the Jewish cemetery, the headstones were becoming a geological layer 'as verdant Lithuania rose to reclaim them'.<sup>306</sup>

Zoë Skoulding's 'In the Forest Where They Fell' is set in this dark stretch of forest, as a historically complex and partisan landscape of belonging; its title is a pun on slaughter, but also a familiar ringing phrase for the felling of trees. In title alone, therefore, it enacts a burial of trauma within the routine wooded environment – i.e., the more disturbing reading of the line is potentially hidden behind the lumberjack meaning, just as the public tragedy of the collective deaths are hidden behind the appearance of the handsome glades of oak and fir. Skoulding's poem takes on the trope of forest as memory, or forest as memorial, above. But Skoulding presents, instead, a landscape of complete simultaneity and constant growth and change: 'Everything's here at once' and 'Time spirals out of seed' – the forest a living archive of cross-fertilised time periods, in un-localised and permeated colours. The budding of young 'leaf-axils' 'Shot as arrows' from the yew is countered by morbid references to time's 'grave', to 'bones' in the clay, and to the past, which 'you knuckle under / or down'. The gap between the mysterious past tense event of the poem's title ('where they fell') and the present tense of the actual text shows this to be a forest of active, burgeoning history – past tense event becomes present tense action – and the unidentified fallen bodies of the past become part of the dynamic composition of the environment ('In clay the bones plough waves, the soil / a skin').<sup>307</sup>

Marvell's speaker in 'Upon Appleton House' was once imbricated with a woodland like this ('The Oak-Leaves me embroyder all, / Between which Caterpillars crawl: / And Ivy, with familiar trails, /

<sup>306</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Fontana Press, 1996), p. 25, 19, 24, 25, 36

<sup>307</sup> Zoë Skoulding, 'In the Forest Where They Fell', *Remains of a Future City* (Bridgend: Seren, 2008), p. 57

Me licks, and clasps, and curls, and haies’).<sup>308</sup> He imagined being nailed with briars, chained with brambles, twined in woodbine, and the wind winnowing his head from the chaff, in a self-effacing crucifixion (‘stake me down’<sup>309</sup>) and/or liberating entry into the natural world. Now Skoulding’s speaker is similarly buried into woodland: ‘The enemy says who I am, up to my neck in mud.’ In fact we know from the mistaken identities of the bodies in one mass grave in the Lithuanian forest that there is likely to be very little saying of ‘who I am’. Indeed, as in those mass graves, we are given only divided body parts – in the second stanza a ‘knuckle’; ‘bones’ and ‘a skin’ in the third stanza; in the fourth stanza a ‘yew stretched against a spine’; a ‘neck’ in the fifth. Over these divided lexical items the surface of the text rolls. The discorporation of the body and its reincorporation into the natural world happens at a microscopic level, too, as ‘Muscle cells (...) surrender to capillary attraction, / wind-fertilized, the greenish blooms’. And the synchronic space of the forest, and the forest poem, is presented in a last line punning on the practice of aging trees by consulting the synchronic rings on the trunk: ‘Specific histories / don’t fade but circle in a constant outward movement.’<sup>310</sup>

The ‘specific histories’ referred to in the poem title, ‘In the Forest Where They Fell’, are here presented not as human legends, but as part of the forest’s own archive. What would it be like if the forest had a vegetable memory of the ‘they’ that ‘fell’ within it? Skoulding’s poem presents history not at a legendary distance, but as part of a synchronic archive – history as fertile, vegetable space, ‘Inscribed on tablets of beech’. She conserves a history not through an asserted narrative or name, but through the human-effacing knock-on effects of ecological processes. These processes ‘spiral’ away from the deaths: but a spiral is a kind of dynamic recovery too, as the specific histories ‘don’t fade but circle in a constant outward movement’, a reference to the trunk’s growth rings. This dendrochronology is thus *both* spiralling and tomb-like: ‘Time spirals out of seed / pushed inside its grave’. Is ‘time’, here, pushed inside its grave in the yew’s wood? Or is it spiralling out of trauma, trauma being the seed pushed inside its grave?<sup>311</sup>

Skoulding is adopting the discourse of dendrochronology, in which tree histories, human histories, and even world histories are anchored to the rings on the tree. These are reflective of atmospheric alterations, historic sun-spot events, and seasonal rainfall, and their signalling of climate-related variables can be used to date landscapes, buildings, and events (such as forest fires, industrial periods, volcanic eruptions or global environmental downturns). The science was founded by the astronomer A. E. Douglas, who set up the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research in Arizona in 1937;<sup>312</sup> tree-ring

<sup>308</sup> Andrew Marvell, ‘Upon Appleton House’, *Andrew Marvell: Selected Poetry and Prose* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 85-86

<sup>309</sup> Marvell, ‘Upon Appleton House’, *ibid.*, p. 87

<sup>310</sup> Skoulding, ‘In the Forest Where They Fell’, *ibid.*, p. 57

<sup>311</sup> Skoulding, ‘In the Forest Where They Fell’, *ibid.*, p. 57

<sup>312</sup> Online at: <<http://lrr.arizona.edu/>> (accessed 24/08/2014)

records have since migrated online to websites such as the International Tree-Ring Data Bank<sup>313</sup> and its search engine and the Digital Collaboratory for Cultural Dendrochronology.<sup>314</sup> These initiatives can be directed to different periods of antiquity: notable Irish dendrochronologist Mike Baillie is undertaking research into medieval and mythical Ireland, for instance. Baillie's *A Slice Through Time* is striking for the rhetoric he draws on while discussing the first long tree-ring chronicles of the Old World. What the tree's 'time capsule of biological material' offers, he asserts, is a corrective to the subjective cultural records of the past: correcting the 'smeared' chronologies or 'punctuated records' of ancient history by means of 'signatures' (p. 13) in the oak.<sup>315</sup> In this way trees have been imagined as containers for human history: as one fire management co-ordinator writes of recovering forest fire histories from trees, 'They "store" fires'.<sup>316</sup> Trees can be seen as 'a great library of data', and the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research as 'the world's largest wooden library'.<sup>317</sup> The metaphor of the archive or the library is often used outside of dendrochronology too, of both tree stumps and living trees. One oral history project related to conifer forestry includes compiled interviews on "'Moss Stock': the Forest Archive in the Peat",<sup>318</sup> referring to the fossilised tree stumps found in bedrock clay and indicative of former forest growth. Skoulding's text also addresses this idea of the timber bank in which recent as well as antiquarian events can be 'stored', as in an archive or library. But she also uses the 'yew' for its store of specific folkloric and literary symbolism.

Skoulding consulted Edward Step's 1904 illustrated pocket guide *Wayside and Woodland Trees*, which describes a 'sombre Yew in the old churchyard', and states 'It is reputed to be the longest-lived of all trees, and it is hoped that no hindrance will be put in the way of these connections of the present with the far past'. Step details the culture of the yew, both in the history of the long-bow and the history of church-building. The former is down to the yew's hard, compact and elastic wood, and made it the subject of several royal ordinances: the yew's poison is also carried into language, as Step writes: 'That word toxic, by the way, owes its significance to the Yew. The tree was named *taxus* in Latin, from the Greek *toxon* (a bow), because of the ancient repute of the wood for making that instrument. The tree was held to be poisonous, and so its name in the form of *toxicum* came to

<sup>313</sup> Online at: <<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/paleo/treering.html>> (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>314</sup> Online at:

<<http://vkc.library.uu.nl/vkc/dendrochronology/research/ProjectsWiki/Digital%20Collaboratory%20for%20Cultural%20Dendrochronology.aspx>> (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>315</sup> Mike Baillie, *A Slice through Time: dendrochronology and precision dating* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.11, 13.

<sup>316</sup> Mark Kaib, Deputy Regional Fire Management Co-ordinator, Albuquerque, 'Enlightenment in Burnt Forests – Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research', online at

<[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0GER/is\\_1999\\_Winter/ai\\_58458605/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0GER/is_1999_Winter/ai_58458605/)> (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>317</sup> Kaib, 'Enlightenment in Burnt Forests', *ibid*.

<sup>318</sup> Ruth Tittensor, *From Peat Bog to Conifer Forest: An Oral History of Whitelee, Its Community and Landscape* (West Sussex: Packard Publishing, 2009), p. 14



designate all poisons.<sup>319</sup> Skoulding explicitly cites this quotation as an inspiration for the poem and an example of the carrying of trauma in language.<sup>320</sup> The warlike industry of the yew binds the tree to human tragedies: hence the long-bow reference in ‘Shot as arrows / from the toxic yew stretched against a spine’. But it is still a ‘venerable churchyard’ tree, as Step heavily emphasises, found in quiet churchyards where it is suggested it served as shelter for the builders of the church, or found in yew groves which are architecturally described as ‘the church of the past’;<sup>321</sup> further examples of this rhetoric can be seen in Vaughan Cornish’s *The Churchyard Yew & Immortality* (1946). The yew is a custodian of bodies; the living yew has a definite memorialising function and appears in this function, for instance, in Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*, where it is described as ‘Old warder of these buried bones’, a tree which ‘graspest at the stones / And dippest towards the buried head’.<sup>322</sup> The Tennyson yew memorialises the body beneath, not legibly as on the tombstones in the same poem, but through its own growth and life: the ‘golden hour’ of bloom and the ‘fruitful cloud and living smoke’ of pollen. In just such a living and fruitful space, Skoulding’s poem depicts the salvaging of trauma – specifically, anonymous and collective suffering – from woodland, using the principle of burial in the forest as a model for ‘post generation’ memory<sup>323</sup> or the ‘postmemory’<sup>324</sup> of historical catastrophe. The trees, in their transmission – or guardianship – of the human past, offer what Crownshaw has also referred to as ‘vicarious memory’;<sup>325</sup> in their restoring of non-official narratives they are ‘counter-monumental’;<sup>326</sup> and in their passing on of the past through their own on-going living growth they seem to offer what is somewhat of a grail in cultural memory studies – a “living connection”.<sup>327</sup>

Dendrochronology and the time-keeping of trees is also the subject of Peter Larkin’s *Rings Resting the Circuit* (2004), which explicitly examines the ‘omens of surround’<sup>328</sup> which are the growth rings on tree trunks. The cover bears a printed drawing resembling these irregular concentric circles of a trunk’s cross-section (it is in fact a replication of the diagram on the front cover of Ofer Gabber and Lorenzo Ramero’s 2003 mathematical text *Almost Ring Theory*). In Larkin’s introduction to the

<sup>319</sup> Edward Step, *Wayside and Woodland Trees: A Pocket Guide to the British Sylva* (Frederick Warne & Co., 1904), p. 74, 78, 76-7

<sup>320</sup> Zoë Skoulding, personal email to author, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2012

<sup>321</sup> Step, *Wayside and Woodland Trees*, *ibid.*, p. 77, 74

<sup>322</sup> Alfred Tennyson, ‘In Memorium’, *Tennyson: A Selected Edition* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), p. 382

<sup>323</sup> Richard Crownshaw, ‘Reconsidering Postmemory: Photography, the Archive and Post-Holocaust Memory in W.G. Sebald’s *Austerlitz*’, *Mosaic* 37.4 Special issue: The Photograph (2004), p. 215; see also Richard Crownshaw, *The Afterlife of Holocaust Memory in Contemporary Literature and Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)

<sup>324</sup> Marianne Hirsch, ‘The Generation of Postmemory’, *Poetics Today* 29.1 (2008); see also Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2012)

<sup>325</sup> Richard Crownshaw, ‘The German Countermonument: Conceptual Indeterminacies and the Retheorisation of the Arts of Vicarious Memory’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 44 .2 (2008)

<sup>326</sup> This term was coined by James E Young in ‘The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today’, *Critical Inquiry* 18.2 (1992)

<sup>327</sup> Marianne Hirsch, ‘The Generation of Postmemory’, *ibid.*, p. 104

<sup>328</sup> Peter Larkin, ‘Introduction’, *Rings Resting the Circuit* (Ontario: The Gig, 2004), unpaginated.

sequence, he describes his interest in the continued rotation and ‘vitalist turbulence’<sup>329</sup> of these growing tree rings, simultaneous with their flat, sealed quality, ‘valveless and doorless’. The ‘horizoning’ of time which he remarks in these natural forms is a neologism with two readings. It combines ‘horizontal’ and ‘zoning’, a reference to the zonation, or marking off, of annual time periods on the horizontal field. But it also turns ‘horizon’ into a verb; so the constant shifting or evolving of the horizon is a continuing dynamic, echoing ‘the circuits of the seasons or stars’. Like Skoulding, Larkin is drawing attention to tree time as a process of growth rather than containment. The tree rings are both closed and empty, and also radically open and generative. He describes them as ‘specks of hollow arena’, a phrase in which an arena – a space for large theatrical displays – is both diminutive and emptied. But these underperforming circles are also a moving ‘frontier which lies and rests and summons’. The tree circle ‘lies’ as it exists only on the ‘endless plain’ of surface area, as a disseminatable ‘unrooted’ cross-section. But it lies also in the sense of false presentation. A circle at rest is only described as a ‘resting’ ring’, the quotation marks around ‘resting’ suggesting that this is a superficial domestic appearance, for really ‘A circle when at rest breaks *into* its wending apart’. The growth rings are self-disseminating, and always exceeding themselves into ‘that world-surface which recedes beyond’. At each further ring it is not comprehensible whether we see a ‘rim’ or ‘membrane’, or an ‘interior opening or hollow’; Larkin resists a ‘hierarchy of the within or the outside’, instead crowding together contradictory spatial lexis in phrases like ‘an invaginated margin of abyss’.

The loops are flat and ‘smoothly unladen’: an ‘unsuspended’ ring ‘doesn’t burrow into the surface’, but ‘vagrantly’ turns without ‘cutting into’ the apparent: ‘no depth is punctured and no horizon crossed’. Yet the loops also project beyond their own ‘scope of containment’; they ‘border and cross’ (both verbs, and contradictory). The rings on the tree trunk are too nomadic to perform a legible memorialising function. They are over-running; we are visually offered multiple ‘surpassed boundar(ies)’. These are not ‘arrivable confines’, not sealed units of time, but are future-facing. Larkin’s scaling down to these ‘micro-rings’ deliberately show how these phenomena ‘reinstat[e] the otherness of a boundary’ while that boundary is ‘advancing on all fronts’. Time is not offered up in a finite or legible form, but in its continuation in the on-going performance of the uninhabitable circles. It is not contained but performed: there is a call for action in the ‘frontier which lies and rests and summons’ – as in dendrochronology’s ritual accounting of the omens of tree rings, described as ‘conjure(d) rings’ and ‘protective circles of prayer’. Larkin remarks ‘The poems invite speculative variations’ (punning on *speculum*, the convex mirror of the orifice); these variations each recast ‘circuiting not as closure but as bidding’.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Larkin, ‘Introduction’, *Rings Resting the Circuit*, *ibid.* Further quotations are all from this unpaginated volume.

<sup>330</sup> Larkin, *Rings Resting the Circuit*, *ibid.*, unpaginated

Larkin's rhetoric brings out the symbolic paradoxes of dendrochronology. His dense vocabulary circles back on itself in negative affixes<sup>331</sup> such as in 'non-abysse', 'unsuspended', directional affixes such as in 'ingathering' or 'going-outward', and temporal affixes such as in 'fore-occupied' and 'lessening-before'. His own unsealed syntax and self-modifying language plays out his subject's status as lines which 'may be circumscribed' but 'continue to modify' and invite 'further histories given the initial trace'. Larkin puns on words such as 'preliminary', describing a 'preliminary loop', the word positioning that loop within a greater circle and spatially before the *limin*, threshold. But general use suggests 'preliminary' is a temporal more than a spatial term: here he morphs the temporal and spatial reading of the loops, to play with the idea of looking at a tree ring to 'read' a vision of time.

The on-going 'nimbus' of the tree's rings is imagined both as a response to the external – they are 'rings which attend the surfaces of earth' and are described as 'receptor sites' – and also as an autonomous function, tree trunks as 'innate forms of self-organisation' offering a record which is not imposed by the external world. This autonomous, dynamic record is not a public memorial; it does not simply enclose external time. Larkin does not exactly endorse the trope of the memorialising forest; instead he presents it within linguistically inaccessible schemes of 'itinerant closure'. The figure of the ring, so important to dendrochronology, is both 'fully closed' and 'blankly open'. Larkin shows that this is vital to the paradox of the temporal symbolism of the forest as a living and growing archive. Nancy Gaffield's 'Zu Babel' also explores linguistic paradoxes of dendrochronology – in fact, imagining dendrochronology as an errant language itself, 'released from dendrochronology pentatonic monody for four voices'. This is a historical forest as a space of Babelization, in Eco's terms,<sup>332</sup> where we hear 'babbling' in 'that place unreason lives', in run on sentences of 'coppiced chestnuts, conifer plantations woods older than Babylon'. The tower of Babel is invoked in this poem's relationship to the futurity of forest echo and word transformation ('*reccheo, reccho, exile / errant, wretch / Words aged in the dark / before us / stammer past future / present*'),<sup>333</sup> while another poem explicitly tackles the non-communicability of dendrochronology's pasts into human language:

The rings of the tree know  
something. Radical  
introspection. In here is a world  
the tree wishes to speak of,  
the shadow of a former

<sup>331</sup> For an account of negative affix culture as part of the 'reconfiguring' process of post-modernism, see Alex Coles and Richard Bentley eds., *De-, Dis-, Ex-: Ex-cavating Modernism* (London: BACKless Books, 1996)

<sup>332</sup> Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language* (London: Fontana Press, 1997), p. 319

<sup>333</sup> Nancy Gaffield, 'Zu Babel', *Continental Drift*, *ibid.*, p. 15-16

*Listen.*<sup>334</sup>

This is a versioning of the canonical topic of the issues of translation of tree-speech, from Andrew Marvell's famous 'scattered Sibyls' leaves' of the language of the 'inverted tree',<sup>335</sup> to Anthony Barnett's prose poem translations of Roger Giroux ('the tree was going to send out its word over the landscape / (...) What rose from the heart of the tree, I had no way of saying').<sup>336</sup> But in Gaffield's version it is more explicitly language-d as a judgement on the coded speech of dendrochronology, from her specific references to the science of tree rings,<sup>337</sup> to her references to the secrecy and undecodability of its world records: 'Thick as trees and just as good / at keeping secrets / ... / Up here on the rim / transubstantiating and wearing / masks, writing the world'.<sup>338</sup> Thus, in Gaffield, Skoulding, and Larkin, the forest cannot easily legibly contain time. It does continue to present time through arboreal growth, but specific histories cannot be decoded or salvaged from these phenomena. When it comes to past trauma, such as the fallen bodies in the Lithuanian forest, there is no fixed heritage; the trauma remains unburied, a part of on-going arboreal changes. As Larkin states: 'These rings are where loss falls unburied but where it changes range'.<sup>339</sup>

On a different, human scale, the retrieval of anthropocentric forest memories is a prevalent feature of oral history projects, such as the Welsh Oral History of Forestry project ('Hanes y Goed') coordinated by the archaeologist Caroline Earwood, Forestry Commission Scotland's oral history projects in the Touchwood History series launched in 2007, focusing on early twentieth century forestry in the Great Glen,<sup>340</sup> and the full-scale Forestry Memories project<sup>341</sup> with its online 'Forestry Memories Image Library', launched in 2009 by the Forestry Commission in Scotland and the UHI Centre for History. These projects show the archiving of social memory through the medium of forestry. As Rachael Holtom observes in the preface of another published project, *Echoes of Epping Forest: Oral history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Forest* (2004), 'The Forest may have existed here for thousands of years and seem

<sup>334</sup> Nancy Gaffield, 'Vor Langen Jahren', *Continental Drift*, *ibid.*, p. 18

<sup>335</sup> Andrew Marvell, 'Upon Appleton House', *Andrew Marvell: Selected Poetry and Prose* (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 84-5

<sup>336</sup> Roger Giroux (trans. Barnett), 'L'arbre le temps', *Time and the Tree* (Yorkshire: Open Township: 1987), p. 3; this text also corresponds with some of the European writings already touched on here, playing with names and pines; in this context of ecological translation, see also p. 11: 'Where is the pine? And why would it need my voice to sing? Not enough its night wood, its leaf chemistry?'

<sup>337</sup> 'A year is made of light and dark / rings, principle of Limiting Factors. Spring / wood filled with inner light endarkens / and hardens by summer'. Gaffield, 'Vor Langen Jahren', *ibid.*, p. 18

<sup>338</sup> Gaffield, 'Vor Langen Jahren', *ibid.*, p. 19

<sup>339</sup> Larkin, *Rings Resting the Circuit*, *ibid.*, unpaginated

<sup>340</sup> Involving wood fairs and events, oral history publications, and the setting up of educational facilities; see <<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/newsrele.nsf/WebNewsReleases/AF1A28967474F944802572810038AD1C>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>341</sup> A social history drawing on the recorded memories of those who worked in or whose lives were affected by Scottish forestry, using video, interview and photos – see <<http://forestry-memories.org.uk/abouttheproject.asp>> (accessed 12/08/2014)

timeless to us but it was affected by the Second World War, urban development and social changes as much as any other part of the country'.<sup>342</sup> Thus, the forest can elicit localised retellings of public events just as much as teach us about the practises of early forestry. These oral human histories of the forest are 'histories from below', in the E. P. Thompson school,<sup>343</sup> they combine amateur naturalists, loggers, verderers and local residents.

The most comprehensive and site-specific to date is Ruth Tittensor's five-year Whitelee Forest Oral History Project, the fourth part of the Touchwood History series, mentioned briefly above. This text about the Whitelee plantation includes amongst its constituents the memories of forest contractor George Young, a resident's history of the old peat road, a field-notebook of the Whitelee hills by an amateur poet, a technical account of woodwork around Darvel, a history of the Gentian plant, and stories of the collection of gulls' eggs from peat colonies in the 1960s. Other contributors include foresters, district officers, trappers, surveyors, rangers, farmers, sportsmen, and local residents. James Hunter's foreword to the Touchwood volume explains that accounts of plantation forestry and its costs have tended to focus their interpretative effort on natural history, hence the focus in this project on the social effect of cleared agriculture and changing employment and experiences for local residents, even including amateur poetry in the published output. We might compare such endeavours in local and collective histories with the more professional Forestry oral histories, such as the OHIs (Oral History Interviews) published by the Forest History Society in America, which tend to focus on administration, silviculture, and pioneer foresters and technologies.<sup>344</sup>

Most notably, Tittensor's Whitelee oral history publication includes, eccentrically, a contents page in which the chapters list is arranged as a diagram of growth rings, concentrically annotated. Using dendrochronology as the visual organisational matrix for the book is deeply resonant. The chapters are in fact conventionally arranged in linear progression from the 1920s to the present day, through the ages of Whitelee farming, contracting, plantation, ranging, mature forest ecology, the new millennium, second rotation, and wind farms. But the contents page sacrifices this diachronic structure in favour of a rotational image of chapters – twentieth century time contained in the flesh of

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<sup>342</sup> Rachael Holtom ed., *Echoes of Epping Forest: Oral History of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Forest* (Ipswich: Riverside Press, 2004), p. 3

<sup>343</sup> See E. P. Thompson's canonical sociological study *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963).

<sup>344</sup> A list of available transcripts are online here: <<http://www.foresthistory.org/publications/oralhist.html>> (accessed 12/08/2014). There is also a tradition of individual professional memoirs of forest industry, such as Mary Stuever's *The Forester's Log: Musings from the Woods* (New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 2009), and the equally well-titled *Sound Wormy: Memoir of Andrew Gennett, Lumberman* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2007). American forestry has its social oral histories too, incorporating the less professional dimensions: see for example Amelia R. Fry's various forestry oral histories conducted for the UC Berkeley Bancroft Library Regional Oral History Office in the 1960s; W. Gilbert Davies and Florice M. Frank eds., *Stories of the Klamath National Forest: the first 50 years, 1905-1955* (Hat Creek, CA : HiStory Ink Books, 1992); or Victor W. Geraci ed., *The Lure of the Forest: Oral Histories from the National Forests In California* (USDA FS publication R5-FR-005, 2005)



being shot down and parachutists

full of dog roses<sup>348</sup>

The above is an extract from Edmund Hardy's poetic text *Forest Set: An Archive Essay* (2007), which constructs an experimental record from the oral accounts in *Echoes of Epping Forest: Oral history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Forest* (2004). His text also uses the trope of the forest as a repository for past human voices; here he combines raw lines from participants about war memories in Epping Forest with idyllic extracts taken from an earlier chapter of the oral history. By redoubling the citation process – the participants are quoted by Rachael Holtom in the oral history, and then fragmentarily re-quoted by Hardy – he draws attention to the logic by which historical experience is 'accessed' in the forest. The memory content is acutely present in each strophe of Hardy's poem; where Rachael Holtom collates her sources within an appropriately historiographical framing narration, Hardy's are unidentified utterances, with multiple speaking first persons in disordered time periods.

The source text, *Echoes of Epping Forest*, is made up of italicised extracts of the words of fifty one interviewees, arranged in themed chapters (Clubs and Organisations, The Outdoor Classroom, Managing the Forest), with innocuous boldface introductions and segues by the editor, Holtom. The preface marks out the volume's interest in 'unifying experience' and 'common phrase(s)', those shared sayings ("The Forest was our playground") which might be imagined as the titular echoes throughout the volume. The emphasis is very much thrown on there being joint stories; the move from one source interview to another is commonly marked by Holtom's banal passing-of-the-conch: 'All the fresh air of the Forest means that by lunchtime the Committee's appetites are sharpened and lunch is always very welcome. John Besent, former Superintendent of Epping Forest, picks up the story'. This erratic compiling of anecdotal items, with its emphasis on coincidence (several accounts of visiting the same green wooden ice cream hut on the edge of the forest with a remembered parent), finds consonant topics: temporary pre-fabs, refreshment houses, golfing and fishing, road developments, cycling, Dutch elm disease. It sets out to demonstrate that Epping Forest, which may 'seem timeless', is in fact an involved participant in the twentieth century and the Second World War, urban development, and social changes. The assembling into micro-histories (e.g., the culture of forest-based clubs and organisations such as the Boy Scouts) is a haphazard effect of the process – in which the topics and precise formats of the gathered material is dependent on the respondents who supply it, whether recorded in natural conversation, with prompt notes or a script, or in written form.

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<sup>348</sup> Edmund Hardy, 'Archive Poems: A Forest Set', in Stephen Mooney ed., *Viersome #0* (London: Veer Books, 2012), p. 30

Many participants in the eighteen month study were volunteers, often including the voices of most likely suspects: verderers, conservators, voluntary bailiffs, and Friends of Epping Forest.<sup>349</sup>

Hardy's selection is more streamlined. Resetting only the first chapter ('Childhood Playground') and the second chapter ('Second World War'), he divests his text of the more particular recreational enthusiasms or administrative histories, preferring the individual intensities of the childhood and wartime themes. The chapter 'Childhood Playground' combines excerpts from interviews which conform to the trope of innocent days in the forest. Two of the participants, Ken Hoy and Harry Berry, separately assert, for example, that their earliest memories took place in the forest, and viscerally describe these infant recollections.<sup>350</sup> Other participants relay what Phil Macnaghton has called the 'micro practices' of the forest:<sup>351</sup> wooding (p. 9, p. 16, p. 19), nutting and burring (p. 9, p. 14-15, p. 20), den-building (p. 10), egg-stealing (p. 10), hide-and-seek (p. 14), bird-watching (p. 18) and picnicking (p. 10, p. 20). The text is full of assertions of individual identification: 'We knew every pathway like a map', states Kathleen Hollis of herself and her sister, while Marna Snook says 'I grew up acutely aware of textures, smells, and seasons'.<sup>352</sup> The personal imaginative significance of these 'favourite spots'<sup>353</sup> is also shown by the reportage of unofficial or vernacular names for particular landmarks and areas (p. 9-10), and remembered school-lore and children's legends about specific parts of the forest (p. 11-12). And the 'glorious carefree days'<sup>354</sup> of the forest are frequently associated with the excursions taken with long-gone parents: 'I shall remember the exact routes we took and look wistfully at the space where the tea hut used to be. Dad has gone now, but I have treasured memories of our time in what I always feel is my part of the Forest.'<sup>355</sup>

By re-fragmenting these sources again in his own disjunctive history, Hardy intensifies the situation in which deeply individual associations ('what I always feel is my part') vie with the collective unit of the narrative. He obliterates any linguistic boundary between the several voices – as well as between the childhood escapades and the war events:

There was shrapnel falling

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<sup>349</sup> Rachael Holtom ed., *Echoes of Epping Forest: Oral History of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Forest* (Ipswich: Riverside Press, 2004), p. 3, 3, 81, 3

<sup>350</sup> Harry Berry, later to become Mayor of Chingford, recalls sitting on a stile as his father took a stone out of his shoe at the age of two; Ken Hoy remembers hiding under a stool for camouflaged bird-watching. In Rachael Holtom, *Echoes*, *ibid.*, p. 15, 18

<sup>351</sup> Phil Macnaghton, 'Trees', Stephen Harrison, Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift eds., *Patterned Ground: Entanglements of Nature and Culture* (London: Reaktion, 2004), p. 234

<sup>352</sup> Rachael Holtom ed., *Echoes*, *ibid.*, p. 9, 16

<sup>353</sup> Rachael Holtom ed., *Echoes*, *ibid.*, p. 13

<sup>354</sup> Rachael Holtom ed., *Echoes*, *ibid.*, p. 16

<sup>355</sup> Rachael Holtom ed., *Echoes*, *ibid.*, p. 16



covered in deep yellow flowers,  
 or take home may blossom, which stank  
 and we had to get under the trees to protect ourselves<sup>356</sup>

Here, the voice of Marna Snook recalling picking gorse as a child ('In season, we would pick gorse, covered in deep yellow flowers, or take home may blossom, which stank but I thought quite pretty') is run together with the voice of Ivy Alexander retelling her experience of a forest air raid siren on the first day of the Blitz ('There was shrapnel falling and we had to get under the trees to protect ourselves from shrapnel, it was pretty frightening'). The fit is not grammatical; the 'falling' verb of the shrapnel and the 'take home' of the blossom do not mutually conjugate. To read the sentence while ignoring these disruptions, the shrapnel would be seemingly pastoralized, covered in yellow flowers; and the may blossom would lose the reference to its prettiness, but not its stench – which more fittingly applies to the shrapnel-blasted forest. The two experiences of the forest, the idyllic and the traumatic, are intense imprints which even in Ivy Alexander's own final sentences are positioned in abrupt co-existence: 'those two things the first day of the Blitz and Epping Forest are imprinted on my mind. We'd had so many happy times in Epping Forest, but that day was really terrible.'<sup>357</sup>

Holtom apologetically edited the contributions of her text 'to improve the readability of the stories',<sup>358</sup> but identified and prefaced each distinct contributor. Hardy's text has no such identifiers of non-authorial voice. It is also barefacedly un-calibrated in its grammar and sense: 'We enjoyed wooding with my mother to get wood. / but I thought quite pretty'.<sup>359</sup> The war stories of the oral history, involving in the original source material Epping Forest evacuations (p. 24-26), temporary shelters (p. 23, p. 25-27), prisoner of war camps (p. 29, p. 30) and bombs (p. 22-23, p. 31), are differently exposed by this fragmentary sampling, in which new circulations or assemblages of data occur. This poetic archive essay draws from human history on a third telling (firstly, by the speakers; secondly, as reported by the oral history; thirdly, in the poetic text) to again assess the memory-work which is done by the modern British forest. This is a linguistic issue, too: the texts considered here offer a close scrutiny throughout of the little words and grammars upon which these expressions of memory and cultural identity hinge, and in which partisan divisions are hinted at; this is vital in contemporary forestry controversies, for '(t)he meaning of the past is political and belongs to the present.'<sup>360</sup>

<sup>356</sup> Hardy, 'Archive Poems: A Forest Set', *ibid.*, p. 30

<sup>357</sup> Rachael Holtom, *Echoes*, *ibid.*, p. 15-16, 22, 22

<sup>358</sup> Rachael Holtom, *Echoes*, *ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>359</sup> Hardy, 'Archive Poems: A Forest Set', *ibid.*, p. 29

<sup>360</sup> Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley, *Social Theory and Archaeology* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), p. 212

The twenty-first century has seen something of a renaissance of the association between trees and social memory in the UK. With the rise of national mourning regarding ash dieback,<sup>361</sup> the Woodland Trust's 'Your Tree Memories' campaign and public database,<sup>362</sup> and the 'condolences' being offered for the death of Wales' National Tree, also in 2013,<sup>363</sup> there have been numerable articulations of tree loss and mourning; the 'History Trees' commissioned as part of the Olympic Park installation in London<sup>364</sup> also stand testament to the role of trees as 'legacy' in public imaginations of the future.<sup>365</sup> A number of works<sup>366</sup> which respond to these past and future leanings of trees, which cannot be fully covered here, include Peter Jaeger and Zoe Hope's *The Grief of Trees* (2013), which – while its text is drawn from online grief forums – in its material form as an alphabetised index organised by tree names plays with the catalogues of trees in Drayton and Spenser (where we hear of 'the Fir, that weepeth still'<sup>367</sup>). Richard Skelton and Autumn Richardson's *Relics* (2013) draws from pre-historic pollen analysis records in a now treeless area, and the eleven lost tree genera identified in that area of south-west Cumbria by the botanist Winifred Pennington. Each of these eleven trees is represented by a trunk cross-section, with the innermost ring comprising its earliest linguistic form and the outermost its modern-day equivalent. In this way, the dendrochronology diagram comes – in this case – to refer to language epochs. Skelton and Richardson observe in their note that the texts are written to circle around the 'ghost-presences in the toponymic and cartographic record'.<sup>368</sup> This work is timely; this year's forestry conference at Sheffield – where forestry and woodland conferences have now been held regularly for twenty years – was on the topic of 'Shadows and Ghosts: Lost Woods in the Landscape', while Rotherham, Jones and Handley's edited historical geography and forestry volume *Working & Walking in the Footsteps of Ghosts* (2013) has just been made available. Cross-

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<sup>361</sup> See Brian Muelaner (Ancient Tree Advisor for the National Trust), 'Ash Dieback and the threat to our cultural trees', National Trust Press Office website, March 2013: <http://ntpressoffice.wordpress.com/2013/03/26/ash-dieback-and-the-threat-to-our-cultural-trees/> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>362</sup> See <http://www.loveitorloseit.org.uk/memories/other-peoples-memories/> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>363</sup> Kaye Brennan, 'Condolences for Wales' National Tree', *Woodland Matters* (Woodland Trust blog), April 2013: <http://wtcampaigns.wordpress.com/2013/04/18/condolences-for-wales-national-tree/> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>364</sup> Heather Ackroyd and Dan Harvey, 'History Trees' (2011): 'A tree marks time. This artwork will grow year by year, transform as the seasons change, reflecting the evolving nature of the Olympic Park. These trees embrace metal rings which have been engraved with a record of the site's history, held in the branches for successive decades to come.' <http://www.ackroydandharvey.com/olympic-commission/> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>365</sup> Scottish artist Katie Paterson's current plantation project *Future Library* also partakes of this rhetoric: 'A forest in Norway is growing. In 100 years it will become an anthology of books'. She is currently selecting authors for the limited edition, which will be read for the first time in 2114. See: <http://www.situations.org.uk/projects/katie-paterson-future-library/> (accessed 25/08/2014)

<sup>366</sup> I curated a number of these materials for the exhibition *Time, the deer, is in the wood of Hallaig*; the full catalogue of items – including several dozen small press texts – is online here: <http://timethedeer.wordpress.com/> (accessed 12/08/2014)

<sup>367</sup> Edmund Spenser, 'The Faerie Queen', *The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser: Volume 1* (Edinburgh: William Nimmo, 1868), p. 22

<sup>368</sup> Autumn Richardson and Richard Skelton, *Relics* (Cumbria: Corbel Stone Press, 2013), unpaginated

disciplinary work linking heritage studies, forestry, and cultural memory still seems to be flourishing as an area of inquiry, not least as at the end of this year, 2014, the Woodland Trust will begin planting four new flagship national woodlands (in Wales, Scotland, England, and Northern Ireland) to celebrate the war centenary. This is a vital moment to consider continuing evidence of the ways we express our national and cultural pasts and identities through timber cultures.

As this chapter has shown, the forest is not a shadow of civilization: in its importance to cultural expression, memory, and identity, it might even be seen as a monument *to* civilization. This chapter has aimed to show the intervention of poetry in language's part in the contesting claims made in the forest. It has not been able to track the many different riddles of culture hidden in the forest; under its branches it hosts a massive residue of traditional symbols, as attested to by folklorists and poets such as James Frazer<sup>369</sup> and Robert Graves.<sup>370</sup> The runic codes of the forest seen in the Ogham alphabet – the runes which Wotin formed on the tree – have also been impossible to track in modern poetry here, although contemporary re-imaginings of the Celtic tree alphabet are various, whether as sections in Sweeney translations (by Barry MacSweeney, Seamus Heaney, and others), or as individually published poetry books, such as Jeremy Read's *Riddle of the Oak*, or, most recently, Mandy Haggith's new edited anthology arranged species by species according to the Celtic alphabet, *Into the Forest: An Anthology of Tree Poems*.<sup>371</sup> The forthcoming book by Francis Presley, *Halse for Hazel* (2014), draws on both Celtic riddles and local tree glossaries in its word puns and transformations ('Halse is Exmoor dialect for hazel, as transcribed by local historian Hazel Eardley-Wilmot: a convergence of names which initiates a new poetic syntax of marginal trees and tongues...'), and evidently, when published, will ring some echoes with this study's focus on variant languages and forest glossaries.<sup>372</sup> Meanwhile, attention has not been paid here to engagements with the forest's traditions of spatial interpretation and representation (including Heidegger's *holzweg* or wood-way), such as Peter Larkin's book-length volumes on different forest management spaces, Thomas A. Clark's visual poetry versions of two contrasted managed forest spaces in the pamphlet *Two Evergreen Horizons*,<sup>373</sup> various texts by Skoulding (particularly 'Through Trees' and 'Forest and A to Z of Cardiff'),<sup>374</sup> and,

<sup>369</sup> James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1926)

<sup>370</sup> Robert Graves, *The White Goddess: a Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (London: Faber, 1948)

<sup>371</sup> Mandy Haggith, *An Anthology of Tree Poems* (Glasgow: Saraband, 2013)

<sup>372</sup> 'Halse for hazel has three sections, *Halse*, *Col* and *Hassel*: alternate and playful names for hazel, which map wide ranging geographic and linguistic areas, as well as political and environmental pressures. *Halse* begins with Exmoor tree names and ends with Lorna Doone, while *Col* moves from an irreverent Celtic tree alphabet to Atlantic woods in Scotland where hazel dominates...' Frances Presley, *Halse for Hazel* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2014), book blurb. See also Presley's essay on local dialect glossaries and trees, 'Hazel Eardley-Wilmot and the Vagaries of Language', Glasfryn Project: <<http://glasfrynproject.org.uk/w/2686/frances-presley-hazel-eardley-wilmot-and-the-vagaries-of-language/>> (accessed 25/08/2014)

<sup>373</sup> Thomas A. Clark, *Two Evergreen Horizons* (Fife: Moschatel Press, 1980), including 'Neat Norwegian Horizon / Spruce' and 'Sad Scotch Horizon / Pine'.

<sup>374</sup> Zoë Skoulding's concrete poem 'Through Trees' is in *The Mirror Trade* (Bridgend: Seren, 2004), and the geographical composite 'Forest and A to Z of Cardiff' is in *Remains of a Future City* (Bridgend: Seren, 2008)

in popular nature writing, Robert Macfarlane's new collaborative text, *Holloway*.<sup>375</sup> A number of contemporary texts also take on material versions of forest inscriptions – drawing on the topoi of bark-writing<sup>376</sup> – including Chris Drury's chapbook of marked bark and translations, *Algonquin* (based on a group of languages thought to have its beginnings in bite marks on bark),<sup>377</sup> and John Dilnot's assorted tree graffitis in *White Poplars*.<sup>378</sup>

I could not track each of these histories of linguistic mythmaking in the space of the forest; but I have laid out some histories of the dream of the forest language as a natural language, or common language, or as a lingua franca – and, vice versa: of the forest as a space of divisive language. This comparison could be profitably taken further via current anthropological research into tree-tagging, forest counter-mapping, and the tension between the global working language of forestry technology and the diverse and divergent indigenous symbolisms of trees, and how these may be brought into interactive processes. Here, I have merely indicated the importance of the forest as subject matter in modern language works, due to its long-term history as a space to host political complaints, to test state identity and politics, and to negotiate foundational ideas around landscape, land management, and the human sphere of influence – as well as competing cultural identities within that. These have created irreconcilable semantics and conflicting voices of historical narrative. This chapter has not been about the mystical, multiple voices of nature, therefore, but about the forest as a model for conflicted human speech – often in reply to official history or standard language.

Culture lives on a 'heavy diet of trees'.<sup>379</sup> The tropes of popular writing respond to both the perceived wildness of forests, and their role as symbols of human identity and belonging, as in Felix Dennis's 'The Children of the Wood' (which begins 'Every age is a wood age', and ends, 'We are the children of wood!').<sup>380</sup> The poets considered here have re-interrogated these tropes through eccentric or even malfunctioning languages - from Thoreauvian style neologisms, in Peter Larkin's *Sprout Near Severing Close*, to the babel-like (babbled) messages of oral history and dendrochronology, to the contradictory and consciously bookish citations of texts like *A Book of Herne* or *A Robin Hood Book*. The woods of 'wide word(s)'<sup>381</sup> are tackled in a number of poets' dalliances with language complexity, particularly those which treat the forest as a dialectical space, or as a space of translation – where the gist is not lost but transformed. As 'Forests unsettle, they overturn stability (and) they are

<sup>375</sup> Robert Macfarlane, Dan Richards, and Stanley Donwood, *Holloway* (London: Faber & Faber, 2014)

<sup>376</sup> See, for instance, Leah Knight, 'Writing on Early Modern Trees', *English Literary Renaissance* 41.3 (2011)

<sup>377</sup> Chris Drury, *Algonquin* (Lewes: Van den Eynde, 2008)

<sup>378</sup> John Dilnot, *White Poplars* (Alicante: Dilnot, 2003) – a two volume accordion chapbook showing found messages on tree trunks in an urban avenue.

<sup>379</sup> Laura Auricchio, Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook and Giulia Pacini, *Invaluable Trees: Cultures of Nature, 1660-1830* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2012), p. 5

<sup>380</sup> Felix Dennis, *Tales From the Woods* (London: Random House, 2010), p. 20

<sup>381</sup> Michael Haslam, *A Cure for Woodness* (Todmorden: Arc Publications, 2010), p. 9

places of transformation',<sup>382</sup> they can also be posed against functionary communication, or perfect and ordered top-down models of language. These texts have exposed these issues of functionary language which hide behind the modern British love affair with woods.

From the modern diction of global forestry, to the annular object of the tree ring, to the narrative ghosts of the multi-storied forest, the authorial voice is challenged in modern British poetry. This is apt considering a long history of language problems in forestry and forest culture. In the modern and postmodern era of woodland management these language histories are still being negotiated. The cultural histories of trees as argued over by scholars including Charles Watkins,<sup>383</sup> Joshua Radkau, Carl Griffin, Judith Tsouvalis, and Denis Cosgrove offer a geographical context which has here been brought together for the first time with this poetry's interest in the interleaving of models of the 'proper' word, or proper name, and the voice that is multi-lingual, multi-authored, or resistant to singular classifications of history or future in, and via, the woods. Socially and textually, then: is the forest, finally, a foreign space – or is it endlessly dictated?

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<sup>382</sup> Nancy Langston, 'On Teaching World Forest History', *Environmental History* 10.1 (2005), p. 24

<sup>383</sup> Watkins' forthcoming book, *Trees, Woods, and Forests: A Social and Cultural History* (London: Reaktion, 2014), promises to re-interrogate the great varieties of values and meanings in these cultural histories.

*I slipped onto my knees on being told there really is  
no landscape-language linkage: all the rides in pine  
are over-run with quibbles, brambles, puns and rhyme.*

Michael Haslam<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Haslam, 'The Love of English', *A Cure for Woodness* (Tadmorden: Arc Publications, 2010), p. 79

Conclusion: waterlogged words

You have said; but whether wisely or no, let the forest judge.

*As You Like It* III ii

This thesis offers a contemporary poetic geography of two sites in Britain, the coast and the forest, as spaces of linguistic reckoning. In doing so, it has been dragged again and again into an awareness of these sites as two disputed territories in language, or “translation zones”.<sup>1</sup> These are environments in which the tools of modern poetry come into their own. From lyric’s wordplay, puns, and tropes, to multi-lingual citations, to experimental erasure texts, to book designers’ typographies and mimeographs, to conceptual, and even illegible, forms of poetry,<sup>2</sup> a wide range of writing processes were here used to deliberately explore the coast and the forest *so to speak or in other words*. Each of these texts problematized the idea of linguistic fidelity applied in one, or both, of these environments, in poems which lapsed into language games, glossolalic utterances, or historical echoes. There was a deliberate courting of linguistic difficulty, from the capsized languages in Caroline Bergvall’s *Drift* to the disoriented songs amongst branches in Eric Mottram’s *A Book of Herne*. As the contextual work of this thesis has also shown, both of these are sites where taking the measure of our language is vastly important: they are where states and individuals have historically modelled their conflicting rights and definitions, as well as where culture finds metaphors for its own identity and its opposition (the sea and the forest have been respectively described as ‘the mirror of man’ and ‘the shadow of civilization’).<sup>3</sup> It is thus deeply striking when these poets remind us that these are also two spaces in which we are never entirely fluent.

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<sup>1</sup> Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005)

<sup>2</sup> See Craig Dworkin, *Reading the Illegible* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2003)

<sup>3</sup> ‘La mer est ton miroir’ (the sea is your mirror), Charles Baudelaire, ‘L’Homme Libre et la Mer’ (1852), cited in Barry Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and its Peoples 800 BC – AD 1500* (Oxford: Oxford University

The attention to definitional words, common to most of the poets, is made obvious in texts which, like Jeff Hilson's *In the Assarts* and Amy Evans' *The Sea Quells*, use the practice of citing O.E.D. definitions (including diverging and alternative definitions) on their flyleaf page. In these examples, Hilson's use of the competing verb and noun definitions for 'assarts', from the French etymology, sets up a division in his glossary play between (treed and non-treed) woodland spaces and their origin, management, exploitation, or clearing, while in Evans' definitions of 'quell' and its Germanic origins, we see a disturbing mix of opposing meanings related to 'kill' (*cwellan*) and 'torture' (*quälen*), and meaning to pacify, to silence, to subdue, to suppress, to assuage, to calm, or to settle, these manifested in different ways across the 'tortuous sea margin'.<sup>4</sup> Each of the other texts also brought attention back to certain words and their deep-seated associations as part of the fraught rhetoric of landscape. The poets deliberately re-explored forms of linguistic grammar and other word relationships (the synonymous, the antonymic), and, in many cases, drew attention to the place of these within larger systemic operations and philosophies of language.

This is thus a timely study; it occurs at an intersection in the twenty first century between growing interdisciplinary research concerns with global environmental discourse theories and forms of standardisation, as discussed particularly in the forest chapter, and, in the environmental humanities and literary study, an advancing awareness of the need for discussion around the role of comparative literatures, multi-lingual relations, and profound rethinking of the meaning and role of translation (as a particular example, Taylor-Batty's recent study on Babel and literary multilingualism).<sup>5</sup> The European journal of literature, culture, and environment, *Ecozon@*, has dedicated its most recent issue to a special selection on the recent multilingual concerns of the environmental humanities, including in non-standard processes of 'intra-lingual translation or rewording'.<sup>6</sup> In the face of modern pluralist paradigms for environmental knowledge, we see a quickening of poetic interest in these two sites as problem spaces for language. This thesis's discussion of official nomenclatures at the coastline and standard languages in the forest has offered another context to these investigations of the British shore and woods, and their wide range of possible locutions.

Against a backdrop of coastal management decrees and forest valuation policies, the thesis has therefore investigated the return, by poets, not to a natural and standard autochthonic language "of the

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Press, 2001), p. vi; Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992)

<sup>4</sup> Peter Philpott, *Textual Possessions: Three Sequences* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2004), p. 82

<sup>5</sup> For three key engagements see Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone*, *ibid.*; Matthew Reynolds, *The Poetry of Translation: From Chaucer & Petrarch to Homer & Logue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Juliette Taylor-Batty, *Multilingualism in Modernist Fiction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

<sup>6</sup> See Axel Goodbody et al. guest ed., *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture, and Environment* 5.1 (2014): Translating Environmental Humanities



soil” (or earth-writing), but instead to the ‘unhoused’ languages of linguistic pluralism,<sup>7</sup> in stubborn riddles, double-speak, pidgin and creole forms, and historical vernaculars. Why is it that, in an era of standardising global environmental discourses and new official languages of cultural and environmental valuation, these poems keep returning to the linguistic debris of the coast and the forest, and their answering-back ‘traffic’, ‘drift’, and ‘echo’? And why are we still fascinated by spaces in which environmental definitions flounder, even spaces which are being defined out of existence (by not being registered in official discourse and languages), or spaces which can themselves become metaphors for conflicted human speech? The poetic responses can even dramatise the way in which the two landscapes establish specific metaphorical imaginations for linguistic and critical endeavour, from ‘our paradigm / Of lost, dense losing’<sup>8</sup> in the forest (particularly the dialectical “hunt” for meaning), to blue criticism’s ‘portent(s) / borrowed from the sea endlessly / rocking’,<sup>9</sup> both environmental tropes that critics continue to avail themselves of. What else is hiding in the vernacular forest, or in shore-crossing coastal idioms? From the slippages of proper names to the cultural misrepresentations and misconstruals of environmental history, these two places offer complex shadow narratives to the mash-ups, parodies, and experimental citations of modern poetry.

The approach of the thesis aspired toward a perfect storm of cultural geography, environmental history, and linguistic imagination. It drew on the coast and the forest as two key topoi of emerging geographical and popular literature, as well as spaces of complex enquiry for specialist geographers and historians. This is balanced against the fact that the vegetative spaces of culture have already been figured as sites to consider, through word play and experimental texts, the “gentle foal linguistically wounded”, as Veronica Forrest-Thomson describes the natural world rendered in text, in a lyric from *Language-Games* (1971).<sup>10</sup> Bringing together the new cultural geography’s investment in landscape discourse with the language games of modern British poets in these two environments, new avenues of thought are offered here into – and via – the history of the coast and the forest, from their competing textual and environmental pasts, to the discordant communications of their present and future. Within the context of wider work on politicised and cultural natures (including Raymond Williams and William Cronon), the poetic texts I have exemplified each consciously explore the miscegenation of voices and cultural regimes in these two regions, antagonising the constraints of “singular language” to be found there.

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<sup>7</sup> ‘A striking aspect of this language revolution has been the emergence of linguistic pluralism or ‘unhousedness’ ... ‘the inter- and intra-linguistic cat’s cradle of their inventions’. George Steiner, *Extraterritorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1975), p. 10

<sup>8</sup> John Milbank, *The Mercurial Wood: Sites, Tales, Qualities* (Salzburg: University of Salzburg Press, 1997), p. 67

<sup>9</sup> Nancy Gaffield, *Continental Drift* (Bristol: Shearsman, 2014), p. 9

<sup>10</sup> Printed in Veronica Forrest-Thomson, *Collected Poems and Translations* (Allardyce: London and Lewes, 1990), p. 72

The junction and disjunction of words and worlds has long been a canonical topic in geography (via “landscape-as-text”) and in literary studies (via “language-landscape-linkage”); its theories continue to be discussed explicitly in the language of contemporary poems, from Kei Miller’s ‘land-guage’<sup>11</sup> to Nancy Gaffield’s ‘landscape as a complex language nested within a sentence, landschaft, landschap, landskip, languagescape’.<sup>12</sup> Yet there are richer specific histories to this idea which have yet to be fully brought together at the coast and at the forest, with all the abridgements of and to culturally legible identities and values offered there. This thesis aimed to work in the space of several of these oversights. More critical attention has been paid to these two sites’ rhetorical and social formations in previous historical periods, but their affiliation with different models of cultural legibility and illegibility continues to be worked through in twentieth and twenty-first century textual incarnations.

Meanwhile, the interest in (post)modernistic fragmentation and fractured voices has more often, and more renownedly, been performed in urban texts and criticism, attached to the legacy of the city dweller or flaneur as a key figure of literary modernism – with the British Library’s *Writing Britain* exhibition of 2012, for instance, dedicating a whole display table to the ‘babel’ of voices in the city.<sup>13</sup> This thesis highlights the coast and the forest as equally a space of ‘Babelization’, in Umberto Eco’s terms,<sup>14</sup> according with the modern eco-critical approaches surveyed earlier, which aimed to discursively recoup “rural” and “natural” objects of enquiry. These texts combine historical and modern visions of the two sites as disordered terrains which threaten collective discourse and enclosures of the past, and where

it may be necessary  
to add an imaginary translation

it’s easy to lose one’s way      in the forest<sup>15</sup>

In many ways, the groundwork for this meeting was already in place. The lionization of irony in contemporary linguistically-engaged poetry criticism has already been offered as a tool of attack on

<sup>11</sup> ‘Map / was just a land-guage written gainst I&I’, Kei Miller, *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014), p. 44

<sup>12</sup> Nancy Gaffield, *Continental Drift*, *ibid.*, p. 78

<sup>13</sup> *Writing Britain: Wastelands to Wonderlands*, The British Library, 11<sup>th</sup> May to 25<sup>th</sup> September 2012

<sup>14</sup> Umberto Eco, *The Search for the Perfect Language* (London: Fontana Press, 1997), p. 319

<sup>15</sup> Nancy Gaffield, *Continental Drift*, *ibid.*, p. 74

nominal and nominated speakers, authorities, and hegemonies.<sup>16</sup> A number of key texts have shaped critical interest in innovative poetic writing as a technology that may be radically un-original, in that it draws on existing source materials, languages, and excisions; this has also been described by writers such as Jed Rasula as itself a critical ecological device related to the role of concepts of authorship in modern environmental thinking.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, many of the approaches explored in this thesis's survey of geographical poetry criticism of recent years were already using spatial theory to unpin ideas of language and to approach the territoriality of literary voices on different scales, from deictic markers and other signs of the construal of space, to larger narratives of the marking out of cultural identity within the transatlantic, dialogic, and technologically informed space of the modern lyric. This thesis has a clear role to play making a space for itself within this context, whilst also engaging with environmental discourse theory, and the specific histories attendant on ideas of language and interpretation at the coast and at the forest.

I set out to work with the modern poem in all its guises, within the many territories of modern print culture and digital culture. This included, but was not limited to, that which has been defined as 'difficult', 'marginal', and 'radical' poetry. From the wide and uneven world of British poetry writing since 1970, a number of texts were chosen for their interventions with the geographical subject matter, in language, process, and/or form. Amongst these are examples of procedural experimentation in conceptual poetry – including the writing of mono-lingual translations (from English into English), or the production of variorums, such as Caroline Bergvall's versions of Dante's wood – which are used to think through problems of language and representation related to the technicity of the modern environment, its classification systems, and its governance bodies. The repetition of earlier literary sources and poems also comes into its own in these two sites as a means to assess economic, legal, and social doctrines and their dependence on a history of previous publications. The various texts and writings considered were thus chosen for the questions they pose about voice, translation, and the authorial principle. However, this was not simply applicable to conceptual poetry, or obviously radical forms. A number of the texts considered used more traditional lyric forms, while drawing on historical sources including folk music and religious texts to consider – through wordplay, etymology, and puns – how aesthetic language is tied to the land's 'precepts' of history, property, and entitlement.

In many ways the early research involved me following my nose: what might be the import, in British poetry, of the modern semantic fractures of the coast and the forest? As I pursued the research threads,

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<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, Denise Riley, *The Words of Selves: Identification, Solidarity, Irony* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000)

<sup>17</sup> Jed Rasula, *Modernism and Poetic Inspiration: The Shadow Mouth* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Kenneth Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Marjorie Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); on the ecological thinking in particular, see Jed Rasula, *This Compost: Ecological Imperatives in American Poetry* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2012)

a number of critical ideas began to snowball. There was richer material than expected on the coded sea and on nomenclature in the forest. These two contexts were drawn through several poems, particularly those which create or use non-standard orthographies, and were also placed within a wider understanding of language and translation theory after Benjamin and Steiner ('To understand is to decipher. To hear significance is to translate.'<sup>18</sup>). The strength of these questions brought me back again to Nicholas Howe's reminder that 'raeden' originally meant 'to solve a riddle', and to this thesis's involvement with the trope of 'reading the land' (raeding the land) made famous in the last three decades of cultural geography. The research found within modern British poetry a range of normative and radical reading strategies which were invoked to deal with specific perceptions at these two sites ("wilderness", "trauma", "public", "heritage"), and the nature of their links to tellurian space. It particularly focussed on complications to the idea of single identities bound in specific places, such as Peter Riley's self-dividing reference in *Alstonefield* to the terrain 'where / we live, I and I',<sup>19</sup> as well as to the abandoned entity of the single author(ity) in texts such as Colin Simms' 'Carcajou', which bears the subheading:

a long-poem of an encounter with the wolverine of the Northern Old and New  
Worlds by me and you, Hraska, Alaska, Nara, Ezra, Erika, Sitka Andy, Alan.<sup>20</sup>

Crucially, the thesis has aimed to approach the poems of these two canonical areas of the British landscape without ever forgetting that, in Tim Cresswell's words, 'Geography is a profound discipline' (rather than 'the butt of jokes').<sup>21</sup> As opposed to the 'down to earth' poetry which Duncan refers to in shorthand as 'Blood Sod Spades God',<sup>22</sup> this thesis examines poetries which understand that 'geography is not what's under your foot, that's simply the ground'.<sup>23</sup> It has also avoided short-circuiting the complexity of geography on the route to spatial theory; instead, it has deliberately looked for guidance from those who are working directly in research on shores and woodlands within critical and cultural geography and its cognate disciplines (heritage studies, environmental history, spatial analysis), and exploring the concepts of space, time, and identity which inform these sites'

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<sup>18</sup> George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. XII

<sup>19</sup> Peter Riley, *Alstonefield: A Poem*, (London: Carcanet, 2003), p. 18

<sup>20</sup> Colin Simms, 'Carcajou', *Eyes Own Ideas* (Durham: Pig Press, 1987), p. 7

<sup>21</sup> Tim Cresswell, *Geographic Thought: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), unpaginated Kindle edition

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Duncan, *Centre and Periphery in Modern British Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), p. 23

<sup>23</sup> Ed Dorn, 'Preface to *Idaho Out* (1965)', in *Edward Dorn: Collected Poems* (London: Carcanet, 2012), p. 923

capacities for cultural meaningfulness. In this way, I determined not to approach geography and literature as monolithic entities, instead drawing materials from geographers working in specialist areas. My argument has also deliberately skirted a number of famous spatial texts and theorists, instead showing the diverse marginal and geographical ‘tongues of men’ in archives, publically forgotten small presses, Gestetner printings, first-run editions, and online journals. Throughout these ‘speechridden’ and ‘textridden’ geographies the thesis has found two principal questions drawn from the trope of speaking land – not just ‘who speaks for the land’, but also, ‘who does the land speak for?’ Which histories and communities can be (apparently) retrieved from the British landscape’s loci of memory?

Dogging the thesis throughout is the fact that it has been written by a single scholar (and geographer-in-the-making). The fusion of horizons which cross-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary work attempts is, essentially, improbable. The danger of speaking for a second, third, or fourth discipline is that each has a different vanishing point for its understandings of valuable cultural inquiry. Without going so far as to confirm the ‘melancholic views of the hybrid as a space of the perpetual ‘in-between’’,<sup>24</sup> it is still right to note that this thesis represents a written stage in an on-going problematic task: to find ‘avenues of thought’<sup>25</sup> between outlying work in literary criticism and critical geography, without freezing mobile concepts such as ‘space’, ‘ecology’, ‘representation’, and ‘culture’. (That shifting meaning of the word ‘culture’ across cultures is particularly significant, from the 164 definitions compiled by the anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn in 1952,<sup>26</sup> and Raymond Williams’ *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976), to the etymological investigation in the most recent issue of *PAN*.<sup>27</sup>) While understanding that both disciplines are dynamic in their evolving concerns, it is also a mistake to present them as entirely plastic, manipulable, or diffuse. As with Cresswell’s chapter on ‘excluded geographies’ in the most recent survey of the discipline, *Geographic Thought: A Critical Introduction* (2013), it is important to consider what is excluded, as well as what is included, in ‘the construction of geographical mesotheory’ and grand theory.<sup>28</sup> Philip Crang has also written valuably on the sense of scale in cultural geography; as a discipline, he argues, it has partly been formed by occupying ‘the tension between the significant and insignificant, the small and the mighty, the trivial and the momentous’, and its young history of studying everyday practices and

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Clingman, *The Grammar of Identity: Transnational Fiction and the Nature of the Boundary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 6

<sup>25</sup> Lyn Hejinian, *The Language of Inquiry* (California: University of California Press, 2000), p. 131

<sup>26</sup> A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (New York: Vintage Books, 1952)

<sup>27</sup> Massimo Angelini, ‘Down to the roots of the word “culture”’, *Pan: Philosophy Activism Nature* 9 (2012)

<sup>28</sup> Tim Cresswell, *Geographic Thought: A Critical Introduction* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), unpaginated Kindle edition

identifications has already demonstrated that ‘Little things mattered as matters of cultural politics (...) without recourse to a superorganic culturalism.’<sup>29</sup> In other words: Geography, in a minor key.

It was incumbent upon this thesis to address various alternative (minor key) crossings of poetry and geography in the twentieth century. The written form it has taken is reflective of this, and of the overlapping contextual materials – shown here by the distribution of attention in the survey chapters. This context-heavy form of the text raises questions about the role of exegesis and how it might be usefully dealt with in future cross-disciplinary research, which aims to be accessible in its output (and its positionality), but also to cover original ground. In this thesis’s pages I have tried to co-ordinate materials in a way which will be compatible with new arrangements in the shape of literary geography. Where this research text encounters its limitations, it is hoped that the laying out of such materials will provide the mechanisms by which future geographers can exceed this study, as well as make arguments to the same texts.

In terms of the research’s own practical horizons, there is significant room for development in historical discourse analysis, developing the research of the coast and the forest through (for instance) the alternative readerships of amateur writing and professional histories and documents. Meanwhile, a limitation is obvious in these pages’ focus on English Caucasian writers, frequently male, whose texts I have found useful. This is not reflective of predilections, so much as a result of the patterning of my research activities (and knowledge) between existing critical groupings of British writers, publishing presses, and their archives. Many twentieth century texts could have been chosen as part of an analysis of the speculative study of the land by modern poets (R. S. Thomas: ‘I have looked long at this land / Trying to understand / My place in it’<sup>30</sup>). Those that feature in these pages have been selected for their potential significance to the prospects of the “minor” disciplines of forest history and coastal and marine geography, and working research on the conceptual, symbolic, and political spaces that abut the main land of Britain, or are to be found beneath the cover of her trees. The expression of this research is designed to instigate ways of reading the relevant poetries within these environmental and linguistic contexts, rather than to draw a line under the selection of writers at hand here; the poetry publishers Peepal Tree Press, for instance, focus on Caribbean and Black British writing, and include on their roster of books a large number which approach the British coastline as a composite, post-colonial geography of immigrants and emigrants; Kamau Braithwaite’s British publications (including *MiddlePassages*) are an example of a valuable potential future source, particularly in linguistically engaged sequences such as ‘Word Making Man’.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Philip Crang, ‘Cultural geography: after a fashion’, *Cultural Geographies* 17.2 (2010), p. 194

<sup>30</sup> R. S. Thomas, *Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 67

<sup>31</sup> Kamau Braithwaite, *MiddlePassages* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 1992); ‘Word Making Man’ is p. 9-14.

The livelihood of this PhD has taken place both within, and without, various academic domains. It has made use of the privileges of institutional literary research, and concerned itself with the authorship of a written thesis, whilst also investigating emerging public geographies, modes of engagement, networks of cross-disciplinarity, and the growing sensation of being part of cultural and historical geography ‘at large’;<sup>32</sup> the appendix, which follows at the end of the text, speaks more to these issues. In particular it has aimed to resist the ‘information classified’ approach which can be applied at the borders of ‘experimental’, ‘radical’, ‘difficult’, and ‘marginal’ poetry. Against a wider ‘cultural circuitry’<sup>33</sup> of research, and within the convivial culture of ‘minor’ geographies, this thesis has marked out a concern with the textual symbolisms of two British bio-regions.

The coast and the forest have been written, over and over, as spaces of alien promise and cultural radicalism. But they are also central sites for a conservative landscaping of memories, politics, and selves. Each of these poets has drawn on ‘precepts’ of history, place, and spatial experience, as well as the specifics of discourse at the coast and in the forest, to consider modern notations of land and world. These on-going poetic commitments to cultural geographical issues through language provide a clear argument for bringing such textual artefacts out of private bookshelves and underground library stacks, and before the eyes of geographers. This thesis has shown how the descriptors of the coast and the forest are a site of an interminable (never-ending) politics in textual representation. In the coastal chapter, the two representational poles of the drift and settlement of language – also being pursued in brand new publications, such as Caroline Bergvall’s *Drift* (2014) and Nancy Gaffield’s *Continental Drift* (2014), which discusses language’s ‘drifters outside / looking in’<sup>34</sup> – are used to approach issues of land and dispossession through the ‘inaudible lines of language’<sup>35</sup> of the coastline, in Andrew Duncan’s terms. The coast is also shown as a space to see the complexity of the contours of modern British poetry and culture, from its ‘local habitations’ to its investments in global, Mediterranean, or Atlantic culture. A number of policy documents and environmental bodies (including the Woodland Trust) present the British forest as providing a site of unanimous access to cultural memory; the texts covered here consider the space ‘we at best / Subvert by calling ‘forest’’,<sup>36</sup> interrogating the reliance of certain appropriations of the British forest imaginary on models of cultural uniformity and historical cohesion. Through existing heroic cycles and legendary figures, they offer citational histories and multi-lingual representations, testing the fate of a single hegemony in the forest.

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<sup>32</sup> For a history of this term as a positioning of new disciplinary activity, see Felix Driver, ‘Historical Geography at Large’, *Journal of Historical Geography* 36.3 (July 2010)

<sup>33</sup> Paul Gilroy, *Darker than Blue: On the Moral Economies of Black Atlantic Culture* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 114

<sup>34</sup> Gaffield, *Continental Drift*, *ibid.*, p. 38

<sup>35</sup> Duncan, *The Imaginary in Geometry*, *ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>36</sup> Donald Davie, ‘Sylvae’, *Collected Poems 1950-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 197

Ursula K. Heise has described the dangers of mono-lingualism as one of the most serious problems for modern eco-criticism.<sup>37</sup> These experimental texts bring out an analytical geography through issues of language – at a time when these languages are still being politically re-assessed at the coast and at the forest. With the growth of maritime super-mobility and pelagic criticism, and ‘as the world grows bluer and less orderly’ (Steve Mentz),<sup>38</sup> attention must be paid to the cultural product of the coastline as an extra-territorial space of multinational relations – through its ‘relational poetics’, in the terms of Édouard Glissant’s study in créolité environmental history.<sup>39</sup> The ‘total globe’ eye-view of the twenty-first century and its scramble for economic and political benefits through the strategic medium of the ‘watery world-wide web’<sup>40</sup> poses critical tensions which are thrown into relief by the literary histories of the British coastline: as a Romantic emblem of turbulent space; as an archipelagic site of encounter with devolved literatures outside of the Anglophonic paradigm; as a place of postcolonial ‘meta-history’; as a model for modern political vernacular related to the means of admission to this nation;<sup>41</sup> and as a site where our dictums and definitions are flooded by natural threats. New cultural geographies approaching the coastlines as material, affective, and in emergence – drawing on assemblage theory – also drive investigations into the protocols of coastal representation accorded by abstracted legal geographies, versus embodied knowledges of modern maritime space. These overlapping histories of coastal consciousness still trouble the modern designations of the coast as a cultural “line” or precipice, as worked through in texts such as Andrew Duncan’s ‘Anglophilia – a Romance of the Docks’ (‘violating rational limit / Infinite approaches to the homeland’).<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, forest communications is a major antagonist in the canonical narratives of global environmental discourse theory, or contemporary discourse management for crisis; a recent report on the ‘ongoing poor communication of the European forestry and arboricultural industries’ compares various social misconceptions of the ‘axioms of forestry’, for instance.<sup>43</sup> International forestry policy – as a ‘forest regime complex’<sup>44</sup> – is currently characterised by institutional, discursive, and coalitional fragmentation (also given the academic sobriquet “the forest problématique”), a sober corrective to any simple designation of forest values. An important part of this thesis’s work considers

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<sup>37</sup> ‘The environmentalist ambition is to think globally, but doing so in terms of a single language is inconceivable – even and especially when that language is a hegemonic one.’ Ursula K Heise, ‘The Hitchhiker’s Guide to Ecocriticism’, *PMLA* 121.2 (2006), p. 513

<sup>38</sup> Steve Mentz, *At the Bottom of Shakespeare’s Ocean* (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 98

<sup>39</sup> Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997)

<sup>40</sup> Chris Parry, *Super Highway: Sea Power in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (London: Elliot & Thompson, 2014), unpaginated Kindle edition

<sup>41</sup> See p. 9, this thesis

<sup>42</sup> Duncan, *The Imaginary in Geometry*, *ibid.*, p. 54

<sup>43</sup> Pip Howard, ‘To embrace European forestry and arboriculture we need to embrace protest and celebration’, *Nordic and Baltic forests blog*: <<http://www.nbforest.info/blog/empower-european-forestry-and-arboriculture-we-need-embrace-protest-and-celebration>> (accessed 12/06/2014)

<sup>44</sup> In particular, see the currently live research project, *Discursive fragmentation of the international forest regime complex: Towards a better understanding of multi-level forest policy discourses* (2012-15), led by Georg Winkel at the Institute of Forest and Environmental Policy, University of Freiburg.



the troubled history of the “standard” language of the forest in the context of the current turn to cultural diversification in policy, management, and interpretation practises. As the discussion of International Auxiliary Languages in chapter three made clear, this is a global issue – in the tension between any global working language and ‘local tree tenure definitions’.<sup>45</sup> But it is also difficultly engaged in Britain: in the texts which draw on a ‘thicket’ of literary history and symbolism in translation, from Dante, to German folklore, to Celtic riddles and tree alphabets, to English customary rights; and in those which respond to the European forest imaginary, in literary and philosophical tradition, as the landscape *par excellence* for thinking about the problems of linguistic relativism and the etymological feints of history. This is handled deliberately in texts such as Auden’s ‘Bucolics’, with its figure of the philologist in the woods, and Donald Davie’s ‘Sylvae’ (with its ‘dubious roots’<sup>46</sup>); radical linguistic approaches to the forest continue to be produced in the context of the fierce public debate with Defra over the meaning and fate of British woodlands, which at time of writing, after two years, is still yet to be resolved in legislation. ‘In times like these / (...) it’s necessary / to talk about trees’, as the poet Adrienne Rich has it.<sup>47</sup>

The thesis has dealt with official designations and standard parlance, but also local languages and variants (as, for instance, with Katrina Porteous’s work with fishing dialect terms) – sensitive to the plurality indicated in Scotland based Jamaican poet Kei Miller’s recent in-text demand for a creolised ‘prayer for the languages / we know this landscape by’.<sup>48</sup> The two landscapes in which this thesis has dwelt are embattled spaces, vital to cultural history – as scholars such as Joachim Radkau and Lincoln Paine have shown, offering histories of world civilization via the forest and maritime space respectively.<sup>49</sup> As such, the forest and the coast as linguistic objects remain over-communicative beyond our standard “effable” languages and international operations. By offering interventions into the polemic of history, and the literary pasts of the coast and the forest, these texts also consider how the two environments are being written into the future. As we fashion our models of authority over the present and future environments of Britain within the global Anthropocene, it is valid to turn again to this poetry’s address to legal designations, historical encryptions, and variant forms; to types of poetry as a ‘space of verbal encounter’;<sup>50</sup> and to the evolving tropes of the coast and the forest, and what they

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<sup>45</sup> ‘Introduction: Trees and Tenure’, online document *Community forestry rapid appraisal of tree and land tenure*, hosted by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/006/t7540e/T7540E00.HTM#TopOfPage> (accessed 12/06/2014)

<sup>46</sup> Donald Davie, ‘Sylvae’, *ibid.*, p. 198

<sup>47</sup> Adrienne Rich, ‘What Kind of Times Are These?’, in *Dark Fields of the Republic: Poems 1991-1995* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995). Peter Linebaugh discusses this text and its relationship with Brecht’s original (‘What kind of times are they, when / A talk about trees is almost a crime’) in *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons For All* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 69

<sup>48</sup> Kei Miller, *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014), p. 24

<sup>49</sup> Joachim Radkau, *Wood: A History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2011); Lincoln Paine, *The Sea and Civilization: A Maritime History of the World* (London: Atlantic Books, 2014)

<sup>50</sup> Skoulding, ‘Lisa Samuels: Unknown Cities’, in Davidson and Skoulding eds., *Placing Poetry* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), p. 107

tell us. From ‘what we hope to call “land”’<sup>51</sup> to what ‘we at best / Subvert by calling ‘forest’’,<sup>52</sup> these environmental tropes are in our own words, from slangs to laws. But those existing words and tropes also provide the ground for new readings, or riddlings, of the environments around us – for, in Bergvall’s Anglo-Saxon play,

what goes seafaring without mægaworries ohman of being broken into code (...)<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> J. H. Prynne, ‘The Glacial Question, Unsolved’, *Poems* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 2005), p. 66

<sup>52</sup> Donald Davie, ‘Sylvae’, *ibid.*, p. 197

<sup>53</sup> Caroline Bergvall, ‘Song 7’, *Drift* (New York: Nightboat Books, 2014), advance extract from the author (unpaginated)

APPENDIX: ‘Gang thegither’: on interdisciplinary processes

Why, I know a whole sackful of tricks!

The Fox<sup>1</sup>

In analysing our textual possession of these two sites, this thesis explored them both as unique discursive spaces (particularly through their tropes of linguistic disorientation), and also as spaces to examine environmental discursiveness itself. In doing so, it brought the tools of sharp incision (the literary critic’s close reading) together with broader geographical epistemologies, language philosophies, and currently active minor groupings of geographical researchers. The aim was to find a way in which these approaches could mutually clarify each other while also tackling modern issues of the semantics of the coast and of the forest. The thesis, not comfortably accommodated in literary *or* cultural geography, attempted to create its own arena (between linguistic imagination and environmental history) as it progressed; a lot of energy was therefore put into mapping the terrain of disciplinary ‘bricolage’ and its discourses,<sup>2</sup> as in the preliminary surveys. It is apt, considering the strained disciplinary histories of both forest studies<sup>3</sup> and coastal or oceanic theory,<sup>4</sup> for this study to have gone in seven-league boots across fields and methodologies. Shore-line terminologies and sylvan discourse both require an approach which acknowledges language’s wide milieu, from the characteristics of Anglo-Saxon to the anxieties of global environmental discourse theory; these then inform the closer looks at modern poetry’s versions of paraphrase, parody, wordplay, citation, collage,

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<sup>1</sup> Aesop and Milo Winter (illust.), *Aesop’s Fables for Children* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1919), p. 89

<sup>2</sup> See Lytle Shaw’s definition in *Fieldworks: From Place to Site in Postwar Poetics* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 2013), p. 3-4

<sup>3</sup> ‘The history of European woods and forests has long remained somewhat on the edge of academic study; it has never been central to any particular discipline or sub-discipline. (...) Some (books) have considered, for example, the history of medieval forests, others have concentrated on the rise of scientific forestry. (...) As woodland and forests have frequently been found throughout history at the borders of regions, so much of the interesting research is taking place on the edges of disciplines.’ Charles Watkins, ‘Themes in the history of European woods and forests’, in Watkins ed., *European Woods and Forests: Studies in Cultural History* (Wallingford: CABI Publishing, 1998), p. 1, p. 8

<sup>4</sup> See p. 100, this thesis

pun, partial derivation, and even the ‘innumerable white lies’ of our common parlance,<sup>5</sup> all examples of what George Steiner has described as ‘alterity’ in models of translation.<sup>6</sup> This thesis therefore takes what may seem to be unexpected directions: it absconds from the central discussions of language poetry traditions, pastoral, philosophy, and environmental utterance<sup>7</sup> to explore dictionaries, assemblage theory, memory studies, naval code, and Celtic liturgy, amongst others. It is important that the text be accompanied, therefore, by a consideration of inter- and cross-disciplinary values, particularly considering the timing of this study as part of the breaking wave of transdisciplinary and even post-disciplinary PhDs and practices of the last few years.

The ‘crowded exuberance’<sup>8</sup> of geography’s trans-disciplinary concerns is considerable. Its intellectual renaissance in the late twentieth century has incorporated humanist and postmodernist challenges to its traditional bounds, as well as internalising some of the 1990s rhetoric of complexity theory, with its conscious concern for ‘assemblages’ of systems and knowledge.<sup>9</sup> The history of the social sciences themselves as an intervention in C. P. Snow’s 1959 dichotomy of ‘The Two Cultures’ (the sciences and the humanities)<sup>10</sup> has been narrativised by Jerome Kagan in *The Three Cultures*;<sup>11</sup> Snow’s divide was also challenged in the 1990s by Brockman’s vision of a “third culture” of empirical scientists engaged in extra-disciplinary communication,<sup>12</sup> and by the biologist E. O. Wilson’s 1998 theory of ‘consilience’ – etymologically, a “jumping together” of disciplines in ‘the unity of knowledge’.<sup>13</sup> Such models of disciplinary synthesis have themselves been problematized, however, as in the American poet Wendell Berry’s spiritually-minded complaint at the turn of the century against what he saw as the reductionist, science-led structure of Wilson’s ‘consilience’.<sup>14</sup> Thus, strategies for cross-disciplinary movement may be branded as entirely necessary to the problems and theories of the modern world (as the urban geographer Michael Dear announces, ‘(a)fter postmodernism,

<sup>5</sup> George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 231

<sup>6</sup> Steiner, *After Babel*, *ibid.*, p. 437

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Terry Gifford, *Green Voices: Understanding Contemporary Nature Poetry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); for a collection specific to the topic of tropes of environmental voice, see Yrjö Haila and Chuck Dyke eds., *How Nature Speaks: The Dynamics of the Human Ecological Condition* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006)

<sup>8</sup> Michael Dear, ‘Afterword: Historical moments in the rise of the geohumanities’, in Dear, Ketchum, Luria, and Richardson eds., *Geohumanities: Art, history, text at the edge of place* (New York: Routledge, 2011), unpaginated Kindle edition.

<sup>9</sup> As a useful positioning within geography at the turn of the century, see Nigel Thrift, ‘The Place of Complexity’, *Theory, Culture, & Society* 16.3 (1999)

<sup>10</sup> This was a famous lecture given by Snow in 1959, published as *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959)

<sup>11</sup> Jerome Kagan, *The Three Cultures: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and the Humanities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

<sup>12</sup> John Brockman, *The Third Culture: Beyond the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995)

<sup>13</sup> E. O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (New York: Knopf, 1998). On page 7 Wilson addresses the etymology of the term as he uses it.

<sup>14</sup> Wendell Berry, *Life is a Miracle: An Essay Against Modern Superstition* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2000)

transdisciplinarity is unavoidable<sup>15</sup>), but, evidently, they are not easy. Any re-arguing or re-arranging of borders must be necessarily complex, given a history of cultural knowledge in which, for instance, the word ‘scientist’ was itself coined by a philosopher and theologian, as Stephen Jay Gould reminds us.<sup>16</sup> A brief guide to the nineteenth and twentieth century professionalization of mono-disciplines is offered by Peter Weingart in *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*,<sup>17</sup> whilst a number of books published in historical geography have traced the history of the discipline itself through Enlightenment and modern cultures.<sup>18</sup> As Derek Gregory observes, the apparatus of the modern academy is designed ‘to mark, and on occasion, to police (disciplinary boundaries) ... But these divisions do not correspond to any natural breaks in the intellectual landscape.’<sup>19</sup>

In 2008, Harrison et al asked, of interdisciplinarity, ‘do Geographers wish to rise to this intellectual challenge?’<sup>20</sup> Interdisciplinarity in its current formation(s) has indeed been a significant topic within geography – while geography has also been a significant topic within interdisciplinarity. As an area of discussion, interdisciplinarity is oddly able to trigger both active experimental movements into extra-curricular fields, and, on the other hand, a great deal of disciplinary naval-gazing about one’s “own” discipline’s philosophical constitution. The political geographer Andrew Barry and social scientist Georgina Born begin their new edited volume by considering how disciplinary commitments might be described in the first place: ‘Disciplines discipline disciples’.<sup>21</sup> Inversely, as Rob Sullivan observes in

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Dear, ‘Afterword: Historical moments in the rise of the geohumanities’, in Dear, Ketchum, Luria, and Richardson eds., *Geohumanities: Art, history, text at the edge of place* (New York: Routledge, 2011), unpaginated Kindle edition.

<sup>16</sup> The term was coined by William Whewell in 1833, as Stephen Jay Gould recounts in his exploration of the historical relationships between the humanities and the sciences, *The Hedgehog, the Fox, and the Magister’s Pox* (Nevada: Harmony Books, 2003), from page 247

<sup>17</sup> Peter Weingart, ‘A Short History of Knowledge Formations’, in Frodeman, Klein and Mitcham eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

<sup>18</sup> David Stoddard, *On Geography and Its History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); David Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992); Godlewska and Smith, *Geography and Empire: Critical Studies in the History of Geography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Morag Bell, Robin Butlin, and Michael Heffernan eds., *Geography and Imperialism, 1820-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); David Livingstone and Charles Withers eds., *Geography and Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Robert Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography: The Political Languages of British Geography 1650-1850* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Charles Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); David Livingstone and Charles Withers eds., *Geography and Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Charles Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 11

<sup>20</sup> Stephan Harrison, Doreen Massey, and Keith Richards, ‘Editorial: Conversations across the divide’, *Geoforum* 39 (2008), p. 549

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Barry and Georgina Born, ‘Interdisciplinarity: Reconfigurations of the social and natural sciences’, in Barry and Born eds., *Interdisciplinarity: Reconfigurations of the Social and Natural Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 1. Barry and Born’s volume was part of a larger research project at Oxford which resulted in several more publications, particularly by the anthropologist Marilyn Strathern; see Strathern ed., *Commons and Borderlands: Working Papers on Interdisciplinarity* (Wantage: Kingston, 2004); Strathern, ‘Knowledge on its travels’, *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 31.2 (2004); Strathern, ‘Social property: An interdisciplinary

*Geography Speaks*, geographers themselves can ‘attempt to “discipline” the discipline of geography’.<sup>22</sup> Or should we spare the rod? Is this very mutability part of the ‘conceptual sickliness’ of geography in hearsay?<sup>23</sup> There have been multiple arguments made for the importance of geography in the ‘era of interdisciplinarity’,<sup>24</sup> including in the special themed issues of *Geoforum* (2008) and *Area* (2009).<sup>25</sup> In 1994, Karl Zimmerer published an article celebrating the ‘disequilibria’ in the fields of human geography and its renewals through ‘the new ecology’,<sup>26</sup> while ten years later Rita Colwell’s AAG keynote described geography as the ‘ultimate field of confluence’, stating that ‘Geographers point the way for interdisciplinary approaches’.<sup>27</sup> Her observation that in the “hyphenated” zones of geography ‘almost every practitioner has a close tie to another discipline’<sup>28</sup> might remind us of that famous parable of interdisciplinarity, concerning Archilochus’s fox, who, unlike the hedgehog, ‘knows many things’.<sup>29</sup> Evans and Randalls have also more recently written on the ‘competitive advantage’ that geography has in such explorations due to the fact that ‘its own “interdisciplinarity” is actually “intradisciplinary” – science and humanities contained within one discipline’.<sup>30</sup> The aptness of geography to interdisciplinarity has tended to be emphasized in one of three ways: firstly, the polymath nature of geography as an ‘intradiscipline’<sup>31</sup> and ‘the most cosmopolitan of all sciences’;<sup>32</sup> secondly, the complexity of the environment and its natural, social

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experiment’, *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 27 (2004); Leach, ‘Being in-between’: Art-science collaborations in a technological culture’, *Social Analysis* 49 (2005), and Strathern, ‘Experiments in interdisciplinarity’, *Social Anthropology* 13.1 (2005)

<sup>22</sup> Rob Sullivan, *Geography Speaks: Performative Aspects of Geography* (London: Ashgate, 2011), p. 151

<sup>23</sup> David Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition: Episodes in the History of a Contested Enterprise* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 32

<sup>24</sup> Gregory Simon and Jessica Graybill, ‘Geography in Interdisciplinarity: Towards a Third Conversation’, *Geoforum* 41 (2010)

<sup>25</sup> Susan J. Smith, ‘Editorial: Joined-Up Geographies’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30.4 (2005); Stephen Harrison, Doreen Massey and Keith Richards, ‘Conversations Across the Divide’, introduction to *Geoforum* 39 (2008); Lisa Lau and Margaret Pasquini, ‘Jack of All Trades? The Negotiation of Interdisciplinarity within Geography’, *Geoforum* 39 (2008); L.J. Bracken and E.A. Oughton, ‘Interdisciplinarity Within and Beyond Geography: Introduction to Special Section’, *Area* 41.4 (2009); Gregory L. Simon and Jessica K. Graybill, ‘Geography in Interdisciplinarity: Towards a Third Conversation’, *Geoforum* 41 (2010); Thomas J. Baerwald, ‘Prospects for Geography as an Interdisciplinary Discipline’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 100.3 (2010)

<sup>26</sup> Karl Zimmerer, ‘Human Geography and the “New Ecology”: The Prospect and Promise of Integration’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 84.1 (1994), p. 108

<sup>27</sup> Rita Colwell, ‘The New Landscape of Science: A Geographic Portal’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94.4 (2004), p. 705

<sup>28</sup> Rita Colwell, ‘The New Landscape of Science’, *ibid.*, p. 705

<sup>29</sup> ‘The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing’. Fragment attributed to the ancient Greek poet Archilochus, and popularised as a reference to breadth and variety in philosophical thinking by Isaiah Berlin in *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1953) and Stephen Jay Gould in *The Hedgehog, the Fox, and the Magister’s Pox: Mending the Gap Between Science and the Humanities* (New York: Harmony Books, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> James Evans and Samuel Randalls, ‘Geography and paratactical interdisciplinarity: Views from the ESRC-NERC PhD studentship programme’, *Geoforum* 39 (2008), p. 582

<sup>31</sup> Harrison et al., ‘Conversations Across the Divide’, and James Evans and Samuel Randalls, ‘Geography and Paratactical Interdisciplinarity’ both in *Geoforum* 39 (2008)

<sup>32</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), p.2

and technical systems, reflected also in the rise of area studies, and, thirdly, the need for a combined range of specialisms to address sustainability and other complex real-world problems.<sup>33</sup> However, a concomitant enterprise to ‘shore up’ the bounds of geography, as exemplified, for instance, in Matthews and Herbert’s edited collection *Unifying Geography: Common Heritage, Shared Future*,<sup>34</sup> has also been taking place, aimed as a corrective to the perception of the discipline as fragmentary, ‘splitting apart’,<sup>35</sup> or even as a ‘core-less “donut discipline”’,<sup>36</sup> particularly during a period in which Geography (by its own name) has been being eliminated from many of the elite American universities. Yet its interdisciplinary agency has continued to be developed in the twenty-first century<sup>37</sup> – as well as the belief that, as Skole observes in a particularly didactically titled article (‘Geography as a Great Intellectual Melting Pot and the Preeminent Interdisciplinary Environmental Discipline’), ‘geography is placed at the centre of this emerging new transdisciplinary synthesis science’.<sup>38</sup>

‘Centre’, of course, is an operative geographical word in the above quotation (from an article which featured in a special section of the journal titled ‘Where we have come from and where we are going’). This is a clear example of the imagined *spatialisation* of disciplinary terrains and trajectories. The ubiquity of geographical metaphor in dividing intellectual activity (e.g., notoriously, the word “fields”) has been described by Alice Jenkins in *Space and the ‘March of Mind’: Literature and the Physical Sciences in Britain 1815-1850*, in which she explores the “knowledge as landscape” trope as it attends in the nineteenth century to ‘uniformity of knowledge’ or to ‘*champs de spécialité*’ – i.e., the division of the imagery between aerial and non-aerial perspectives for projects of knowledge, including ‘labyrinth’, ‘map’, ‘whole circle’, ‘path or way of transit’, and Coleridge’s ‘hub-and-ray’ pattern.<sup>39</sup> These geometries of research include twentieth century discussions of the spaces of interdisciplinarity, too – from the ‘wide borderland’ J. B. Harley sees between art history and cartography to the ‘debatable territory between physics and philosophy’ which Arthur Eddington terms ‘scientific epistemology’.<sup>40</sup> These visualisations of disciplinary terrains continue to shape the

<sup>33</sup> See for instance Anna Wesselink, ‘The Emergence of Interdisciplinarity in Problem-Focused Research’, *Area* 41.4 (2009), and Frances Harris, Fergus Lyon and Sarah Clarke, ‘Doing Interdisciplinarity: Motivation and Collaboration in Research for Sustainable Agriculture in the UK’, *Area* 41.4 (2009)

<sup>34</sup> David Herbert and John Matthews, *Unifying Geography: Common Heritage, Shared Future* (London: Routledge, 2004)

<sup>35</sup> Nigel Thrift, ‘The future of geography’, *Geoforum* 33 (2002), p. 295

<sup>36</sup> Andrew Sluyter, *Colonialism and Landscape: Postcolonial Theory and Applications* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), p. 216

<sup>37</sup> See Thomas J. Baerwalda, ‘Prospects for Geography as an Interdisciplinary Discipline’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 100.3 (2010)

<sup>38</sup> David L. Skole, ‘Geography as a Great Intellectual Melting Pot and the Preeminent Interdisciplinary Environmental Discipline’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94.4 (2004), p. 739

<sup>39</sup> Alice Jenkins, *Space and the ‘March of Mind’: Literature and the Physical Sciences in Britain 1815-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). See particularly Chapters 1-3.

<sup>40</sup> M. J. Blakemore and J. B. Harley, ‘Concepts in the History of Cartography: A Review and Perspective’, *Cartographica* 17.4 (1980), p. 76, and Arthur Eddington, *The Philosophy of Physical Science* (Cambridge:

circuit of knowledge production, as argued in a number of publications on the modern trope of academic ‘tribes’ and ‘territories’.<sup>41</sup>

What Julie Thompson Klein calls the ‘mantra’<sup>42</sup> of interdisciplinarity can, of course, be deeply problematic. Its ‘multi-disciplinary assemblage(s)’<sup>43</sup> are often short term and wholly benign; they reflect the idea that interdisciplinary exchange is appealing or profitable inherently. Joe Moran calls interdisciplinarity a ‘rarely interrogated’ buzzword,<sup>44</sup> and Alan Liu describes it as ‘the most seriously underthought critical, pedagogical and institutional concept in the modern academy’.<sup>45</sup> The problems of interdisciplinary discourse, its utopian rhetoric, and its ‘pseudo forms’<sup>46</sup> are the subject of writings by Klein, Garber, Strober and others.<sup>47</sup> In academic situations, the language of interdisciplinarity also relates to its occurrence in countless written strategies by funding agencies, policy bodies, and professional and educational organizations. Yet it is not always addressed critically as an agenda demanding its own modes of operation and communication. There are many procedures which fall under the rubric of interdisciplinarity and require different integrative, consultative or administrative processes, dependent on their different practical, theoretical, technical, or intellectual purposes and effects. Klein gives a comprehensive history of the various typologies of interdisciplinarity in her suggested taxonomy,<sup>48</sup> while Allen Repko has also recently extended several chapters on modes of defining interdisciplinarity and its metaphors.<sup>49</sup>

The many valuable studies which look consciously towards these (as yet) uncertain practices are part of what Barry and Born describe as ‘the present situation of ... problematisation’ in the knowledge economy.<sup>50</sup> It is an ‘age of uncertainty’ for autonomous disciplines,<sup>51</sup> and such meta-narratives are

Cambridge University Press, 1939), p. 1. Both of these examples are cited in Alice Jenkins’ chapter on ‘Disciplinary Boundaries and Border Disputes’, in *Space and the ‘March of Mind’*, *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Hazard Adams, *The Academic Tribes* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Tony Becher, *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Culture of Disciplines* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989); Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labour* (Chicago: University OF Chicago Press, 1990); Paul Trowler, Murray Saunders, and Veronica Bamber eds., *Tribes and Territories in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Rethinking the Significance of Disciplines in Higher Education* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>42</sup> Julie Thompson Klein, *Creating Interdisciplinary Campus Cultures: A Model for Strength and Sustainability* (San Francisco: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Julie Thompson Klein, ‘A Taxonomy of Interdisciplinarity’, in Robert Frodeman, Julie Thompson Klein, and Carl Mitcham eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 17.

<sup>44</sup> Joe Moran, *Interdisciplinarity* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 743.

<sup>46</sup> Klein, ‘A Taxonomy of Interdisciplinarity’, *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>47</sup> Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory and Practice* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990); Julie Thompson Klein, *Creating Interdisciplinary Campus Cultures: A Model for Strength and Sustainability* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Marjorie Garber, *Academic Instincts* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), particularly the essay ‘Discipline Envy’; Myra Strober, *Interdisciplinary Conversations: Challenging Habits of Thought* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).

<sup>48</sup> Julie Thompson Klein, ‘A Taxonomy of Interdisciplinarity’, *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Allen Repko, *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory* (London: SAGE, 2008)

<sup>50</sup> Andrew Barry and Georgina Born, ‘Interdisciplinarity: Reconfigurations of the social and natural sciences’, *ibid.*, p. 1



therefore necessary to explore the fraught activities of moving between disciplines. It is impossible for this thesis to rehearse other exegeses of the different theoretical, methodological, and administrative frameworks which have been encountered in the wild since the first typology of interdisciplinarity in 1972.<sup>52</sup> The ‘contextual’, ‘composite’, ‘supplementary’, ‘serial’ or ‘additive’, ‘auxiliary’, ‘structural’, ‘theoretical’, ‘instrumental’ or ‘strategic’, and ‘integrative’ interdisciplinarity which Klein describes each have different organizational structures and different functions (not all of which are found in the work of a lone scholar); meanwhile, the terms ‘multi-disciplinarity’, ‘cross-disciplinarity’, and even ‘anti-disciplinarity’<sup>53</sup> each refer to different ways of thinking jointly or across each other, whether this be around common axioms, common tools, or common agendas.<sup>54</sup> These forms of ‘agonism and antagonism’<sup>55</sup> can, of course, involve a prioritising of academic focus on one side of the divide (relying on merely vernacular knowledge of the other field); they can be uni-directional in their style of borrowing; the politics of interdisciplinary ‘motive hierarchies’<sup>56</sup> can even lead to accusations of “proprietaryness” (essentially, land-grabbing: one discipline seizing ground or assuming ownership over external territories).<sup>57</sup> The rhetoric of interdisciplinarity, as much as its actions, shapes its possibilities: its most usual idealised languages point us in two ways, either towards ‘bridge-building’, or ‘re-structuring’, as Klein notes in her chapters on interdisciplinary lexicons and rhetoric.<sup>58</sup>

That happy-go-lucky watchword, ‘inter’, has been written on in contesting ways. In her biography of the word ‘interdisciplinary’, Roberta Frank describes it as a ‘hairy and friendly’ prefix to the ‘hoary and antiseptic’ Latinate term ‘discipline’, creating something to please everyone.<sup>59</sup> ‘Inter’ is actually also one of the major headaches of interdisciplinarity, referring as it does to the problematic mediations of an ‘inter-language’<sup>60</sup> and ‘inter-locutors’ (often self-selecting).<sup>61</sup> Much argument has

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<sup>51</sup> Gibbons, Scott and Nowotny eds., *Re-thinking Science: Knowledge and the Public in an Age of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001)

<sup>52</sup> Apostel, Berger, Briggs, and Michaud eds., *Interdisciplinarity: problems of teaching and research in universities* (Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1972)

<sup>53</sup> ‘Antidisciplinarity’ is addressed by Andrew Pickering in his chapter ‘Ontology and Antidisciplinarity’, in Barry and Born eds., *Interdisciplinarity: Reconfigurations of the Social and Natural Sciences*, *ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Klein, ‘A Taxonomy of Interdisciplinarity’, *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Andrew Barry, Georgina Born and Gisa Weszkalnys, ‘Logics of interdisciplinarity’, *Economy and Society* 37.1 (2008)

<sup>56</sup> Jerome Kagan, *The Three Cultures*, *ibid.*, p. xi

<sup>57</sup> The accusation of “proprietaryness” is exemplified in Wendell Berry’s *Life is A Miracle*, *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), particularly the chapters ‘An Interdisciplinary Lexicon’ and ‘The Rhetoric of Interdisciplinarity’. See also Arild Buanes and Svein Jentoft, ‘Building bridges: Institutional perspectives on interdisciplinarity’, *Futures* 41 (2009)

<sup>59</sup> Roberta Frank, ‘Interdisciplinary: the First Half-Century’, in Stanley and Hoad eds., *Words: For Robert Burchfield’s Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1988), p. 100

<sup>60</sup> See Bracken and Oughton, ‘What do you mean?’ The importance of language in developing interdisciplinary research’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 31 (2006)

<sup>61</sup> ‘We should be trying to choose our interlocutors rather than having them pick us’. Erica Schoenberger, ‘Interdisciplinarity and Social Power’, *Progress in Human Geography* 25.3 (2001), p. 379

been had over the drawbacks of interlanguages as ways of developing ‘common ground’<sup>62</sup> in place of the local languages of specialist concerns. Most recently, Thomas Osborne has warned the ‘bright, progressive, brave-new-world interdisciplinarians’ that, after all, ‘if you lack a discipline to inter, you can’t be interdisciplinary at all’.<sup>63</sup>

For the purposes of this thesis, four particularly hands-on articles have been useful for their characterisation of the plight of those who have gone before me in navigating the interdisciplinary spaces of geography in academe. Evans and Randalls,<sup>64</sup> recounting their own experiences as guinea pigs in the ESRC-NERC interdisciplinary studentship programme, analyse various hierarchical power relations between disciplines and forms of ‘discipline envy’,<sup>65</sup> including physics envy and philosophy envy. In making their own argument for a ‘paratactical interdisciplinarity’ characterised by non-reductionist dialogue, they insert and discuss several of Cartwright’s diagrams of the imagined spaces of interdisciplinarity, arranged in different visual relationships of hierarchy and adjacency<sup>66</sup> – an interesting comparison to the diagrams of disciplinary interaction analysed by Klein, including a visualisation of the improbable ‘ideal’, a ‘fish-scale model of omniscience’.<sup>67</sup> Evans and Randalls’ article offers a good autobiographical lens on the pitfalls associated with interdisciplinary career paths, whether this be to do with practical issues or just perceptions (promiscuity; lack of grounding expertise; etc.) – including reference to Ian Cook’s memorable comedy-horror article of 1998 on interdisciplinary thesis research, ‘You want to be careful you don’t end up like Ian. He’s all over the place’.<sup>68</sup> The three other articles engage with forms of practice by conducting interviews alongside real-world interdisciplinary research projects. The environmental geographers Elizabeth Oughton and Louise Bracken’s 2009 survey of the ‘framing and reframing’ of interdisciplinary practice draws on Knorr Cetina’s description, ten years earlier, of framing as a ‘design strategy for knowledge’ within a certain ‘epistemic culture’.<sup>69</sup> Oughton and Bracken draw the ‘framing’ idea through twelve interviews with leaders of interdisciplinary projects crossing between the natural and social science, to investigate individual scholars’ fencing out of interdisciplinary behaviours in the conceptual pursuits of geography.

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<sup>62</sup> For a full survey, see Allan Repko, ‘Integrating Interdisciplinarity: How the Theories of Common Ground and Cognitive Interdisciplinarity Are Informing the Debate on Interdisciplinary Integration’, *Issues in Integrative Studies* 25 (2007)

<sup>63</sup> Thomas Osborne, ‘Inter that Discipline!’, in Barry and Born eds., *Interdisciplinarity: Reconfigurations of the Social and Natural Sciences*, *ibid.*, p. 82

<sup>64</sup> Evans and Randalls. ‘Geography and paratactical interdisciplinarity’, *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Marjorie Garber, ‘Discipline Envy’, *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Cartwright, *The Dappled World: A Study of the Boundaries of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>67</sup> Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice*, *ibid.*, p. 83

<sup>68</sup> Ian Cook, ‘You want to be careful you don’t end up like Ian. He’s all over the place: autobiography in/of an expanded field’, in Moss ed., *Placing Autobiography in Geography* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2001)

<sup>69</sup> Knorr Cetina cited in Elizabeth Oughton and Louise Bracken, ‘Interdisciplinary research: framing and reframing’, *Area* 41.4 (2009), p. 387

Lau and Pasquini, in their article on the ‘uneasy identification’<sup>70</sup> of the ‘Jack of all trades’, conduct fourteen interviews with physical and human geographers and anthropologists. They initially – in the introductory section, ‘Cartographies of comprehension’ – lay out their own difficulties as geographers with non-Geography backgrounds (as well as reporting on their interdisciplinary initiatives, including a series of workshops at Durham). The findings of the interviews are then surveyed – with the anonymous participants, amusingly, ‘given synonyms, and named after mountains, in keeping with a geographical spirit’.<sup>71</sup> From young researchers to senior academics, Lau and Pasquini analyse the conceptualisations of interdisciplinary research and its problems, finding a non-congruence in its meanings for different researchers: it is ‘the way for the future’ (Kilimanjaro); it is not real or ‘true’<sup>72</sup> interdisciplinarity unless it involves long-term research ‘side-by-side in the field’ (K2 and Everest); or is an interdisciplinarian is ‘jack of all trades and master of none’, an opinion which echoes across the study participants (K2, Vesuvius, McKinley)? Their article offers both an evidence-based reading of the various receptions interdisciplinarity has received within the discipline (‘as being, among other things, too speculative’ – Baigent et al., 1982<sup>73</sup>) and also a reflective report on positionality in geography, after Rose’s study.<sup>74</sup> Finally, Jessica Graybill and Gregory Simon – in their advocacy of a ‘third conversation’ for reflexive thought on interdisciplinary geography – survey colleagues with whom they have collaborated on the interdisciplinary programme in Urban Ecology at the University of Washington.<sup>75</sup> In this case, the questions were designed to address how non-geographers ‘experienced concepts in geography’,<sup>76</sup> asking about levels of jargon, critical and philosophical contributions, and so on, in a usefully external view of what geography is seen to offer – as well as failures of communication born of its very breadth and inclusiveness.<sup>77</sup>

Cultural geography is an often misconceived discipline. Phil Crang observes that twenty years’ of heterogeneous work in cultural geography is often reduced to ‘the codifications that came to stand for it’.<sup>78</sup> The wider domain of interdisciplinarity is itself particularly prone to misconceptions and

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<sup>70</sup> Lisa Lau and Margaret Pasquini, ‘Jack of all trades?’ The negotiation of interdisciplinarity within geography’, *Geoforum* 39 (2000), p. 553

<sup>71</sup> Lau and Pasquini, ‘Jack of all trades?’ The negotiation of interdisciplinarity within geography’, *ibid.*, p. 555

<sup>72</sup> The rhetorical dichotomy between ‘true’ and ‘untrue’ interdisciplinarity is common; see as one instance Erica Schoenberger on “genuinely interdisciplinary engagement”, in ‘Interdisciplinarity and Social Power’, *ibid.*, p. 10

<sup>73</sup> Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1982), cited in Lau and Pasquini, ‘Jack of all trades?’ The negotiation of interdisciplinarity within geography’, *ibid.*, p. 553

<sup>74</sup> Gillian Rose, ‘Situating knowledge: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics’, *Progress in Human Geography* 21.3 (1997)

<sup>75</sup> Jessica Graybill and Gregory Simon, ‘Geography in interdisciplinarity: Towards a third conversation’, *Geoforum* 41 (2010)

<sup>76</sup> Graybill and Simon, ‘Geography in interdisciplinarity’, *ibid.*, p. 358

<sup>77</sup> A key article for considering the external perception of geography is Alexander Murphy, ‘Enhancing Geography’s Role in Public Debate’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96.1 (2006)

<sup>78</sup> Philip Crang, ‘Cultural geography: after a fashion’, *Cultural Geographies* 17.2 (2010), p. 193

misunderstandings, as explored by Myra Strober in her *Interdisciplinary Conversations: Challenging Habits of Thought*, a set of close readings of six faculty conversation in North American universities which aimed to be interdisciplinary.<sup>79</sup> The interpersonal and institutional processes are both complex. To return to Wilson's "jumping together" of disciplines, we might want to ask - how do we 'jump together'? Is it a do-si-do (back-to-back) or a vis-à-vis (face-to-face)? Is there any repeatable pattern of activities which can be referred to as the methodology of interdisciplinarity? As Bracken and Oughton remark in their editorial, replicability equals assessability (in the quality control and validation of research projects).<sup>80</sup> Interdisciplinarity is partly underdeveloped as a professional stream because of these very difficulties with its assessment and administration<sup>81</sup> – not to mention the problems of library classification, peer-reviewing systems, pedagogical structures, and other formalisations of disciplinary hegemony.<sup>82</sup> It is no wonder that an individual scholar may feel wary both of interdisciplinarity's desirability and its 'courtship of imposture'.<sup>83</sup>

Team-teaching and team-publishing<sup>84</sup> is one avenue for interdisciplinarity. Outside of the department or the institution and its 'endogenous' interdisciplinarity is the 'exogenous' kind, including the various no men's lands and no land's men of interdisciplinary encounters: "travelling concepts",<sup>85</sup> "invisible colleges",<sup>86</sup> "boundary objects",<sup>87</sup> and the general understandings of think tanks and research clusters. The support of interdisciplinarity is on the rise in UK research councils – for example, in joint research council programmes (such as Rural Economy and Land Use), or joint studentships, including this particular thesis's AHRC funding in a geography department. Resources are also multiplying – including the virtual seminars run by the International Network for Interdisciplinarity and Transdisciplinarity (INIT)<sup>88</sup> and activities attached to particular bodies, including the Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies (Warwick) and the Topology Research Network (Goldsmiths). Interdisciplinarity – particular as it applies to human-environment interactions

<sup>79</sup> Myra Strober, *Interdisciplinary Conversations*, *ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Bracken and Oughton, 'Interdisciplinarity within and beyond geography', *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> See in particular Katri Huutoniemi, 'Evaluating interdisciplinary research', and Dan Sarewitz, 'Why interdisciplinarity is so hard', both in Frodeman, Klein, and Mitcham eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Interdisciplinarity*, *ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> See Raphael Foshay, *Valences of Interdisciplinarity: Theory, Practice, Pedagogy* (Edmonton: AU Press, 2011)

<sup>83</sup> Marjorie Garber, *Academic Instincts* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 72

<sup>84</sup> An example is the collaboration between Dear, Ketchum, Luria, and Richardson on their *GeoHumanities: Art, History, Text at the Edge of Place* (New York: Routledge, 2011)

<sup>85</sup> Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002)

<sup>86</sup> Diana Crane, *Invisible Colleges: Diffusion of Knowledge in Scientific Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972)

<sup>87</sup> Susan Star and James Griesemer, 'Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39', *Social Studies of Science* 19.3 (1989); this concept has been applied in geography by Henry Buller in Buller, 'The lively process of interdisciplinarity', *Area* 41.4 (2009)

<sup>88</sup> Papers and discussion threads can all be downloaded on the platform: <[www.interdisciplines.org](http://www.interdisciplines.org)> (accessed 24/08/2014)

– has been celebrated as the ‘linchpin’ of progress<sup>89</sup> and as ‘the necessary churn in the system’.<sup>90</sup> Its overlapping motives and processes are, however, not without their concerns and dangers, which the modern interdisciplinarian – with his ‘sackful of cunning’<sup>91</sup> – must navigate.

This thesis – which most of all affiliates, in Klein’s taxonomy, with the subcategory of ‘hybrid specialization’<sup>92</sup> – is also interested in such models of team teaching, team publishing, and team research. The alternative research initiatives which have developed from my subject, besides the written thesis, are by no means secondary. Beyond the remit of the individual scholar’s writing are collaborations, networks, and other research spaces which are created by multiple actors – what Rob Sullivan, in his chapter on the ‘auto-performance’ of geography, has referred to as ‘definitional’ research performances.<sup>93</sup> Three years ago, Crang observed that the new cultural geography’s journey from its fashionable youth into its current ‘middle-aged spread’ has brought about a diversity of approaches in which creative research has been ‘re-framed in less solipsistic forms, re-oriented around practices of collaboration and social knowledge production’, casting cultural geographers in a range of capacities: ‘as commissioners and curators, as correspondents, as researchers’. He gives particular examples of collaborative work with large cultural institutions, evidence of what has been called “public geographies” or “creative public geographies”. This – to Crang – shows the move from models of ‘external academic critique and interpretation (to) a meshing of different practices of criticality’.<sup>94</sup>

My formation of the project *Land Diagrams* in 2012 – an online series of ‘twinned studies’<sup>95</sup> – acted as a proposal, along these lines, for new open-access navigations of interdisciplinary understandings of the land. The series uses found diagrams (chart, scheme, score, map) to prompt essay responses by two unrelated specialists. Each found image – usually an unidentified lo-fi black and white scan – therefore acts as a visual hinge between the two written interpretations, which are then exhibited together online.<sup>96</sup> The responses are often experimental: no rules are set beyond word count, and there is no consultation between the two guest writers: a divergence of readings is preferred to a

<sup>89</sup> A.R. Horwitz, ‘Building Bridges through Collaboration – A Pathway for Interdisciplinary Research’, *Trends in Cell Biology* 13.1 (2003), p. 2–3.

<sup>90</sup> L. Salter and A. Hearn, *Outside the Lines: Issues in Interdisciplinary Research* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996)

<sup>91</sup> Wilhelm Grimm and Jacob Grimm, ‘The Fox and the Cat’, *Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* (Auckland, New Zealand: The Floating Press, 2009), p. 305

<sup>92</sup> Julie Thompson Klein, *Crossing Boundaries: Knowledge, Disciplinarity, and Interdisciplinarity* (Virginia: The University Press of Virginia, 1996), p. 44

<sup>93</sup> Rob Sullivan, *Geography Speaks*, *ibid.*, p. 151

<sup>94</sup> Phil Crang, ‘Cultural geography: after a fashion’, *ibid.*, p. 191, 195, 196. Crang’s examples include Gideon Koppel’s documentary film *Sleep Furiously* (2008), Felix Driver and Lowri Jones’ 2009 exhibition *Hidden Histories of Exploration* at the RGS, Toby Butler’s ‘memoryscapes’ project on London’s sonic archives (2007), and work by Steve Daniels, David Gilbert, and Hayden Lorimer and David Matless with, respectively, Tate Britain, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and BBC Radio 3.

<sup>95</sup> See Amy Cutler, ‘Land Diagrams: the new twinned studies’, *Cultural Geographies* 20.1 (2013)

<sup>96</sup> See: <[www.landdiagrams.wordpress.com](http://www.landdiagrams.wordpress.com)> (accessed 24/08/2014)

cooperative middle-ground. The reading of diagrams, of course, depends on different tacit knowledge of practices, techniques, and the conventions of the academy. But diagrams are also ‘machines of translation’,<sup>97</sup> offering ways of transmitting and prompting thought between disciplines. By setting out to curate these alternative intersections, the *Land Diagrams* series aims to give leeway to unexpected geographical rapports across disciplines. It emphasises that diagrams do not fully disclose themselves or their disciplinary operations, but are, rather, unutterable formal languages expressed through ‘cultural techniques’.<sup>98</sup> (As Jacques Bertin wrote in his landmark *Semiology of Graphics*, ‘One does not “read” a graphic; one asks questions of it.’<sup>99</sup>) As this project argues, if the complex environments of the modern world are one of the major stakes in interdisciplinary conversations, then we need alternative methods such as these of organizing cross-disciplinary geographical enquiry.

The expanding field of creative-critical operations is shown to be a crucial element in the contemporary meaning of the discipline in a recent survey by Harriet Hawkins. Hawkins observes that such ‘uncharted’ modes of engagement, in cahoots with art theory and philosophy, challenge the easy production of the ‘spaces, strictures and structures of geographical knowledge making’.<sup>100</sup> Felix Driver’s article on his production of the exhibition *Hidden Histories of Exploration*, with Lowri Jones, also argues for the complexity of the relations between analytical and curatorial geographies and between ‘research’ and ‘exhibition’, a relationship which is ‘by no means one-way, as is implied by the language of “dissemination” and “output”’.<sup>101</sup> Driver writes on the ‘co-production of geographical knowledge’<sup>102</sup> in the visible display spaces of archive-based exhibition, which, as he demonstrates, can be used as an importantly interventionist strategy (as in his own exhibition’s focus on the erased stories of indigenous porters, pilots, guides, and translators who played crucial roles in each expedition, rather than the figure of the heroic individual explorer usually dominant in visual public narratives). His work on spaces of display and on geographical curating “against the grain of the archive”<sup>103</sup> coincides with something of an archive fever in modern textual and artistic practice and discourse. The concept of the ‘radical’ archive invites new movements through historical records as ‘generative spaces’, as ‘instruments of future planning’, and as sites of ‘political confrontation, of

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<sup>97</sup> Sybille Krämer, ‘Epistemology of the Line: Reflections on the Diagrammatical Mind’, in Olga Pombo and Alexander Gerner eds., *Studies in Diagrammatology and Diagram Praxis* (London: College Publications, 2010), p. 30

<sup>98</sup> Sibylle Krämer and Horst Bredekamp, ‘Kultur, Technik, Kulturtechnik: Wider die Diskursivierung der Kultur’, in Sibylle Krämer and Horst Bredekamp eds., *Bild, Schrift, Zahl* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2003)

<sup>99</sup> Jacques Bertin (trans. Berg), ‘Preface’, *Semiology of Graphics: Diagrams Networks Maps* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), p. x.

<sup>100</sup> Harriet Hawkins, ‘Geography and art. An expanding field: Site, the body, and practice’, *Progress in Human Geography* 37.1 (2013), p. 53, 56

<sup>101</sup> Felix Driver, ‘Hidden histories made visible? Reflections on a geographical exhibition’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38.3 (2013), p. 420

<sup>102</sup> Felix Driver, ‘Hidden histories made visible?’, *ibid.*, p. 420

<sup>103</sup> Felix Driver, ‘Hidden histories made visible?’, *ibid.*, p. 433

action and intervention in the present.<sup>104</sup> It includes (but is in no way limited to) the online source for British innovative poetry founded by Andrea Brady, *Archive of the Now*,<sup>105</sup> the forthcoming cross-disciplinary conference, *Archives for the Future*,<sup>106</sup> and the AHRC-funded language art exhibition project and festival of 2013, *Text Art Archive*, including its one day conference, ‘Report on the Archive’.<sup>107</sup>

The exhibition which I curated in 2013, *Time, the deer, is in the wood of Hallaig*,<sup>108</sup> working with the research conducted in the forest chapter of this thesis, was an investigation of the trope that ‘In our world where time is now told by the rings of trees, the forest of symbols is an archive’.<sup>109</sup> It explored the presentation of the past in the managed spaces of woodland, as well as the social and environmental properties of the concept of ‘forest memory’ – working through the text, the archive, and the xylarium, or wood collection. Between the French horticultural term “forest trauma” and Robert Pogue Harrison’s “forests of nostalgia”, both mentioned in the forest chapter, a whole investigation can be opened up around history, witnessing, and the memorial qualities of woodland. For the exhibition, small press texts, including many that could not be considered in this thesis, were placed alongside archival photographs, artefacts, museum objects, and installations, in an old, low-lit belfry designed by Sir John Soane. (The full item catalogue now has a permanent place online, including all of my written text, photographs of each of the displays, and links to reviews of the exhibition, including several in peer-reviewed journals.<sup>110</sup>)

The temporary collection ran to nearly two hundred items. In curating it, I collaborated with the Kew Museum of Economic Botany, choosing eighteen woods – raw and crafted – from its xylarium of 30,000 samples, originally belonging to the long-closed Museum of British Forestry. (Recent research completed at Kew by Caroline Cornish has extrapolated histories of forestry from the competing inscriptions, labels, and engravings to be found on the woods, including its twentieth century trends as a colonial, educational, economic, and scientific discipline.<sup>111</sup>) The UCL Dendrochronology

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<sup>104</sup> These quotations are from the ‘Archives for the Future’ blog at <http://archivesforthefuture.wordpress.com/call-for-papers/> (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>105</sup> Online at: <http://www.archiveofthenow.org/> (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>106</sup> *Archives for the Future: An Art and Visual Culture Conference*, University of Westminster, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2014

<sup>107</sup> *Report on the Archive*, The Peltz Gallery, 43 Gordon Square, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2013

<sup>108</sup> *Time, the deer, is in the wood of Hallaig: an exhibition on forests, history, and social and environmental memory*, St. John on Bethnal Green, June 2013

<sup>109</sup> Bonnie Marranca, ‘The Forest as Archive: Wilson and Interculturalism’, *Performing Arts Journal* 11/12 (1989), p. 40

<sup>110</sup> Catalogue online at: <http://timethedeer.wordpress.com/> (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>111</sup> Caroline Cornish, ‘Reliving Kew’s Museum of Economic Botany’ (2010), on the institution’s blog at <http://www.kew.org/news/kew-blogs/economic-botany/Reliving-Kews-Museum-of-Economic-Botany.htm> (accessed 24/08/2014); Caroline Cornish, ‘Circulating India: Kew, Colonial Forestry and Circuits of Display’ (2011), public lecture available as a Natural History Museum podcast at <http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2011/12/caroline-cornish-circulating-india-kew-colonial-forestry-and-circuits-of-display/> (accessed 24/08/2014); Cornish, Gasson, and Nesbitt, ‘The Wood Collections at Kew: From Toys to Totem Poles’, *Journal of the International Wood Collectors Society* 66.3 (2013)

Laboratory supplied several working specimens related to tree ring reading, including bog yew pieces, tree core samples mounted for microscope examination, and three spectacular trunk slices cut down to give chronologies of historical events. I also sourced twentieth century aerial photographs of forested land from English Heritage and a set of photos from the London Metropolitan Archives, recording a hands-on forestry lesson at Woodhill Primary School led by a Forestry Commission representative.

Beyond these institutional resources were the many individual responses, including Gail Ritchie's memorial tree ring drawing series based on the French battlefields; Paul Gough's deformed *Upas Tree* drawings inspired by Paul Nash's wartime paintings; David Chatton-Barker's lightbox with filmstrips from *Folium & Araneum*, with decaying leaves; Chris Paul Daniels' use of nineteenth century glass-plate portraits in his film *Family Tree*, and Tom Noonan's architectural sketches *The Reforestation of the Thames Estuary and the John Evelyn Institute of Arboreal Science*. The spectre of ash dieback haunted the exhibition, both in contemporary works-in-progress such as Carol Watts' poem and small book *Ash Pastoral*, and in earlier works which created keepsakes of trees, particularly the Dutch artist herman de vries' funeral book, *In Memory of the Scottish Forests*. The dozens of small press and broadsheet texts and books ranged from those which exist as print-on-paper to more diverse forms of "publication", including Chris Drury's bite marks on a piece of birch in imitation of the bark-based language Alqonquin, and accompanying chapbook of the same title lent by Peter Foolen Editions, and Justin Hopper's audio-loop of prose-poetry broadcast in the woods of Chanctonbury Rings, accompanied by a postcard-book. Some of the items included in the exhibition seemed every-day, but became iconic in the context of the forest memory subject matter – such as the Polish vodka bottle branded 'Pan Tadeusz' (the epic poem of the Lithuanian forest), or the wooden memory branch by the designers OOMS (i.e., a branch which was also a USB memory stick).<sup>112</sup>

Beyond the printed, bound word, the radical approach to the environmental archive and its narratives and futures becomes a meaningful curatorial as well as scholarly topic.<sup>113</sup> In this case, it brought together a number of alternate angles for the research in these pages, from the use of natural environments as a back-up device for human history, to the rhetorical positioning of 'public' concerns and institutions, to the spatiality of display in avant-garde texts and material book forms. The role of language art in exploring the 'interstices' of exhibition space in this way has been recently argued by the text curator Tony Trehy in Tony Lopez's new book *The Text Festivals*.<sup>114</sup> Here, Trehy observes

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<sup>112</sup> All of the mentioned works appear in the online catalogue at <<http://timethedeer.wordpress.com/>> (accessed 24/08/2014)

<sup>113</sup> As seen, for instance, in the subsequent exhibition, *Nature Reserves* (GV Art Gallery, London, 26<sup>th</sup> July – 13<sup>th</sup> September 2013). The curatorial essay, 'Nature Reserves: tracing thoughts and the future of the archive', is available online, as is the full catalogue and images: <<http://www.gvart.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/GV-Art-Nature-Reserves-Catalogue.pdf>> (accessed 24/08/2014).

<sup>114</sup> Tony Trehy, 'Curating Text', in Tony Lopez ed., *The Text Festivals: Language Art and Material Poetry* (Plymouth: University of Plymouth Press, 2013), p. 36



the role of ‘linguistical installation’ of avant-garde text forms as a ‘challenge to practice’<sup>115</sup> in the white cube gallery, in which language has often remained in the hands of prestigious text artists, with neon signs at their disposal, rather than experimental poets. Tony Lopez’s introductory essay also refers to the ‘unstable, artistic and cultural functions’ of texts placed into new curated spaces, referring to the catalogues of the famous text-art exhibitions of the 1960s and 70s,<sup>116</sup> including poets whose work was to a substantial degree reliant on such curatorial mediations, such as Ian Hamilton Finlay. This thesis’s four year span has coincided with a number of exhibitions involving small presses and artists’ books, not limited to “Vispo” (visual poetry).<sup>117</sup> Lopez describes the role of ‘acute curatorial practice’ in these spaces as being to ‘challenge (...) enclaves and open them up for shared scrutiny’, particularly the ‘protected domains’ of research livelihoods.<sup>118</sup>

This piece of thesis writing cannot stand alone, or apart from such collaborative endeavours and interventions with public language and environmental perceptions. But it is hoped that its form – and its bringing together of a very particular sackful of tricks – will be useful to future engagements with the tricky semantics of woods, coasts, or other politically coded sites, where we are reminded that, as much as any official terminologies, received standard languages, or apparently universal cultural values, ‘Blemish is the native tongue’.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Trehy, ‘Curating Text’, *ibid.*, p. 36

<sup>116</sup> In particular, four exhibitions of concrete poetry, *International Exhibition of Concrete and Kinetic Poetry* (Cambridge, 1964), *Between Poetry and Painting* (Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1965), *Sound Texts, Concrete Poetry, Visual Texts* (Amsterdam, 1971), and *An International Exhibition of Concrete Poetry* (University of East Anglia, 1975).

<sup>117</sup> This included retrospectives of Ian Hamilton Finlay (Tate Britain, 2012-13) and of Bob Cobbing (John Moores Exhibition Research Centre, Liverpool, 2013), several exhibitions at the Saison Poetry Library documented at <http://www.poetrylibrary.org.uk/exhibitions/past/?StartRow=41&PageNum=3#content> (accessed 24/08/2014), and, memorably, a room dedicated to small press books at Tate Britain’s 2009 Richard Long exhibition, which I visited in my first week as a PhD student.

<sup>118</sup> Tony Lopez, ‘Introduction: Language Art and Material Poetry’, in Lopez ed., *The Text Festivals*, *ibid.*, p. 27

<sup>119</sup> Michael Haslam, ‘Lyric in Blemish’, *A Cure for Woodness* (Todmorden: Arc Publications, 2010), p. 30